

**‘Cultural policy and creative industries in Japan and Scotland’
Symposium held at the Playfair Library Hall, Old College, University of
Edinburgh, Thursday, 11 October 2012.**

**‘Cultural policy and the idea of the creative economy’
Opening presentation, Panel 1: Cultural Policy**

**Professor Philip Schlesinger, Director, Centre for Cultural Policy Research,
University of Glasgow**

Your Excellency, Lord Bruce, Principal, madam chairman, ladies and gentlemen

It’s a great pleasure and honour to be here in this magnificent setting.

And it’s intriguing to take part in an event that compares Japan and Scotland.
That’s a first for me.

Before I begin, my thanks to Professor Zachmann and the Daiwa Anglo-Japanese
Foundation for their kind invitation to contribute to this symposium. Professor
Zachmann sent me some publications in a valiant effort to educate me about
Japanese cultural policy and cultural trade. I’ve tried to be a good student and
have read them all. I hope to some positive effect.

It’s important to point out that although this panel is first and foremost about
cultural policy, as the title of my talk makes clear, the so-called creative economy
is now an unavoidable topic – and has been so, in one guise or another, for the
past fifteen years or so. In today’s cultural policy discourse, creativity has
become ubiquitous.

Although the creative industries and creative economy have become familiar
phrases in the media and in policy circles, these terms mean little to most of us,

so one of my tasks this afternoon is to tell you briefly where these ideas come from.

But before I do so, let me begin with some thoughts about contemporary cultural policy. This is made and implemented where culture, politics and the economy meet. Contemporary cultural policy is highly institutionalized. It brings government into a relationship with how culture is made, how it circulates, and how we use it. So cultural policy is invariably concerned with questions of value, how, in the context of reception, objects or performances move and engage us, and in the marketplace, what we're prepared to pay for them. And it's not at all surprising that aesthetics and economics are often found pulling in different directions. To put this in the language of agency: those in political or institutional power are often at odds both with those undertaking cultural work and over who owns a cultural project.

Of key importance for the kind of comparative discussion we're having today is the fact that cultural policy is characteristically focused on nations and questions of collective identity. Because this is the territory of sentiment and emotion, it's always sensitive. The global projection of a national society has become deeply linked with branding, marketing and so-called cultural diplomacy. Most often, but not invariably, cultural policy is the purview of sovereign states, such as the United Kingdom and Japan. It therefore unavoidably and centrally involves public institutions: ministers and ministries and various kinds of public agency that intervene in the cultural domain, and a bevy of national bodies from theatres to museums, orchestras to film agencies, and many more besides.

Here, in Edinburgh of all places, we can hardly ignore the fact that statehood is by no means essential for cultural policies to be pursued. Scotland is a nation without a state – for some it's a nation in pursuit of its own state. In common with many sovereign states, there is a Scottish cultural policy apparatus. There is a Cabinet Secretary for Culture, and there is a culture division in the Scottish Government and an education and culture committee in the Scottish Parliament. There is a bevy of the classic national high-cultural institutions that are typical of

a European nation state: museums and galleries, the library, the orchestra, the opera, the theatre. If you look at the Scottish budget, you'll find that expenditure on the national cultural apparatus includes the agency Creative Scotland, the Cultural Collections, and the National Performing Companies.

Under the present constitutional arrangements, which are highly politically contested, cultural policy is a devolved power under the aegis of the Scottish Government and the Scottish Parliament. This was set out in the Scotland Act 1998, which was phase one of devolution. Phase two is reflected in the Scotland Act 2012. When and whether we'll talk about phase three is anyone's guess right now.

Broadcasting – which you might rightly consider to be a major cultural force, in the form of radio and television and their related web presence – is still a reserved power, held by London rather than Edinburgh. Aside from its cultural dimension, broadcasting is also a political and economic player. The national broadcaster is another of the classic institutions of sovereign states. Who controls broadcasting in Scotland is a particular bone of contention for the SNP government. This has implications for the future of the BBC in the event of independence post 2014, and therefore we should discuss it today because in many ways this is a test case of the current scope of Scottish cultural policy and also highly relevant to any conception of the creative economy, given the income and employment generated by radio and TV.

But before we venture further into the thickets of the Scottish institutional landscape, we should discuss the invention of the creative industries, which by degrees have mutated into the creative economy.

The official ideas about managing culture that dominate Scotland today were first minted in London in 1997, by the New Labour government of Tony Blair. The Blairites were the first major popularisers of the creative industries thinking that has now circled the globe and captivated many policy makers worldwide. But that mode of thought also hopped instantly over the Border. It was rapidly

adopted by our very own coalition, the Labour-Liberal Democratic one that ruled in the Scottish Parliament for two terms from 1999-2007. For better or worse, coalescing was *à la mode* and necessary in Edinburgh more than a decade before it was rediscovered in London in 2010.

Since coming to power in May 2007, the SNP government's initiatives in broadcasting and cultural policy have likewise been deeply influenced by current thinking about the key role of the 'creative industries' and the 'creative economy' in conditions of global competition.

At the heart of all creative industries strategy is aggregation: its purpose is to bring together a number of quite distinct cultural practices – from architecture to antiques, from film production to software production – and to call these creative. This creates an object, now called the creative economy, which still remains an aggregation of different practices, and actually behaves that way too – and that continuing diversity and specificity makes policy-making rather difficult.

For those adopting this strategy, after having established a new focus or object for policy the task is to try and devise instruments to make it work better - in particular, to make more of a profitable business of culture. One of the consequences of this approach is to change the focus and functioning of public agencies operating in the public domain. This can involve renaming and reconstructing existing bodies or reorienting them profoundly by introducing new management styles. In Scotland, it was creative industries thinking that led directly to the establishment two years ago of Creative Scotland, the national agency for Scotland's arts, film and creative industries. This too offers an illustration for cultural policy analysis and, like the BBC, I shall return to it later.

Quite how the creative industries, and latterly, the creative economy, should be defined has spawned a massive literature among consultants, gurus and academics. Which industries are central, which peripheral? Has creativity become the new human resource? Can we distinguish between cultural and

creative industries? To what extent are the statistics bandied about at national and international level actually reliable?

I'll spare you a review of all these questions, not least because much of this debate is not terribly interesting. Moreover, my brief today is to talk about the ideas, the discourse, and their consequences. And I do indeed think that ideas matter a great deal more than is often recognised.

You might start with the most obvious appeal of labeling something as creative. Who *doesn't* want to be called creative? It's so much better than being dull, mundane and boring, which is the implied alternative. But playing with romantic notions of cultural work – those extra-ordinary and god-like qualities of originality and inspiration – is only a small part of the story. The idea of creativity as such has appeal because it has a widespread ideological resonance - it accords with contemporary aspirations to seek fulfilment in work. But while it is often officially presented as inclusive and democratic, creative economy policy is ultimately focused on a small minority's cultural labour and its successful commodification through the exercise of intellectual property rights - because that goes with the grain of how cultural markets work, as is well attested in the research literature.

In pursuit of its vision of creativity, the Department for Culture, Media and Sport in London – the DCMS - came up with 13 industries to fit the bill. The list was always arbitrary and continues to be so. For instance, it didn't include museums and galleries, visual arts, the printed press, book publishing or sport.

You might think – in light of the hullabaloo about the Olympics of London2012, which was so self-evidently harnessed to economic and urban regeneration and the projection of the UK worldwide as 'open for business' – that to omit sport from the defining features of the creative economy is very odd indeed.

At the heart of the official British vision of creativity have been the harnessing of culture to the growth of the national economy and a grandiose post-imperial

design to make the UK the 'world's creative hub'. We might also note that London2012 was rapidly (and superficially) interpreted in some quarters as a rediscovery of Britishness, of the rebirth of Ukania, to use Tom Nairn's ironic term. Dishing the nationalists in Scotland was one immediate follow-up unionist tactic after the Olympics. Such manipulations, however, are inherently open to a boomerang effect. With the Ryder Cup and the Glasgow2014 Commonwealth Games to come in the year of the independence referendum, we shall see the exactly same kind of instrumentalism used against the union.

Irrespective of the parties in power, the creative economy has moved increasingly to the centre of policy thinking in the UK. The Labour Party's last throw of the dice was a government report called *Creative Britain* published in 2008. It's really no coincidence that in 2007, the Japanese foreign ministry had already produced a pamphlet titled *Creative Japan*. Nor indeed that Japan was at the time developing a conception of the nation as a 'creator of content-based culture' as part of its Intellectual Property Strategic Programme. And if for one early millennial Blairite moment, something called 'Cool Britannia' was invented, so – just a bit later – was something called 'Cool Japan', based on the international marketing of cultural products. Questions have rightly been raised about the success of these strategies. But one fundamental logic remains in play - the tradability of intellectual property (IP) in cultural works and the contribution made by such trade to the national economy.

The echoes in Japan of British tropes are simply testimony to how creative economy thinking has become globalized, if adapted to each country's particular needs. And this movement – while not quite universal – has continued apace. In East Asia, during the past decade, both China and Korea have adopted creative economy strategies, and they are not alone in doing so. At a global level, it was in 2008 that the United Nations produced its *Creative Economy Report*, which advocated an IP-driven approach for all countries, at whatever stage of development.

Why has this happened? In the UK's case, part of the explanation at least, given

the sway of post-industrial, 'new economy' thinking, with its strong bias towards knowledge production and non-material goods and services, has been the quest by nations for new sources of profitability and competitive economic advantage.

In similar vein, the present attraction for the Edinburgh government of a creative economy is obvious, not least after the collapse of the banking system, concern about over-reliance on oil, and therefore needing to diversify Scottish sources of income generation. At the heart of the Scottish nationalist vision is the harnessing of culture to the growth of the national economy to contribute to the economic foundations of Scotland's independence.

There is a deep continuity with present UK policy and also with Scotland's own earlier coalition governments. One way of looking at this is that Scottish cultural policy is in fact a scaled-down version of British cultural policy. This parallelism also extends to policy on communications infrastructure where the quest to build a digital Scotland with world-class capacity once again echoes another of the former Labour government's themes, first embodied in the 2009 report titled *Digital Britain*. This aspiration is also coalition government policy in London.

Many different sources have come together from sociological and economic thinking to create the present policy framework that so dominates everywhere. In the UK – and therefore Scotland – creative economy thinking came about through two mutations hidden deep in the heartlands of social theory. It began in 1947 with a critique of the so-called culture industry by the Frankfurt School theorists, Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer. It then shifted from critique into leftwing policy analysis in the 1960s and 70s through the work of French and British critical political economists. And then it was reworked in the 1990s through the thinktankerati of New Labour into more or less what we have now.

In concluding this contribution, I would like to briefly sketch two cases that illustrate quite concretely the complexities and difficulties of making cultural policy in Scotland.

This week, it would be hard for anyone north of the Border – perhaps even for the alert visitor - to ignore the major row that has broken out about Creative Scotland. The central focus of media coverage has been a letter first signed by more than 100 artists accusing the agency of ‘ill-conceived decision-making; unclear language; lack of empathy and regard for Scottish culture’ and much else besides. Arguments between creatives and agencies are not unusual but on this occasion maybe we need to look at the impact of creative economy thinking on Creative Scotland’s organizational architecture.

Creative Scotland was formed out of two predecessor organisations. The Scottish Arts Council and Scottish Screen. Its structure was intended to make a break with the previous model and was based in a critique of traditional arts funding, where it was held that relations of dependency had developed between arts officers and their clients. A new relationship was conceived, mediated by a new-style officer, the portfolio manager, who would not ‘own’ a piece of cultural territory or work in a ‘silo’ and who could therefore evade capture by art-form interest groups.

Creative Scotland was therefore conceived as a new prototype of the cultural agency: an investor rather than a funder, the leader of a number of partners sharing risks and finance. The blueprint for the organization drew on the DCMS’s ideas about the creative industries as well as those of the innovation think-tank, NESTA. The then culture minister, Mike Russell, recognized the tensions between entrepreneurial and cultural approaches but thought them to be reconcilable. My view is that fundamental conflicts about cultural value cannot be wished away and that is what is presently fuelling the row, amongst other things. We shall see how this matter will be resolved.

My second example is broadcasting, whose future is also quite an open question. Whereas Creative Scotland is a two-year-old invention of the Scottish Parliament, the BBC was established in 1927 by a Royal Charter and is a fundamental institution of Britishness, with a Scottish dimension in the shape of BBC Scotland.

I will spare you the convoluted history. But ever since 2007, when the SNP first entered government at Holyrood, the quest for control over broadcasting has been on the agenda, first with a commission and then a panel set up to investigate the issue, occasioning several debates and committee inquiries in the Scottish Parliament. For five years, there has been a continuing struggle between unionists and nationalists over the scope of broadcasting policy: on the one side, there's the desire to keep it reserved to Westminster; on the other, there's the determination to repatriate it to Scotland, even within the terms of the devolution settlement.

The initiative has lain with the nationalists, who have consistently argued for the creation of a separate public service broadcaster in Scotland, controlled by the Scottish Parliament. The argument has been deeply connected to the creative economy (more Scottish production) to national identity (more representations of Scottishness) and also politics (more focus on Scotland's public sphere).

This proposal to create a publicly funded Scottish Digital Network within the devolved settlement – using part of the Television Licence Fee - has been either blocked or entirely ignored by London politicians. And now the debate has moved on in some respects. The most recent, dramatic, turn in the story came at the Edinburgh International Television Festival this August. Alex Salmond, Scotland's First Minister, proposed the break-up of the BBC on independence, with the BBC's Scottish assets to be taken over by the new Scottish state. This leaves open many complex questions to which we are promised some answers next year. It is dream territory for the policy analyst if not a nightmare for the policy-maker.

And there, madam chairman, I shall conclude. Thank you all for your attention.

