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THE POLITICS OF CULTURAL POLICY¹

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Abstract

This article addresses the roles of intellectuals in the shaping of cultural policy. Three distinct but interrelated political levels are discussed: the EU, the UK as a member state and Scotland as a stateless nation. The cultural and political space of the European Union is contradictory: it has a cultural presence but member states have full cultural competence. The EU’s public sphere is fragmented, poised between regulation and federation. The member state therefore remains the principal focus for analysis of cultural policy debates. Next, a variety of theoretical positions on the intellectuals and the strategic uses of expertise in a ‘knowledge society’ is explored, illustrating how the cultural policy field is typically constituted. The article goes on to discuss how intellectuals in the UK have shaped government policy on the ‘creative economy’, underlining the importance of a New Labour ‘policy generation’ in taking ideas forward that have been globally influential as well as in Scotland. A discussion of stateless nationhood is the backdrop to showing how the Nationalists in power inherited their Labour-LibDem predecessors’ approach to developing a new cultural institution, Creative Scotland. This underlines Scotland’s deep policy dependency on creative economy ideas fashioned in London.

Cultural policy, states and intellectuals

¹This article draws on ‘The Politics of Cultural Policy’, my inaugural lecture at the University of Glasgow, delivered on 25 March 2009.

Cultural policy is made at the intersection between culture and politics. While its scope and purposes may vary through space and time, contemporary cultural policy characteristically brings diverse ways of life and modes of cultural production, distribution and consumption into relation with the institutionalised form of the state. Cultural policy broadly understood is moulded by the tensions between profit and aesthetic value, by continually shifting boundaries between the private and the public, by the vagaries of social and cultural inclusion and exclusion, and so forth.

In many countries, contemporary cultural policy has a major economic and social dimension, as current talk of the creative and digital economy underlines. In some formulations it may embrace institutional arenas such as education, the arts, and broadcasting. What is key, however, for present purposes, is that in most practical respects cultural policy is played out within the political systems and the public spheres of states. Consequently, its relation to questions of national identity is inescapable.

In contemporary Europe, states face a dual challenge: on the one hand, that of managing their internal cultural diversity and on the other, addressing the strains placed on ideas of cultural sovereignty and the national public sphere engendered by uneven processes of 'Europeanization' principally resulting from the expansion of the European Union. Conceptions of national identity are inherently contested and these struggles have become especially acute in Europe over the question of migration and what might be the limits of multiculturalism.

Culture is a 'subsidiary' matter for the EU's Member States. In this domain, Article 151 of the Treaty on European Union restricts the EU's actions. Notwithstanding this, the Union's presence in the cultural field has slowly grown. In recent years, for instance, it has launched the Culture 2000 programme (which ran from 2000-2006) and the Culture Programme (which runs from 2007-2013). The field of culture within the EU's remit, arguably, 'is becoming broader and includes...areas such as citizenship, economic development, social policy and education'. The EU has become an international actor in the cultural domain, as is evident from the Union's negotiations

over the UNESCO Convention on Cultural Diversity.² From one perspective, therefore, it could be held that elements of a European cultural space are beginning to emerge. But it is a contradictory one, for as Abram de Swaan has remarked, within the EU ‘intellectual exchange is hampered by the barriers of language and by the constraints of national frameworks’.³

Alongside the contradictory Europeanization of cultural space, the question of whether the EU might constitute a common politico-communicative space has been repeatedly addressed. Arguably, this has preconditions, if in not a common culture then at least in a widely shared, boundary-transcending, political culture. Elsewhere, I have suggested that the EU remains stuck somewhere between being a regulatory entity and forming a federation. With elements of each of these political forms currently coexisting, a fractured political domain is the inevitable outcome. As the mediated public sphere is still overwhelmingly dominated by states, and a meaningful transnational politics does not yet exist, it is not surprising that the prospects of a common European public sphere remain distant. The Euro-sphere is overwhelmingly constituted by the EU’s institutions and the elite interlocutors focused on its functioning.⁴

The complex dynamics and the unresolved debate resulting from Europeanization underline the limitations of taking the state as an analytical framework for the analysis of culture. The idea of bounded cultural sovereignty is plainly challenged by global flows of culture and communication and transnational systems of governance. So-called nation-

² Patricia Dewey, ‘Transnational Cultural Policymaking in the European Union’, The Journal of Arts Management, Law, and Society, 38(2): 99-118. Quotation from p.104.

³ Abram De Swaan , ‘The European Void: the Democratic Deficit as a Cultural Deficiency’, pp. 135-153 in John Erik Fossum and Philip Schlesinger, eds, The European Union and the Public Sphere: A communicative space in the making? (London and New York: Routledge, 2007). Quotation from p. 149.

⁴ John Erik Fossum, and Philip Schlesinger, ‘The European Union and the public sphere: a communicative space in the making’, pp. 1-19 in Fossum and Schlesinger, op.cit.

states are often actually constituted as multiethnic and multicultural societies. The boundaries of states, moreover, do not necessarily coincide with their component nations. Such considerations add to the complexity of how we must conceive of the shaping of cultural policy.

The development of a national culture is as much an intellectual project as a political one. Zygmunt Bauman has argued that modern intellectuals developed with the emergence of culture itself, culture being conceived as an autonomous space for action.⁵ Bauman has described intellectuals as a key expert stratum that developed with the Enlightenment. Their initial role, he argues, was that of 'legislator'. They articulated the ideology of a new order impatient of diversity and backwardness and were in the vanguard of seeking centralised polities and cultures. In post-modernity, where epistemological certainties have collapsed, Bauman suggests, the role of intellectuals has shifted from legislator to 'interpreter', to a more modest role of making sense of cultures; they are largely disconnected from power.

Edward Said also set out to identify 'a specific public role in society' for the intellectual.⁶ Where Bauman's argument is sociological Said's is normative. The choice for Said is either one of working inside the power structure or of being powerless. He urges public intellectuals to side with the weak and the dispossessed. His conception of the intellectual is one of 'speaking truth to power'. For Said, to speak within a national discourse is to occupy a prison house that limits our discursive independence and horizons. He therefore celebrates the role of the intellectual as an outsider. To stand outside, he suggests, offers both epistemological and moral advantages. Consequently, exile – both actual and metaphorical – is the only state that fits true intellectual endeavour. Said, of course, was an exile; and so too is Bauman, although he has not argued that this condition confers special advantages everywhere and always.

⁵ Zygmunt Bauman, Intimations of Postmodernity (London and New York: Routledge, 1992).

⁶ Edward Said, Representations of the Intellectual (London: Vintage, 1994).

Both Bauman's and Said's positions are highly questionable. Bauman's valuable insight is that the breakdown of traditional orders turns culture into a distinct sphere of action, a new playground. Culture becomes something to be managed and it is therefore central to intellectuals' self-conceptions, because culture is their living space. But contemporary intellectuals are not all simply interpreters. There is good empirical evidence that the desire to legislate for how culture should be shaped and turned to profit remains very powerful in our times. Some intellectuals do indeed find ways of acting as legislators, even if that often means shaping legislation through interpretation. So the ideological struggle over visions of the cultural order is not innocent but has major consequences, particularly where those who articulate ideological visions are close to the centres of power.

Said has written eloquently on the consolations of outsider-ness. According to his exilic ideal we should contribute to the public debate as outsiders. This view derives from a classic image of the public intellectual as engagé and dates from the Dreyfus affaire of the 1890s. However, this limiting conception polarises intellectuals into the co-opted v the free, the clean v the corrupt, the principled opponent v the compliant bootlicker, and the saint v the sinner. Although it is neat, this schema distorts the actual complexity of how contemporary intellectuals (academics included) address the world of policy and politics.

Yet another exile, the critical theorist Theodor Adorno, provides a more grounded view on the role of expertise in cultural policy.⁷ Analysing what he disparagingly called 'the culture industry', Adorno thought that intellectuals were mostly 'servile'. He loathed the idea of an administered culture. Nevertheless, Adorno believed that a critically self-aware cultural policy was feasible and that expertise could be used 'for the protection of cultural matters from the realm of control by the market'.⁸ In short, Adorno thought

⁷ Theodor Adorno, The Culture Industry (London: Routledge, 1991).

⁸ *ibid.* 112.

experts working within institutions to pursue culturally progressive ends could – in Bauman’s terms - be legislators rather than just interpreters. My own research into the formation of ‘creative economy’ policy supports this view, although we might dispute whether the ends pursued are necessarily ‘progressive’.⁹

What might entitle intellectuals to intervene in policy debate today? Under contemporary conditions, policy-relevant expertise has become a key criterion for credible entry into debate. This has become increasingly the case since the mandarin political commentator, Walter Lippmann, writing nearly nine decades ago, astutely noted the strategic advantages enjoyed by experts in influencing decision-making in the increasingly complex structures of US government and administration.¹⁰ Such complexity, Lippmann observed, demonstrated ‘the need for interposing some form of expertness between the private citizen and the vast environment in which he is entangled’.¹¹ In other words, he endorsed a special place for a particular kind of intellectual elite in policy formation and implementation.

Suitable credentials may be established in numerous ways. In academia, for instance, expertise is built upon research and scholarship, as well as based on the practical experience of advising and engaging in both public and private arenas. But none of this offers a guarantee of making one’s voice heard. Rather, the possession of expertise merely establishes a necessary condition for the articulation of relevant perspectives for a debate on policy.

⁹ Philip Schlesinger, ‘Creativity: from discourse to doctrine’, Screen 48(3) 2007: 377-387; ‘Creativity and the experts: New Labour, think tanks and the policy process’, International Journal of Press/Politics 14(3) 2009: 3-20.

¹⁰ Walter Lippmann, Public Opinion (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1961 [1922]) 375.

¹¹ *ibid.* 378.

That is because the stage army of discourse shapers tends to be rather small. Even in the mainstream of policy debate and commentary, few public intellectuals achieve really significant and sustained access to the airwaves and the newspaper columns, or – in that current mark of the digital age - enjoy the status of a blogger with influence. As Régis Debray pointed out some thirty years ago, the post World War II rise of celebrity media intellectuals created a star system for the few. The overall significance of the university as a widespread source of legitimate knowledge consequently diminished.¹² The growing centrality of popular media has changed the rules of access to the public sphere and transformed the nature of a successful performance.

There have been repeated attempts to characterise the changing nature of expertise and intellectual life in our times. In the late 1970s, the sociologist Alvin Gouldner wrote about the emergence of a new powerful class of symbol-manipulating intellectuals immersed in the ‘culture of critical discourse’.¹³ In similar vein, at the start of the noughties, the celebrity economic policy guru, Richard Florida hailed the rise and flight of the ‘creative class’, this time to admiring gasps of official credulity as governments around the world sought to install competitive creative economies – on which, more shortly.¹⁴

Such arguments about how to situate the intellectuals relate to structural changes in capitalism since World War II and the emergence of a so-called ‘knowledge economy’. Economic restructuring has changed how expertise is valued and discussed. Gouldner and

¹² Régis Debray, Le Pouvoir Intellectuel (Paris: Ramsay, 1979).

¹³ Alvin Gouldner, The Future of Intellectuals and the Rise of the New Class (London: MacMillan 1979).

¹⁴ Richard Florida, The Rise of the Creative Class (New York: Basic Books, 2002); The Flight of the Creative Class (New York: HarperCollins, 2005).

Florida – like Daniel Bell before them¹⁵ - have been part of a tradition of trying to paint new pictures of class and power as industrial society is left increasingly behind.

However, if intellectuals have become members of an increasingly dominant knowledge or creative class, one can only observe that within that class, power and influence are unevenly distributed. For those outside the magic circles of government favour, it is hard to be heard in the world of cultural policy formation and harder still to have effects. That is because the shaping of such policy has become both more competitive and more complex. This has particular import for academics. The multiplication of cultural and communication management consultancies, the expansion of special advisers in government, the growth of in-house research teams inside communications regulators, the development of specialist cultural, media and communications business journalism - all have recast the space available to the academy to make its views known and be taken seriously. It is into this intensified framework of competition in the attention structures of the public sphere that academics' attempts at opinion formation have to fight their way.

In his broad-ranging conception of how expertise might be mobilised for the public good, Walter Lippmann, argued for an ideal of intellectual disinterest.¹⁶ One World War later, the leading sociologist, Robert K. Merton, reflecting on the role of social research in the formation of policy, inflected Lippmann's stance towards the ideal of professionalism. 'The role of the expert', he wrote, 'always includes an important fiduciary component.' This entails 'the responsible exercise of specialized competence by experts'.¹⁷

¹⁵ Daniel Bell, The Coming of Post-Industrial Society (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1973).

¹⁶ Lippmann, op.cit, 375, 382, 397.

¹⁷ Robert K. Merton, 'The Role of Applied Research in the Formation of Policy: A Research Memorandum', Philosophy of Social Science 16(3) July 1949: 161-181. Quotation from p.167.

Such views about disinterest and professionalism depend on one's taking up a normative position as to the desirable comportment of a class of experts with a public role to play in influencing and shaping debates on matters of public policy. Oppositional critique *à la* Said, therefore, is only one of the available options.

If we consider contemporary debates on culture, academics are commonly active in a wide range of arenas ranging from music to art history, from museology to media and communications. In the UK, for reasons shortly to be described, such engagement in the public domain is likely to become even more widespread. However, producing research and opining in the media (the latter being vouchsafed to a relative few) is a different matter from exercising influence over policy formulation and implementation. Real influence over policy thinking is generally based in access to institutionalised power and, in this respect, academics face active crowding out by other intellectuals.

On rare occasions, the professor might become a minister of culture, the chairman of a regulatory body or the head of a cultural institution.¹⁸ Or perhaps become the author of a report that shifts the terms of reference for thinking about the public funding of a major cultural field such as broadcasting.¹⁹ The openings to influence are much more

¹⁸ Joan Manuel Tresserras and Ramón Zallo, both professors of communication, are cultural councillors in the Catalan and Basque governments, respectively; this equates to ministerial office in the autonomous governments concerned. Lord (David) Currie, an academic economist, was first chairman of the UK communications regulator, Ofcom. A former academic economist, Sir Michael Lyons, chairs the BBC Trust. Farrel Corcoran, a professor of communications at Dublin City University, chaired the Irish state broadcaster, RTE. Ib Bondebjerg, a professor of communications at the University of Copenhagen, chaired the Danish Film Institute.

¹⁹ In the UK, the outstanding example is the Report of the committee on financing the BBC, chaired by the academic economist, Sir Alan Peacock, which fundamentally reshaped debate about public service broadcasting.

modest for most academics acting as applied public intellectuals. The production and publication of research can make a contribution to public debate if the right kind of attention is paid to its accessible dissemination. Academics might also decide to join boards and commissions, to supply expert advice to governments and agencies or parliamentary committees, make submissions to public inquiries, contribute commentaries to the media, or set up a blog, and so forth.

Because universities give them considerable space, academics are well placed to make a disinterested contribution to public policy, on the lines envisaged by Walter Lippmann. Disinterest does not imply a lack of commitment to values and ideals. It is about the stance taken – about whether or not benefits are sought from advice and whether or not that is a prime motivating force.

In the UK, the desire to demonstrate engagement with the public domain might well become more widely entrenched in coming years, as there is ever-growing pressure from public funding bodies for academics to satisfy the interests of so-called ‘users’ and ‘stakeholders’ – or in the latest lingo, to have a demonstrable ‘impact’.²⁰ Now that the fashion is changing, what used to be called ‘knowledge transfer’ is today more often termed ‘knowledge exchange’, to convey the idea of a mutually modifying effect in the communication between academics and ‘key stakeholders’ such as business and government. Contributing measurable ‘public value’ in exchange for public funding has increasingly become a key objective both for governments. Cultural bodies and universities operating in the prevalent culture of accountability and accounting that is our common lot. If manifest public engagement is set to increase due to the pressures to demonstrate the utility of research in every field – the human sciences included - this will make increasingly acute how to address the question of the institutional capture of academics by the policy world of government departments, quangos and commercial

²⁰ For an idea of how the UK’s Arts and Humanities Research Council is addressing this question, see <http://www.ahrc.ac.uk/FundedResearch/Pages/ImpactAssessment.aspx>

interests. An inevitable by-product of increased engagement will be an increase in those destined to marginality in the competitive market place of influence already outlined.

A creative nation?

So how is intellectual power mobilised in today's cultural policy debates? Contrary to Bauman, I wish to argue that intellectuals still desire – and some have the capacity – to 'legislate', although most are indeed relegated to the role of 'interpreter'. To illustrate my argument, I shall focus on some current developments in cultural policy in the UK and Scotland – those concerning the so-called creative economy.

In 1998, shortly after Tony Blair's New Labour government first took up office, the Department for Culture, Media and Sport promoted the idea of the 'creative industries'. These, we were told, had their 'origin in individual creativity, skill and talent...which have a potential for wealth and job creation through the generation and exploitation of intellectual property'.²¹ This new policy emphasised individuals as creators and subordinated culture to economics. In short, the argument fell completely in line with the neo-liberal thinking that has dominated the UK since the days of Margaret Thatcher's governments. The creative industries do not constitute a concept; they are made up of an arbitrary grouping of diverse cultural, communicative and technological practices. The designated thirteen are these: advertising, architecture, art and the antiques market, crafts, design, designer fashion, film, interactive leisure software, music, the performing arts, publishing, software and television and radio.

Creative industries policy made in London is circling the globe and has been imported into many countries, as though it were a ready-made conceptual toolkit with which you can solve the problem of how to make creativity profitable. Although the policy has been repeatedly revised and is based on questionable data (as admitted by one of its key architects in a private seminar at Glasgow University) this hasn't prevented the

²¹ Department of Culture, Media and Sport, Creative Industries Mapping Document (London: Department for Culture, Media and Sport, 1998) 1.

rampant process of diffusion of ideas – for instance, to China and the European Union, and through the United Nations.²²

The UK is has been a key ideas factory for the creative industries and creative economy discourses now being distributed globally – and these ideas are not only sweeping up enthusiastic adherents but also provoking increasing opposition and critique both in Europe and north America.

UK creative industries policy has been a political project closely related to the ‘policy generation’ at the heart of New Labour in government. Think tanks and other forms of expertise, such as that provided by policy advisers and sympathetic industry figures, have contributed significantly to shaping the cultural policy process, as is common in many fields. Key individuals have moved from advocacy in think tanks into positions of strategic influence in the Prime Minister’s office, the Department of Culture, Media and Sport and other ministries, the communications regulator, Ofcom, and the BBC. They have shaped the policy framework in practice.

If we restrict ourselves to the fields of culture and communication, a number of individuals (doubtless unknown to an international readership) illustrate the point. James Purnell became Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, with an earlier stint as a junior minister, on both occasions influencing creative industries policy. While his time at the DCMS was short-lived, his thinking was in part shaped by time spent working in the think-tank, IPPR, and as a policy adviser at the BBC. On leaving government in 2009, Purnell renewed his think-tank connections. His successor as Secretary of State, Andy

²² KEA European Affairs, The Economy of Culture in Europe. Prepared for the European Commission, Directorate General of Education and Culture, 2006.

ec.europa.eu/culture/key-documents/doc873_en.htm; Michael Keane, Created in China: The Great New Leap Forward (London and New York, 2007); UNCTAD, Creative Economy Report 2008. UNCTAD/DITC/2008/2, www.unctad.org/en/docs/ditc20082cer_en.pdf

Burnham, who also had a short period at the DCMS, similarly had a background as a New Labour policy adviser, and oversaw the publication of the UK Government's Creative Britain policy statement.²³ Ed Richards, who became chief executive of Ofcom, had been head of strategy at the BBC, moving on to advise Prime Minister Tony Blair, and like Burnham and Purnell, played a role in drafting the far-reaching Communications Act 2003. Richards' predecessor as chief executive of Ofcom, Stephen Carter, subsequently became Prime Minister Gordon Brown's chief of strategy, moving on from this to enter the House of Lords and, as a minister, pilot New Labour's blueprint for a 'digital Britain'. As the creative economy and the digital economy have become increasingly hard to disentangle, whether as discourses or policies, the impact of this group (along with other key figures) in sustaining an agenda seems incontrovertible.²⁴

Those who became leading players through the London-based think tanks clustered around New Labour, mutating into policy advisers or consultants, operated within elite circles where the costs of entry to knowledgeable policy discussion are high and therefore inherently exclusionary. Usually, attendance at top universities (mostly Oxbridge), early association with the Labour Party's 'modernising' drive, time spent in the worlds of policy advice and/or management consultancy, and extensive exposure to cultural and communications policy and strategy issues have been this group's common characteristics.

The terms of British policy discourse on the creative industries and the creative economy have become compelling. Not to buy into these frameworks is tantamount to self-dismissal from policy debate. Cultural and communications industries designated 'creative' have been hailed as the driving force of a new economy and a rival in

²³ Department for Culture, Media and Sport, Creative Britain: New Talents for the New Economy (London: Department for Culture, Media and Sport, 2008).

²⁴ For more detail see Schlesinger, 'Creativity and the experts', op.cit. 8-11.

importance to the financial sector.²⁵ The evidence for claims made about the scale of the creative sector is open to question.²⁶ That said, the sheer pervasiveness of creativity discourse as a liquid synonym for dynamism, growth, talent formation and national renewal is quite remarkable. Herein lies its attractiveness as a development ideology adaptable to many different kinds of regime and economic condition. It resonates with the ‘new spirit of capitalism’ embedded in management theory, recently analysed by Luc Boltanski and Ève Chiapello.²⁷ It is fundamentally rooted in beliefs about how to manage cultural labour in conditions of global economic competitiveness.

A key issue for future research into intellectual elites, therefore, is better to understand the sources of such policy arguments and the perspectives of those who advocate them. Contrary to Zygmunt Bauman, some intellectuals do still seek legislative power. They aren’t just interpreters. For such actors, know-how - and particularly, personal connections - are key to the actual exercise of influence and sometimes even governmental power. The scramble for intellectual dominance means that at any one time, there are preferred suppliers of ideas and evidence in a policy field. So far as the creative economy is concerned, unless academics are prepared to be largely uncritical advocates of dominant ideas, their ability to influence arguments is severely limited.

Policy dependency

If dominant ideas about cultural policy prevail at the centre, they also do so on the periphery. Apart from circling the globe, British creative economy doctrine has also

²⁵ The Work Foundation, Staying Ahead: the Economic Performance of the UK’s Creative Industries (London: The Work Foundation 2007).

²⁶ Larry Elliott and Dan Atkinson, Fantasy Island: Waking up to the incredible economic, political and social illusions of the Blair legacy (London: Constable & Robinson Ltd, 2007)

²⁷ Luc Boltanski and Ève Chiapello, The New Spirit of Capitalism (London and New York: Verso, 2007).

hopped over the border to deeply inform Scottish government thinking about how to reshape a key cultural agency.

Scotland is a ‘stateless nation’ of just over 5 million inhabitants in a UK state of some 60 million. For some political nationalists, stateless nationality suggests a teleological aspiration: that the nation ultimately needs to have a state - what Ernest Gellner once called a ‘political roof’²⁸ – and that growing the requisite carapace is both desirable and necessary. From this perspective, not to have a state is a structural shortcoming. However, stateless nationhood is marked not only by a lack. Whatever the stateless nation’s political status may be, its self-identity as a nation is also entails the recognition of a special status, based in the existence of a distinctive socio-cultural space and often a specific institutional complex that chronically reproduces distinctiveness.

European stateless nations typically have a complex public sphere. Indeed, rather than constituting a single public sphere, a stateless nation such as Scotland is more likely to be situated in an overlapping dual public sphere. That is because ideal-typically, the stateless nation has its own cultural institutions and media, and often a widely-used language that differs from the lingua franca of the state. Under non-repressive conditions, even where there is no separate indigenous system of representative politics, there is likely to be a distinct administrative apparatus, bound into that of the wider state and endowed with some autonomous powers in recognition of the identity claims of stateless nationhood. Inhabitants of stateless nations are therefore routinely exposed to their own national public sphere - the local, intimate and proximate – as well as being situated in the communicative space of the more distant state itself. Such a simple dual public sphere model exposes the fact that while there might be considerable convergence between the operations of the stateless national and central state public spheres, there is also room for dislocation, divergence and contradiction, as well as for disputes about boundaries, competencies and resources. The contingent set of relations between the stateless nation

²⁸ Ernest Gellner, Nations and Nationalism (Oxford: Blackwell 1983).

and the wider state is significantly shaped and channelled by the political-institutional framework in place.

For these reasons, in stateless nations, the functioning of the domains of culture and communication may be particularly complex. It is obvious that these will be areas of crucial concern as national identity (expressed and represented through the gamut of cultural practices and routinely sustained through media of communication, educational, sporting and arts institutions and wider associational life in civil society) is routinely debated and flagged in stateless nations. Much, therefore, depends on the nature of the autonomy afforded the stateless nation – for instance, the extent to which it may pursue a distinctive cultural policy ranging from the traditional arts to digital communications. Such autonomy is in any case likely to be periodically renegotiated in line with shifting power relations between the stateless nation and the central state. Following this model, therefore, it is essential to understand how all levels of the polity work and how they interact, in order to analyse the lines of domination and subordination and to assess the scope and limits of policy intervention.

The dependency relation between UK and Scottish policy making is particularly clear in the Scottish Government's project to establish a new cultural agency called Creative Scotland, which combines two existing bodies, the long-established Scottish Arts Council and the younger Scottish Screen. Creative Scotland has been some time in the making. A Draft Culture (Scotland) Bill to set it up was first published in December 2006 by the Labour-Liberal Democratic coalition cabinet. But the elections of May 2007 intervened before a Culture Act could be passed in the Scottish Parliament, and then the SNP formed the new, minority Scottish Government. Once in power, the SNP adopted Creative Scotland and launched its own much-simplified Creative Scotland Bill in March 2008. Meantime, Scottish Screen and the Scottish Arts Council enjoyed a kind of organisational half-life, with their own boards dissolved, but with some members from each combining to form a joint board of an organisation that still didn't exist. The SNP government's Creative Scotland Bill was defeated in the Scottish Parliament in June 2008 and the plans have had to be recast. At this time of writing, Scottish Screen and the

Scottish Arts Council still exist but the new Creative Scotland is supposed to be established in Spring 2010, should the Public Services Reform Bill 2009, presently before the Scottish Parliament, be passed.

One day, someone will write an entertaining book or thesis on this less than glorious exercise in setting up devolved Scotland's new strategic cultural institution. My sketch of an incomplete story underlines the unreflective nature of Scottish cultural policy making, which in an area of clear and undisputed autonomy has straightforwardly adopted thinking made in London.

Creative Scotland is the unloved child of two ill-matched parents: bureaucracy and intellectual dependency. The idea originated during the much-mooted 'bonfire of the quangos' in 2003, when the then Labour culture minister proposed one cultural agency to replace two, with no really good grounds, given their different remits. This *idée fixe* entered the civil service bloodstream of the Scottish Executive and subsequently was never seriously questioned. Why Creative Scotland? 'Creativity' was then – as now - in the air. Lacking originality, and any independent intellectual test-bed, Scottish Labour imported New Labour policy and terminology, without altering a comma or full stop. The paternity suit, therefore, needs to be filed against the coalition Labour-Liberal Democratic Scottish Executive.

But the somewhat reluctant mother of this invention will be the present SNP Scottish Government. Why did the Nationalists in power not think again? Like the predecessor coalition, the present cabinet simply adopted policy made in London without critical reflection. The New Labour creative economy growth story certainly appealed to Alex Salmond, the SNP First Minister, inflecting his government's broadcasting policy towards seeking an increase in Scotland's share of UK television production.²⁹ Creative

²⁹ Philip Schlesinger, 'The SNP, Cultural Policy and the idea of the "Creative Economy"', pp. 135-146 in Gerry Hassan, ed. The Modern SNP: from politics to power (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009).

Scotland's long gestation period opened up a playground for consultants schooled in creative industries thinking to reinforce the existing path dependency. Where there was opposition to the proposal, this came most significantly from cultural producers focused on fears that a merger would have an adverse impact on their funding opportunities. Although as each Bill trundled through Parliament, the usual round of consultation with a range of interested parties took place, this did not have any noticeable impact on the underlying conception of the project. In short, no more than Scottish Labour did the Nationalists operate in an intellectual ecology capable of offering a robust challenge, or to imagine an alternative way of doing things. The framing ideas of Creative Scotland, eventually published in February 2009, were a word-for-word reiteration of the DCMS's conception of creative industries, 1998 style – not even the reframed creative economy thinking of 2007 and after. Thirteen creative industries have been designated as such in Scotland because that's what London decided was appropriate a decade or more ago. No doubt, the appropriateness of this line of thinking will be tested.

Creative Scotland exemplifies an astonishing case of deep policy dependency, which has embraced the neo-liberal assumptions of the New Labour project just as these have been challenged by our profound financial and economic crisis. Looked at from a Scottish perspective, it would seem that policy dependency is at least in part linked to a weakness in the mobilisation of policy expertise. This can be attributed to a number of factors: a problem of capacity, stability and formation in the civil service; failures in the ability of the political class to make certain interconnections coupled with continual churn in holders of the culture brief; the absence of a policy ecology north of the border to match that of London - not in scale, of course, but at least in its range and political leverage. It now remains to be seen, as Scotland's autonomy extends and deepens, whether it can develop the intellectual capacity to rethink the institutional relations between culture and politics.

