

Making Power, Doing Politics:
The Film Industry and Economic Development
in Aotearoa/New Zealand

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A thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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November 2007

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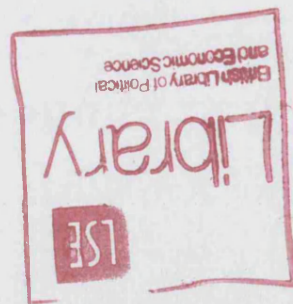
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Abstract

Over the last decade creative industries, such as film and fashion, have become increasingly commonplace items on economic development agendas at urban, regional, and national scales. A sizeable academic literature has emerged to document this ‘creative turn’ in economic policy. The existing literature often locates the widespread adoption of creative industry policies within either a capitalist system that increasingly demands creativity if accumulation is to be secured or a series of powerful travelling policy discourses which impose themselves on local landscapes irrespective of fit. These explanations are, however, rarely substantiated empirically to show how, in very material ways, capitalism or travelling policy discourses make demands of a particular locality. In this thesis, Actor-Network Theory (ANT) is used to argue for a less ‘determined’ approach to the study of creative industries in economic development: the assumptions about macro phenomena structuring the local are put aside in order to tell the story of one situated case of creative industries-based economic development.

The specific case that is examined is the film industry of Aotearoa/New Zealand. In the period from 1999 to 2005, the Aotearoa/New Zealand film industry went from being almost entirely absent from economic development policy to playing a central role. The thesis draws on extensive documentary analysis and 58 interviews to construct a description of the practices, devices, techniques, and knowledges that were deployed to constitute, shape, contest, and stabilise the role of the film industry within economic development. What emerges from this description is that contingency and opportunism, rather than capitalist demands or global travelling policy discourses, are key to explaining the prioritisation of the film industry. This suggests that ANT makes visible political processes that often remain hidden from view but are crucial to understanding the way that power is made and politics is done.

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Acknowledgements

After the labours of thesis writing, I expected it to be easy to write these acknowledgments. Yet, it now seems difficult to find the words to truly 'acknowledge' the ways in which family, friends, fellow PhD students, and my supervisor made the process of completing this PhD not only possible, but also immeasurably easier. Here are my very humble efforts.

I want to acknowledge especially my supervisor, Don Slater, whose guidance this thesis owes a lot. Throughout the process, Don was a source of encouragement, support, and challenging (but always fair) feedback.

My family and friends have been both a welcome distraction and extremely supportive, particularly in the final stages. I am especially grateful to my parents, Susanne and Thomas, and my sisters, Sarah and Anna-Lena, for being there for me when I have needed them.

Thanks is also due to my fellow PhD students, who ensured that the process was enjoyable *as well as* challenging. I am especially indebted to Chris Hamilton, for reading a complete draft of this thesis, and to the 'lunching ladies': Megan Clinch, Tessa Boyd-Caine, and Linsey McGoey.

Financially, I was supported by a studentship from the Tertiary Education Commission of New Zealand. Without this, it would not have been possible for me to study at the LSE. Additionally, the University of London Central Research Fund provided an award for research expenses.

Finally, I want to acknowledge my partner, Alasdair, for making the last few years some of the best.

List of Abbreviations

AFCI	Association of Film Commissioners International
ANT	Actor-Network Theory
CTU	Council of Trade Unions
BERL	Business and Economic Research Limited
CCSG	Creative Sector Strategy Group
CCUG	Coalition of Creative Unions and Guilds
DCMS	Department of Culture, Media and Sport
DEED	Department of Employment and Economic Development
GIF	Growth and Innovation Framework
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
LBSPG	Large Budget Screen Production Grant
MEAA	Media Entertainment and Arts Alliance
NDU	National Distribution Union
NFU	National Film Unit
NLNZ	National Library of New Zealand
NZBC	New Zealand Broadcasting Corporation
NZFC	New Zealand Film Commission
PDV	Post-production, Digital and Visual Effects
SAG	Screen Actors Guild
SPADA	Screen Production and Development Association
SPIT	Screen Production Industry Taskforce
SROI	Social Return on Investment
STS	Science and Technology Studies

Chapter 1:

Introduction

I think there would be some Ministers in my job who would have said, “Get a life! The bloody film industry! Don’t ask me to do that!”

(Jim Anderton, Minister for Economic Development, Interview June 2005)

In early 2007, some eight years after Jim Anderton was first assigned to the Economic Development portfolio and began to investigate whether there is a role for film within economic development, the industry is the subject of a series of initiatives that stretch across the multiple agencies and institutions which together make up the ‘economic arms’ of government. At the local level too, film has become a priority of government. Almost without exception, cities and regions across Aotearoa/New Zealand have produced economic development strategies around the film industry and established film offices to encourage production within their locality. Now, if Anderton is correct in his assessment above – and we have no reason to disbelieve him – then these developments suggest that the political status of the film industry has moved from a point where a Minister for Economic Development might reasonably have rejected the call for film-related economic development with the cry ‘Get a life!’ to one where the absence of an economic development policy around film is the oddity and even perhaps, we could imagine, in some instances considered irresponsible or foolhardy. That is, we appear in the course of not even a decade to have seen the successful stabilisation of the film industry within economic development in Aotearoa/New Zealand.

It is the change in fortunes of the Aotearoa/New Zealand film industry within economic development at the national scale that is the subject of this dissertation. Most immediately, then, it seems important to note that even a casual observer of trends in economic development would probably say that it is not altogether surprising that it was the film industry, rather than some other industrial actor, which came to be the focus of so much attention by politicians and policymakers. The turn to creative industries within economic policy, both in terms of support for specific constituent subsectors such as film and for the

sector in its entirety, has been well-documented in numerous contexts (Cunningham, 2004; Gibson & Klocker, 2004; Oakley, 2004; Volkerling, 2001). Writing on the role of creative industries within regional economic development in the United Kingdom, Oakley (2004:68) has, for example, remarked that:

One thing one can be sure about in opening any policy document, tender for research or brochure on regional economic development in the UK is that the creative industries will merit a mention somewhere.

This 'creative turn' in economic policy also touched Aotearoa/New Zealand, with the primary economic development strategy under Anderton's stewardship identifying the creative industries as one of three key sectors to the economy (Office of the Prime Minister, 2002). We might, therefore, want to read the case of the film industry in Aotearoa/New Zealand as a further instance of the global spread of creative industries-based economic development. This kind of statement, however, implies a particular kind of relationship between the local and 'higher' scales whereby what we observe in a given setting is in large part the result of wider political, economic, or social processes imposing themselves on that locality. Such a relationship is often assumed to exist by virtue of the widespread uptake of creative industry policies around the world but is rarely subjected to empirical investigation. This has meant that practices at the local level in these accounts are often deemed, without much interrogation, to be the product of forces or developments at scales beyond the local. That is, what occurs within the local scale is afforded very little, if any, agency.

The aim of this dissertation is to leave the nature of the relationship between the local and any other scales, if these can even be deemed analytically separate, open. The aim is simply to tell the story of how a political project to introduce a subsector of the creative industries to economic development in a specific locality was made and, at least for a time, stabilised. Specifically, this dissertation tells the story of how the film industry in Aotearoa/New Zealand came to occupy a key place within economic development. It asks and investigates the following questions: what techniques, devices, objects, knowledges, and strategies were deployed to bring this political project into being and to stabilise it? Who was deploying

these? How, and by whom, was the project being contested? Were there alternative projects? The nature of the relationship between the local and any other scales, if these do exist in such a way, is then able to emerge from this investigation. It may transpire that the political project around the film industry in Aotearoa/New Zealand was in large part determined by what was occurring at global or macro scales, but by not assuming this from the outset we also allow for the possibility that it might be otherwise.

The focus on the *making* and *stabilisation* of a political project suggests that theoretically this dissertation might be anchored in the now well-established Foucauldian governmentality tradition. However, it is the concepts and tools of Actor-Network Theory (ANT) that will be deployed instead. The use of ANT to study politics and political processes is a fairly recent development, most extensively pursued by Andrew Barry (2001; 2002a). There are, as Barry (2001) notes, good reasons for adopting an ANT approach rather than a Foucauldian governmentality approach. We can summarise these reasons in the form of two main arguments. The first argument for ANT is that it moves us beyond the Foucauldian conceptualisation of government as the conduct of persons to also take materiality seriously. That is, it focuses attention on the devices, objects, and techniques that are integral to the constitution and stabilisation of political projects and also, more generally, the social itself. The second, and related, argument for ANT is that it is especially attentive to the particularities of how something is manifest in a given place at a specific moment in time and, additionally, to how that ‘thing’ is also constantly undergoing change. Foucault’s analysis, on the other hand, tends to be more concerned with identifying historical forms and is, therefore, ‘too static to reveal the dynamic instability of socio-technical arrangements’ (Barry, 2001:200). The importance of this latter point will become apparent as we begin to examine the empirical material. We will see that, although the place of the film industry on the economic development agenda may for the moment have been secured, its terms of inclusion are constantly shifting in ways that Foucault’s theorisation of the *dispositif* – his closest concept to the actor-network – would not be able to adequately account for.

Beyond these theoretical concerns, ANT is also being deployed here in a more practical sense through the use of one of the main heuristic devices of Science and Technology Studies (STS): ‘Open the black box!’ This heuristic was first introduced by Callon and Latour in a 1981 article and makes use of what is originally an engineers’ term for a device whose internal structure and mechanism can be disregarded because it reliably transforms a given input into predictable outputs. Callon and Latour (1981) argued that social scientists have often ‘black boxed’ institutions, such as laboratories, and in so doing have missed important elements of how the social and society is constructed. The call to ‘open black boxes’ is above all about a focus on details: on the practices, devices, techniques, and so on that operate ‘inside’ the structure, organisation, or institution that has hitherto been black-boxed. It is, if you like, a focus on the details that go into, and are involved in, the making of something. These details should not, however, be seen as ‘mere details’. They are instead fundamental to the *making of power*, as Donald MacKenzie (2005:558) remarks in his application of the heuristic to global finance:

[T]he macro actors of social life (including not just individuals, but also organisations and even “structures”) are micro actors grown large through their capacities to mobilise and command black boxes ... The contents of black boxes are indeed “details”, but not “mere details”. If a black box ceases to function as such – if it no longer reliably transforms inputs into appropriate outputs – then the power of a macro actor can be disturbed.

There is a very good reason for using the ‘black box’ heuristic in this study of the film industry and economic development in Aotearoa/New Zealand. We already know that in the existing literature localities are often investigated within a frame that implicitly locates agency in a scale beyond the local. In effect, this means that local political processes and practices have often been ‘black boxed’ in much the same way that the insides of laboratories were by social researchers studying science before the first STS accounts.

We see this ‘black-boxing’ particularly when we look at the explanations that have been offered for the widespread prioritisation of creative industries within economic development. There are two common ways of explaining the rise of the creative industries, both of which deem the actions of policymakers and politicians to be determined largely by

powerful forces beyond these individuals themselves. The first explains the increased importance of creative industries through reference to the demands of the capitalist economy (see for example, Scott, 2000a). That is, creativity is said to be important to the continued accumulation of capital in a globalising post-industrial/post-Fordist economy and the emergence of policies around creative industries is the almost inevitable response to these demands. The second explanation attributes the widespread adoption of creative industries-based economic development strategies to powerful travelling policy discourses (see for example, Wetzstein & Le Heron, 2003). In the case of both of these explanations there is always an input from a scale beyond the local – in the case of the first, a demand for creativity if capitalist accumulation is to be sustained and, in the second, a powerful policy discourse – that gives rise to a reliable ‘local’ output which takes the form of a programme or policy around the creative industries and economic development. The specificities of what happens in between – for example, the ways in which policymakers and politicians actually engage with ideas of creativity-led economic development, the objects and devices that materialise such policies, and the way these might also be contested – are rarely attended to.

It is this ‘stuff in between’ that is of primary interest to this dissertation. This, then, necessarily entails a commitment to empiricism. Again following Barry (2001), this is a commitment to empiricism in two senses. In the first sense, it is a commitment to making visible the details and, hence, complexity of political processes. As Barry (2001:22) notes, it is only through such an emphasis on details that:

one gets a sense of the irreducibility and contestability of the social, the disjuncture between the programmatic statements of policy and the messiness of actuality, the contingency of history, and the interference and intersection of diverse historical and geographical movements.

In the second sense, and this follows logically from the first, it is about a commitment to situatedness. Just as Barry (2001:22) did not set out to make transcendental claims about the nature of government and politics today, the aim here is not to generalise from the Aotearoa/New Zealand experience but rather to ‘reveal a dimension of political life which

is often neglected'. That is to say, through the commitment to situatedness we retain a keen awareness of the fact that the substantive content of the 'stuff in between' may well vary from locality to locality. This does not mean, however, that the details uncovered by this type of exploration have implications only for the locality under study. What we find inside the black box might challenge predominant explanations in quite fundamental ways. In the case of this thesis, for example, the contents of the black box could potentially disrupt the assumptions about agency that underpin many of the existing accounts of creative industries and economic development.

By now it should be apparent that this dissertation is in part exploratory in nature. ANT has only recently been applied to the study of political processes and has not yet been used in a study of creative industries-based economic development. As such, this is also a 'test' of what ANT might offer us: what insights do we gain from using ANT as a method and theoretical approach? And, importantly also, what might be the costs of using ANT?

To begin to give the reader a sense of what ANT might enable us to do, the remainder of this introduction sketches an outline – or, in film terms, presents a trailer – for the thesis.

Chapter 2 begins with a fuller exploration of the existing literature on the creative industries and economic development. It traces the way this dissertation project evolved from an initial engagement with this literature to its eventual framing as an ANT study of political stabilisation. The final part of the chapter provides a brief introduction to Aotearoa/New Zealand in order to 'set the scene' and explain why the film industry there provides us with a useful case study of how a political project around creative industries-based economic development is brought into being and provisionally stabilised.

Chapter 3 is a discussion of methodology and method. It outlines how, in practice, I went about 'tracing associations' to construct an ANT account of the film industry's role within economic development. Specifically, this chapter suggests that multi-sited ethnography provides a useful way of 'operationalising' ANT.

The next three chapters examine in various ways the ‘stuff in between’ – that is, the contents of the black box.

Chapter 4 examines the political projects that coalesced around film over the last hundred years in order to consider whether the argument that culture and economy are increasingly intertwined can be substantiated in the Aotearoa/New Zealand case. The historical explorations detailed in this chapter suggest that until the early 1970s, culture/economy is not an appropriate lens through which to read the political projects that formed around film. During this early period, the overriding feature is a very instrumental use of film by government to achieve other ends, such as war propaganda. Once political projects specifically *about* film emerge in the late 1970s, the culture/economy framing becomes more appropriate as we begin to see various actors mobilise notions of the cultural and economic to secure support for the development of a domestic film industry. The story, however, is not one of ‘cultural’ and ‘economic’ essences that are shifting in relation to each other over time, but rather of strategic deployments that tell us less about the extent to which the film industry *is* ‘cultural’ or ‘economic’ and more about the conditions that permitted its stabilisation as a political project at various points in time.

Chapter 5 brings us to the contemporary moment when the film industry is being prioritised within economic development and also for the first time is located within a broader creative industries project. This chapter takes as its starting point a divergence between the way that this ‘creative turn’ in economic development is explained in political texts, such as policy documents, and the way it is explained by policymakers and politicians in the research interviews for this thesis. In the political texts, justifications are most commonly based on international models of creativity-led economic development, theories of the creative economy, and calculations of economic impact. In the interviews, on the other hand, explanations centre primarily around opportunities in the local economic context, contingency, and pragmatism. It will be argued that this divergence between the texts and interviews tells us something important about the way that political projects are made and stabilised, namely that politics is made possible through an act of ‘framing’ that translates embodied, local, and contingent knowledges into objective, rational, and universal truths.

The second half of the chapter then considers two examples where quantification was used to do framing work in order to stabilise aspects of the government's film project.

The last of the substantive chapters, Chapter 6, stays with the contemporary moment but shifts focus to a new set of actors. Acknowledging that political projects are held together by diverse associations and connections, it examines the role played by industrial and non-governmental actors in making, stabilising, and contesting the government's agenda for the film industry. Specifically, the chapter considers two examples. The first example examines the case of the Screen Production Industry Taskforce. Here, a select group of industrial actors was charged by government with developing a strategy to grow the screen sector and so vested, in a very direct way, with the ability to participate in the making of the film project. In the second example, we examine two campaigns by a coalition of creative sector unions and guilds to contest dominant articulations of the film project. These actors had been excluded from official political processes, including the Taskforce, and so mobilised events beyond these processes to try to reinsert workers into the worker-less imaginary of the film industry and claim for themselves the right to participate in deliberations about the future of the film industry. From the different positions occupied by the actors across these two examples, conclusions are drawn about the abilities of industrial and non-governmental actors to 'make real' their projects.

Chapter 7 is the first of two concluding chapters and considers the usefulness of ANT to the study of politics and political processes. The chapter is organised around two questions: firstly, what claims is it possible to make using an ANT approach? And, secondly, what opportunities does ANT provide for political intervention?

The final chapter, Chapter 8, then returns to the substantive concern of this thesis: the question of creative industries in economic development. The fieldwork is brought to bear on the three explanations that are found in the existing literature for the prioritisation of the creative industries. Given limitations in being able to address some of the existing explanations that reference macroeconomic factors and globalisation, the final part of this

chapter considers whether an alternative theoretical frame to ANT might have been productive.

Let us begin now, however, with the argument *for* ANT.

Chapter 2:

Why ANT? Explaining the Rise of Creative Industries within Economic Development

At the dawn of the twenty-first century, a very marked convergence between the spheres of the cultural and economic seems to be occurring.

(Scott, 2000a:2)

Britain was once the workshop of the world. It led the industrial revolution. It was defined by shipbuilding, mining and heavy industry... Yet more people now work in film and TV than in the car industry ... The overseas earnings of British rock music exceed those of steel. I believe we are now in the middle of a second revolution, defined in part by information technology, but also by creativity.

(Tony Blair in Brown, O'Connor, & Cohen, 2000:437)

The PhD project on which this dissertation is based did not start out as an ANT study of how a political project is made and stabilised. Informed by the existing literature on cultural and creative industries, it began instead with claims such as those above by the academic, Allen Scott, and British Prime Minister, Tony Blair, that suggested capitalism had entered a new phase in which generating economic value is dependent increasingly on culture and creativity. Against this backdrop, the prioritisation of the film industry within economic development programmes in Aotearoa/New Zealand appeared to be an instance where culture and creativity were being supported as a policy initiative in order to establish conditions for the ongoing accumulation of capital, and it was in this light – as an example of how a locality uses culture and creativity to respond to processes of political and economic reorganisation – that the film industry was to be studied for this project. However, encounters with theoretical and empirical literatures, and later the field, suggested that this was not an altogether productive way of understanding what had occurred in respect of the film industry and economic development in Aotearoa/New Zealand. In particular, the implicit assumption within the existing literature about processes and actors at higher scales determining the local became increasingly troublesome to

sustain and led eventually to a focus, following Bruno Latour and others in the ANT tradition, on the way political projects are made through heterogenous arrangements of humans, devices, objects, technologies and so on.

What follows in this chapter is a narrative of the theoretical and empirical engagements that informed this project over the course of its development. The chapter traces the project from its beginnings in the existing literature on cultural and creative industries through to the adoption of an ANT approach and its eventual reframing as an inquiry into the practices of political stabilisation. It argues that many of the existing explanations for the rise of the creative industries discourage an openness to the world and, therefore, foreclose the possibility that the world might also, in very important ways, be organised differently to the way we assume it to be.

Beginnings: The Existing Literature

The creative industries concept is actually a fairly recent invention. Most historiographies of the term locate its first usage within a policy context in the ‘Creative Nation’ report of Paul Keating’s Australian government in the mid-1990s and cite Tony Blair’s adoption of the term in 1997 as the beginning of its widespread use (Cunningham, 2004; Galloway & Dunlop, 2007). There is some suggestion that it is primarily a ‘political construct’ and that analytically it refers to the same group of industrial actors as the ‘cultural industries’ concept which preceded it (see for example, Pratt, 2005). The existing literature, therefore, contains references to both the ‘cultural industries’ and the ‘creative industries’. For heuristic purposes, we can divide this existing literature into two parts.¹ The first is concerned with a series of macro economic changes that have seen culture and creativity become increasingly important to accumulation over the last several decades (see for example, Lash & Urry, 1994). From this literature, the creative industries emerge as one expression of a more general ‘cultural turn’ in capitalism. As the emphasis in this body of work is on broad economic changes rather than the specific ways in which these have been responded to by policymakers and politicians, the terms ‘cultural industries’ and ‘creative

¹ As this is a heuristic rather than bodies of work that have developed separately within defined schools of thought, there is considerable overlap between the literatures assigned to each of these parts.

industries' are often used interchangeably. In the second body of work, on the other hand, the distinction between these terms is important. This second body is concerned with the cultural and creative industries as a *policy response* and looks at the way these industrial actors have been used as a tool for economic development, regeneration, and place-marketing (see for example, Gibson & Klocker, 2005; Pratt, 2005). Both the 'economic' and 'policy' literatures were important to the initial formulation of this thesis project, and so we now consider each of these in turn.

The 'Economic' Literature

The claim by Allen Scott (2000a) that we are observing a convergence between the cultural and economic points us to a development that is sometimes referred to as the 'cultural turn' in capitalism. Capitalism, it is argued, has entered an epoch in which economic value depends increasingly on culture and creativity. There is a comparative historical claim being made here about the preceding epoch, even if only implicitly (Slater, 2002a). The discussions around the culturalisation of the economy often substantiate this claim through reference to the transition from Fordism, where culture and creativity had little or no role to play in generating economic value, to some variation of a post-Fordist or post-industrial economy. Culture and creativity emerge from these discussions as a key element in the after-Fordist 'fix' for capitalism. The growth of the creative industries as a specific sector of the economy, therefore, is read as one outcome of that fix establishing itself.

Most of these accounts begin with the observation that for much of the twentieth century Fordism provided a means of organising the economy and society in order to secure the accumulation of capital (see for example, Amin, 1994; Boyer, 1990; Scott, 2000a). Its logic of mass production and mass consumption, tied to a welfare state, ensured relative wealth and prosperity, particularly in the post-war period, for most Western economies. That same logic, however, also left little room for culture and creativity (Scott, 2000a). The accumulation of capital was secured through efficiency gains that were derived from increasing levels of mechanisation. Mechanisation was achieved most easily if products were standardised. This meant that cultural and creative inputs – for example, design features – presented an obstacle to efficiency and were eliminated as far as possible. The

emphasis was on achieving *economies of scale*, rather than *scope*. As Scott (2000a:5) notes, cultural elements ‘tended to become subservient to the more functional design imperatives imposed by the need for manufacturing efficiency and competitive cost-cutting.’

By the early 1970s, however, Fordism was starting to fall victim to its own logic. Increasing mechanisation meant that fewer workers were required for a growing industrial output (Boyer, 1990). This led to significant unemployment, which in turn disrupted the virtuous cycle whereby mass production was sustained through mass consumption (Jessop, 1991). Many Western economies were, therefore, faced with a crisis of overproduction. This internal crisis was exacerbated by several external factors, most notably the 1973 Oil Shocks and emerging globalising processes that saw manufacturing shift to developing countries (Harvey, 1990). The combination of these internal and external factors plunged many Fordist economies into recession. These recessions, which lasted up to a decade in some contexts, are seen by most commentators to mark the end of the Fordist period and emergence of a new after-Fordist economic arrangement.

There was considerable debate about the specific characteristics of the after-Fordist period in the academic literature, though most accounts were in agreement that in general terms a decline in the importance of mass manufacturing and an increase in the importance of knowledge, services, and culture was being observed (Amin, 1994). The extent to which culture and creativity, both as features of the economy as a whole and more specifically in terms of the cultural (or creative) industries, were seen to play a role in this new economic era varied depending on the account. In all cases, however, there was some sense that they played an increased role. To illustrate some of the ways that culture and creativity were theorised to be gaining in importance, we now briefly consider three seminal accounts of the after-Fordist period: the Regulation School’s description of ‘Post-Fordism’, Bell’s (1973) ‘Post-Industrial Society’, and Lash and Urry’s (1994) ‘Economy of Signs’.

The writers who argued for the emergence of a ‘post-Fordist’ organisation of the economy were in most cases associated with a Marxist theoretical movement called the Regulation School. These writers identified flexibility and the rise of something they termed ‘flexible

specialisation' as key features of the after-Fordist economic arrangement (see for example, Harvey, 1990; Jessop, 1991). The term 'flexible specialisation' referred to a reorganisation of production, with the central logic shifting from scale economies to economies of scope. Production, so the Regulationists argued, was becoming increasingly oriented towards niche markets with consumers now buying goods not only to meet a particular need but also to construct for themselves a particular lifestyle and identity (Boyer, 1990). These fragmented consumer markets necessarily required diverse product ranges, and this differentiation of products was most readily achieved through cultural or design elements. Scott (2000a:6), who writes within this approach, argues that a 'great surge' towards 'design- and information-intensive outputs' occurred at this point. This took place both within existing sectors of the economy and in 'new post-Fordist industries' that catered specifically to the production of cultural goods (Scott, 2000a:6). Many of these 'new post-Fordist industries' would now be collected under the creative industries heading and so we see here the first of the economic explanations for the growth of the creative sector following the Fordist crisis.

Our second account of the after-Fordist period, Bell's (1973) notion of the 'post-industrial society', overlaps to some degree with the descriptions of post-Fordism by the Regulation School. However, whereas the Regulation School privileged production as the main economic force and saw shifts in consumption as primarily an effect of changes in the productive sphere, Bell (1973) argues that consumption itself is a major economic force. Moreover, for Bell (1973), knowledge, as opposed to flexibility, is the defining characteristic of the after-Fordist period. Central to Bell's (1973) thesis, is the notion that developed economies are moving away from the production of material goods to an economy based around the exchange of services. Manufacturing does not disappear altogether, but is no longer the mainstay of the economy. A key factor in this transition from manufacturing to services is, according to Bell (1973), the increased importance of the knowledge worker and so it is here that we see knowledge emerge as the primary enabler of the post-industrial society. Knowledge workers are involved, for example, in the provision of financial and management services – both sectors that experienced rapid growth after the Fordist crisis. According to Bell (1973), knowledge workers are so central to the

organisation of the economy in the after-Fordist period that they constitute a new 'class', which he terms the 'knowledge elite'.² In this 'knowledge elite', we find the beginnings of an expanded role for creative workers as many of those involved in the production and delivery of cultural services would be considered part of this class. A more explicit emphasis on cultural and creative workers emerges, however, from Bell's (1973; 1976) arguments about consumption.

Specifically, Bell (1973) argued that rising disposable incomes and affluence had led to shifts in consumer demand, with consumption in the post-industrial society extending considerably beyond 'essential' goods and services. On the one hand, the greater role of consumption was evidenced by increased demand for domestic services such as cleaning and, on the other, by increased demand for goods that are cultural, designer, and for leisure (as opposed to household) purposes. Bell (1973), therefore, makes similar observations about consumption as the Regulation School but his analysis of causality and consequence is different. For Bell (1976:20), as we noted before, this shift to more cultural forms of consumption acts as a major economic force. In acknowledgment of this, Bell (1976) added a second category alongside the 'knowledge elite' several years after publishing *The Post-Industrial Society*. This second category was called the 'cultural mass' and referred to the class of workers involved in particularly the distribution of cultural goods and services (Bell 1976). We see, therefore, that in Bell's (1973; 1976) account culture is also singled out as an important feature of the way the after-Fordist economy is organised.

Lash and Urry's (1994) description of the 'economy of signs' was published some two decades after Bell's (1973) thesis on the post-industrial society. Like Bell (1973, 1976), Lash and Urry (1994:61) argued that the post-Fordist account privileged the role of production over consumption and, additionally, that it underestimated the 'extent to which culture has penetrated the economy'. In a nod to the Regulation School concept of the regime of accumulation, however, they proposed that within the 'economy of signs'

² Several later theorists, most notable among them Manuel Castell (1996), would emphasise knowledge and information even more strongly as defining characteristics of the after-Fordist age. This emphasis on 'knowledge' also found its way into policy and politics through the idea of the 'knowledge economy', which we will see later became rhetorically linked to creative industry policies in some contexts.

capitalism has become organised around a logic of 'reflexive accumulation' (Lash & Urry, 1994:64). The turn to signs and reflexivity, according to Lash and Urry (1994), can be observed in the arenas of production and consumption. In respect of production, reflexivity manifests itself in a tendency for the involvement of more knowledge, monitoring, and feedback in the production of goods. In respect of consumption, on the other hand, reflexivity is evident particularly in terms of 'aesthetic reflexivity', where this denotes the increased concern of consumers with symbolic and cultural codes. For example, Lash and Urry (1994) argue that even resolutely material goods, such as whiteware, are marketed increasingly in terms of design, brand, and other symbolic attributes to the extent that their purchase becomes also an act of consuming signs.

The rise of reflexive accumulation across the spheres of production and consumption is, according to Lash and Urry (1994:4), epitomised by the increased demand for what they term 'postmodern goods'. These are goods that are primarily aesthetic, cultural, or symbolic – such as films, videos, music and so on – and that constitute some of the main outputs of the creative industries. In fact, for Lash and Urry (1994) the cultural industries are emblematic of the economy of signs. Reflexive accumulation, they argue, is in essence the organising logic of the cultural industries applied to the economy as a whole (Lash & Urry, 1994).

We could say that of the three accounts of after-Fordism discussed here, Lash and Urry (1994) propose the most significant role for culture and creativity. For this project, however, it was not the arguments about the extent to which culture and creativity were implicated in the economic logic of after-Fordism that were important but rather that there was a general consensus that culture and creativity were characteristics of the emergent economic 'fix'. That is, to invoke Harvey (2001c), culture and creativity seemed to be playing a key role in attenuating, for a time at least, the crisis tendencies of capitalism.

We have already seen some of the implications for the cultural and creative industries of this role within the after-Fordist fix. Most immediately, we saw that all three accounts referred to an increase in demand for the output of these industries. This meant that the

cultural and creative sectors experienced growth in terms of their contribution to economic wealth and also on measures such as their share of employment. As Scott (2000a:6) noted earlier, in some cases this saw the development of ‘new industries’. That is, sectors that had previously been at most ‘cottage industries’ were emerging as organised industrial actors. The growth of the creative sector was often documented in this literature through the use of quantitative data, such as census employment figures and surveys of industrial activity (see especially Scott, 2000a). One of the early findings to emerge from these studies was that the cultural (or creative) industries were displaying a particular pattern of geographical localisation. Scott (1996; 1997) was one of the first to note that the cultural industries had a tendency to cluster in specific locations and that the resultant industrial agglomerations acted as significant drivers of local and regional economic development.

The resurgence of these industrial agglomerations, which were developing also around specific technologies, seemed at first to be something of a paradoxical observation within a globalising context. That is, it was difficult to explain the formation of new industrial clusters when globalising processes seemed to be removing many of the physical and spatial reasons for locating in a particular place. Scott and some of his colleagues at UCLA set out to find out why these agglomerational economies were continuing to form and what role they played within regional economies (see especially Scott & Storper, 2003; Storper, 1997, 1999). There is now a sizeable literature that documents locational patterns in the creative industries and the dynamics of specific creative industry clusters (see for example, Coe, 2001; Pratt, 2004; Scott, 2000b). This literature also touches on the implications of cluster formation for local and regional governments seeking to grow their economies. As such, we see here an explicit overlap with the second body of work that discusses the cultural and creative industries as primarily a policy response.

We turn now to this second body of literature, and it will quickly become apparent that there is actually a very close connection between the two literatures that we created for heuristic purposes at the beginning of this chapter. Most immediately, the explanations that are offered by this second body of literature for the rise of the cultural and creative industry policies within economic development often reference the macro changes discussed in the

economic literature. That is, the turn to cultural and creative industries by policymakers and politicians is often constructed – by the actors in these accounts, if not always with the agreement of the authors – as a necessary response to changed economic conditions.

The Policy Literature

We noted that in the economically-focused literature the terms ‘cultural industries’ and ‘creative industries’ were often used interchangeably, both being invoked as fairly neutral descriptors of those industrial actors whose outputs are primarily aesthetic or cultural rather than utilitarian. However, for academics writing about how culture and creativity have become incorporated into government policy, the distinction between these terms is crucial. The rhetorical shift from ‘cultural industries’ to ‘creative industries’ is seen to mark the point at which these policies started to gain widespread acceptance and also the point at which government support for the subsectors that were included under the ‘creative industries’ umbrella became resolutely about economic rather than cultural imperatives (see for example, Cunningham, 2004; Galloway & Dunlop, 2007; Garnham, 2005). It is worth for a moment considering the genealogy of the term as it emerged in the United Kingdom, if we are to understand the existing explanations for the political project that gathered momentum around the ‘creative industries’ concept in the late 1990s.

The precursor term ‘cultural industries’ had emerged in local government politics and policymaking in the 1980s principally as an industrial regeneration strategy and, in some cases, as a vehicle for political mobilisation (Garnham, 2005; Hesmondhalgh & Pratt, 2005; Moss, 2002). We know that it referred to many of the same industrial activities that were later included under the creative industries umbrella term. It also already did a lot of the work of moving away from an arts-based approach and towards an economic agenda for culture (Garnham, 2005; Jayne, 2005). This means that if the purpose of the creative industries concept was to bring the cultural sector into an economic framework, then this had already largely been achieved by the use of cultural industries and, as such, it raises questions about why the ‘creative industries’ term was introduced by New Labour in the late 1990s (Garnham, 2005; Pratt, 2005). Pratt (2005) argues that the ‘creative industries’ term fulfilled a very specific political purpose. Cultural industry policies were strongly

associated with the activities of left-leaning Councils, such as Greater London Council (GLC), as these had been the first to develop such initiatives. In the course of the 1997 election campaign and during the post-election period, New Labour actively sought to distance itself from these origins. According to Pratt (2005), the shift from 'cultural' to 'creative' industries was one way of rhetorically effecting this rupture with the past.

There is also some suggestion that the 'creative industries' term served another pragmatic and rhetorical purpose. Garnham (2005) argues that the term completed the transition to an economic framing which had begun with the 'cultural industries' term. It did this by bringing the creative sector into the political project that had coalesced around the transformation to a knowledge economy (Garnham, 2005). The knowledge economy project had by this point gained considerable momentum not only in Britain, but also elsewhere. The notion that the future was not in manufacturing, but in the exploitation of ideas had become received wisdom within economic policy circles. The shift from 'cultural' to 'creative' enabled links to be made to key features of the knowledge economy (Garnham, 2005). Understood as 'creative industries', there could now be a linking of the cultural sector to knowledge economy discourses around 'innovation' and 'intellectual property'. These linkages were often made very explicitly as in, for example, the original Department of Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) definition of the 'creative industries' term, which defined the sector as follows (DCMS, 2001:3):

Those activities that have their origin in individual creativity, skill and talent and which have the potential for wealth and job creation through the general exploitation of intellectual property.

Some commentators have argued that this alignment with the knowledge economy was important to gaining political acceptance of the creative industries project because it enabled high-value and high-growth sectors, such as software, to be included under the creative industries umbrella. According to Garnham (2005:26), it was only through the inclusion of software that it was 'possible to make the claims about size and growth [of the creative industries] stand up.'

From these accounts, we see that naming and defining the ‘creative industries’ involved a considerable degree of opportunism and pragmatism. It also suggests that local actors mattered and made a difference. In this respect, we might want to ask whether these accounts trouble the claim made in Chapter 1 that the existing literature rarely attributes agency to the local and to local actors. The argument that will be made as we examine the policy literature more fully is that the agency afforded to the local is often very limited, with the impetus for creative industry policies usually attributed to macro-level economic or political changes or to some other powerful force, including specific individuals, beyond the local. Of course, such limited agency is not a problem in itself, if it has been empirically substantiated. The encounter with ANT further into the research project, however, suggested that these accounts often did not have the methodological basis to make such claims about the locus of agency.

The existing literature offers three main explanations for the widespread adoption of creative industry policies. The first is concerned directly with establishing the creative economic fix, the second sees creative industry policies as a response to changes associated with globalisation, and the third attributes the rise of creative industries to powerful travelling policy discourses. These factors can work together in a given locality, and indeed it was all three explanations that contributed to the initial formulation of this dissertation project. Let us explore each a little more.

In the case of the first explanation referencing the new ‘economic fix’, the argument is usually that policymakers and politicians furthered the creative sector because it was seen to provide a new source of jobs, and therefore also wealth and growth, in areas that had been hit by deindustrialisation. The explanation offered by Oakley (2004) for the widespread uptake of creative industries at the regional scale in the United Kingdom is typical of this type of account. She writes (Oakley, 2004:67):

As industrial decline continues and the strength of the sterling erodes what is left of our manufacturing industries, many policymakers are turning to the creative industries as a way out of this mess.

The literature presents a number of case studies, particularly from the 1980s and 1990s, where the cultural and creative industries were said to have been used in this way. One of the pioneers of this type of regeneration strategy was the former steel town Sheffield, and Moss (2002) provides us a good account of its history. Sheffield, like other towns in northern England, was experiencing significant job losses by the 1980s, with losses in the steel industry alone estimated at around 50,000 jobs. Moss (2002) details how the local Labour-led Council responded with a highly proactive strategy, establishing the United Kingdom's first Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED) in 1981. Within a year of its inception, the DEED was experimenting with culturally-based economic recovery strategies. One of its first initiatives was the conversion of a former lead mill into a music performance venue. In 1986, it went further, taking the bold step of establishing a 'Cultural Industries Quarter' in a former industrial area on the edge of Sheffield. The explicit aim of the quarter, according to Moss (2002), was to create new jobs in the creative sector in order to counter the high unemployment brought on by deindustrialisation. As such, Moss (2002:214) argues that culture here acted very much as the 'means, not the end'. That is, there was not an interest in culture *per se*, but in what culture could offer to policymakers and politicians as they tackled the problems caused by deindustrialisation.

In addition to providing us an illustration of the 'economic fix' explanation, the Sheffield case also points us to two further features common to creative industries-based regeneration strategies documented in the literature. The first is that the scale of intervention was often the city and region, rather than the national economy. This was said to reflect a more general scalar shift in the economy and in economic development, as discussed extensively by a group of geographers known as the New Regionalists (see for example, Storper, 1997). Interestingly, this is a development that has not yet been observed in Aotearoa/New Zealand to the same degree, probably because it is a much smaller country and economy. The second is that the creative industry regeneration policies were usually described as being part of an increasingly entrepreneurial mode of governance (see for example, Wilks-Heeg & North, 2004). Harvey's (2001b) seminal work describes this as fundamentally about a shift from a managerialist approach that is concerned with meeting the needs of

those living within a locality to a mode that is first and foremost concerned with proactive and speculative place-making.

Finally, Sheffield is interesting for us because it became, alongside other pioneering localities such as Newcastle and London, a model for cultural (and later creative) industries-based economic development (Moss, 2002). As such, the early experiments with cultural industries policies in Sheffield and elsewhere, contributed to the diffusion and development of these types of strategies (Moss, 2002). In terms of diffusion, the literature documents that in the subsequent two decades cultural industry policies, and later creative industry policies, appeared in cities and regions across the United Kingdom and also further afield in Canada, Australia, New Zealand and, most recently, in various parts of Asia (Cunningham, 2004; Oakley, 2004; Volkerling, 2001; Wang, 2004). In terms of development, particularly noticeable is a turn to cultural consumption especially from the 1990s onwards. As Moss (2002:215) notes, the focus in places like Sheffield had been on job creation, not least because unemployment was such a pressing problem. However, as both theory and practice developed, the emphasis shifted increasingly to the role these strategies could play in place-marketing. It is here that we see the second explanation for the implementation of creative industry policies emerge.

The shift from using the cultural and creative industries as a tool for job creation to place-marketing is usually attributed to a concern about the ways in which globalising processes had reconfigured economic competitiveness. The argument here is that globalising processes eroded many of the spatial barriers that used to confer monopoly powers of place, forcing localities to find new ways of differentiating themselves (Harvey, 2001a). In this quest for differentiation, cities and regions have become embroiled in 'place wars' (Silk 2002:777), competing with each other in increasingly entrepreneurial ways for visitors, talented workers, and investment (see also Harvey, 2001a, 2001b; Yeoh, 2005). The terrain of culture, and so also the creative industries, emerged as one of the main battlegrounds in these place-wars (Harvey, 2001a). This is because culture was seen to provide a way of differentiating cities and regions, while at the same time making them appear attractive and

fashionable (Harvey, 2001a). In Frith's (1991:140) words, culture functions here as a kind of 'urban make up' to market and brand a city or region.

Cultural and creative place-marketing strategies have taken three main forms. The different strategies are often employed together and build on the creative industries, as opposed to culture more generally, to various degrees. One common strategy centres on building new cultural institutions or regenerating existing ones, often through investment in iconic architecture (Frith, 1991). The Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao is probably the most famous example of this type of strategy (Plaza, 2000). Here the objective is two-fold: firstly, to draw visitors in through a very place-bound cultural consumption experience and, secondly, to create a sense that the host city or region is an interesting, exciting, and fashionable place that one might want to visit, live in, or invest in. A second strategy centres on spectacle events, particularly festivals (Frith, 1991). The European City of Culture initiative is a good example of this type of strategy. The aim of this second strategy is primarily to attract tourists and achieve a longer term benefit from communicating a positive city image. In the case of cities with perceived image problems, such as Glasgow, initiatives like the European City of Culture have been described as particularly valuable in achieving perception change (Garcia, 2005). Finally, and this is most interesting for us, a locality may encourage the development of a vibrant creative industries sector. There can be an explicit focus on branding here, as in for example the largely unsuccessful 'Cool Britannia' campaign. In other instances, and this is especially true at the city level, support for the development of a vibrant designer fashion or music scene is directed towards creating new sites for consumption and achieving a more general aestheticisation of place (see for example, Gilbert, 2000).

So far we have seen two related explanations for the rise of creative industries within economic policy. First, the argument that cultural and creative industry policies were a response to the economic changes associated with the transition to an after-Fordist economy and, second, the argument that the turn to cultural and creative industry policies was caught up in efforts to be competitive in the context of the place-wars. The third

explanation is different to these in that it is concerned with the way in which ideas about creativity and the economy travel from context to context.

Specifically, the concern in this third explanation is with several texts and their authors who, by distilling writings on creativity into a more popular form, have succeeded in gaining a wide audience among politicians, policymakers, and business leaders. Of these, Richard Florida and his book *The Rise of the Creative Class* are probably the most well-known (other examples include, Howkins, 2002; Landry, 2000). First published in 2002, *The Rise of the Creative Class* became a bestseller in the United States and transformed Florida into something of a celebrity personality, complete with speaking tours that Gibson and Klocker (2004) describe as bearing more than a passing resemblance to the tours of popular rock bands. The central argument advanced by Florida is a popular version of the culturalisation of capitalism thesis. He argues that old industrial manufacturing can no longer be the basis of a competitive economy as we have now entered the ‘creative age’, where creativity is the key to economic success. As he puts it (Florida, 2002:21, emphasis added):

Creativity has come to be valued – and systems have evolved to encourage and harness it – because new technologies, new industries, new wealth and *all other good economic things* flow from it.

Creativity is understood very broadly by Florida (2002), probably for pragmatic reasons not too dissimilar to those that saw politicians try to link the creative industries to high-growth sectors, such as software (Peck, 2005). We can see just how broadly creativity is understood by Florida (2002) if we look at his concept of the creative class. The creative class, which for Florida (2002) is the driving force of the creative age, refers not just to the usual cast of creatives – artists, cultural and creative industry workers, musicians, and performers – but to anyone engaged in innovative, knowledge-intensive activity. So a scientist, engineer, or economist could be a member of Florida’s (2002) creative class, provided their work fitted within this very broad definition. The explicit link back to the creative industries comes in the form of a popular version of the place-wars argument. Florida (2002) argues that the presence of the creative class is crucial to the

competitiveness of a city or region. This means that cities are plunged into what he calls ‘talent wars’ (Florida, 2002:7). These talent wars are, in turn, won by cities that can cater to the creative class’ desire to live in interesting, exciting, and creative places. For Florida (2002:229), the prescription for policymakers and politicians is simple:

I like to tell city leaders that finding ways to help support a local music scene can be just as important as investing in high-tech business and far more effective than building a downtown mall.

The widespread dissemination of Florida’s (2002) work, and also the work of others such as Landry (2000) and Howkins (2002), gave rise to an argument that creative industries-based economic development strategies had become travelling policies. Consequently, the uptake of such policies in a large number of contexts internationally has been attributed to politicians and policymakers uncritically buying into these discourses, in part because they have been seduced by the celebrity of the messenger (Gibson & Klocker, 2004; Peck, 2005; Wetzstein & Le Heron, 2003). Here is how Peck (2005:740) put it:

The book’s [*The Rise of the Creative Class*] thesis ... has proved to be a hugely seductive one for civic leaders around the world, competition among whom has subsequently worked to inflate Florida’s speaking fees well into the five-figure range. From Singapore to London, Dublin to Auckland, Memphis to Amsterdam; indeed, all the way to Providence, RI and Green Bay, WI, cities have paid handsomely to hear about the new credo of creativity, to learn how to attract and nurture creative workers, and to evaluate the latest “hipsterization strategies”.

The initial formulation of my dissertation project drew on this travelling policy explanation and also the other two explanations in the existing literature. It posited that the introduction of the film industry to economic development in Aotearoa/New Zealand could be studied as an instance of political actors pursuing a creative industries-based strategy in response to the need for a creative ‘economic fix’ and globalising processes that were making new forms of spatial differentiation increasingly important. Moreover, in terms of the third explanation, visits by Richard Florida and Charles Landry suggested that Aotearoa/New Zealand was very materially hooked into global policy circuits and that the travelling policies had acted as the conduits for convincing politicians and policymakers that a

creative industries-based approach to economic development was necessary. In short, the case of the film industry and economic development in Aotearoa/New Zealand appeared to be an apposite site for studying the ways in which a series of macro and global processes were shaping the actions of policymakers and politicians in a specific locality. The project would probably have gone ahead in this form were it not for an encounter with Bruno Latour's (1986) essay entitled 'Powers of Association'.

Rupture: Latour's 'Powers of Association'

When you simply *have* power – *in potentia* – nothing happens and you are powerless; when you *exert* power – *in actu* – others are performing the action and not you.

(Latour, 1986:265, emphasis in original)

With this paradox, Latour (1986) begins his treatise on power. The explanation to the paradox, argues Latour (1986), lies within a translation model of power. Such a model conceives of power not as an entity to be possessed and exercised by 'powerful' individuals, institutions, or structures but rather as the effect of collective action by a multitude. For any order to be executed faithfully, so says the translation model, actors must be convinced through a process of enrolment to align their behaviour with whatever is demanded. Power, in other words, has to be 'made' (Latour, 1986:273, emphasis in original):

Those who are powerful are not those who "hold" power in principle, but those who practically define or redefine what "holds" everyone together. This shift *from principle to practice* allows us to treat the vague notion of power not as a cause of people's behaviour but as a consequence of an intense activity of enrolling, convincing, and enlisting.

Such an approach to power is radically different to the way that power is normally conceived of in sociological accounts. Latour (1986:266) characterises the more orthodox approaches to power as 'diffusion' models. Within such diffusion models, power does not have to be explained but is instead a 'thing' that powerful actors, institutions, or structures hold and exercise. The obedient transmission of an order is, thus, explained simply by the

originating source of the order possessing a lot of power. The ways in which that power is actually constituted, in and through material objects and relations among humans and non-humans, is not considered. The explanation stops simply with the statement that the actor, institution, or structure is 'powerful'. Conversely, in cases where an order fails to be carried out or is carried out inappropriately, the explanation within a diffusion model attributes this failure to either resistance or the originating source not having sufficient power in that particular context (Latour, 1986).

The encounter with Latour's (1986) translation model occurred after repeated suggestions from my supervisor to consider ANT. Reading the 'Powers of Association' article provoked a series of urgent questions: what does it mean to say that 'creativity is a powerful travelling policy discourse'? Who are the actors that are transmitting the 'creativity order' within the economic arms of government? How are they transmitting this order, if indeed we can speak of it as an 'order'? Are they transmitting it more or less faithfully? And, even more urgently, what are the implications of describing capitalism as a 'powerful system' that makes demands of local economic and institutional contexts, in this case of Aotearoa/New Zealand?

That is, Latour's (1986) article provoked an awareness that the accounts which had framed the research project up to this point usually assumed power to operate in a way that is characteristic of diffusion models. In the case of the more economically-focused literature, such as the Regulation School accounts, this was evident in the way that capitalism was represented. Capitalism, in these accounts, is described as a powerful system that makes demands of state and economic actors. These demands must be accommodated if accumulation is to be sustained. There is then a philosophical realism – capitalism exists! – that underpins these accounts and also a functionalism in that changes in state and economic form are read, in the first instance, as a response to demands of the capitalist system. In the context of this project, for example, the capitalist demand is for the 'culturalisation' of the economy and various local actors have little choice but to obey this because – and here we see the circularity – capitalism is very powerful.

In the travelling policy literature, on the other hand, it is the discourse of creativity-led economic development and the various actors promoting it that are vested with power. Policymakers and politicians are, by virtue of this power, assumed to be easily seduced by the creativity discourses. The literature represents them as almost unwitting dupes, who become incapable of judgments about whether these policies make sense in and of themselves and blind as to whether they represent a good 'fit' for their particular locality. In Gibson and Klocker's (2004:432) account of Florida's Australian tour, for example, we find precisely such a representation of policymakers and politicians:

What is obvious in the case of discourses of "creative economy" is the extent to which the authority of visiting personalities such as Florida is rarely challenged; indeed perplexingly, such visitors continue to be accorded favourable "star" status and shielded from criticism, even though they are unlikely to know much about local circumstances.

Similarly, Wetzstein and Le Heron (2003:4) make the following comment on Florida's visit to Aotearoa/New Zealand:

He [Florida] had just returned from a trip to Wellington where he not only personally met "super-creative" director Peter Jackson but was also guest of the mayor who has full-heartedly adopted his views on creativity and now puts them at the heart of the policy framework for a competitive Wellington.

There are two significant implications of such a diffusionist approach to power in these discussions around creative industries and economic development. Most immediately, and this is fairly obvious, it means that there is from the outset often an implicit assumption about the locus of agency. That is, if capitalism and travelling policy discourses are assumed to be powerful in a diffusionist sense then it follows that these will be able to impose themselves on the local scale and the local scale itself will have very little ability to determine what occurs within it. The second, and related, implication is that these accounts often therefore assume that local actors can be understood through the 'higher' scale phenomena that 'determine' their experience. We can see this kind of assumption at work especially in the travelling policy literature. In this literature, claims are made about the actions, beliefs, and intentions of politicians and policymakers. Problematic is the fact that

these claims are often derived from an analysis of policy documents, press releases, or media articles rather than from interviews or ethnographic observation. Wetzstein and Le Heron (2003), for example, make the claim that the Wellington Mayor has ‘full-heartedly adopted’ Florida’s message. However, Wetzstein and Le Heron (2003) did not interview the Mayor and so this claim is in actual fact an inference based on the implementation of creative industry policies in Wellington and an assumption about the power of Florida and creative industry policy discourses to seduce politicians.

It should be becoming apparent that the disagreement with the existing literature is not so much with the substantive content of the explanations, but with the analytical frame that these are placed in and with the methods that underpin them. That is to say, travelling policy discourses and capitalist demands may well be playing a role in the cases described in the existing literature and also in the Aotearoa/New Zealand case. The disagreement with these existing accounts, however, is that they often assume from the outset that power has been made rather than showing, firstly, *whether* power was made and secondly, (if so) *how* it was made. Most fundamentally, then, we could say that the diffusionist orientation to power discourages an openness to the world. That is, it discourages the researcher from actively engaging with the particularities and specificities of the research setting. In the case of Wetzstein and Le Heron (2003) above, more openness might have challenged their account in quite dramatic ways. For example, if they had interviewed the Mayor, they might have found that she did not ‘buy into’ Florida’s ideas but was using them strategically to justify an economic development programme based around local opportunities. While this may not be the most parsimonious explanation, it was the narrative that emerged from the interviews conducted with politicians and policymakers at the national scale in Aotearoa/New Zealand (see Chapter 5 for a full discussion).

There were also clues in other creative industry literatures which suggested that a ‘less determined’ approach could yield important insights. Specifically, the literature on creative work seemed interesting in this respect because it pointed to individuals very carefully, and unpredictably, negotiating discourses of creativity. The critical literature on creative work derived its ‘openness’ in part from a disenchantment with, on the one hand, boosterist

accounts that uncritically celebrated creativity and, on the other, more established sociological accounts that were intent on disavowing the role of culture and creativity in order to show that creative workers are, after all, ‘just workers’ (Dean & Jones, 2003; Gibson, 2003; Ursell, 2000). In order to act as a corrective to these accounts, the critical work literature was intent on giving voice to creative workers, and this manifested itself methodologically in terms of a commitment to interviewing and ethnography (Dean & Jones, 2003; Gibson, 2003; McRobbie, 1998). The resultant bodies of work provide comprehensive accounts of *how* it is that ‘culture matters’, with a particular focus on the way that creative workers make sense of the divergence between an ideal of creative work and their own experiences of low pay, uncertainty, and hyper-(self)exploitation (Gibson, 2003:202; McRobbie, 1998, 2002a, 2002b).

Specifically, the literature points to two main ways that creative workers negotiate this divergence between lived experience and the creative ideal. The first strategy is to invest further in discourses of creativity (see for example, Gibson, 2003; McRobbie, 1998, 2002a, 2002b). Creatives who pursue this strategy often do so by denying that they are engaged in ‘work’. Gibson (2003:209), for example, noted that many of the musicians in her study of the music industry on the Far North Coast of New South Wales would refuse to see their activities in terms of either discourses of ‘work’ or ‘industrial relations’. They would invest instead in the ‘romantic idea of an imaginary identification between themselves, their art, and audiences’ (Gibson, 2003:209). The second strategy is to do exactly the opposite and *disinvest* in notions of creativity. Dean and Jones (2003:530-1) studied the experiences of women actors and found that these often struggled to have their activities recognised as ‘work’ by those outside of their profession:

Part of the problem is that acting, as with other performing arts, “looks like fun” to the audience, and, given the common distinction between work and pleasure (and other difficulties, such as the way that “enjoying oneself” is part of the performance, that one can only appear to enjoy performing after enormous preparatory “work,” and so on), it can be difficult to think of acting as work, as a profession or career option that involves many of the same issues as other kinds of work.

There is, in other words, no straightforward relationship between workers in the creative industries and the dominant discourses of what it means to be a creative. That is, we can see that, although there is a common input in the form of a discourse around creative work and also a predictable output in the form of a 'creative worker', how discourses of creativity are actually negotiated and used *in practice* does not follow predictably from these. As such, these accounts point to the importance of interrogating how, if at all, creativity matters rather than simply assuming that creativity can act as an explanation. There seemed good reason to test this insight in the context of creative industries and economic development by asking how, if at all, 'culture' and 'creativity' matter to economic politicians and policymakers.

In sum, it seemed that the accounts of creative work, especially when combined with the challenges presented by Latour's (1986) translation model of power, meant that it was no longer possible to assume that there was an input – be it a demand by the capitalist system for more culturalisation or a powerful travelling policy discourse calling for creativity-based economic policies – that would lead reliably and predictably to an output. As a result of these engagements, the thesis project was beginning to be reformulated as an investigation into the different ways in which the film industry, as a specific subsector of the creative industries, was being enacted, deployed, manipulated, and 'made real' within economic development by policymakers and politicians. Most simply put, it was starting to become an investigation into the making of the political project around the film industry and economic development in Aotearoa/New Zealand. This sort of investigation necessarily calls forth a focus on the *practices* of government, or how it is that the development and implementation of economic development policy around creative industries is actually done. The phrase 'practices of government', in turn, could suggest a Foucauldian governmentality approach. The encounter with Latour's translation model, however, led first to a more thorough exploration of what ANT could offer.

Stabilisation: Becoming an ANT

The translation model asserts that power does not simply exist, but has to be made. ANT scholars make the same provocative claim about the 'social', arguing that the 'social' does

not exist as a 'thing' if by this we mean some kind of fixed state of affairs that is distinct from other realms such as the technological, natural, economic and so on (Callon, 1986; Latour, 2005; Law, 1991a). The 'social', for ANT scholars, is instead a *product* of associations between heterogeneous elements. These associations, which are always only provisional, serve to consolidate the heterogeneous elements into a more or less stable arrangement that then becomes identified as 'social'. Latour (2005:5) succinctly put it thus:

The social does not designate a thing among other things, like a black sheep among other white sheep, but a *type of connection* between things that are not themselves social.

In the same way that 'power' cannot be invoked as an explanation within a translation model but itself needs to be explained, the social can no longer act as *explanans* within an ANT account. Social forces, therefore, cannot be discussed as though they are distinct entities with particular effects, but must themselves be shown to be the products of a process of 'heterogeneous engineering' (Barry & Slater, 2002a:178). Capitalism, for example, is not something that simply exists (as in the philosophical realist tradition) but instead is a heterogeneous network of objects, people, things, devices, and technologies that is constantly in the process of being made and remade. As Latham (2002:116) has remarked, adopting an ANT approach 'allows us to see how very ordinary objects and relations are implicated in holding together quite extraordinary "imbroglios"' (Latour, 1993:3) of time-space. The constant work of making and remaking the connections that build up these 'extraordinary "imbroglios"' leaves traces and, according to ANT scholars, it is these traces that a sociologist should follow. Sociology is thus no longer a 'science of the social', but instead recast as the '*tracing of associations*' (Latour, 2005:5).

It is the recasting of sociology as a 'tracing of associations' that has led some of the leading scholars who write under its name to argue that ANT is first and foremost a method and not a theory. Latour (2005:142), for example, explicitly stated in a recent introduction to the approach that 'ANT is a method. It says nothing about the shape of what is being described.' To this end, the central concepts of ANT – such as 'translation', 'network', and 'mediator' – make no substantive claim about the shape of the world, but rather provide a

means to study it. Collectively, these concepts are referred to as the '*infra-language*' of ANT and are contrasted to the '*meta-language*' of other social theories, where the latter is language that makes substantive claims about the organisation of the world as in, for example, the way that a concept like 'capitalism' functions within Marxist theory (Latour, 2005:30, emphasis in original). While Latour (2005:30) is correct in his assertion that the concepts of ANT are 'meaningless' except as tools that enable 'displacement from one frame of reference to the next', the claim that ANT has nothing to say about the shape of the world is somewhat misleading. We have, after all, already seen that underpinning the 'method' or *infra-language* of ANT is a particular ontological claim about the nature of the 'social', or better said the impossibility of the 'social' as it is commonly understood.

The central point that Latour (2005:30) makes, however, remains: collectively the *infra-language* of ANT and the way the social is reconceptualised means that an ANT-scholar cannot make any assumptions about the way the world is organised or, more specifically, about the kind of associations that exist between people, objects, scales, nature, technology, or places (Barry & Slater, 2002b; Latour, 1983, 1986, 2005; Mol & Law, 2002). He or she must trace even the most taken for granted associations so as to be open to the possibility that the world might also be organised differently. This, Latour (2005:25) has acknowledged, often makes the ANT-scholar's work painstakingly slow as it requires him or her to 'trudge like an ant, carrying heavy gear in order generate even the tiniest connection.' It also recognises that something which appears stable is in fact always being worked upon in order to preserve the connections among its various constituent parts. The degree to which an actor-network achieves stability, or in Callon's (1991:150) words is 'made irreversible', is said to be dependent on the quantity and diversity of its connections:

The more numerous and heterogenous the interrelationships the greater the degree of network co-ordination and the greater the probability of successful resistance to alternative translations.

We can make an analogy between the increasing irreversibility of an actor-network and romantic relationships. When two people first form a couple, there are usually very few connections between them as a couple and other people, things, objects, institutions and so

on. It is possible at this stage to end a relationship without too much difficulty. The further it progresses, however, the more the couple becomes tied to other things and people. For example, the couple might have a joint mortgage, an increasing number of mutual friends and so on. These ties make it more and more difficult to end the relationship. The same applies to actor-networks: the more ties, the more likely it is that the actor-network will not be disrupted.

Stability, or better said the appearance of it, is therefore an achievement. It is the outcome of much, often costly, work making connections. This insight led to the final reformulation of the project. It suggested that the central research question should focus not only on the *making*, but also on the *stabilisation* of the film industry project within economic development. That is, it became also a question of how economic development policy around the film industry had been made progressively more durable and harder to reverse. The question was, in essence, as follows: what associations and connections were made in order for the film industry first to be introduced to economic development and then to become an accepted part of the economic development programme? Answering this question using the ANT approach would require careful tracing of all the various connections and associations that had been made in the process of constituting and stabilising the film industry as a key part of economic development policy in Aotearoa/New Zealand.

There are several implications, both methodological and theoretical, of becoming an ‘ant’ and reformulating the project in this way. The first is that the tracing of associations is fundamentally about a focus on materiality. To make a convincing argument, the ANT-scholar must be able to provide material evidence of associations, connections, translations, displacements (Callon, 1986, 2002; Latour, 1983, 1986, 2005; Law, 2002). In the context of this research project, for example, to make an argument that the development of an economic development policy around the film industry was influenced by travelling policy discourses it would be necessary to document the movements and actions of the individuals that acted as ‘messengers’, describe key events and meetings, and identify objects, tools, and devices that were involved in these processes. The latter – the objects, tools, and

devices – can be ‘actors’ in the narrative as much as the individuals and this is the second implication of becoming an ‘ant’ (Callon, 1986; Latour, 2005). As Latham (2002:131) notes, ANT exhorts the researcher to commit to a principle of ‘symmetry’ between humans and non-humans. This means that the researcher ‘cannot assume *a priori* that it is the human part of any actor-network that is the key element in drawing any given actor-network’ (Latham, 2002:131). Applying this principle in this study, requires an openness to the possibility that policy documents, consultancy reports, calculative practices, and so on played a role as *actors* in the course of the film industry being introduced to economic development.

There is also a third implication of becoming an ‘ant’ and this relates to the way that structure and agency are reconfigured. We need to return to Latour’s (1986; 1991) translation model of power to illustrate where we end up in respect of these troublesome sociological categories. Recall that the central point of the translation model is that power is the effect of a multitude of actors more or less faithfully transmitting an order (Latour 1986). As such, there always exists the possibility that these actors might betray the order or manipulate it in their own interest. In Latour’s (1991:105-6) words, ‘the fate of a statement [order] is in the hands of others.’ Latour (1991) illustrates this point for us with the example of a hotelier who is trying to minimise the loss of room keys by encouraging guests to leave their keys at reception. Initially, the hotelier simply makes a verbal request to guests. Some comply, but many do not and so the hotelier reinforces it with a sign. This leads to several more guests complying, but still many who do not because, as Latour (1991:104) notes, ‘a thousand different customers will follow a thousand different paths after reading the order.’ To increase compliance further, the hotelier attaches a cumbersome weight to the key. The combination of weight, sign, and verbal request leads to almost complete compliance. In ANT terms, the hotelier has ‘made power’ by constituting a heterogenous network. What we also see, however, is that the order has changed as a result of this process. The customers are now not simply leaving a key behind in reception, but relieving themselves of a nuisance (a weighty object cluttering their handbags or pocket). In this sense, the order ‘has been translated, not transmitted’ (Latour, 1991:105):

[T]he order is *no longer the same* as the initial order... In following it, we are not following a sentence through the context of its application, nor are we moving from language to praxis. The program “leave your key at the front desk”, which is now scrupulously executed by the majority of the customers is simply not the one we started with. Its displacement has transformed it.

The importance of this somewhat banal example is to illustrate that, because an order is always dependent on a multitude of actors, the outcome is necessarily always a translation. Any account must, therefore, pay attention to ‘both the succession of hands that *transport* a statement and the succession of *transformations* undergone by that statement’ (Latour, 1991:106). For the present project this means that the actions of policymakers and politicians as they translate notions of creativity-led economic development *matter*. If we return to the heuristic introduced in Chapter 1, we could say that the contents of the ‘black-box’ is of consequence.

The act of opening the ‘black box’ using ANT, therefore, enables us to avoid the pitfalls of reductionism that we saw Barry (2001) warn against in the previous chapter. Such reductionism can be described in terms of a movement that, in Barry’s (2001:20-1) words, sees researchers first posit ‘the existence of a macro social order, such as the state, society, or the world-system’ and then proceed to ‘turn [their] local empirical studies into mere instances of wider truths, and mere case studies of ever wider contexts.’ Avoiding such reductionism could also, however, have been achieved by way of a Foucauldian governmentality approach. Such an approach would also have extended the analysis of government beyond the state to practices and technologies, raising the question why a Foucauldian approach has not been adopted for this project. To answer this we need to briefly consider Foucault’s (1980) notion of the *dispositif* or apparatus. This concept is Foucault’s closest to the actor-network. Consider, for example, the parallels between how Foucault (1980:194-5) describes the concept in a 1977 interview and the notion of the actor-network as it has been described here:

What I try to pick out with this term is, firstly, a thoroughly heterogeneous ensemble consisting of discourses, institutions, architectural forms, regulatory decisions, laws, administrative measures, scientific statements, philosophical, moral and philanthropic propositions – in short, the said as much as the unsaid.

Such are the elements of the apparatus. The apparatus itself is the system of relations that can be established between these elements. Secondly, what I am trying to identify in this apparatus is precisely the nature of the connection that can exist between these heterogeneous elements... whether discursive or non-discursive. Thirdly, I understand by the term “apparatus” a sort of – shall we say – formation which has as its major function at a given historical moment that of responding to an urgent need. The apparatus thus has a dominant strategic function.

There are clear similarities. The emphasis in both approaches on relations between heterogeneous elements is perhaps the most obvious similarity. However, there are also significant differences, and it is these that make the ANT approach preferable in the context of the current project. Most notably, we see an explicit historical functionalism in Foucault’s articulation of the *dispositif*; the apparatus is seen to perform a ‘major function at a given historical moment’ (Foucault 1980:195). By linking the *dispositif* in this way to the identification of what Barry and Slater (2002a:178) have called, ‘paradigmatic historical forms’, a far more stable and enduring arrangement is suggested than that described by the actor-network. In this project, the emphasis is precisely on the particularities of a given socio-technical arrangements and all the variability, instability, and contingency that this calls forth. It is principally for this reason, therefore, that an actor-network approach has been adopted.

The final point to make about ANT, and this is methodological again, is that it is particularly useful to the study of controversies (Latour 2005). Moments of controversy can occur for a number of reasons – as a result of innovation or break down, for example – but are all characterised by the object of interest having the status of a ‘matter of concern’ rather than a ‘matter of fact’ (Latour, 2005:87). It is at these times that the making of connections is said to be most visible. The film industry, as a new priority for economic development in Aotearoa/New Zealand, appeared to be precisely such a moment of controversy. As it was also located discursively within a broader creative industries framing, it presented an apposite site in which to examine the making of a political project around creative industries and economic development. This will now be illustrated more fully with a brief discussion of the case.

Introducing the Case: The Film Industry of Aotearoa/New Zealand

In choosing to study the film industry of Aotearoa/New Zealand because it was still in the process of becoming integrated into economic development, the rationale for case selection paralleled Barry's (2002b:143) justification for studying the European Union:

Its attributes are still, as sociologists of science would say, controversial and unstable. It offers ample scope for those wishing to explore the art of government-in-the-making, a process of ordering rather than achieved political order.

There was also, however, a more pragmatic as well as political reason for this choice of case study. Questions around economic development and creative industries had been of interest to me for some time, having studied and worked on a project investigating the emergence of the designer fashion industry in Aotearoa/New Zealand (Goodrum, Lerner, & Molloy, 2004; Neitzert, 2003). I wanted to remain focused on Aotearoa/New Zealand because this was a context where I believed interesting things were occurring in respect of the creative industries and also because this was a context to which I felt some political responsibility. During the course of formulating my project, the profile of the film industry came to eclipse the other creative industry subsectors.³ As such, to ensure that my project would be able to make a meaningful contribution to conversations about economic development in Aotearoa/New Zealand, the film industry was selected as the focus for the study. The motivation to have political relevance derived in part from a commitment to *phronetic* research, which is discussed more fully in the next chapter. For the moment, let us continue with the introduction to Aotearoa/New Zealand.

The association of fashion, film, and other creative pursuits with Aotearoa/New Zealand, particularly in an economic sense, is a decidedly recent phenomenon (Goodrum et al., 2004). Historically, Aotearoa/New Zealand was known for its agriculture, enjoying for much of its colonial history a reputation as 'Britain's garden in the South Seas' (Kelsey, 1997:23). The export of agricultural goods to Britain and, in the post-war period, to Europe ensured a degree of relative economic prosperity until the early 1970s. At this point, the

³ That film eclipsed the profile of the other creative industry subsectors is not surprising as the formulation of this research project coincided with the filming of the *Lord of the Rings* trilogy.

general economic downturn set in train by the worldwide Oil Shocks of 1973 was exacerbated in Aotearoa/New Zealand by worsening agricultural terms of trade that had been precipitated mainly by Britain's entry into the European Economic Community (Kelsey, 1997; Roper, 1991a, 1991b, 1997). The subsequent three decades saw successive governments launch political projects, often bearing a strong resemblance to political projects in the United Kingdom, that aimed to restore economic competitiveness.

The first, under the stewardship of a conservative National government, was premised on a policy of economic nationalism and sought to create jobs through a combination of import substitution and state investment in large infrastructure projects, such as the construction of hydrodams (Roper, 1991b). This was followed in the mid-1980s and early 1990s by a programme of rapid neoliberalisation in the course of which barriers to imports were reduced or eliminated, state assets were privatised, and the welfare state was drastically cut back (Kelsey, 1997). The election of the Labour-Alliance coalition government in 1999 saw a further shift in political direction. Adopting the rhetoric of Tony Blair's Third Way, the coalition advocated a more hands-on approach to economic development and implemented a sector targeting programme with the stated aim of facilitating the transition to a 'knowledge economy' (Clark, 2002). The creative industries was one of three sectors – the others were biotechnology and information and communication technology (ICT) – to be targeted under the auspices of this programme, which was called the Growth and Innovation Framework (GIF) (Hosking, 2001). Initiatives around the creative industries soon came to be dominated, at least in funding terms, by the film industry (see for example, Cullen, 2003).

There seemed good reason for seeing the GIF as the beginning of a new moment in the way that the film industry was supported by government as up until this point the industry had received funding and development assistance mainly from the 'cultural arms' of government.⁴ Policy advice had been delivered almost exclusively by the Ministry of Culture and Heritage and responsibility for policy implementation rested with the New

⁴ In Chapter 4 we will see that the divisions between the 'cultural' and 'economic' are not nearly this clear cut. However, when the case was being selected the initiatives that the Labour-Alliance coalition government was developing around the film industry seemed to contrast sharply with an earlier cultural moment.

Zealand Film Commission (NZFC), which had been established in 1978. There was a popular sense that the film industry was concerned with the production of domestic features that contributed to the development of a national cinema and national identity (Martin & Edwards, 1997; Waller, 1996). After the GIF, on the other hand, political interventions around the film industry increasingly involved agencies and Ministries from the economic arms of government (see for example, Ministry of Economic Development, 2006b). The Ministry of Economic Development played a key role in policy development, while the export development agency, Trade New Zealand, and its domestically focused sister organisation, Industry New Zealand, became involved in the implementation of these policies. Moreover, there seemed to be a rupture with the previous focus on domestic features that could contribute to a sense of national identity. Many of the new film industry initiatives targeted international productions. The single largest new film-related budget item by the Labour-Alliance government was an apportionment of 40 million dollars for the Large Budget Screen Production Grant (LBSPG) (Cullen, 2003).^{5,6} The LBSPG provides a 12.5 percent rebate on qualifying production expenditure, provided that a minimum spend of 15 million is reached (Outcome Management Services, 2005). As budgets for domestic features are usually in the range of one to five million, it is unlikely that a domestic film would ever be able to qualify (SPADA, 2003).

The fieldwork commenced several years after the creative industries and film were first targeted for intervention in the GIF and so it was anticipated that the fieldwork would capture this moment of transition. For the ‘details’, in an ANT sense, of what was uncovered, however, the reader will have to wait until Chapters 4 to 6.

Conclusion

Having traced the way this thesis project developed from being firmly rooted within existing explanations for the prioritisation of the creative industries within economic development, we arrive at the conclusion of this chapter at an ANT study of the film

⁵ All monetary amounts are in New Zealand dollars unless otherwise stated.

⁶ 40 million dollars was specifically set aside for this purpose in the 2003 budget and annually thereafter (Cullen 2003). However, it was also stated that should claims under the grant scheme exceed this apportionment, the government would make additional funds available to honour them.

industry and economic development in Aotearoa/New Zealand. The use of ANT denotes a concern with providing a detailed description of how this specific political project was made and stabilised. It is entirely possible that the description that emerges from our ANT-informed explorations shares many similarities with the existing accounts. The use of ANT is not a rejection of the substantive content of the existing explanations, but rather an attempt to remain open to the possibility that there might also be other kinds of relationships between a given locality, travelling policy discourses, and processes of economic and political reorganisation.

Chapter 3:

Methodology and Method

[I]t is always felt that description is too particular, too idiosyncratic, too localized. But, contrary to the scholastic verb, there is science only of the particular. If connections are established between sites, it should be done through more descriptions, not by suddenly taking a free ride through all-terrain entities like Society, Capitalism, Empire, Norms, Individualism, Fields, and so on. A good text should trigger in a reader this reaction: “Please more details, I want more details.” God is in the details, and so is everything else – including the Devil.

(Latour, 2005:137)

From ANT we have learned that if the social is not a fixed state of affairs but rather the product of connections between heterogenous elements that are momentarily stabilised into actor-networks, then we can no longer invoke ontological categories, such as ‘society’ or ‘capitalism’, as explanations without showing the way these are themselves materially constituted in and through such networks. The goal of sociology becomes the tracing of connections, and a good sociological account is one that sets out to describe a particular socio-technical arrangement. This begs the question of how, in practice, we go about ‘tracing connections’ and ‘describing’. The ANT literature is replete with detailed ethnographies and in many ways is a good guide for the novice sociologist of associations. I also, however, looked elsewhere for clues and found Marcus’ (1995; 1998) writings on multi-sited ethnography particularly useful. This chapter provides an account of how I drew on these and other writings to do a ‘sociology of associations’ in the context of my case, the film industry and economic development in Aotearoa/New Zealand.

Doing a Sociology of Associations

[A]lthough we often in writing up our results talk blandly of our samples or our case studies, letting the reader assume that the particular industry, location, site, and respondents were the optimal or ideal for investigating the particular issue in which we were interested, we all know that the “reality” – if I can use that old modernist term – is a lot messier.

(McDowell, 1998:2135)

Alongside the commitment to a ‘sociology of associations’, I was also guided in this chapter by another consideration: a commitment to making explicit the messiness that McDowell (1998) identifies as characteristic of research in practice. My discussion of method here is, therefore, necessarily reflexive. It is punctuated throughout by the way contingency, ‘failure’, and chance shaped the trajectory of my case study. That said, we will now start at the beginning when mess was still far from my mind.

The emphasis on the ‘particular’ and ‘description’ means that ANT is a mode of situated inquiry and suited to the case study method (Latour, 2005). The early works in science studies, out of which ANT developed, were often detailed ethnographies of laboratories (see for example, Latour, 1987; Latour, 1988; Latour & Woolgar, 1986). Laboratories, as we saw in the introductory chapter, had often been ‘black-boxed’ and the aim of these ‘microstudies’, as Latour (1983:141) termed them, was to ‘penetrate these black boxes ... [in order] to get firsthand observations of the daily activity of scientists.’ This did not mean, however, that the analyst of laboratory practices was confined to the *inside* of the laboratory or, indeed, to the microscale. By tracing associations, these studies showed that what occurs inside the laboratory is always already about the outside. Latour (1983:168), for example, argued that we can come to regard the laboratory as ‘just a moment in a series of displacements that makes a complete shambles out of the inside/outside and the macro/micro dichotomies.’

Aside from disrupting the dichotomy between the ‘micro’ and ‘macro’, the early laboratory studies and subsequent work, such as Callon’s (1986) study of the fishermen and scallops at St Brieuc Bay, were also characterised by two further elements that follow logically from the ontological assertions that underpin ANT. The first is a focus on materiality, as suggested in Chapter 2. In the case of Latour’s (1983; 1988) study of Pasteur, for example, this was evident in the emphasis placed on the role of writing devices in the construction of ‘the scientific fact’. The second feature of these studies is an explicit willingness to be surprised by the object of study. For Callon (1986), this was achieved in part through the principle of ‘free association’, which exhorts the researcher to avoid assuming *a priori* the

existence of particular relationships, alliances, or associations. In the case of the fishermen and scallops of St Brieuc Bay, this principle ‘made it possible to follow all the variations which affected the alliances’ (Callon, 1986:222):

Not only was the identity of scallops or the fishermen and the representatives of their intermediaries or spokesmen (anchored larvae, professional delegates, etc.) allowed to fluctuate, but the unpredictable relationships between these different entities were also allowed to take their course.

These characteristics of ANT studies resonated with an ethnographic approach that I had become familiar with in a previous research project on the designer fashion industry of Aotearoa/New Zealand. In that project I had drawn on Marcus’ (1995; 1998) writings on multi-sited ethnography. The multi-sited ethnography approach shares with ANT a focus on disrupting the dichotomous constructions of the relation between the micro and macro, with Marcus (1995:95) stating that multi-sited ethnography is first and foremost concerned with:

mov[ing] out from the single sites and local situations of conventional ethnographic research designs to examine the circulation of cultural meanings, objects, and identities in diffuse time-space.

Marcus (1995:106) proposes a number of ‘tracking strategies’ to guide the construction of the ‘field’ in such an ethnography: a researcher may, for example, choose to ‘follow the people’, ‘follow the thing’, ‘follow the metaphor’ or adopt any of these strategies in concert when tracing connections beyond the initial entry point(s) to the field. In this sense, we see that multi-sited ethnography is also concerned with the tracing of connections and, through its attention to ‘things’, with materiality. Marcus’ (1995; 1998) writings, thus, seemed to provide a very concrete way of ‘operationalising’ ANT.

The use of ethnography was important also for a more practical reason. Government agencies, like many other organisations and institutions, are, as Barry (2001:23) has argued, ‘experts in the presentation of self’:

[T]hey have developed elaborate technologies for dealing with the problem of self-presentation: reports, press releases, mission statements, policy documents, brand names, scientific papers.

This has implications for method. It suggests that textual analysis of policy documents, media releases, and consultancy reports would not be sufficient to gain an understanding of the political project that emerged around the film industry and economic development in Aotearoa/New Zealand. In fact, in later chapters we see that there can often be a marked divergence between such texts and practices. This makes clear that there are limits to the effectivity of texts and that a focus on practices and materiality is essential if we are to understand how a political project is, in ANT terms, made and stabilised. Ethnography presented itself as the ideal method, then, because it provides the researcher with a means to 'get at' practices. As such, it enables the research to gain an insight into the 'internal messiness of a[n] organisation' and be attentive to (Barry, 2001:23):

the ways in which institutions contain elements which are not part of their self conceptions; [and] to the relations between public presentations and other practices.

Once committed to an ethnographic approach, I started to plan my fieldwork by mapping out three entry points to the field: film and national library archives; observation at Film NZ, which is a quasi-governmental film promotion office; and finally, interviews with a range of stakeholder organisations. I was intent on doing a 'proper' ethnography and saw the observation phase at Film NZ as an essential part of my method. I felt that it was the data from these observations that would enable me to make claims about economic development at the level of practice and materiality.

However, upon arriving in Wellington, this neat schema was soon disrupted. It quickly became apparent that access for ethnographic observation was going to be a significant issue, despite the fact that initial conversations with Film NZ and other key individuals in local, regional, and national economic development agencies revealed a general willingness to participate in the project. This more general openness to the research was undoubtedly shaped by what Ward and Jones (1999:303) have termed 'political-temporal contingency'. I

began my fieldwork at a time when the film industry had been at the top of the economic development agenda for several years and there appeared to be a widespread sense that if film was to remain a priority it needed to generate evidence of its economic impact and value. As such, I believe that my research came to be viewed in some quarters as performing a similar function to the plethora of consultancy reports that had been commissioned by government agencies in the preceding few years and that it was for this reason that many of the 'elites' I contacted were more than happy to be interviewed.

Whatever the explanation for this general willingness to participate, there was also a profound anxiety in the film promotion offices around anything that – no matter how seemingly small or insignificant – might not fit with the expectations of the international film producers and location scouts that constituted their clientele. It was clear that 'observation' was seen by Film NZ and other similar agencies as a threat to their professional relationships. Repeated approaches over several months to gain even very limited access to internal meetings were denied even though the same organisations continued to be of considerable assistance in other ways, including by providing me with access to internal documents.

Unsuccessful in my attempts to secure access for observation, I was forced to rethink how I would 'get at' the level of practices and materiality given that this was so central to my project. It was at this point that I first came across McDowell's (1998) piece on the messiness of research in practice. She recounts a similar experience in her study of workplace cultures in the City of London. Having tried without success to negotiate access for participant-observation with merchant banks, McDowell (1998) gives up on the 'proper' ethnography and conducts in-depth, semi-structured interviews instead. She argues that while these were not the ideal method for investigating her research questions, it was preferable to abandoning the research altogether. I decided to take a similar approach and began to experiment with interviews as a means of generating information on the practices of economic development around the film industry and wider creative industries. After conducting and analysing five of these 'experimental' interviews, I could see that the interviews were enabling me to obtain an insight into the concrete ways in which the

political project around the film industry and wider creative industries was being made and stabilised. I was, for example, able to obtain descriptions of how a particular policy document had been made, even if I could not observe it firsthand.

I decided, therefore, to proceed without significantly altering my research question. For me, this raised an important question about the status of practices in my account, namely: if we treat interviews as discourse, how is it possible to extract information about practices as to do so would require the researcher to treat the interview as a (more or less) truthful account? The answer to this question had to be pragmatic. I could not assume the interview accounts to be unproblematic representations of practice, but rather had to draw on a variety of other clues and strategies to determine their validity. Such clues included, for example, the context in which a particular assertion was made, the positionality of the interviewee, or the agenda(s) being pursued. Strategies, on the other hand, included the use of secondary sources or other interview subjects to triangulate accounts of practice. Aside from these clues and strategies, there was also another way in which the interviews could be read for practices. If we consider that the political project around the film industry and creative industries was still in the process of being made, then in some instances the interviews were also part of that process and so could be analysed as practice in and of themselves. Together these pragmatic justifications for being able to extract practices from interviews, of course, do not solve the problem. They simply mitigate it and, as such, meant that I had to retain an awareness of the limits of my data.

After restructuring my project in this way to be based around interviews as opposed to observation, I still remained committed to the tracing of associations and connections. The tracing now, however, had to occur principally within and between texts and interviews rather than *in situ*. The strategies suggested by Marcus (1995; 1998) continued to prove very useful as I set out to do this ‘tracing work’. In the remainder of the chapter, I discuss how I traced connections outward from four initial entry points to the field: contemporary policy, government, and industry documents; archives and libraries; interviews with policymakers, practitioners, and politicians; and finally, interviews with industrial and non-governmental actors.

First Entry Point: Contemporary Policy, Government, and Industry Documents

My first entry into the 'field' was primarily virtual in that it took place mainly in cyberspace before I left London. My fieldwork began with an exploration of the way in which the film industry and creative industries were being discussed in contemporary policy, government, and industry documents in Aotearoa/New Zealand. I was guided in this exploration by the tracking strategy Marcus (1995:106) has termed 'following the metaphor', where this is understood as the tracing of a 'thing' that is 'within the realm of discourse and modes of thought'.

To put this strategy into practice, I began by compiling a comprehensive list of government and non-governmental organisations with responsibilities for film and the creative industries in Aotearoa/New Zealand. I then proceeded to visit the websites of these organisations and download relevant documents for analysis. It was at this point that I started to trace particular discursive objects to sites beyond the initial entry point. The discursive objects I was tracing were primarily: 'film industry', 'creative industries', 'the arts', 'culture', and 'economic development'. The tracing of these discursive objects took a number of forms. In some cases, it was a matter of tracing connections from one document to another document in a different national or geographical context. For example, many of the government publications made references to models of intervention in other national or sub-national contexts and so I would seek to locate these source documents and, if appropriate, trace the way in which the discursive object had travelled across space-time. In other cases, it was primarily a tracing along the time-axis. For example, an industry publication might make reference to an earlier document that I would then try to locate. This tracing along the time-axis also informed my archival and library research, which I discuss in more detail below, as some of the older documents had to be physically retrieved because they were either not available online or could not be directly requested from the authoring organisation.

Concurrently with searching for documents directly on the websites of film- and creative industries-related organisations, I examined media reports for pointers to any documents

that might not have been made publicly available. I conducted a detailed search for articles with the keywords 'film industry' and 'creative industries' on *NewsTEXT*, which is a full-text Aotearoa/New Zealand news database that covers most of the daily newspapers and current affairs magazines. In addition, I also searched the online archive of the main industry magazine, *On Film*. The media report searches proved to be very fruitful as they alerted me to the existence of several cabinet papers on tax incentives and the economic impact of the *Lord of the Rings* productions. I was then able to request the release of these documents under the provisions of the Official Information Act.

I also continued to build my corpus of contemporary documents once I was physically in the field. Many of the interview subjects who were affiliated to government or industry bodies provided me with access to internal documents or other publications that I had not been aware of. It is interesting to note though that the tracing between people and documents often went in both directions. That is to say, I selected a number of my interview participants because they had either authored or been mentioned in one of the publications or documents I had located. Marcus' (1995:106) strategy of 'following the metaphor', thus, often came to be complemented by another of his strategies, 'following the people'.

Second Entry Point: Archives and Libraries

The archival and library work represented my first physical entry into the field and commenced shortly after I arrived in New Zealand in April 2005. My goal here was to extend the corpus of documents I had collected through my cyberspace explorations by using archival and library resources to trace historical shifts in the way that film and the film industry were incorporated into government policies and initiatives.⁷ In order to make connections between documents and materials I was, as above, again 'following the metaphor' (Marcus, 1995:106).

⁷ As this was primarily historical research, the more recent 'creative industries' concept was not a feature of this phase.

I began my archival and library explorations in Wellington at the National Library of New Zealand (NLNZ) and the Alexander Turnbull Library, which is a more specialised documentary archive within the NLNZ. Combined, the NLNZ and Alexander Turnbull Library collections hold most official government publications. My journey into the NLNZ and Alexander Turnbull collections commenced with the obvious: I retrieved legislation pertaining to the film industry, such as the Film Commission Act; examined the parliamentary debates surrounding the enactment of these pieces of legislation; scanned the annual reports of Ministries and government agencies with responsibilities in the areas of arts, culture, and economy for any mentions of film;⁸ and located working party reports that had been mentioned in the secondary literature. This first foray into the archives and library revealed the existence of a number of working party and select committee reports that proved to be very useful, including several around the establishment of the Interim Film Commission in 1978 and the National Film Unit (NFU) in 1941. Having located these and the ‘obvious’ documents, I felt that I had built up a comprehensive collection of official publications pertaining to the history of film in Aotearoa/New Zealand.

At this point I was also, however, starting to feel somewhat frustrated with the historical materials I had collected. I was reminded of the two common dangers Harris (2001) identifies for the archival researcher. According to Harris (2001:331), the archival researcher often either gets too immersed in the archives – that is, the archives ‘swallow the researcher’ and he/she collects a vast amount of materials but without a clear sense of direction or purpose – or, at the other extreme, he/she enters the archives too focused and only examines that which supports a preconceived idea, theory, or plan for the research. My forays into the archives and documents up to this point had fallen into the latter trap. I felt a distinct need to do more of what Harris (2001:331-2) terms ‘highly contextualized wallowing’, where one enters the archives with a theoretically and practically informed ‘game plan’ but recognises that archival scholarship is an ‘ongoing, evolving interaction between the scholar and the voices of the past embedded in the documents.’ Aside from a sense of having been too goal-directed, my frustration was also, I believe, rooted in the

⁸ During the timespan I was examining, several of these Ministries actually changed names. For the sake of concision, I refer simply here then to Ministries with responsibilities in the areas of art, culture, or economic development.

nature of the materials I had collected. The materials were too 'neat' and 'polished'. I found it difficult to see traces of how specific political projects had come into being and stabilised. It seemed to me that by the time the 'voices of the past' had, in a sense, been 'disciplined' into the particular format required of the official publication – be it a piece of legislation or working party report – much of the complexity of the debates had been 'written out' or smoothed over. I wanted materials that were less 'processed' and with this in mind approached the New Zealand Film Archive.

The New Zealand Film Archive is an independent charity that was established in 1981 to collect and preserve Aotearoa/New Zealand film history (New Zealand Film Archive, 2006). Prior to its inception, there had been no central organisation that collected film-related documents or artefacts and so when the archive was first established it had to build its collection through appeals to the public and film-related institutions. Understandably, therefore, the parts of the collection which pertain to the beginnings of film production and film regulation in Aotearoa/New Zealand are very piecemeal and patchy. The Archive has, however, enjoyed considerable support from the New Zealand Film Commission, and so has in its collection a vast array of documents dating to the first meeting of the Interim Film Commission in 1978. I did most of my 'contextualized wallowing' in these Film Commission documents, which included detailed meeting minutes, strategy and planning documents, and correspondence with government departments, industry bodies, overseas Film Commissions, and funding applicants. In the case of documents from the early years of the Film Commission, there were sometimes several draft versions of a particular document in the collection. By tracing what came to be included, excluded, emphasised, or downplayed I was able to begin to build a picture of the competing interests, tensions, and debates which shaped the development of the Film Commission. It is also worth noting that while I was at the Film Archive the document collection was in the process of being catalogued. This meant that things were not as ordered as they might otherwise have been and so on occasion I serendipitously came across a very useful file or folder that I might not have known to ask or look for.

By the time I finished my work at the Film Archive, I had detailed notes and a mountain of photocopied material on the Film Commission, the National Film Unit, key companies and individuals, and stakeholder organisations. Along with the material collected in the ‘virtual’ phase of the research, I analysed this using thematic coding, as discussed in more depth later in the chapter.

Third Entry Point: Interviews with Policymakers, Practitioners, and Politicians

I conducted my first interviews with what might be termed ‘elites’ – senior policymakers, economic development practitioners, and politicians – in May 2005. As discussed earlier, the decision to interview was initially a pragmatic one that grew out of an inability to secure access to a site for ethnographic observation. That said, there is a body of work, particularly in the field of economic geography, that attests to the utility of the semi-structured interview in studies of institutions and local government (see for example the seminal work of Schoenberger, 1991) and there were indeed advantages that interviewing afforded me over observation, which I will come to later.

The five ‘experimental’ interviews I conducted when trying to reformulate my method took place in Wellington. The participants were individuals that I had identified either because they occupied a particular public office (e.g., the Mayor), were known to me from the documentary analysis (e.g., a senior tax policy official at Inland Revenue), or worked on film or creative industries within a local, regional, or national economic development agency. I had read many cautionary tales on the subject of interviewing elites and was concerned that, despite the enthusiasm for the research among those I had already informally spoken to, there might still be access issues when trying to schedule interviews (see for example, Cormode & Hughes, 1999; England, 2002; Goodrum, 2002; Hert & Imber, 1995; Hughes & Cormode, 1998; McDowell, 1998). However, these concerns turned out to be unfounded. I had made the initial approach to all but the Mayor via an email introducing myself and providing a brief description of the research. Within days, I had received email responses agreeing to an interview from all but one of those I had approach. I followed up the fourth individual, who had not yet responded, with a phone call. He was most apologetic for not having replied to the email, citing a hectic work

schedule, and agreed immediately to be interviewed. In the case of the Mayor, I had sent a letter on London School of Economics letterhead requesting an interview and was pleasantly surprised when, within a week of posting, I was contacted by the Mayor's Personal Assistant to schedule an interview.

The focus in my project on materiality and practices meant that I was interested in asking these participants very 'concrete' questions about their everyday activities. That is, I wanted to ask them about what they do in a typical week or the specifics of a policy process, such as how a creative industries strategy document or cabinet proposal was put together. Right from the outset, I found that participants were initially surprised by this sort of questioning and would revert back to a more 'macro' analysis of either film or creative industries, often adding that the minutiae of their daily work could not possibly be of interest or use to me. Persistent questioning and reassurance that such information really was very helpful and interesting did, however, usually mean that the participant eventually talked about their work in very material ways and at the level of concrete practices. It was at this point that I was able to get insight into the way actors used particular knowledges, devices, tools, and formats to 'do politics' around the film industry and the creative industries. Given the wariness of these 'concrete' questions, however, I usually started interviews with a question about the macro-level, such as a participants' general opinion on the way the government was supporting the film industry within economic development initiatives, and used this to build rapport before moving onto the questions about the everyday. Beyond building rapport, this movement between macro- and micro-levels also provided rich material for analysing how differences and conflicts between these levels are explained away or rationalised.

Having seen through the five experimental interviews that in-depth, semi-structured interviewing could generate useful data, I proceeded to draw up a map of potential interview subjects. It was at this point that one of the advantages of interviewing vis-à-vis ethnographic observation became readily apparent. Semi-structured interviewing meant that, although I could not achieve the depth of a 'proper ethnography', I was able to gain insight into the practices of a wider range of actors involved in the political projects around

film and the creative industries. I initially drew up a map of potential interview subjects based on the earlier documentary analysis and on my knowledge of local, regional and national government. This initial map comprised about fifteen individuals, ranging from senior policy officials to Ministers and ‘practitioners’, such as regional film office workers.⁹

In making contact with potential participants beyond the initial experimental interviews, I was again struck by how willing people were to participate. Only one request for an interview was turned down and that was by the Prime Minister. In part the ease with which I was able to obtain access to these elite subjects can be explained, as I noted earlier, by political-temporal contingency. However, a further factor I believe was my affiliation with a well-known and highly-respected educational institution. Most of the participants had heard of the London School of Economics and would ask me about how I had come to study there, some even making comments such as ‘it must be a very good place to be’ (Fieldnote, 8 June 2005). McDowell (1998) made a similar observation in her study of workplace cultures in the City of London, noting that her post at an elite institution – she was at Cambridge at the time – opened doors for her when requesting interviews at several of the merchant banks. Finally, the ease with which I gained access to elite participants was no doubt also in part a product of my decision to offer anonymity to most of my participants. I had decided this from the outset in order to encourage honest and frank discussions. The option of anonymity was only withheld in cases where a person was readily identifiable by virtue of their position and where that position was actually required to contextualise the information they had provided (e.g., Mayors, Ministers).

Although securing interview subjects did not turn out to be a problem, several of the other issues discussed in the literature on researching elites did arise. I struggled most – and this is actually related to access – with how to (re)present the research and my own stance in relation to it (Cochrane, 1998; England, 2002; McDowell, 1998; Sabot, 1999). In Chapter 2 I stated that one of the reasons I was interested in studying the film industry was because of

⁹ The number of participants kept growing in the course of my research as interviewees would suggest others that I ‘really must interview’. In the end, across all the strands of my research I conducted 58 interviews.

its political significance in Aotearoa/New Zealand at the present moment. I wanted my research to make a 'worthwhile' contribution to the conversation about the role of the film industry, and creative industries more generally, within economic development. By 'worthwhile', I meant a contribution that would be in the interests of social justice. I was aware that in order to make such a contribution I might be required to adopt a critical stance vis-à-vis some of the elite research participants. Being upfront about this would, however, probably have meant that few, if any, of the elite subjects would have consented to participating. As Cochrane (1998:2124) has noted specifically in relation to interviewing elites:

The negotiation of access is particularly problematic – the researcher begins to put on a different skin right from the start – “critical” researchers are forced to present themselves as somehow respectable, in some sense “sympathetic” to those being interviewed.

If we accept, as most critical social scientists now do, that it is not reasonable to expect complete transparency when researching elites then the question becomes one of how much 'gloss' or 'deception' is acceptable (Cochrane, 1998; McDowell, 1998; Nast, 1994). This question of what is 'acceptable' has both ethical and practical dimensions. Ethically, it is a question of how much deception of individual participants can be justified in the interests of a particular social justice agenda. Practically, it centres on the dangers of being 'found' out and, consequently, being seen to have betrayed the trust that had developed with these participants. Bearing both the ethical and practical dimensions in mind, I tried to be as transparent as a particular context allowed while acknowledging at the same time that it was important for me to also be consistent in the way I (re)presented myself and the research if I was to avoid being 'unmasked' as a 'critical' researcher. For most of the interviews with elites, this meant representing my research as an 'objective' study of what works and doesn't work in terms of film-related economic development strategies. On occasion, as in a particularly frank interview with a senior policy official who was expressing scepticism about the current direction of economic development strategies around the creative industries, I was able to be more open about the fact that I shared some of his concerns. In direct contrast, however, there were also times when even the

'objective' frame was considered too sensitive. For example, when about fifteen minutes into the interview with the Associate Minister for Arts, Culture, and Heritage I posed a question that might get at possible negative aspects of the government's strategy, I was made aware by changes in tone, body language, and by a very clipped response that the friendly and open rapport which had characterised the interview up to this point would not continue if critical questions were posed (Fieldnote, 8 June 2005).

The example from the interview with the Associate Minister also points to another issue that is often highlighted in the literature on researching elites, namely how unequal power relations between the researcher and 'elite' participant shape what occurs in the interview setting. As a young, female graduate student I was usually in a subordinate position relative to my participants, who were not only in very senior positions but often also twenty or thirty years older. As England (2002) has noted, this can mean that the content or tone of the interview may be controlled or dictated by the participant. This was certainly the case in several of the interviews where, as in the interview with the Associate Minister, particular subject areas were deemed off-limits. In other instances, I sensed that some quite deliberate power games were being played to make me aware of my junior position. Interestingly, these sort of power games were particularly evident in the interviews with senior women. In the case of one such interview I recorded in my fieldnotes (27 June 2005): 'I can't quite put my finger on what was occurring in the interview, but I feel as though I have been bullied.' Reading the transcript and listening to the interview again, I could see that one of the ways this participant performed her more senior position was by not allowing me to finish sentences. In some cases, she would contradict me before it was even clear what I was going to say, as in this example:

E: To play devil's advocate, the high profile films that we've seen – *King Kong*,
The Lord of the Rings –

P: To be absolutely clear, those films were absolutely driven by Peter Jackson.
They were not here –

E: That's the point I was going to make –

P: Now *Samurai* and *Lion Witch* were different.

E: Yeah. That was sort of the point I was going to make there. You know, you've had those two high profile films that came here and the role that the incentive played in those is kind of questionable –

P: Which two are you talking about?

The conduct of participant P during the interview undermined my confidence and intimidated me. As such, I felt that it influenced the kind of questions I felt comfortable asking and also the information that I was able to obtain from that interview. In other cases, however, my putative powerlessness also worked to my advantage as it meant that I was not perceived as a threat by my participants. Some participants were probably considerably less guarded in my presence than they would have been in the presence of a senior academic. Moreover, I always prepared myself meticulously for the interviews with elite participants in an effort to 'empower' myself and mitigate the impact of any power differential. I would usually spend at least a day preparing a personalised set of interview questions and reading background materials on the individual or organisation.

I do not mean to imply through this discussion of power relations in the interview setting that the interviews with elite participants were fraught with tensions or defined by power games. Often the relationship was friendly and cordial. Many of the participants were extremely helpful. Some spent up to two hours talking to me and introduced me to further participants, while others quite literally filled up my email inbox with internal planning or evaluation documents. This generosity raised questions about reciprocity as there was often an unspoken – and at times explicitly articulated – sense that I was being given this assistance because the participant wanted to contribute to a research project that they thought was not only worthwhile, but might also be of benefit to them in their work. Most often this 'benefit' was articulated in terms of justifying in some way the place of the film industry within economic development initiatives. This expectation of reciprocity troubled me then because, as noted above, I was aware that a meaningful contribution to the conversation about film might require me to take up a stance in opposition to some of these participants. This is a dilemma that Duncan and Duncan (2001:404) also confronted in their research on housing and heritage in Bedford, New York:

The issue of our obligations to informants and to notions of social justice are complex. Although we have tried to be empathetic, even sympathetic, to our informants, we have found often that notions of social justice have moved us to an adversarial stance.

Specifically, the news searches in the first strand of the research had alerted me to several sites of contest, where particularly domestic filmmakers and unions were questioning the direction of government economic policy around the film industry. I thought from my initial reading of the arguments put forward by domestic filmmakers and union representatives that my allegiances might lie more with these actors, who constituted the fourth entry point to the field, than with the politicians and policymakers I had already interviewed. After providing details of this fourth entry point, we will come to a discussion in the section on 'Data Analysis and Writing Up' about how one makes decisions when faced with competing agendas.

Fourth Entry Point: Interviews with Industrial and Non-Governmental Actors

The aim of the interviews with industrial and non-governmental actors was two-fold. On the one hand, it was to get a fuller sense of the way in which government policies and initiatives were subject to contest by stakeholder bodies and those in the domestic industry more generally. That is, the aim was to flesh out the insights that had already been obtained from the news searches. On the other hand, it was also about how some of these actors had been incorporated into governmental processes and, therefore, had become involved in the making and stabilisation of the film and creative industries project within economic development. This second element was particularly important because the mantra of partnership between government and industry had become well established in Aotearoa/New Zealand. In the case of the film industry, this was evidenced most explicitly in the establishment of the Screen Production Industry Taskforce (SPIT), a working party of select industry figures who were charged with preparing a report on how the government could best support growth in the screen sector, and later by the establishment of the Screen Council, an 'industry' body set up with government funding to implement the recommendations of the Taskforce.

I began my research at this entry point in the early stages of fieldwork during May and June 2005 by first making contact via email and then arranging interviews with various industry organisations. The organisations I contacted at this time ranged from the producers' association to diverse film industry unions and guilds and the representative organisations of Maori and women in the film industry. I was mindful to include these organisations early in to the fieldwork so that they could be involved in shaping the research agenda. To this end, I stated in my initial email that the interviews were as much about 'finding out what kinds of issues might usefully be covered by the research' as it was about 'collecting information' (on the importance of early consultation with stakeholders, see England, 1994). These organisations in the main responded enthusiastically and the interviews, in addition to providing concrete examples of how film and the creative industries have become the subject of political projects within economic development, raised a number of issues that informed the content of the interviews with elite participants as well as the way I 'read' documents.

The contact with stakeholder organisations also informed the selection of participants from industry. With the help of these organisations, I initially selected ten individuals from industry who had been involved in government processes or initiative, such as the SPIT or the Screen Council. I tried to be 'purposeful' in the way I sampled, ensuring that I included individuals from a variety of backgrounds – small and large companies, Maori and Pakeha, more and less 'commercial' filmmakers, men and women, established and new generation – so as to 'get at' how experiences of, and involvement in, these processes may be differentiated by social location. The interviews here, again, were conducted with assurances of anonymity and operated at two levels: firstly, at the 'concrete' level of materiality and practices and, secondly, at the macro-level of policy and strategy.

After several of these interviews I became aware of a silence in my research. One of the industry participants recounted how she had been on the original Taskforce but was not subsequently invited to sit on the board of the Screen Council, which was essentially its institutional successor body. She believed that this was because she had taken a critical

stance and pointed to several other ‘critical voices’ on the Taskforce who had also not been asked to sit on the board of the Screen Council (Interview, Participant RS). The experience of this participant brought home to me a point that now seems obvious, namely that valuable insights into the making and stabilisation of a political project are afforded not only to those who are *included* in government processes but also to those who are *excluded* from them. I was able to identify two groups that had been marginalised or excluded: outspoken industry figures and workers in the industry. The decision to include these ‘excluded’ figures did not mean a break with the ANT call to ‘follow the actors’. On the contrary, it was often through a process of following the main actors that this final set of participants was identified as practices of exclusion leave traces in much the same way that efforts to include actors do. The case of the industry figure who was not asked to carry on from the Taskforce to the Screen Council vividly illustrates this point.

I recruited participants for this final stream in a number of ways, cognisant all the time that because of the highly networked nature of the film industry it was especially important to ensure anonymity. I identified outspoken industry figures mainly through documentary analysis. Some were quoted in media reports or had made open submissions to government consultations. To contact workers, on the other hand, I used the *Databook*, which is a directory of companies and individuals in the Aotearoa/New Zealand screen production industry. I selected ten individuals from the *Databook*, carefully selecting for a variety of different roles – Art Director to grip – and across a number of different types of productions – the *Lord of the Rings* trilogy to small domestic features. I again made my initial approaches via email but found that I received very few responses from the workers. When I followed up the emails with phone calls, there was often a noticeable wariness about participating in the research. Some of the workers were concerned about negative consequences if others ‘found out’ that they had been speaking to me, while others simply said that it would ‘do no good anyway’ (Fieldnote, 11 July 2005). I found myself trying to convince these individuals that the research was ‘useful’ while at the same time feeling, much like Hubbard (1999:232) in his research with sex workers, that I was unable to provide any kind of promise or assurance that the research would lead to an improvement in their situations. Eventually, however, I was able to recruit ten ‘workers’ and the

interviews proved very valuable. These accounts, combined with the experiences of trying to recruit these workers, heightened my sense of needing to produce ‘useful’ knowledges. As such, this became an important consideration in the course of data analysis and writing up.

Data Analysis and Writing Up

By the end of my formal fieldwork period in September 2005, I had assembled a large collection of materials which I came to regard much like an ‘archive’. This archive contained the notes, printouts, and photocopies from the first two strands of the research, the verbatim transcripts of what amounted to 58 interviews, and two journals filled with my own thoughts and responses to the field. The sheer volume of data posed a very significant question: how do you proceed to analyse such an archive in any kind of systematic way? I decided to use the qualitative data analysis software, AtlasTi, to assist with coding. The act of coding was an iterative process. I usually began by assembling a fairly coherent set of materials – for example, all the interviews with policymakers – that I could then code in very general terms. This first ‘rough’ coding was followed by several re-readings in order to construct more and more specific codes. Where textual sources were in electronic format I would follow the same process, while for non-electronic documents I reverted to more traditional tools, using multi-coloured post-it notes and pens. In constructing my codes I tried to be aware at all times that my goal, following ANT, was *description*. I was conscious, therefore, of the need to avoid simply translating the words and texts in my archive into some kind of meta-language. For, as Latour (2005:49) puts it:

We have to resist pretending that actors have only a language while the analyst possesses the *meta*-language in which the first is “embedded”... [A]nalysts are allowed to possess only some *infra*-language whose role is simply to help them become attentive to the actors’ own fully developed meta-language, a reflexive account of what they are saying. In most cases, social explanations are simply a superfluous addition that, instead of revealing the forces behind what is said, dissimulates what has been said.

Once I was satisfied with my coding of the various subsets of materials, I would bring these into relation with each other. This step served two purposes. Most immediately, it provided

another opportunity to triangulate data. More importantly, however, it allowed me to gain a better understanding of the relation between different actors, objects, devices, and strategies. As such, it enabled me to begin crafting my description of the contests, techniques, struggles, devices, and alliances that had been mobilised in the attempts to constitute and stabilise film and the creative industries as a political project within economic development.

The description I have just given of the way I conducted my data analysis could be said to be somewhat disembodied, perhaps even giving the reader the impression that themes ‘just emerge’ from the data in some sort of ‘objective’ fashion. Of course, as McDowell (1998) reminds us, there is nothing ‘objective’ about what comes to be extracted from hours of tape, transcripts, or documentary materials. The researcher, conditioned by his or her positionality, biases, and agendas, decides what comes to be heard and what is silenced. The same can be said for the act of writing. As Barnes and Duncan (1992:3) point out, ‘[W]hen we “tell it like it is”, we are also “telling it like we are”.’ This, then, raises an important question about how we deal with our embeddedness in the world and the impact that this has on analysis and writing. This is a question that becomes all the more important if we acknowledge the performativity of writing and, more generally, of the social sciences. That is, if we acknowledge, as Mol and Law (2002:19) suggest we do, that:

Knowing, the words of knowing, and texts do not describe a pre-existing world. They are rather part of a practice of handling, intervening in, the world and thereby of enacting one of its versions.

Such performativity, in turn, poses the following question: how do we make a decision about what kind of version of the world we should ‘enact’ in our account? I want to argue that the answer to this question has to derive from an analysis of the way power is exercised in our research context and that Flyvbjerg’s (2001) *phronetic* research approach might give us some guidance as to how we go about producing such an analysis.

Flyvbjerg (2001) begins his articulation of the *phronetic* research approach by returning to Aristotle’s three virtues; episteme, phronesis, and techne. He argues that the virtue of

episteme, which is concerned with the production of universal, context-independent knowledges, most closely approximates the goal of the natural sciences and that the social sciences have been wrong to strive for this virtue. The social sciences should instead, Flyvbjerg (2001:57) argues, be defined by *phronesis*, which is first and foremost concerned with the production of ‘pragmatic, variable, and context-dependent’ knowledges and a commitment to ‘deliberation about values with reference to praxis’. The phronetic approach, thus, seeks to rehabilitate value-rationality as it calls on social scientists to ‘carry out analyses and interpretations of the status of values and interests in society aimed at social commentary and social action’ (Flyvbjerg, 2001:60). For Flyvbjerg (2001:131), this means that at the core of phronetic social science research is an engagement with the following four questions:

- 1) Where are we going?
- 2) Who gains and who loses?
- 3) Is it desirable?
- 4) What should be done?

It is important to note that it is not a recourse to judgements based on universalist values that is intended here, but rather a situational ethic. Flyvbjerg (2001:130) argues that the task of the phronetic researcher is to take an attitude ‘based on a common view among a specific reference group to which the research refer[s]’. Value-judgements, in this sense, should be the product of a dialogical engagement between the researcher and the reference group. The researcher is, therefore, exhorted to get close to their context of study and ‘consciously expose themselves to reactions from their surroundings – both positive and negative’ (Flyvbjerg, 2001:132).

In the course of analysing my data and writing up, I used Flyvbjerg’s approach in several ways. Most immediately, I tried to keep the four phronetic questions in the forefront of my mind so that when deciding what ‘version’ of the world to ‘enact’ I might produce an account of ‘where we are, where we want to go, and what is desirable according to diverse sets of values and interests’ (Flyvbjerg, 2001:176). The emphasis Flyvbjerg (2001) places on allowing this analysis to emerge from the research setting meant that, although I

wanted my writings to make a 'worthwhile' political contribution, I tried not to presume from the outset that certain actors would be 'in the right' simply by virtue of their positionality. Moreover, I tried to work on maintaining the dialogue between participant and researcher that the phronetic approach depends on. Such dialogue is particularly important *after* the interview. One of the ways I maintained this dialogue post-interview was by providing all my participants with a copy of their transcript and asking them whether they wished to make any amendments or add anything further. Furthermore, as I produce written outputs, I am committed to maintaining this practice of engaging with my participants. I will make my research findings available to participants and actively seek their feedback and comment. This dialoguing with a 'polyphony of voices', as Flyvbjerg (2001:139) describes it, serves both a political and methodological purpose. It provides at once a means of contributing to the conversation about the role of film and the creative industries in economic development and also a way of testing the validity of my research findings by testing the research among those that have been 'studied'.

Conclusion

Ethnographers have shown themselves to be willing to employ practically every technique available to the social scientist: sample surveys, informants, census, historical documents, direct participation, firsthand observations, descriptive linguistics, correlation techniques, psychological tests and so forth: "shameless eclecticism" and "methodological opportunism" are defining features of the ethnographer.

(Jackson 1985:169, cited in England, 2002:203)

In being faithful in this chapter to the 'messiness' in my method, I have exposed myself as being guilty of the 'shameless eclecticism' described by Jackson, showing that this is a characteristic also of the 'failed' ethnographer. The substantive chapters that follow are the product of this messiness, eclecticism, and opportunism and I want to conclude, following Law (2004), by suggesting that they are the better for it. Law (2004) argues that messy methods are necessary if we are to describe a world that is complex, variable, and unstable. As he puts it in relation to a disordered painting, 'If this is an awful mess ... then would something less messy make a mess of describing it?' (Law, 2004:1).

Chapter 4:

Cultural, Economic, or Something Else? Filmmaking, and Government, 1896-1990s

We have seen in previous chapters that underpinning many of the existing accounts of the creative industries in economic development is a claim about a shift in the relation between culture and economy. It is suggested in these accounts that the prioritisation of creative industries within economic development is, on the one hand, indicative of the increasing value of culture to the economy and, on the other, representative of an increasing economisation of the cultural (see for example, Galloway & Dunlop, 2007; Scott, 2000a). There is, then, a historical comparison that is being made here and that is worth investigating by considering how the industrial actors that make up the creative industries were understood at various points in time. The aim of this chapter is to provide such a historical account for the Aotearoa/New Zealand case by tracing the political projects that have coalesced around the creative industries subsector that we are examining in this thesis; film. The chapter begins with the arrival of the first films for exhibition in 1896 and continues through to the ‘new moment’ some hundred years later when the film industry is said to be in the process of becoming a priority for economic development.

From these historical explorations, we find that government was not concerned with building a local film industry until the late 1970s and then only as a result of sustained pressure from an emerging domestic film industry and from arts and culture bureaucrats seeking to provide a more inclusive definition of ‘culture’. Prior to this, there had been some government funding of filmmaking but this was always directed at very instrumental ends and was usually located within government departments. Funding was, for example, made available in the first half of the twentieth century for the production of tourism, immigration promotion, and war propaganda films. Here, however, film served simply as the medium, illustrated most starkly when at one point film was replaced by photography. As such, the political projects that involved film at this time were not so much *about film* as they were about making *use of* the technological opportunities afforded by film to achieve

some other ends. During this period, therefore, we do not see film placed explicitly within either an economic or cultural frame: the discussions were in the main about the broader political projects and their purposes rather than about film *per se*.

The scope of political projects in the first half of the twentieth century was limited in large part by a colonial mindset that still saw Aotearoa/New Zealand as part of Empire and by the absence of an active domestic film industry. The emergence in the post-war period of a local industry that set out to explore issues of national identity made possible a marked shift in the types of political projects that could form around film. Most immediately, it meant that for the first time there was a significant lobby for support of the film industry in its own right and, importantly, outside of government departments. By 1978, the momentum generated by this lobby saw the establishment of the New Zealand Film Commission (NZFC), the first institution to be charged with developing a domestic film industry. The rationales that were deployed by the Film Commission lobby and its adherents are of interest to us as it is here that we begin to see culture/economy framings emerge. Most notably, the rationales that were used to argue for support of the domestic industry were neither straightforwardly cultural nor economic, but instead moved back and forth between these poles. It is argued that this movement back and forth tells us something very important about culture/economy and also about our broader question around the making and stabilisation of political projects. Paralleling Slater's (2002b) argument about materiality and the weightless economy, it is suggested that we might regard these shifting rationales as indicative not so much of changes in the nature of the object – that is, the extent to which the film industry is either 'cultural' or 'economic' – but rather as indicative of the conditions that permit this particular object to be stabilised as a political project at any given time.

The Arrival of Film in Aotearoa/New Zealand, 1896-1920s

Within twelve months of the Lumière Brothers moving picture show in Paris, the first public film screening in Aotearoa/New Zealand took place at the Opera House in Auckland on 13 October 1896 (Dennis, 1993; Sowry, 1984). A supplement to the normal evening

programme of the Godfrey Vaudeville Company, the advertisement boasted that subjects to be covered would include (Dennis, 1993:6):

Trains in Full Motion – Sea Bathing – Electric Trams – Merry-go-Round’s –
Dancing Girls – London Streets – and others too numerous to mention.

The screening proved popular, with the *New Zealand Herald* proclaiming the following day that ‘[e]verything moved as though in life: in fact, it was life reproduced. So natural was it that the moving figures on the screen were cheered’ (reprinted in Kaye, 2001). It was not long before other vaudeville venues in towns across Aotearoa/New Zealand began to screen films as part of their regular evening programme and cinema spread to rural areas courtesy of travelling showmen, who moved between small towns on an almost daily basis with a projector and stock of imported films depicting scenes much like those first screened at the Opera House (Churchman, 1997).

It was one of these travelling showmen, A H Whitehouse, who shot and produced Aotearoa/New Zealand’s first films. Whitehouse made two topical films in 1898: *The Opening of the Auckland Exhibition* and a horse-racing film, *Uhlán Winning the Auckland Cup* (Churchman, 1997). He went on to shoot a further ten such films in quick succession and, interestingly for our purposes, wrote to the Colonial Secretary, J. Carrol, in 1899 to request funding to attend the Paris Exhibition which was to take place the following year (Kaye, 2001). Whitehouse noted in his letter to Carrol that he was in possession of ‘the first and only camera in New Zealand for taking animated pictures for the Kinematograph’ and had already filmed ‘three Maori Regatta Scenes at Ngaruawahia, and a scene of the opening of the Auckland Exhibition’ (Whitehouse in Kaye, 2001). Carrol was unconvinced by the merits of Whitehouse’s request and so funding was declined. Whitehouse still attended the exhibition at his own expense and returned with a new projector and films. Although he never made another film after returning from Paris, he became an important film exhibitor, establishing some of the earliest cinemas in Aotearoa/New Zealand.

Despite declining to fund Whitehouse’s trip to the Paris Exhibition, the first government foray into filmmaking occurred only a short while afterwards and took a form that was

illustrative of the very instrumental way in which filmmaking was to be considered by government for the next half century. The Royal Visit by the Duke and Duchess of Cornwall and York in 1901 prompted the government to approach Joseph Perry of the Salvation Army's Biorama company to produce an official record of the visit (Churchman, 1997; Dennis, 1993). Perry shot 3360ft, or about 40 minutes, of film during the visit (Churchman, 1997). It seems that the primary purpose of the film was to provide a historical record, with Perry remarking in a letter to the New Zealand Premier that 'the negatives could be placed among the archives of the history of the state so that at any future period the scenes which took place could be reproduced with the actuality of life and movement' (Perry in Dennis, 1993:6). Although the film was never added to the archives, it was followed by several further government sponsored films that aimed to preserve important events in the historical record (Hillyer, 1997).

A more consistent, but equally instrumental, approach emerges with the appointment in 1907 of James McDonald by the Department of Tourist and Health Resorts as the country's first official 'kinematographer' (Pugsley, 1996). The objective behind McDonald's appointment was also not the support of filmmaking as an end itself, but was instead aligned to broader government objectives. The Department of Tourist and Health Resorts was charged with promoting immigration, attracting industry, and growing tourism – the latter both abroad and within Aotearoa/New Zealand. McDonald's role was to provide films of Aotearoa/New Zealand's scenic and cultural attractions that could be used as publicity material to further these goals. The importance attached to promoting Aotearoa/New Zealand abroad through McDonald's films is evident from a *Dominion* newspaper article reporting on a special screening organised by T E Donne, the head of the Department of Tourism and Health Resorts, in 1907 (reprinted in Pugsley, 1996:28):

At the invitation of Mr T E Donne a Dominion representative was present at a private show of the results that have so far been achieved in depicting those features of our picturesque country that lend themselves to animated photography. Some of these are exceptionally interesting, and if exhibited abroad, should provide a valuable advertisement... The Tourist Department intends sending several series of these views to England and America.

Although not a full time employee, over the subsequent five years McDonald pursued a hectic schedule travelling across New Zealand to record films on a range of subjects. Scenes shot by McDonald during this period included, for example, a Maori poi dance, canoe race, and the departure of Ernest Shackleton on his Antarctic Expedition (Churchman, 1997; Pugsley, 1996). The films were, as had been envisioned from the outset, distributed to the High Commissions in London and Melbourne for promotional use.

Despite the apparent success of McDonald's work, however, his tenure at the Department of Tourist and Health Resorts was far from secure (Pugsley, 1996). He had been appointed originally by T E Donne and, with the departure in 1912 of Donne for a new post at the High Commission in London, McDonald's work at the department also came to an end. McDonald was replaced by a photographer. As a result, film production by the Department of Tourist and Health Resorts all but ceased, with only the occasional film still being shot by McDonald on special commission. We see then that McDonald's work at the Department depended on the presence of a key individual who was convinced that film was a valuable medium for the promotion of tourism and immigration. Others thought the same objective could be achieved with the less costly medium of photography, illustrating quite vividly that the government funding was directed at achieving the specific goal of tourism and immigration promotion. As such, the political project here was tourism and immigration promotion rather than the support of filmmaking in its own right.

After his tenure at the Department of Tourist and Health ended, McDonald returned full-time to his position at the national museum, the Dominion, where he had been employed since 1904. It was here that McDonald went on to make four further government-sponsored films between 1919 and 1923 (Blythe, 1994; Hillyer, 1997). The subject matter of these films was Maori culture and ways of life. Each film was the product of an 'expedition' undertaken by McDonald and his colleague Elsdon Best and Johannes Anderson of the Alexander Turnbull Library. Hillyer (1997:13) describes these films as 'salvage ethnography' because their aim was to catalogue traditional Maori crafts, lore, and practices rather than produce the sort of national propaganda the earlier scenic documentaries had aspired to. In fact, it appears that these films were never edited for exhibition purposes but

remained at the museum almost completely unseen until their restoration in the 1980s (Blythe, 1994). Although supported by Apirana Ngata, the Native Minister and Member of Parliament for Eastern Maori, and so officially falling within the category of government sponsored films, these films are generally considered to be peripheral to government filmmaking as opposed to part of a concerted political project. Blythe (1994:55) argues that the films were 'never more than "occasionals" shot by enthusiastic mavericks operating on the margins of government.' According to Blythe (1994:55), their objective of recording traditional Maori practices was out of step with many in government who were at that time actively encouraging Maori to 'abando[n] their old ways and becom[e] "modern" New Zealanders.'

The peripheral support for McDonald's films of Maori cultural life and his occasionals at the Department of Tourist and Health Resorts aside, there was to be no further sponsorship of films by government until 1923 when a cameraman was again employed on a permanent basis and a government film unit was established. In the intervening ten years, filmmaking in Aotearoa/New Zealand tended to fall into one of two categories: local filmmakers shot scenes of daily life, local interest, and newsworthy events and international filmmakers shot and produced feature films based on Maori myths and legends (Churchman, 1997). There is no record from this time of any discussions in parliament about support for either the filmmaking efforts of the locals or internationals, suggesting that government did not consider that it had a role to play in supporting filmmaking that was occurring outside of government departments. The alternative explanation that government was simply unaware that this filming was taking place seems unlikely, given the scale of activity.

Early Independent Filmmaking: The 'Locals' and the 'Internationals'

The activity of local filmmakers during this time was often a direct extension of the early filmmaking efforts of the travelling showmen, who had quickly learned that they could increase audiences and profits by shooting local scenes and adding these to their stock of imported films (Churchman 1997). Many had learned this out of necessity, having had the unfortunate experience of arriving in a town with their projector and imported films only to find that they were hot on the heels of another travelling showman who had exhibited the

same films. A few pioneering showmen found that by adding footage shot locally they were still able to bring together a large audience of local townspeople eager to see themselves and their town on celluloid. During the 1910s, this kind of opportunistic local filmmaking continued to take place. In fact, we will see later that it continued right up until the depression, with Rudall Hayward's community comedies of the late 1920s being a more organised version of the travelling showmen films.

In the 1910s, however, there was also some evidence of professionalisation among local filmmakers, although by the end of the decade it was still only a handful of individuals who could make a living from filmmaking. This is, for example, when the first newsreels and sponsored industrial films were produced for exhibition in the cinemas that were opening across the country and the first feature film by a New Zealander – *Hinemoa* by George Tarr – was released (Churchman, 1997; Martin & Edwards, 1997). Shot over eight days in Rotorua in 1914, *Hinemoa* was based on a Maori love story and filmed by Charles Newham, one of the only full-time filmmakers at the time (Churchman, 1997). Production of New Zealand's first feature might have been expected to bring filmmaking to the attention of government, but there is no evidence of government debating, or even considering, support for local filmmaking at this time. It is interesting to note also that most historical accounts of filmmaking in Aotearoa/New Zealand do not attach much significance to Tarr's production, preferring to credit Rudall Hayward's (1922) *My Lady of the Cave* with the birth of domestic dramatic film production (see for example, Shepard, 2000). This may have something to do with the fact that Tarr's film shared many similarities with the overseas productions of the same era. Indeed, Tarr had hoped to make a film about Maori customs for a British audience but the outbreak of World War I meant that finance was not available and he opted instead for the shorter fictional *Hinemoa* story, which was distributed throughout Aotearoa/New Zealand by one of the main local cinema chains, Hayward's Pictures (Martin & Edwards, 1997).

The first of the overseas productions was shot in Aotearoa/New Zealand in 1912 by the American, Gaston Méliès. Méliès had arrived in Aotearoa/New Zealand with a crew of seventeen, having already made films in the Pacific Islands, Australia, and Java (Dennis,

1993). He stayed for one month and filmed three short dramatic features and five scenic films. Each of the dramatic features was based on a Maori myth or legend, as the titles attest: *How Chief Te Ponga Won His Bride, Loved By A Maori Chieftess*, and *Hinemoa*. The cast in all three films was entirely made up of local Maori and they were all shot in Rotorua, a town with significant geothermal activity and an active Maori community that was also the location for Tarr's film and for most of the subsequent international productions. Meliès was followed by the Australian directors Raymond Langford and Beaumont Smith, the British-financed productions of the Frenchman Gustav Pauli, and the maverick American director Alexander Markey (Martin & Edwards, 1997). By 1930, at least eleven films had been made by international filmmakers in Aotearoa/New Zealand. As Blythe (1994:20) has commented, the 'most striking feature' of these films is that 'they are all set in Maoriland.' Indeed, this notion of 'Maoriland' was often invoked explicitly by the filmmakers as an 'exotic and utopian synonym for New Zealand', located outside the realm of history (Blythe, 1994:16). Most of these films, including those of Meliès, were never distributed in Aotearoa/New Zealand. It seemed that their primary purpose was to record and present an 'exotic other' to an American and British audience.¹⁰ This is certainly the impression we get from Markey's 1934 feature, *Hei Tiki*, where, in a personal, to-camera introduction, he calls on the viewer to 'forget your cares and problems for a brief interlude and join me on a voyage to the Isle of Ghosts' and promises that on this voyage 'you will feast your eyes upon a sight no living white man has seen before' (Markey in Blythe, 1994:12). These films were usually also accompanied by publicity campaigns that sought to vouch for the authenticity of the film by 'detailing just how many exhausting months and what trying conditions were endured to get the film in the can' (Blythe, 1994:12). Given the context, it is not surprising that considerable violence was done to representations of Maori, as leading Maori filmmaker Merata Mita (1992:42) comments:

[T]he need arose to exaggerate or minimize aspects of Maori character and culture to make the action more accessible and attractive to a foreign audience

¹⁰ That the primary objective here was to present an 'exotic other' is further evidenced by the fact that there was at least one film, *The Mutiny of the Bounty* (1916), where Maori actors and an Aotearoa/New Zealand location stood in for another 'exotic' place and its people – in the case of *Bounty*, the 'faked' location and peoples were Tahiti and Tahitians (Martin & Edwards, 1997). That is, we can see that the filmmakers were interested not so much in the specificities of particular cultures or ethnicities, but a generic exotic other.

... Underlying this was the desire to increase the commercial value of the project and hopefully raise its box office potential in Europe and America. As a result of these distortions some of the early fiction films contain material which is culturally insensitive and in some cases downright offensive.

The representation of Maori in these films is important and has been covered extensively elsewhere (see especially Blythe, 1994). For the purposes of our discussion, these films are of interest because they again show that despite considerable activity – recall that eleven such features had been made by the 1930s – for most of this time government showed no interest in this type of filmmaking. This is all the more perplexing when we consider that there was actually substantial thematic overlap between these films and the government's early promotional films under McDonald, which had also referenced Maori culture. There is only a brief moment late into the international filmmaking period when this overlap is acknowledged by government and an attempt is made to exploit the international films for tourism and immigration gain.

This moment occurs in the late 1920s. We see it first by the attendance in 1927 of the then Prime Minister, Gordon Coates, at a Gaumont Company screening of *The Romances of Hine-Moa* in the United Kingdom (Martin & Edwards, 1997) and again, a year later, when Coates comments that the American production, *Under the Southern Cross*, 'should go far towards making the name of New Zealand a household word overseas' (Coates in Dennis, 1993:12). It is important not to overstate, however, the significance of the Prime Ministerial endorsements of *The Romances of Hine-Moa* and *Under the Southern Cross*, which was actually dedicated to the New Zealand government. There is no record of any similar endorsements of feature films in subsequent years (although this may in part be related to the onset of the depression), or indeed much in the way of a historical record around these particular events that might allow us to reconstruct the political agendas that informed them. It certainly seems too insignificant to call this a 'political project' in its own right. The most likely explanation is that the Prime Ministerial endorsement tied in with a renewed focus on government filmmaking for tourism purposes that had come with the establishment of a film unit within the Government Publicity Office several years earlier. This film unit, known as the 'Tin Shed', produced some 240 films between 1923 and 1930

(Dennis, 1993). These films were mainly short, one-reel scenic documentaries but towards the end of the 1920s, around the same time that Coates was giving his endorsement to the international films, the unit produced several longer films exploiting the idea of 'Maoriland' as it had been developed by Meliès, Markey, and the other internationals. We will examine these films and the political project they were a part of in more detail shortly.

Before we do so, however, it is important to explicitly draw out from our discussion thus far that independent film production was of interest to government only if it also served some other purpose: the efforts of local filmmakers was not seen to fit with any of the political projects being pursued at the time and so the 'locals' were left to their own devices; overseas productions, on the other hand, became noteworthy only when they seemed to align with the government's tourism and immigration promotion goals. It seems worth asking why supporting the development of a film industry was not on the government's agenda, given that other countries – particularly the United States, but also Britain – were actively supporting local industries at this time. Part of the explanation for the limited scope of political projects involving film in Aotearoa/New Zealand during the early twentieth century must relate to its status as a colony and the way that this shaped understandings of the 'local' and 'foreign'. Up until World War II, most white New Zealanders considered themselves to be British and a part of Empire. Given that there was not a distinct 'New Zealand identity', there also was little sense that Aotearoa/New Zealand needed to have cultural production, such as film, that was distinct from Britain. Even local filmmakers seemed to share this sense of being part of Empire. One of Aotearoa/New Zealand's pioneering filmmakers, John O'Shea (1992:16), remarked in his memoirs that in the 1930s:

It hardly ever occurred to us that we, our families, friends and neighbours, were unique and worthy of a story, a song, a drama or even a painting that would convey what we meant. We barely knew where we were – except as a part of "Empire".

We can see, then, that although there was local filmmaking activity in the 1910s and 1920s, there would hardly have been an active lobby for the development of a 'New Zealand' film industry.

The actions of government also very explicitly showed that at this time the 'local' did not mean Aotearoa/New Zealand but included – or maybe was – Britain and Empire. Most immediately, there was considerable concern for the health of the British film industry in the 1920s because of the dominance that American film distributors had achieved in numerous markets around the world. The Aotearoa/New Zealand government responded initially with the introduction in 1921 of a customs tax on all 'foreign' films (Churchman, 1997). British and Commonwealth films were exempted in a schedule to the act which declared that in the Aotearoa/New Zealand context these were 'local' films. The tax was not successful and so was followed up over the next decade with several other measures to help the embattled British film industry. At no point in this period when the government is actively concerned with assisting the British film industry, however, does the matter of supporting the development of a 'New Zealand' film industry even receive a mention in the parliamentary record.

It is, of course, possible that it was not just the legacies of colonialism that accounted for the lack of interest in a New Zealand film industry but also, more pragmatically, that the concerns for the health of the British film industry simply occupied government attention to the extent that the prospect of a 'New Zealand' industry could not be entertained. If that is the case, then there were also several other film-related concerns that would have compounded this. The other film-related concerns before government at the time related mainly to the rapid expansion of film exhibition, which by 1920 had seen some 38 cinemas open in Auckland to cater to its population of 157,000 (Churchman, 1997:11). As in other countries, this rapid expansion of cinemas led to an active public campaign for censorship and also to concerns over safety because of the volatility of nitrate film stock. The campaign for censorship was probably the most pressing for government as it steadily gained momentum from 1910 onwards, forcing the government to eventually take action in 1916 (G. Owen, 1996). Safety, on the other hand, was addressed in the later

Cinematographs Film Act of 1928, which placed a number of restrictions on the handling of nitrate stock and introduced a system of licensing cinemas (Martin & Edwards, 1997).

With censorship and safety addressed, we might have expected government to have more time to address issues concerned with the development of a domestic industry. However, in the late 1920s concern over the power of American distributors emerged again but this time with a local dimension. Throughout the 1920s, local exhibitors had grown increasingly frustrated with the 'blind' and 'block' booking systems of the big American distributors, which forced them to take on low grade American films if they wanted to screen the best American films. By the end of the decade, they were calling for action on the part of the government to curtail the power of the American distributors (Martin & Edwards, 1997). We already know that the first attempt, the customs tax in 1921, had been largely unsuccessful in reigning in the American distributors. A second attempt was made in 1928 with the introduction of a quota for local films (as per the earlier definition) and a ban on block-booking for periods of longer than 12 months (Churchman, 1997). These measures again proved largely unsuccessful and so, under continued pressure from local exhibitors, the government convened a public inquiry into the matter in 1934. The inquiry also investigated the concerns of independent local exhibitors that cinema chains were engaging in racketeering practices to force them out of the market. As a result of the inquiry, the Cinematograph Film Act was amended to allow exhibitors to reject up to 25 percent of a block booking (Churchman, 1997). This new rule seemed to be effective in redressing the power imbalance between exhibitors and distributors. The inquiry was less successful, however, in addressing the concerns of the independent film exhibitors and so, in the wake of further consolidation of theatre chains during World War II, another inquiry had to be convened in 1949. This second inquiry was given a far wider remit than the first and is worth examining in more detail because it gives us some insight into government priorities in relation to film at the time and, more specifically, into the place of filmmaking and a film industry.

The second inquiry was presided over by the specially formed Motion Picture Industry Committee. Although prompted by concerns over the consolidation of theatre chains during

World War II, the government drafted a deliberately broad remit for the Committee's investigation. The preamble to the Committee's report states that 'rather than limit the scope of the inquiry, the order of reference was made as wide as possible so that all matters affecting the industry could be dealt with' (Motion Picture Industry Committee, 1949:3). The twelve 'principal matters' of concern identified by the Committee give us perhaps the best insight into government priorities and the sort of political projects that were possible around film at this time. The first matter identified by the Committee is concerned with the business practices of the theatre chains. It sets out to investigate '[w]hether the existing monopoly condition in the exhibition of films in New Zealand are compatible with the public interest and whether any legislative or other action should be taken to overcome, limit, regulate, or supervise these monopoly conditions' (Motion Picture Industry Committee, 1949:4). The next ten 'principal matters' are concerned with the nationality of theatre ownership, cinema safety, the theatre landlord-tenant relationship, admission prices, taxation of film exhibition, and censorship. Filmmaking is mentioned in the last 'principal matter' on the reference list, which states that the Committee will investigate 'whether it is desirable in the national interest to foster the production of films in New Zealand, and, if so, by what means' (Motion Picture Industry Committee, 1949:4). In the context of the whole report we also see that film production was not a significant concern for government with only two paragraphs in the 63-page report relating to the production of films. These paragraphs are interesting, however, because they make a clear distinction between the films produced by the National Film Unit (NFU) – the successor of the 'Tin Shed', which we will come to shortly – and entertainment films. The report states that it finds 'no hindrances upon the production of entertainment film in New Zealand beyond the necessity of providing considerable capital for what must be speculative return' (Motion Picture Industry Committee, 1949:29). However, despite acknowledging the difficulties of raising sufficient capital for feature film production, the report goes on to state that there is 'no case to be made for the expenditure of public money on such a project' (Motion Picture Industry Committee, 1949:29). The subsequent paragraph on the NFU is even shorter, and reads in its entirety as follows (Motion Picture Industry Committee, 1949:29):

The evidence showed that the National Film Unit, which produces topical and documentary rather than entertainment film, was fulfilling a function and (subject to the expense involved) could well still be further developed.

We can see from this that filmmaking was not only very low on the list of government priorities, but also that the scope of the political projects that could form around it was still very limited. There is a clear continuity, therefore, between the Committee's report and the instrumental treatment of film production that we saw in the early 1900s. Yet, again filmmaking emerges as something that government does not support in its own right, and certainly not to develop an industry or capacity *outside* of government departments, but rather supports in order fulfil some pre-existing government objective.

The 'Tin Shed', which we turn to now, was a government film institution that was deeply rooted in such an instrumental approach to filmmaking.

Government Filmmaking from the 'Tin Shed' to the National Film Unit, 1920s-1950s

After McDonald's departure from the Department of Tourist and Health Resorts in 1912, the task of assembling promotional material, now primarily photographic rather than filmic, had been transferred to the Photographic Section of the Agriculture Department (Churchman, 1997). In 1922, these responsibilities were given to the newly formed Government Publicity Office, which immediately signalled that it would once again use film for tourism promotion (Blythe, 1994). The following year, Cyril Morton was employed as a full-time cameraman and the Government Photographic Office was set up in a disused stable behind the parliament buildings (Dennis, 1981). It was Morton and those who later joined him that referred to this building as the 'Tin Shed' because of its appalling state of disrepair. In an essay, Morton (1981 [1966]:12) recalls that 'a sanitary inspector declared the place unfit for animals to be in, let alone humans.' However, budgets were tight in the early days at the unit and so, despite the sanitary inspector's grave verdict, 'no improvement resulted' (Morton, 1981 [1966]:12).

The early films shot and produced by Morton were all short documentaries. In keeping with the purpose of the unit, the films either depicted the natural beauty of Aotearoa/New

Zealand or its achievements as a modernising nation. Key industries and major infrastructural developments were favourite subjects. In 1923, for example, films produced by the unit were entitled thus: *Dr Gunn's School*, *Irrigation in Otago*, *Meat Industry (Hawkes Bay)*, and *Fiordland of New Zealand* (New Zealand Film Archive, 1981a). There was a policy of deliberately excluding people from the films so as to ensure that they would not date (Dennis, 1981). This policy was to endure until the 1940s, and led John Grierson, a founder of the British Documentary Movement, to declare on a visit to Aotearoa/New Zealand in 1940 that he had never seen 'the face of a New Zealander' (Grierson, 1981 [1940]:21).

The fortunes of the unit improved considerably with the appointment of Arthur Messenger as the head of the Publicity Office in 1925. He increased the budget of the unit from 1600 dollars to 30,000 dollars (J. Reid, 1972:13). This allowed the unit to grow and also, that same year, to produce its first feature length documentary, *Glorious New Zealand*. Subtitled 'a never-ending panorama of scenic gems', the film was distributed throughout Aotearoa/New Zealand and also internationally (Hillyer, 1997:22). In a press release announcing the film, Messenger explicitly linked it to the promotion of tourism (quoted in Hillyer, 1997:22):

The big scenic film which has just been released under the title "Glorious New Zealand" is the forerunner of a campaign calculated to stimulate tourist traffic within the Dominion ... The Publicity Office wishes it to be known that a large number of booklets illustrative of Dominion scenic, sporting, attractions and other information are available at all times for those who wish to help advertising of the Dominion abroad.

Messenger seems here to be enlisting New Zealanders in his campaign to promote the country internationally, constructing it as their duty to educate themselves about the 'gems' within their country so that they can entice friends and family from abroad to visit. To further this objective, *Glorious New Zealand* was shown for free to over half a million visitors at the New Zealand and South Seas Exhibition in Dunedin and followed up with eight one-reel documentaries entitled 'Know New Zealand First' which were distributed in cinemas nationwide (Hillyer, 1997:22). The sequel which followed eleven years later,

Romantic New Zealand (1936), was accompanied by a similar campaign. In that case, the slogan for domestic marketing was 'Know New Zealand First and Advertise to Your Friends Abroad' (Hillyer, 1997:25).

Glorious New Zealand was widely regarded as a success and consolidated the place of the government film unit. In 1926, its position was further strengthened through a distribution deal with MGM to screen a weekly one-reel documentary production of the unit in cinemas across Aotearoa/New Zealand (J. Reid, 1972). The agreement with MGM saw 40 films being produced in 1926 and 50 in 1927. The thematic concerns of these productions were much the same as in previous years, with titles including: *Picton and the Queen Charlotte Sound* (1926), *Wool Way* (1926), *Tall Timber* (1927), and *Isle of Enchantment* (1927) (New Zealand Film Archive, 1981a). Several of the films more in the style of a travelogue were also distributed internationally (J. Reid, 1972).

The late 1920s is also when the first government films exploiting the 'Maoriland' notion were made. Blythe (1994) has termed these films 'tourism romances' to draw attention to the role these played in the government's tourism promotion campaign. The first of the 'tourism romances' was *Whakarewarewa* (1927), a film that features a group of tourists being shown around a traditional Maori village and geothermal attractions by a Maori guide in traditional costume. In Blythe's (1994:65) words, *Whakarewarewa* and the other tourism romances that followed tended to 'sketch a Noble Savage Utopia in order to wax enthusiastic about the supposedly carefree life and material comforts of the Maori which the Pakeha tourist can share in.' A very interesting exception to this schema is the film *Amokura*. Shot in 1928, it tells the story of a young Maori woman who is given a full facial tattoo or moko. The moko is normally a practice reserved for men, but in this case the father, who did not have any sons, tattoos his daughter because of his desire for a male offspring. The young woman becomes an outcast, unable to find love. She eventually falls in love with a flute player, Turi. The god Tane removes her moko for one season, during which Turi falls in love with her. When at the end of the season the moko reappears, Turi remains true to her and so Tane removes the moko forever. The film is interesting for us because its subsequent treatment by the government publicity office points yet again to the

very instrumental way in which these films were being perceived at this time. It was initially decided that *Amokura* would not be released as its portrayal of a 'savage' custom – that is, the moko – was judged to be unhelpful to the tourism promotion campaign (Blythe, 1994).¹¹ The political project that these films were caught up in was very clearly, then, about tourism promotion, with film acting simply as the means by which that project could be pursued.

As the decade drew to a close, the 'Tin Shed' continued to be a prolific producer of short documentary films, with 44 one-reel documentary films being made in 1928 and a further 48 in 1929 (New Zealand Film Archive, 1981a). The arrival of sound and the onset of the depression were, however, to have dramatic effects on the output of the unit in the early 1930s (Hillyer, 1997). Several years earlier a fire in the Tin Shed had led to a decision to outsource film developing to a laboratory established by AAP McKenzie on Lambton Quay in the Wellington central business district (J. Reid, 1972). After a further fire there, McKenzie moved to a larger site in the suburbs and established himself as Filmcraft Studios. By 1931, Filmcraft was employing some 40 individuals to process government film stock. However, cutbacks during the depression coupled with increasing production costs due to the introduction of sound, saw a sharp decline in government filmmaking. Compared to the 48 films made in 1929, a total of 28 films were made in 1930, ten in 1931, and only two in 1932 (New Zealand Film Archive, 1981a). As a result of this decline in production, Filmcraft was forced into receivership and its staff was cut to just four (New Zealand Film Archive, 1981b). Over the subsequent four years, Filmcraft operated on a month-to-month basis with bank advances that were tied to contracts for the development of government films. Between seven and 12 films, mainly scenics, were produced annually between 1933 and 1935 (New Zealand Film Archive, 1981a). As the depression eased, the government made a decision to lease Filmcraft Studios for an annual rent of 960 pounds sterling and formed the Government Motion Picture and Advertising Studios within what was now the Tourist and Publicity Department (New Zealand Film Archive, 1981b). In 1938, the studios were purchased outright for 14,000 pounds sterling and staff numbers began to increase again. At first glance, this might seem to signal a new commitment to

¹¹ The film was eventually released in 1934.

filmmaking and, given the name change, also perhaps the possibility of new kinds of political projects around film. However, in actual fact the purchase of Filmcraft was not intended to be part of even a long term commitment to government filmmaking, let alone a move towards a more comprehensive approach to the support of film (Fry, 1995). With World War II brewing, there was a decline in the demand for scenics and other promotional films and so the government film studios were scheduled to close after the production of an epic film to mark the hundredth anniversary of the signing of the Treaty of Waitangi, the founding document of Aotearoa/New Zealand. This film, *One Hundred Crowded Years*, is described by Blythe (1994:73) as ‘the last gasp effort of a decaying government filmmaking institution.’ The production values of the film were high. It was made over several years with a large cast of Maori and Pakeha and made use of elaborate sets and costumes. Blythe (1994:73) suggests that *One Hundred Crowded Years* would have made a ‘considerable impact on the New Zealand public had it not been overtaken by World War II.’ As it was, however, matters at home were superseded by more pressing developments in Europe.

The same fate was also to befall John Grierson, a leading figure in the British Documentary Movement who, during 1940 was in Aotearoa/New Zealand for several months after a local lobby from within the Motion Picture Studios persuaded the government to extend an invitation to him (Fry, 1995). Grierson was asked to prepare a report on the possibilities for government filmmaking, as he had already done in Canada where his model for a national film board was accepted and implemented by the government (Fry, 1995, 1996). His visit generated considerable interest, but ultimately was not very successful. Fry (1996) argues that his call for a film board along the lines of the Canadian model was ahead of government thinking at the time and, with World War II a far more pressing concern than domestic filmmaking, the proposal was rejected by the Labour government. The local lobby, however, was able to use the momentum generated by Grierson’s visit to argue for a continued role for government filmmaking, albeit again in pursuit of very functional ends. Ernest Stanhope Andrews, who was working at the government Motion Picture Studios at the time, was said to have been particularly influential in the eventual establishment of the National Film Unit (NFU). He presented the Prime Minister, Peter Fraser, with a short

report and a film that he had made of soldiers leaving for the war. The film was different to the earlier government films in that it deliberately focused on the faces of the soldiers and of people in the crowd. Fraser, who according to Andrews had actually thrown away Grierson's earlier report, was persuaded by Andrew's arguments for a film propaganda unit and established the NFU by Cabinet Minute using his war time emergency powers. Andrews was installed as Producer, the effective head of the unit, and the ethos of his earlier film for Fraser was to drive the work of the NFU during the early 1940s (Fry, 1996:34):

They wanted to show individual men and women doing everyday things. They thought it important that people could see what their opposite number was doing, that soldiers could see that people back home were working in factories, that factory workers could see where the tin hats, or the machinery was going ... Stan Andrews was convinced that it was vital that a national film unit produced film that could not have been produced by a fascist state, that film should show democracy at work.

It is important to stress that the establishment of the NFU was not planned, nor did it represent a long term commitment to government filmmaking: it was the spontaneous response to a need for war-time propaganda. The General Manager of the Department of Tourist and Health Resorts and Publicity, L J Schmitt, summed up the remit of the NFU several years later as follows: 'War and war time morale pictures for New Zealand consumption' (quoted in Fry, 1995:13).

This remit was clearly reflected in the work of the NFU and also in the way it was managed. There were originally eight staff members, including Andrews. Their early films included a combination of war reportage, anti-waste films, and scenes of domestic life in the face of war time rationing (Fry, 1995). These films were seen widely, with an estimated 500,000 cinema tickets being purchased weekly in the early 1940s by Aotearoa/New Zealand's population of 1.5 million. The government maintained tight control over editorial content and day-to-day affairs at the unit. The NFU was located within the Prime Minister's Department and was directly responsible to the Director of Publicity, a position that had been established in 1939 to oversee war censorship and propaganda. All films produced by

the unit were paid for from the War Expenses budget and had to be approved by the Director of Publicity. This close relationship between the unit and the Prime Minister's office was no doubt necessary in order for the unit to fulfil its propaganda function, but in the post-war period it would become problematic and threaten the survival of the NFU.

During the war, the NFU's weekly magazine-style programme, with its signature opening credits featuring marching men, had become immensely popular and the NFU itself had become something of a treasured national institution (O'Shea, 1992). By the time the war ended the government had, therefore, seen firsthand how useful film could be in communicating government policy and so decided to continue to fund the NFU as a peacetime government filmmaking unit (Fry, 1995, 1996). In fact, in the immediate post-war period funding to the unit was increased and 15 additional staff members were employed. As Fry (1995:32) notes, there was 'considerable optimism within the NFU' at the time. It was to be only several years, however, before the very instrumental way in which the government regarded the unit – that is, as a producer of government propaganda – led to charges of political bias and interference from political opponents and also from staff within the unit. There were two incidents in particular that proved to be defining moments for the NFU, and also for the subsequent development of the Aotearoa/New Zealand film industry and the political projects that could form around it. The first incident involved the firing in 1948 of the cameraman Cecil Holmes, the second centred on allegations of editorial interference in a documentary called *Mail Run* (Churchman, 1997; Fry, 1995, 1996; O'Shea, 1992).

The official reason for the dismissal of Cecil Holmes were his communist sympathies (Churchman, 1997). In truth, Holmes had fallen out with a powerful trade unionist and Labour party figure, Fintan Patrick Walsh, and it was this falling out that was behind his dismissal in a saga that became known as 'The Satchel Affair'. It was so called because the allegations of communist sympathies were made after Holmes' satchel, which contained his communist party membership card and a document suggesting collusion at an NFU stop work meeting, was stolen from a car outside the NFU and made public. The Holmes incident gave the incoming National government in 1949 the pretext for an extensive

investigation into the NFU and for its restructuring the following year. In a move that was publicly declared to be about lessening political influence over the output of the unit, the NFU was brought under the Tourist and Publicity Department. However, as Fry (1996) argues, the introduction of a Cabinet sub-committee to monitor production and the downgrading of the Producer role to that of a manager meant that in actual fact political control over the unit was, if anything, tightened. Along with the change in the structural location of the NFU, the National government at this time also introduced a commercial imperative to the unit. This meant that the unit became increasingly oriented towards outputs that could be sold internationally, such as road safety films, and less concerned with communicating to an Aotearoa/New Zealand audience. After the restructuring, then, the purpose of the Unit shifted from producing propaganda to generating profit but there was still no sense that government filmmaking was in any way intended to develop capacity more generally or contribute to the building of a local industry.

The *Mail Run* documentary incident, on the other hand, was crucial to the eventual emergence of a local film industry and a political project around filmmaking beyond government institutions. *Mail Run* was an NFU documentary exploring the relationship between Aotearoa/New Zealand and its Pacific neighbours (O'Shea, 1992). Editorially, the documentary sought to make a strong political point about the imperialist agendas being pursued by various international interests, including the United States, in South East Asia. As such, it did not fit with the propaganda function envisaged for the unit by its government overseers and several attempts were made to alter the content. One of those working on the documentary, Alan Falconer, became increasingly disgruntled with these attempts to water down the content of the film. Fed up with the constraints of working within a government filmmaking institution, he established the Pacific Film Unit with a fellow NFU staffer, Roger Mirams, who had become frustrated with the level of bureaucracy at the unit. Their partnership lasted only several years before Falconer departed. However, the organisation they established was to have a significant presence for the next three decades, building capacity in the independent sector and making possible the development of a local film industry that eventually could lay claim to government funding for filmmaking in its own right.

The (Re)Birth of the Independents, 1950s-1970s

Before the Pacific Film Unit was established by Mirams and Falconer, there was very little in the way of independent filmmaking in Aotearoa/New Zealand, and there had been virtually no activity in the preceding decade either (Martin & Edwards, 1997). A similar fate as government filmmaking, only more drastic, had befallen the independent sector in the early 1930s. The combined effect of the depression and arrival of sound technology had all but killed off what had been a fairly vibrant local filmmaking scene (N. Reid, 1986). Let us briefly catch up on the activity of the independents between 1920 and 1950.

The 1920s had been an exciting time for independent filmmaking in Aotearoa/New Zealand. Rudall Hayward, who is now often looked upon as one of the pioneers of local filmmaking, was particularly active at this time (Churchman, 1997; Martin & Edwards, 1997). He made his first feature film, *My Lady of the Cave*, in 1922 and went on to produce a further five features in the next twenty years, most concerned with the relationship between Maori and the British settlers. As these features did not provide a financial return, Hayward spent much of his time in the late 1920s travelling the country making two-reel 'community comedies' with titles such as *Tilly of Te Aroha* and *Daughters of Dunedin* (Hillyer, 1997). These were in many respects simply a more professional version of the travelling showmen's filmmaking efforts discussed earlier in the chapter. Hayward would travel from town to town with a stock script and, in each locality, cast locals, shoot the film, and then develop and screen it to a packed local cinema within seven to ten days. In a radio interview, Hayward described the process as follows (quoted in Hillyer, 1997:62):

Altogether we scooped in practically everybody ... we got everybody in the town practically "gee"ing on this thing, and the result was a foregone conclusion. You couldn't keep them out of the theatre with iron bars.

He is thought to have made at least 23 such films before the onset of the depression significantly curtailed his filmmaking efforts. Another prolific local filmmaker during the 1920s was Edwin Coubray, who made mainly industrial and sponsored films (Sowry, 1984). He had achieved some success with a horse-racing drama called *Carbine's Heritage*

(1927). Coubray was one of the first to experiment with sound technology, producing the *Coubray-tone News* in 1929 with improvised sound recording equipment he had built himself (Price, 1996). He also went on to make the first local 'talkie', *Down on the Farm*, with Stewart Pitt and Lee Hill in 1935. Independently of Coubray, Hill made two further films, *The Wagon and the Start* (1936) and *Phar Lap's Son* (1936), in quick succession, but both were considered to be of very poor quality. Filmmaking activity by independents then slowly petered out, with the final feature film of this era of independent filmmaking – an updated version of Hayward's film *Rewi's Last Stand* – being released in 1940 (Martin & Edwards, 1997).

The establishment of the Pacific Film Unit was significant, then, because it represented the first concerted effort to revive independent filmmaking in a decade. Mirams and Falconer were fortunate to very quickly secure a steady income stream through a contract to produce the *Movietone News* for distribution in cinemas (O'Shea, 1992). When John O'Shea replaced Falconer in 1950, the unit was rebranded as Pacific Films in a deliberate attempt to reorient their work towards feature film production. This commitment to producing independent features was at the same time also a commitment to telling stories of New Zealand and contributing to the development of a 'New Zealand' identity.¹² The commitment to building a 'New Zealand' identity set Pacific Films apart from the earlier moments of independent filmmaking. We already saw that O'Shea (1992:16) had remarked in his memoirs that such filmmaking had not been possible prior to World War II because white New Zealand still considered itself to be British and a part of Empire. And, indeed, if we compare the first Pacific Films feature with Rudall Hayward's films in the 1920s we do see a marked contrast. The films of Rudall Hayward, although concerned with Maori and settler relations, were not about developing a New Zealand identity but instead about recounting particular British colonial experiences. Martin and Edwards (1997:31), for example, describe Hayward's first film as a 'superb example of sympathetic colonialism'. The first feature produced by Pacific Films, *Broken Barrier* (1952), on the other hand, is fundamentally concerned with what it means to be a 'New Zealander' (Martin & Edwards,

¹² The emergence of a New Zealand identity in the post-war period was a product both of Aotearoa/New Zealand coming of age as a nation and Britain moving away from its colonies to align itself more closely with Europe.

1997). It examines themes of cultural difference and interracial intolerance through the story of a Pakeha journalist who falls in love with a young Maori woman. There is a clear commitment to biculturalism in the film. This is apparent thematically and also in terms of the filmmaking techniques used, with documentary style footage being deployed in parts of the film directed at cultural learning.

Unfortunately for O'Shea and Mirams, however, *Broken Barrier* was not a commercial success and without government assistance for these kinds of films it was to be another twelve years before they could make their next feature. In the intervening years, Pacific Films was kept afloat by earnings from commissioned industrial and educational films, a contract to cover All Black test matches, and, as television became more popular, by income from the production of television commercials (Martin & Edwards, 1997). By 1969, some 77 percent of Pacific Films income was derived from the production of commercials (Martin & Edwards, 1997:52). Pacific Films, then, never fulfilled its objective of becoming a major producer of 'New Zealand' feature films. Nonetheless, Pacific Films was a stalwart of independent screen production. It played an important role in building capacity in the sector, employing upwards of 20 people from the late 1950s onwards. Many Pacific Films employees went on to start their own independent production houses and so Pacific Films can take considerable credit for the emergence of the 'independents', an identifiable loose grouping of filmmakers who were not attached to the state television broadcaster or NFU and whose efforts were to play a key role in securing government support for the film industry during the 1970s.

The arrival of television might have been expected to open up new opportunities for the independents beyond television commercials, especially in the areas of documentary and drama production. The peculiar structure of television licensing in Aotearoa/New Zealand, however, meant that the independent sector, and incidentally also the NFU, were virtually locked out of any production for television (Joyce, 2003). The New Zealand Broadcasting Corporation (NZBC), which up until then had been the state organisation with responsibilities for radio broadcasting, was conferred a monopoly on television broadcasting. Deeply suspicious of both the NFU and independents – the latter apparently

being regarded as ‘money grubbers’ (Murphy, 1992:132) – the NZBC proceeded to screen almost exclusively programmes that had either been produced in-house by its own staff or purchased from the United Kingdom, Australia, and the United States. For those heading up the NZBC, as Joyce (2003:34) argues, ‘the single licence to broadcast came [with] an assumption that the NZBC had sole right to produce television programmes.’

There was a short reprieve from this lock out when a new controller of programmes, Tahu Shankland, was appointed by the NZBC in 1970. Shankland, having been a member of the Wellington Film Society, was sympathetic to the independents and immediately commissioned a number of programmes, including the documentary *Getting Together* from Pacific Films (O’Shea, 1992, 1999). The election of Norman Kirk’s Labour government in 1972, however, ushered in new reforms of television broadcasting that would again keep the independents out of production for television (Joyce, 2003). Kirk had been the leader of the Labour Party since 1965 and had suffered two election defeats before his eventual win in 1972. It was common knowledge that he attributed significant blame to the television media for these earlier defeats and that his reform of broadcasting was, at least in part, motivated by a desire to exact revenge on the television sector (O’Shea 1992). The broadcasting reforms, first and foremost, forced the NZBC to adopt a more commercial and market-oriented ethos (Joyce, 2003). Consequently, although a new channel with additional programming space was established, opportunities for independents were drastically scaled back as the NZBC could now only afford to pay domestic production houses the same rate as they paid to overseas companies for imported programming (Murphy, 1992). This meant that in the mid-1970s, the NZBC paid 24 dollars per minute of programming, which was far less than it actually cost to produce documentaries and dramas (Murphy, 1992:133). In the wake of these reforms, staff numbers at Pacific Films – the largest of the independents and a good barometer of the health of the independent sector more generally – were cut from 28 to 6 when its contract with the NZBC lapsed (O’Shea, 1992:33).

The independents were also not helped at this time by their somewhat troubled relationship with the NFU. A system of import licensing meant that the NFU had a virtual monopoly on film processing equipment as it was the only body in Aotearoa/New Zealand that was

allowed to import such equipment (J. Reid, 1972). The independents were, therefore, reliant on the NFU to develop their films. According to one of the independents, Geoff Murphy (1992:131), this was problematic because the NFU 'resented outside production and did everything they could to make such production difficult.' An incident where the NFU refused to process the films of John O'Shea, one of the founders of Pacific Films, is often cited as evidence of the belligerence of the NFU towards the independents, with the dispute only being resolved after the intervention of a government Minister (Murphy, 1992). We might, however, want to proceed with some caution when reading such accounts. While the relationship between the independents and the NFU was undoubtedly fraught, it is not clear whether this was all the fault of the NFU. For its part, the NFU always maintained that it refused to process O'Shea's films because of an outstanding debt (Reynolds, 2002). It may well be that the problems between the NFU and independents stemmed as much from the particular modes of operating cultivated by the independents, who, as Murphy (1992:132) himself admitted, found it 'difficult to cooperate':

The main requirement here was to be independent. They found it difficult to cooperate and resented anyone else getting any funding for anything.

Whatever the cause of the difficulties between the NFU and the independents, the result was that for the most of the 1960s and 1970s the independents were positioned between, on the one hand, a state television broadcaster that was either not interested or could not afford their product and, on the other, a processing facility, the NFU, that could not always be relied upon. How was it then that the 1970s was to see not only the production of several successful independent feature films but also an entirely new kind of political project around film that culminated in the establishment of the first government agency for the support of domestic feature production, the New Zealand Film Commission (NZFC)?

Arguably, being locked out of the mainstream was crucial to both the production of the successful feature films of the 1970s and the establishment of the Film Commission. Without recourse to funds from television or the NFU, the independents became caught up in a wider experimental culture movement. Films were one of the mediums used for cultural expression by this movement and it was out of this milieu that many of the

successful features of the 1970s emerged (Joyce, 2003). The lack of funds from established sources also meant that the independents had to look elsewhere for money and this brought them into contact with a parallel movement within cultural policy circles to redefine what was meant by ‘art’ and ‘culture’ and, in particular, to extend the reference of these terms beyond high culture to mass culture.¹³ What is important for us is that at this point film, for the first time, emerges as the object of a political project rather than as the means to achieve something else. With this shift, we also begin to see film itself placed within culture and economy framings and debated explicitly in terms of its cultural and economic attributes. If we return to the question with which we began this chapter, then it is important to note that the establishment of the Film Commission has often been labelled by other commentators as a predominantly ‘cultural’ moment in government support of film, not least because of the way it was caught up in the experimental culture movements and shifts in cultural policy (see for example, Shelton, 2005). It will be argued here, however, that a closer look at developments leading up to the establishment of the Film Commission suggests that it was a far messier undertaking and that, while these ‘cultural’ developments played a significant part, its eventual establishment was achieved through very strategic deployment of cultural and economic rationales such that the value of labelling this moment as either ‘cultural’ or ‘economic’ becomes questionable. That is, it will be argued that it is more interesting and fruitful to pay attention to the ways in which film and the NZFC were constructed as either ‘economic’ or ‘cultural’ in the course of doing politics than attempting to determine which of these constructions matches up with the underlying ‘true’ nature of these ‘objects’.

Establishing and Stabilising the New Zealand Film Commission, 1970s-1990s

The 1970s was a defining moment in the cultural development of Aotearoa/New Zealand, as it had been in other contexts internationally. For the first time a distinctly Aotearoa/New Zealand identity was being advanced in a concerted fashion and a challenge was being mounted against accepted understandings of culture and structures of cultural production

¹³ These developments were obviously influenced by similar developments occurring at this time in the United Kingdom, United States, Europe and elsewhere.

(Joyce, 2003).¹⁴ The BLERTA collective, established by Bruno Lawrence in 1971, was at the forefront of these developments.¹⁵ Lawrence had been frustrated and disillusioned with the mainstream music industry and set up BLERTA as a vehicle for experimental music, theatre, performance and, later, film (Newman, 2006). The original members were musicians from several bands that Lawrence had been involved in or associated with, and the idea was to tour the country annually with innovative music and stage shows. BLERTA was not just about cultural production, but also about a particular way of life. The collective, which included their families, toured the country in an antique bus decorated with psychedelic imagery and, when not on tour, lived communally on a farm in Hawkes Bay (Spicer, 2000).

Derisively labelled by their critics as 'just a bunch of hippies', BLERTA had considerable appeal among young creatives across the country and with audiences (Newman, 2006). Even before the first tour, the collective grew beyond its original membership of musicians to also include filmmakers, artists, actors, and lighting technicians. The filmmakers who joined included some of the independents who had passed through Pacific Films and so there is continuity here with the independent sector that emerged during the 1960s. There was also, however, a new breed of filmmakers that came on to the scene at this time. One of the new set was Geoff Murphy of the multimedia collective Acme Sausage Company. The Acme Sausage Company had already made the experimental film *Tankbusters*, and it was Murphy who pioneered the use of film during the BLERTA shows and, after the collective had disbanded, made the feature film *Wild Man* based on one of its sketches (Joyce, 2003).

The BLERTA bus travelled the country with an entourage of fifty at its peak and usually played to capacity audiences right up until the final tour in 1975 (Newman, 2006). For the development of the feature film industry, the BLERTA years are important in several ways. Most immediately, the collective provided a space for like-minded creative people to meet

¹⁴ The earlier efforts of Pacific Films to put articulate a specifically New Zealand identity through cultural production had been considerably more sporadic and isolated. Here, for the first time, is a more general cultural movement advancing a New Zealand identity.

¹⁵ BLERTA was short for the 'Bruno Lawrence Electric and Revelation Travelling Apparition', although it was rarely referred to in the longer form (Newman, 2006)

and experiment with modes of cultural expression, story telling, and so on. Most independent filmmakers of the 'new era' of domestic filmmaking in the 1970s passed through BLERTA at one point or another (Joyce, 2003). We have already seen that at least one feature, *Wild Man*, was very directly indebted to BLERTA. More generally, however, BLERTA also made a contribution to new era filmmaking in a very practical sense in that prop-building, lighting, set-building, and special effects had all been central to the BLERTA shows. In the early films of the new era, such as *Goodbye Pork Pie* and *Sleeping Dogs*, we see the use of techniques and skills learned during the BLERTA years and even some of the original props that were constructed for the shows (Newman, 2006). Taken together, the BLERTA years helped to build the capacity of the local film industry to a point where, as we will see later, a political project around support of the domestic film industry became possible.

BLERTA was, of course, not the only collective experimenting with new forms of cultural expression. There were several other manifestations of the more general cultural shift that was occurring in Aotearoa/New Zealand in the early 1970s, although these did not have the same visibility as the BLERTA collective. Specifically in terms of film, this is when we see the first works, often with a renegade spirit similar to BLERTA, by individuals who later also became key figures in the feature film industry (Joyce, 2003). In 1974, for example, Ian Mune and Roger Donaldson made *Derek*, a film about an office worker struggling with alienation and middle age, and in 1975 Geoff Stevens made *Test Pictures*, a feature about two lovers running away from the city. *Derek* was screened on television and *Test Pictures* managed to secure a cinematic release. The success of these films is significant because it showed, just as BLERTA had done, that local cultural productions could have popular appeal. As a consequence, these films, together with BLERTA, were important not only because of the very direct way in which they contributed to building filmmaking capacity, but also because they lent weight to the attempts by cultural policy bureaucrats to develop a more inclusive definition of culture. That is, they were important because they tied in with a broader political project.

We can trace the beginnings of the move to redefine policy understandings of culture to a conference organised in 1970 by the main government funding body for the arts, the Queen Elizabeth II Arts Council (Waller, 1996). Arts Conference 70 was instigated by its Chairman, Bill Sheat, to formulate a vision for the next decade of arts and culture policy. That film and television might for the first time be considered within the remit of the Council could be seen from a session devoted to a discussion of 'the role of film and television in establishing a national identity' (quoted in Waller, 1996:2). The conference passed a resolution calling for the establishment of a 'National Screen Organisation' and it was around this remit that a policy lobby for support of film developed. It is tempting to analyse the conference resolution and subsequent developments for the degree to which support for the emerging film industry was considered to be an 'economic' or 'cultural' phenomenon. If we did so, we might want to argue that the economic was surprisingly visible and significant for a moment that is often labelled as predominantly cultural. For a start, the first and second responsibility envisaged for the Screen Organisation by the conference remit concerned finance and exporting, with more cultural considerations placed further down the list of responsibilities. The remit read as follows (Film Industry Working Party, 1974:2):

... [T]his Conference recommends to the Arts Council that it consider the establishment of a National Screen Organisation to assume management of the country's public utilities in film (i.e. the National Film Unit Laboratory) and set up and administer:

- i) a New Zealand Screen Finance Corporation
- ii) a New Zealand TV Film Export Agency
- iii) a New Zealand TV Film Archive
- iv) a Screen Training School
- v) a New Zealand TV and film award
- vi) a National Film Theatre.

Moreover, the working party that was established to take forward the remit consisted of both cultural and economic actors. It included representatives from 'cultural' bodies, such as the Arts Council and Federation of Film Societies, as well as from bodies with a more 'economic' focus, such as the Department of Internal Affairs. Finally, if our objective was to recover the economic in this 'cultural moment', we could cite the careful negotiation of

cultural and economic rationales in the three reports published by the working party. In these reports, the establishment of a body to further the film industry is usually couched within a commitment to the development of a distinctive national identity, but in almost every instance is also accompanied by claims about the economic benefit of a viable film industry. The final report of the working party in 1974, for example, states that the ‘main argument in favour of establishing such a [film] industry is to ensure that New Zealanders are not subjected to a constant diet of programmes from other cultures’ (Film Industry Working Party, 1974:6). Several pages earlier, however, the report asserts that a healthy local film industry would ‘yield great social, artistic and *economic* benefits’ (emphasis added, Film Industry Working Party, 1974:4). The final report also proposes that the Film Commission be located within the Department of Trade and Industry – that is, within an economic arm of government – as opposed to a cultural Ministry.

There is substantial evidence, then, for a reading that recovers the ‘economic’ in this moment. However, there is good reason to be cautious about such a reading for either economic or cultural essence. As we get closer to the establishment of the Film Commission, we see more and more instances of cultural and economic rationales being deployed very strategically, seemingly in line with judgments about what is perceived to have the most chance of persuading key actors that government has a role to play in supporting the emerging film industry. As such, it seems problematic to preclude similar strategic deployments at this earlier point. This is not to say that the cultural and economic were being deployed strategically by the early policy lobby, but simply that we cannot rule it out. Let us continue now to the second half of the 1970s, where we begin to see more clearly these strategic deployments at work.

Initially, the strong calls by the working party for the establishment of a Film Commission fell on deaf ears. The government was still unconvinced by the time of the final working party report in 1974, and so in the subsequent few years we see continued efforts by the Arts Council to champion a more inclusive definition of culture and the cause of film specifically. The 1975 Annual Report, for example, formally adopts the recommendations of the final working party report and urges the government again to put these into action

(Queen Elizabeth II Arts Council of New Zealand, 1975). The Arts Council also begins around the mid-1970s to invest in film projects in an attempt to demonstrate the viability of domestic feature films and so we see here a point of intersection between the policy campaign and the more general cultural movement. The films *Derek* and *Test Pictures* were both funded in part through small grants from the Council (Queen Elizabeth II Arts Council of New Zealand, 1975). In 1976-77, a further three film projects received Arts Council funding: *Sleeping Dogs*, *Wild Man*, and *Solo* (Queen Elizabeth II Arts Council of New Zealand, 1977). *Sleeping Dogs* went on to become a popular success and is sometimes retrospectively credited with finally convincing government to establish the Film Commission (see for example N. Reid, 1986). *Sleeping Dogs* no doubt played an important role in making possible the NZFC, but this is a more complex story that vividly illustrates the strategic negotiation of the cultural and the economic.

The turning point in the government's stance on film occurs in 1978 when an Interim Film Commission, with the former Arts Council Chairman Bill Sheat as its Chair, is established by the National government of Robert Muldoon. There had been a four year lag between the working party's final report and the eventual establishment of the Interim Commission. As such, we might want to ask what finally convinced the government to put in place the first support mechanism for the domestic film industry. The box office takings of the early domestic films and the lobbying by the Arts Council undoubtedly played a role, but more significant perhaps was the advocacy of film by three key individuals (Joyce, 2003). The first of these was Jim Booth, a civil servant in the Department of Internal Affairs (for a discussion of Booth's role, see also Waller, 1996). Booth wrote a report outlining the cultural, social, and economic rationales for supporting film. That this report was influential in the eventual establishment of the Film Commission is evidenced by direct excerpts from it appearing in the speech by the Government Minister introducing the New Zealand Film Commission Act in Parliament in 1979. The second key individual was the Member of Parliament for Epsom, Aussie Malcolm (Joyce, 2003). As a former advertising executive, Malcolm was sympathetic to the concerns of the independent sector and lobbied Muldoon for increased support. The final individual, and probably the most significant for us, is Tony Williamson, director of the feature film *Solo*. Williamson had assisted Muldoon with

his election campaign and claims that he was told by the President of the National Party that earlier reports calling for support of film had been dismissed by Muldoon because they were 'too arty' (quoted in Joyce, 2003:61). Williamson, therefore, produced a one-page report outlining the economic rationales for support of the domestic feature film industry. He claims that it was his report that finally convinced Muldoon to establish the Interim Film Commission. While we might want to retain some scepticism about exactly how influential Williamson was, his account does trouble very explicitly an attempt to read the arguments of the Film Commission lobby for a cultural or economic essence. He points us to the way notions of the cultural and economic were used strategically, illustrating one dimension of the 'Trojan Horse' strategy that Joyce (2003:57) argues typified the campaign to establish the Film Commission:

[C]ultural motives at times conceal[ed] economic ones, and at other times, the reverse ... Filmmakers were not necessarily all nationalists but in order to secure government financial support they were prepared to talk about national culture [and vice versa] ... The idea of a Film Commission was promoted in economic or cultural terms, depending on the audience and their political priorities.

In other words, the rationales we find in the historical record are not a reflection necessarily of the 'real' or 'true' reasons for establishing the Film Commission. Instead they provide clues to the ways in which particular discourse were seen to have power-making effects (for a longer discussion of 'power-making', see Chapters 2 and 5). That is, actors in these political processes did not have to believe in cultural or economic rationales in order to advance them, they simply had to believe that these had the power to convince key actors of their political project and, hence, to make real their project.

The parliamentary record around the introduction of the Film Commission Bill further substantiates such a reading of the way that the cultural and economic were being used. Most immediately, there was neither a clear advance of either cultural or economic arguments by the government Minister responsible for the passage of the Bill, but rather a slippage from an initially cultural rationale to an increasingly economic one. At the first reading on 24 August 1978, the Minister, Allen Highet, speaks exclusively of the cultural

reasons behind the Bill, tying it to a wider programme of support for the arts (Highet in "New Zealand Film Commission Bill Introduction," 1978:2864):

In its policy statement at the last election the Government promised to encourage New Zealand small film producers in the production of feature films. This can be seen as a very important aspect of our policy to develop New Zealand's cultural identity by actively encouraging artists, composers, playwrights, and writers to use their talents.

By the time of the second reading on 28 September 1978, Highet pays considerably more attention to the commercial aspects of filmmaking and to the wider economic benefits of a viable film industry. He stresses that the Film Commission does not represent a further 'handout to the arts' but rather would be driven by a 'businesslike' approach to investment (Highet in "New Zealand Film Commission Bill Second Reading," 1978:3990). Moreover, in terms of the wider economic benefits, he states that as the industry grows 'there is also the exciting prospect of the development of an export industry which could earn foreign exchange, both directly through sales and indirectly through the publicity which we could gain from overseas exhibition' (Highet in "New Zealand Film Commission Bill Second Reading," 1978:3991). It is argued here that this shift in Highet's emphasis from the cultural to the economic was most likely a strategic move based on an assessment of what he felt was most likely to convince his fellow parliamentarians, and perhaps also the media and general public, of the merits of the Film Commission Bill. A leading New Zealand filmmaker who was party to some of the lobbying around the Bill supports such a view. She said in an interview for this thesis that 'you couldn't justify it [the Film Commission] on the basis of namby-pamby artists wanting to express themselves in a really expensive medium' (Interview, Participant G). Foreign exchange earnings were, according to her, the only levers that could convince politicians:

G: The reason that the government was able to buy into it, for having the film industry at all, was that it could justifiably bring in foreign exchange. So this is a government that's got a ... regulated dollar. The only legal tender for New Zealand money outside New Zealand was a ten dollar note. You had to save them up. We had import restrictions and we had a totally restricted currency. So the film industry was always very importantly seen as a generator of foreign funds.

She correctly states that this strategic emphasis on the economic and commercial carried through into the wording of the Film Commission Act. The Act does not once mention the word 'culture', but rather focuses on the role of the Commission in building an industry. The section describing the 'Functions of the Commission', for example, reads as follows ("New Zealand Film Commission Act," 1978:694):

- (a) To encourage and also participate and assist in the making, promotion, distribution, and exhibition of films:
- (b) To encourage and promote cohesion within the New Zealand film industry, and in particular –
 - i. To encourage and promote the exchange of information ...
 - ii. To encourage and promote the efficient use of resources ...
 - iii. To co-operate with other interested or affected bodies and organisations in order to encourage and promote employment in the New Zealand film industry, and the productivity of that industry...

Moreover, once established, the Film Commission continued to strategically deploy notions of the cultural and economic (for a detailed discussion, see Waller, 1996). The goal now, however, seemed to be securing the ongoing existence of the Film Commission within a shifting political climate. In the first fifteen years of its existence, we see a continual movement back and forth between the cultural and economic in response to changes in the wider political context. The annual reports provide perhaps the best indication of how the Commission was positioning itself along the culture-economy axis. The first report in 1979 begins with a jubilant celebration of what the establishment of the Film Commission means for the cultural development of New Zealand (New Zealand Film Commission, 1979:4):

After 80 years of film history, New Zealand has at last recognised the importance of film-making in the community at large, and has accepted the need to establish cinematograph expressions particular to New Zealand to counter the largely unrelieved diet of films from foreign cultures.

This explicit celebration of the cultural might have been intended as an ode to the efforts of filmmakers and cultural policy bureaucrats who had lobbied for the better part of a decade to get the Film Commission established. Later in the report, however, the arguments that

Hight had made about the commercial and economic aspects of filmmaking in the course of the Film Commission Bill's passage are repeated almost word for word, probably in recognition of the fact the Film Commission was still a contested body.

The annual reports that follow in the early 1980s are far more subdued and place considerably more emphasis on the economic. The annual report in 1980, for example, begins with a statement about the dual cultural and economic aims of the Commission (New Zealand Film Commission, 1980). This is followed later in the report with a claim that the film industry has the potential to 'create new export markets which not only earn money for New Zealand but which also make New Zealand better known in the countries where our films [are] shown' (New Zealand Film Commission, 1980:3). This focus on the economic was in no small measure political expediency. There was not much political interest in promoting culture at the time and so the Commission needed to, in a sense, 'make real' the claims that had been made about 'business-like' investment in the film industry.

This need to 'make real' these claims was also reflected in the early work of the Commission. It was headed up by an accountant, Don Blakeney, who was determined to find private investment for the film industry. He discovered a tax loophole in 1980 that enabled private investors to gain tax write offs through limited recourse loans irrespective of whether a film actually returned a profit (Murphy, 1992). This led to a boom in filmmaking. However, as word of the loophole spread and overseas companies also began to take advantage of the scheme, the tax write offs grew to increasingly obscene proportions. For films where write offs were the primary motivation, quality became a significant issue. Some never made it to theatric or video release, and it is unclear whether there had ever been the intention that they would (Churchman, 1997). One filmmaker retrospectively described the tax shelter films as 'legalised fraud' (Murphy, 1992:8). Not surprisingly, Inland Revenue moved to close the loophole as soon as it was made aware of the scheme in 1982 (Bowie, 1984). Inland Revenue also announced that it would investigate any films that had been financed using the tax shelter and proceeded to open investigations that would drag on for the rest of the decade (Waller, 1996). Although no

one was ever prosecuted as a result of these investigations, the damage to the domestic industry was considerable, with private investment drying up almost completely. More feature films were released at the height of the boom in 1984-1985 than in the entire 1986-1989 period combined (Waller, 1996).¹⁶ Obviously, the standing of the Film Commission was also affected by the tax scandal. Faced with rebuilding its reputation, the Film Commission moved in the mid-1980s away from the economic rhetoric that had celebrated film as an industry success story and back again to discourses of national identity and cultural development.

This change in the direction of the Film Commission in the mid-1980s ended up not only rehabilitating its battered reputation but proved also to be politically fortuitous in another respect. Aotearoa/New Zealand was by that point in the midst of its own Thatcherite reforms, which locally were known as 'Rogernomics' after the Finance Minister who spearheaded them in the wake of Labour's election victory in 1984. This neoliberal turn could have placed increasing requirements for fiscal accountability on a body like the Film Commission. However, there was also considerable anti-American popular and political sentiment. The same government that was pursuing neoliberal economic reforms had just banned vessels with nuclear materials from its maritime waters. The resulting diplomatic standoff with the United States was a defining cultural and political moment in Aotearoa/New Zealand. Waller (1996) argues that in positioning itself as a bulwark against American cultural imperialism the Film Commission was able to weather the early neoliberal reforms much better than other government bodies and institutions. The annual reports, again, give us a good insight into how the Commission was strategically positioning itself. The 1985 report, for example, states that (New Zealand Film Commission, 1985:3):

Ultimately, the purpose of a Film Commission is cultural. It is to establish, through the means of a secure film industry, the full potential of film as a tool in the expression of the New Zealand cultural identity.

¹⁶ When closing the loophole, Inland Revenue permitted films already underway to still be eligible for the write off provided they were completed within 24 months. This meant that most of the tax shelter films were released in the 1984/85 Film Commission year (Waller, 1996).

Beyond the annual reports of the mid-1980s, we also see that the Film Commission published a booklet entitled 'Every Nation needs its Story-Tellers' (New Zealand Film Commission, 1987) and introduced a new funding category in 1986 called 'New Zealand language films', where these are films with significant New Zealand cultural content (New Zealand Film Commission, 1986). There was also an explicit commitment to encouraging diversity, with a special mention of Maori filmmakers (Joyce, 2003), that seemed to work in with this repositioning along more cultural lines.

In this way, the Film Commission was effective in keeping neoliberal reforms at bay for several years at a time when other institutions were facing drastic restructuring and cutbacks. However, as the decade drew to a close the political value of the cultural discourse seemed to diminish again and the Film Commission's respite from neoliberal reforms started to come to an end. A new Chief Executive was appointed in 1989 and, under continued pressure from economic rationalism, there was a return to the more economic and commercial rhetoric of the early 1980s (Joyce, 2003). The election of the National Party, which did not share any of the Labour Party's anti-American cultural and foreign politic, meant that this repositioning was timely. It was still not enough, however, to save the Commission from major funding cuts. In the 1991 budget, the National government reduced its funding to the Commission by 74 percent, which equated to a 20 percent reduction in the overall budget of the Commission (Joyce, 2003:191).¹⁷ For the remainder of the 1990s, the National Party remained in power. The fortunes of the Film Commission did not change significantly during this time and neither did its rhetorical positioning along the culture-economy axis. The Commission saw out the decade as an embattled institution fighting to justify its existence through recourse to ever more specific performance measures (Joyce, 2003). In the next chapter, we pick up again with the Film Commission in 1999 when it receives a funding boost and renewed endorsement of its activities from the newly elected Labour-Alliance coalition government.

For the moment, however, it is worth staying briefly with the 1990s because we see at this time a new, and ultimately unsuccessful, political project emerge around film and the arts.

¹⁷ This is because the other major source of the NZFC's funding, Lotteries money, remained unchanged.

Between 1989 and 1993, three reports examining the export potential and commercial viability of the film industry and the arts are published by the New Zealand Trade Development Board, a government agency responsible for export growth (see New Zealand Trade Development Board, 1989, 1990, 1993). These reports are significant, on the one hand, because they point us to the political climate which saw the Film Commission return to a very commercial and economic rhetoric. They are also, however, significant for another reason which concerns their relationship to the 'new moment' almost a decade later when film and the creative industries become key priorities within economic development. Most immediately, this is because there are strong similarities between the Trade Development Board reports and the reports produced in the later moment. These similarities straddle form, argumentation, and content. For example, both the Trade Development Board reports and the later reports were outsourced to consultancy firms rather than being produced by policymakers within government departments. Moreover, in both cases arguments often marshalled 'objective' calculations and were characterised by a strong and explicit repudiation of the cultural, with the proposed policy programmes instead placed in an economic frame. The first of the Trade Development reports, for example, states that foreign exchange earnings of the arts business could grow more than eight-fold and the Chairman of the Board concludes his foreword with a statement about the spillover benefits to the rest of the economy, claiming that growth in the arts business would 'help to improve living standards, not only for individuals actively involved in the arts, but also for New Zealand and all New Zealanders' (New Zealand Trade Development Board, 1989:3).

These similarities are important because there is a crucial difference between the reports of these two moments. The reports of the 'new moment' were part of, or gave rise to, film-related policy programmes and initiatives, whereas the Trade Development Board reports 'remained' as reports. That is, if we want to use ANT language, we might regard the early reports as 'traces' of a failed attempt at political stabilisation. Their similarities to the later, more successful attempts at stabilisation, provokes then a question: why did the Trade Development Board reports fail to be converted into a more durable political project? The most compelling explanation suggests that contingency is important to politics. That is, the

most likely explanation for the contrasting degrees of success of these reports is that the array of social, economic, political, and cultural factors that enabled stabilisation in the early years of 2000 was not present at the earlier moment or, as one of my interviewees said about another failed political project, there were ‘not enough hooks into it’ at the earlier moment (Fieldnote, 9 July 2007). The importance of contingency is one of the central arguments in the next chapter and so provides us with a fitting transition as we conclude our historical narrative here.

Conclusion

This chapter has been concerned with providing a historical account of film and government in Aotearoa/New Zealand. The objective of this discussion was to see what kind of political projects had been able to form around film, and also whether it was possible to tell a story about converging cultural and economic spheres in this case. Two points emerge immediately. The first is that the culture/economy frame is not always an appropriate one to adopt. Up until the 1970s, film in Aotearoa/New Zealand was not problematised, at least in political terms, as either ‘cultural’ or ‘economic’. Instead the overriding feature from this period was that film was being used very instrumentally as a tool for, amongst other things, tourism promotion, ‘salvage ethnography’, and war time propaganda. Of course, the ‘ends’ that film was being deployed to achieve could be placed along a culture-economy continuum. Film itself, however, existed outside of such framings, acting as the medium that enabled these other goals to be achieved. The second point is that when such culture/economy framings do come into play from the 1970s onwards, the story is not one of essences that are shifting in relation to each other. In fact, the explorations around the establishment of the Film Commission suggest that the merits of trying to get at shifting cultural and economic essences is debatable when most apparent is a very strategic deployment of cultural and economic discourses by actors who have made judgments about how they will have the best chance of persuading others to buy into their project. Here also we arrive, then, at the first part of an answer to our central question about the making and stabilisation of political projects. The Film Commission example suggests that the very contingent ways in which the nature of an object is constituted – so, in this case, the film

industry as 'cultural' or 'economic' – is important to the making and stabilisation of a political project.

Chapter 5:

Making and Stabilising the ‘New Moment’

We pick up the story again in the late 1990s when, in the context of economic development in Aotearoa/New Zealand, the film industry is not yet a ‘natural’ constituent but rather, to borrow from Latour (2005:87), a ‘matter of concern’ that may or may not become a ‘matter of fact’. It is also at this point that the film industry appears to become bound up for the first time within a wider ‘creative industries’ project, which itself is still being made and stabilised. As such, the chapter begins with an exploration of how this turn to film and the creative industries within economic development is accounted for in two data sets: firstly, in the ‘paper trail’ of policy documents, media releases, newspaper articles, and other textual sources; and secondly, in the research interviews with politicians and policymakers. What emerges from these data sets are two very different explanations for the prioritisation of film and the creative industries, with the paper trail suggesting that travelling policies played a key role and the interviews pointing instead to local contingency and opportunity. Moreover, these data sets suggest two different kinds of political projects: in the case of the paper trail, the ‘new moment’ appears to be first and foremost a ‘creative industries’ project, whereas the interviews suggest that the ‘new moment’ is primarily concerned with exploiting opportunities in the film industry and so is, therefore, also first and foremost a ‘film’ project.

In the second half of the chapter, an attempt is made to understand this divergence. It is argued that if we adopt a translation model of power, we can begin to understand the divergence and, additionally, also learn something about the making and stabilisation of political projects. Specifically, it is argued that adopting a translation model enables us to move away from a position that sees the paper trail as a description of ‘what happened’ and towards one where policy documents, media releases and so on are recast as a set of ‘power-making’ devices that, when successful, help to make and stabilise political projects. The documents in the paper trail function as power-making devices in this way by enrolling others through a process of ‘framing’ that is akin to what Callon (1998a) has argued occurs

to make market transactions possible. Such framing, it will be argued here, *makes politics possible* by converting the contingent and local into something more reasoned and objective. The creative industry policy discourses emerge from this discussion as one way of achieving this transformation for the film project, but there are also several others. This final point is illustrated through two examples where quantification was used to do framing work in an effort to stabilise (aspects of) the film project. The examples we consider are, firstly, the attempt to stabilise the Large Budget Screen Production Grant (LBSPG) and, secondly, the efforts to generate an economic impact assessment of the *Last Samurai* film production in Taranaki.

The Turn to Creative Industries: Following the ‘Paper Trail’

We begin our story with the election of the Labour-Alliance coalition government in late 1999. If we follow the paper trail of media releases, speeches, policy documents, newspaper articles and so on, it becomes immediately apparent that this was an important moment for the arts and cultural sector in Aotearoa/New Zealand, albeit not initially because of a newfound economic development role. The incoming Prime Minister, Helen Clark, had clearly signalled her support for this sector before the election. At the Labour Party conference prior to the election she had said that she would take a ‘close personal interest in the arts and culture’ if elected that year (Clark, 2000b:1). Once elected, she appointed herself Minister for Arts, Culture and Heritage to indicate the value that she and her government placed on this portfolio (Clark, 2000b:1):

I believe that the arts and culture have been undervalued in our political culture – and that one way to demonstrate how important and indeed how crucial their role is – was to throw the weight of the Prime Minister’s position behind the portfolio.

Arts and culture had also experienced an increased political profile under Tony Blair’s New Labour government in the United Kingdom around this time. However, initially there were few similarities between the very economically-focused creative industry policies being developed in the United Kingdom and Helen Clark’s renewed focus on the arts and culture. Clark located her support of the arts and culture very much within a more traditional

cultural policy framework. The goal for her was, first and foremost, cultural development. The first policy statement released jointly by Clark and the Associate Minister, Judith Tizard, in November 1999 justified the focus on arts and culture in terms of the role these could play in building a New Zealand identity. Clark (2000b:1) would later summarise the argument of the paper as follows:

In that policy statement released last November, entitled *Uniquely New Zealand*, we said that through the arts and through cultural activities we New Zealanders express our aspirations as a nation, who we are, and where we stand in the world.

The first interventions into the arts and culture sector reflected this cultural development agenda. In March 2000, Judith Tizard announced that the government had commissioned the development of a strategy for the sector. The 'Heart of the Nation' project, as it was called, was charged with formulating a strategy that would fulfil the 'government's vision for a vibrant arts and cultural sector which all New Zealanders can enjoy, and through which a strong and confident cultural identity can emerge' (Tizard, 2000:1). In May 2000, before the Heart of the Nation project had reported back, Helen Clark (2000b:2) launched the 'Cultural Recovery Package' to address what she called the 'parlous state' of many arts, culture, and heritage institutions after a decade of underfunding by the National government. The Package consisted of an immediate investment of 87 million dollars and an additional 20 million dollars for each subsequent year, with funding allocated primarily to the traditional recipients of cultural funding (Clark, 2000c). Creative New Zealand, formerly the Queen Elizabeth II Arts Council,¹⁸ and a new film fund for domestic features received nearly a quarter of the funding each. Others to benefit were the New Zealand Symphony Orchestra, Royal New Zealand Ballet, Historic Places Trust, and the Film Archive.

Several months later Helen Clark participated in a public lecture series at the University of Auckland on 'Arts, Culture and Public Policy'. Here she again very clearly reiterated both her personal and her government's commitment to a cultural policy approach. Clark

¹⁸ This name change took place in the mid-1990s and did not occur within a movement towards a 'creative industries' framing. Creative NZ continued to fulfil the role of an 'arts council'.

(2000a:1) described herself as having ‘a lifelong love of the arts’ and outlined what she saw as the three main reasons for supporting the arts and culture. Her first objective centred on ‘enabl[ing] creative expression’, while the second was concerned with contributing ‘to a strong assertion of New Zealand identity’ (Clark, 2000a:1-2). In the third objective, we see the first mention of the sort of economic framing that would almost completely dwarf the cultural policy focus within two years. Clark (2000a:2) stated that her third objective was ‘to see arts and culture contribute to the building of strong creative industries which provide rewarding employment, opportunities for creative entrepreneurs, and good economic returns.’ However, the term ‘creative industries’ and economic objectives, more generally, were not mentioned in the remainder of the 50-minute lecture, with the focus entirely on creative expression and identity.

It seems that the mention of the economic at this point was probably a strategic deployment rather than an indication of her intentions in respect of the arts and culture sector. Most likely, Clark was ‘name-checking’ the economic so as to cover all the possible rationales that could stabilise her programme for the arts and culture. Such a reading is supported by the fate of the Heart of the Nation project. The project committee, which was made up of five high-profile individuals from the sector, had submitted its draft to Helen Clark and the Associate Minister, Judith Tizard, in June 2000. Both Clark and Tizard were said to be so dismayed with the recommendations in the 450-page report that it was initially suppressed for over a month (New Zealand Herald, 2000a). In this time, the authors were asked to make a series of amendments but even with these changes the government still denounced the report when it was eventually made public in late July (New Zealand Herald, 2000b). The government’s opposition seemed to stem from the call by the report for an ‘overhaul’ rather than ‘tune-up’ of the way that government supports the arts and culture (Heart of the Nation Strategic Working Group, 2000:8). Specifically, the report called for the abolition of Creative New Zealand and its replacement with a Creative Industries Development Agency. Here, then, seemed to be a proposal for the sort of infrastructural change that had been adopted in the United Kingdom in the transition to a creative industries framework. Helen Clark and her government resoundingly rejected these proposals and, in fact, refused to mention the Heart of the Nation report after its publication. The University of Auckland

lecture, for example, took place just a month after the report was made public but contained no references to it.

The introduction to this chapter stated that the paper trail would suggest to us that powerful travelling discourses played a key role in the adoption of an economic development role for the film industry and the creative sector, but does the case of the Heart of the Nation report not disprove the role of these very discourses? It would, if this were the end of the paper trail. However, over the next two years the paper trail continues and shows evidence of policymakers and politicians repeatedly coming into contact and engaging with economic policies around the creative industries. These engagements are not in the first instance with the cultural policymakers and politicians but with policymakers and politicians from the economic arms of government.

After its election in 1999, the Labour-Alliance coalition government had also commenced a programme of research, engagement, and fact-finding to define a new economic policy agenda (see for example, Boston Consulting Group, 2001; L.E.K. Consulting, 2001; Science & Innovation Advisory Council, 2001). Contrasting itself with the previous fifteen years of neoliberal reforms, the government signalled from the outset that the new direction was to be unashamedly interventionist and focused its research on the best way to target such interventions (Clark, 1999). During this fact-finding period, we find evidence in the paper trail of several high profile instances of engagement with economic development policy discourses around the creative industries. Most immediately, the Minister responsible for implementing creative industry strategies in the United Kingdom, Chris Smith, visited New Zealand, as did the creativity 'gurus' Richard Florida and Charles Landry (Wetzstein & Le Heron, 2003). In the wake of these visits, the government commissioned research on the economic contribution of the creative industries in Aotearoa/New Zealand. The research, conducted by the New Zealand Institute of Economic Research, used the creative industries definition established by the Department of Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) in the United Kingdom and borrows heavily from its mapping document methodology (see New Zealand Institute of Economic Research, 2002a). This very specific study of the creative industries was backed by several more general

consultancy reports on economic transformation that identified a key role for the creative industries, often with reference to the importance of creativity in other economic contexts around the world (see for example, L.E.K. Consulting, 2001).

The outcome of this fact-finding was the launch in 2002 of a new economic strategy called the Growth and Innovation Framework (GIF) (Office of the Prime Minister, 2002). The stated objective of the GIF was to provide a strategy to help move New Zealand ‘onto a higher growth plane’ and, in doing so, return its per capita income to the top half of OECD rankings (Office of the Prime Minister, 2002:6). The creative industries were identified in this strategy, alongside biotechnology and ICT, as a sector that warranted specific targeting due to its potential for high growth and spillover benefits. The GIF describes ‘creativity as lying at the heart of innovation’ and states that New Zealand has already ‘established competitive advantage in some niches within this sector, such as film and television production and post-production’ (Office of the Prime Minister, 2002:56). The document also explicitly references overseas models, including again the work of the DCMS. Moreover, during the launch Helen Clark (2002) stressed the objective process by which the creative industries were identified as a key sector:

Boston Consulting Group, Industry New Zealand, Trade NZ, and the Foundation for Research, Science, and Technology have all worked on sector targeting and come to similar conclusions.

The GIF document was allocated initial funding of 110 million dollars for sector targeting (Cullen, 2003). The funding was made available primarily to the domestically focused national economic development agency, Industry New Zealand, which had been launched two years earlier. Its export-focused sister organisation, Trade New Zealand, also received a sizeable share of the funds. Both immediately began work on creative sector engagement strategies and launched a series of initiatives, some of which secured additional funding from government. It is interesting to note that many of these initiatives were not directed at the creative industries as a whole but instead focused on one of two subsectors; design and film. The interviews suggest a possible explanation for this narrowing of focus and we will return to this in the next section. First, though, it is worth noting the types of interventions

that were made in respect of film. Industry New Zealand quickly established the Screen Production Industry Taskforce to draft recommendations for growing the film industry, provided additional funding for the locations office Film NZ, and began to investigate incentive schemes for international productions (Ministry of Economic Development, 2005). Trade New Zealand, on the other hand, set out to tailor its export support programmes to the needs of film businesses and expanded the scope of the screen production programme within Investment New Zealand, a subsidiary agency charged with attracting foreign investment (Ministry of Economic Development, 2005). The paper trail that accompanies these developments is replete with references to overseas models and creativity theorists. In a speech to mark the launch of the Screen Production Industry Taskforce, for example, Jim Anderton (2002), the Minister for Economic Development, includes a lengthy quote from the introduction of John Howkins' (2002) *The Creative Economy*.

We can see, then, that the GIF document created the discursive space for the incorporation of the arts and culture sector, or at least some aspects of it, into an economic development framework. The transition to this framework was most visibly marked, as it had been in the United Kingdom, by the adoption of the term 'creative industries'. It is interesting that this rhetorical shift was in evidence not only in the 'economic' arms of government, but also in the 'cultural' arms of government. The cultural policy focus that Clark (2000a; 2000b) had articulated early into her term fades around this time, being replaced instead by creative industry discourses. The Associate Minister for Arts, Culture and Heritage, for example, lambasted the opposition in mid-2002 for ignoring the importance of the creative industries in their proposed arts and culture policy (Tizard, 2002:1):

By making no provision whatsoever for the creative industries, they have completely failed to understand the economic importance of the sector, both within New Zealand and internationally. They are out of date, out of step and out of tune.

Here the reference is made again to the 'international' and we could easily read this as further evidence of a global policy discourse taking hold in Aotearoa/New Zealand. Such a

reading would fit with the references that we have already seen to the work of the DCMS and with the fact that leading advocates of these types of policies – Richard Florida, Charles Landry, and Chris Smith – had visited Aotearoa/New Zealand. Furthermore, it is certainly the case that others have read the paper trail in Aotearoa/New Zealand and elsewhere in this way (see for example, Gibson & Klocker, 2004; Peck, 2005; Wetzstein & Le Heron, 2003). Recall, for example, that in Chapter 2 we saw Wetzstein and Le Heron (2003:4) conclude on the basis of media reports and policy documents that local politicians in Wellington had ‘full-heartedly’ adopted Florida’s message. The problem for me, however, was that such a reading became untenable very soon after the first physical forays into the ‘field’.

I had completed most of the analysis of contemporary textual sources before the initial research trip to Aotearoa/New Zealand. The laboratory studies of ANT meant that I expected some ‘messiness’ upon entering the field. After all, one of the main lessons of this body of work is the disparity between the carefully crafted outputs of science laboratories and the ‘reality’ of the processes that give rise to them. The extent of the divergence between the ‘paper trail’ and the explanations offered by politicians and policymakers in interviews, however, was nonetheless surprising. Most startling was that politicians and policymakers explained their focus on film and the creative industries primarily in terms of contingent local factors and opportunities. The kind of knowledges they emphasised were more often intuitive and local than objective and global. Moreover, in the case of the economic policymakers and politicians, the local opportunities they mentioned were most often concerned with film and the ‘new moment’ started to look more and more like a ‘film’ project than a ‘creative industries’ project. After examining the interviews, it will be argued, that we end up with two alternative explanations to the paper trail for the use of a creative industry policy framework: on the one hand, economic policymakers seemed to adopt the policies very strategically to take advantage of local economic opportunities particularly in relation to film and, on the other, cultural policymakers seemed to be using the creative industry discourses as a means of stabilising their programme of support for the arts and culture sector.

The Turn to Creative Industries (or Film?): The Interview Accounts

The contrast between the paper-trail and interviews is perhaps best illustrated by the interview with the Minister for Economic Development, Jim Anderton. I began the interview with a question about how it was that creative industries had become so central to economic development:

E: Well maybe to start off with you could maybe just tell me a bit about how it was that creative industries came to be identified alongside ICT and biotech as key to economic development when the Labour-Alliance coalition first came to power.

JA: Well it wasn't. It didn't happen at first. We had to feel our way through issues of economic, industry and regional development.

In describing this process of 'feel[ing]' through issues of economic development, Anderton recounts a process of pragmatic, situated learning from the local economic context. He says that he began by commandeering what was then the Ministry of Commerce – a Ministry he described as 'dry, deregulatory ... and, I would say, to the right of Genghis Khan actually' – and transforming it into the explicitly interventionist Ministry of Economic Development. In contrast to the 'objective' targeting methodologies referred to in the GIF, Anderton says that the focus of the initial work conducted by the Ministry of Economic Development was the result of 'looking a bit opportunistically at the New Zealand economy'. Specifically, the Ministry of Economic Development began by targeting declining regions and what Anderton describes as 'dysfunctional' sectors, such as wood processing and textile, clothing and footwear. It was engagement with these regions and sectors, according to Anderton, that led to the eventual targeting of the creative industries and film:

JA: We learnt a lot from these engagements. And then we came to the realisation that innovation and creativity were special characteristics of successful economies. I'm not saying that sort of struck us like lightning on the road to Damascus, but everywhere you went you came across these innovative, creative companies or people – á la Peter Jackson for example – and they were the catalysts for change.

The description given by Anderton still points to strategic and deliberative action. However, the knowledge upon which deliberations are based is in the first instance *local* and *experiential*. The mention of Peter Jackson is important because he was repeatedly identified in the interviews as key to the prioritisation of film and, more generally, the creative industries.

Interviewing senior economic policymakers at the Ministry of Economic Development, for example, pointed to a very similar process around the identification of economic opportunities. One policymaker attributed the government focus on the screen sector to ‘an element of strategy and opportunity’ and explicitly cited the *Lord of the Rings* trilogy as a contributing factor:

M: The government has been through a process of developing an economic development strategy, which is the GIF and I understand the Minister spoke to you about that ... In order to make the GIF more “real”, it was also decided that what we would do is focus on some sectors which were basically seen as “enabling” sectors ... and the two elements of the creative sector that were identified – basically because of their economic development potential, particularly in enabling other sectors to develop – was the screen production industry and design sectors. That’s coincided, that process coincided with a couple of real screen opportunities within New Zealand. *Lord of the Rings* is the obvious one there. So there was a wee bit of a momentum there.

This policymaker went on to say that it was inevitable that in a small economy, such as Aotearoa/New Zealand, contingency plays a significant role because single individuals can have dramatic impacts on the economy:

M: I think one of the characteristics of the New Zealand economy is that we are small enough to often be influenced by individuals and we’ve had an individual [Peter Jackson] who has had a profound influence on the screen production landscape over the last four or five years.

For those in the domestic film industry who had been lobbying for the past decade for an increased role for film, there was little doubt that the success of Peter Jackson – and not creativity theories or objective targeting methodologies – was the main reason behind the

government's sudden interest in film from an economic standpoint. One filmmaker, who has been making films since the late 1970s, put it thus:

G: It's amazing what it took for the New Zealand government, of whatever colour, to understand the enormous value of a film industry... It actually took somebody in Miramar [Peter Jackson] to make the biggest film ever made in the world anywhere and very gradually there was this "oh my goodness" thing. The penny dropped. And then we had a sudden proliferation of film-friendly organisations.

Further evidence that factors specific to the local context were more influential than international models or theories, came from a number of economic policymakers who explicitly rejected that the United Kingdom was an appropriate model for Aotearoa/New Zealand. One leading economic policymaker, for example, argued that the difference in size of the United Kingdom and New Zealand economies as well as their differential geographical positioning in relation to world markets meant there was little point in comparing them:

W: It seemed to me that it [the United Kingdom] wasn't a helpful model ... The comparisons between a very large economy with relatively mature or highly subsidised cultural niches right in the middle of an international market that had a demand for that kind of product couldn't be compared to a very small economy with very immature creative industries very distant from market.

Another economic policymaker, who had experience of both the United Kingdom and Aotearoa/New Zealand creative industry policies, vehemently denied any suggestion that Aotearoa/New Zealand was simply 'mimicking' the United Kingdom:

K: I don't think for a minute that it is transplanting an international model and that's because I was at the British Council when the 2001 mapping study came out from DCMS. So I don't think that our strategy kind of mimics that.

Similarly, suggestions that the approach had been influenced by the ideas of Florida or any other popular creativity theorist were disputed. In fact, the very notion that there was an essence to something 'creative' was questioned by Jim Anderton, the Minister for Economic Development:

JA: I don't see the film industry or the music industry as any different to any other industry. I mean there is a lot of excitement, a lot of creativity, a lot of innovation, and a lot of skill in engineering, in making a good casting for the aluminium industry or whatever. Huge skill. Talent. Excitement. Creativity. Innovation. It's just as artistic as anything else. You watch them do it. It's magnificent. It's like a full scale orchestra: everything is beautifully positioned, the lute is turning, the automatic stuff is going on, the computer is programmed. It's a symphony. It is. And it is just like watching an orchestra or a film, there's been a lot of elements that have put that together... [So] these are all names... Could have called it anything. Could have called it the innovation and craft taskforce. But, no, I don't get hung up on names. Other people think up the names. I just do it.

In Anderton's discussion there is evidence again of pragmatism and also of the performativity that comes with naming. That is, there was no objective reason for adopting the discourses of 'creativity' and the 'creative industries'. However, in choosing to do so, a new object was brought into being that could then be used to take advantage of local opportunities, such as the success of Peter Jackson. The fact that most of the initiatives that were implemented post-GIF centred on specific subsectors, such as film, where there already were 'some very real' opportunities supports such a reading. We see here, then, our first alternative explanation to that offered by the paper trail for the turn to creative industries. In this explanation, travelling creative industry policy discourses also play a role but not because politicians and economic policymakers were seduced by them. Instead, these political discourses seemed to provide the main political actors in our story with a convenient way of legitimating a policy that was rooted in experience and knowledge of the local economic environment. That is, we were seeing in the paper trail a strategic deployment of the creative industries project to make real a political project based around specific local opportunities, of which film was the most significant. If we wanted to put it bluntly, we could say that the creative industries project was really a project about film, and to a lesser extent design, that became dressed up in the language of creative industries in order to make it 'sell'.

This still leaves us, however, with the cultural arms of government, who also adopted the creative industries policy framing in the paper trail. In that case, finding an explanation for

why the creative industries discourse was adopted seems a little more difficult at first because the most striking feature of the interviews with the cultural policymakers and the Associate Minister for Arts, Culture and Heritage is the almost complete absence of references to the creative industries and to economic rationales. In all of these interviews, the cultural policy rhetoric we saw Helen Clark use immediately after being elected dominates. We see this especially in the interview with the Associate Minister for Arts, Culture and Heritage, Judith Tizard. Tizard did not use the term 'creative industries' at any point in the interview and focused almost exclusively on the cultural benefits of film and other artistic and creative pursuits. In fact, Tizard began the interview by referring back to the cultural objectives for support of the arts and culture outlined in Helen Clark's speech at the University of Auckland some five years earlier:

JT: Helen made a really good speech, which you might like to have a look at, which was her winter lecture speech to Auckland University in 2000 where she said generally the government's objectives are, first, that the arts are intrinsically good and useful: it is about confrontation without shooting each other; it can be about how you get information across; how you get stories across... it's a great way of telling New Zealand stories. The second argument that Helen uses is that it's about identity. And she has said that as a small trading nation at the end of a globalising world, if we are not out there telling our stories, then nobody will.

Even when pressed to consider the economic, Tizard tries to play down its role:

JT: But, whatever, some are going to be less commercially successful than others... But I think the proof of *Once Were Warriors* and *Whale Rider* and *Perfect Strangers* indicates that women's films, Maori films, very specifically New Zealand stories can be very popular and successful.

E: And I guess that's the really interesting thing about film because it is at this nexus of the cultural and the economic and how you strike the balance between those two different imperatives really –

JT: Well that was one of the reasons that we decided that the focus of film policy had to be in the Ministry of Culture and Heritage and not in the Ministry of Economic Development or in Trade and Enterprise. Those are certainly important aspects, and, for example, Film NZ has been funded to support a one-stop shop for overseas filmmakers wanting to come to New Zealand to make films, but not the main ones.

Tizard is drawing the boundaries around film in a very interesting way by claiming that the ‘focus of film policy’ still rests with the Ministry of Arts, Culture and Heritage. In funding terms, and if we consider the number of new initiatives, a very strong case could be made that the locus of film policy had by this point shifted to the Ministry of Economic Development. However, Tizard seems to be saying that the work of the Ministry of Economic Development and other economic agencies is, in some senses, not really about film because *real* ‘film policy’ is the support of film with a cultural development agenda as its primary goal. This, of course, runs counter to the ‘creative industries’ concept, which at its core is about creativity in pursuit of economic gain. Tizard’s investment in such a cultural policy framework would not be an issue if it were not for the fact that in the paper trail we have seen Tizard describe the creative industries and economic concerns as being at the heart of a forward-thinking arts and culture policy. How do we, then, explain the divergence between the paper trail and interview? The explanation for the divergence in this case is similar to the explanation offered for the economic policymakers and politicians. For the cultural policymakers and politicians, the creative industry policy discourses also seemed to come in ‘handy’. For the cultural actors, these discourses appeared to provide a means of stabilising support for their already existing project around the arts and culture. As such, there is also little here that suggests ‘cultural’ politicians and policymakers were seduced by creative industry policy discourses.

The interviews have, therefore, shown us two very strategic deployments of creative industry discourses. In each instance, the adoption of a creative industries policy framing relates to contingent local factors. For the economic policymakers and politicians, the primary motivation is a need to take advantage of local opportunities, such as Peter Jackson’s success. For the cultural policymakers and politicians, on the other hand, it is a deep and, in Clark’s case, personal commitment to the arts and culture. The question this raises for us is what function the documents in the paper trail serve. Or, put another way: why can politicians and policymakers not be upfront about the basis for their policies? In the remainder of the chapter, it will be argued that the documents that make up the paper trail are key devices of political stabilisation. These documents, it will be suggested, are

deployed to enrol others in a given political project through a process of framing that constructs political action as rational and objective. To understand how this works, we must return to the translation model of power.

Making Politics Possible: On Power, Enrolment, and Framing

Let us recall that the central tenet of Latour's translation model is that power has to be made. It is an *effect* rather than *cause* of collective action; the result of a multitude having been convinced, cajoled, persuaded to carry out a particular order. The successful execution of a political project is, therefore, not attributable to a 'powerful' politician or government body but rather to the enrolment of others in the project. This necessarily shifts attention away from a question of 'who has power?' to one that asks 'how is power made?' That movement, in turn, calls forth a focus on *techniques* and *devices* that are used for the purposes of interest enrolment or, as Barry (2002a:269) terms it in the case of politics specifically, a focus on 'the remarkable technicality of politics'.

Adopting this model means that we can no longer see the policy documents, consultancy reports, and other elements of the 'paper trail' simply as straightforward descriptions of what was envisaged and embarked on by politicians and policymakers. Instead we must also see them as tools for enrolling others in their project and, hence, tools for making power and doing political work. How do textual artefacts perform this 'interest work', as Callon and Law (1982:621) term it? It will be argued here that successful enrolment strategies were perceived to depend on the use of objective knowledge and reasoning and so required politicians and policymakers to engage in a 'framing' exercise in order to disentangle themselves from their embodied and contingent contexts.

This is not an argument about whether such enrolment strategies actually work. The important point is that they are *perceived* to be crucial to enrolment and are therefore deployed. Callon and Law's (1982) notion of interest maps helps us to understand this distinction. They argue that, although 'interests' themselves are neither fixed nor predictably follow from particular social locations, when seeking to enrol others in a given project actors often construct 'maps of interest' to determine what is most likely to enrol

their target (Callon & Law, 1982:621). In our case, these ‘maps’ are used by policymakers and politicians to deduce what is most likely to persuade other policymakers, politicians, industry, and the general public to buy into a role for film within economic development. We have already seen that in the interviews economic policymakers and politicians explained the focus on film through a combination of contingency and opportunity. Every economic policymaker and politician interviewed for this research, for example, identified the presence of Peter Jackson and the filming of *The Lord of the Rings* as a significant factor in the prioritisation of film within economic development. However, policy documents rarely mentioned such contingent factors. Far more prominent were instead references to economic models, the experiences of other contexts, and economic estimates. This disparity arises, it is argued here, because the main actors believed that rational, ‘objective’ argumentation would have the most purchase with the actors they had targeted for enrolment.

As such, one of the functions of the documents in the paper trail, is to do this work of converting the contingent, subjective and local rationales for the focus on film into something more objective, rational, and universal. Put another way, we could say that the documents in the paper trail *make politics possible* through a process of disentangling – a process that is akin to what Callon (1998a) has described as ‘framing’ in the context of market transactions.

Callon (1998a) derives his concept of framing from Goffman’s writings on social interaction. For Goffman, social interaction is only able to take place if there is a suitable frame in place that establishes the parameters and terms of the interaction. In *The Laws of Markets*, Callon (1998a:253) extends this to markets to argue that market transactions are only possible after a process of framing that clearly defines what is external and internal to the transaction through a ‘violent effort to extricate’ agents from their networks. In essence, framing is a process that ‘demarcates in regards to the network of relationships, those which are taken into account and those which are ignored’ (Callon, 1998b:15). The myriad of connections to the ‘outside world’ mean, however, that this process of framing is always costly and never complete: it requires constant (re)work and is always threatened by

'overflow' (Callon, 1998a:244). The argument being made here is that the enrolment of other actors in the political project around film and economic development proceeds via a similar process of framing and that the textual artefacts are a tool that political actors use for the establishment of frames. That is, as noted above, the textual artefacts do framing work by converting local, contingent, and embodied knowledges into seemingly objective and universal 'facts'. There were two main ways in which the textual artefacts sought to achieve this transformation from the contingent to the 'objective'. The first was through the hooking of local opportunities around film – specifically, Peter Jackson and *The Lord of the Rings* – into a broader discourse around the creative industries. As we saw in the paper trail, there were frequent citations of creative industry policy models, creative economy theories and other international contexts in order to make this link to creative industries and, thus, confer an air of objective authority on a very locally embedded project around the film industry. The second strategy makes use of quantification, much like the New Zealand Trade Development Board reports discussed at the end of Chapter 4. This second strategy was widespread, but has not yet been explored here and so the two examples at the end of this chapter will provide a detailed account of how numbers did framing work in the course of stabilising the government's film project.

For the moment, however, it is important to make two further points about the implications of recasting the documents in the paper trail as devices of power-making. The first is that recasting the textual artefacts in this way should not be read as an epistemological argument about their truth value vis-à-vis the interview narrative. For a start, these texts are acting upon the world and, as such, enacting themselves in the world. They are becoming, in a sense, 'real', even if they were not the 'real' reason for the implementation of these policies to begin with. In addition, we cannot assume that the interview narrative is a better approximation of the 'truth' as it is also a performance and a part of making 'power'. The disavowal of economic models could, for example, be read as an attempt by policymakers and politicians to construct themselves as agentic individuals. Even if we do not accept such a reading, at the very least our analysis must be built on the assumption that policymakers and politicians do not approach a socio-economic problem with a blank slate. Decisions about strategy are always based at least in part on memories of interactions, texts,

and experiences and this must be the case here (see also Law, 1991a). We can return to the colourful language of the Minister for Economic Development, Jim Anderton, to illustrate this point. The notion that creativity might have a role to play in economic development certainly does not simply strike politicians and policymakers like ‘lightning on the road to Damascus’ but, rather, is related at least in part to the embeddedness of these actors in discursive contexts where such ideas about economic development circulate.

The second point is that, quite separate from the framing work, the paper trail also plays another role in making and stabilising the film and creative industries project. Law (1991b:174) has noted that ‘one of the best strategies for stabilising relations and their downstream power effects is ... to embody them into durable materials.’ Following Law (1991b), the policy documents and textual artefacts also, therefore, contribute to the durability of the film (and creative industries) project by *materialising* it. To put it more simply we can borrow the words of a local economic development policymaker in Wellington who said that policy documents played a key role in ‘making real’ a given political vision (Interview, Participant GW). There are, of course, many ways of materialising a project but writing has been identified by ANT scholars as a particularly important tool of materialisation. This is because written texts, as Callon (2002) has recently argued, can play a performative role and also act as conduits between individual and collective action. Callon (2002) has illustrated this using the example of two service companies. For these companies, writing made their product, which as a service existed in an intangible form, durable and transportable (Callon, 2002:194). This was a performative act in that the detailed descriptions of the product were not just a reflection of the service but also defined and ‘made’ it. In Callon’s (2002:199, emphasis in original) words:

[T]his [writing] is a process that puts actions into words without being a mere statement of what happens: writing down the sequences of elementary actions *defines* the content of the service.

The same is true of policy documents: these bring the objects ‘film industry’ and ‘creative industries’ into being in a particular form as much as they describe them. In so doing, they also construct a narrative that then enables collective action. Actors, to use Callon’s

(2002:200) words again, are able through these texts to become the ‘subjects of a narrative, of a story into which they fit and through which they act, which they cause to progress, and through which they progress.’ For these narratives to be the basis of collective action in this way, however, requires that actors become enrolled in them. Before we look at our two examples of how quantification was used in the paper trail to do framing work and enrol actors, let us now turn to a brief mapping of the main actors and their targets for enrolment.

Doing Interest Work: Actors and Their Targets

We will adopt as our main actors the economic policymakers and politicians, since it was from within the Ministry of Economic Development that the creative industries and economically-focused film project originated. The Associate Minister for Arts, Culture and Heritage and the cultural policymakers only retrospectively adopted creative industries rhetoric when it already appeared to have some traction. As such, the work of constituting the project and much of the initial ‘interest work’ was done by the Ministry of Economic Development and its subsidiary agencies.

Shortly after the GIF was launched, the Ministry of Economic Development established a specialist creative industries division. Alongside the Minister Jim Anderton, it was the policymakers from within this division that were the main proponents of an economic development role for film and the creative industries. They were supported by policymakers and ‘practitioners’ within the film and creative industries divisions of the three government agencies tasked with implementing economic development policies: Trade New Zealand, Industry New Zealand, and Investment New Zealand.

For our main actors, the targets for enrolment were both within and outside their own organisations. Most immediately, because film and the creative industries were very much still matters of controversy, these actors often found themselves having to convince others in the economic development field that they were worthwhile projects. Beyond their own colleagues, these actors also had to convince cultural agencies, the domestic film industry and the general public that incorporating film and the creative industries into an economic development framework was a sound course of action.

Economic Development Targets: Colleagues and Treasury

Politicians and senior policymakers working in the area of film and creative industries often spoke at length about their colleagues' scepticism that the creative industries could generate 'real' economic value and deliver on economic development objectives. One senior policymaker, for example, described how she had attended numerous meetings where the role of economic agencies in the creative sector was questioned, although in the case of film she said that this antagonism was starting to subside as a result of Peter Jackson's success:

W: There are people who think, "What are we doing there?" I think that Peter Jackson has provided us with a much more solid opportunity to actually build on that. For example, there are a lot of other creative industries where you get no leverage... Music is a real struggle. I mean I've sat in meetings where someone is going, "Well it's all culture. Just give it to Ministry of Culture and Heritage. They do culture. We don't do culture."

Another policymaker expressed frustration that, despite making a contribution to the GDP that was similar in size to other industries whose role within economic development was accepted, the intervention by an economic agency in the creative sector continued to be questioned. She spoke of her challenge to make the government's commitment to promote film 'meaningful':

K: My challenge as sector director is to find a way to make that meaningful within the economy; to resist the notion that, even though the growth rate at its peak has been as high as 9 percent in New Zealand, its contribution to GDP is only 3.1 percent. Although that puts it up among education, you know, and some quite credible sectors who don't get the same attack all the time: "Your contribution to GDP is too small." So it's making it credible and establishing it in the minds of our and other agencies. We have encountered quite a lot of scepticism from some of the policy ministries ... and some scepticism internally. So the big challenge was to create a strategic document and then develop some projects around that that actually demonstrated what our role could be.

She went on to say later in the interview that she felt there was a divide ‘at quite a senior level’ within her agency between those who believe the creative industries have a role to play in economic development and those who do not:

K: I do think that there is in traditional economic development like this – and it is fantastic that we have a creative industries section – but I think there is probably at quite a senior level a real split between the people who don’t actually believe that the creative industries have a real economic development or growth potential.

Policymakers often used words such as ‘struggle’ and ‘battle’ to describe their attempts to gain recognition for the economic value of creative industries. Aside from the battles within their own agency, most said their greatest difficulty was trying to bring on board policymakers from the Treasury. The same policymaker who spoke of the split within her agency, for example, said:

K: It’s been a struggle for some with a rather dry economic view to actually recognise the value, particularly if you are talking about spillover benefits and so on. It’s relatively ephemeral for someone sitting in Treasury.

We will see in the two examples at the end of this chapter some of the strategies that were mobilised to persuade the Treasury to support a role for film in economic development. For the moment, let us turn to another front in the attempt to establish an economic development role for film and the creative industries.

Cultural Targets: Cultural Agencies and the Domestic Film Industry

At the same time as battling with other agencies that have economic remits, the policymakers responsible for implementing economic development initiatives around film and the creative industries were also immersed in battles with government agencies with a stronger cultural focus. They often described policymakers within these agencies as fearful that an increasingly economic focus would compromise cultural objectives, as in this example where a senior policymaker from an economic development agency describes her attempt to have a seat on a committee with responsibilities for overseeing policy delivery primarily for the domestic film industry:

W: We have a group called Screen Co-ordination Group, which we had to battle to get into. They didn't want us in there. But I have insisted on having a role in there and I think it has been to the advantage or benefit of that group as a whole.

E: Why did people not want you in there?

W: Because a lot of people in policy roles in those agencies on, if you like, the cultural end of the continuum actually don't see it as a continuum. They see it as a polarity and there have been some harsh words uttered about the bureaucrats in Ministry of Economic Development and NZTE not having the capability of understanding what "cultural development" is about and almost seen as kind of compromising cultural development by introducing the evil world of commercialism and economic development.

The cultural agencies, however, disputed such characterisations of themselves as consumed by a fear of all things economic and commercial. In respect of film especially, opposition to government policy was usually constructed not in terms of an ideological concern about the encroachment of economic rationales on a cultural domain but rather in far more pragmatic terms. The government's new economic direction for film was discussed most often by cultural policymakers and practitioners in terms of the focus on attracting international productions. The general sentiment was that these were not necessarily bad for the development of the domestic film industry but that an imbalance had developed in support for foreign and domestic productions. The Chief Executive of the Film Commission, for example, stated that she did not object to international productions as, in her opinion, the 'benefits outweigh the risks'. However, she was opposed to the current government policies because her sense was that the government strategy of prioritising international productions was akin to 'putting all your eggs in a very unfaithful basket':

R: The other risks [of international productions] are, for example, that the governments are totally seduced by the scale of benefit that you get from a very large film. They put in place subsidy regimes that are designed to do that and it's like a cargo cult... So it's putting all your eggs in a very unfaithful basket or overweighting that unfaithful basket. I see that as a risk and the result of that is that if that is to the detriment of your domestic industry ... then you're undermining the base on which all the rest of it sits.

Claims were made by both the cultural and economic policymakers that those on the other side of the culture/economy divide did not understand how the film industry 'really works'. So, for example, the economic policymakers claimed that the opposition of the cultural policymakers was based on a flawed understanding of the film industry and the cultural policymakers, for their part, argued that the initiatives of the economic policymakers were misguided because they did not understand how film operates in Aotearoa/New Zealand. Both articulated a need to educate the other party.

A similar dynamic also existed between economic agencies and the domestic film industry.¹⁹ The domestic film industry's opposition to initiatives around international productions was attributed by economic development policymakers and practitioners to an irrational fear of the 'economic' and a lack of understanding of the business of film. One economic policymaker, for example, described the domestic industry as 'very uptight' about government support for international productions. In her opinion, however, most of their arguments against international productions are 'spurious and don't actually stack up':

K: I mean some people say it pushes crew rates up and other people at the same time say, "But we want to be paid more!" And you go, "Well which one is it?" ... We certainly get quite a lot of flak about the amount of effort that goes into attracting large productions. In terms of pure economic impact, it is a really important part of the kind of pipeline of what we do and I guess, in terms of us developing policy and working with the industry, the job is to convince people that in terms of capability building and opportunities and sheer throughput of work that it is a good thing.

A regional film promotions officer described elements of the domestic industry as 'ignorant of reality', going on to say that all 'film is dollar' and that a more economic and business-minded approach would be required if the industry was to see growth:

S: So I just think we have to look a little bit deeper and be a bit more broader minded in terms of how we go about growing the industry. But it won't happen without the dollar, without successful business models.

¹⁹ 'Domestic film industry' is understood here to mean those sections of the local film industry that are not primarily involved in making or servicing foreign productions.

Some said selfishness on the part of the film industry compounded this lack of understanding, with several stating that local filmmakers and producers needed to look beyond the success of their individual businesses and projects. A policymaker within the Ministry of Economic Development, for example, contrasted the broad economic development agenda he was charged with pursuing with the more limited standpoint of someone from industry:

T: It's some of the general economic benefits that we are trying to capture as well as grow the industry at the same time. But the industry's focus, and probably fair enough, is often very industry-specific and not thinking about the wider economy, which is obviously what we have to consider and how we have to look at it.

Those in the domestic industry who were most vocal in their opposition to the economic direction of government policy on film, however, countered that the problem was not selfishness or a lack of understanding on their part, but rather an ignorance among economic development policymakers, practitioners, and politicians of how the film industry – international and domestic – works. The appointment of a Minister with responsibilities for the *Lord of the Rings* trilogy and the extensive government support for the premiere of the third *Lord of the Rings* film was often used to illustrate the perceived failings of government. A high profile member of the Screen Production and Development Association (SPADA), which is the domestic producers' association, saw the ministerial *Lord of the Rings* appointment as symbolic of the government's 'naiveté':

N: You know, *Lord of the Rings* was seen as an enormous opportunity and you had this nonsense situation where we had this "Minister of *Lord of the Rings*", which frankly I just think is embarrassing. It shows how juvenile the attitude is to it. I mean, you know, it was a phenomenon but it is a business issue and you do not have to have a Minister for *Lord of the Rings*. And, by having that, from an international perspective it shows New Zealand's naiveté. There doesn't appear to be either an overarching policy or any understanding of the different factors of the industry.

He concludes that current government policy is 'slightly ass about the face':

N: It's all focused on the international servicing and the glamour and "let's get the studios in" without an understanding that without a strong domestic industry the servicing industry is going to be deeply flawed.

Other industry people recounted personal experiences with economic development agencies that, in their mind, illustrated that these understood little about how the sector worked. One film producer who was attempting to get finance for a new film business described how Trade and Enterprise New Zealand²⁰ had sought to put him in touch with venture capitalists, only to find that the film industry held virtually no appeal to venture capitalists:

L: Well I was in touch with Trade and Enterprise just to look at getting a business plan together and start a business etc and they put me onto a venture capital broker and he then went and looked around at who might be open to considering what we are doing and he was quite blown away. He came back and said, "Look this has just been a bit of an eye-opener" because there was only one venture capitalist that was even willing to talk to him and even then when they talked to him, they came back and said, "No." So the creative sector, and film and television in particular because of the high profile it has, was designated by the government as one of the five business industries that they wanted to grow but they haven't thought it through. The reality is that there's no one out there – this guy came back and said, "The creative sector is the least attractive to the venture capitalists." Like, they don't want to come near it basically.

There was also a sense among some in the domestic film industry, as there had been among the cultural agencies, that it was not so much that international productions were entirely negative, but that the balance between support for these and support for the domestic industry had come unstuck. A local director, for example, stated that:

G: There are some occasional positive things [from international productions] but they are so hard to quantify that on the whole that the amount of energy that goes into promoting foreign productions is what's upsetting and the amount of money that is spent on luring them down here.

We can see here again, then, that there was a mismatch between the way that our main actors described the standpoint of their targets for enrolment and how these targets

²⁰ This was a government agency that was formed in 2002 out of the amalgamation of Trade New Zealand and Industry New Zealand.

themselves described their own position. The result is that the concerns of the cultural targets are rarely addressed in the efforts of the economic policymakers and practitioners to stabilise the film project. Their offerings – ever more elaborate quantifications of the effects their policies will have – do little to bring on board the domestic film industry and cultural agencies. After all, it is not that these actors are unaware of the financial benefits that stem from international productions but that they feel an imbalance between government support for the local and international film industry has developed.

The General Public

The elaborate quantifications were also, however, directed at a further target and here, arguably, they were at least provisionally successful. As with most political undertakings, stabilisation requires also the enrolment of the general public. The need to enrol the general public was talked about explicitly by policymakers in the context of several high profile film events. In Wellington, for example, the consultant charged with co-ordinating the world premiere of the third *Lord of the Rings* film, *The Return of the King*, stated that a central objective of the event was to ensure that ‘ratepayers could, you know, feel involved and be proud of it.’ The media functioned as the primary conduit for enrolling the public and we see frequent mobilisation of economic multipliers, scoping report estimates, and economic impact assessments in newspaper articles and news reporting (see for example, Taylor, 2003b). In addition, photo opportunities with key local players, such as Peter Jackson, and high profile international talent were exploited by politicians and communicated through the media. These, however, did not always go to plan. In one instance, recounted by an Inland Revenue policymaker, the Prime Minister, Helen Clark, was photographed with Tom Cruise on the set of *The Last Samurai* on the same day that a tax scandal involving the film broke:

H: Not a good look for a civil servant when the Prime Minister is on the front page of the *New Zealand Herald* next to that lovely young man Tom Cruise and the whole article talks about *Last Samurai*’s tax problems. Not pretty. There were a few “please explains” quickly after that.

We know that photo opportunities are staged and, so, also ‘produced’. Barry (2001) reminds us that the same is true of numbers and quantifications: such information does not just ‘exist’, but rather needs to be produced. Moreover, once produced, it creates as much as it describes the reality it purports to represent. Our next two examples examine, therefore, both the production and deployment of numbers in the attempt to stabilise film-related economic development initiatives through ‘framing’ work.

Stabilising through Framing: Two Cases of Quantification

Barry’s (2001) assertions are made in the context of a study in which he examined the production and use of air pollutant measurements in a London Borough. Barry (2001) noted that measurements were deployed by the Council even when they knew that these measures were not necessarily reliable or meaningful. The goal, according to Barry (2001:169), was stabilising a ‘rapidly expanding arrangement of political alliances, policy directives, technological transfers, financial flows and measurement and assessments of “public opinion”.’ In our case, it is not measures of air pollutants but economic estimates that are at the centre of enrolment strategies and the project that is being stabilised is the film industry in economic development. The ‘truth value’ of the estimates, however, seem equally inconsequential to the politicians and policymakers deploying them. Our first example of quantification examines the Large Budget Screen Production Grant Scheme (LBSPG). Here, numbers were used by a diverse range of actors even when aware that these numbers held little or no truth value. The argument, as outlined earlier in the chapter, is that the numbers were used irrespective of their truth value because of the ‘framing work’ they could do. That is, they were deployed in order to disentangle politicians and policymakers from their contingent, embodied contexts and, in so doing, make it easier for them to enrol others in their project around the film industry. The second example explores the collaborative effort of national economic development agencies and a regional film office, Film Taranaki, to construct a standardised methodology for measuring the economic impact of films. Here again we see similar framing at work: the emphasis is on producing ‘factual’ data that will be accepted by numerous different parties. Of course, as with the framing of market transactions, the framings in both of these examples are always threatened by overflow and, as we shall see, not necessarily successful.

The Large Budget Screen Production Grant

The LBSPG was hastily introduced in July 2003 with the stated objective of ‘increas[ing] economic growth by providing a financial incentive to attract large scale production (expenditure greater than or equal to NZ\$15million) to New Zealand which would be unlikely to come in the absence of incentive’ (Mallard, 2006:4). The scheme, which is administered by the Film Commission, initially provided a 12.5 percent rebate in the form of a non-taxable grant to productions with a budget that exceeded 50 million dollars.²¹ Films spending between 15 and 50 million also received the 12.5 percent rebate provided that more than 70 percent of the total production budget was captured in Aotearoa/New Zealand and met the criteria for ‘Qualifying New Zealand Expenditure’. In the first two years of the scheme (to July 2005), seven films accessed the scheme to receive grants totalling 56.9 million dollars (Outcome Management Services, 2005:31). This made it the single largest new initiative for film in the wake of the GIF and also larger than any other initiative under the creative industries umbrella. It was also an initiative that, as we will see, had its roots in very local and contingent events but ended up being framed, primarily through the use of numbers, as something that made objectively good sense in the course of its (provisional) stabilisation. Let us start right at the beginning of this story.

The shape of the LBSPG was in no small measure influenced by historic events surrounding taxation of the film industry. For a start, the tax shelter films of the 1980s had left successive governments wary of implementing tax-based subsidies for the film industry. As one official involved in advising the government on the LBSPG noted, the ‘ramifications’ of these films ‘are still being felt today’ (Interview, Participant H). More important to the eventual shape of the LBSPG than these films was, however, the tax treatment of the *Lord of the Rings* trilogy. The trilogy exploited, albeit with the tacit consent of the then National government, a tax provision for domestic films that had been

²¹ This was the original form of the grant. In July 2007, the grant was increased to 15 percent in a move that also brought in several other changes to eligibility requirements (New Zealand Film Commission, 2007).

in place for some 25 years and allowed for the early deduction of production costs.²² Despite the ‘real’ owners of the film being based in the United States, the trilogy was able to qualify through a structure that saw a group of New Zealanders act as ‘financiers’ who could argue that they ‘owned’ the film and therefore should qualify for the early deductions. This structure was, as one official said, ‘quite artificial’ in that it was ‘essentially a loan transaction’ in which ‘the real American owners, whoever they were, had to get reputable banks to guarantee that the New Zealand financiers would be repaid at the end of five years’ (Fieldnote, 22 June 2005). For our purposes, there are two things that are noteworthy about this arrangement. The first is that it meant that the Labour-Alliance coalition government was initially very resistant to offering any kind of incentive to international productions and that when the decision was eventually made to implement the LBSPG it was designed to be delivered as a grant rather than through the tax system. In the words of the Minister for Economic Development, Jim Anderton:

JA: We set our mind against tax deductions because we had learned from *Lord of the Rings* and others that these are bottomless pits when you go through the tax system because international corporations, and movie corporations in particular, are very good at mining this stuff to the point where you haven’t got a clue where the money is going. You only know that you are losing a lot of it.

The second point about the *Lord of the Rings* tax arrangement relates directly to our discussion of quantification and numbers as it is an interesting case, amidst the prolific production of numbers, of politicians claiming ‘not to know’ a figure. There had been considerable debate in the media about the cost of the arrangement (see for example, Alley, 2003). Several government Ministers, including the Minister of Finance and Minister for Economic Development, consistently maintained when questioned by journalists that they did not to know the exact cost. Similarly, when interviewed for this research the Minister

²² It was suggested to me ‘off the record’ that the National government was approached by a consortium of former Bank of New Zealand bankers representing the *Lord of the Rings* production to discuss a ‘favourable’ tax arrangement for the trilogy (Fieldnote, 11 May 2005).

for Economic Development claimed not to have accurate knowledge of the cost borne by the taxpayer.²³

E: You were saying before about *Lord of the Rings* and in terms of the arrangement you had there –

JA: I mean we didn't have that. That was done by the previous government. But it was. Whether it has been worth it or not – and I think a lot of New Zealanders would probably say it has been – I wouldn't even know because I don't actually know how much it cost. It's almost impossible to measure.

E: Why is that?

JA: Well because the way the tax treatment was devolved by the companies was so complex that I don't think the Inland Revenue knows exactly how much –

E: No one can follow it?

JA: No. You can't figure out how much it's actually cost you. I'm sure they probably know how much they got. But it was such a labyrinthine, Machiavellian bloody trivets of connections.

An official from Inland Revenue, however, disputed the Minister's account. He maintained that the cost was known but that he could not divulge it to me as he was not allowed to talk about 'taxpayer specific stuff' (Fieldnote, 22 June 2005). That said, he could comment on the cost of deductions by the *Lord of the Rings* trilogy and 'like films'²⁴ – of which there were two; neither with a sizeable budget – and stated that it was 'probably ... in the order of three hundred mil'.

The claim by the Minister not to know, then, is significant because it points to the way that numbers can at times be seen as a hindrance in efforts to enrol the interest of others. In this case, knowledge of the exact figure would have enabled those opposed to a role for the film industry in economic development to more effectively question the net economic benefit of the *Lord of the Rings* trilogy to the Aotearoa/New Zealand economy. Nonetheless, the

²³ Interestingly, the consultants commissioned by the government to produce a report on the lasting economic impacts of the *Lord of the Rings* trilogy were specifically told that they were 'not to go near the financial stuff' (Fieldnote, 4 May 2005).

²⁴ By 'like films' he meant other films that had exploited the same tax loophole, which incidentally was closed shortly after the *Lord of the Rings* trilogy.

claim to ‘not know’ still has something in common with the plethora of numbers that were produced and mobilised in order to secure a place for film within economic development. What it has in common with these other uses of numbers is that it makes very explicit that the deployment of numbers is not neutral: just because the information exists, does not mean it will be made available. Only those numbers that were perceived to have the potential to enrol actors in the project were actually deployed in the public domain. There is also an additional reason why this claim to ‘not know’ is interesting. Barry (2002a) has noted that calculation and numbers have often been seen by political sociologists to have ‘anti-political’ effects. That is, in Barry’s (2002a:272) words:

Calculation is often regarded as an essentially anti-political instrument... when situations become calculable it is taken to indicate the fact that political contestation has ended.

Here, however, numbers would have opened up, rather than closed off, debate. We will return to this idea later in the chapter.

For the moment, we know that the experience with *Lord of the Rings* had left the Labour-Alliance coalition reluctant to offer an incentive for international productions. This was despite constructing a raft of other economic development initiatives around film, including several directed at international productions. Even after the publication of the Screen Production Industry Taskforce report in March 2003, the government was still adamant that it would not be offering an incentive to international productions. Jim Anderton, for example, is quoted in a newspaper article at this time rejecting the Taskforce’s call for an incentive (Taylor, 2003a):

Calls for tax incentives to support local film and television appear to have little chance of a sympathetic hearing from the Government ... Anderton said in general terms the Government was not looking at taking the tax incentives route and was reluctant to “buy business” that way. If it started to offer incentives, other countries would offer more.

What, then, convinced the government in July 2003 that such a scheme would be a good idea after all? In the research interviews, the politicians and policymakers involved in

deliberations around the scheme were very upfront about the impetus for its implementation, acknowledging that it was not economic models or travelling policy discourses but rather pressure from international producers and elements of the local industry that were involved in servicing international productions. Several international producers had requested meetings with the Minister of Finance and the Minister for Economic Development. One official described what he saw at these meetings as ‘blackmail’:

H: [T]he American film industry is very, very skilled in ferreting subsidies out of governments, whether they are state governments or national governments, right around the world. I’ve actually used the term “blackmail” in terms of how they go about it ... I’ve literally heard that blackmail happen in the Minister’s Office and was not impressed.

Another official was more measured, describing it as follows:

M: The Large Budget Screen Production Grant was instigated by government as a result of pressure from the industry. No doubt about it ... I guess it was kicked off ... by two or three other offshore films wanting to come here ... who knocked on the door of government. And I was at some of those meetings and they were very straight forward about what they wanted, which was money to come here. And so the government said, “All right. We’ll have a look at it.” And that’s where it came from.

The government deciding to ‘have a look at it’ set in train a policy process. It will be argued here that this policy process was not so much about determining whether the incentive scheme could be justified from an economic policy perspective, although that was undoubtedly a part of it, but more about enrolling two government agencies, Treasury and Inland Revenue, and generating numbers that could then be used to enrol the interests of the domestic industry and the general public. That is, the policy process was about ‘making power’ through a process of framing that disentangled the incentive from its beginnings in coercive meetings between Hollywood producers and government Ministers. Unfortunately for the proponents of the LBSPG, this process did not always go to plan.

The first step in the policy process involved the assembly of a team of policymakers from across the Ministries with responsibility for economic policy. The Ministry of Economic Development was represented by policymakers from its creative industries division, Treasury with a team from its tax department, and Inland Revenue by its policy division. Within this grouping, the policymakers from the Ministry of Economic Development were considered from the outset to be in favour of implementing an incentive scheme, perhaps as they were already working in a dedicated creative industries division. Both Treasury and Inland Revenue, on the other hand, were opposed to the LBSPG for a mixture of ideological and pragmatic reasons. Treasury is widely known in policy and government circles, as the Minister for Economic Development noted, to 'hate subsidies of any kind'. In a similar vein, Inland Revenue policymakers interviewed in the course of this research said that they thought 'government should let the market work out what should and shouldn't be done in New Zealand.' More pragmatically, the Inland Revenue policymakers also said that in the event that the government did choose to subsidise particular economic activities, an incentive for film was not 'the most appropriate way to spend money to attract extra business' (Fieldnote, 22 June 2005). Given this opposition from Inland Revenue and Treasury, the policymakers from Jim Anderton's Ministry of Economic Development were charged not just with providing policy advice but also with convincing the two other Ministries of the need for an incentive scheme.

An Inland Revenue policymaker recalls that the arguments from the Ministry of Economic Development centred on estimates of the economic value of international productions, and in particular of the *Lord of the Rings* trilogy, to the Aotearoa/New Zealand economy. It was his opinion, however, that these were often overstated:

H: I have a perception that economists overstated spin offs ... As I say, I can't judge what the multipliers are. I sort of had the feeling from rubbing shoulders with the economists involved that at least some parties typically overstated them.

The policymakers from Treasury were also not convinced by the arguments put forward by the Ministry of Economic Development and so the initial cabinet paper produced by this tri-

Ministry grouping advised the government against implementing an incentive scheme. The Inland Revenue policymaker quoted above provided the following succinct summary of the initial paper: '[D]on't do it. You've got better ways to spend your money. These films are going to come here anyway.' The cabinet, however, was not satisfied with this advice and instructed the policymakers to "go away and have another think" (Interview Participant JG). The instruction to 'have another think' is again illustrative of the power-making function of policy processes. That is, it points to how the seeking of policy advice is not necessarily about determining what the appropriate course of action is in response to a specific problem but also about enrolling others, both directly and through the production of tools that can then be used more widely with, for example, the general public.

In this case, neither the attempt to enrol actors – Treasury and Inland Revenue – directly nor the production of tools to persuade a wider audience was successfully achieved through the extended policy process that ensued from the policymakers 'hav[ing] another think'. The policymakers from Inland Revenue and Treasury retained their scepticism about the merits of an incentive scheme. Aware, however, that the government had made a decision to go ahead with such a scheme they chose to proceed pragmatically:

H: At the end of the day ... we would rather not have had a bar of it. But the government made the decision they were going to do it, so we told them how to do it.

The same official described the final paper as 'probably the most difficult cabinet paper I've been near.' He said that it was important to him that the paper was 'very carefully written ... to at least make sure that they were fully aware of the various issues with it.' The resulting paper is testimony to the reluctance of the policymakers from Treasury and Inland Revenue to endorse an incentive scheme. It outlines several delivery mechanisms for the incentive but provides a very cautious projection of the overall net economic benefit of such a scheme, stating that the most realistic modelling predicts a fiscal impact of somewhere between a five million dollar per annum loss and 10 million dollar per annum gain (Inland Revenue, Treasury, & Ministry of Economic Development, 2003:8). The paper

also strongly recommends that the scheme be reviewed within three years (Inland Revenue et al., 2003).

The modest projected economic return of the scheme and the generally cautious tone of the cabinet paper presented Jim Anderton, as Minister for Economic Development, and the wider cabinet with a problem: how do you sell an initiative that policymakers have advised against? Anderton and the cabinet decided to suppress the paper and embark on a communication strategy that made no mention of the economic estimates produced by the policymakers. However, at the press conference immediately after the cabinet meeting that decided to implement the LBSPG, numbers did play a central role. Anderton (2003b) began by explaining the rationale for the cabinet's decision as follows:

The coalition Government has decided today at Cabinet that large-budget films are to receive production expenditure grants as part of the long-term development of the film and screen industry in New Zealand. The fact is that we took into consideration when deliberating on this issue that the screen production industry is a key part of New Zealand's culture, and cultural and economic future. Large-screen production companies could make decisions to invest up to \$300 million in this coming financial year that starts tomorrow, in New Zealand.

This 300-million dollar figure was mentioned a further three times in the course of the press release. In addition, Anderton also spoke of a possible investment of 1,000 million dollars if the five Narnia films are shot in Aotearoa/New Zealand. Newspaper articles announcing the scheme the following day reproduced these figures, as in this article from the *New Zealand Herald* (Taylor, 2003b):

Economic Development Minister Jim Anderton said Cabinet decided yesterday to approve the system, which will match a tax rebate incentive scheme operating in Australia. He said large screen-production companies might decide to invest nearly \$300 million in New Zealand on three major movies in the 2003-04 financial year.

The *New Zealand Herald* journalist must also have approached the Ministry of Economic Development for additional economic impact figures as later in the article he states that (Taylor, 2003b):

The Economic Development Ministry says local spending by producers of *The Last Samurai*, which starred Tom Cruise and was filmed in Taranaki, was more than \$70 million. If the grants system had been operating the production would have qualified for at least \$8.75 million.

The citation of the Taranaki economic impact figures for the *Last Samurai* production is interesting because the Ministry of Economic Development had, of course, been part of the tri-Ministerial grouping that was responsible for generating the economic impact assessments for the incentive scheme. The decision to keep their own figures out of the public eye and offer instead the more favourable figures from Taranaki points again to the way in which numbers are deployed not so much for their 'truth' value but strategically in accordance with what is perceived to have the most potential to enrol the interests of other actors. In this case, cabinet had decided that the public, and probably also its political opponents, would not be brought on board with the LBSPG figures and so chose instead to deploy the more favourable figures from Taranaki.

The initial success Anderton and the policymakers had in persuading the media of the sizeable investment the scheme could potentially attract was, however, to be short-lived. A journalist from the Christchurch daily newspaper, *The Press*, requested the confidential cabinet papers under the Official Information Act, which requires that all government documents be made publicly available unless there are extraneous circumstances that justify suppression. On 7 August 2003, an article appeared in *The Press* disputing Anderton's figures (Espiner, 2003):

Treasury and IRD advice to the Government was that an incentive scheme stood to lose up to \$5m a year on top of the \$40m invested, and, at best, could recoup \$10m. Officials said New Zealand was likely to attract large-budget Hollywood films on the basis of its scenery, skills mix, and exchange rate -- with or without a taxpayer subsidy. The official advice appeared to contradict claims by Economic Development Minister Jim Anderton that the scheme had the

potential to bring “hundreds of millions of dollars of investment into New Zealand every year”.

In the same article, Anderton rejects the criticism by disputing the validity of the calculative practices used by Treasury to generate the final LBSPG assessments (Espiner, 2003):

Mr Anderton said last night that he stood by his comments... Mr Anderton said Treasury's economic modelling did not take into account the cultural, social, and “feel good” benefits to New Zealand of a buoyant film industry.

Political opponents, however, used the publication of these figures to launch an attack on the scheme, again using the media as a conduit for enrolling the general public. A high profile Member of Parliament for the right-wing ACT party, for example, said in the same article in *The Press* that Anderton is ‘just making things up’ and called on him to ‘produce evidence to back his claims that New Zealand would benefit from investing in the film industry’ (Espiner, 2003). The LBSPG was able to weather the political controversy that ensued over the next several weeks. The role of the scheme within the wider economic development agenda was, however, weakened and during the national elections in 2005 the main opposition, the National Party, made the abolition of the scheme one of its campaign pledges. Moreover, a senior staff member at the Film Commission, which was the body that had been charged with administering the LBSPG, said that the controversy around the scheme meant that all applications to the grant were being thoroughly investigated:

F: From our perspective, yes, there is a, I think the compliance costs are higher than they might otherwise be. But that’s because this scheme is relatively new and the government who ultimately pays, which is the Ministry of Economic Development, is very keen that every possible avenue of, I guess, investigation that can be done, is done before paying out taxpayers money. Also, this is high profile... One of the other political parties has said that if they gain power, they will scrap it. Another political party that probably won’t survive the election is very anti it and prior to the scheme coming in to effect there was an enormous fuss around the tax arrangements around *Lord of the Rings* and we’re all keen to avoid that. So I think that the compliance costs are quite high.

In the end, the re-election of the Labour Party meant the scheme was safe. It was not, however, beyond contest.

In July 2005, the Ministry of Economic Development began a two-part review of the LBSPG. The first part consisted of an economic impact assessment, which the Ministry contracted out to a private consultancy firm, Outcome Management Services. This assessment, in contrast to the consultancy reports produced for other major film-related initiatives and most likely reflecting the political controversy surrounding the scheme, was decidedly cautious. It estimated that the annual net impact of the scheme was somewhere between a 38 million dollar loss and a 33 million dollar gain, with base case modelling projecting an annual net loss of nine million dollars (Outcome Management Services, 2005:32). However, undoubtedly wary of repeating the mistakes that had been made in the initial announcement of the LBSPG, the new Minister for Economic Development, Trevor Mallard, released the full assessment and also a Treasury commentary (Mallard, 2006). The Treasury commentary was unequivocal in its opposition to the scheme (in Mallard, 2006:8):

The Treasury considers that there is not sufficient robust evidence, including that provided in the evaluation, to support the contention that there are large spillover benefits to the New Zealand economy from large budget film productions, which would justify the current subsidy programme.

Despite the strong criticism from the Treasury and the far from favourable impact estimates produced by Outcome Management Services, in his recommendations to cabinet and a subsequent media release Mallard (2006) still attempted to construct the cabinet's decision to continue to support the scheme as a sound, rational policy decision founded on objective evidence. That is, he continued to engage in framing. He did this in two ways, both of which seek to recast the assessment by Outcome Management Services as supportive of the cabinet's decision to continue to support the LBSPG. Firstly, he attempted to divert attention from the net impact assessments by focusing instead on a series of numbers that, while contained in the assessment, are meaningless if the costs of the scheme are not also

taken into consideration. The opening paragraph of the media release is indicative of this tactic (Ministry of Economic Development, 2006b):

Government funding for large budget films and screen productions will continue following a review of the fund, Economic Development Minister Trevor Mallard announced today. Trevor Mallard said an independent economic evaluation of the impacts of large budget screen productions such as the *Chronicles of Narnia* and the *Hercules* mini-series over the last two years showed they had generated:

- a \$363 million direct cash injection into the New Zealand economy;
- additional economic activity of \$119 to \$227 million;
- and indirect benefits ranging from \$10 million to \$34 million.

Secondly, when Mallard does acknowledge the net impact figures he disputes, as Anderton had done earlier in response to the Treasury's LBSPG estimates, the terms of their measurement, arguing that 'some benefits and spin-offs have not been quantified, the sample size is small, and the timeframe for the evaluation was only two years' (Ministry of Economic Development, 2006b). The additional benefits and spin-offs that Mallard is referring to are principally the 'goodwill' the scheme has generated among screen producers internationally and the more general 'value of the international reputation' that New Zealand has built up through film, although it should be noted that tourism impacts were considered by the assessment (Ministry of Economic Development, 2006b). This critique of the calculative practices that were used to arrive at the net impact estimates leads Mallard (2006:8) to conclude as follows:

In my view, the overall benefits (if both direct and intangible effects are taken into account) outweigh the costs of the grant. The results of the economic evaluation are conservative and probably underestimate the overall benefits of large budget productions to New Zealand.

In the end, however, despite Mallard's (2006:8) assertion that the 'overall benefits ... outweigh the costs', the cabinet decision to continue the scheme was accompanied by an announcement that it would be subject to a further review in 2009. This was probably a wise political move as the newspaper headlines the following day focused on the difference of opinion between Treasury and cabinet. The *New Zealand Herald*, for example, led with

the following headline: 'Government and Treasury at odds over film-subsidy scheme' (New Zealand Herald, 2006).

At the conclusion of my fieldwork, then, the place of the LBSPG within the government's economic development programme was by no means assured. The LBSPG, thus, presents us with a case where politicians and policymakers repeatedly deployed numbers in an effort to stabilise a film-related policy initiative but where these numbers would more often actually open up a space for contest. We could say that the proponents of the LBSPG were trying to use numbers in exactly the way that Barry (2002a:272) argues political sociologists have assumed them to function: to place an object beyond contest. We might want to consider, therefore, why the numbers in this case were more likely to have 'political' than 'anti-political' effects (Barry, 2002a).

Clues to this may lie in the distinction Callon (1998a) makes between 'hot' and 'cold' situations. Callon (1998a:260) argues that in 'hot' situations 'everything becomes controversial'. That is to say, even the terms of debate – definitions, devices of measurement, boundaries – are subject to contest. In 'cold' situations, on the other hand, there is consensus as to the procedures and means by which one arrives at a decision. Put succinctly, the degree to which a situation is 'hot' or 'cold' will shape the 'conditions under which knowledge is produced' and, consequently, the conditions under which decisions are made (Callon, 1998a:262). This is essentially an argument about the stability of a frame. In cold situations, the boundaries of the frame – what it includes and excludes – is accepted and there is less danger of overflow. In hot situations, on the other hand, the framing is still being worked out and far more vulnerable to overflowing. This distinction between 'hot' and 'cold' situations is useful if we want to further develop Barry's (2002a:272) observation that numbers in politics can just as well provoke debate as they can work to shut it down. We can use it to argue that the deployment of numbers in a 'cold' situation will most often work fairly unproblematically in the way that political sociologists have assumed them to. However, when a situation is 'hot' the deployment of a number will more likely than not provoke debate as it provides a site for working through contests over framing.

The introduction of the film industry to economic development conforms in many ways to Callon's (1998a) description of a 'hot' situation. Film is a new object on the economic development agenda and, as we have seen, the terms of its inclusion are by no means stabilised. The failure of the numbers to function as the proponents of the LBSPG intended them to can, therefore, be read as a consequence of this 'hotness'. Take for example the failed attempts by the Ministry of Economic Development to enrol the interests of the policymakers from Treasury and Inland Revenue during the preparation of the initial policy advice on the LBSPG. In that instance, 'hotness' enabled the policymakers from Inland Revenue and Treasury to contest the economic impact assessments generated by the Ministry of Economic Development. It meant that the Inland Revenue and Treasury policymakers were able to discount what would otherwise have been very persuasive economic multipliers by claiming that the calculative practices that generated them were not sound.

Numbers in 'hot' situations, therefore, are a focal point for contest and their deployment will more often than not have 'political' effects. This does not, however, mean that 'hotness' always works against the proponents of a particular policy initiative. Uncertainty over calculative practices can also serve these actors by allowing them to critique numbers put up by their critics to oppose the initiative. Recall that in our example the Minister for Economic Development was able to use 'hotness' to attack the calculative practices of Treasury after the suppressed cabinet papers were published in the media. The Minister's attack could only be sustained because there were no standardised practices, or what Latour (2005:227) calls a 'metrology', for calculating such assessments.

Advocates of the LBSPG, and those supporting a role for film in economic development more generally, were aware that the absence of metrologies for calculating the economic impact of film was causing problems. Their main concern was that Treasury was not buying into a role for film. Treasury's refusal to accept the economic estimates produced in the course of the LBSPG's introduction was significant because any attempt to stabilise an economic initiative must pass through Treasury. In ANT terms, Treasury acts as something

of an 'obligatory passage point' (Callon, 1986:204). In 2003, the efforts of the Taranaki regional film office to quantify the economic impact of the Warner Bros' *Last Samurai* production provided an opportunity for some of our main actors at the national scale to advance their attempts to establish a calculative mechanism that would have traction with Treasury. That is, a calculative mechanism that would provide a reliable 'frame'. This is our second case study of framing via quantification, which we turn to now.

Film Taranaki and the Last Samurai Economic Impact Assessment

The Taranaki region is located on the West Coast of the North Island and has a population just in excess of 100,000 (Taranaki Regional Council, 2006). A relatively remote and isolated region, its economic fortunes had been tied to commodity prices for agricultural exports, crude oil, and gas. During the 1990s, it had one of the worst records for economic performance of any region in New Zealand and was, as the Mayor of New Plymouth acknowledged, perceived as something of a laughing stock:

PT: When folk used to get posted to New Plymouth they had a bloody wake with their friends around the country before they got posted here.

In 2003, Warner Bros shot around 70 percent of its scenes for *The Last Samurai* in Taranaki. By that time the region was experiencing an economic upturn. Of interest to us here is not why Warner Bros chose Taranaki as a location or how the shoot contributed to the region's shift in economic fortunes but rather the way in which Film Taranaki and its parent organisation, the regional economic development organisation Venture Taranaki, sought to use the experience to develop a standardised methodology for calculating the economic impact of film productions. This means that our concern is also not with interrogating the accuracy of the economic multiplier generated by the impact assessment but with the struggles and negotiations that these actors engaged in to construct and stabilise a metrology that could reliably frame political action.

Of course, we have already seen that the *Last Samurai* economic impact study was by no means the first attempt to quantify the economic impact of film. Such assessments, and with it consultants, had become firmly entrenched as an obligatory passage point. The

decision to approve funding for a soundstage in Wellington was, for example, preceded by a Price Waterhouse Coopers 'feasibility' study and an additional, more detailed economic impact projection that was produced jointly by Price Waterhouse Coopers and the New Zealand Institute for Economic Research (Positively Wellington Business, 2005). These consultancy reports, however, were usually marked out by what one consultant acknowledged as 'back of the envelope calculations' and were generally held in low esteem (Fieldnote, 11 May 2005). The following research participant expressed the sentiment of many that I interviewed:

N: There's been a number of them. There was a previous report on the comparative cost of shooting in different countries, which just disappeared without trace because it was so bad. There was the economic impact study of *The Lord of the Rings*. I mean all the reports are a joke and they would have spent tens of thousands of dollars on all of them. They are of no use to anybody except to those people trying to justify their policies.

The participant, N, went on to say that this was in part because consultants were 'chosen not for the right reasons but because they think they are going to get the result they want or there is some connection.' This was a point echoed by a consultant who said to me, only half in jest, that he thought they might have missed out on producing a report because another firm 'was able to offer a higher multiplier for a lower price' (Fieldnote, 4 May 2006).

The *Last Samurai* economic impact study was different to these earlier reports in that it sought specifically to develop a new methodology that would become an accepted model for calculating the economic impact of a film. In ANT terms, this was a very conscious attempt to build and fix a frame that could then reliably be used to determine the value of film production to the economy. That Treasury was one of the main targets was explicitly acknowledged by the regional film promotion officer in Taranaki, who stated that because the *Lord of the Rings* study 'wasn't very good' one of the main objectives of the *Last Samurai* study was to ensure that it would meet Treasury requirements for rigour:

S: We wanted ours [the study] to have traction in Treasury so that if they were to use it for any policy purpose that the maths and the science would stand up.

The film officer and his colleagues were also, however, keenly aware that if the model was to obtain 'metrological' status the calculative practices underpinning it would need to be acceptable to actors beyond Treasury, most notably the film industry itself:

S: They [existing reports] certainly mean nothing to film people. You know, like it's a different world. It means things only to government... But we also wanted [in ours for] people to understand how it worked.

The film officer and his colleagues at Venture Taranaki were aware that buy-in would be best achieved by enrolling a range of other actors in the process. Fortunately for them, establishing a metrology was also a priority for economic development agencies at the national scale. Trade New Zealand and Industry New Zealand, therefore, became involved very early into the process as 'joint commissioners' of the assessment with Film Taranaki. They agreed to provide funding for the assessment and to be part of the consultative committee reviewing the report.

The 'joint commissioners' also made a further effort to expand the range of actors involved in the project. They established a working group to develop and conduct the impact assessment. This working group was deliberately made up of people from a variety of backgrounds so as to enlist a diverse range of stakeholders in the process. Although not put in such terms, the joint commissioners effectively established what Callon, Meadel, and Rabeharisoa (2002:195) have termed a 'hybrid forum'. The distinguishing feature of such forums is that, in the words of Callon et al. (2002:195):

Professional economists no longer have the direct monopoly (assuming they did ever have it) on authorized or legitimate discourse. This does not mean they are excluded from the debate. On the contrary, they are cordially invited to participate, but they are no longer alone.

Whereas the other impact assessments produced by consultants were usually drawn up by economists and accountants, the hybrid forum established for the *Last Samurai* impact

assessment included a mixture of economists, consultants, film commissioners, and industry representatives. This suggests that we can think of the process of establishing a metrology as always also being a process of enrolling actors. The inclusion of the consultants on the hybrid forum, for example, was an explicit attempt to enrol Treasury. The regional film officer stated that the consultants from Business and Economic Research Limited (BERL) were included because 'getting at Treasury' required one to 'speak their language'.

Methodologically, the *Last Samurai* study was beset by the same problem that most other attempts at calculating the economic impact of a film have also encountered, namely that Hollywood studios are extremely guarded about production budgets (Wasko, 2003). In this case, Warner Bros refused to participate in the process and the decision was made to construct an 'indicative budget' for the film (Interview, Participant S). The hybrid forum used their collective experience to estimate spending on various services and to identify whether this was captured in Taranaki, nationally, or internationally. For one member of the forum, this process showed up the lack of understanding among the economists and consultants of how the film industry works:

S: We dealt with BERL. And I think the thing that I found that was curious to me was that these guys had no idea of how the film business operated. No idea at all. That's where doing that model was useful because ... the economic guys could ask them questions and they then started to figure out how the business worked, the business of the business. So that's why I think we've got a good result from our study and this is what we could never see before.

This participant also, however, acknowledged that it was a process of reciprocal learning, with industry participants gaining an understanding of how economists calculate multipliers and indirect economic impacts. In any case, to strengthen the credibility of the indicative budget, the working group also commissioned a postal business impact survey and interviews with 20 local businesses in the Taranaki region. These were then triangulated with the estimates in the indicative budget and BERL was instructed to generate a range of economic multipliers and estimates of the direct and indirect economic benefit to Taranaki and nationally. The calculation of multipliers and indirect economic impacts was seen as

crucial to gaining the ear of Treasury. But, again, there was acknowledgement that the accuracy of the numbers did not matter so much as that they were accepted. One participant in the hybrid forum stated that ‘it doesn’t really matter what the numbers are, so long as they are the right type of numbers’ (Fieldnote, 27 April 2005).

Of course, the production of economic multipliers and other such figures will not by itself lead to the development of a metrology, no matter how sound or rigorous its methodology. From ANT scholarship we know that if it is to become established beyond its immediate locality, then it must form connections by enrolling other actors (Latour, 2005). We have already seen two ways that the main actors in the *Last Samurai* impact study tried to achieve the ‘spread’ of their methodology. First by ensuring that a range of actors were included in the hybrid forum, and secondly through the use of forms, such as the economic multiplier, that would appeal to their targets for enrolment. As the assessment neared completion, another strategy was deployed. Once a draft of the assessment had been produced, a strategic review was convened with the three commissioning agencies and a wider government and industry grouping that included representatives from Inland Revenue, Tourism New Zealand, and Film NZ. While the ostensive purpose of this meeting was to assess the validity of the impact study, this meeting also ensured that important decision-makers and key industry people were made aware of the study.

The push to gain acceptance for the methodology in the *Last Samurai* study really only, however, began in earnest once the report had been completed. The report was published with a media release and copies were widely distributed to policymakers, politicians, and industry bodies. The report, therefore, was one form in which the methodology was able to circulate. In addition, the regional film officer in Taranaki became the embodied ambassador of the methodology, providing training and seminars on the study to other film officers and policymakers. These efforts were not restricted to within Aotearoa/New Zealand, but took place internationally. The Taranaki film officer, for example, liaised with the Association of Film Commissioners International (AFCI) and presented a session on the impact assessment at the annual AFCI conference in 2004. The report of the assessment is now also published on the AFCI website (Interview, Participant BK). We might want to

ask, then, whether the Taranaki film officer and his colleagues were successful in their attempt to develop a set of calculative practices around the economic impact of films that could have widespread acceptance among industry and government, including Treasury. In some respects, they were very successful. The *Last Samurai* economic impact study was widely known, as could be seen from the fact that a diverse range of participants referred me to the study. The *Last Samurai* study was first mentioned during a preliminary interview at the UK Film Council before fieldwork in Aotearoa/New Zealand had begun. A research officer there was working on a project to develop economic multipliers and said that they had been liaising with Film Taranaki (Fieldnote, 14 March 2005). The key industry bodies and most policymakers generally spoke positively of the study, although Treasury still remained unconvinced by the calculations around multipliers and indirect economic benefits. As one participant who worked closely with Treasury noted:

E: When you are trying to talk to people in, for example, Treasury and you come along with ... the *Last Samurai* study – does that carry any kind of weight there?

K: No, I don't think it does... I think when you talk about indirect and spillover, even with those reports, you will find that a very dry economist will point to the direct and be less persuaded by the indirect and spillover.

As Treasury acts as an obligatory passage point, this means that the calculative practices in the study are not yet successfully stabilised as a metrology. That is, they are still subject to contest and, to return to Callon (1998a), we might say that film within economic development is still characterised by 'hotness' because a frame was not successfully established. This does not mean, however, that nothing has changed. Perhaps we would be better to complexify Callon's typology and describe the situation as 'lukewarm' in recognition of the diverse actors who during the course of the *Last Samurai* study and after its completion have bought into, even if only partially, the calculative practices it developed. Moreover, we saw that in the course of the LBSPG's implementation the *Last Samurai* figures were deployed by the Ministry of Economic Development. That is, they were part of the attempt to frame the LBSPG as a reasoned political act by distancing the scheme from its beginnings in Cabinet office meetings between film producers and

government Ministers. As such, the *Last Samurai* numbers, even if they did not convince Treasury, might have helped the LBSPG achieve some provisional stability by enrolling diverse actors, such as political opponents and the general public.

Conclusion

This chapter was entitled ‘Making and Stabilising the “New Moment”’ and we have just examined in detail two instances where political actors sought to stabilise aspects of the ‘new moment’ by way of quantification. It seems fitting now, however, to move away from the ‘technicalit[ies] of politics’ (Barry, 2002a:269) and conclude in more general terms by reflecting on what the discussion in this chapter means for understandings of the creative industries and economic development. It seems important to begin by reflecting on what this ‘new moment’ of the chapter title actually was about. The material presented in this chapter suggests that politicians and policymakers began with a series of local opportunities, of which film was the most significant, and proceeded to develop a political project that could build on this opening. That film was the main target was evidenced by the fact that most of the initiatives, and particularly the high-value initiatives, were concerned with this subsector. It could be argued, then, that the new moment was first and foremost a ‘film’ project and had nothing to do with the creative industries at all. However, this is too simplistic an analysis. In the course of stabilising this ‘film’ project, the main actors connected it up with creative industry policy discourses. This, as we saw, was an act of framing that sought to enrol others by disentangling the project from its contingent, local beginnings. The act of framing also, however, translated the project. Just as the hotelier in Latour’s (1986) account is no longer giving the same order once a weight has been attached to the room keys, so the political actors in this story are pursuing a different project once they cite creative industry policy discourses. The project is now both a ‘creative industries project’ and a ‘film project’: the former because this is the project that actors are being enrolled in through the textual artefacts in the paper trail; the latter because its target is still by and large the film industry.

In any case, irrespective of how we label the ‘new moment’, we can see that local and contingent factors were key to the introduction of film to economic development and also

to the adoption of creative industry discourses. This is important in terms of the travelling policy literature we encountered in Chapter 2 because, although travelling policies played a role in the Aotearoa/New Zealand case, it was not in the way that the literature often assumes them to (see especially, Wetzstein & Le Heron, 2003). The political actors we met in this chapter were not seduced by these discourses, but rather were deploying them for their own ends. As such, the story here bears out the importance of looking at the ‘stuff in between’. It shows that, even when the input and output are as one would predict from the travelling policy literature, it is not possible to make assumptions about what was going on ‘in between’ (specifically, that the political actors had ‘bought into’ these policies).

It is more difficult, however, to bring the discussion in this chapter into conversation with the more economically-focused literature that attributes the rise of creative industries to a broader cultural turn in capitalism. If we wanted, for example, to dispute the functionalist assumptions of this literature, we could use the emphasis on the local and contingent to argue against the role of macro factors, such as demands of the capitalist system. However, this could be countered by an assertion that the local factors – for example, the economic opportunities in the film industry – were themselves products of the ‘cultural turn’ in capitalism. We reach difficulties at this point because the material presented here also does not seem to support this counter-argument as the local actors in our account *do* appear agentic. In short, it seems difficult from the ANT-informed explorations in this chapter to provide conclusive evidence either *for or against* the functionalist explanations in the economically-focused literature. In part, the problem seems methodological and so raises a larger question about the sorts of claims one can make using ANT. Specifically, it begs the question whether it is possible, using ANT, to trace the sort of macro forces, if these exist, that are described in the more economically-focused literature. This is an important question and one that we take up again in the concluding chapter on the ‘usefulness of ANT’.

Chapter 6:

Whose Film Industry? What Future? Industrial and Non-Governmental Actors Making and Contesting Film Projects

In the last chapter we were concerned with the making of the creative industries and film project by political actors; that is, by politicians and policymakers. However, we know from ANT that stabilisation of a given project occurs through a process of heterogenous engineering that establishes networks of diverse actors and objects. In this chapter, therefore, we continue our focus on the making and stabilisation of the 'new moment' but shift focus to a different set of actors. We are concerned in this chapter with the role played by industrial and other non-governmental actors, examining how these are involved in the making of this political project, contesting the project as it was proposed by politicians and policymakers and, finally, in proposing alternative projects.

We again approach this through the use of two examples. The first thing to say about these examples is that, although they both concern developments that occur after the government adopted the creative industries framing in the Growth and Innovation Framework (GIF), the industrial and non-governmental actors engage with these as though they are projects about the film industry or slightly broader screen sector rather than the creative industries. In fact, there is hardly any reference to creative industries in either of the examples we examine. This suggests, as argued in the last chapter, that creative industry policy discourses were deployed strategically by political actors in order to create space for a political project around local opportunities in film and that the subsequent implementation of that project proceeded as though it was, by and large, a 'film project'.

The two examples considered in this chapter concern industrial and non-governmental actors that occupy very different positions in relation to the government's project. The first example looks at the Screen Production Industry Taskforce (SPIT), which was established by the government shortly after the creative industries were identified as a key economic sector in the GIF. Through the Taskforce, government sought to stabilise the film project by

using a body of ‘friendly voices’ from industry to amplify its vision for the screen sector. That is, a carefully selected group of industrial actors was enlisted to help ‘make’ the film project. However, contest by industrial actors excluded from the Taskforce over membership of the body and the strategy it articulated saw the Taskforce become a site for working through two competing versions of what the film project should be: the ‘Taking on the World’ vision of the Taskforce, which aligned very closely with the government’s economic agenda for the film industry, and the ‘Strong Aotearoa/New Zealand’ of the excluded industrial actors, which was concerned first and foremost with building a strong domestic film industry. Through these contests over what the film industry project should be, we will see that these actors were also, more fundamentally, constituting the very objects ‘film industry’ and ‘screen sector’.

Our second example is also concerned at its most basic level with what, or better said who, constitutes the film industry. In our second example we examine how a coalition of creative sector unions and guilds sought to contest the place and value of workers in dominant articulations of the film industry. Silenced within official political processes, including the Taskforce, these actors attempted to mobilise a union merger ballot and employment court case to reinsert workers into the worker-less new economy vision of the film industry and, in so doing, claim for themselves status as a stakeholder. Here too, then, contest is in some sense about a *vision*, or about some notion of what the future should look like and hold. You might want to, therefore, read the substantive chapters in terms of a temporal progression: Chapter 4 was concerned with history, the previous chapter with ‘the present’, and here the concern is with the articulation and contestation of futures for the film industry.

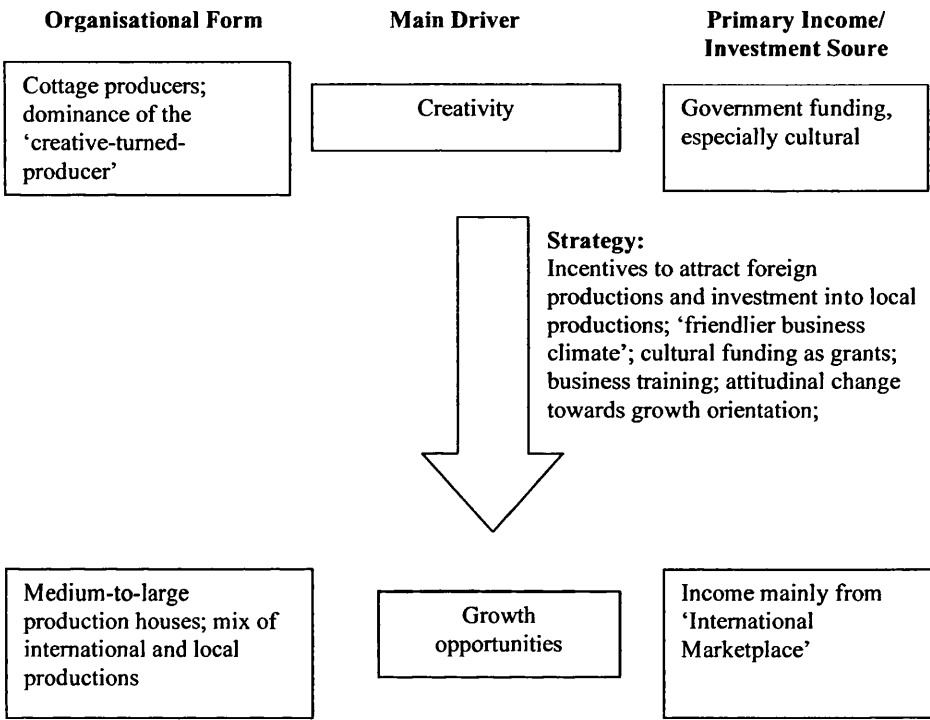
The Screen Production Industry Taskforce: Competing Future-Visions

The SPIT was one of five Taskforces to be set up by the Ministry of Economic Development in the wake of the GIF (Ministry of Economic Development, 2005). Two were concerned with creative industry subsectors, with Taskforces established to look at screen production and design. Unlike in the United Kingdom, however, the government did not establish a pan-creative industries Taskforce, illustrating again that there was not really

an interest in the creative sector *per se* but in very specific local opportunities. For each of the Taskforces, the government appointed leading industry figures and charged them with providing guidance to government and industry on how major economic growth could be achieved in that particular sector. On the one hand, these Taskforces were a tool that politicians and policymakers used to make power and so could also have been discussed in the previous chapter alongside the other techniques of making power. The Taskforces provided politicians and policymakers with a way of enrolling non-governmental actors in their project so that these could then go on to become ‘independent’ champions of that project. As a tool for power-making, the Taskforce model is deployed according to the following logic: industry figures likely to be sympathetic to the government’s policy direction are invited to sit on the Taskforce; these then formulate ‘their’ strategy for the sector; this strategy closely resembles the direction the government has already signalled; government implements what from the outset was its policy but rhetorically constructs it as a ‘response to the Taskforce’. Taskforces, in other words, enable the translation of a ‘government’ project into an ‘industry’ project. The course of politics, however, rarely runs this smoothly and so Taskforces can also become vehicles through which a variety of actors contest, rather than faithfully make, a political project. This is precisely what ended up occurring with the SPIT.

In the case of the SPIT, the industry figures who were invited to sit on the Taskforce did transmit the government’s order fairly faithfully, constructing a strategy and vision for the screen sector that closely aligned with that of the government. We shall name this, after the title of the Taskforce’s report, the ‘Taking on the World’ vision. Problems arose for the government, however, because this vision was vociferously contested by industrial actors who had been excluded from the Taskforce. These actors proposed an alternative that we shall call the ‘Strong Aotearoa/New Zealand’ vision. What follows is the story of the Taskforce and the emergence of these competing visions. To signal where we are headed, Figures 1 and 2 summarise the main features of the two visions and the alliances that formed around each.

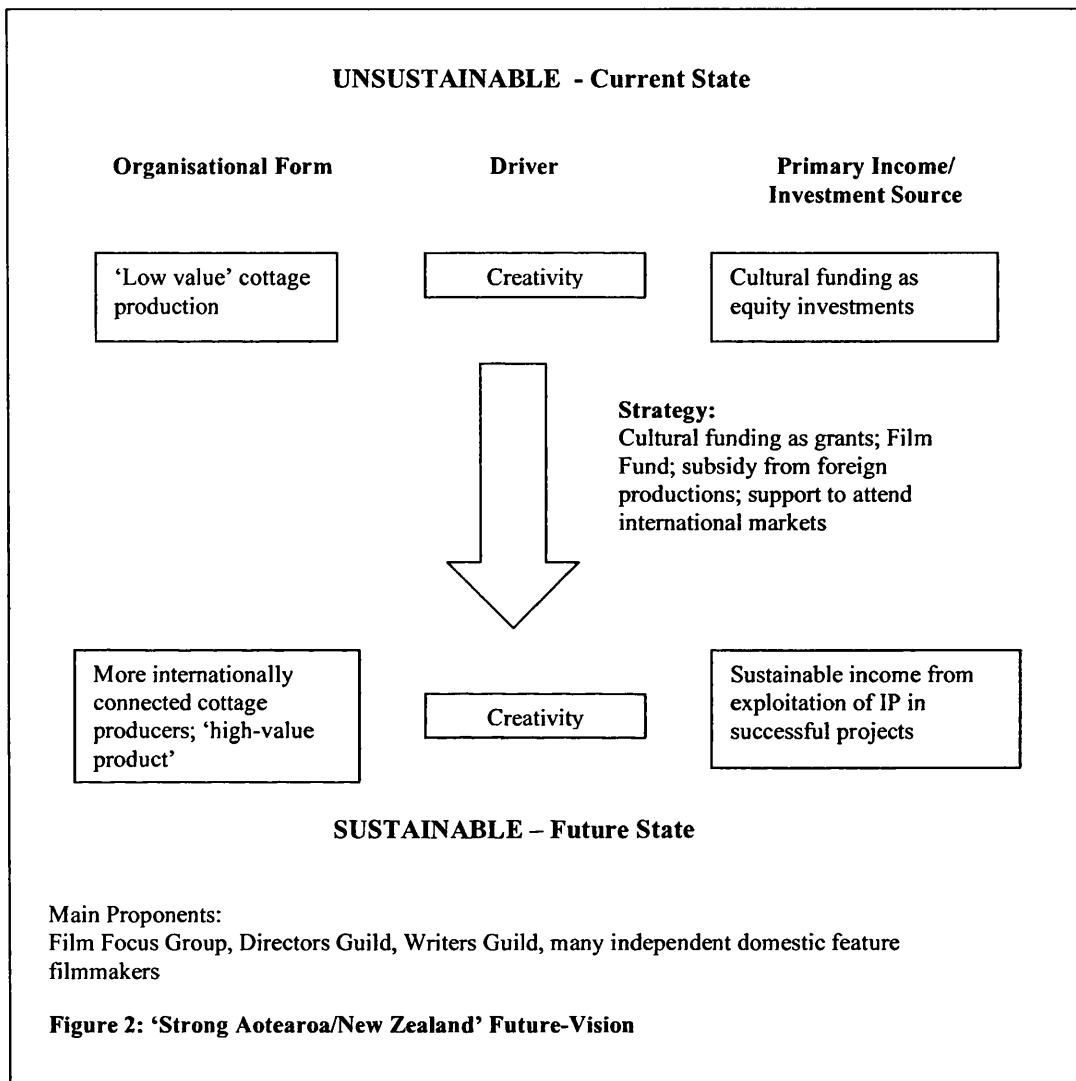
UNSUSTAINABLE – Current State



SUSTAINABLE – Future State

Main Proponents:
Screen Production Industry Taskforce, Larger Production Houses, Television
Companies and Broadcasters, Ministry of Economic Development.

Figure 1: 'Taking on the World' Future-Vision



Membership

The most obvious place to begin our story is with membership of the Taskforce. The first thing to note is that in forming the Taskforce, the government also created a new entity, which they called the 'Screen Production Industry'. The many parts that make up this new entity – television, commercials, feature films, and post-production – are known for staunchly maintaining independence from one another, even though many individuals work across these sectors. In the Taskforce, however, the government was asking them to speak with one 'voice', as Jim Anderton noted in his foreword to the Taskforce's report (Screen Production Industry Taskforce, 2003). The Taskforce members embraced this new entity,

stating in their opening message that ‘we have made recommendations which will ensure that the Screen Production Industry has a united voice which will be heard by Government’ (Screen Production Industry Taskforce, 2003:7). The invention of this entity seemed to serve two purposes. Firstly, it created a stakeholder population that could then be invested, as one official put it, with ‘a sense of ownership’ for the sector strategy (Fieldnote, 20 June 2005). Secondly, and perhaps more importantly, as a pan-industry identity it served to make the Taskforce appear representative of the screen sector as a whole when in actual fact the constituent parts of the sector were invested with very differential rights to articulate a strategy.

The list of members in Figure 3 indicates which industry stakeholders were perceived by government to be suited to the task of strategy building and, therefore, which perspectives would be furthered. The Taskforce was dominated by representatives of medium-to-large companies, often in the television sector. There were only two representatives of small companies involved in feature film production: Robin Laing of Preston*Laing Productions and the Maori filmmaker Don Selwyn. The Film Focus Group, a subgroup of SPADA that represents feature film producers, argued in their submission that the Taskforce’s membership failed to reflect value generation in the screen sector, although they based their analysis on an equally exclusionary logic by referring only to feature films:

Figure 3: SPIT Members
 John Barnett, MD, South Pacific Pictures
 Grant Bradley, founder, Daybreak Pacific
 Julie Christie, founder, Touchdown Television
 Geoff Dixon, founder, Silverscreen/Oktobor
 Ian Fraser, CEO, Television New Zealand
 Rick Friesen, MD, TV3
 Nigel Hutchinson, founder, Motion Pictures
 Robin Laing, co-founder, Preston*Laing Productions
 Di Rowan, founder, Diana Rowan Casting
 Don Selwyn, founder, He Taonga Films
 Jeremy Speight, director of finance, Cloud 9
 Michael Steadman, MD, Natural History NZ
 Richard Taylor, co-founder, WETA
 Sue Thompson, CEO, The Film Unit
Source: (Screen Production Industry Taskforce, 2003:6)

Of th[e] twenty-seven (27) features [produced in the last 5 years] only five (5) were produced within organisations with large television infrastructure. The twenty-two (22) “front-room” produced features, including as they do the two *LOTR* films, generated by far and away the higher foreign exchange earnings.

However, if the goal of the Taskforce was to produce a strategy that closely aligned with government policy, then the dominance of medium-to-large television companies should hardly surprise us because it is these types of organisations that we would expect to share the very commercial and economic focus that government was advocating in the wake of the GIF. Certainly, for an established local filmmaker that I interviewed, the make up of the Taskforce was a clear signal that its report, in her words, was a ‘very politically dealt to document’:

G: The Screen Council [Taskforce] report, like all of those reports, was a very politically dealt to document... because the Ministry always put a value on turnover and growing the business only people with a turnover of over 10 million could play after a while.

There was also another notable omission from the Taskforce and that was the creative sector unions and guilds. The chair of the Coalition of Creative Unions and Guilds (CCUG) described the body as ‘basically an employers’ Taskforce’ and said that worker representatives had been omitted despite protests from the Writers Guild, Actor’s Equity, and Technicians’ Guild. On the one hand, this omission was probably also a reflection of judgments about the likelihood that these actors would support the current direction of government policy. On the other hand, however, it might also have been about enacting the worker-less, post-industrial imaginary of the film industry. In this sense, membership of the Taskforce was not just about who was seen to have a right to speak but also about who was considered to be a part of the sector. Interestingly, even the independent feature filmmakers and producers, who protested against the dominance of television production companies on the Taskforce, did not think that worker organisations should be represented. The Film Focus Group (2003:3), for example, drew boundaries around the feature film industry in the following way in its submission to the Taskforce:

What is the size of the feature industry? We don’t feel that the Report takes full cognisance of the fact that the phenomenal success of the film sector is the result of a tiny handful of creative practitioners. In the last five years we made twenty-seven (27) feature films. These films were produced by barely twenty (20) producers and helmed by twenty-two (22) directors... This small group is in effect the entire creative industry that has caused so much growth.

In a similar vein, the filmmaker, G, said that writers and other workers ‘do not make work happen’ and so their representative organisations also have no place on bodies such as the Taskforce:

E: And you’ve also had some of the guilds who were quite disappointed to be left out and not have a representative voice. That’s particularly, the actors and the writers and so forth.

G: I think that’s not a bad thing because I think really it’s producers that make work happen. The writers don’t make a thing happen. Sorry to say. Producers are the only people in the industry who make work happen. The rest of the people do the work. They only work if producers can raise the money to make it happen.

Now it is interesting that although it ended up being a fairly predictable set of actors that was marginalised in the Taskforce process, this was by no means automatic. The process of selecting ‘friendly voices’ by the Ministry of Economic Development, who set up the Taskforce, also appears to have been an attempt at interest formation, at least in respect of the independent feature filmmakers. It seems that the Ministry had not from the outset ruled out more extensive participation by independent features filmmakers. Quite to the contrary, prior to the establishment of the Taskforce, the Ministry made a number of attempts to align the interests of the domestic independent filmmakers with their own. Most notably, a meeting was convened where filmmakers were talked through the economics of film by a business lecturer from Victoria University of Wellington. This meeting, however, only appears to have further alienated independent filmmakers. One filmmaker, for example, said that the business lecturer did not understand the economics of film and ‘was applying the wrong business model’:

A: So I was asked to the first meeting of the industry that was asked to look at ... the Taskforce... And there was a man from Victoria University business school there who was applying a wrong business model to the film industry. It isn’t like we make weegies and you make one and then you sell one and then you get the money back and you make more. I mean the film industry does not work like that.

She went on to say that there was a consensus among the filmmakers in the room that there was no understanding of the 'fundamental issue' facing independent filmmakers:

A: During that day everybody in that room was asked, you know, the problem we were all there to solve was "how can we grow our business?" And not a single soul said they want to grow their business. Everybody at that meeting said, "We don't want to grow our business. Our business is already bigger than we want it to be. We almost can't cope. We've got work coming out of our ears. What we want to do is we want to add value to our businesses...We want to grow value in our business so that as producers we can be earning more per hour than roughly equivalent to the dole."

We might surmise, then, that the failure of these attempts to enrol the interests of independent filmmakers in the Ministry of Economic Development's growth agenda for the film industry led to their eventual exclusion from the Taskforce. We certainly see similar processes of active exclusion in the transition from the Taskforce to the Screen Council, which was its institutional successor body. It was suggested to me by more than one interviewee that those Taskforce members who raised difficult issues were asked not to continue on to the Screen Council:

A: It's interesting to see who wasn't invited to carry on. See, you know, Robin Laing is not asked to continue because she's got a cultural inclination. And what's the name? Maori ... Don someone -

E: Don Selwyn.

A: Yeah. Not asked to continue.

E: So the kind of people that were a bit of a thorn in the side basically.

A: Yes. They got moved on.

If we think about the careful selection of friendly voices by the Ministry of Economic Development in ANT terms, we can see that it plays an important stabilising role. The act of selecting friendly voices diversifies the connections holding the film project together, with a whole new set of sympathetic non-governmental actors connected through the Taskforce, and later Screen Council, to political and media channels. So although the

Ministry can never be sure that its orders will be transmitted faithfully, it has by this means increased the likelihood that the ideas from industry figures which are able to circulate the furthest and widest are compatible with its own agenda.

Content

This brings us, then, to the substance of the Taskforce's strategy. The 70-page report of the Taskforce, as we already know, was entitled *Taking On the World* and this gives us some indication of the strategy it envisaged for the sector (Screen Production Industry Taskforce, 2003). In line with the ambitious title, the introduction begins optimistically by listing recent achievements of the screen sector. Aotearoa/New Zealand is described as having 'made an unprecedented impact on the international industry in the last three years' (Screen Production Industry Taskforce, 2003:12):

In the year to June 2002, New Zealand-made productions had total foreign exchange earnings of \$361 million including the final figures for *The Lord of the Rings*. While the outstanding success of *The Lord of the Rings* and *Whale Rider* focused the attention of the film world on New Zealand as a location, other production successes also demonstrate that New Zealand culture is a worldwide saleable commodity. Natural History New Zealand's 2002 output of 50 documentaries is seen in 200 countries. South Pacific Pictures' *Being Eve* has sold to 30 countries and Greenstone Pictures' series *Private Lives* has sold to 15 countries.

It is at this point that we begin to see how this chapter could also be read as being about 'futures'. In the remainder of the report, the Taskforce repeatedly moves between two possible futures in order to construct an argument for its 'Taking on the World' strategy. That is, contest about 'what to do now' becomes framed in terms of questions about 'what kind of future' actors want for the film industry and screen sector. Interestingly, the discussion remains resolutely focused on the film industry and screen sector, with no attempt made to locate these in a broader creative industries project. It is worth signalling also that there is considerable slippage between the terms 'film industry' and 'screen sector' in these discussions. This is a point we will return to once we have considered the two 'futures' envisaged by the Taskforce.

One of the futures articulated by the Taskforce is a rather bleak vision of where the industry will be in a 'business as usual' scenario if no changes are made to the way government supports the sector. The main concern in this scenario is the continued reliance of much of the industry on government funding, with the Taskforce (2003:12) stating that:

While such success [as listed] is promising, the wider industry remains reliant on Government funding, the levels of which are mostly stagnant and the real value of which is diminishing.

The dependency on Government funding is said to set limits on the industry 'financially, commercially, and creatively' (Screen Production Industry Taskforce, 2003:8). The report argues that businesses in the screen production sector are unable to form long term strategies while they remain trapped in this 'cycle of dependency' (Screen Production Industry Taskforce, 2003:10):

Reliance on unpredictable, short-term funding from Government agencies means most small to medium-sized companies have yet to develop sound and long-lasting business strategies for growth... The screen production sector cannot grow or flourish creatively without more stable and forward-thinking business structures.

The dependency on government funding is connected to another key problem in this future scenario, namely low levels of private investment. The report attributes the lack of private investment to a hostile regulatory and business climate. In the 'business as usual' scenario, the Taskforce (2003:12) foresees a further reduction in existing investment levels for both foreign and domestic productions, arguing that the rising New Zealand dollar and absence of any incentive scheme for film means that 'it is likely that our perceived competitive advantage of cost-savings has been substantially eroded.' Without a change in the business climate, the report predicts that it will be increasingly difficult for medium-to-large production companies to operate. The 'cottage' industry model, where independent producers work on projects literally out of the 'front room' of their homes, will therefore continue to predominate and the industry will stay 'small scale' (Screen Production Industry Taskforce, 2003:20). In a newspaper article on the day following the release of the

report, the Chair of the Taskforce, Julie Christie, made clear what she thought the implications of the 'business as usual' scenario were (Taylor, 2003a):

A tough-talking Christie said that if nothing has been done in a year's time, she and several other members of the task force would probably not be living in New Zealand.

The second future advanced by the Taskforce, and for which the title of the report was coined, is markedly different. In the second future-vision, the sector has doubled in size over a five-year period and is characterised by a more forward-thinking, global orientation (Screen Production Industry Taskforce, 2003). A key aspect of this future are the much cited 'growth targets' set by the Taskforce. The doubling in size would mean that by the year 2008/2009, the sector would be netting 'sustainable foreign exchange earnings of \$400 million per annum' (Screen Production Industry Taskforce, 2003:8). This growth would come from an increase in the number of medium-to-large companies, with the Taskforce (2003:18) envisaging 'at least 10 companies achiev[ing] an annual turnover of \$50 million; and at least another 20 companies an annual \$10 million turnover.' These ambitious targets are, according to the report, achievable if government and industry follow its blueprint for change. This blueprint is made up of three related elements: developing a stronger commercial ethos, 'going global', and independence from government. We will briefly examine each of these because it is the comparison between these proposals and the government's existing agenda that will tell us how faithfully the 'friendly voices' on the Taskforce have translated government policy.

The first strand of the Taskforce's blueprint – the call for the industry to develop a stronger commercial ethos – is developed in the third section of the report. This section, notably titled 'A New Business Environment for Growth', begins with the very future-oriented subheading 'From Cottage Industry to Big Business' and proceeds to chastise the domestic industry for failing to develop, or be interested in developing, business acumen (Screen Production Industry Taskforce, 2003:10). It argues that 'historically, New Zealand production companies often have had a lack of conventional business management skills'

and cites the low number of 'professional' Chief Executives as a significant problem (Screen Production Industry Taskforce, 2003:31):

The absence of "professional" chief executives and the standard practices which such professionals bring to business has led to the industry being perceived as "cottage". It has also contributed to the view by capital investors that the industry is too creative driven, too unpredictable, and too high risk.

Moreover, the report argues that the predominance of 'creatives' in management roles means that the focus ends up being on 'creating products rather than financing, selling and marketing them' (Screen Production Industry Taskforce, 2003:31). They state emphatically that (Screen Production Industry Taskforce, 2003:31):

At present, facing a choice between writing up a business plan and writing a creative proposal, they [filmmakers] choose the latter.

The consequence of this emphasis on the creative, so argues the Taskforce (2003:31), is that while businesses may be successful, 'they are not able to "grow" ... at a rate which will achieve the level of growth proposed by the Taskforce.' The Taskforce stops short of recommending that all creative enterprises now employ a 'professional' Chief Executive, acknowledging that many in the sector cannot afford this expense. Instead, they suggest that industry make better use of government schemes designed to help build business skills and recommend that business training become a core component of all tertiary screen production training courses. In addition, the Taskforce calls on the government to develop targeted business training programmes for the sector and to market its existing services better.

The call for the sector to develop a stronger business focus is strongly tied to the second element in the Taskforce's blueprint, the call to 'go global'. Again, the Taskforce (2003:21) begins by lamenting the present state of the industry, charging that it has been 'inward-looking and domestically focused':

The ... [i]ndustry traditionally has been characterised as inward-looking and domestically focused. With some notable exceptions, sales of ideas and formats, and finished films have been seen as a bonus rather than a fundamental measure of success.

The report argues that those companies that have grown substantially over the past decade have done so because they have 'changed their business focus to the global market' (Screen Production Industry Taskforce, 2003:20). This means not only marketing products globally and netting the foreign exchange earnings that result from international sales, but also attracting foreign investment for new ventures. In this alternate future-vision, all film producers must become oriented towards the 'international marketplace' because it is the international marketplace that will be the 'most likely source of substantial increases in income' (Screen Production Industry Taskforce, 2003:8). Achieving such an orientation links back to the commercial ethos, with the Taskforce (2003:21) cautioning that producers will need adequate training in order 'realise the full-income earning potential of their productions.' The present 'naivety of inexperienced producers', according to the report, means that there is a 'very real risk' that 'less favourable' agreements for sale and investment will be entered into and the industry will lose out on income (Screen Production Industry Taskforce, 2003:21). The call to 'go global' also, however, links to the third strand of the Taskforce's blueprint – independence from government – in that it is foreign investment that is seen as crucial to breaking the dependency on government funding.

We have already seen that dependency on government funding was identified by the Taskforce as one of the main barriers to growth for the industry. In the 'Taking on the World' future-vision, the industry has broken free from this 'cycle of dependency'. There are several changes that the Taskforce says must occur if such independence is to be achieved, some of which arguably create a different kind of dependency rather than less dependency. The Taskforce (2003:37) argues that there first needs to be an attitudinal shift on the part of both industry and government: industry needs to look less to government for support and government needs to see it itself as an enabler, rather than as the primary supporter, of the industry. This attitudinal shift needs to be coupled with several changes to the regulatory environment so as to make the 'business climate' more friendly to the screen

sector. Most immediately, the Taskforce calls for incentives to be put in place to encourage private investment in the sector. It notes that most other countries in the world have an incentive scheme for screen production and that ‘if the New Zealand Screen Production Industry is to compete in the global market, it needs incentives’ (Screen Production Industry Taskforce, 2003:36). Such incentives, according to the Taskforce (2003:37) should be carefully designed to ensure that both domestic and foreign productions are able to benefit, but would mostly likely be tax-based. In particular, they advise that any incentive to a foreign production be routed through a local company to ensure domestic sustainability. In addition, the Taskforce calls for changes to the way that cultural funding is administered. At present, cultural funding to the screen sector through bodies such as the Film Commission or the television equivalent, NZ on Air, takes the form of equity investments. This means that if a product is successful, some of the profits are expected to return to the funder. According to the Taskforce, the structuring of cultural funding in this way fosters dependency because producers cannot fully exploit their intellectual property. In the ‘Taking on the World’ strategy, the main benefit of a cultural investment would be the ‘screening of a New Zealand film by a New Zealand filmmaker to domestic and international audiences’ (Screen Production Industry Taskforce, 2003:52). The economic return, on the other hand, would flow back to the producer to enable him or her to ‘develop market awareness and, through this, some control over the viability of his or her business’ (Screen Production Industry Taskforce, 2003:51). Ironically, this transition from the very business-like arrangement of an investment to what is essentially a ‘handout’ is at the core of what the Taskforce (2003:46) describes as a ‘more businesslike relationship with industry, which would allow more independence.’

The call for the government to put in place tax-based incentives and change recoupment policies for cultural funding is very interesting. Up to this point the recommendations of the Taskforce have aligned closely with government policy. The call for incentives and changes to recoupment, however, is out of step with the government film project and so illustrates vividly a key tenet of the translation model of power, namely that power is ‘in the hand[s] of people’ (Latour, 1986:267). That is, it shows us that although an order may be given – in this case, the directive by the Ministry of Economic Development to provide

an ‘industry voice’ that supports its own agenda for the future of the screen sector – there is no guarantee that this will be carried out faithfully. Latour (1986:268) uses the analogy of a token being passed along a chain of people to illustrate that the faithful transmission of an order is a rarity:

[T]he chain is made of *actors* – not of patients – and since the token is in everyone’s hands in turn, everyone shapes it according to their different projects. This is why it is called the model of translation. The token changes as it moves from hand to hand and the faithful transmission of a statement becomes a single and unusual case among many, more likely, others.

We saw in the last chapter that at the time of the Taskforce’s report the government was still strongly opposed to any kind of incentive for the film industry. Similarly, the cultural funding agencies were opposed to changes to recoupment policies. For the Chief Executive of the Film Commission, allowing more money to flow back to the producers did not make sense from either a business or public policy perspective:

E: Do you see movement on that issue [recoupment] from the Film Commission?

R: Tell me anywhere in the world where it’s free. There isn’t anywhere. So I think it’s an absolutely non-commercial approach to a business and I don’t understand the argument that says making government money free is commercially sensible... I think it’s a perfectly understandable approach to say, “Give us free money because we like it better than money that costs money!”... So, no, I don’t think it makes any sense in public policy and I don’t think it makes business sense either because I don’t think it’s business-like.

These disagreements between the Taskforce’s articulation of what was required to secure the future of the screen sector and the government’s perspective were, of course, also played out in the media. The government’s refusal to back a tax-based incentive, for instance, was the subject of an article in the *New Zealand Herald* entitled ‘Plea left on cutting-room floor’ (Taylor, 2003a). So, while the Taskforce model does have the potential to assist in the stabilisation of a political project by bringing new actors into the fold, it also carries with it risks because the message will by necessity be a translation of some sort. Policymakers were aware of this, with one very frankly declaring that:

K: You get into that situation with the taskforce model where you ask people to work for two years to do something. You can't then ignore what they say and say, "No, you're talking crap." They weren't getting paid or anything. So you kind of have to take them seriously. So that means you kind of can get cajoled into doing things that might not have been the best idea.

If we take the Taskforce's report as a whole, however, the process was a success for the Ministry of Economic Development. There may have been some disagreements over the details of how things needed to happen but the overarching vision for the screen sector and the government's role within it was largely shared. This shared vision was articulated often in terms of *what it would take for the industry to be sustainable*. The three elements of the blueprint discussed above – a strong commercial ethos, 'going global', and independence – were central elements for both the Ministry and Taskforce. The composition and nature of the screen sector was also something they agreed on. A sustainable screen sector for both of these actors is one where there is a mix of foreign and local production and where growth-focused, medium-to-large, globally-oriented enterprises predominate (see Figure 1 earlier in the chapter for a summary of this shared vision). Jim Anderton, for example, stated in his Ministerial foreword to the Taskforce's report that he wanted screen production to fulfil its potential as a sector that is 'grounded in innovation, [has] a global outlook, [is] internationally recognised and can make a real difference to economic growth' (Jim Anderton in Screen Production Industry Taskforce, 2003:1). Moreover, in a later press release announcing the government's response to the Taskforce, he explicitly thanked the Taskforce for sharing the government's vision for the screen sector (Jim Anderton in New Zealand Film Production Fund, 2003):

I want to congratulate the Taskforce and its chair Julie Christie for sharing the government's vision of a successful, vibrant New Zealand and the value of working together towards that.

By now it might be apparent that there is a considerable degree of slippage between the project that is being articulated here for this new entity, the 'screen sector', and the more specific 'film industry' and, furthermore, an interesting absence of references to the creative industries. What is the relationship between all of these terms and projects? If we

look at the recommendations and examples used in the Taskforce's report then it seems that the 'Taking on the World' strategy is a project for the film industry: its target are the 'cottage' film producers and the aim is to grow these into globally connected, medium-to-large production houses. In effect, what occurred with the Taskforce is that a set of actors drawn mainly from television production houses ended up prescribing a growth strategy that would transform independent film production companies into the kinds of companies they are already running. That is, from the Taskforce emerged a project targeting the 'film industry' (and, hence, a film project) but modelled on the dynamics of the television subsector. In respect of the creative industries, on the other hand, the most likely explanation for the absence of this discourse is that the term was first and foremost a rhetorical device that was used to create an opening for projects such as this one around the film industry. Consequently, unless some other benefit could be derived from the creative industry policy discourses, they were simply no longer used once the opening had been created.

Contest

As we turn now to contest, we see that that the Film Focus Group, who had earlier contested the composition of the Taskforce, recognised the Taskforce strategy as being in the first instance *for* the film industry and *modelled* on the television sector. Their critique, which they articulated in a public consultation process after the release of the Taskforce report, was directed at questioning the appropriateness of using television as a model. They argued that while the Taskforce's recommendations may be appropriate to the television sector – a sector that 'in some ways is analogous to a factory production scenario' – it is wholly inappropriate for feature film production (Film Focus Group, 2003:1). Feature film production, according to the Film Focus Group's (2003:1) submission, has 'vastly different requirements and economic drivers.' In the subsequent contest over the Taskforce's report, we see that references to the 'screen sector' fade as debate becomes explicitly oriented around the film industry. It becomes, first and foremost, a debate about what would make for a sustainable *film industry* and, relatedly, what such a sustainable *film industry* should look like.

The Film Focus Group was the most vocal critic of the Taskforce. They were opposed to several elements in the Taskforce strategy. Most immediately, they argued that trying to grow all ‘cottage’ type film producers into medium-to-large television production houses with occasional film projects is a case of mistaking a ‘symptom of a problem that plagues the industry’ for a cure (Film Focus Group, 2003:2). While agreeing with the Taskforce that at present it is only the feature film producers in television production houses that have reliable incomes, the Film Focus Group (2003:2) maintained that to recommend, therefore, that feature film production should occur primarily within television production companies is a ‘form of day-jobbing’ that they are ‘loath to recommend’:

[O]perating a large television company in order to make feature films is a form of “day-jobbing” and we are loath to recommend it as the way forward for our industry, any more than we would recommend producers become airline crew to get free international travel.

Their submission also disputed the Taskforce’s claim that the industry lacks sufficient business acumen and needs to professionalise. This view, in their opinion, again reflects a fundamental misunderstanding of the nature of feature film production. Quoting the Taskforce’s call for more ‘professional’ chief executives, they reply (Film Focus Group, 2003:7, emphasis in original):

We find this statement ridiculous in relation to the feature film industry. Peter Jackson does not have a professional CEO in his company, few if any feature film producers do. The reason that the industry is perceived as being “cottage” is that feature film making **is** “cottage”. **The international film industry is creatively driven, unpredictable and high risk. That is the nature of our world. We cannot change this.**

Thus, the problem, according to the Film Focus Group, is not that feature film production companies work on a project by project basis and have a small core of staff that might literally operate from a ‘cottage’, but rather how to make these producers more successful in attracting and developing high-value projects. Peter Jackson is cited several times as an example of someone who continues to operate within the ‘cottage’ model but is very successful (see for example, Film Focus Group, 2003:2-3):

It should be kept firmly in mind that Peter Jackson, like the vast majority of all independent film producers internationally, is a “front-room” producer. He literally operates out of a “cottage” in suburban Miramar. His production company Wingnut films had five employees at the time of *Lord of the Rings* and at the announcement of *King Kong* being green-lit it was no bigger.

We see then that in critiquing the Taskforce, the Film Focus Group is articulating its own alternative vision for the feature film industry and grounding it in a claim to first-hand knowledge of what the subsector is and how it works. In the future-vision of the Film Focus Group, it is not large television production houses that define the industrial landscape of the film industry but a greater number of ‘front-room’ producers operating internationally in the way that Peter Jackson does. In order to achieve this, they propose several measures to strengthen domestic producers and filmmakers. For this reason, we refer to their proposed futures as the ‘Strong Aotearoa/New Zealand’ vision (return to Figure 2 for a summary). This vision is far more concerned with ensuring that the production of New Zealand films can take place than with growth *per se*. There is still, however, some overlap with the Taskforce’s recommendations. For example, they echo the Taskforce’s call for a change to recoupment, proposing an entirely grant-based system of cultural funding where all profits flow back to the producer (Film Focus Group, 2003:7):

Returning 100% from first dollar to the producer for films that are primarily funded for their cultural imperative is, in our view, a simple and much needed mechanism to increase industry sustainability. The long-term effect ... will provide commercially successful independent producers with an increased capital base with the ability to grow and develop their business without further recourse to the funding agencies.

Unlike for the Taskforce, where this was seen as a means of facilitating the development of medium-to-large production houses, the goal here is a sustainable domestic base. The other recommendations similarly place emphasise on the domestic industry. The push for changes to recoupment was accompanied by a call for producer grants of 100,000 dollars to enable travel to international markets and for the continuation of the Film Production Fund. The Film Fund, as it became known, was an initiative implemented by the Labour-Alliance government as part of the ‘Cultural Recovery Package’ in order to extend the development

pathway for domestic filmmakers. Its objective was to provide funding for films by experienced domestic filmmakers, who often struggled to find funding for their second and third films because the Film Commission was geared primarily towards supporting filmmakers at the beginning of their careers when their budgets are generally smaller (New Zealand Film Production Fund, 2003). The Film Fund had originally been capitalised with 22 million dollars for use across five projects and there was no commitment from the government that this would be extended once it had been used up. By the time of the Taskforce's report in 2003, the future of the Film Fund was looking decidedly uncertain. For the Film Focus Group (2003:12), the continuation of the Fund was described as 'absolutely vital'. They saw it as critical to the health of the domestic industry, which for them, of course, was at the heart of a sustainable industry. The international productions, which the government and Taskforce pinned their hopes on to grow the industry, were for the Film Focus Group at best troublesome 'bonuses'. While they acknowledged that foreign productions provide work for people in the industry and, in some cases, develop the local infrastructure, their submission also stressed that these productions pose a considerable threat to local production, especially in terms of inflationary pressures on budgets. The final demand of the Film Focus Group (2003:10), therefore, was for the establishment of a subsidy to the domestic industry to 'compensate for the impact of significant cost increases that foreign productions cause to domestic producers.'

The emphasis on strengthening the domestic industry, as outlined in the Film Focus Group's vision, was also shared by other actors who had been marginalised in the Taskforce. As a result, a loose alliance formed around the 'Strong Aotearoa/New Zealand' vision that included directors, writers, and many domestic filmmakers. We see evidence of this alliance in the interviews with filmmakers, directors, and writers, where there was a general consensus that sustainability was dependent on the strength of independent filmmaking as opposed to television production houses or the international productions. One experienced filmmaker, for example, expressed frustration that Aotearoa/New Zealand was continuing to pour money into foreign productions rather than the domestic industry despite the negative experiences of numerous other contexts internationally:

B: But the fact of the matter is that if we don't look after the local industry we will just end up with nothing because the offshore producers will only come as long as it's cheap and when they've gone there'll be nothing ... I don't know why we can't ever learn from anyone else's mistakes, but we can't. You know in the 1970s this has happened in Spain, it's happened in Mexico and it's happening in the United Kingdom right now.

Moreover, the recapitalisation of the Film Fund was repeatedly identified by these actors as the most critical issue facing the film industry, with one director describing the Film Fund as a 'lifeline' for independent filmmakers. Another lamented the 'short-termism' of establishing the Film Fund for only four years and argued that the eventual decision not to recapitalise showed that the government did not understand how to achieve the long term sustainability of the screen sector:

O: The government is not hitting the balance ... between bringing in international productions, which again is short term thinking because every country in the world understands – and we do here, but the actual policies haven't been implemented to sustain the domestic industry.

The need to prioritise domestic filmmaking over foreign productions is probably experienced more acutely by directors and writers than anyone else in the sector. Foreign productions shooting in Aotearoa/New Zealand invariably come with a script and director already in place, meaning that there is very little opportunity for local writers and directors to be involved. For the head of the Writers Guild, international productions can therefore never be the basis of a sustainable industry because sustainability requires that all 'creatives' have the opportunity to develop their talent:

D: You have to ensure that the money flows down to the creatives, to all the creatives. I mean actors need more parts so they can get better parts. Directors need to be directing more. It affects all of us, you know... A writer can't improve their craft with *Without a Paddle* [a foreign production]. You know, that doesn't improve me or anybody as a writer. We didn't get to benefit from that. So, yeah, sustainability is my key word. It's a word I constantly use.

The head of the Directors Guild picked up on the government's rhetoric around the exploitation of intellectual property to similarly place domestic filmmaking and, hence,

local directors and writers at the centre of policies directed at achieving sustainability in the sector:

V: You know the argument in favour of the international production – apart from bringing money in – is that you upskill crew and it gets more work for crew... [But] the two disciplines that don't get any upskilling are directors and writers and, you know, they are the creative visionaries behind film-making, if you like... They create the IP. And in any industry in our so-called smart, modern world, it's the people who create the IP that are the most important. So without upskilling them, I've been quoted before as saying, "We might as well be making T-shirts." And we might as well because we're not creating any cultural product with that [the foreign production], and there's no positive offspin.

In stressing the importance of the domestic industry, the writers and directors were by and large endorsing the sentiments of the producer-oriented Film Focus Group's vision. This endorsement was, however, always tempered with the qualification that any measures to support the domestic film industry would need to extend beyond producers because, as the head of the Writers Guild put it, 'improving production companies is just going to improve production companies' (Interview, Participant D).

In the discussions that took place after the publication of the Taskforce's report, then, we can see that there were two versions of the film project that gathered momentum, each with a particular vision for the future of the film industry and each with a set of actors aligned to it. You might want to at this point refer back to the diagrammatic illustrations of these visions at the beginning of the chapter to see how they contrast.

There was also a third future-vision that we have not yet mentioned. This was articulated mainly by workers associations, such as the Technicians' Guild and Actor's Equity. The argument here was about the importance of workers to a sustainable industry. There was no preference for either international or domestic productions, so long as local crew and screen actors had reliable and skilled work.²⁵ The main organiser for Actor's Equity, for example,

²⁵ To avoid confusion with 'actors' in the ANT sense, the term 'screen actors' will be used to refer to those who work as actors in the screen sector.

wanted a future where the competitiveness of Aotearoa/New Zealand was based on the talent of its screen actors and crew rather than on cost-savings:

Z: It's about talking about a viable, local market ... and we know it's the scenery, the talent, and the acting level and the crew skill that should be the things that attract people to the country because ... to compete on wages alone is really short-sighted and, yeah, stupid.

For screen actors specifically, she stated that 'our goal is to have a viable industry and to have some training and sort of career paths.' This third worker-centred vision, however, did not gain any momentum in the course of the Taskforce discussions. The main proponents of this vision were unable to gain access to media channels, as evidenced by the fact that their voices were almost completely absent from news reporting around the Taskforce report. They were also unsuccessful in trying to form alliances with other actors who might be able to amplify their voices, as this member of the Technicians' Guild executive acknowledged:

Q: We're not made of the stuff that trumpets for ourselves very well, so we probably don't really do ourselves a lot of favours in, you know, pushing for more things and, you know, speaking to the right people.

It was partly frustration at being left out of the post-Taskforce discussions that led the workers associations to look for others means of participating in discussions about the future of the film industry. These actors, in other words, first had to find a way of establishing themselves as a stakeholder. The two main ways they attempted to do this – through a union merger and employment court case – are examined as the second example of contest by non-governmental actors shortly.

For the moment, however, let us return to the two primary takes on the film project that did have momentum in the post-Taskforce discussions. The fact that there were two competing versions of what the government's film project should be and what the film industry should look like begs an obvious question: which set of industrial actors was able to make their project real? The Taskforce members were, of course, already connected up with political actors and had articulated a strategy and vision that closely resembled the government's

film project. The question, therefore, is really more about whether the 'Strong Aotearoa/New Zealand' alliance had been effective in contesting the 'Taking on the World' vision and breaking up the alliance between the Taskforce members and government. The answer is a resounding 'no'. The government's response to the Taskforce came in two instalments, both of which would 'make real' a largely unmodified version of the 'Taking on the World' strategy.

The first response was the launch of the Large Budget Screen Production Grant (LBSPG) in July 2003 (Anderton, 2003b). From the previous chapter we know that the call by domestic actors, such as the Film Focus Group, for measures to ensure that the local industry would also benefit from any incentive scheme were ignored. The LBSPG was structured in such a way that it was extremely unlikely that local productions would be able to access it and, moreover, no attempts were made to put in place safeguards to protect the domestic industry from the threats posed by foreign production. The second announcement, in November 2003, was in fact the 'official' government response to the Taskforce (Anderton, 2003a). The LBSPG launch had preceded the November announcement because policymakers and politicians were of the opinion that there was considerable urgency attached to New Zealand entering 'the incentives game'. The November announcement was issued via two press releases. The first, by Jim Anderton, begins again with an articulation of the 'Taking on the World' vision, stating that 'the government is committed to working with the screen production industry to build a vibrant, sustainable, and financially independent industry' (Anderton, 2003a). He goes on to endorse the growth targets of the Taskforce and announce four primary measures (in addition to the LBSPG) to support the industry. Two of these are further research and review exercises; one a statistical survey of the industry; the other a review of funding mechanisms. The two main policy initiatives, however, were the establishment of the Screen Council with initial funding of 900,000 dollars and an expanded role for the New Zealand film location office, Film NZ, supported by 960,000 dollars over two years. The additional funding for Film NZ was directed mainly towards more extensive marketing of Aotearoa/New Zealand to foreign productions and so, again, did little to address the needs of domestic filmmakers. Similarly, when we look in a moment at the remit of the Screen Council, we will see that it was essentially tasked with

implementing the 'Taking on the World' vision and so also does little to further the 'Strong Aotearoa/New Zealand' vision.

There was, however, in the launch some rhetorical acknowledgement of the contested nature of these visions. Jim Anderton (2003a) concludes his press release with an acknowledgement of the main argument put forward by critics of the 'Taking on the World' vision:

This [package of initiatives] is about strengthening the domestic base at the same time as we attract international productions. We're building critical mass and taking advantage of all the opportunities and benefits.

By claiming that the policy initiatives the government is implementing are actually about strengthening the domestic base, even though in actual fact they do far more for foreign than local productions, Anderton appears to be trying to bring on board the domestic film industry while diverging very little from the path he has chosen for the film industry. The second press releases which accompanied this announcement sought to do a similar job of trying to stabilise what in essence was the 'Taking on the World' version of the film project by adopting the rhetoric of the independent filmmakers. This second press release was issued jointly by the Minister for Arts, Culture and Heritage and her Associate Minister and declares that the SPIT package will be a 'boost for New Zealand screen production' (Clark, 2003). In this release, the government announced a 10-million dollar increase in the baseline funding of the Film Commission. While this may at first seem like a significant investment in the domestic industry, the funding was in part intended to cover administration costs associated with the LBSPG and, moreover, does not make up for the loss of the Film Fund, which had by this point been discontinued.

That the 'Strong Aotearoa/New Zealand' vision survives in rhetoric rather than deed is clear also when we look at the work that was undertaken by the Screen Council and Ministry of Economic Development in the wake of the November 2003 announcement. The membership of the Screen Council, as we saw earlier, was from its establishment in December 2003 onwards dominated by representatives of medium-to-large television

production companies. Its remit was to implement the Taskforce's strategy for the growth of the sector. The Taskforce's growth targets and proposals for how these might be achieved were translated almost word for word into the Screen Council's annual business plans. The July 2005-June 2006 business plan, for example, lists in order of priority the following 'goals and activities': improving international connections, improving business capability, and improving the environment for investment (New Zealand Screen Council, 2005:3). The Ministry of Economic Development, on the other hand, was concerned almost exclusively with the LBSPG and large infrastructure developments, such as studios and post-production facilities, that are used mainly to attract foreign productions.

By the end of my fieldwork in September 2005, then, not even one of the main 'enablers' in the 'Strong Aotearoa/New Zealand' version of the film project had been taken up by government. The Film Fund had been discontinued, there was to be no subsidy from foreign productions for the domestic industry, and changes to recoupment of cultural funding were not on the cards. What perhaps was most startling by the end of fieldwork, however, was that the dominance of the 'Taking on the World' version of the film project was so complete that the competing 'Strong Aotearoa/New Zealand' project had almost entirely disappeared from the public arena. The Screen Council played a significant part in silencing the competing vision. It was set up by the Ministry as an industry organisation and constructed, in an analogous fashion to the Taskforce, as the 'voice' of the sector. The fact that the Council was fully funded by government, run by a senior policy analyst who had previously worked at the Ministry of Economic Development, and that appointments to its board were made by government did little to damage its standing with the media and some government agencies as the 'industry's voice'. Existing industry organisations were well aware that their ability to access media and also some government agencies diminished after the Screen Council was established. A senior staff member in the producers association which had, prior to the Screen Council's establishment, been the main lobby group in the sector, expressed frustration at the Council for doing what had been their work but with considerably less claim to industry representativeness:

N: They've been set up by government supposedly as a sort of an overview or leadership role for the industry. But the people have been appointed by the government – yes, they are from industry but it's what their role is in the industry. That's the question mark. So the way the Screen Council is operating. They are doing policy work, you know, to inform Ministers of particular issues around economic growth in the industry. A lot of the areas that they are working in are the very same areas that we were working in.

It seems, then, that the Ministry of Economic Development managed to successfully institutionalise the 'friendly voices' of the Taskforce and give its project for the film industry some stability. Such stability, however, is always only temporary. It depends on many things, not least the Screen Council continuing to faithfully perform its role as a 'friendly voice'.

The second example we now turn to concerns actors that occupied a very different position to the main actors in our first story. In this second example, our protagonists are a set of actors that have been excluded from official political processes. Their project is, therefore, located outside of these channels and is concerned with claiming voice so that they might participate in future conversations about the direction of the film industry and government policy towards it. That is, this example is not about contesting the government's film project directly but, rather, about contesting their exclusion from any conversations about what that project should entail. You can think of their actions in the next example as laying the groundwork for political participation. Essentially, this is a project that sets out to reimagine the film industry in such a way that workers become recognised as an integral part of it.

Unions and Guilds: Claiming a Voice, Becoming a Political Participant

The Taskforce process marginalised workers and workers' organisations more than probably any other set of actors in the sector. As we saw earlier, they did not have representation on either the Taskforce or Screen Council and their voices were also largely absent from media reporting of the discussions that the Taskforce's report provoked. When interviewed in the course of this research, there was a widespread sense among union and guild representatives that they had been repeatedly left out of conversations about the

direction of the film industry or had even been ‘silenced’. The union organiser for Actor’s Equity, for example, said that workers and their representatives needed to become recognised as an important part of the industry – that is, as stakeholders:

Z: Just in terms of the Screen Council and Ministry of Economic Development and Film Commission, [they need to] ... recognise that as really important stakeholders in the industry we need to be having conversations with them and with the producers. And, hopefully the goal - in terms of having a common goal - and I’m really clear that the common goal should be to have a viable industry, film industry in New Zealand and that there’s enough local content so that people can have access to work and access to training and be, I don’t know, just feel like a more important part of the industry. That’s a concern that I’ve heard from actor’s that have been around for like 10 or 15 years. They feel like they’ve been silenced for quite a while, which must be frustrating in the occupation as well because they end up being the faces of the film industry. So on the one hand they are very visible, but they can’t be vocal as well, and that’s a real concern.

The Actor’s Equity organiser, like the Technicians’ Guild representative in the Taskforce example, acknowledged that it was in part the responsibility of unions to be better at making workers voices heard:

Z: So we understand that it is our role through us and the other creative unions and guilds [to make workers visible]... there needs to be I think a step taken towards the recognition and the respect that we deserve as the workers voice.

Unlike in the previous example, where two sets of industrial actors were contesting strategy by each articulating a version of the film project, the unions and guilds were faced with first becoming recognised as a stakeholder that has a right to articulate a future. In the two years after the publication of the Taskforce’s report, the sense that unions and guilds needed to be doing more to enable workers to partake in political and industry conversations saw the formation of a new entity within the national Council of Trade Unions (CTU). This new group was called the Creative Sector Strategy Group (CSSG) and was born out of the wider CCUG. The CCUG had first been convened by the CTU some five years earlier to capitalise on the government’s interest in creative industries. It included representatives from CTU-affiliated unions with a stake in the creative sector and also several non-

affiliated workers' organisations, such as the Technicians' Guild. The CCUG met on a quarterly basis to discuss issues facing the sector and how they could respond. By the time of the Taskforce, however, there was some disenchantment with the coalition. It was felt by some that the group needed to have more of a focus on campaigning, with particularly the CTU-affiliated groups arguing that its strategy up to this point of focusing mainly on writing submissions for parliamentary processes and consultations was not sufficient to get workers' voices heard. For the CTU-affiliated groups, a gulf had emerged between themselves and the other non-affiliated organisations, which they attributed to differential levels of commitment to unionism. The non-affiliated groups were not registered as unions under the Employment Relations Act and conducted themselves as guilds. The CTU co-ordinator of the CCUG described the difference as being mainly about whether an organisation adopts a servicing or campaign focus:

Y: They [the guilds] feel ... that their members don't employ their employed staff to do those things for them. So they don't employ their paid staff to agitate their members or to encourage their members to be involved in campaigns or issues. They employ their staff to be service agents and to do submissions on their behalf and to include them in processes but not to, you know, do what unions might choose to do or might choose not to.

The CSSG that eventually formed was much smaller than the almost 20-strong coalition, comprising just the five affiliated unions. The CTU co-ordinator described the process of its formation as follows, again emphasising the differential 'commitment to unionism':

Y: Last year [2004] when I joined the CTU we talked about where we were going to go with the group [CCUG] and the group itself in terms of our union affiliates were talking about: "Well we're finding it difficult to progress stuff from a union perspective because the other groupings are a bit far behind in terms of their commitment to unionism." So trying to find an issue to organise around was just a nightmare because we'd come up with stuff and then the solution would be "let's write a submission to parliament" ... It's an important part of that. But obviously the unions wanted a bit more activity, a bit more campaigning, going on.

The CSSG identified two events to mobilise around. The first was a vote by Actor's Equity members over whether to form an alliance with their Australian counterpart, the Media

Entertainment and Arts Alliance (MEAA). The second was a court challenge brought by a former *Lord of the Rings* modelmaker, James Bryson, to contest his status as an independent contractor. Here too, then, we see a narrowing of focus from creative industries to film. The CCUG, recall, had been formed in response to the government's turn to the creative industries. The two cases selected by the successor body CSSG to mobilise around, however, are both primarily concerned with film.

At first glance it might seem that the Actor's Equity/MEAA merger and the James Bryson case are primarily about solving very immediate problems for film workers – the strength of their union and employment status, respectively – rather than about a broader project for the film industry. However, in both instances the CSSG used these events to articulate an alternative future where workers are valued members of the film industry. In this sense, these campaigns were at their core about contesting the worker-less film project articulated by political actors and the industrial actors we met in our last example. The centrality in each of these campaigns of a future-vision points us again to the important role that notions of the 'future' play in the making and contestation of political projects. Let us consider the two campaigns in turn.

The Actor's Equity and MEAA Merger

The merger of Actor's Equity with the MEAA was first mooted in August 2004. Ostensibly, its objective was to address the low levels of unionisation in the screen sector in Aotearoa/New Zealand, which are something of an anomaly when compared internationally. In Australia and the United States, for example, the film and television sectors are strongholds of the union movement. In Aotearoa/New Zealand, on the other hand, technicians are represented by an organisation that is not even officially a union and only about 20 percent of screen actors were members of Actor's Equity at the time that the merger campaign was launched (New Zealand Herald, 2005). The low union density in the Aotearoa/New Zealand screen sector is in large part the product of a number of legislative changes that took place over the last three decades. Until the 1980s, union membership had been compulsory. This meant that some unions became little more than fee collectors, knowing that they did not have to offer anything to their members, who were in effect a

captive market. The abolition of compulsory unionism saw a sharp decline in the membership of such unions. In the early 1990s, a further change to industrial relations legislation made official registration as a union dependent on a minimum membership of 1000 workers. Actor's Equity at this point had only 200 members and was forced to merge with a large union in order to retain its status as a 'union' (New Zealand Herald, 2005). Actor's Equity elected to become part of the National Distribution Union (NDU), which represented primarily retail, forestry, and textile workers. Like many other smaller unions who were forced to merge at this time, Actor's Equity soon found its concerns submerged within those of the larger union (Interview, Participant Z). In the decade after the NDU merger, Actor's Equity was allocated few resources by the NDU and struggled to maintain its existing membership, let alone recruit new members. On the one hand, the merger with the MEAA was, therefore, seen as a way of revitalising Actor's Equity, not least because the MEAA promised to inject 200,000 dollars into the organisation over two years and to support organising by seconding some of its staff to Aotearoa/New Zealand (New Zealand Herald, 2005). For the CSSG, however, the merger proposal was not just about rebuilding Actor's Equity but also provided the opportunity to provoke a public debate about the role of workers in the film industry and, hence, also about the future of the film industry and how government supports it.

That the merger proposal was mobilised as a means of contesting the direction of the film industry and government policy is evident from the long process that Actor's Equity, the MEAA, and wider CSSG embarked on to come to a decision on the proposal. If the aim had been simply to decide on the merger proposal, then a postal ballot of Actor's Equity members would have sufficed and, indeed, this is standard practice within unions for arriving at a decision about such matters. While a ballot was eventually conducted, it came at the end of a very public, two-year campaign. The campaign commenced with an announcement of the proposed merger in the main industry magazine, *On Film*, and also in the mainstream media. It was announced at this time that in addition to the binding vote of union members, a poll of all screen actors, irrespective of whether they were members of Actor's Equity, would be held in order to canvass their views on the merger (Wakefield, 2004). Screen actors were asked to register with an independent audit company if they

wished to participate in the poll and were then mailed information about the proposed merger. A series of meetings and public forums were also organised to discuss the proposal and the organisations advocating for the merger made considerable use of *On Film* magazine to keep the issue alive (see for example, Whipp, 2004).

In the course of this public campaign, a particular kind of future was being articulated for the film industry that placed workers at the heart of a sustainable industry. In essence, this was a project of reimagining what the film industry would look like if workers were valued. Central to this was an argument about the benefit of a better remunerated workforce to the industry as a whole. If the union was stronger, advocates of the merger argued, then screen actors would be able to negotiate better agreements and pursue acting as a career. Such professionalisation, it was argued, would improve the viability of the industry as a whole by reducing uncertainty and instability. The head of the Writers Guild, which despite its name is actually a CTU-affiliated union and a member of the CSSG, presented this argument in an *On Film* article (Wakefield, 2006):

Writers Guild executive director Dominic Sheehan sees the merger as a chance for Actor's Equity to become properly resourced and grow as an organisation. "I believe it will benefit actors and the entire industry," he says. "Strong industry organisations are better able to support not just their members but everyone (for example, as a Guild we provide a range of services that benefit writers but those working with them). I sincerely hope this move leads to some minimum agreements governing the engagement of actors in New Zealand. We have been struggling to bring in minimum terms and conditions for writers. It would be fantastic to see another creative union succeed in doing that. Minimum agreements create certainty and fairness in an industry and again, this is good for everyone."

There was also a suggestion that if the contracts of screen actors more fairly reflected their input into productions, performances would improve. The head of the Film Commission, Ruth Harley, described in a *New Zealand Herald* article how this argument had been put to her (New Zealand Herald, 2005):

From the other point of view, people have said to me that the actors' industrial arrangements in New Zealand... are weak ... The people who advance this

argument say that in the end this perhaps engenders a lack of confidence which may be reflected in performance.

In the same article, the Secretary of the CTU, Carol Beaumont, endorsed the statement and linked it to a bigger question about how Aotearoa/New Zealand positions itself and its workers:

The pay-peanuts-get-monkeys philosophy has support from the Council of Trade Unions... CTU secretary Carol Beaumont: "We don't think the film industry should be competing on 'oh we've got the lowest rates and conditions and you can come here and get cut-priced workers.' It should be competing on the fact we have magnificent scenery, skilled people, international recognition of our talent, and the facilities that now exist."

The international competitiveness and standing of Aotearoa/New Zealand workers was frequently raised as an issue by proponents of the merger. They sought to interrogate how New Zealanders see themselves, and how they want to see themselves, vis-à-vis their international counterparts. These were questions about confidence, self-worth, and identity as much as about whether screen actors should be represented by one union over another. Simon Whipp, the MEAA representative heading up the fight for the merger, put it very explicitly (New Zealand Herald, 2005):

He [Simon Whipp] says the real issue for New Zealand actors is whether they should have to continue to work in their own country alongside, but on substantially inferior contracts to, actors who are members of the United States Screen Actors' Guild. "Do they believe they are inferior performers or do they believe, as we do, that they're just as good as their international colleagues and entitled to work on equivalent contracts the way Australian performers do?"

Arguments about international competitiveness were also, however, at the heart of the main counter-campaign instigated by a loose alliance of producers, casting agents, and talent agencies. They predicted a very dire post-merger future for the film industry. In their future-vision, the film industry in Aotearoa/New Zealand has lost all its international competitiveness and is sitting idle. One of the strongest voices against the MEAA merger was the screen actor's agent, Robert Bruce. He argued that screen actors would 'put the industry and their livelihoods at risk if they vote in the next couple of months to join the

Australian actors' union, the Media Entertainment and Arts Alliance' (New Zealand Herald, 2005). A downturn in the number of foreign productions in Australia was attributed by Bruce and other opponents of the merger to intransigence on the part of the MEAA and was frequently cited as Aotearoa/New Zealand's future if the merger were to go ahead (New Zealand Herald, 2005):

“Australia has huge studios in Sydney, Melbourne and the Gold Coast that are sitting idle. They're not getting the big productions. They go to Romania, South Africa, Canada; they come here. Australia has been left behind.” He [Bruce] blames the MEAA for being too hardball in its fight for better pay and conditions, succeeding only in driving productions away.

The president of the producers' association agreed with Bruce that the MEAA had contributed to Australia losing favour as a filming location and added that the MEAA would make films such as *King Kong* and *The Lord of the Rings* a lot more difficult to make in Aotearoa/New Zealand (Wakefield, 2004):

Gibson believes MEAA's “slightly more heavy-handed approach” to negotiation has seen overseas production bypass Australia. “*King Kong* and *The Lord Of The Rings* would not have met MEAA criteria. I don't think that approach would be very good for the New Zealand industry.”

Paradoxically, despite the claims that Australia is in the ‘worst shape ever’, opponents of the MEAA merger also invoked the spectre of Australia colonising the film industry of Aotearoa/New Zealand. A prominent local producer, John Barnett, for example is quoted in an *On Film* article describing the MEAA's offer of support as a ‘land grab’ and warning local screen actors that they would get ‘raped and pillaged’ by their Australian counterparts (Wakefield, 2004). Opponents of the merger argued that if the MEAA enforced its Australian contracts in Aotearoa/New Zealand, then there would be no incentive for productions to hire a local screen actor given that for the same price they could hire an Australian. Moreover, it was often suggested that Aotearoa/New Zealand would lose its distinctiveness and become ‘just another part of Australia’ in the eyes of the international film industry. Bruce likened the union merger to a ‘takeover’ (Wakefield, 2006):

Bruce reckons the merger will cost NZ screen production its true identity ...
“It will be a takeover – the rest of the world will see New Zealand and Australia as one jurisdiction.”

Aotearoa/New Zealand is always described as the loser in such a ‘takeover’. The larger size of Australia, its more extensive facilities, and greater talent pool are said to mean that if Aotearoa/New Zealand no longer has a comparative advantage in respect of the industrial relations landscape, then Australia will become the obvious location choice for foreign productions considering a shoot ‘downunder’.

Actor’s Equity, MEAA, and the wider CSSG used public forums and the pages of *On Film* to dispute the claims of the merger opponents. Most immediately, they vigorously refuted the claim that Australia had lost its competitiveness in the international locations business. In his ‘Whipping Up Support for the Merger’ article, Simon Whipp (2004) argued that Australia is still ‘growing exponentially’ and shifted the blame for any downturn on exchange rate fluctuations:

Contrary to critics’ claims, Whipp says he’s not aware of one production that’s refused to shoot in Australia because of MEAA’s agreements and immigration policies or dealings with its officials... He points out Australia continues to have an “exponentially growing” offshore production sector, with the value of offshore productions in 2003/4 climbing 12.5% to A\$470 million. “There is no indication at this point in time that this will turn around. The main inhibitor of offshore production, we are told, is fluctuations in the exchange rate between the US and Australian dollars.”

The unions and guilds also, as we have already seen, vigorously defended Aotearoa/New Zealand workers. In particular, they lambasted local producers for their lack of commitment to Aotearoa/New Zealand screen actors. Peter Jackson had been one of those to suggest that local screen actors would lose out to Australians if fees were the same. Merger advocates used his comments in *On Film* as an opportunity to again underscore their own commitment to local actors, with Simon Whipp being quoted as follows (quoted in Wakefield, 2006):

It seems that we at the MEAA are the only ones who have any respect for the quality of New Zealand performers. Behind Peter's comments is an assumption that NZ performers are hired only because they are cheap. We don't think this is the case. We think NZ performers are equal to their colleagues anywhere in the world. This is clear from the acknowledgements they have received from Sam Neill to Russell Crowe, and Karl Urban to Anna Paquin.

In these rebuttals, the merger advocates are making a concerted case for a more worker-centred future. Dominic Sheehan of the Writers Guild succinctly summed up this future-vision (Wakefield, 2006):

Noting how some agents and producers spoke vehemently against the proposal before the vote, Sheehan says, "I often heard that this move will wreck the industry, that it will drive costs up, that overseas productions won't come here. None of it was based on any substantive research, but fear-based speculation. Will it drive costs up? Perhaps – but why have we been expecting creatives, including actors, to subsidise our industry by working for such miserable pay and conditions?"

For both the advocates and opponents of the merger, then, these discussions were not just about an Aotearoa/New Zealand union deciding to merge with its Australian counterpart but about more fundamental concerns: what is, and should be, the place and value of workers in the industry? What is, and should be, the basis of our international competitiveness? How do we sit in relation to our trans-Tasman neighbours? These are all fundamental questions about the nature and future direction of the film industry in Aotearoa/New Zealand. In the case of the first question – what is, and should be, the place and value of workers in the industry? – we see a clear link to the project of reimagining the film industry in a such way that workers might be able to claim stakeholder status.

How then did the alliances form around these two competing articulations of the future for the film industry? In this case, alliances formed largely as one might predict. The screen actors who registered for the public poll – and there were nearly 900 of them – voted overwhelmingly to support the merger, with 82 percent saying they were in favour of it (Wakefield, 2006). In the subsequent binding ballot of union members, only 93 of the estimated 200 members voted but again the vote was overwhelmingly (90 percent) in

favour of the merger (Wakefield, 2006). The producers and casting agents who had the most to lose from a stronger union failed to persuade those who stood potentially to gain the most – the screen actors – to accept their arguments. There were even several very public instances of side-taking that illustrated the way alliances were forming. The outspoken casting agent Robert Bruce declared publicly that he had written to all the screen actors on his books to say that if they supported the merger, he would no longer be willing to represent them. Six high-profile screen actors went on record to say they had made the decision to sign up with a different agent, stating their support for the Actor's Equity/MEAA merger was not something they were prepared to give up. Bruce justified his actions by saying that he simply could not work for people who had such different views about what 'is good for the industry', clearly indicating again that the contest was as much about the future of the film industry as it was about union membership (Wakefield, 2006).

There was also, of course, a wider objective at stake here that related directly to being able to have a say in the future direction of the film industry. By the end of the fieldwork period, it was difficult to say whether the merger campaign had been successful in getting workers and workers' organisations acknowledged as stakeholders within the industry. There had not yet been another Taskforce-like consultative process where workers might have been included. On the whole, however, the Actor's Equity/MEAA merger campaign appeared to have been a success. The groups behind the merger managed to not only enrol their targets in the merger, but also to stimulate a wider discussion about what the status and role of workers should be in the film industry. In our second example, on the other hand, the unions and guilds were far less successful in enrolling their targets. The campaign around the James Bryson case, which we turn to now, also provoked a public discussion about the place of workers in the film industry but saw many workers side with producers rather than the unions and guilds.

The James Bryson Case

James Bryson was a modelmaker. He was first engaged to work for Weta Workshop, one of Peter Jackson's Miramar companies, in 1996 and completed several short projects there between 1996 and 1998 ("SC CIV 24/2004," 2005). The *Lord of the Rings* trilogy saw him

take up a more permanent appointment. In February 2000, Bryson started working again at Weta Workshops. Two months later, in April 2000, he was seconded to another Jackson company, Three Foot Six, to make models for the miniatures unit that was providing much of the special effects footage for the trilogy. After two weeks with Three Foot Six he was offered a permanent position as a set model technician. He was to remain at Three Foot Six until September 2001, when the miniatures unit was downsized and he was made redundant along with another technician. The court case that ensued from Bryson's dismissal centred on whether he could make a claim for 'unjustifiable dismissal' under the Employment Relations Act. To make a claim under the Employment Relations Act, Bryson would need to have been an 'employee'. However, it was standard practice within the film industry in Aotearoa/New Zealand to engage workers as 'independent contractors'. Before considering the case for unjustifiable dismissal, the Courts, therefore, had to decide whether he was for all intents and purposes an 'employee', even though an agreement issued to him some six months after starting at Three Foot Six declared him to be an independent contractor.

The case was originally heard by the Employment Relations Authority, which ruled that he was an independent contractor ("SC CIV 24/2004," 2005). Bryson sought leave to take the case to the Employment Court, where he won. Three Foot Six, in turn, appealed that ruling in the Court of Appeal. The majority decision of the Court of Appeal overturned the Employment Court ruling, arguing that although Bryson may fail the independent contractor test set out in the Employment Relations Act, the consequences for the industry would be too severe if employment practices were suddenly changed. Bryson appealed to the highest court, the Supreme Court, which again found in his favour. The Supreme Court judgment argued that the Court of Appeal had erred in the weight it had given to the consequences for the industry and that the facts of the case meant that they had no choice but to rule that Bryson was an employee of Three Foot Six and could bring a claim for unjustifiable dismissal ("SC CIV 24/2004," 2005).

This court battle took place over four years and generated considerable public debate. It is an example of contestation in that, just as with the Actor's Equity/MEAA merger, a coalition of actors sought to use the case to provoke a discussion about the place of workers

in the industry. Again, then, here was an attempt not so much to contest a specific government policy, but a depiction of the film industry from which workers and their concerns were largely absent. The Bryson case provided such leverage because the contractor status of many workers in the film industry had a number of important implications. The coalition supporting Bryson included the CTU, which provided assistance with his legal fees and was officially listed as 'First Intervener' in the Supreme Court Case, and the CSSG. They recognised that if workers in the industry were engaged as employees rather than as contractors, then they would need to be given access to employee benefits, such as a sick leave, bereavement leave, and holiday pay. They would also be afforded protection against unfair dismissal, have the right to bargain collectively, and be covered by workplace health and safety legislation. Shifting from a situation where being an independent contractor is the norm to one where most film workers are employees was, therefore, constructed as a key stepping stone towards the union and guild vision of a fairer deal for workers. To this end, they again organised a very public campaign aimed at enrolling others in their project. Forums, panel discussions, and an active media campaign accompanied every stage of the court case. In an interview several days after the release of the Supreme Court decision, a representative of a union in the CSSG recounted the preparations they had made in anticipation of the judgment:

D: We met about Bryson months ago. So when Bryson was released we had a plan in place. We knew how we were going to react to it. We'd done all of the drafting of all the material for it. So when it came out we were able to ... start this process of moving forward on it.

Despite the large amount of effort expended on the campaign, however, it was not a very successful one. Almost without exception, the workers interviewed in the course of this research expressed dissatisfaction with the union campaign around Bryson, some even saying they had considered leaving their union or guild because of it. There was a common view that in supporting Bryson, the unions were not doing what their membership wanted them to but instead pursuing their own agendas or, as one interviewee put it, their 'bandwagons':

RT: To be honest, I almost left the Guild when the Bryson thing happened ... I'm still angry with them and I'm still on the tenterhooks of, "Why the hell do I belong to this organisation?" They don't represent the members. They represent what they think they want to do, you know? That's what I think. They've got their own little bandwagons and agendas.

Most of the workers interviewed said that they did not have a problem with being an independent contractor. A lighting technician stated quite emphatically that 'everyone – well, apart from a young man named Bryson – would prefer to be contractors.' Even individuals who had been working for the same company upwards of five years and were still contractors said that they saw no particular reason to agitate for employee status. Bryson was often characterised by these workers as something of a 'sore loser', out to settle a score because his contract did not get renewed:

E: So has there been anything that's come around since that Bryson decision came out a few weeks ago?

BN: Not really. We all know. We sign a contract. That makes you a contractor. I don't think anyone really believes it's going to change the industry very much. I mean all it really does is make him look like a sore loser because, you know, his contract didn't get renewed.

Another worker described him as a megalomaniac and said that he was 'not worthy to be this test case':

RT: Yeah, he's not worthy to be this test case or to be this person. That's my take on it, totally. First ever job in the film industry. He had no thought for anyone else who works in the film industry or even awareness of. You know, he knew he was a self-employed contractor. He busted his butt to work there and, yeah, he's a disgruntled human being who thinks that the world should have been his and it wasn't.

The worker opposition to the union and guild campaign around the Bryson case cannot be explained by the fact that workers were satisfied with their conditions. They were quick to list grievances in the interviews, many of which related directly to their status as contractors. The uncertainty of project-based work was probably their main concern. Even relatively senior people in the industry spoke of the anxiety attached to quiet periods. A set

builder with more than two decades of experience in the industry described a recent period where he was without work for two months as follows:

TW: Well I did get anxious, I just had two months off. Well, of course, the first month was absolutely gorgeous. Lovely, lovely. Guilt-free. Totally guilt-free. But I started to get twitchy. Yeah, I was seriously twitchy by the end. I was starting to think, “Well I’m going to have to do something.” You know, “If this doesn’t come off, I cannot just lounge around for the rest of my life. I’m not quite at that point yet.”

For those with families to support, these periods were especially stressful. Although being an employee would not eliminate such quiet periods, it would mean that workers would have to be given due notice and paid redundancy if a project was to end sooner than expected. In addition to the uncertainty that comes with being a contractor, workers expressed concern about the difficulties of negotiating pay and conditions as an individual rather than a collective, which as employees they would be entitled to do under the Employment Relations Act. Many said that they found it hard to ask for more money or improvements to their conditions because they felt that they would either not be hired on the next project if they stuck their neck out. One interviewee recalled that when she was offered her contract on *The Lord of the Rings*, the other workers laughed at her because she took the time to read it. Her co-workers, she said, simply signed it because there was little to be gained from speaking out:

WA: I know that because it is a limited industry here most people will say “yes” to a job even if it’s not necessarily their desired income or their desired whatever. You know, just because they want to keep working, they want to keep doing stuff, whatever. But, you know, workers in a sense are on a back foot. They don’t actually have much to barter with. I mean except for the few workers that are absolutely so ultra-indispensable... It puts a lot of us on a foot where we can’t actually speak up for our rights in a sense and say, for example, “I deserve an extra five dollars an hour,” or something like that or, “I’m more used to this rate. I’d like to have this rate.”

The final concern, and this was a significant one for many technicians, was the disregard for health and safety within the industry and the lack of recourse to the government and legal remedies that are available to employees. Numerous technicians spoke of the health

and safety risks that came with the long hours many were working on especially the large productions. Several interviewed for this research said that they thought somebody was going to get seriously injured or killed, particularly on the *Lord of the Rings* trilogy.²⁶ A technician on the trilogy recalls challenging one of the producers about health and safety during filming of the trilogy:

TW: I really thought someone was going to get killed. That was one of my things I said. I said, 'Are you going to be able to live with it if someone actually gets killed?' That was one of the things that I, I mean somebody would work 40 days and then they would only get one day off and would work another 35 days and, you know, it was just [incomplete sentence].

A serious accident on the later production of *King Kong* clearly illustrated the difficulties of intervening in a situation where almost everyone is a contractor. The same technician who had expressed his concerns about *The Lord of the Rings* recalled what happened when investigators came to the set after the accident:

TW: The thing that really bothered them was that they wanted to find an employee... Even right at the very top – the producer, the director – they were all contractors. There was nobody they could actually nail or say could be. It really frustrated them. They could not find anybody. Everybody was a contractor to the company. Nowhere was anyone an employee.

We can see, then, that the workers generally agreed with the unions about problems in their working conditions. We might logically expect them to also, therefore, enrol in the union's campaign around the Bryson case. This, however, did not happen. In the course of the Bryson campaign, workers often ended up siding with the producers rather than the unions and guilds. This pattern of alliance formation was strikingly illustrated during a visit to one of Peter Jackson's companies for an interview with one of his key partners. The interview took place just days after the Bryson Supreme Court decision. I recorded the following fieldnote (14 July 2005):

²⁶ A similar comment is made about the *Lord of the Rings* trilogy by Sean Astin, the Hollywood actor who played Samwise (see Astin & Layden, 2004).

I arrived a few minutes before 1pm and walked in to the lobby. I was asked by one of the people passing through the lobby what I wanted. I explained that I had arranged an interview with X. The woman told me to wait in the lobby while she fetched X. She disappeared into a room to the left, from where I could hear a lot of laughter and chatter. I heard someone say something like, “Hey, don’t do that. I’ll sue you. Don’t forget I’m an employee now!” This was followed by a lot of laughter. Then X emerged, apologising for the delay and saying he’d just been having lunch. I said, “So Bryson is the talk of the lunchroom?” And he said, “Yeah.”

During the interview with X, I brought up the Bryson case again and he said that it was something of a joke for him and his staff, who are all contractors:

E: And I guess related to that is what you were talking about in the lunch room before and that is the Bryson case and the status of people as independent contractors –

X: Yeah, exactly... I mean that could be dire... Most of us in the film industry reckon that would be the death knell of the New Zealand film industry basically if suddenly everyone says, “Oh, I think I’m an employee.” We laugh about it down there [in the lunch room], but all those people down there are all contractors.... No one in the film industry wants to be an employee that I know of.

Other writings on creative work suggest that the failure of workers in this sector to align themselves with unions can be explained in part by the need of these workers to assert themselves as ‘creatives’ (see for example, Ursell, 2000). One of the requirements of ‘being a creative’, this literature posits, is individualism, which sits uncomfortably alongside the collectivism that underpins unionism. Moreover, in some of these accounts, as we saw in Chapter 2, ‘being a creative’ is constructed as something akin to a calling. This means that ‘creative work’ is not work at all but some kind of quest to be ‘true to the self’ and, so, very difficult to fit within industrial relations discourses (see for example, Gibson, 2003). While these explanations make sense, they do not fit with the support we saw for the Actor’s Equity/MEAA merger in the previous example or the interview material collected in the course of this research project. The workers interviewed, who were performing a range of jobs within the film industry, almost universally did not consider themselves to be ‘creatives’. Amongst those working on the Jackson films, for example, there was often a

reverence for him as director – he was more than once called a creative ‘genius’ – and a repudiation of their own creative input. A special effects technician who had worked on *The Lord of the Rings* put it as follows:

SN: I really enjoy what I do. I enjoy the challenge... Just about every day they’ll throw a curve ball at you and you’re like, “Oh, how are we going to do this?” And that’s where a lot of my live theatre experience comes into play because I can think on my feet relatively quickly and come up with a solution for a problem and we’re up and running with it again. So, yeah.

E: It’s quite a creative job then.

SN: Yes and no. I don’t think I’m creative at all. I’m very practical. If a director says, “I want to do this and I want it to look like this.” That to me is creative because he’s come up with a vision. It’s then up to me to make that work. So that’s the practical side of it. I don’t. It could be construed as being creative the way you get around to do it. But the way we do something is based on experience and based on the tools we’ve got and based on the materials.

Even workers who were employed in the Art Department or worked as assistant directors disavowed the ‘creative’ label. The only exception in the interviews was a young woman, who had graduated from film school a year earlier and said that she had always known from an early age that she was a ‘particularly creative person’ (Interview, Participant PH). It is possible that the interviews may be pointing to a generational effect, with those just entering the film industry now doing so for different reasons to their forebears. This, however, would require more extensive research to substantiate.

Whether this is the case or not, we still need to explain why many of the workers chose not to buy into the worker-centred film project articulated by the unions around the Bryson case. As with the Actor’s Equity/MEAA merger, there was a strong and very public counter-campaign. In this instance it was spearheaded by producers, who much like X predicted that there would be dire consequences if all workers in the industry were made employees. After the initial decision in the Employment Court, for example, there was speculation by producers that filming of the 300-million dollar production of *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* would be jeopardised. Barrie Osborne, the Hollywood producer who had acted as Executive Producer on *The Lord of the Rings*, declared in a *New Zealand*

Herald article that the ruling would have ‘significant consequences that are unfortunate for the film industry’ (New Zealand Herald, 2003). Others called forth a future in which the film industry was all but ‘dead’. The unions, of course, responded to these nightmare scenarios. They asked again why workers should subsidise the rest of the film industry (Dominic Sheehan, Writers Guild, in *On Film*, 2004:6):

People like Bryson and other workers in the industry subsidise this competitiveness through lower rates of pay and poorer conditions of work than our overseas counterparts. Yes, we compete internationally but at what cost?

The arguments, then, were very similar to those around the merger proposal. This raises a question about what led workers to side in this instance with the alliance of producers, casting agents, and talent agencies. The most likely explanation from the interviews seems to be that the counter-arguments used by the producers, casting agents, and talent agencies around the Bryson case connected up with the workers’ own experiences and knowledge of ‘American-style’ unionism. In the interviews, workers often said that the Bryson case smacked of the kind of heavy-handed unionism practiced by the United States’ Screen Actors Guild (SAG). Several recounted their own experiences of working alongside SAG members and said they did not want to ‘go anywhere near’ that kind of unionism (Interview, Participant RT). An actor on *The Lord of the Rings* said that in this respect the trilogy had been a ‘good chance for the local industry to get a bit of a glimpse of things like SAG’:

RT: They are the extreme and I don’t think we should go anywhere near the extreme that they have gone.

Several others recounted second-hand stories of union excess in the United States and Canada. Strict demarcation of tasks and seniority rules were often cited as examples of ‘excess’. A set-builder, for example, said that he thought people were often not judged on merit:

TW: You know, the union does the hiring and firing and that kind of thing. So you don’t get to say, “Well I want so-and-so.” Apparently, you can pick your

HODs [Head of Department's]. But after that you have to take because it's all a hierarchy thing and whoever has the most points gets phoned up, "We've got this six week job. Are you interested?" ... So you get that kind of situation and I think that would be horrific. You don't get a chance to use people on merit.

He went on to say that he thought the balance was about right in terms of unionism in Aotearoa/New Zealand, although perhaps there was a case for a slightly stronger union to address some outstanding issues:

TW: So I think where we are at suits us. Slightly more unified conditions would obviously [be good]. Because there are discrepancies. You know, Aucklanders get more and get generally treated better.

On the whole, then, despite an awareness of problems with their working condition and an openness to stronger representation, workers were not sold on the worker-centred film project articulated by unions and guilds around the Bryson case. Although the arguments were not too dissimilar from those mobilised around the Actor's Equity/MEAA merger, the producers managed to successfully evoke a sense that the unions and guilds were trying to impose a 'one size fits all' solution. This, in turn, called forth the workers' own experiences, stories, and memories of 'extreme' unionism in other contexts, especially the United States. The argument here is that it was these memories, stories, and experiences that played a crucial role in making the producers' opposition to the union and guild project believable. More generally, however, it is again difficult to say what effect the campaign, and the way that alliances formed, had on the union and guilds' broader project of claiming a voice and gaining recognition as stakeholders. They were, as they had been with the Actor's Equity/MEAA merger, very good at provoking a debate about the status of workers and it is entirely possible that the way in which alliances came together did not undo the greater visibility that was gained from the increased public exposure. As with the merger, however, we will have to wait for the next consultative exercise to see if workers' organisations have won a right to partake in political deliberations about the future of the film industry and the way that government supports it.

Conclusion

At the conclusion of this chapter, there are two points that it seems important to draw out from this discussion of how industrial and non-governmental actors sought to participate in the political processes around the film project. The first concerns the roles that industrial and non-governmental actors can play in such processes and their ability to play these roles successfully, while the second is a more general comment about contingency and pragmatism in the 'working out' of the film project and what this means for travelling policy discourses around the creative industries.

In respect of the first point, we have seen industrial and non-governmental actors become involved in stabilising the film project, contesting that same project, and in proposing alternatives to it. Most immediately, the industrial actors on the Taskforce played an important stabilising role in that they diversified the connections holding together the film project to the extent that there is now an 'industry voice' that, up to this point at least, reliably advocates on behalf of the government's film project. On the other hand, the actors aligned to the 'Strong Aotearoa/New Zealand' vision and, in our second example, the unions and guilds tried to contest the dominant film project and propose alternative versions. Ultimately, their ability to make 'real' the projects they were advancing was, however, far more circumscribed. It seems an obvious point to make about the relative success of the actors in this chapter, but one that is nonetheless worth making explicit: the likelihood that any given set of industrial and non-governmental actors will be able to make their vision or project real depends on previous stabilisation work. In the context of our examples, we saw that the Taskforce members were already extensively connected to a range of political and media channels. As such, their version of the film project was able to circulate the furthest and, importantly, circulate in the right channels. If we contrast this to the unions and guilds, these actors first had to become recognised as stakeholders before they could begin to contest the government project. That is, to use ANT language, the unions and guilds first had to do 'engineering' work in order for their ideas to be able to circulate over sufficient distances, and in the right channels, to be heard and have a chance of being 'made real'.

The second point is that in all of these instances of making, stabilisation, and contestation we see a very local, experiential, and pragmatic process of ‘working out’ what the film industry is and, hence, also what the film project should be. The Taskforce, for example, involved the making up of a new entity (‘screen production industry’) and then a process of determining who should be considered a part of that entity and able to speak on behalf of it. This process was not an abstract one, but very practical. Recall, for instance, the attempt by the Ministry of Economic Development to enrol domestic filmmakers in the project by inviting them to a seminar on the business of film by a Victoria University lecturer. This very local working through of what the film industry and the film project should be is difficult again to reconcile with the accounts we find in the travelling policy literature, where politicians and policymakers are often represented as being virtually blind to how policies fit within their particular contexts. Moreover, it seems precisely this very local and contingent act of working out *what the political project should be* that saw references to the creative industries disappear almost completely. That is, in Aotearoa/New Zealand the implementation process after creative industries were named in the GIF appears to have been first and foremost a very locally-engaged and practical one to which the travelling creative industry policy discourses were of little use.

Chapter 7:

On the Usefulness of ANT

The introduction to this thesis likened the project being undertaken here to the ‘black-box’ opening exercises conducted by ANT scholars in their studies of laboratory life in the late 1970s and 1980s. It made the bold assertion that using the black box heuristic to interrogate the political practices and processes around the film industry and economic development in Aotearoa/New Zealand was crucial if we were to understand the making of power and, hence, how political projects around the creative industries and economic development are made and stabilised. This assertion was based on the assumption that power is not something that is possessed by powerful actors or institutions, but rather something that is made through associations, connections, technologies, devices and so on. To illustrate, let us recall Donald MacKenzie’s (2005:558) claim about the constitution of ‘macro actors’:

[T]he macro actors of social life (including not just individuals, but also organisations and even “structures”) are micro actors grown large through their capacities to mobilize and command black boxes... The contents of black boxes are indeed “details”, but not “mere details”. If a black box ceases to function as such – if it no longer reliably transforms inputs into appropriate outputs – then the power of a macro actor can be disturbed.

There are two important consequences of such a conceptualisation of macro actors. First, and this is fairly obvious, the distinction between the macro and micro disappears. The ‘macro’ is but an effect of extensive ‘micro’ connections that translate reliably and can, therefore, be ‘black boxed’. It follows that a political project is provisionally stabilised once black-boxing has taken place and that we should be able to understand the process of its stabilisation by tracing the ‘small’ connections that were made in the course of this black-boxing process. Second, and this is important for our discussion in the latter part of the chapter, there are implications for how one intervenes politically to disrupt macro actors. If we buy MacKenzie’s (2005) argument, and the argument of ANT scholars more generally, then it should be possible to disrupt macro actors by interfering with the micro connections and associations that hold them together; that is, in MacKenzie’s (2005) words, with the

‘details’ inside the black box. We should, therefore, be able to avoid falling back on the ‘hidden forces’ that underpin the critical sociology project.

The point of this first concluding chapter is to reflect on both of these consequences, using this thesis project as a starting point for discussion. The first part asks whether an ANT approach enables us to ‘get at’ power-making and, hence, also at political stabilisation: are we able to understand how a political project comes to be made and stabilised by simply tracing the ‘small’ connections? The second part then turns to the question of politics: can an ANT informed approach provide the basis for effective political intervention? The sum of these two parts is intended to provide an evaluation of what we gain and lose when using ANT in the study of political processes and practices.

ANT and Political Stabilisation

The thesis took as its starting point the apparent stabilisation of the film industry within economic development initiatives in Aotearoa/New Zealand. It would have been easy to read this development as yet another instance of global economic and political processes imposing themselves on a local context. After all, the political project around the film industry appeared to be firmly located within a wider creative industries agenda and, as such, Aotearoa/New Zealand seemed to be following a well-trodden path in carving out a central role for creative industries within economic development. The United Kingdom, United States, Canada, and Australia had all already implemented similar programmes at national, regional, and urban scales of governance. Such a reading also seemed to be supported by the ‘paper trail’. In Chapter 5, we saw that policy documents repeatedly placed film within a creative industries project and referenced overseas contexts, such as the United Kingdom. Moreover, the paper-trail pointed to ways in which Aotearoa/New Zealand was, in very material ways, hooked into global policy circuits. Key figures, such as Richard Florida and Charles Landry, had visited the country to promote creative industries-led economic development and, conversely, politicians and policymakers from Aotearoa/New Zealand had travelled to other contexts to learn from their experiences.

The decision to use ANT, however, was first and foremost a decision to try to tell the story of the film industry's stabilisation as a political project without assuming from the outset that there existed, even if only implicitly, a determinist relationship between the local and any developments, processes, actors, and institutions at 'higher' scales. This was not to say that some of the 'macro' phenomena described in the existing literature might not be playing a role, but rather to say that if they were playing a role then this would need to be substantiated empirically through an act of tracing the 'small' connections. For example, if travelling policy discourses were the main reason for the prioritisation of the creative industries within economic development in Aotearoa/New Zealand, it would not be sufficient for an account to offer as an explanation that these discourses 'are powerful' or attached to 'powerful actors'. Instead, telling the story of how these policy discourses took hold would require a description of the techniques, devices, knowledges, strategies, and tools that were used to enrol local actors in the project and, in so doing, make power. This illustrates very clearly that ANT is, as its proponents claim, first and foremost a method: it does not make substantive claims about what we will find, but rather gives us a set of tools for exploring how something comes into being and is (provisionally) stabilised.

So, despite using ANT and in a sense writing counter to the existing literature, we could conceivably have found ourselves concluding with a story that is very similar to those that attribute the rise of creative industries to travelling policy discourses. Of course, we know by now that the story we have ended up with from our ANT-informed explorations is actually very different. The key elements in this story of how the film industry came to be a priority of economic development in Aotearoa/New Zealand could be summed up as *contingency* and *opportunism*. Most immediately, in Chapter 5 we saw that it was the opportunities opened up by Peter Jackson and the *Lord of the Rings* trilogy that brought film to the attention of policymakers and politicians. The creative industry policy discourses, on the other hand, were deployed strategically by these actors in order to make their very local, contingent, and opportunistic endeavour appear more reasoned and rational and, hence, politically sound. That is, it seemed that the political actors in this story were not so much interested in the 'creative industries' as a sector but, rather, in using the momentum around this idea to stabilise initiatives that could support some 'very real'

opportunities in the local economic environment, of which film was the most significant. Moreover, the historical account of political projects around the film industry presented in Chapter 4 makes it difficult to construct the ‘new moment’ as a product of some epochal shift in the relation between ‘culture’ and ‘economy’. After all, the most striking feature around the first dedicated ‘film project’, the establishment of the New Zealand Film Commission, was that the cultural and economic did not correspond to fixed essences, but were discourses that actors deployed pragmatically in line with judgments about what would be most likely to persuade others to buy into their project.

If we return, then, to the central question animating this thesis – the question of how a political project around a creative industry comes to be made and stabilised – what story can we tell? In the case of the ‘new moment’ in Aotearoa/New Zealand, the story that emerges from the empirical data is one of local actors embarking on a project that, for a whole host of contingent factors, ‘made sense’ to them in their context. Some might want to argue that it wasn’t really a creative industries project – that, in a sense, it has been unmasked in this thesis as a ‘film project’ – and so tells us very little about the making and stabilisation of creative industries-based economic development initiatives. This, however, misses the point. The prioritisation of the film industry within economic development in Aotearoa/New Zealand looked from the ‘outside’ as much like a creative industries project as any of the other often cited examples. In this sense, the film project had been translated into a ‘creative industries’ project by the political actors who discursively placed it within this frame. Above all, however, it illustrates the importance of opening the ‘black box’ as it was only by interrogating the ‘stuff in between’ that we could see that creative industry policy discourses had actually been used very ‘unfaithfully’ in the service of a ‘film project’.

The creative industries policy discourses were used to stabilise the film project, but these were not the only tools deployed by our main actors in making and stabilising this political project. Across Chapters 5 and 6, we also uncovered several other techniques that were deployed in the course of trying to ‘doing politics’ around the film project. Quantification was an important tool that functioned in much the same way as the creative industry policy

discourses, doing 'framing work' in order to convert the local and contingent into something more reasoned and objective. In the case of the Large Budget Screen Production Grant (LBSPG), for example, economic estimates were used to distance the scheme from its origins in meetings between Hollywood producers and government Ministers. Chapter 6, on the other hand, pointed us to the importance of diversifying the connections that hold together a given political project. The Screen Production Industry Taskforce (SPIT) enabled political actors to connect 'friendly' voices from industry to its growth agenda for the film industry. The establishment of the Screen Council, as a permanent successor to the SPIT, showed how such connections can be institutionalised in the interests of longer term stability. Alongside these techniques, which were discussed at length, we also saw that simply the conversion of something into a durable form, such as a policy document, contributes to stabilisation by materialising the political project.

In all these cases of making and stabilisation, but most of all in the initial prioritisation of film, we can see that the actions of local actors mattered. Allowing for the possibility of local agency in this way is, of course, a critical element of any ANT account because underpinning ANT is an assumption that actors could have behaved in numerous different ways and that what we observed was not inevitable but rather one outcome among several other possible outcomes. We could also say that the agency afforded to local actors in this account is probably what differentiates it most markedly from the existing literature on creative industries in economic development. As we saw in Chapter 2, in many of the existing explanations for the rise of creative industries on economic development agendas, the actions of politicians and policymakers are not seen to be consequential in and of themselves (see for example, Wetzstein & Le Heron, 2003). In the case of the travelling policy explanations, the politicians and policymakers are posited to be no match for the powerful policy discourses circulating around them and so become something akin to unwitting dupes in a bigger game. In the more economically-focused literature, on the other hand, the policymakers and politicians are no match for the power of the capitalist system and so play the role of handmaidens to capitalism, refashioning economic and political landscapes to secure the conditions for ongoing accumulation. We might say, therefore, that one of the strengths of the ANT approach is that it restores the agency of local actors. We

could go even further and agree with Latour (2005:152-3) when he says, in a fictitious dialogue with an exasperated LSE student searching for a 'framework' for his dissertation, that only such a conceptualisation of agency makes doing fieldwork worthwhile:

Student: Are you making fun of me here? Striving for that sort of framework [where there is a known cause of local action] seems feasible to me.

Professor: But even if it were, would it be desirable? See, what you are really telling me is that the actors in your description make *no difference whatsoever*. They have simply realized a potential – apart from minor deviations – which means they are not actors at all: they simply carry the force that comes through them. So, my dear Student, you have been wasting your time describing people, objects, sites that are nothing, in effect, but passive intermediaries since they do nothing on their own. Your fieldwork has been simply wasted. You should have gone directly to the cause.

Student: But that's what science is for! Just that: finding the hidden structure that explains the behavior of those agents you thought were doing something but in fact were simply placeholders for something else.

Professor: So you are a structuralist! You've finally come out of the closet...

The value of this thesis, we could surmise then, lies in its demonstration of the ways in which local actors *act* and *matter*, specifically because this is a case that on the surface appears to fit within a wider narrative of economic and political change. The restoration of agency to local actors in this way has implications for how one might intervene politically as it offers both the 'local' and quite 'ordinary' as a locus for alternative political action and organising. We will discuss these political implications more extensively in the next section.

For the moment, however, let us remain with this assertion about the importance of the local actors. There is a certain unease that accompanies this claim. This unease stems, it will be argued here, from a methodological bias within most ANT projects towards what are perhaps best described as the 'shorter' connections. Let us explore this. In Chapter 2, we learned that a central premise of ANT is that the sociologist of associations must 'trudge like an ant', tracing even the most taken for granted associations (Latour, 2005:25). This means that processes and things that the 'sociology of the social' is able to adopt a

philosophical realism towards and assume exist – we might think here of globalisation or capitalism, for example – must first be shown to exist through a process of tracing connections and associations. These macro actors, if they do indeed exist, are said by ANT scholars to achieve their reach by virtue of an extensive network of connections and associations. This necessarily poses a very practical problem for the sociologist of associations: how does one muster the resources to trace these extensive connections? It might even be that we have to take another step back and ask not ‘how’ one goes about mustering resources but whether *one is* actually able to muster such resources, where these might be financial, temporal, and so on. If we gratuitously extend Latour’s (2005:25) metaphor we might summarise this problematic as follows: it is fine to trudge like an ant around your neighbourhood, but it would be a rare ant indeed that manages to trudge around the whole world in one lifetime. For sheer reasons of practicality, then, ANT is a method that seems better suited to tracing and making visible the ‘shorter’ associations in a locality, not least because of the increasingly constrained time frames within which academic research is expected to occur. There follows logically from this a question about the substantive content of ANT accounts: is the agency afforded to the local as much an effect of method as a good account of the world, if we might invoke notions of truth for a moment?

In the context of this account of the film industry and economic development in Aotearoa/New Zealand, this problematic has implications for the conclusions we draw about what our data means in respect of the more economically-focused accounts which attribute the rise of the creative industries to the increasing culturalisation of the economy. The *contingency* and *opportunism* that emerge from the empirical data could arguably be read in one of two ways. First, it could be read as an accurate story. That is, the prioritisation of film on the economic development agenda is ‘really’ a story about contingency and opportunism, and this is the end of the story. Second, we might say that contingency and pragmatism emerge as stronger explanations than the macro factors that populate the economic accounts only because it is more feasible to trace the shorter, localised connections in the context of a PhD project supported by a three-year studentship and only very limited research funding (an award of £700 for travel). That is, being faithful

to the standards of evidence required by ANT means that it was always going to be very difficult for macro factors, such as shifting demands of the capitalist system, to emerge as *explanans* in this account. Adopting this second reading does not, of course, inevitably mean that if there had been the scope for more extensive tracing of connections, larger macro actors would have inevitably emerged as the dominant factors in the story. It simply says that without this scope, the possibility that such macro actors might have emerged cannot be ruled out and we cannot be certain that we are telling the 'whole' story. For instance, when using ANT faithfully it is difficult to establish what the relationship is between some notion of 'capitalism' and the local economic opportunities that political actors said they were responding to when putting in place the film project.

We reach something of an impasse at this point: without the scope for more extensive tracing, it is not possible to adjudicate between these divergent readings. In fact, we are not even sure what 'extensive enough' would mean and whether that would ever be practicable. The response of Latour and other ANT scholars to this dilemma would most likely be that we know our tracing has been 'extensive enough' if we are able to give a description that does not require recourse to any additional factors, most notably the 'hidden forces' which haunt accounts in the sociology of the social. This does not seem to be a satisfactory answer, however. If we are honest about the practices of fieldwork, then we will acknowledge that we are constantly making decisions about which paths to follow and which openings to ignore. These decisions are often a compromise between what is most likely to help us 'get at what is going on' and what is actually feasible for us to do. By not following certain paths, we are foreclosing on possible explanations and also foreclosing on factors that could possibly trouble some of our conclusions. It is possible, therefore, to envision being able to offer a description that does not provoke unanswerable questions, but that could nonetheless have been troubled by choosing to follow a different path. This is not an argument for the existence of 'hidden forces', but an argument within ANT's own terms: how do we know we have traced enough associations, given that in all honesty we can never trace all the associations?

By using ANT, then, we could say that we have ended up in the middle of a rather ‘risky’ account, although not in the sense that Latour (2005:121) intends for us in *Reassembling the Social*. This is not to say that what we have found – the contingency and opportunism – isn’t actually going on. It is. This is a question about what else might be going on beyond the scope of what we were able to trace and what the relationship of that might be to what we were able to make visible. It could be argued that these reflections on the status of the account being offered here are overly reflexive. This would probably be a valid criticism if the project being conducted had not been exploratory in nature and, therefore, carried with it a responsibility to interrogate at what cost any new insights are obtained.

If we conclude, then, on the merits of ANT for the study of political and economic processes, generally, and the creative industries within economic development, specifically, it seems fair to say that this thesis has demonstrated that ANT is a productive method. In this case, it has brought to the fore dimensions of political and economic processes that previous accounts have missed. Specifically, in pointing to the role of local contingency and opportunism, this account makes an important intervention in the literature on travelling creative industry policies. It challenges the assumption that we can understand how political actors are engaging with these policies by simply looking at the ‘input’ and ‘output’. As such, even if contingency and opportunism do not feature in other contexts, this thesis is testimony to the importance of ‘opening the black box’. Yet, it seems equally salient to acknowledge the shortcomings of the approach. This is not to say that ANT should not be used, but that it should be used with an awareness of some of the very practical and physical obstacles that stand in the way of being faithful to the ANT approach when trying to trace the role played by larger, more ‘macro’ actors. It is somewhat surprising that the ANT focus on materiality has not yet been directed inwards in any concerted, practical way to interrogate how material matters impact on the ability of a researcher to ‘do ANT’. Perhaps more reflexivity, as practiced here, about the limitations of our ANT-informed ‘trudging’ might prompt conversations about ways in which the method can develop in order to confront some of the material challenges that come with doing a sociology of association.

ANT and a 'Better' World

In Chapter 3, I expressed the hope that this thesis would make a 'meaningful' and 'worthwhile' contribution to the conversations about creative industries and economic development, generally, and the case of film, specifically. What follows here is a reflection on the usefulness of ANT to the sociologist concerned with building a more just world. We could say that if the first problematic discussed in this concluding chapter was about whether we can use ANT to come to an understanding of our world, then the second is about whether we can use ANT to change it for the 'better'.

To begin our discussion it is worth noting that for Latour (2005) the ANT project is in part motivated by a desire to overcome what in his view is the political inefficacy of modern sociology. Specifically, Latour (2005) challenges the critical sociology approach. In *Reassembling the Social*, he variously describes the critical sociology project as 'vampirical', a form of 'masochism', and as a 'misplaced attempt at clinging to common sense mixed with an ill-timed craving for political relevance' (Latour, 2005:50, 252, 25). For Latour (2005), politics is not possible if we are faced, as critical sociologists claim we are, with an all-powerful system, such as capitalism, and all-powerful forces, such as exploitation, domination, reification, and so on. In the face of such awesome power, there can only be defeat. In Latour's (2005:252) words:

With respect to the Total, there is nothing to do except to genuflect before it, or worse, to dream of occupying the place of complete power.

He concludes that if society is indeed a 'thing' in the way that the sociology of the social describes it, then 'no politics is possible' (Latour, 2005:250). The claims to political relevance that often accompany 'social explanations' are, therefore, at best misguided (Latour, 2005:250):

So, contrary to the first impression, there is a strong conflict between gaining political relevance and offering social explanations.

Latour's own definition of politics follows from his redefinition of the social. If the social is an *effect* of the temporary stabilisation of heterogeneous elements into assemblages, Latour (2005:254) argues, then politics is best redefined as the 'progressive composition of the world.' As such, politics becomes a diffuse practice because the collection of heterogeneous elements into assemblages is, after all, occurring all around us. It also means that academic accounts are always already political. That is, insofar as academic accounts through their descriptions perform a version of the world, they are also playing a role in its composition. As Latour (2005:256) puts it, 'to study is always to do politics.' Where, then, does such a formulation leave the sociologist seeking political relevance?

The answer must lie in accounts that contribute to a more just composition of the world. Latour (2005:256) argues that the achievement of such compositions requires the sociologist to produce, and here we return more faithfully to the idea, 'risky accounts'. A risky account, in the sense that Latour (2005:256) actually intends it, is one that first multiplies controversies – that is, makes visible all the 'bits' and associations that make up any given assemblage – and then collects and composes them in a way that builds a more just arrangement. The first step is critical because it is only through a process of making visible the 'smaller ties' that resistance becomes possible (Latour, 2005:256):

It's only if forces are made of smaller ties, whose resistance can be tested one by one, that you might have a chance to modify a given state of affairs.

Latour (2005:257) summarises the production of risky accounts as being a process of first '*taking into account*' and then '*putting into order*'. The sociologists' political role is, according to Latour (2005:252), 'most of the time a fragile intervention consisting only of a text.'

If we apply Latour's (2005:256) arguments to the present study, we can see that there is considerable value to making visible the 'smaller ties'. Should we wish to argue against the role afforded creative industries within economic development, for example, we would have little chance of success if we based our campaign around debunking the theories of Richard Florida (2002) or other creative economy models. After all, our exploration of the

'smaller ties' that have temporarily stabilised the film project within economic development has shown that Florida's (2002) theories and economic models acted not as rationales for policies and initiatives, but as devices and techniques that politicians and policymakers deployed to 'do politics'. The actual impetus for the policies around film was rooted in the local economic context and we would do far better to address these factors in any campaign to shift economic development priorities. Similarly, there would be little point in disputing the accuracy of the calculative practices used in economic impact assessments. Much like the theories of Richard Florida, we saw that these were being deployed not in the first instance for their 'truth' value but because they made politics possible by transforming a policy based on local and contingent rationales into something far more universal, objective and, hence, politically acceptable. We see, then, that the focus on 'small' ties in this study has made visible sites for resistance that are not only more likely to be effective, but also *more accessible* by virtue of being 'small', localised, and, in many respects, quite ordinary. That is, there is a sharp contrast between these targets for political intervention and the hidden forces and structures in critical sociology accounts, which along with being all-powerful are often portrayed as being so all-consuming that they are simultaneously everywhere and nowhere.

The focus on small ties does seem to have merits then. There are, however, two significant problems with other aspects of the way Latour (2005) formulates the political role of the sociologist, both of which I want to argue can also be overcome. One of these concerns the scope of the political intervention he envisages, the other relates to the basis on which a sociologist might make normative judgments. For Latour (2005:252), as we saw earlier, the main political contribution of a sociologist is the risky account, which most often takes the form of a text. It is true that at present many sociologists intervene only through the medium of texts. By not challenging in his formulation the practice of seeing political intervention as something that can begin and end with a text, Latour (2005:252) it seems to me is unnecessarily limiting the scope of the sociologists' political contribution. He is making the mistake of accepting what is standard practice among sociologists for what *should be* – or, better said, might be their most effective – political role. He also opens himself up to a charge levelled at Foucauldian and post-structuralist accounts of power and

politics, namely that the extent to which effective political intervention depends on struggle is occluded (see for example, Hartsock, 1990). Latour's (2005:254) very definition of politics as the 'progressive composition of the world' could be said to push from view the violence – physical and non-physical – that often accompanies efforts to make (over) our common world. If we can agree that politics is a more turbulent affair than Latour's (2005:254) definition suggests, then the intervention of the sociologist would need to extend in many cases beyond texts if it is to be effective.

There is some indication that despite his description of the sociologist's political role in the conclusion to *Reassembling the Social*, Latour (2005) is well aware of the need for more extensive intervention. Elsewhere in the text, for example, Latour (2005:231) calls on sociologists to become more involved in ensuring that sociological tools, or tools that sociologists could build, become established as metrologies within political processes. This is an endeavour that would surely require more than textual intervention. In the writings and work of other ANT scholars there is also an awareness that effective political intervention will need to go beyond texts. We derive perhaps the best insight into what such intervention might look like from an interview with Michel Callon (Barry & Slater, 2002b). Callon asserts in this interview that sociologists need to become more involved in governmental processes and institutions. Speaking of his own work on markets, Callon argues that sociologists should behave more like economists and claim the right to devise and implement alternative tools (Barry & Slater, 2002b:300-1):

Michel Callon: If we believe the analysis we are producing, we are obliged to recognize that the way to influence structures or structure institutions is to devise tools... The weakness of sociology and anthropology when they come to analyse economic activities is precisely their reluctance to do the same jobs as economics. Economists are able to tell how it is possible to calculate profits and so on, but sociologists do not provide these kind of tools.

Callon is advocating a far more 'hands on' participation in public debate and politics than is suggested by Latour's (2005:256) 'risky account'. In Callon's vision, sociologists must get their hands dirty by becoming involved in the very material and practical aspects of world-making. Later in the interview, he outlines another possible way for sociologists to become

involved in making the common world, articulating a vision of co-operative research undertakings that might underpin new kinds of social movements. Callon points to his work with patient groups as an example of such an undertaking (Barry & Slater, 2002b).

There is no reason, then, why the political intervention of the ANT sociologist needs to, or indeed should, end with the production of a 'risky account'. With Callon's help we can also begin to overcome a second problem in Latour's (2005) formulation, namely the problem of how, as sociologists, we can make normative judgments within a framework that seeks to return interpretive authority to the actors in our accounts. In Chapter 2, we learned that one of the central tenets of ANT is a movement to destabilise the privileged position often occupied by the sociologist vis-à-vis the actors he or she is studying. The strong argument against the translation of what actors are saying into a meta-language is one way in which this movement manifests itself. In a sense, within ANT the roles of the sociologist and actor are reversed. Latour (2005:32) summarises this as follows:

Actors do the sociology for the sociologists [within ANT] and sociologists learn from the actors what makes up their set of associations ... While this should seem obvious, such a result is actually in opposition to the basic wisdom of critical sociologists. For them, actors do not see the whole pictures but remain only "informants". This is why they have to be *taught* what is in the context "in which" they are situated and "of which" they see only a tiny part, while the social scientist, floating above, sees the "whole thing".

The ANT scholar is exhorted to 'follow the actors' and 'learn from the actors'. While this might be almost achievable when collecting data, it becomes more problematic in the writing and interpretation phase of a research project. Here, the sociologist must make choices about how to fit all the divergent accounts into one in order to tell a story and, as such, cannot avoid bringing an interpretative frame to bear on the material, even if it is only in terms of a decision about which of his or her actors to privilege in the account. This dilemma is exacerbated further if one is concerned with producing a politically relevant account. It is all good and well to say 'follow the actors', but what do you do when the actors in your story have conflicting political agendas? In the present research project, we could use the competing future visions in Chapter 6 as an example: should you assist the

actors seeking to stabilise the ‘Strong Aotearoa/New Zealand’ future-vision or should you assist those advancing the ‘Taking on the World’ future-vision? In the interview with Barry and Slater (2002b), Callon seems to suggest a situational ethic. Consider this exchange with Barry (Barry & Slater, 2002b:302):

Andrew Barry: And the key question is which actors do you co-operate with and with which you do not co-operate.

Michel Callon: It’s a very important question and there is no straightforward answer. It’s a question of trial and error.

Later, still in response to the same question, Callon elaborates further (Barry & Slater, 2002b:302):

Michel Callon: ... I think it’s easier to explain why, in the case of a very limited conflict or debate, you will choose to co-operate with certain actors and with others, because the problems are really circumscribed...

The key point to take from this exchange is that the decision about who to co-operate with cannot be derived from some pre-existing grid of analysis but must be made *in situ*. Callon does not, however, offer us any criteria for how we might make a normative judgment *in situ*. It seems helpful, therefore, at this point to return to Flyvbjerg’s (2001) phronetic approach to the social sciences, which was first introduced in Chapter 3.

Phronesis, recall from Chapter 3, is the Aristotelian virtue concerned with the production of ‘pragmatic, variable, and context-dependent’ knowledge (Flyvbjerg, 2001:57). A social science that holds phronesis as its goal is oriented towards producing social commentary that engages with four key questions (Flyvbjerg, 2001:131):

- 1) Where are we going?
- 2) Who gains and who loses?
- 3) Is it desirable?
- 4) What should be done?

The social science researcher uses these questions to make judgments about how to compose an account and also, if relevant, how to intervene. The emphasis on context means that these questions are not answered by the researcher through recourse to universal or pre-existing values, but rather through a dialogical engagement with participants and the wider setting. The emphasis on 'context' might at first seem antithetical to an ANT approach, which at its core seeks to disrupt the dichotomy between actors and contexts. However, it is really more a sense of 'context' as *in situ* that Flyvbjerg (2001) is describing here. As such, these questions need not conflict with the central tenets of ANT but could be used to provide a basis for ANT scholars to make judgments – for it is almost inevitable that such judgments will have to be made – about which actors to privilege when putting together their 'risky accounts' and about how to intervene political beyond the text(s) they produce.

In putting together this thesis, there were several instances in which I was guided by Flyvbjerg's (2001:131) phronetic questions. The composition of Chapter 6 provides a good example. There were numerous examples of contest and competition by industrial and non-governmental actors. The Screen Production Industry Taskforce was an obvious one to include because of its significance to the making of the government's project for film. For the second example, it was more difficult to decide on a case. I ended up choosing the campaign by the unions and guilds for two reasons: firstly, because it was one of the most high profile instances of contest during my fieldwork period; and, secondly, because when applying the phronetic questions it seemed one of the most pressing issues. The interviews with workers and workers' organisations had convinced me that there were some very significant issues, particularly around health and safety, that needed to be addressed and that this would only happen if workers achieved greater visibility. Including them in this account seemed to me to be a small, but not insignificant, contribution to that project of achieving visibility. That is, it seemed in a very small way to act as a corrective in terms of the balance between 'winners' and 'losers' in the way that the film project was progressing.

At the end of this discussion about politics, then, where have we ended up in respect of ANT's political efficacy? Most immediately, we have demonstrated that making visible the 'small' ties is an important element in making resistance, or in Latour's (2005:254) words

an alternative 'composition of the world', possible. The act of opening the 'black box' is, if you like, akin to the denaturalising project of critical theory: things that appeared to be the product of structural forces are returned to 'local' actors and actions and, therefore, can be engaged with politically. If we can say that we have also found ways of mitigating the rather circumscribed scope of the political role Latour (2005:254) articulates for the sociologist of associations and the lack of guidance around normative judgments in most ANT theorising, does that mean ANT can be used fairly unproblematically to achieve political relevance and also political efficacy? There is, unfortunately, a third issue and this draws us back into the problem with which we concluded the first section of this chapter. We can pose this best as a question: if there are practical, material limitations to the ANT method that prevent us from making visible the more extensive assemblages, then how can we use ANT to counter them (if they exist)? Just as there was no answer that could be offered at the end of the last section, there is no answer here either and we must contend ourselves with an assessment of ANT's political efficacy that parallels the assessment of it as a method: ANT has the capacity to open up spaces for politics that other approaches foreclose and, as such, is a very useful tool for achieving political relevance and directing political intervention. However, just as with intellectual labours informed by other approaches, this tool also has limitations and the limits in this case are defined in the first instance by the problematic around macro actors.

Conclusion

This thesis was in part an exploratory project. It took as its subject something that had already been documented in some depth and asked what could be gained from using a new approach that reconfigured the way that this subject was researched, analysed, and explained. The subject, of course, was the role of creative industries within economic development and the approach was ANT. The story of contingency and opportunism that emerged in the situated case of the film industry in Aotearoa/New Zealand differs markedly from what is described in the existing literature. In bringing to light elements that previous studies had missed and that also challenge the explanations offered by these studies, the description here is testimony to the value of the ANT approach to studies of political and economic stabilisation. It is not, however, an attempt to say that contingency and

opportunism are generalisable features of political projects. The lesson is instead simpler and more fundamental: it is that when we approach studies of political and economic processes with preformed ideas, even if these are only implicit, about what is determining a particular phenomenon then we may well miss important aspects of the explanation – in this instance, contingency and opportunism.

In the introduction to the first part of *Reassembling the Social*, Latour (2005:25) uses the metaphor of a traveller to describe the ANT scholar. Warning that ANT travels are not for the faint-hearted, he gives the following advice (Latour, 2005:25):

[P]ack as light as possible, don't forget to pay your ticket, and prepare for delays.

Latour is alluding here to the fact that embarking on a journey with ANT does come at a cost. When making this statement, Latour (2005:25) is referring mainly to the time-consuming nature of ANT research and the painstaking effort of tracing small ties. The purpose of this first concluding chapter has been to be honest about what some of the other costs of ANT-inspired journeys might be. In particular, it sought to be honest about material limitations on the extent and reach of ANT journeys by asking: is it really possible to trace connections in such a way that we can show the existence of macro actors, such as capitalism, if these do indeed exist? The goal of this honesty was not reflexivity in and of itself. It was guided instead by a hope that this project, and others that adopt similar reflexive practices, might prompt discussions that will lead to a refinement of the ANT method and approach. After all, the cost of ANT journeys need not be 'fixed' and so these discussions might eventually lead, if we can use Latour's (2005:25) metaphor one last time, to cheaper fares. Part of that project to reduce fares begins in the next chapter, where the limitations of the ANT-guided explorations lead to a search for a more productive theoretical framing.

Chapter 8:

Returning to the Creative Industries and Economic Development

The account of the film industry and economic development in Aotearoa/New Zealand presented up to this point has been written as an ANT story. This means that across the substantive chapters material was only included in the description if it could fulfil the standards of evidence required by ANT, namely that it could be shown to exist through a process of *tracing associations*. This strict adherence to ANT was pursued in order to provide a ‘methodological’ test of ANT’s suitability to the sociologist studying the making and stabilization of political projects, and the previous chapter concluded on the outcome of that test. However, the objective of this thesis was not simply to make a methodological contribution to the fields of economic and political sociology. The study, as noted in the introductory chapter, began from a very specific observation: the prioritization of a creative industries subsector, the film industry, within economic development in Aotearoa/New Zealand at a time when creative industries were being incorporated into economic development agendas in numerous localities globally. The objective of this thesis was, therefore, also to make a contribution to the literature on creative industries and economic development.

As such, in this second concluding chapter, the discussion returns to the three main explanations in the existing literature for the prioritization of creative industries within economic development and considers how the fieldwork presented in Chapters 4 to 6 can be brought to bear on these. That is, we consider what arguments the fieldwork allows us to make about the role the macroeconomic context, pressures of globalisation, and travelling policies played in placing film on the economic development agenda in Aotearoa/New Zealand. Given the limitations of ANT discussed in the previous chapter, other approaches that might be better suited to obtaining these sorts of explanations are also introduced and evaluated. Specifically, the final section to this chapter asks whether the investigation of the film industry as a political project might have been more productively pursued using

another theoretical approach. Bourdieu's (1993; 1996) field theory and sociological new institutionalism, especially as outlined by DiMaggio and Powell (1991), are considered. To conclude, a 'weak' formulation of ANT is proposed as a possible way forward.

Macroeconomic Explanations

The macroeconomic explanations for the rise of creative industries as an object of economic significance and interest were encountered in two forms, as outlined in Chapter 2. Firstly, these explanations could be found in more general accounts of the economic changes that have taken place over the last several decades, specifically the transition from a Fordist economy dependent on a logic of mass production and mass consumption to some version of an after-Fordist or post-Fordist economy where culture and economy are increasingly intertwined (see for example, Harvey, 1990; Lash & Urry, 1994). These were, for instance, the arguments of the Regulation School that increasingly diversified product ranges were required in order to secure the accumulation of capital and that such diversification could be achieved in part through the addition of cultural and design elements (Scott, 2000a). Secondly, explanations referencing the macroeconomic context could be found in the literature documenting actual cases of creative (or cultural) industries-led economic development. The case of Sheffield was introduced in Chapter 2, where Moss (2002) argued that initiatives around the cultural industries were used in order to create new jobs and, thereby, counter the effects of deindustrialization.

The first point to make about ANT is that it is open to this type of explanation provided that two conditions are met. The first condition is that any such *macroeconomic* factors are understood to be differentiated from the more *micro* solely along a quantitative axis and not in qualitative terms (Latour, 2005; MacKenzie, 2005). That is, the macroeconomic actor is more 'macro' simply by virtue of more extensive connections rather than because it is a different kind of actor. The second condition is that the sociologist making such arguments must be able to provide material evidence of the macroeconomic actors existence by tracing the connections that constitute that same macro actor (Latour, 2005). In theory, then, it should have been possible to use ANT as a method *and* still be able to contribute to these

discussions about the role played by macroeconomic factors in prioritizing the creative industries within economic development.

The fieldwork, however, consistently pointed to the importance of economic factors that were more local and micro than the kind described in the existing literature. So, as we saw in the interviews presented in Chapter 5, politicians and policymakers repeatedly identified Peter Jackson and the *Lord of the Rings* trilogy as the primary impetus for the film industry based economic development policies. The notion that they might be responding to some more epochal shift in the nature of capitalism was either not raised at all or downplayed. We saw, for example, that the Minister for Economic Development disputed the very notion of something uniquely 'creative' that is the property only of the creative industries and not also a component of other industries, such as the aluminium industry. Moreover, some of the political actors were at pains to stress that the film industry presented a short term opportunity, suggesting very strongly that, for them at least, the focus on film as a creative industry subsector was not about establishing a longer term 'cultural fix' for capitalism. When asked whether the film industry could be the basis of a sustainable economic development policy, the Minister for Economic Development, for example, responded:

JA: No, I wouldn't bet my life on it. But you've got to take these windows of opportunity and you've got to drive through them and you've got to keep the momentum going.

He said the focus on film was part of a strategy of diversifying the Aotearoa/New Zealand economy in order to make the economy as a whole less vulnerable from downturns in any given sector:

JA: So, ok, it's a bit like having a lot of eggs in a basket, not just a few. And, ok, if you crack one or two here and there, there's still going to be a lot left. And what New Zealand is doing, and I've been very keen to see this happen and drive it along, is diversification and a wide range of skill and challenge, innovation and industry development. And if the wood industry is not doing too well, then the plastic's industry probably will be. If the biotech's not, then ICT

might be. And if horticulture and agriculture are not booming, then our electronic engineering industries are...

It was argued, in light of these interviews, that references to macroeconomic factors, such as to the rise of the creative economy, in the 'paper-trail' had to be regarded as part of the process of doing politics rather than as an indication of *why* such policies had been introduced. That is, it was argued in Chapter 5 that references to, for example, Florida's (2002) arguments about the dawn of the creative age made politics possible by enabling the framing of a locally embedded political project as universal, objective, and rational. This kind of framing was undertaken, it was suggested, to increase the likelihood that other actors, such as political opponents, would buy into the project. In short, references to macroeconomic factors in the policy documents could not be read as the *actual* reasons for implementing the policies but needed to instead be seen as strategies for securing a project that was based around local economic opportunities.

There are two developments that occurred after the conclusion of fieldwork which lend further weight to my argument that politicians and policymakers were motivated first and foremost by very immediate opportunities, such as Peter Jackson's presence, rather than by a sense that there had been a shift towards a more cultural form of capitalism. The most significant is the disappearance of the language of creative industries from economic development documents at the national scale. Recall that the guiding economic development strategy during the fieldwork period was the Growth and Innovation Framework (GIF), which had been launched in 2002. This explicitly identified the creative industries as one of three key sectors, alongside ICT and biotechnology, for the development of the Aotearoa/New Zealand economy (Office of the Prime Minister, 2002). In 2006, a successor strategy was launched called the Economic Transformation Agenda (Ministry of Economic Development, 2006). Within this new strategy document, there are no explicit references to the creative industries. It is interesting, however, that the work around the film industry and also the design sector, which had been started under the auspices of the GIF's creative sector targeting, continued nonetheless. During an informal conversation with a local economic development policymaker in late 2007, I asked what she made of the fact that creative industries discourses had been abandoned at the national

scale.²⁷ She echoed the argument presented in Chapter 5, stating that it was her sense that policymakers had realised that they did not actually need to use the idea of the creative industries to pursue policy development around film and design. That is, she confirmed that the use of the creative industries discourse had been strategic rather than founded in a more general belief in the rise of the creative economy.

The second post-fieldwork development which further suggested that the film project was primarily about taking advantage of local economic opportunities centres on the way in which the film project evolved in respect of post-production. In July 2007, a significant change was made to the Large Budget Screen Production Grant (LBSPG) to allow claims to be made solely for post-production (New Zealand Film Commission, 2007). Up to this point, the focus of the LBSPG had been on encouraging films to be shot in Aotearoa/New Zealand. The changes in July 2007 introduced a new 'PDV' – post-production, digital and visual effects – incentive. Whereas previously access to the grant required a minimum spend of 15 million dollars, the new PDV incentive allowed filmmakers to claim the rebate on reaching a spend of just three million dollars. I want to suggest that the changes in respect of post-production illustrate yet again the ways in which the film project was constructed – to borrow Anderton's words – very pragmatically as a result of 'feel[ing] ... through issues of economic, industry and regional development'. That is, the film project was constructed and modified in accordance with the economic opportunities that were visible to policymakers and politicians at any given moment rather being modeled on a global discourse of what that project should look like. Initially, I want to argue, it was the very visible act of shooting a film that caught the attention of economic development policymakers and it was only later that the less visible, but arguably higher value, post-production activity became recognised as an economic opportunity and site for intervention.

Having made the argument that it was in the first instance specific and local economic opportunities that motivated politicians and policymakers it is necessary to couch this claim

²⁷ I had by this point taken up a lectureship at Auckland University of Technology which brought me into contact with economic development policymakers, including some of those who had participated in the research.

within the specificities of the Aotearoa/New Zealand economy. Most immediately, and this would also be true of other small economies, there is less distance between a specific economic opportunity, such as the *Lord of the Rings* trilogy, and something that might normally be considered a macroeconomic concern, such as whether there had been a general culturalisation of the economy. It is conceivable, then, that policymakers and politicians were actually in part managing the economy at the scale of such specific economic opportunities rather than at the level of aggregate macroeconomic actors or phenomena. It is worth illustrating this with some figures. The New Zealand Institute of Economic Research (New Zealand Institute of Economic Research, 2002:VI) estimated that the *Lord of the Rings* trilogy had spent 352.7 million dollars in Aotearoa/New Zealand. Although this is small compared to Aotearoa/New Zealand's GDP, which was 129.8 billion in 2002 (Reserve Bank of New Zealand, 2007), it is significant when compared to the economic contribution of other sectors that were receiving attention from economic development policymakers at the same time. For instance, when the *Lord of the Rings* trilogy was being filmed, export education was also becoming a priority sector. A strategic review by the Ministry of Education put the value of the whole sector in 2001 at 700 million dollars – that is, only twice the value of the *Lord of the Rings* productions (Ministry of Education, 2001). Similarly, the exports of the much celebrated wine industry were worth just 246.4 million in 2002 (New Zealand Trade and Enterprise, n.d.).²⁸

Placed within the context of the wider economic landscape in Aotearoa/New Zealand, we see that the *Lord of the Rings* trilogy had a much more significant impact than a similar sized production would have had in a larger economic context, such as the United States. Although it was a single and specific economic opportunity, then, its shorter distance from what might be deemed macroeconomic phenomenon meant that political actors could use it as the impetus for their political project. That is, the political actors in this story could act without referencing the sort of macroeconomic phenomenon, such as the culturalisation of

²⁸ The specificity of the Aotearoa/New Zealand economy also has a role to play in explaining why these sectors and industries, which make a relatively small contribution to GDP, are nonetheless deemed significant. The explanation lies in the fact that the Aotearoa/New Zealand economy is dominated by tourism and primary production. That is, because these two sectors account for such a large share of GDP, the remaining sectors all have a relatively small share but are still important. There is, in a sense, a 'missing middle' in the Aotearoa/New Zealand economic landscape.

the economy, that might be required to understand general trends within a larger economic context.

It is important to acknowledge, however, that just because the actors that were being followed did not cite macroeconomic factors as motivation for the film project, does not rule out that a culturalisation of the Aotearoa/New Zealand economy had taken place. It is entirely possible that the *Lord of the Rings* trilogy was just one instance – a particularly large and visible one – of a more general trend towards culturally-imbued economic activity. The absence of macroeconomic factors from the account presented in Chapters 4 to 6 may, as already acknowledged in the previous chapter, be as much a product of the ANT method as of *reality* (if we can invoke it for a moment).

We are faced with a problem at this point, then. Even if we believe our actors have been telling the truth about their reasons for supporting the film industry, what if their actions were enabled or constrained by macroeconomic factors that they themselves were unaware of? Put another way, what if a trends towards culturalisation of the economy presented the film industry as an opportunity in the first place? To pursue this further, we might at this point be tempted to investigate the extent to which the Aotearoa/New Zealand economy had undergone ‘culturalisation’. We could follow Scott’s (2000a) lead and analyse quantitative data on employment, enterprise, and value growth in the creative sector. Such a project would be interesting and worthwhile, but it is different and incompatible with the project that was undertaken here. As far as this thesis is concerned, the central question was about the making and stabilization of the political project around the film industry and not about the extent to which a culturalisation of the economy has taken place. The focus on making and stabilisation does not in and of itself make the project incompatible with Scott’s (2000a). However, the use of ANT *in this specific case* does. This is because one of the central arguments of ANT concerns the inseparability of actors and their contexts (Latour, 2005). In fact, within ANT there is a repudiation of the very notion of ‘context’. Most simply put, there is no ‘actor’ that is then inserted, embedded, or located within a given ‘context’. The hyphenation of the actor-network is meant to denote the continuity between the ‘actor’ and ‘network’. Therefore, given that the actors in this account did not

make connections to the culturalisation of the economy when discussing their motivations, it is not possible to conduct an analysis of the kind that Scott (2000) has carried out in order to provide it as ‘context’ for the explorations detailed in Chapters 4 to 6.²⁹

The inability to provide ‘context’ in this way, if one remains true to the ANT method and approach, is obviously a significant concern. We have seen how the use in this concluding chapter of even just several facts about the economic environment in Aotearoa/New Zealand has yielded important insights by providing a sense of the relative significance of the *Lord of the Rings* trilogy. A more thorough exploration of context, not limited by ANT, could provide a window on how dynamics in the economic environment enabled and constrained the actions of politicians and policymakers. For example, it might enable us to get a sense of which sectors had experienced growth recently and, conversely, which had experienced decline. This, in turn, would provide clues as to the relative attractiveness of these sectors to politicians and policymakers. Such contextual information seems vital to an informed analysis and, as such, we consider later in the chapter whether an alternative theoretical frame to ANT might have provided a means to ‘get at’ context and, hence, also a more productive means of studying political projects such as the film industry and economic development.

At this point, then, we can conclude that the ANT-guided explorations in this chapter have yielded us only a partial answer to the first explanation offered in the existing literature for the rise of creative industries. We can use the fieldwork to conclude that actors were driven primarily by a specific local opportunity, namely the *Lord of the Rings* trilogy. However, it is impossible to see how the economic opportunities identified by the political actors in the interviews were related, if at all, to other economic phenomena. This is not necessarily to say that there were ‘hidden forces’ at work. It is entirely possible that the kind of material

²⁹ There are instances where an investigation along the lines of Scott (2000a), or pre-existing information from such an analysis, would not be incompatible with an ANT account. This could occur, for example, if actors identify such factors or the results of such a study as playing a role in the making and stabilization of their political project. We might expect this to occur in larger economies, where decision-making might be more strongly influenced by aggregate economic phenomena rather than single and specific opportunities. For example, insofar as actors in Moss’ (2002) account of Sheffield explicitly referenced job losses in the steel industry, it would be possible to include these in the ANT description as the actors had connected with them (that is, it was part of their actor-network rather than ‘context’).

and practical limitations to ‘tracing’ that were discussed in the previous chapter meant that the explorations conducted for this thesis failed to make visible connections to other important actors. That is, this can be a limitation within the ontological frame of ANT, as much as it might require a move beyond this frame.

Let us now move on to the second explanation in the existing literature: the pressures of globalisation.

The Pressures of Globalisation

As we saw in Chapter 2, this second explanation begins from the assertion that globalising processes have eroded many of the spatial and political barriers that used to confer some form of protection and monopoly rights for localities, where these might be cities, regions, or nations (Harvey, 2001a; Yeoh, 2005). As a result, so the argument goes, new forms of competition have emerged between localities for investment, visitors, and workers. Culture, and therefore also the creative industries, are said to be one of the primary domains in which this competition plays out. In a recent article focused on the urban scale in South-east Asia, Yeoh (2005:946), for example, remarks that ‘the creation of global cities increasingly rests on the integration of economic and cultural activity around the production and consumption of the arts, architecture, fashion and design, media, food and entertainment.’ With similar pressures also said to be effecting the national scale, the question this poses is whether, and to what extent, a need to participate in competitive place-marketing played a role in the prioritization of the film industry within economic development in Aotearoa/New Zealand.

There is no doubt that film, and especially the *Lord of the Rings* trilogy, was deployed as part of place-marketing campaigns. Tourism NZ, the state agency responsible for tourism promotion, ran a worldwide advertising campaign to create an association between Aotearoa/New Zealand and Tolkien’s Middle Earth (Tourism New Zealand, 2004). Image 1 overleaf depicts one of the advertisements from this campaign. The government, moreover, provided funding for the staging of the *Return of the King* world premiere in Wellington, motivated in large part by a desire to generate media coverage for Aotearoa/New Zealand

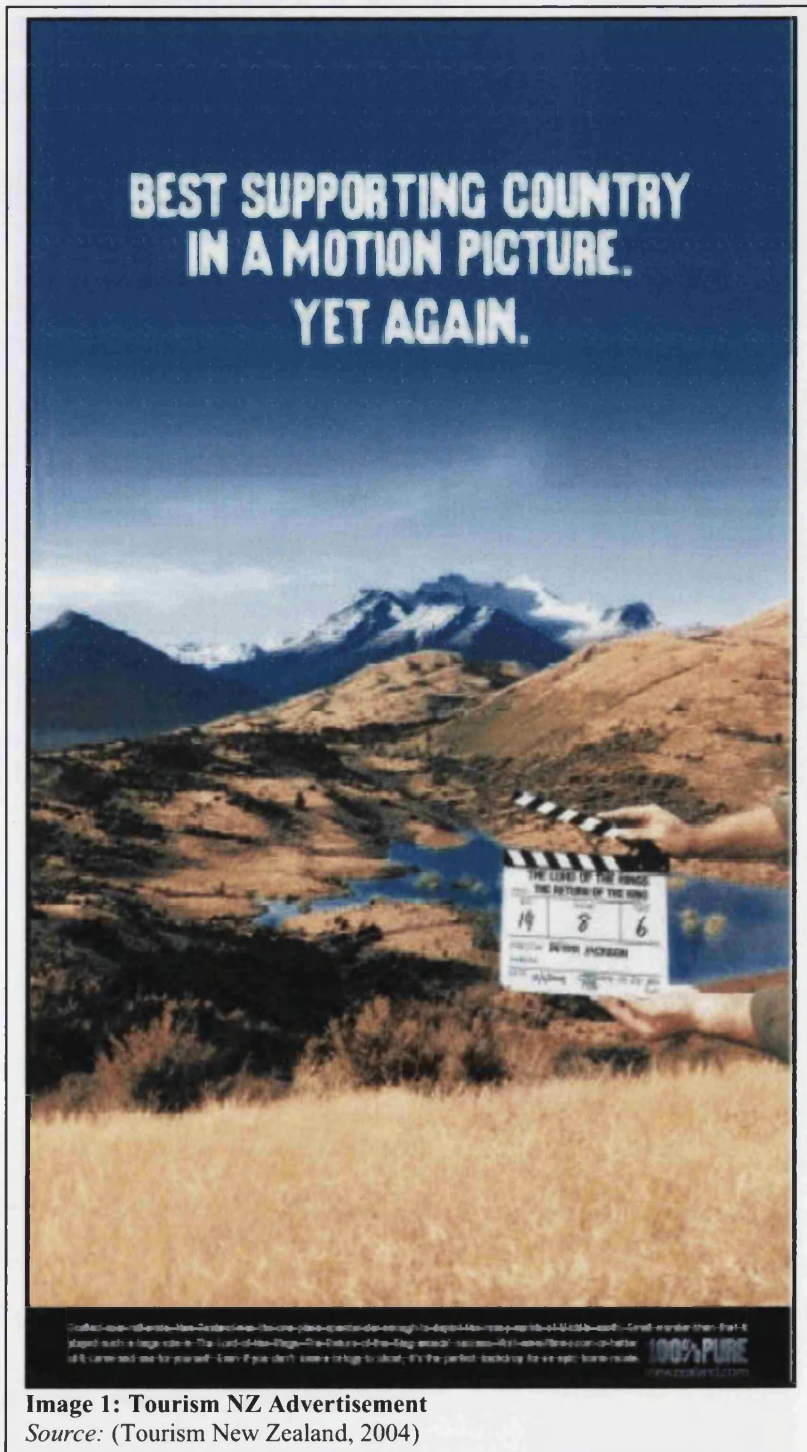


Image 1: Tourism NZ Advertisement
Source: (Tourism New Zealand, 2004)

internationally (Interview, Participant T). On its own, however, the fact that high profile films, such as the *Lord of the Rings* trilogy, were used to do place-marketing work does not necessarily mean that, firstly, this place-marketing was a response to the pressures of

globalisation and, secondly, that it was the reason for film's prioritisation within economic development. Let me explain.

To address the first point – whether place-marketing was a response to the pressures of globalising processes – it seems productive to briefly return to Chapter 4.³⁰ The discussion in Chapter 4 showed that place-marketing has a very long history in the Aotearoa/New Zealand context, as indeed it does in other colonial contexts also (see for example, Gasher, 2002). Recall, for example, that the first films shot by McDonald between 1907 and 1912 were used as part of a tourism and immigration promotion campaign and that the output of the 'Tin Shed' and National Film Unit was oriented towards similar goals, as films such as *Glorious New Zealand* attest. Of course, this is not to say that nothing has changed in the last several decades. Recent globalising processes have undoubtedly led to a (re)intensification of place-marketing and a shift in focus towards attracting workers and investment as opposed to primarily tourists (Kotler, Haider, & Rein, 1993). However, the extent to which this is a new form of place-marketing in Aotearoa/New Zealand, where there has always been a high dependence on tourism and immigration, is debatable. In other words, the specificities of the Aotearoa/New Zealand case, with its historical reliance on tourism and immigration, means that place-marketing has a significantly longer and stronger tradition than suggested by the accounts that link it first and foremost to recent globalising processes. This argument is borne out by the interviews with politicians and policymakers. The political actors spoke of the role film could play in promoting tourism to Aotearoa/New Zealand, but very rarely placed this within the context of a discussion about 'new' pressures associated with globalisation. The Associate Minister for Arts, Culture and Heritage, Judith Tizard, for example, did not mention globalisation but stated that she believed one of the great benefits of film was that it 'worked absolutely symbiotically with the tourism industry, which is our biggest industry.' The Chief Executive of the New Zealand Film Commission (NZFC), moreover, said that leveraging tourism gain off film

³⁰ In the interests of being able to proceed with the discussion here, we will take for granted that some globalising processes have taken place. ANT would, of course, require us to provide material evidence of these through a process of tracing and following connections. That is, globalisation is also one of the problematic 'macro' actors discussed in the previous chapter.

predates the *Lord of the Rings* trilogy and is something that the Film Commission has been involved in since the early 1980s (see also Shelton, 2005).

This provides a fitting segue into the second question, namely whether place-marketing played a role in the prioritisation of the film industry in economic development in Aotearoa/New Zealand. We can see from the above quotes, and also the campaigns that took place around film, that there was an acute awareness of the work that film could do to further place-marketing objectives. This awareness, however, was not itself sufficient for the film industry to become prioritised within economic development. After all, as Shelton (2005) and the Chief Executive of the New Zealand Film Commission note, film had been used for some time to do place-marketing work but it had never occupied a central place within economic development. Contingency, again, has to be part of the explanation here. The contingent factor that saw film become prioritised was the *scale* of the *Lord of the Rings* productions, acknowledging however that one of the reasons that the trilogy was considered such a significant economic opportunity by political actors was its potential spin-off for tourism promotion and the branding of Aotearoa/New Zealand more generally. As an interviewee based in an economic development policy agency stated:

T: I mean one reason we're all in the game I think is because films like *Lord of the Rings* ... are a good way to showcase to the world our creative ability, our technological nous and the rest of it.

Another economic development practitioner put tourism spin offs in third place after job creation and attracting foreign exchange (Interview Participant JT).

To conclude this section, then, place-marketing certainly had a role to play within the prioritisation of the film industry and economic development but not on its own and not solely due to the pressures of globalisation. The use of films for such purposes had a far longer history and it was only the scale of the *Lord of the Rings* productions that enabled the film industry to move towards the centre of economic development policy.

Travelling Policy

The third explanation in the existing literature is one that I have termed ‘travelling policy’. Here I am referring to a series of accounts that attribute the rise of the creative industries to the circulation – embodied and disembodied – of powerful policy discourses around creativity-led economic development (see for example, Gibson & Klocker, 2004; Peck, 2005). As noted in Chapter 2, there is often a strong diffusionist assumption that underpins the existing accounts. Policymakers and politicians are frequently depicted as uncritically buying into these policies, giving little thought to either the merit of these policies or whether they are fit for their specific context.

In coining the term ‘travelling policy’, I am borrowing from Said’s (1991) notion of ‘travelling theory’ and, in ANT terms, ‘translating’ it to understand the movement of policy. For Said (1991:226), the term ‘travelling theory’ refers to the notion that ‘like people and schools of criticism, ideas and theories travel - from person to person, from situation to situation, from one period to another.’ The borrowing from Said (1991) is deliberate because his account of the way theory ‘travels’ is fundamentally about being sensitive to the ways in which ideas and theories undergo change as they move across contexts. He states that when tracking how ideas and theories travel (Said 1991:226):

one should ... specify the kinds of movement that are possible, in order to ask whether by virtue of having moved from one place and time to another an idea or a theory gains or loses in strength, and whether a theory in one historical period and national culture becomes altogether different for another period or situation.

In other words, Said’s (1991) concept of ‘travelling theory’ could be said to fit within a translation model of power. Theories and ideas, according to Said (1991), are like Latour’s (1986:268) ‘token’ that undergoes change as it ‘moves from hand to hand’.

It is precisely this sort of nuance that I want to bring to the fore by coining the term ‘travelling policy’. In using ‘travelling policy’, I want to stress that we must be open to the possibility that creative industry policy discourses, or any other policy discourse for that matter, can operate in a number of different ways and be taken up in a number of different

forms as it circulates across contexts. The disagreement with the existing accounts is, therefore, methodological rather than substantive. It is that these accounts often too quickly read the appearance of creative industries policies in localities beyond their point of origin (most often considered to be the United Kingdom) as a case of diffusion without interrogating how these policies may also, in the process, have been *translated*.

The fieldwork presented in Chapter 5 bears out the importance of being sensitive to translation when discussing the movement of policies. Although from the ‘outside’, the Aotearoa/New Zealand case appeared to be an instance where creative industry policies had gained widespread acceptance, the interviews with policymakers and politicians revealed a far more complex relationship to these policies. Most of the political actors did not ‘believe’ in these discourses, but were using them strategically to advance some other political project. For instance, the economic policymakers and politicians saw the creative industry policies as a means of legitimating their project for the film industry, which was rooted, as discussed above, in the opportunities presented by the *Lord of the Rings* trilogy and Peter Jackson’s presence. Similarly, the cultural policymakers and politicians saw the momentum around the creative industries as an opportunity to secure a programme of support for the arts and cultural sector.

Of course, not all contexts are going to exhibit such a strong divergence between the intent of the travelling policies and how they are actually put to use. In fact, in some contexts travelling policies will be adopted largely uncritically and unmodified. The lesson from my account, then, is that studies examining the movement of policies across contexts cannot assume that straightforward diffusion has taken place without empirically proving that translation has not, or only in small measure, occurred. That is, policy studies must account for the ways policies *travel* in the sense intended by Said (1991).

A Different Theoretical Frame?

The previous chapter evaluated the limits of ANT. In concluding in this chapter on what the fieldwork can tell us about the substantive focus of this thesis – the question of creative industries in economic development – we have encountered difficulties when engaging

with two of the explanations from the existing literature. Most significantly, it has been difficult to talk about the role of macroeconomic factors. Relatedly, in order to discuss the pressures of globalisation, the question of whether globalisation exists in an ANT sense had to first be footnoted. I want to now consider whether an alternative framing of the thesis project might have been more productive. Specifically, I will consider Bourdieu's field theory and the sociological new institutionalism associated with Paul DiMaggio.

Bourdieu's Field Theory

In Bourdieu's articulation of field theory, society is composed of a series of fields, where these are delimited 'spheres of actions' such as the economic, political, media, and so on (Benson, 2006:188). Each of these fields has an internal logic that shapes action by defining how struggles for position, which are struggles for various forms of capital, take place (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). This internal logic is not, however, the sole determinant of action. The field is also subject to external pressures, and in particular economic pressures. The extent to which action in a given field is the outcome of its internal rules or external pressures depends on its proximity to either a 'heteronomous' (external) or 'autonomous' (internal) pole (Benson, 2006:190). In the context of cultural production, Benson (1999:465) cites poetry as an example of a field that is probably closest to the autonomous pole and counterposes this to the media and journalistic fields, where economic considerations are far more pressing.³¹

A fundamental premise of field theory is relationality, both in terms of relations between fields and relations within fields (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). Fields are located hierarchically within a wider field of power, with the positioning of each field depending on its relative stocks of capital. As noted above, actors are similarly differentially positioned within fields depending on their capital. These positionings determine a given field or actors ability to influence others. They are not fixed but shift as a result of struggle over capitals (economic, cultural, social, and symbolic). McRobbie (2005:133) succinctly describes the 'field' as a 'structured social space within which relations of power are

³¹ It is in the arena of cultural production that field theory has been explored in some depth (see for example, Benson & Neveu, 2005; Couldry, 2003; Hesmondhalgh, 2006). As Sallaz (2006) notes, the application of field theory to the study of politics is less common.

pursued through struggle for position.’ It is important to note also that within a given field, such as the media or politics, there are sub-fields that are also governed by an internal logic and vying for position with other sub-fields.

Using Bourdieu’s field theory to frame this thesis, we could have taken the political field as our starting point and examined the struggles to establish a place for the film industry within economic development policy. To tell this story using field theory we would need to examine not only the actions of the various actors in our story but also their positioning within a given (sub-)field, the relationship between fields, struggles over positioning, the ‘rules of the game’ in each of the (sub)fields and, most importantly, external economic pressures. According to field theory, it is only by examining all these factors that that actors and ‘action’ can be understood (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992).

There are good reasons for using field theory, but it would not have led to an entirely different account to that generated by our ANT-guided explorations. The thesis would still have described the practices used by economic development policymakers and politicians to carve out a role for film within economic development. In the write up, the ANT language of ‘enrolment’ would have been replaced by ‘struggles for capital and position’, although the described acts, such as the attempts to generate economic multipliers, would have remained largely the same. In addition to such description, however, the use of field theory would have enabled the mapping of actors within and beyond the political field, illustrating their relative power and influence. For instance, if we take just the ‘economic policy’ subfield for a moment, Treasury clearly acted as a gatekeeper and so, in our analysis, would have been positioned hierarchically above policymakers from the Ministry of Economic Development. We could say, then, that an advantage of Bourdieu’s field theory over ANT is the fact that it makes very explicit the differential positioning of actors. It is not that in an ANT account ‘everyone is equal’, but simply that the flatter network metaphor, which focuses on the extent and diversity of an actor’s connections, makes differential positionings, and arguably power, less immediately visible.

More significant than this for our purpose is, however, that field theory would have opened up a space for considering the 'economic context', the absence of which has haunted the ANT-explorations thus far. It would have allowed for an analysis of, for example, growth (and decline) across various industrial actors and so would have provided a fuller sense of the ways in which the options available to the Minister for Economic Development and his policymakers were enabled and constrained by changes in the economic landscape. Drawing on industrial data on employment growth, for example, would have enabled us to see that the manufacturing sector in Aotearoa/New Zealand had been in severe decline for over a decade. This would provide some context for why the pleas by a large local whiteware manufacturer for a subsidy were declined only several years after the call for a subsidy by Hollywood producers resulted in the establishment of the LBSPG (Owen & Oliver, 2007).

If the strengths of field theory centre around the attention to power and the economic, then it might seem paradoxical that it is also precisely its treatment of power and the economic that makes it problematic, although these are only problems if one is committed to a translation model of power and a post-social sociology. Let me explain. We will begin with power. We have learned that actors and fields are differentially positioned depending on their capital and that this positioning determines the power and influence of the actor or field. It is true that Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992) acknowledge that positioning, and so power, is the outcome of previous struggle. The problem with field theory, however, is that the making of power often gets forgotten once the struggle is over.³² It would not be unusual, if we return to our above example, for Treasury to be treated simply as a 'powerful' body within a field theory account even though its position is the outcome of historical battles with other government Ministries and agencies. There is, then, a slippage that often occurs into a diffusionist model of power: certain actors (or fields) have power and can exercise it. We might ask whether this is indeed a significant problem, given that for all intents and purposes, Treasury is 'powerful' at the moment under examination. I would venture that it is. By slipping into a position where actors (or fields) simply have

³² Incidentally, a similar argument can be made about the constitution of fields and the 'rules of the game'. Although also theorized to be the outcome of historical struggles, they are often assumed to simply exist.

power the opportunities for political intervention are reduced because we no longer see the very practical and politically accessible ways in which that power has to be made and maintained. Moreover, if we agree that academic work and texts are performative, such a treatment of power also has the potential to reinforce the position of the ‘powerful’ actors (or fields) by further naturalising it. Of course, it could be counter-argued that by restricting the use of shorthand descriptors like ‘powerful’ we lose the ability to represent and communicate differential abilities to participate in world-making. I believe that there has to be a balancing act between these polarities, but for the moment field theory is still too strongly tied to a diffusionist approach to power to allow a politically-enabling sociology to emerge.

The treatment of the economic within field theory is problematic for a more straightforward reason. Within field theory, there is a strong economic determinism. For Bourdieu, as McNay (1999:106) notes, ‘in the final instance, all fields are determined by the demands of the capitalist system of accumulation’. A philosophical realism is adopted towards economic pressures. That is, there is very little acknowledgement of how the economic pressures themselves come to be made and, moreover, how such pressures are differentially experienced (and acted upon) by actors. We encounter here the same problem as with the work of the Regulation School in Chapter 2: capitalism is represented as a powerful entity that makes demands of actors and localities which, by and large, must be obeyed.

In identifying the realist treatment of the economic as a problem with field theory I do not want to suggest that the only alternative is a complete disavowal of the economic unless it can, in ANT terms, be ‘traced’. After we consider sociological new institutionalism below, I want to advance a ‘weak’ form of ANT’s sociology of associations to suggest that there might be a pragmatic solution that can bridge this divide.

Before we proceed to neo-institutional sociology and ‘weak’ ANT, however, I want to briefly consider one further problem with field theory and that is the very concept of the field itself. Having conducted an ANT analysis which stresses the importance of ‘free association’ (Callon, 1986:222) – that is, the importance of suspending all *a priori*

assumptions about the relationships between actors, things, objects etc. – it seems difficult to return to a theoretical framework where actors are from the outset assigned to different spheres and where these spheres are said to exist in a relatively bounded way with specific, and distinctive, logics. In the present thesis, there was considerable evidence that the making of a political project requires the drawing together of a diverse range of ‘political’ and ‘non-political’ actors, locations, and processes. For instance, the Screen Production Industry Taskforce was a hybrid creation with feet in both the ‘industrial’ and ‘political’. It seems neither productive to force these hybrid creatures into one of these domains, nor does it seem helpful label them as an exception. It seems more logical to see the very notion of the ‘field’ as the product of the kind of modernist thinking described by Latour (1993) in *We Have Never Modern*: more an attempt to order the world, than a representation of the way it actually is.

New Institutionalism

A renewed focus on institutions as an explanation for social action emerged across a number of disciplines in the late 1970s, including economics, politics, and sociology (DiMaggio, 1998). Although varying quite significantly in their explanations for social action, these ‘new institutionalist’ approaches shared a common opposition to explanations that have their basis in individualistic intent and rationality. We will consider here the New Institutionalism (NI) as it developed in sociology from the work of Paul DiMaggio and his collaborator, Walter Powell.

NI provides us with an alternative framework for this project as from the outset the work of DiMaggio and Powell was concerned with the diffusion of organizational forms, policies and structures. Their seminal article in 1983, ‘The Iron Cage Revisited’, starts from the observation that there is often a remarkable degree of homogeneity among organisations in a given institutional field and sets out to investigate the mechanisms by which this occurs (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). Observing that institutional isomorphism, their term for organizational homogeneity, develops even when organisations do not stand to make efficiency gains from adopting a given organizational form or structure, DiMaggio and Powell (1983) argue that a conventional conception of rationality based on organisational

self-interest cannot serve as explanation. Instead they propose three mechanisms by which diffusion of organizational structure, policy and form takes place: coercive (based on political pressure or legitimacy), mimetic (response to uncertainty), and normative (result of professionalisation). Together these mechanisms were intended to provide an explanation for organizational action that might be considered 'irrational' when assessed against economic costs and benefits.

The widespread uptake of creative industries policies worldwide could have been read by an observer of economic development trends as an instance of transnational institutional isomorphism within the field of economic policy.³³ Given the criticism of Peck (2005) and others that such policies were often adopted even when there was little evidence for their appropriateness, we might imagine that the approach of DiMaggio and Powell (1983) could yield insight into why such policies were adopted even though there seemed few sound economic reasons for doing so. In particular, we might have wanted to explore the legitimating function of these policies: that is, the extent to which the adoption of a creative industries-based approach was used to signal that a particular locality was keeping up with the latest developments in economic policy and, so, should be considered an economic contender (for a similar argument in relation to a public television broadcaster see Powell & Friedkin, 1986).

As NI developed from the seminal article by DiMaggio and Powell (1983), a more general theory of action emerged and it is worth considering what the implications of this would be for our project if framed as described above. Sociological institutionalism whether 'new' or 'old' is, of course, founded on the premise that institutions constrain action (Nee & Strang, 1998). For the NI of DiMaggio and Powell (1991), this constraint has a strong cognitive dimension. Institutionalisation is a process whereby actors internalise rules such that action becomes, in large part, the product of habits and taken-for-granted scripts. In their words, 'taken-for-granted scripts, rules, and classifications are the stuff of which institutions are made' (DiMaggio & Powell, 1991:15; for a similar argument see Zucker, 1983). There is, then, a close affinity between the NI formulation of institutions and action and Bourdieu's

³³ For uses of NI in the study of transnational diffusion see Djelic and Sahlin-Andersson (2006).

concepts of *habitus* and the field, as DiMaggio and Powell themselves acknowledge on several occasions (see for example, DiMaggio & Powell, 1991; Powell, 2007). A result of such a formulation is that action is theorised to have a tendency to reproduce the status quo and, in the course of institutionalisation, to lead to the reduction of diversity (DiMaggio & Powell, 1991). It has, therefore, been difficult for NI to account for organizational heterogeneity, change, and the emergence of new institutional fields (Lindenberg, 1998). DiMaggio (1988) attempted to overcome this problem by introducing the category of the ‘institutional entrepreneur’, where this is an individual that has the power, resources, and interest to influence their institutional context or create new institutional fields. However, as Lindenberg (1998) notes, it is difficult to reconcile how such institutional entrepreneurs come to be invested with agency whereas other actors remain largely bound by taken-for-granted scripts. That is, the category of the institutional entrepreneur is difficult to reconcile with the more general theory of action proposed for NI by DiMaggio and Powell (1991).

When compared with the ANT approach adopted in this thesis, the use of NI would have influenced the analysis considerably.³⁴ Much like with Bourdieu’s field theory, context would have come into play. An NI framing would have required a thorough examination of the institutional context in which our main actors were making decisions and, therefore, provided insight into the ways in which they were constrained by their institutional field. It is noteworthy, however, that the primacy afforded to the institutional means that the economic context would come through considerably less strongly than if using the field theory and, as such, understandings of what constitutes relevant context is in some senses more restricted within NI. Moreover, when put alongside an ANT approach, I would argue that even this limited attention to context comes at a considerable cost. The lack of agency afforded actors and the concern with homogeneity of outcomes in NI means that the account would have been far less sensitive to local variation and process than an ANT-guided study which, through the ‘translation’ concept, is fundamentally about the way actors change a given object even as they adopt it. In this thesis, the importance of being attuned to such variation is, of course, one of the key findings. After all, we found through ‘opening the black box’ that creative industries discourses had not simply ‘diffused’ to the

³⁴ For a comparison of NI and ANT in general terms, see Lawrence and Suddaby (2006).

Aotearoa/New Zealand context but were instead being used very strategically and unfaithfully. It would be difficult for NI to tell such a story because to do so would require a far more distributed notion of power and agency that allows a range of actors, rather than just a few institutional entrepreneurs, the ability to influence organizational form, policy, and structure. In short, even though there is an acknowledgement that institutional fields need to first be constructed and some very good accounts of how that takes place³⁵, institutions once established are, in practice, often reified within the NI approach. The result is that processes of change, or even maintenance, are occluded in most studies concerned with the 'diffusion' of organizational forms, policies, and structures (Lawrence & Suddaby, 2006). Most fundamentally, then, although context becomes partly accessible through an NI approach, it is first and foremost institutional (rather than economic) and, moreover, assigned so much causal authority as to make other explanations, such as the very contingent and specific ones found in this thesis, disappear.

Below I will suggest that we might be able to get at 'context' with far less cost and with fewer limitations on its breadth.

Conclusion: Moving Forward with 'Weak ANT'?

By now it is clear that our ANT-guided explorations have been limited in several respects. Most immediately, it has been possible to offer only a partial response to the existing explanations that cite the culturalisation of capitalism as a key player in the prioritization of creative industries within economic development policy. The fieldwork suggested that specific local economic opportunities were the primary motivation for politicians and policymakers in the Aotearoa/New Zealand, but without a fuller consideration of 'context' it was not possible to rule out that more 'macro' economic factors might also have had a role to play. Similarly, it was not possible from the fieldwork to determine conclusively what role, if any, globalising processes played in the prioritization of film and the creative industries in Aotearoa/New Zealand.

³⁵ For a good, almost ANT-like, discussion of how an institutional field develops, see DiMaggio's (1991) description of the development of US art museums.

Given these shortcomings, two alternative approaches that place an emphasis on ‘context’ were considered. However, in the case of both of these approaches – Bourdieu’s field theory and the NI associated with DiMaggio and Powell – the examination of context came at a considerable cost. Specifically, both these approaches were characterised by a diffusionist approach to power and both made *a priori* assumptions about the shape of the world, associations between actors, and the location of power. It is my contention, therefore, that an approach based on either Bourdieu’s field theory or NI would have made it unlikely that several of the important insights generated in this thesis would have come to the fore. The ANT approach forced attention on to the ways in which a diverse range of actors, rather than a ‘powerful’ few, *matter* and required constant vigilance to see (and document) how even established actors and institutions engage in (re)making power in order to maintain their position. Above all, however, ANT instilled a caution as the ANT researcher must always be open to the possibility that things might be different to how they seem from the ‘outside’. It was the combination of these guiding principles that enabled the discovery and description of a specific, locally made political project around the creative industries in Aotearoa/New Zealand. That is, these principles encouraged research practices that were able to uncover the way in which creative industries concept had ‘travelled’ in the sense intended by Said (1991).

I am, therefore, reluctant to give up the key tenets of ANT, such as the translation model of power, in order to get at ‘context’. Yet, equally, it seems important for the politically engaged ANT scholar to be able to participate in conversations about ‘capitalism’ and ‘globalisation’ even if our studies we are unable to account for these to the standard of evidence required by ANT. I want to now advance a ‘weak’ ANT that might, in a very pragmatic way, help to overcome some of these problems and, in so doing, reduce the cost of an ANT journey.

In constructing the ‘weak’ ANT approach, I was strongly influenced by two things. Firstly, by the existing literature on creative industries and economic development and, secondly, by my own experiences of accounting for social impacts in the not-for-profit sector. Much of the existing literature on creative industries and economic development is remarkably

atheoretical. Although implicit in these accounts are assumptions about power, scale, and capitalism, the accounts themselves are most often focused on description rather than on fitting observations into a particular theoretical framework such as field theory (see for example Moss, 2002). The existing accounts seemed ‘complete’ and, as such, confirmed to me that description, as opposed to translation into a theoretical meta-language, was sufficient and should be the goal of ‘weak’ ANT. This still, however, left the question of how such description could be done so as to both take account of ‘context’ but not at the same time reintroduce a diffusionist approach to power or black-box macro actors, such as capitalism. This is where my experience evaluating social impacts came into play. I had for several years been working with an evaluation tool known as ‘Social Return on Investment’ (SROI) (for more detail on SROI, see Aeron-Thomas, Nicholls, Forster, & Westall, 2004). SROI seeks to quantify in monetary terms social and environmental impacts. In some cases, the conversion of a social impact into a monetary value is relatively straightforward. For instance, if as a result of a particular intervention a person with a severe disability is able to move into employment, it is possible to calculate the savings the state makes in disability benefit payments. In other cases, impacts may be felt over a longer term or there may not be a readily available monetary equivalent. Where this is the case, the SROI tool adopts a very pragmatic solution. Recognising that such impacts need to be taken into consideration when calculating a social return ratio, the evaluator estimates a monetary proxy for that particular social impact. Central to the SROI method is that any such proxies must be clearly documented to show on what basis a particular value was assigned and to indicate their status as proxies as opposed to actual values. I want to suggest that there is a lesson for ANT here: in the ‘weak’ formulation of ANT, I propose that a researcher assign ‘proxies’ for actors that he/she believes are important to the story but that cannot, for whatever reason, be traced in the conventional ANT sense.

In practice, what would such an approach look like and what would it achieve? It seems to me that, despite the metaphor of the humble ‘ant’ (Latour, 2005:25), there is a certain heroism that surrounds the ANT-scholar as described by Latour and others. There is an assumption that, if an association or connection exists, the ANT researcher is capable of seeing it and tracing it. In ‘weak’ ANT, on the other hand, the figure of the ANT scholar is

considerably more modest. There are many reasons why a researcher might not be able to follow associations and connections. Some of these were outlined in the previous chapter. We considered, for example, time and funding constraints that prevent a lone PhD researcher from tracing the extensive connections that would make up a 'macro' actor such as globalisation (if it exists), but there are also others such as access. If, as in this study, you are denied access for participant-observation, then you are prevented from seeing certain things. That is, to some extent the connections you are able to trace and make visible depends on where your participants will allow you to 'follow them'. 'Weak' ANT makes these sorts of limitations explicit and provides a means for a researcher to proceed, very pragmatically, to consider the 'untraceable'. The criteria for including actors beyond what has been traceable is simply that the researcher must have a clear rationale for doing so and must clearly document the process in the write-up.

In our story of the film industry and economic development in Aotearoa/New Zealand, using such a weak formulation of ANT would have enabled us to make an argument for examining the wider economic context. As rationale for considering context, we could suggest that the Minister for Economic Development would, as a result of his wider portfolio, be aware of the shifting fortunes of different industrial sectors and that these would most likely have informed his intentions and motivations, even if in the interview these linkages were not made by him. Similarly, in respect of globalisation, we might have made a case for examining the extent of Aotearoa/New Zealand's globalisation, arguing that globalising processes played a role but were perhaps not explicitly mentioned by politicians and policymakers because they had become so taken-for-granted. 'Context' in this sense is not a rupture with the hyphenated 'actor-network' because the underlying assumption is that the 'context' we are using as a proxy is part of the actor-network – it is simply the connection that cannot be made visible.

You might ask in what ways 'weak' ANT, thus conceptualised, is any different to existing accounts that also look at the economic and political context. There are three main ways. Firstly, the emphasis is still on entering the field without *a priori* assumptions about the kinds of actors, connections, and so on that populate it. Wherever a black-box can be

opened and tracing is a possibility, it should be done. As such, 'weak' ANT is still fundamentally driven by an understanding that the world *could be organised differently to how we assume*. Secondly, when actors beyond those that have been traced are discussed, they are not black-boxed. Instead the researcher makes a tentative assertion that these *might* exist and *might* have a role to play, but they are clearly identified as requiring further investigation and substantiation. Finally, a 'weak' ANT account is able to participate in these sorts of discussions without needing to fall back on some of the problematic assumptions about power, scale, and the economic that underpin existing accounts. For example, if globalising processes are suggested as an additional actor, this actor is not automatically assumed to be 'powerful' but rather is understood as the product of extensive connections that are constantly in the process of being made and remade and that may be experienced in a number of different ways.

We conclude the thesis, then, having provided new insights into the way in which creative industries have been used within economic development and with a proposal for how to take forward research on this topic and research within economic sociology, more generally. The description offered of the political project that emerged around the film industry and economic development in Aotearoa/New Zealand is, therefore, only the beginning. It is important in that it challenges existing accounts that too quickly read the Aotearoa/New Zealand case, and others like it, as simply another instance of a global spread of creative industries policies (see for example Wetzstein & Le Heron, 2003). Most significantly, we saw that the concept of the 'creative industries' underwent significant translation, being used strategically by politicians and policymakers to make real an economic development programme rooted primarily in specific local opportunities, of which *Lord of the Rings* was the most significant. However, in this chapter it has also become apparent that strict adherence to the methodological requirements of ANT limited the ability of this account to engage with some of the explanations in the existing literature. It is for this reason that I advocate adopting the persona of a more 'modest' ANT scholar and look forward to the insights that such a project will yield.

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