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Manageable Creativity

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Abstract

This paper notes a perception in mainstream management theory and practice that creativity has shifted from being disruptive or destructive to 'manageable'. This concept of manageable creativity in business is reflected in a similar rhetoric in cultural policy, especially towards the creative industries.

The paper argues that the idea of 'manageable creativity' can be traced back to a 'heroic' and a 'structural' model of creativity. It is argued that the 'heroic' model of creativity is being subsumed within a 'structural' model which emphasises the systems and infrastructure around individual creativity rather than focusing on raw talent and pure content. Yet this structured approach carries problems of its own, in particular a tendency to overlook the unpredictability of creative processes, people and products. Ironically it may be that some confusion in our policies towards creativity is inevitable, reflecting the paradoxes and transitions which characterise the creative process.

Introduction

As noted in the introduction to this special edition, 'creativity' is a highly adaptable concept which can be used to support or justify a variety of theories and practices. For the purposes of this article, we can make two initial observations. Firstly creativity and management, having been positioned historically as opposing concepts, are increasingly converging in new models of cultural policy and business management. Secondly, in the absence of clear definitions, whilst there is scope for 'creativity' and 'management' to play off each other in interesting and productive ways, 'manageable creativity' is something of a chimera, albeit an alluring one; to regard creativity and management as analogous in this way may be considered a 'category error', but such a position assumes that we actually know what either category means. One of the aims of this article is to consider whether the interplay between management and creativity is a dangerous flirtation or a viable relationship.

In 1963 the marketing guru Theodor Levitt wrote a critique of creativity in business entitled 'Creativity Is Not Enough' (Levitt 2002). Levitt complained that a generation of talented young people were disrupting and distracting management by failing to adapt or apply their 'creativity' to the core competences of the firm. The suggestion that creativity is a disruptive, destabilising

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influence draws on a long tradition in Western cultural theory, from Plato's 'Ion' dialogue to Freud's identification of creativity with neuroticism and social maladjustment in 'Creative Writers and Day-dreaming' (Plato 2002; Freud 1985). Levitt also echoed Schumpeter's economic theory of 'creative destruction'. According to Schumpeter, creativity, and in particular the creative entrepreneur, plays an essential role in revitalising the economy, breaking up established systems and opening up new markets (Schumpeter 1939). The disruptive effects on the individual firm, as identified by Levitt, would have macro-economic benefits. Schumpeter's concept of the entrepreneur as a force of creative destruction, knocking down established businesses in order to reconstruct new ones, is fundamental to entrepreneurial theory (Webster 1973) and indeed to entrepreneurs' perception of themselves as different, oppositional and outside mainstream business and industry (Eikhof 2006; McGrath and Macmillan 1992; Morris et al. 1993). It also reinforces Levitt's argument that creativity (and entrepreneurship) are essentially opposed to management and control, at least at the level of the individual firm, and fits with the stereotypical genius-outsider model of the creative individual.

During the 1960s, 'creativity' was already emerging as a new buzzword in business, particularly in advertising (Frank 1997). The timing of Levitt's article was thus significant, as he felt himself standing against a rising tide of enthusiasm for creativity among business academics and managers. Through the 1980s and 1990s management gurus like Tom Peters and Charles Handy emphasised the necessity of 'creativity' in business in order to adapt to unpredictability, individualism and discontinuous change in the business environment (Peters 1988; Handy 1994). Managers could no longer afford to focus on the classic model of organisation as a perfect machine; the model was reconceived, not as a machine but as an organism, adapting to its external environment (Hatch 1997). The change in attitude towards 'creativity' reflected in turn a change in attitude towards the macro-environment and an appreciation of the role of entrepreneurship in defining and adapting to new markets.

The 1980s witnessed the emergence of an 'enterprise culture' in many Western societies (Bagguley 1991). Even large organisations saw the virtue of an entrepreneurial culture, or 'intrapreneurship', reconstructing big business as a cluster of pseudo-independent small businesses. Recognising the significance of entrepreneurialism and 'creative destruction', the new generation of managers saw creativity as a desirable attribute, not a distraction confined to the margins of artistic and cultural practice. The change in attitude reflected a loss of confidence in the Anglo-American concept of business management based on the multi-divisional, multi-national corporation, building outwards from a sustainable strategic position, as set out by management gurus including Ansoff, Chandler and Porter. That model, already challenged by more 'creative' and contingent approaches in the 1960s, faced a more practical threat in the 1970s, as Western business struggled to adapt to recession and restructuring following the oil crisis. By the 1980s, managers were likely to turn Levitt's dictum on its head: traditional MBA-style management is no longer enough, nor is 'sustainable competitive advantage' a credible basis for doing business in rapidly shifting global markets. Creativity in business, previously a force of destruction, became a source of flexibility, innovation and change.

As managers in the 1980s began to recognise the value of creativity, cultural institutions learned to embrace managerialism and enterprise. Through the 1980s cultural policy makers recognised the dynamism of the commercial cultural industries and sought to bring these into the mainstream of

cultural policy much as business sought to embrace entrepreneurship. Early indications of this shift came with the cultural industries policies in mid-1980s Britain. The influence of the cultural industries policies of the GLC (Greater London Council) has rightly been cited (Garnham 1987) as a formative influence on British creative industries policies. But perhaps of even greater significance than the GLC was the formation of GLEB (Greater London Enterprise Board) towards the end of the GLC period as a public-private sector partnership investing in enterprise and entrepreneurship (Mulgan and Worpole 1984). Similar bodies emerged in other British cities – the Merseyside Development Corporation was established by Margaret Thatcher’s government to regenerate Liverpool’s dockside area in the early 1980s. Whereas the GLC was grounded in a leftist social democratic project of social inclusion and local participation, central government’s priorities were towards enterprise, economic restructuring and empowerment ‘through, not against the market’. It was this marriage of entrepreneurship and culture – and the paradoxical alliance between left-wing local authorities and right-wing central government – which laid the foundations for Britain’s influential creative industries policies more than ten years later.

The British experience during the 1980s is perhaps part of a larger narrative internationally, towards neo-liberal cultural policy and a more turbulent, entrepreneurial global economy. In 1994 Scott Lash and John Urry put forward what has come to be known as the ‘culturisation thesis’. ‘Ordinary manufacturing industry,’ according to Lash and Urry, was ‘becoming increasingly like the production of culture’ (Lash and Urry 1994, 123). This convergence had occurred at both ends of the spectrum. In the cultural sector, a growing emphasis on earned income and accountability to the marketplace, together with a recognition of the economic significance of the commercial cultural industries, had encouraged cultural institutions and policy makers to adopt managerial practices and rhetoric. In business, creativity had emerged as a key business asset, with managers desperately attempting to demonstrate their ‘creative’ credentials to colleagues, customers and shareholders. Not surprisingly cultural policy has become increasingly ‘managerial’, reflecting a general shift towards an increasingly market-driven public sector and a specific shift to engage with the newly significant commercial cultural industries. ‘Creativity’ was relocated at the intersection between these commercial-managerial and cultural-aesthetic worldviews. The convergence of these two worlds is based partly on a redefinition of creativity in managerial terms, as a business commodity and as a management competence, within a global creative economy (Caves 2000, Howkins 2001).

In the remainder of this paper I will argue that the emergence of ‘manageable creativity’ as a conceptual model both in business and in cultural policy is premised on questionable assumptions. First I will offer a brief overview of two models of manageable creativity in business, before considering how these models and assumptions have spilled over into cultural policy.

Creativity in business

Perceptions of creativity in business can be clustered into two categories, the ‘heroic’ model and the ‘structural’ model. The heroic model highlights the transforming impact of a dynamic, visionary creative individual on the firm. This model of creativity in business is associated with ‘transformational’ (visionary, charismatic) leadership and with an individualistic, trait-based theory

of creativity. At the same time the model relies on a generalised rhetoric of creativity rather than substantial evidence or examples. As Prichard notes, the 'discourse' of creativity in business is displayed in flattering personal eulogies and 'profiles' in the trade press rather than in any specific analysis of creative processes or products (Prichard 2002). Such rhetorical displays tend to support Frank's argument that 'creativity' in business is frequently deployed as a tactic to legitimise and popularise managerial practices (Frank 2001). Behind the rhetoric, it seems that the senior management are pursuing 'business as usual'. Levitt would perhaps have approved.

However, trait-based theories of creativity have become increasingly unfashionable. Theories of creativity have moved beyond individual, person-based approaches towards collective, process-based models (Bilton 2007). Indeed process-based, sociological theories of creativity have emerged as the dominant paradigm in theoretical literature, superseding psychological approaches. In the management literature, this new emphasis on collective systems and processes translates into an interest in teams, networks and organisational environments as sources of innovation. This 'structural' model of creativity fits more comfortably with traditional management models and concepts. The disruptive creativity identified by Levitt has thus been replaced by a more rational approach which addresses creativity through the structural conditions necessary for its containment and exploitation.

In the following sections I will consider how the 'heroic' and 'structural' models of creativity translate into management and policy. The 'heroic' model has of course been widely discredited already, but it is still worth discussing because the assumptions behind it continue to influence managerial attitudes. The 'structural' model is a more recent development and perhaps more promising – here I will offer some initial criticisms of what is still an emergent logic in management and policy.

Heroic creativity in business: 'useful mavericks'

Whilst the mythology of individual genius has been discredited in mainstream creativity theory (Weisberg 1986), this model has continued to dominate business thinking, from the cool creatives in 1960s advertising described by Thomas Frank through to Apple's 2006 slogan 'Think Different'. According to Frank, the new generation of advertising agencies in the 1960s saw themselves as the antithesis of 'business as usual', importing fresh ideas and energy from the counterculture into the boardroom. This trend may be seen either as a form of window-dressing, legitimising business by borrowing the clothes, language and 'attitude' of the 'cool' counterculture (Frank 2001, McGuigan 2009), or as a genuine shift to a more individualistic and progressive business culture (Ghoshal and Bartlett 1997; Handy 1994; Peters 1988). In either case creativity is vested in the individual, in the momentary flash of insight and in non-routinised, unconventional thinking, a heroic model of creativity typified by the new generation of online businesses. Companies like Apple and Google represent this new tolerance for eccentric individualism in business, an ethos which can be traced back to their origins in the libertarian ideals of the 1960s West Coast counterculture, as documented by Woolley (1993) and Rheingold (1994).

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Yet heroic creativity seems to both resist and belong to mainstream corporate culture. Like the Picture of Dorian Gray, while the individual maverick offers a flattering image of a younger, hipper way of doing business, the portrait of heroic creativity becomes increasingly distant from everyday business realities. The creative heroes of business, men like Martin Sorrell, Steve Jobs or even Richard Branson are celebrated by their shareholders not because they are subverting the core principles of doing business, as Levitt had predicted, but because they represent McGregor's 'human side of enterprise' (McGregor 1960) whilst still turning out a marketable product. Originality and individualism in business fit with a model of innovation and new product development (Morris et al. 1993). Whether this equates to genuine creativity, a question to which we will return, is less important to the business than the need to develop new products and business models in order to stay ahead of the competition.

What we can say of heroic creativity is that it represents a one-sided definition of creative processes and people, weighted towards the process of ideation rather than the longer process of idea development and application and favouring the individualistic, irrational process of 'divergent thinking' over the collective, deliberate processes of 'convergent thinking' which convert new ideas into valuable innovations (Bilton 2007; Bilton and Leary 2002; Weisberg 1986). Secondly, 'heroic' creativity locates creativity within a minority of exceptional individuals. Thirdly, by extension, heroic creativity is likely to be concentrated within certain organisations, geographical territories or in specific communities and cultures, rather than as a distributed 'normal' human trait. This geographical concentration of heroic genius draws on the Roman idea of genius as the guardian spirit of the home, 'the presiding genius of the place'. Fourthly, heroic creativity is thus necessarily hierarchical, because it is innate, encoded into the DNA of the individual or of a specific place. Finally, heroic creativity assumes that these specially gifted individuals, organisations or communities transform the world around them. Individual creativity is the cause, collective transformation is the effect (as we will see cause and effect is reversed in the opposing theory of 'structural' creativity).

We can observe these assumptions about creativity – the emphasis on ideation, on individual genius, geographical or cultural concentration, a hierarchy of talents and the impact of individual creativity on collective performance – in a certain way of thinking about creativity in business. Above all there is an assumption in the literature, and in management practice, that individual creativity is heroic in the sense of being a positive, not destructive, force. Compared with the suspicions voiced by Levitt's, today's managers regard the effects of creative destruction and disruption as essentially benign, and the creative individual as contributing to the greater good, not driven by essentially selfish or self-actualising motives. Individual creativity is thus framed within a heroic narrative which emphasises not only the power of the individual but also assumes that this individual power will be directed for the common good. Unruly individualism is thus tamed by collective purpose and unpredictable creativity is aligned with corporate objectives. However, Levitt's scepticism remains valid, particularly in the current economic climate where creative mavericks in the financial sector have collapsed the corporate edifice on top of themselves; Levitt reminds us that if given too much latitude the heroic creative individual might in the end do more harm than good.

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Heroic creativity in cultural policy: the creative core

Some of the heroic assumptions in cultural policies towards the creative industries are well documented, notably the faith in 'individual creativity, skill and talent' (DCMS 1999) and the assumption that original creative ideas and talented individuals will have a transforming effect on the wider creative economy (ibid.). The latter is held up as an article of faith in contemporary cultural policy, even though all the research on creativity suggests that creative individuals are driven by intrinsic motives and a self-actualising creative process, not by extrinsic motives and outcomes (Amabile 1990; Hennessy and Amabile 1988; Bandura 1997). The emphasis on ideation translates into an emphasis on cultural production – a relic of policies directed towards traditional art organisations where market failure and 'cost disease' mean that production is no longer viable without subsidy. In the creative industries, this product-led logic no longer applies – the problem is if anything the over-supply of creative ideas and talent, not scarcity. And the broader assumption – that creativity results in the achievement of shared goals and goods, not a self-absorbed and potentially destructive process – remains paramount.

Creativity in cultural policy is of course susceptible to many interpretations, and I will argue that the 'heroic' assumptions noted above are perhaps becoming rather outmoded. However, two themes are worth noting here. First there is the assumption that by focusing policies on a creative elite, benefits will trickle down to an uncreative majority. Similarly there is an assumption that policies focused on particular creative places or 'hot spots' will produce similar benefits. Both assumptions are essentially hierarchical and accord certain privileges to supposedly creative people and places, on the basis that this will benefit a wider constituency.

In the Work Foundation's report (The Work Foundation 2007) to the UK Government on Britain's creative economy, the economic structure of the creative economy is conceived as a series of concentric circles. At the centre of the system lies the 'creative core', where new ideas and concepts are originated. In this model, the creative heroes are often unsung and unpaid, but they have a galvanising effect on the rest of the economy through a kind of 'trickle-down' or 'spill-over' effect into the surrounding circles in the model. Ideas and talents flow outwards from the creative core firstly into the cultural industries which turn their ideas into viable cultural commodities, then into the creative industries which deal in purely commercial products and services but which still exploit underlying intellectual property generated by the creative core. From here creativity flows outwards into the wider economy, driving innovation and alternative business models in disparate industries with no recognisable cultural or creative content, but still fundamentally dependent on 'individual creativity, skill and talent'. So heroic creativity sprinkles its 'magic dust' on the economy at large (Jeffcutt and Pratt 2002).

Richard Florida's 'creative class' follows a similar hierarchical model of heroic creativity spreading outwards from the centre (Florida 2002). Again our heroes may not be instantly recognisable, disguised as bourgeois bohemians working in peripheral industries like music, design or scientific research. But Florida argues that they have a transforming effect on urban culture and hence on urban economies. Attracting and supporting this heroic creative class into the city thus becomes a priority for cultural and economic development, beyond the more obvious investment in social and economic infrastructure. Consultants like Florida are on hand to advise how and where the

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investment should be made to achieve maximum creative impact, on the assumption that the resulting creative clusters will spark the rest of the urban economy.

This investment in a heroic creative core or creative class assumes firstly that this will result in disproportionately high economic or social benefits, following the same logic as the now discredited 'multiplier' model applied to cultural subsidies by Myerscough in 1988 (Hansen 1993). In particular, there is an assumption that this creative core or class will behave altruistically. Yet if cities invest in attracting a creative class, what is to prevent these creative types from forming their own networks beyond the city? There is a risk that the benefits of such investments will either be siphoned off by a temporary, footloose cultural elite (self-interest) or soaked up by a narrow segment of the population (gentrification) – so instead of 'spill-overs' and 'trickle-down' effects, investments in the creative class result in 'leakages' or 'bottle-necks'.

The heroic model of creativity assumes that private goods will result in public benefits. For example, during the 1990s Ireland attempted to build the capacity of its film-industry by providing tax breaks. However, the policy benefited film-makers in Ireland rather than Irish film-making; whilst some inward investment and temporary employment resulted, the chief beneficiaries were the investors and studios using Ireland as a location. What the heroic model of creativity overlooks is the complex motives for creative work (Shalley 1991). Because creative work is relatively impervious to extrinsic rewards and sanctions, it remains, if not entirely selfish, then self-absorbed. Our creative heroes do not set out to save the world, only to fulfil their own intrinsic motivation and drive. A policy constructed on a system of extrinsic rewards and benefits resulting from the creative act is thus unlikely to succeed.

The other assumption behind urban cultural policies directed towards cultivating individual creative talent is that such talents are predictable and geographically stable. Florida's controversial 'creativity index' attempts to highlight the location factors which attract and retain creative talents to the city (Florida 2004). The index in turn provides a blueprint for policy makers wishing to construct a creative city. This model follows the same logic as the 'creative city toolkit' devised by Landry and others in the 1980s and 1990s. Just as heroic creativity identifies complex social processes with individuals, the creative cities model fixes unpredictable networks in branded locations. These clusters of creative activity are deemed to act as magnets for other talented individual in the competition for creative competitive advantage.

Whilst economic geographers recognise that creativity is rooted in specific sub-cultures and clusters (Scott 1999), they also suggest that this sense of place is unstable and continually shifting (Pratt 2000). The suggestion that creative individuals gravitate towards each other in definable clusters is in any case questionable. Studies of creative teams and networks indicate that creative collaborations are more likely to occur at the edge of networks, or on the periphery of creative clusters, not at their centre (Perry-Smith 2006; Perry-Smith and Shalley 2003). Consequently, attempts to artificially engineer a creative district or quarter will create a pattern of convergence and dispersal – as soon as a district achieves a critical mass of creative activity, the talent is likely to migrate from the centre to the margins. This diaspora is motivated partly by rising property prices and gentrification (Zukin 1982); but it may also reflect a preference among creative workers for temporary relationships with people and places rather than permanent attachments. Consequently

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the geography of creative talent seems to follow a shifting pattern, moving in and out of clusters and networks. Policy initiatives which attempt to consolidate creative businesses and creative workers into a permanent infrastructure and fixed locations are again likely to misfire.

Theories of creative clusters or creative cities continue to be influential. They give policy makers a sense of purpose and they give artists and creatives a sense of their own importance – but they do not in the end do justice to the complex and fluid geography of the creative industries. They are tied to a heroic model of creativity, which assumes that a clustering of high profile ‘flagship’ projects will attract a critical mass of talent, providing a catalyst for urban renewal. Certainly cultural producers and cultural consumers will take advantage of any opportunities offered to them. Whether they are committed or attached to policy-based creative clusters or willing to take on the heroic role that is thrust upon them remains an open question.

The heroic model of creativity also overlooks the significance of marginal creative work. Most artists and creative workers are unsung and unpaid, eking out a living on temporary and part-time projects, under the radar of official statistics and definitions. This points to the importance of informal networks and irregular, precarious employment in the creative industries beyond the heroic peaks of visible success. Indeed rather than identifying the creative core and high profile projects and developments as the source of creative networks, we might instead consider them as unintended consequences. The most vibrant and sustainable creative communities in the UK (London’s film and advertising industries, Manchester’s music and fashion industries) seem to follow this pattern of emergence from sub-cultures and informal, marginal activity rather than from centralised, top-down initiatives (cultural quarters and creative hubs). This in turn leads to an alternative model of creativity, as the product not of heroic individuals but of social systems and structures.

Structural creativity

According to Keith Sawyer, since the 1990s the dominant paradigm for understanding creativity is a sociocultural model which locates individual creativity in a network of relationships rather than individual moments of insight (Sawyer 2006, 4). At the individual level, artists engage in multiple projects, described by Howard Gruber as ‘a network of enterprises’ (Sawyer 2006, 51); specific insights are thus embedded in a broader conceptual framework, extending through the artist’s ongoing career. At the social level, creative individuals operate within ‘art worlds’ (Becker 1982) which provide not only practical support and creative inspiration, but also systems for legitimising the artist’s reputation and the value of the work produced (Wolff 1990).

This ‘structural’ model of creativity becomes especially persuasive in relation to the cognitive definition of the creative process developed by Robert Weisberg in this issue. Creative thinking draws upon expertise and craft skills which are shared by those working in a domain or field. Consciously or not, creative processes rely upon our knowledge and experience within this field, and networks of like-minded others help us to access these resources.

This sociocultural model of creativity also accords with a Post-Fordist model of creative work. The restructuring of creative work in relation to clusters and flexible networks rather than centralised firms has been discussed from a variety of research perspectives – economic geography (Pratt 2000; Scott 2004), urban studies (Grabher 2002, 2004), social theory (Storper 1994), macro-economic change (Piore and Sabel 1984, Porter 1998) and micro-economic analysis (Hirsch 1972). As noted above, the network model differs from the 'heroic model', emphasising the informal connections which connect entrepreneurs, artists and micro-enterprises rather than singling out heroic individuals. Researchers also emphasise that these networks and clusters do not consist solely in economic relationships of supply and demand or 'critical mass' (Porter 1998); they reflect also ties of friendship and sociality (Wittel 2001; McRobbie 2002) with artists and creators preferring to congregate in pubs and clubs rather than initiating formal meetings. Friendship ties may even take precedence over economic relationships, resulting in the commodification of friendship as a source of valuable business contacts.

This blurring of economic and social relationships in the creative sphere has led to the charge that creative enterprises do not take their commercial responsibilities seriously, that they are mere 'lifestyle businesses'. On the other hand they also stand accused of exploiting social networks and friendships as sources of freelance contracts or inside information (McRobbie 2002). Certainly, relationships between creative firms do not seem to be wholly driven by economic advantage; for many, being 'part of the scene' fuels their creative identities and aspirations (Poëtttschacher 2005), not just their balance sheets. To paraphrase Granovetter's distinction, creative networks are based not just on the 'weak ties' of economic pragmatism, but also on the 'strong ties' of friendship (Granovetter 1973).

From a business perspective, the sociocultural model of creativity fits with a growing emphasis on organisational culture as the source of organisational mission and purpose, and with a 'transformational' model of leadership. Whereas a 'transactional' leader motivates the workforce through a system of rewards and punishments, the transformational leader encourages the employees to feel motivated from within, inspired by a sense of mission which is embedded in the firm's organisational culture. Employees who are thus motivated are more likely to go the extra mile in their work, and this high level of intrinsic motivation correlates directly to high levels of employee creativity (Amabile 1988; Oldham and Cummings 1996). Such an argument is grounded in a model of organisational creativity where individual creativity is rooted in collective systems, from the structuring of team roles (Kirton 1991, Belbin 1993; Thompson 1993) to the working environment. This shift towards collective creativity is apparent also in the 'creative industries', with a growing emphasis on the creativity of management and systems which facilitate creative talent, rather than on the creative talent itself. In advertising (Bilton 2009) and in television (Schlesinger, in this issue), it is possible to observe a relocation of creativity from the traditionally defined 'creative' department towards the 'creative managers' and 'creative strategy' which precede and follow the one-off creative idea.

In cultural policy, the shift from a heroic, individualised account of creativity towards collective creative systems was a sub-text to the 'creative clusters' narrative noted earlier in this paper. More significantly, 'structural creativity' takes centre stage in cultural policy towards the creative industries. Whereas traditional arts policy had been premised on a model of production subsidy, for

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the creative industries production subsidy has been less important than managing the infrastructure and systems (especially systems of distribution) which make production viable. Consequently it is possible to observe the beginnings of a cultural policy based on 'structural creativity' in government attempts to engage with the creative industries through policy interventions in contingent areas such as intellectual property law, film distribution or education (for further discussion see articles by Kawashima and Wilson in this issue).

Because 'structural creativity' requires policy makers to look beyond the individual artist at the networks and relationships which facilitate creative work, policy makers have had to make more indirect (creative?) interventions. This in turn has led to a corresponding shift away from traditional cultural policy institutions to other bodies with a less obvious cultural policy remit. In the UK, the National Endowment for Science, Technology and the Arts (NESTA) has argued for a connection between creativity and 'innovation', where artistic creativity is seen not as an end in itself but embedded within a process of innovation and entrepreneurship. The innovation process implies a shift from idea generation to the application and implementation of ideas in a variety of commercial, social and educational contexts. This model of applied creativity of course connects with the UK definition of the creative industries in terms of the commercial exploitation of intellectual property, and shifts the focus away from the genius creator to the systems which turn raw ideas into commercial properties. The approach allows policy-makers to address various contingencies up and down the value chain, from access to finance to access to markets, rather than fixing on the moment of cultural production, and from an aesthetic interest in the value and meaning of the product itself to managerial questions of supply and demand. This requires a concession of authority from cultural policy (represented by the Department of Culture Media and Sport) to other bodies only loosely connected with government and cultural policy. NESTA is not directly involved in funding of the creative industries; its remit is to support 'innovation' more broadly. But the fact that NESTA and other bodies both inside and outside government are talking about creativity and the creative industries in policy documents and research is a further indication of a shift in policy from addressing creativity as ideas and idea generation to the broader social systems, organisations and infrastructure which turn ideas into applications.

The implicit shift in cultural policy from the creative arts to applied innovation is of course somewhat controversial. 'Social creativity' diminishes the role and significance of creative individuals in the creative process, and attempts to address a wider policy agenda. The danger here is that the element of individual creativity and of original content is accordingly diminished, and we are left with a purely instrumental cultural policy towards creativity and the creative industries. There is also the risk that we ignore the maverick, individualistic and chaotic elements of creativity at our peril. Creativity and the creative industries are increasingly regarded as the keys to a new economic system based on knowledge, ideas and information. But as Levitt observed, creativity and creative people can also be fickle, directionless and potentially destructive. Attempting to 'tame' creativity in a cage of social and economic benefits might in the end prove to be a dangerous game.

Conclusion – creativity and contradiction

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In this paper I have noted some contradictions in the meaning of creativity in business, between an emphasis on individual 'heroic' creativity and a 'structural' model of creativity which focuses on the social processes and institutions through which creative ideas are realised and validated. These in turn reflect certain paradoxes inherent in the definition of creativity as a process that is at once irrational, sudden and individualistic and at the same time deliberate, incremental and interdependent (Bilton 2007). In the management literature and in business practice, there has been a gradual shift from the individualistic, heroic model towards a 'sociocultural' model of creativity. The emergence of 'structural' creativity in business creativity is likely to gather pace, with firms copying the perceived successes of their competitors rather than analysing the value or appropriateness of the organisational model. This convergence on one supposed model of 'best practice' is described as 'benchmarking' in business practice; in theoretical terms it follows a 'population ecology' model of organisational development, with firms attempting to adapt to models they perceive to be successful when faced with competitive environments.

Contradictions in the meaning of creativity in business are reproduced in contradictions in cultural policy. Cultural policies towards the creative industries are torn between a focus on 'heroic' creative individuals and a concern with the social systems and structures which lie behind them. Again a drift towards a 'sociocultural' model of creativity seems likely in relation to the growing policy emphasis on the creative industries and creative economy, and a shift from traditional channels of cultural policy to institutions like NESTA in the UK, which are only loosely concerned with culture and tend to see creativity in relation to innovation and entrepreneurship, not as ends in themselves. British policies towards the creative industries have recently been characterised by an emphasis on indirect intervention in the broader policy landscape (through media regulation, taxation policy, intellectual property law) rather than direct interventions in cultural production, often filtered through non-cultural institutions like NESTA or through economic or social policies. However, this indirect, socio-cultural approach to cultural policy risks overlooking the individualistic and unpredictable elements in creative processes, people and organisations. As the basis for a future creative economy, creativity perhaps offers a less stable foundation than the statistics and policy rhetoric suggest.

There are no doubt inconsistencies in cultural policies towards the creative industries, reflecting contradictions in the definitions of creativity. The British government enthusiastically embraced the possibilities of a creative economy, pioneered by the creative industries, and its policies betray a contradictory legacy, from the social democratic impulses of municipal socialist governments in the 1980s to the flagship-floating, flag-waving enterprise culture of central government during the same period. Yet such contradictions may be a necessary evil. By fixing on either a purely 'heroic' or 'structural' model of creativity in future, policy makers may achieve a more 'coherent' approach, but at the same time risk overlooking or obstructing the transitions and counter-intuitive connections which lie behind creative thinking. Both the models outlined in this article attempt to tame or domesticate unpredictable, antisocial and self-absorbed processes of creativity within a framework of predictable policy outcomes. The unfashionable policy traditions of pragmatism and 'muddling through' (usually behind a smokescreen of confident policy rhetoric), may actually allow for the accidental and unexpected collisions of individual brilliance and social networks on which creative thinking ultimately depends.

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