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CREATIVE INDUSTRIES AND CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT — STILL A JANUS FACE?

Abstract

Since the 1970s, it has been possible to discuss cultural policy in terms of the discourses 'art as industry' and 'cultural rights' (for a discussion of this history, see Gibson, 2001). 'Creative industries' is the policy 'buzz term' of the moment. The ways in which the terms 'creative industries' and 'cultural rights' are understood in contemporary cultural policy encapsulate the ways in which the economic and humanistic benefits of creative practice have been articulated as existing in competition. I argue that it is counterproductive to understand these discourses as mutually exclusive. Are these discursive constructions — art as profit versus art as identity — constitutively oppositional? To pose this same question using the terms which frame contemporary policy debate, how do we negotiate between the (seemingly) competing logics of the creative industries *and* cultural development *policy discourses?*

Introduction: Culture, government and identity[1]

In 1854, at the laying of the first stone of the State Library of Victoria (which housed the National Gallery of Victoria from 1859 to 1968), Sir Redmond Barry said:

> Seventeen years have scarcely elapsed since the foundation of the colony which was then inhabited by savages. Probably in the world's history no country has attempted to found both a university and a Public Library within a score of years of its first settlement. (in Westbrook, 1973: 8)

A century and a half later, in 1996, Javier Pérez de Cuellar, president of the World Commission on Culture and Development, stated:

> When our Commission began its work, it had long been clear that development was a far more complex undertaking than had been originally thought. It could no longer be seen as a single, uniform, linear path, for this would inevitably eliminate cultural diversity and experimentation, and dangerously limit humankind's creative capacities. (de Cuellar, 1996: 7)

These statements on the relations between culture, identity and 'civilisation' tell us much about the ways in which our understanding of these has changed. In Sir Redmond Barry's proud announcement of the establishment of the cultural infrastructure for 'Marvelous Melbourne' it was Europe's 'Great Cultural Tradition' which was considered most 'useful' by Victoria's colonial settlers. It is precisely this mono-cultural construction of the 'Great Cultural Tradition' and its benefits that de Cuellar challenges when he argues that cultural development can no longer take 'a single, uniform, linear path' (1996: 7). For de Cuellar, the development of culture should facilitate the diversity of 'cultural wealth', while at the same time guarding against the excesses of cultural nationalism (1996: 7). What is most surprising about these statements — with their diametrically opposed sentiments — is how much they have in common. Although set in different countries, in different economic, social and political contexts, and 150 years apart, both emphasise the uses of culture for the governance of populations. De Cuellar's statement is global and defined on the basis of the assertion of

cultural diversity; Barry's is colonial and mono-cultural. Nevertheless, to both culture is a central tool for the governance of populations through its role in the construction of identity.

Since the second half of the nineteenth century, cultural programs have been articulated in relation to social welfare logics of various kinds. Since this time, cultural programs have always been understood to have economic and cultural benefits. In British and then colonial Mechanics Institutes in the mid-nineteenth century, a training in art was understood to be beneficial to the production of good design and quality manufacture at the same time as art was understood to impart a moral and spiritual benefit. Similarly, in Australia after World War II, cultural programs were designed to provide training for democracy and participatory citizenship, as well as training for responsible consumption. Lately it has become possible to discuss art programs in terms of the discourses 'art as industry' and 'cultural rights' (for a discussion of this history, see Gibson, 2001). These terms encapsulate the ways in which the economic and humanistic benefits of art have been articulated in contemporary cultural policy as existing in competition; yet it is counterproductive to understand these discourses as mutually exclusive. Are these discursive constructions — art as profit versus art as identity — constitutively oppositional? To pose this same question using the terms which frame contemporary policy debate, how do we negotiate between the (seemingly) competing logics of the cultural/creative industries and cultural development policy discourses?

The late twentieth century witnessed various attempts to deal with the popular conception of cultural policy as 'elitist'. In the 1990s, the American National Endowment for the Arts was defunded. Developing from the lead of Australia's first Commonwealth cultural policy, *Creative Nation* (DOCA, 1994), by the late 1990s the British government was articulating cultural policy as being about the development of 'creative industries'. 'Creative industries' is the policy 'buzz term' of the moment.

Over the last 10 years or so, there has been a rearticulation of the logics which inform cultural policy. As my title suggests, these logics have been articulated around a paradigm of cultural development, developed particularly in relation to a perceived global threat to regional and local cultural identity and cultural rights, and a paradigm of the cultural — or, most recently, the creative — industries, which has been informed primarily by the gradual withdrawal of government from direct funding and the attendant pressure on cultural organisations to develop practices which will enable them to be economically self-sustaining. However, despite the rhetoric, it seems that cultural policy is struggling with the discursive shifts that an industry-based, entrepreneurial conception of cultural policy entails. The essential problem is with the complexities involved in marrying together enterprise processes for cultural support while retaining the centrality of public-interest rationales for cultural policy. In practice, this has meant that, in the midst of local, state and federal governments stating their policy support for the development of the 'creative industries', the largest cultural grants continue to be to those cultural forms which are the least self-sustaining. It is no surprise to learn that these cultural forms are the ones which have traditionally been the beneficiary of public monies: ballet, opera and theatre. For instance, in Australia, as a result of the Final Report of the Major Performing Arts Inquiry (1999), the federal government gave the 31 'major' performing arts organisations a one-off financial package amounting to $43 million; the state governments topped up this figure.

Elsewhere I have argued that the focus of Australian cultural policy over the last 10 years has been flawed in its basic logic (Gibson, 1999, 2001). During the last decade, Australian cultural organisations have sought to deal with their policy and funding problems by the development of a kind of audience development which relies on an understanding of cultural production and consumption, informed above all by a marketing rather than a sociological understanding of the significant social and political effects of cultural production and consumption. This has resulted in the retention of a dichotomy between the economic/industrial benefits and the humanistic benefits of culture. This dichotomy has been substantially eroded elsewhere, particularly in European cultural policy where culturally led regeneration schemes are focused on economic and cultural regeneration — culturally led

regeneration schemes in Glasgow and Newcastle-Upon-Tyne in the United Kingdom are telling examples of the possibilities.[2]

Judging from the last two years of cultural inquiries, Australia Council and federal government policy statements, it seems that a sophisticated understanding of and concern with the social and cultural effects of government cultural pump priming has been replaced by a selective application of measures for economic sustainability. If cultural funding and management facilitate social, cultural and political capacities, knowledges and identities, then this shift in the management of cultural resources is of great significance. Can these new discourses of cultural provision and management provide for plural cultural sustainability? It seems to me that what has tended to happen in both analysis of and programmatic response to these dual aims of cultural and economic sustainability is that the traditional divide between 'subsidised' and 'commercial' cultural forms has been retained. This dichotomy is not reflective of the diversity of the arts sector. What is most crucial to contemporary analysis of cultural policy is the development of ways to think through the discursive reconstruction necessary if we are to develop cultural policy which is not characterised by a Janus face of 'profit' and 'culture'.

Cultural development

In 1996, the report of the World Commission on Culture and Development identified cultural development as a key objective of international policy. The commission argued that an exclusive focus on economic development had led to a range of social, cultural and economic problems around the world, and had 'given rise to cultural tensions in many societies' (1996: 7). To address these pressing international policy issues, the Commission argued that 'there was a need to transcend economics, without abandoning it' (1996: 8). In this context, the idea of cultural development was introduced as a way of balancing cultural and economic policy objectives (Intergovernmental Conference on Cultural Policies for Development, 1998: 14–19). The Australian economist David Throsby has argued that policy determination based solely on fiscal objectives is misdirected (1997: 33). This is especially evident in the area of cultural policy, which should simultaneously encompass community demands for non-material well-being, inter-generational equity (that is, the distribution and preservation of resources for future generations) and the interdependence of economic and cultural variables. According to Throsby, these are the conditions for 'culturally sustainable development' (1997: 33). In response to arguments like Throsby's, the focus of the cultural development agenda of governments has increasingly grafted notions of 'development' and 'sustainability' to the relations between communities and culture.

Cultural development policy involves two main dimensions. First, it aims to facilitate cultural diversity and give local communities opportunities for cultural expression. Second, cultural development programs aim to facilitate cross-sectoral partnerships as tools for the encouragement of sustainable cultural activity. As a result of this convergent focus on economic, cultural and social objectives, cultural development programs have been configured to address an ever-expanding range of social governance problems. Cultural development policy is understood to be useful in the governance of social 'problems', partly because of the way in which it has been defined as encompassing both economic and cultural goals. As Gillian Swanson has argued, cultural development should be 'about developing sustainable communities as much as it is about developing sustainable cultural industries' (Swanson, 1997: 41).

The logic underpinning UNESCO's cultural development statement *Our Creative Diversity* is democratic and pluralist (de Cuéllar 1996); however — and this is an important point — cultural policy is inescapably normative: it cannot be neutral. Tony Bennett and Colin Mercer (1998) make the point in a report commissioned for UNESCO that:

> 'Culture' and 'development' … were first put together in the context of western
> programs of cultural assimilation … how 'culture' and 'development' are put together

and the role that cultural policies play in meditating the connections between them are, ultimately, questions concerning the frameworks within which, at both the national and the international levels, the relationships between different human ways of living will be managed. (1998: 5)

While cultural development sits comfortably within a socially democratic language, we must nevertheless remain aware that the funding of culture involves a choice which has political, social and economic ramifications. It is imperative that these complex relationships and consequences are investigated if we are to understand the contexts of plural and sustainable forms of cultural production and participation.

Cultural consumption

Accounting for Tastes: Australian Everyday Cultures by Tony Bennett, Mike Emmison and John Frow (1999) is an invaluable discussion of the broad range of Australian cultural tastes. The survey it is based on is the largest sociological survey ever undertaken of Australian cultural tastes, broadly defined to include everything from choices in interior design and participation in sport to those activities traditionally deemed to be 'cultural'. The authors find evidence to prove that cultural habits have social and political ramifications; the tastes 'evident in the cultural choices and preferences of contemporary Australians are pre-eminently social in their organisation and character' (1999: 1). Bennett et al.'s analysis of Australian cultural consumption is underpinned by attention to the policy contexts of that consumption. In particular, this leads them to argue that some forms of cultural capital are associated with enduring distinctions of class. For instance, they point out that 'education increases rates of participation across pretty well the whole field of culture' (Bennett et al. 1999: 246). Bennett et al. warn us that this 'reminder is a pertinent one in a political and policy context in which … those associations may well be strengthened as a result of the increased stress on privatisation and user-pays principles that now characterises both cultural and education policies' (1999: 246). To my mind, given the emphasis in contemporary cultural industry-based policy on economic sustainability, it is timely to recall the point that there are cultural, social, economic and political power effects as a result of which cultural forms are 'pump primed' and why. The question is now as much about how to pump prime cultural production as it is about the kinds of culture supported and the social policy reasons for this support.

Cultural production

A number of factors have contributed to an ongoing change in the ways in which cultural producers operate. As a general trend, governments are moving away from traditional models of funding which involve funding an individual (or group) to produce a product. Funding structures are increasingly based on funding projects which facilitate partnerships (with community, business, 'non-arts' government departments) — for instance, cultural development, per cent for art, and art and industry programs. In addition, there has been an ongoing devolvement of funds to state and local governments who are now the most important cultural funders. In 1997–98, 62.6 per cent of funding came from state and local governments, with the Commonwealth providing 35.5 per cent (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 1998: 3). Cultural programs are increasingly audience focused rather than production focused. The Australia Council has increased its emphasis on serving the interests of the 'arts audience'. *Directions 1999–2001* established the Council's focus areas as: promoting the value of the arts; building a greater international focus; youth and the arts; and ensuring the sustainability of the arts sector (1999a: 5). While these areas of policy development all involve a concern with product, the primary focus and its articulation in policy statements, such as the *Youth and the Arts Framework* (1999b), *Securing the Future: Major Performing Arts Inquiry Final Report* (1999), and the *Promoting the Value of the Arts Strategy*, has primarily been to find ways of facilitating broader access to traditional art forms.

This has partly been the case due to increased pressure on the Australia Council during the period of John Howard's Coalition government to justify its expenditure as relevant to 'Howard's battlers'. However, rather than extending the rubric of the federal Arts Council to significantly encompass a broader range of cultural forms and an expanded strategic policy role for the Council, the policy focus has primarily remained on marketing artforms which the Council has traditionally supported. The disappointment here is that where there has been extensive discussion of new media policy there is a lack of leadership on the really challenging work of developing new cultural policy frameworks which address public interest policy objectives (such as sustainability, diversity and equity) and which will govern the range of cultural forms with which publics actually engage.

According to a recent economic profile of Australia's cultural industries over the last 30 years, government investment in culture has been reduced (Guldberg, 2000: 95). However, during the 1990s, the cultural workforce increased by 23 per cent (compared with a 9 per cent growth in the total workforce) (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 1998: 17). In addition, enrolments to creative arts courses increased by 45 per cent in the first half of the 1990s (compared with a 26 per cent increase in all university courses over the same period), suggesting a further increase in the cultural workforce (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 1998: 7). However, despite the growth in demand for cultural goods and services, Hans Guldberg's *The Arts Economy 1968–1998: Three Decades of Growth in Australia* describes an actual loss of income across all the cultural professions from the 1980s to the 1990s (2000: 43). This continuing decline in median and mean incomes will have significant consequences, given the already low incomes which prevail across most of the cultural sector. For instance, visual artists — whose median income for 1995–96 was $15 300 — suffered one of the worst declines in individual real income, losing 16 per cent over 1986–96 (this was compared with a 4 per cent decline in the overall workforce for the same period) (Guldberg, 2000, pp. 43–44). Yet the Guldberg report makes much of the growth in the cultural industries over the last 30 years. According to Guldberg, it is precisely the 'creative arts sector' (in which visual artists are categorised) which grew the most between 1975 and 1994 — 10.4 per cent compared with 6.6 per cent for the 'live performances sector' (which includes those organisations receiving injection funding as a result of the Major Performing Arts Inquiry) (2000: 47). While this growth in the 'creative arts sector' is partly explained by the increase in the numbers of visual artists and craftspeople, Guldberg argues that 'the question confronting [the creative arts] … is whether the individual artists have been losing share to others within the input–output product, as suggested by the income statistics' (2000: 49). An important question we can ask here concerns the extent to which the development of a new stratum of 'cultural consultants and project managers' is responsible for this drain of funds away from the individual practitioner? The development of this strata has occurred in parallel with a decreasing tendency for cultural organisations to utilise academic cultural policy work (the terms of the Visual Arts Inquiry did not even mention academics as a group of people with whom it may be useful to consult — Contemporary Visual Arts Inquiry, 2001).[3] Research is required into this new stratum of 'cultural expertise' if we are to properly assess its expertise and the broad strategic value of its product.

Typical definitions of 'the arts' and artists tend to imagine an industry which operates in a linear fashion. For instance, the most recent analysis of Australian visual arts and craftworkers used the following definition: 'evidence of professional standing was sought in the form of some indication of professional acceptance or recognition over the last five years'. This was demonstrated 'if over this period they had had creative work professionally exhibited or published; had been involved in producing a substantial body of creative work; had undertaken full-time training as an artist; or had received a grant as an artist' (Bardez and Throsby, 1997: 1).[4] However, like 'the arts', the category of artist is notoriously vague. 'Designers' are sometimes incorporated into the 'visual arts' (in census figures — see Guldberg, 1992: 5) and sometimes they are not (Throsby and Thompson (1994) Prosser

(1989) and Bardez and Throsby (1997) do not include designers in their list of arts occupations.)

Instead we can understand an artist as working horizontally rather than in a linear fashion — to do this acknowledges the working reality of the majority of artists, who cross-subsidise their 'traditional' art practice by working across a range of practice forms. The British report *Career Paths of Visual Artists* describes artists working in a career matrix rather than on a career path. The term 'matrix' draws our attention to the number of practices and working contexts of artists engaged in different types of creative work (Honey et al., 1997: xiii). What is unclear is the extent to which artists cross-subsidise their 'traditional' art practice with other creative work. Australia urgently needs analysis of the forms of cross-subsidisation which exist between sectors in the cultural industries.

Charles Leadbeater and Kate Oakley (1999) describe the cultural workers definitive of the contemporary cultural industries as the 'Independents', referring to their entrepreneurial modes of working. In the British context, Leadbeater and Oakley describe these cultural workers as coming into the workforce in the late 1980s and 1990s as public subsidies to the arts became increasingly pressurised and large commercial organisations were downsizing (1999: 15). These workers tend to operate locally, and their small businesses feed into local cultural networks (1999: 14). They are young (under 35) and educated (1999: 21). For the contexts of this paper I want to draw out two important issues regarding the interaction of cultural policy frameworks and these micro cultural businesses. In the first place, Leadbeater and Oakley argue that, while on the one hand — due to their locally based nature — the 'Independents' 'play a critical role in promoting social cohesion'; on the other hand there are major access issues for this kind of cultural participation as graduates 'make up a higher proportion of people in the youngest and fastest growing sectors' and relatively few 'Independents' 'are from ethnic minority backgrounds' (1999: 17). In the second place, these inequities — in addition to the commercial spheres in which these new cultural businesses operate — are not able to be addressed by the current logics of cultural policy frameworks (1999: 18). There is a need for programs of funding that will encourage these new businesses and their relationships with other cultural sectors, whether commercial or subsidised. For instance, access to micro-credit and institutional infrastructures, including access to 'top-up' skill courses, have been identified as more useful to these kinds of concerns than direct funding models (Leadbeater and Oakley, 1999: 27, 38).

Leadbeater and Oakley's pilot study is based in Britain; however, we can identify these trends in Australia as well. Gillian Swanson and Patricia Wise's (1998) report *Going for Broke: Women's Participation in the Cultural Industries* is based on surveys undertaken in Queensland. This report demonstrates that definitional divisions between forms of practice are not representative of the ways in which women work in the cultural industries. Swanson and Wise argue that:

> the working patterns of those women we surveyed were characterised by a degree of industrial mobility that reflected the changing face of the arts and cultural industries, the internal configuration of which does not support an individual practice identification (1998: 99).

This study found that, while 'more than 50 per cent of arts grants at state level are taken up by women each year, only 14 per cent of our respondents had ever received an arts grant in their career … freelance activities and self-employment appeared to be far more important to both practitioners and administrators as a means of sustaining their arts and cultural practice' (1998: 3). This suggests a workforce who has a transferable set of skills and which is poorly provided for by current cultural funding programs despite gender equity aims.

To think of this workforce in terms of a narrow definition of 'artists' or 'the arts' would be to underestimate the utility of their skills as they are applied across sectors. Our understanding of the creative practitioner, the arts and indeed the whole cultural infrastructure needs to involve an inclusive conception of creative work practices and processes which recognises the

industrial diversity and mobility of cultural workers, organisations, processes and products. Healthy growth in the Australian creative arts sector (Guldberg, 2000), and the potential for expanding the categories of analysis of production and consumption involved in thinking of practitioners and their cross-subsidising relations with other industrial sectors, suggest that funding and regulation of the working conditions of content producers should be a central plank of cultural policy. On this view, audience development — defined as access to culturally plural forms and processes — will best be facilitated by frameworks for support which are based on analysis of the actual ways in which contemporary culture is produced.

I have argued for a rethinking of Australian cultural policy which would locate two objects at the centre of strategic cultural policy development. First, cultural policy frameworks need to be based on an analysis of the contemporary creative practitioner — who they are, how they work, where they work and their conditions of work. It is only in this way that we will get a real sense of the diversity of cultural products, processes and contexts which make up our cultural infrastructure. Second, the support of cultural forms is never neutral; it always has social, cultural, political and economic effects. It is these effects which we need to retain a clear-eyed awareness of if we are not to replace nineteenth century cultural policy structures based on the dichotomy of excellence and community with an equally limited twenty-first century paradigm which establishes a hierarchy between cultural forms which have a commercial application, and are therefore favoured, and those which are useful for social or cultural reasons, and are therefore seen as secondary to those with a higher profit potential (2000: ??).

Notes

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[2] Analysis of these case studies is the subject of work in progress.

[3] The Inquiry will be reporting its findings to the government by March 2002.

[4] David Throsby is currently working on a new survey of Australian visual artists.

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