



Keynote:

After the Creative Industries: Cultural Policy in Crisis

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ABSTRACT

This paper unifies and articulates a series of debates that brought together the Global Cultural Economy Network (GCEN), an informal group of policy experts currently attempting to re-frame international policies on culture and economy. Directed by the author, the Network is critical of the rhetoric on the creative industry/ economy agenda as routinely used by policy makers and public officials, at local, national and international levels (by UNCTAD, WIPO and UNESCO, among others). Subjecting key terms in this rhetoric to scrutiny, this article considers the historical evolution of the 'culture-economy' nexus, and observes that even where the arts and culture have evidently benefitted from their cooption into mainstream public policy agendas, the current dominant and now popular discourse of 'creative economy' is problematic. The article sets out the dilemma by considering the various policy trends involved in this cooption -- from creative industries to creative cities -- and how advocates for the arts and culture have all too easily accommodated the re-orientation of culture for the production of economic value. The article argues that dominant policy trends have marginalised the social character of culture and so its unique forms of productivity, and have generated an obfuscation of the broader political imaginary that has divested cultural policies of their facility for inspiration and alternative futures.

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Introduction

This paper, more polemic or manifesto than scholarly exegesis, was written for a meeting of the Global Cultural Economy Network (GCEN), an informal group of policy experts concerned to help re-frame current debates around culture and economy. In the last decade or so that relationship has been predominantly configured under the agenda of 'creative industries' and later 'creative economy'. The GCEN coalesced in the belief that whatever new insights, dynamics and policy constituencies were generated by the creative industry/ economy agenda, it seems now to have become dysfunctional for, even destructive of, a progressive future for cultural policy. This is not just a Northern hemisphere but a global crisis.

Though this paper, in a rudimentary form, was initially addressed to a specific meeting, the 'we' that it uses nonetheless needs some explaining. The GCEN is an informal – potentially 'activist' – group with no 'official line'. Indeed this paper was precisely an attempt to create a GCEN 'we' by using this statement of position as a central text around which the meeting was to be organised. Could we, as a group, accept this as a broad statement of where we stood? As it transpired, the meeting – at Tilburg University, The Netherlands – did not take place (at least in the form in which it was intended) and this text awaits a future meeting – face-to-face or virtual – in which this 'we' can be more formally brought into existence. Nonetheless, this paper has benefited enormously from the two meetings that preceded it (in Shanghai, and Prato, Italy), and the emailed comments that a prior draft had received. And of course, knowing the immediate audience had shaped its arguments and rhetoric as it would any attempt to actively persuade and enlist a specific group of people.

Which brings me to the second aspect of the 'we'. For though intending to bring a small informal 'we' into existence, the possibility of that act of persuasion was crucially dependent on establishing the existence (real and potential) of a larger 'we' to which, and hopefully for which, we could (eventually) speak. This 'we' is an imagined community, or more accurately perhaps, a rather ramshackle 'epistemic community', around culture and economy that emerged along multiple tributaries in the 1980s and 1990s. An epistemic community can be defined as 'a

network of professionals with recognized expertise and competence in a particular domain and an authoritative claim to policy-relevant knowledge within that domain or issue-area' with one of its features being 'a common policy enterprise, or a set of common practices associated with a set of problems to which their professional competence is directed, presumably out of the conviction that human welfare will be enhanced as a consequence.'¹

This aptly describes the emergent, transnational policy community of cultural (and later creative) industries and cultural (and later creative) cities experts in the 1990s – primarily in Europe, North America and Australia, and increasingly in Latin America, South Africa and East Asia. It emerged from older cultural policy formations – most significantly perhaps the UN 'culture and development' discourse – as well as from the academic traditions of political economy of the media, economic geography, cultural studies and critical cultural policy studies. These in turn were responding to the complex set of contested transitions from a 'Fordist' welfare state system to something else – a 'knowledge' or 'creative' or 'information' or 'post-industrial' or 'post-scarcity' or even 'post-modern' society. However interpreted, this moment of transition was seized as an opportunity for change encapsulated by an 'imaginary' in which culture and economy were to come together in new and positive ways.

Its members were consultants and consultant-practitioners, local and regional government officers, cultural space managers, directors of large cultural institutions, academics and representatives of national (British Council, Goethe Institute, etc.) and transnational cultural agencies (UNESCO, Ford Foundation, European Commission, etc.). Their emergent community was extended and consolidated across a series of conferences, networks, research contracts and practical projects. It constituted, in its formative years at least, a kind of mobile trans-local scene, temporarily convening and reconvening in various 'creative clusters', art spaces and conferences centers. This loose epistemic community can be described as an 'activist' one. It was not just a group of policy-oriented professionals seeking to push 'a common policy enterprise'. Its relatively marginal status, its claims to present the voice of an emergent constituency, its need to

¹ Haas, P.M. (1992) 'Epistemic Communities and International Policy Coordination', *International Organization*, Vol. 46, No. 1: 1–35: 3

challenge existing settings in order to clear a space for itself – all these brought it close to the kinds of 'cultural social movements' that had marked (especially) urban activism since the protests of the 1960s.

Its not-quite-recognized field of expertise benefited enormously from the UK government's 'creative industries' brand and, in turn, this transnational epistemic community was partly responsible for the unexpected (by the UK government at least) success of this policy across the globe. Since that time, the community has extended its reach and recruited new members globally as national governments have sought to promote this agenda, as have agencies such as UNCTAD, WIPO and of course, UNESCO. The latter, gradually building momentum around its work to ratify and promote the 2005 *Convention for the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions*, has taken a lead in the linking of culture to development, but using the cultural/ creative economy notion to give a new inflection to this agenda. One of the questions this paper raises concerns the costs incurred by this mainstreaming of an activist practice. This is not about 'selling out', rather it is about interrogating the conditions within which this mainstreaming took place.

The 'we' then is exploratory, a work-in-progress, a gamble. I called this epistemic community 'ramshackle' as it was made up of a disparate group of people operating on the margins of an already pretty marginal cultural policy constituency. Its concern to combine culture and economy gave it a certain cohesion and self-consciousness, and also provided the rhetorical strategy by which it sought increased centrality in policy. Does such an epistemic community still exist and can it be interpellated along the lines of our appeal here? What residual meaning does the word 'culture' retain after its systemic replacement by 'creative' as an all encompassing good? Perhaps the failure – after years of lobbying by the most powerful international agencies in the field of cultural policy – to get 'culture' anywhere near the list of re-iterated Sustainable Development Goals (now the Millennium Development Goals came to an end in 2015) might be the jolt necessary to create a 'we', for a moment at least. This failure attests to the further diminution of the 'culture and development' agenda as it does to the hubris of the 'creative economy' that was to transport us all to the heart of the policy-making process. Beyond that –

and this is the subject of this paper – the failure speaks to a serious, perhaps terminal, crisis of the cultural policy settings that emerged in the twenty or so years after 1945.

This paper then is not an attempt to give a detailed account – 'the way it really was' – of this ramshackle epistemic community, nor of the period in which it saw itself as ascendant. 'To articulate the past historically...means to seize hold of a memory as it flashes up at a moment of danger'; seizing such a memory-in-danger, Walter Benjamin continues, helps us to 'deliver tradition anew from the conformism which is on the point of overwhelming it' and to set 'alight the sparks of hope from the past'.² This is one attempt to signal a moment of danger, and to suggest some hope without which, *pace* Deleuze, we will never forge new weapons.³

Culture and Economy: Elective Affinities or Reconciliation under Duress?

We should be mindful of the changed circumstances of today, compared to eighteen years ago when the UK government launched its *Creative Industries Mapping Document*. That policy moment built on twenty years of work around the cultural industries (and culture-led urban regeneration) and was welcomed by many (including many of us) as culture's arrival at a more powerful negotiating table. One widely quoted description of this is from John Hartley:

The creative industries idea brought creativity from the back door of government, where it had sat for decades holding out the tin cup for arts subsidy – miserable, self-loathing and critical (especially of the hand that fed it), but unwilling to change – around to the front door, where it was introduced to the wealth-creating portfolios, the emergent industry departments, and the enterprise support programmes. Win, Win.⁴

We suggest that few would nowadays share the cloudless optimism of this highly revealing statement. After a decade at the front door many are concerned with what they jettisoned from the good

² Walter Benjamin (1938) *Twelve Theses on the Philosophy of History*. Thesis VI.

³ "There is no need to fear or hope, but only to look for new weapons". Gilles Deleuze (1992) "Postscript on the Societies of Control," *October* 59 (Winter): 4.

⁴ John Hartley (2005) 'Introduction' in Hartley, J. ed. *The Creative Industries*, London: Sage:

old days at the back door. One thing stands out loud and clear: a condition of creativity's grand entrance seems to have been that it dropped its embarrassing links to art and culture. Creativity became tongue-tied as it was forced to speak the language of growth, innovation and economic metrics. Despite this, since 2008 it has been increasingly deemed a luxury superfluous to requirements. Ushered out of the grand entrance its supporters are now dismayed to find that the back door has now shrunk to a porthole. Lose, lose.

This situation could be a path to cynicism or a return to pure art and 'intrinsic' value. The GCEN wishes to take neither.

We acknowledge the embrace of popular, everyday and commercial cultures outside the narrow field of the subsidised 'arts', giving dynamism and radical energy to the cultural policy debates of the 1980s and 1990s. So too we recognise the inevitable intersection of economic and cultural value consequent on the rapid expansion of education, leisure and spending power; aspirations to 'non-material values' amongst large sections of the population; the proliferation of new and globalising information and telecommunications infrastructures; the increased importance of the service sector in generating profit, taxes and wages; the opening up of spaces for self-employment and micro-businesses; and the growing emphasis on knowledge and information as central to productivity growth in post-industrial economies.

However, we differ from the 'win, win' approach by also recognising that the great expansion of cultural participation, consumption and aspiration has not resulted in the kinds of economic transformation heralded by the prophets of creative economy. Alongside the millennial promise of the creative economy have come higher levels of inequality and exclusion; cuts to art and culture budgets; cuts to arts education; persistent un- and under-employment, increased precarity and (self-) exploitation; greater global conglomeration coupled with an ability to cherry-pick local winners early; integrated material and logistic production chains and a new international division of cultural labour: all of this written under the aegis of an economic rational that increasingly excludes any values other than those set by 'growth' and 'efficiency'.

We do not want to paint an excessively gloomy picture, simply to correct the breathless optimism against which critics are positioned as elitist,

backward looking Luddites. We want to identify what is at stake in the creative economy agenda and how we might make good on some of its promises. For example, one crucial development in the last decade has been the proliferation of the creative economy agenda outside those post-industrial heartlands that it was initially intended to benefit. East Asia was an early adopter, as its governments sought a way up the value-chain. Africa has rapidly followed as various international programmes have proselytised for the benefits of the creative economy in leap-frogging (as with mobile phones and landlines) straight to the post-industrial. Other Middle Eastern, South Asian and Latin American countries are gearing up for the same.

This proliferation has re-introduced much dynamism into the agenda, as well as exposing the kinds of preconceptions and hidden agendas of a western-centric creative economy in the manner of previous modernisation and development programmes. Is the creative economy an escalator taking us all to the Western model, or might there be another route, to a different place?

Policy-wise, a number of creative economy models have emerged. First, and most visible, was what can be viewed as a 'industry policy lite' of the UK and Australia, adopted in different ways by much of Northern and parts of Southern Europe. If the creative economy is about bottom-up, creative innovation amongst networks of entrepreneurs and SMEs, then the best policy approach is simply to get out of their way. This could effectively mean more training, enterprise support, workspace and building cultural (usually arts-based) facilities. Second, might be the East Asian model, where governments applied their successful state-led growth strategy to the creative sector, providing high levels of investment to selected domestic companies charged with learning from the established players and promised protected access to the new domestic markets they create. Levels of investment in these latter dwarf those of the former. Third, and mostly invisible, has been that found in the US and to some degree in Japan and even India. Long established industries with access to large markets (in the US case global markets) rely on intensified IP legislation and the power of locked in distribution networks to do the work of policy for them. Fourth, we have a range of small-scale initiatives aimed at developing basic skills amongst local cultural producers, assembling basic infrastructures and markets to allow craft, communal

and proto-professional activities to become self-sufficient and income earning. Finally, and often parallel to these models (sometimes initiating them), there is a broad field of area-based development strategies, using infrastructures of culture and creativity to try and reposition locations (quarters/cities/regions) more strongly on emerging creative and/or tourism markets.

In reality, the policy landscape – if we view it across its local, national and regional scales – is often a complex weave of many or all of these approaches. This landscape in turn is marked by the active, preserved or crumbling remains of existing cultural policy strategies, often desperately trying to adjust to a diversifying and/or market oriented cultural reality. Equally there have been some great successes and inspiring initiatives. We are not aiming to level the policy landscape to some all-encompassing logic of globalisation or neo-liberalism. Nor do we claim to have all the answers to the open question of the future. The field is neither uniform nor unilinear.

What we do claim is that the conceptual framework and narrative provided by the creative economy is no longer a viable guide.

Instead we suggest the adoption of the term 'cultural economy' and seek below to outline what kind of agenda that might announce. In short, cultural economy does not refer, as does *cultural economics* to *the economy of culture*, as a distinct system underpinning the production of cultural value(s). It refers to the intersection of cultural and economic values across the full range of practices and institutions involved in cultural production. It suggests first, that culture articulates – in its production and consumption – values that cannot be reduced to economic value, even though it is *productive* of economic value.

Second, that the values of culture should be brought to bear on how its own economy of production, distribution and consumption is (and might be) organised, because this deeply affects the kind of culture we get.

Third, somewhat more radically, that cultural value, rather than having to constantly translate itself into economic value, has an important voice in how the economy itself might be re-framed, and thus provide a major contribution to re-thinking the challenges facing a global society of the 21st Century. As Chris Gibson put it, cultural economy 'resonates well with the imminent requirement that we question current, unsustainable economic practices –

requiring, I would argue, a bolder sense of the rightness/ wrongness of forms of production and commoditisation'.⁵

Why the Creative Economy has become an Obstacle to Change

Creative Economy is not some neo-liberal conspiracy, nor is it simply about governments looking for a quick buck. As we said above, the 'imaginary' of the creative economy has complex roots in the developments of the last four decades. There is no denying the energies it generated and corralled as it made its way rapidly around the globe in the early 21st century. The value of the term 'creative economy' has been presented in terms of:

- moving away from an emphasis on art and heritage to more contemporary cultural activities;
- focusing more on SMEs and start-ups rather than big corporations and institutions;
- linking culture to new digital technologies of production and communication;
- encouraging us to see audiences as active participants rather than passive recipients;
- opening a bridge between culture, art and science;
- re-orienting policy to the economic dimensions of culture;
- positioning culture as an essential part of a wider creativity in society;
- positioning culture therefore as crucial to the 'next stage' in economic evolution to a knowledge-intensive, creative economy and society.

Taken individually and collectively these are important values not to be dismissed or trivialised. They are combined and emphasised in different ways such that the specific meaning and rhetorical weight of 'creative economy' will be different, and have different uses, in different local contexts. For some in this network it is still seen to provide useful policy traction, and many people still hold onto the sense of a new kind of culture and a new kind of economy that it promises.

However, we would suggest that the dominant tendency has not been the 'culturalisation of the

⁵ Gibson, C. (2011) 'Cultural Economy: achievements, divergences, future prospects', *Geographical Research*, 50:3:1-10, p.6.

economy'⁶ nor a marriage of equals but the ever-increasing reduction of cultural values to those provided by 'the economic'.

Creative economy discourse uses the powerful charge of cultural and artistic practice – affect, innovation, aesthetic imagination, situated iterative creation, the protean dynamics of the lifeworld – but fastens them directly to economic growth. Though it claims to be rethinking that economy in the light of culture and creativity, it instead strip-mines creativity out from the lifeworld in which it was embedded. In this sense rather than re-embedding economic activity in social and cultural life, the creative economy disembeds and commodifies a whole new range of practices previously thought to be distinct from, even opposed to, the economy.

This entails more than 'just' an instrumentalisation of culture. It implies fundamental shifts in the ways in which 'the cultural' is imagined, valued, positioned and legitimated, together with the time-spatial frames concerned. For example, where culture and the arts were approached from the perspective of the *longue durée*, as a source of utopia, inspiration and alternative futures, now they are forced to focus on the next 'product-market cycle'. Similarly, the promotion of creativity and innovation as the central function of culture has **systemically marginalized other core benefits of culture** – individual and collective expression and identity building, celebration, tradition, aesthetic pleasure and entertainment, social cohesion, democratic citizenship, self-development and education in common.

The endless definitional problems of the creative industries (what is included; what marks them off from other sectors; what makes them the same as or different from 'cultural'; whether they are co-terminus with 'the digital', and so on) that has dogged this agenda across the globe and continues to prevent any clear agreement derives from precisely this process of disembedding. In order to be made amenable to standard forms of economic analysis and policy cultural or symbolic meaning needed to be objectified as an 'input' – creativity – and an 'output' – the production of jobs and products – fitting existing administrative-sectoral policy and accounting routines and procedures. This dis-/reembedding not only resulted in definitional terms so broad as to defeat statistical precision

⁶ Lash, S. and Urry, J. (1994) *Economies of Signs and Space*, Sage, London: 123.

(what, prey, is *not* creative?) it accelerated a further shift from 'the cultural' towards more general notions of 'the creative' as a central organising concept.

'Creativity', when used loosely, disconnected from the artistic and cultural practices to which most versions of it have traditionally referred, can be applied to any professional activity that requires situated skills and intelligent judgement. As a consequence the lines drawn between a 'creative sector' and other high skilled sectors can only be arbitrary – as the list of sectors frequently included by East Asian countries indicates (R&D, Bio-tech; business consulting, automobile design and so on). This is often glossed as the 'opening up' of creativity – mobilising bio-political resources for a knowledge economy and democratising a capacity previously locked up in art for art's sake. In fact it makes the identification and characterisation of a specific 'creative' sector very difficult without surreptitiously using – and at the same time disavowing – the notion of 'culture'.

Creative economy has not only reduced much of cultural value to a useful input into growth and innovation but has produced systematic confusion as to what the cultural/ creative 'sector' actually does and how it does so. A recent announcement by Park Geun-hye, the President of South Korea, that automobiles were a creative industry – linking it to the marketing capacity of local galleries, theatres and folk performances – represents the *reductio ad absurdum* of this agenda.⁷

Why do we continue to promote the Creative Economy?

He has found the Archimedean point but has used it against himself. Evidently this is the condition necessary to finding it. (Kafka).⁸

There were always good tactical reasons for those in the arts and cultural sector to join in with the creative economy discourse. In the face of real or perceived cuts to the public funding of arts and culture since the 1980s, a central tactic of many cultural agencies and advocacy groups was to argue

⁷ <http://www.korea.net/NewsFocus/Policies/view?articleId=125217> (accessed 7 October, 2015)

⁸ Franz Kafka (Trans. Joyce Crick) 'Aphorisms', in *A Hunger Artist and Other Stories*, Oxford World Classics: 201.

for the economic importance of culture in various registers. Get to the negotiating table by any means necessary and then you can make the more nuanced points. In the time-honoured fashion of artists and arts organisations, one must talk the talk, tick the boxes, get the money. Because the essential goal is to get finance for culture – which can only be a good thing!

çThe creative economy appeared to many as only the latest in the long line of economic justifications for public funding, and needed to be used as such. However, many have found that once at that negotiating table the language used to get there becomes a trap. There is no longer any space to talk about the other values of culture – or at least only as an optional add-ons. Instead there were growing demands for impact metrics and other forms of measurable outcome for culture. And even if these were found they provided little guarantee against being de-funded once the crunch came.

What this indicates is not just a tactical failure – a belated recognition of the price paid for hitching a ride on the train of creative economy – but a wider crisis in cultural value. The public (policy) space in which art and culture could articulate a distinct set of values has been radically attenuated.

This has implications, even for many governments who retain a sense of culture as part of 'civilisation' or national identity, and whose milieu and personal preferences are for the elite arts. Though they want to promote the arts they lack any overarching justification for this funding other than 'excellence', city branding or national 'soft power'. It has been even more difficult for those who hold to a more progressive view of cultural democracy, where cultural policy extends beyond the arts and takes into account popular culture, the media, urban planning, or community development. The cultural ambitions associated with these have been sidelined in favour of their economic impact. The trajectory from the culture-led re-invention of the post-Fordist city in the 1980s to the consumption-led promotion of the lifestyle of the creative class is a case in point.

In pointing out the collapse of the creative economy agenda into a relentless economic reductionism we cannot ignore the promise of a new kind of culture and a new kind of economy which persisted in the economic and cultural 'imaginary' of the creative economy. Therefore, we do not choose a retreat into the 'pure' value of art and culture as if the cultural industries and creative economy had

never existed.

A second kind of tactical approach then tries not simply to pay lip service to the language of creative economy in order to get money for an 'art and culture' whose value is taken for granted. This approach attempts to fully engage with the economy of culture and follow the logic of their mutual intersection. In short it suggests that any effective policy for the creative economy, one that is adequate to the way the creative economy actually works – with its range of non-economic values and motivations, its social and cultural embeddedness etc. – would *inevitably* have to be a cultural as well as economic policy. We might say it is a *Trojan horse*, cultural policy hidden inside the exterior frame of an economic policy. This has been, perhaps, one of our main ways of getting to the negotiating table.

In this approach, the creative sector is the benign future face of a new creative economy in which the values of quality, experience, aesthetics, meaningful work, anti-hierarchical networks, relations of respect and trust (not domination and exploitation) might be realised. In responding to these, governments at all scales would need a new relation to the sector, one that would transform the parameters of that governance. Here the economic argument does not just set out to get funding for culture by any means necessary, but tries to re-think what an economic policy for culture might be. Get that policy right for the creative economy and we get a bottom-up transformation of economy, culture and polity. The economic importance of the creative economy is a lever for wider social and political transformation.

One of the problems of this approach is that these progressive cultural/ creative economy arguments have studiously ignored the overarching 'economic imaginary' in which they have been set. Governments have sought primarily economic *results* from the creative economy. Using this as leverage many have tried to give it progressive cultural content as part of any effective operationalization. There have been successes. However, we are all aware of how these well-constructed creative economy policies have been constantly limited, or truncated, or high-jacked, or left high and dry. This is not (just) local cases of stupidity or sabotage, or the necessarily compromised nature of the world: fundamentally, we have failed to challenge the overall economic imaginary in which cultural and creative economy policies have been caught. In going along with the economic argument at the expense of

cultural value – with whatever good intentions – the dominant ground has been ceded. The bottom line remains.

A third approach has been to annex the creative economy's evolutionary narrative for the purposes of culture. This is part of that millennial narrative of the 'new' economy that has been associated with Silicon Valley and what has been called the 'Californian ideology'.⁹ It has been combined with Maslow's 'hierarchy of needs' and various post-materialist, post-scarcity theories in which the next stage of historical evolution will complete the climb from agriculture, through industry, services, to 'creativity' and (sometimes) culture. It runs through a lot of policy on sustainable development, in which culture is a necessary accompaniment to an otherwise inevitable and uncontroversial programme of economic growth.

Funding for culture then can only help the transition to the next stage, which itself will usher in a new world of culture and creativity. 'Win, win'. This creative millenarianism, not only runs disturbingly close to that of the libertarian, techno-utopian, innovation-fetish of the 'Californian Ideology', but in its fixation on the new ignores the real historical novelty of a society which can only satisfy its cultural needs as a form of consumption *after* the economic hard labour has been done. And it is never done. It seeks to embed 'culture' into everyday life in ways that are anathema to cultures – such as indigenous Australians – that still remember what this is really like. It is, in fact, a call to dissolve the final unoccupied remnants of the lifeworld into the circuits of consumer capitalism.

The questions we ask as a network, therefore, include the following:

- Have we reached the end of a certain kind of tactical approach to squeezing in culture 'through the back door' of economy?
- Have we, in the meantime, ignored and undermined other, older arguments for culture?
- In wrapping culture up in economics, have we, in fact, failed to understand how arguments for, and understandings of, culture, might have moved on?

- In focusing on culture's contribution to the economy have we ignored the continuing necessity for culture's critique of economy?
- Would engaging in such a critique simply expel us from the negotiating table as 'unworldly', or are there other alliances at that negotiating table that culture could be making in order to help move us on from the current situation?

What can we draw from older values for culture?

There are other values associated with culture that do not register within the accounts of the creative economy.

Culture is an economy. It provides jobs, profits, royalties and tax revenue; it deals with contracts, intellectual property law, employment legislation, market regulation, stock market flotation, health and safety, budget reporting; it involves actors from the public and private sectors – local and global, large, medium and small, institutions and entrepreneurs. It is in this sense that the system of culture is sometimes called an industry or economic sector.

But culture is not an industry 'like any other'. Those involved in its production seek other values alongside the maximization of profit or income, just as its users seek other benefits than satisfaction of economic needs. Culture's public benefits certainly include employment and wealth creation and the contribution to city branding or innovation effects and so on. However, the core benefits of culture – those on which its value must be judged – concern individual and collective expression and identity building, celebration, tradition, aesthetic pleasure and entertainment, social cohesion, democratic citizenship, self-development and education in common.

Culture, taken in the standard terms of an economic sector, might be better seen not as a cutting-edge innovation machine but as a complex service sector, providing public sector services and infrastructure, as well as a range of producer and consumer services for the commercial manufacturing, agriculture and other service sectors. Painted in its broadest terms as 'culture, sport and leisure' – along the lines of the 2009 UNESCO statistical framework, which includes sport and tourism – this sector can account for 20% of GDP in

⁹ Barbrook, R. and Cameron, A. (1996) 'The Californian Ideology', *Science as Culture*, Vol. 6, No.1: 44-72.

advanced economies.¹⁰ The creative economy agenda has little to say from this perspective, built as it is on the out-dated nature of public services and a focus on the digital start-up economy as the face of the future.

Culture, along with health and education, as a public value is a crucial component of that system of modern nation-state governance developed across the course of the 19th and 20th centuries in Europe and America. It has been extended across the globe since 1945, though of course it has taken different forms. In this sense whilst culture is clearly an economy – as are health and education – it still retains its links to public goals and values. It is these latter that have been radically challenged by both neo-liberalism and the creative economy discourse.

Culture is more than a vector of productive creativity but is an extension of citizenship, requiring not just the right to freedom of expression but also the material means to fully participate in cultural expression, production and exchange (including education, infrastructure, satisfaction of basic needs, access to open markets). This is expressed clearly in the 2005 UNESCO Convention, and in the work of Amartya Sen¹¹ and Martha Nussbaum,¹² who have extended the discourse of human rights into that of a series of 'capabilities' to which all individuals should have access.

Culture has also been seen as a space of critique, dissent and even fragmentation. Culture emerged as a distinct sphere in Europe and America only towards the end of the 18th century, along with the new category of 'art'. Art and aesthetics have a complex relationship to culture – sometimes elided into art-and-culture, sometimes set against culture as everyday life, non-elitist or non-professional. This tension of art and culture is part of an ongoing one within modernity between culture as the logic of communal belonging, and indeed governmentality, and art as the free play of a creative individual. Art and Culture have been used for nation building, for the construction of 'imagined communities', and for constructing and governing ideal citizens.

At the same time art and culture have provided a key historical site in which more individual questions, deeply rooted in modernity, as to how authentic

experience possible, in what does it consist, how does the self work on the self and to what ends?

There are persistent tensions between communal identities and subjective difference. As William Ray puts it: culture,

...tells us to think of ourselves as being who we are because of what we have in common with all the other members of our society and community, but it also says we develop a distinctive particular identity by virtue of our efforts to know and fashion ourselves as individuals.¹³

Within this zone of tension, art and artists have attempted to legitimize themselves in terms of an ongoing search for new sources of meaning, of imagery, of expression, in an ambivalent relationship to functional criteria of profit, pleasure, the social, based on a professional mastering of the materiality of text, image, sound, the performative. The creative economy discourse actively embraces the persona of the avant-garde, iconoclastic artist as a cipher for a putative Schumpeterian entrepreneur-driven creative destruction. However, critique was not derived from the persona of the artist (at least not until modernism) but rather from the distinct space of a culture that was autonomous from, or represented a set of values different to, the logics of economy and administration. These values of free 'useless' creation, of the complete human, of unified expressive communities could be nostalgic compensation for a disenchanting modernity, or an active critique of a modern world that progressively denied such values and thus needed changing. In any event that which was art and culture had values not amenable to those of the market, of politics or established morality.

Culture was never simply autonomy: it became a way of articulating what it was to be 'human' in a more holistic or existential fashion than mainstream economic and political 'modernisation'. In its anthropological definition culture was the meaning system produced by groups of humans in interaction with place and history. In the 'culture and development' tradition, which strongly influenced UNESCO until recently, culture was used to critique unilinear and western centric models of development. These models had failed to acknowledge the specific cultural meaning and value

¹⁰ Piketty, T. (2014) *Capital in the Twenty-First Century*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press: 91

¹¹ Sen, A. (1999) *Development as Freedom*, New York: Knopf.

¹² Nussbaum, M. (2011) *Creative Capabilities. The Human Development Approach*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

¹³ Ray, W. (2001) *The Logic of Culture: Authority and Identity in the Modern Era*, Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell: 16.

systems in which specific groups of people lived their lives, and thus repeatedly either failed or succeeded only by destroying these cultures, leading to new problems. But alongside culture as *fact* was culture as *value*: culture here suggested the vital human importance of those forms of perception and meaning creation that took place outside the practices captured by economic metrics.

It is culture as value that is at stake at the present moment; culture as fact is now as much the province of developmental specialists, behavioural psychologists and 'change management' as it is cultural policy.

Culture, both autonomous and anthropological, has often been mapped onto the West (modern) and the Non-West (traditional). This distinction is no longer valid. Globally, culture stands for a set of meaningful values and practices that go beyond the abstract economic model of market-based efficiency that has now come to define 'the good life'. Pulling back a disembedded market system into a value system based on a broader notion of the common good is what many are asserting when they talk about the importance of culture in development or sustainability. In this 'creativity' has been a false friend. Promising a more human, more fulfilling, even exciting, route to economic growth it has succeeded in converting the lifeworld into 'the social factory'.

Culture's position of autonomy – always provision and contested – has been radically attenuated since the 1980s, from both inside and outside the cultural sphere.¹⁴ This is not just a question of the 'reduction' of culture to economics, as in the old charge of 'philistinism', but of the active penetration of economic value-creation into the heart of both autonomous and anthropological (or lifeworld) culture. A key thrust of neo-liberalism was the disenchantment of politics by economics – issues that should have been decided politically are turned into questions of economic 'efficiency' and rational calculation. Only in the last ten years, perhaps, have we become aware that this process has taken place within cultural (and indeed education and health)

policy. It is no coincidence that the replacement of 'culture' by 'creativity' by UK New Labour was accompanied by a demand for metric-based evidence that could stand up to the scrutiny of the treasury in the form of Return on Investment. This process has been well documented by Robert Hewison, for the UK.¹⁵ But, unlike that author, we simply cannot dismiss this as a collective fad of dumb politicians; it speaks of a crisis of cultural value – of the very language of cultural value – but this was a crisis of long standing, going back to the 1970s, perhaps earlier, and to which the 'creative industries' attempted to provide an answer.

Culture has certainly become much more central within policy, just as cultural policy concerns have become much more global. 'Culture' carries with it all these older strands of tradition, radical contestation and aspirations to change, which interleave in complex ways with the aspirations articulated by the 'creative economy'. This complex bundle of values is inevitably transformed, adapted and contested as they encounter the new dynamics and realities of a modernity that now reaches beyond its Euro-American iteration. This is only to be expected as a massive wave of urbanisation, dwarfing the great 19th century urban migrations of Europe and America, is catalysing an explosion of alternative modernities across Asia, Africa and Latin America.

The Creative Economy agenda has been a dominant voice in articulating how this global transformation of urban modernities and cultural production is to be understood and directed. We are suggesting that creative economy can no longer be allowed to act as such an organising imaginary. We urgently need to reframe our approach in a way that acknowledges the entanglement of culture and economics, but does so in a way that can allow us to be critically engaged with both dimensions and articulate cultural policy in terms amenable to the new aspirations and the languages, practices and technologies through which they are expressed and acted upon.

What do we mean by Cultural Economy?

To reiterate: the concerns of the GCEN are with the intersection between culture and economics, a complex and critical entanglement that we call cultural economy.

¹⁴ Many recent theorists have suggested that capitalism has lost any 'outside' – not just in the form of the Soviet Union and other socialist regimes, but also any values other than the market and profit. For many this has been to capitalism's detriment. It has spun out of control, resulting in the further commodification of land, labour, money and the environment, radically destabilising itself as it inverts the relationship between humans and the economy that is meant to serve its needs. After 20 years of creative economy thinking it would be ironic if the biggest contribution of culture to the economy turned out to be its critical refusal of that economic logic!

¹⁵ Hewison, R. (2014) *Cultural Capital. The Rise and Fall of Creative Britain*, London: Verso.

We must first acknowledge that for many people culture is a source of income, a way of making a living, through state and corporate funding, commercial practice, informal exchange and a range of local, national, global, business and consumer markets. That these opportunities should be supported and expanded, and that access to these opportunities be made as open and equitable as possible, is a basic tenet of this network.

As such, we do not see the market as in itself anathema to culture or cultural values. Whilst we assert the important role of non-economic values within the production and consumption of culture, we need to break away from the Aristotelian aloofness from economy as the realm of necessity. However, unlike the creative economy agenda, we also have to acknowledge the limits of markets in providing the only measure of, and route to, the 'good life'.

For its most vocal supporters the expansion of production and consumption opportunities *is* the creative economy. For these the promotion of creative entrepreneurs and their audiences/ markets in a way that grows the creative economy can only be good for culture. This emphasis on growth as the single legitimating rationale for creative production and consumption ignores the question as to why 'culture' is a good thing – what is its value to us as individuals, communities and nations?

For example, much of current media policy is based on the unchallenged goals of product proliferation ('more is always better') linked to the built-in obsolescence of delivery devices ('permanent upgrading') under the organising strategic objective of advertising ('delivering eye-balls'). There is no interest in the quality of this experience, of the possibility of less consumption, less choice. The state's role is simply to ensure efficient delivery – efficiency here defined not just in terms of technological capacity or the configuration of the private companies that deliver, but also as the aggregated 'efficient' choice of individual consumers. The act of purchase, framed within the legal-regulatory consumer protection laws set (mostly) by the state, is the only information required in this system. The question of cultural value is of no import, merely the remnants of elitism or state tutelage that has no place in the contemporary world. What is the reason – outside the news – for public broadcasting? What reason for cultural policy?

What reason for any values outside the act of purchase?

Once we raise the issue of the *cultural* value of the cultural economy then it becomes clear that questions of *how* the cultural economy is organised are crucial for *what* kinds of culture gets produced. The values we associate with culture are applicable to the equal opportunities for, and conditions of, cultural workers themselves. We also need to understand the ways in which funding streams, markets, contracts, laws, space, regulations, communications infrastructures and governance are organised. That is, the way the cultural economy is organised should be approached from the perspective of the public good (as well as the public goods) we expect from it.

Standard economic analysis, as in the important work of cultural economics, can help us understand the cultural economy, but it is limited. Standard neo-classical analysis has great difficulties in dealing with the kinds of cultural values at play in the production and consumption of culture or with the value of the public goods that are sought by states and civil society bodies. Cultural economics tends to accept the basic outline of neo-classical economics in outlining the formal exchange relations in the cultural economy, whilst acknowledging that there are other values at play amongst producers and consumers, as well as the right of the state to change these conditions by subsidy, tax-breaks etc. in order to secure these public goods.

We think this is no longer enough. First, cultural economics often ignores the ways in which neo-liberal economics has systematically attacked the grounds for anything but the most basic public goods. Oscar Wilde's famous formulation, 'the price of everything and the value of nothing' was made for a world in which economic and cultural value were seen as separate spheres. Hayek himself never intended his radical rethinking of the market to apply to the cultural realm. Since the 1980s markets and prices have been expanded to regulate all sections of social life – health, education, public administration and, finally, culture. Neo-liberal economics systematically denies any form of value that is not based on economic efficiency – that is, the best return to rational utility maximising consumers. If the subsidised arts can still maintain a distinction between its cultural values and the economic mechanisms with which its administrations and

marketing deal, the wider cultural economy simply cannot do this.

Second, in accepting many of the basic tenets of neo-classical economics, cultural economics provides a limited account of the values at play throughout the cultural economy. We cannot see the formal exchange relations governed by the laws of the market as a kind of parallel system running alongside or underneath cultural values. In many ways creative economy's attempt to dissolve this distinction is more prescient. However, as we have said, in dissolving this distinction creative economy reduces the public value of culture to that of economic productivity and growth, rather than opening a space for rethinking the interrelationship. Moreover, the ways in which the creative economy has invaded the shared and intimate spaces of the lifeworld, and sets out to reframe the identity of individuals under the code of 'creativity' make such a parallel system unworkable.

Cultural economy draws on the tradition of political economy, which produced much of the ground-breaking work on cultural and media industries in the 1970s through to the 1990s. This approach situated 'the economic' within its wider socio-historical context, refusing to see economics as either an autonomous system or *homo economicus* as providing a viable model of human behaviour and values. Political economy has links to those other approaches to cultural policy – the New World Information Order, and Culture and Development – which greatly influenced the work of UNESCO in the thirty years before the launch of creative economy.¹⁶

What has changed since that time is that the distinctiveness of cultural goods (public or otherwise) is no longer so easily accepted. That the market is the best means to allocate resources based on the revealed preferences of individual consumers is now a truth almost universally accepted. Those who suggest otherwise are deemed elitist or authoritarian (or both). In the 1980s, neo-liberalism was not concerned with culture as an economy (they were interested in the values underpinning enterprise and hard work). Since the 1990s neo-liberalism has systematically annexed the values of culture and creativity to its project, and creative economy has been central to this.

At the same time, practices of cultural production and consumption have proliferated beyond the large corporations and nation-state entities that formed the focus of political economy. We are now in the 'culture society', where aspirations to creative work, new forms of peer-to-peer distribution and sharing, and new forms of creative subjectivities have transformed the cultural landscape (though of course states and corporations are still there). Cultural economy attempts to register this more fluid interplay between economic and cultural value, as well as the distribution of proto-commercial production and consumption across the lifeworld of the social.

Cultural economy thus draws on work done by feminist, developmental and environmental economists and social scientists. These all try in different ways to expand/ contest the frame of what is formally described as economic activity. They seek therefore to register the role of, for example, domestic labour, or environmental damage, or socio-cultural meaning systems in underpinning/ undermining these formal economies. In so doing they have questioned the ability of neo-classical economics to exclude these aspects from the frame their formal models.

Cultural economy also draws on the work stemming from science studies and actor network theory (confusingly, also termed 'cultural economy'), and which tries to show how the 'economic' is a constructed entity. Here economics does not just have a limited or abstract model; it is performative. That is, it actively constructs that which it claims to describe. Economic analysis identifies a limited set of practices that are amenable to specific forms of measurement and analysis. The tools and the networks of actors that use these tools and validate the methods, thus produce the 'economy' as a distinct entity. We can think how the growing sophistication of techniques for measuring national economies in the 1920s and 1930s allowed the identification of a distinct national economy expressible in GDP and a range of other metrics.¹⁷ Through the elaboration of these tools and analytical frameworks, and through the provision of the necessary training and accreditation (business schools, MBAs, professional associations, and so on) actors are created whose behaviours and

¹⁶ Schech, S. and Haggis, J. (2000) *Culture and Development: A Critical Introduction*, Oxford; Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers.

¹⁷ Mitchell, T. (2005) 'The work of economics: how a discipline makes its world', *European Journal of Sociology* XLVI: 297–320.

understandings increasingly conform to those required by such an 'economy'.

The creative economy agenda, with its mapping documents, its repertoires of creative entrepreneurialism, its impact metrics and training workshops, has helped bring into being new policy actors who have the requisite persona and vocabulary for the pursuit of the liberating power of the market. However, as the (again rather confusingly named) neo-Marxist school of cultural political economy has argued, the economic is surely constituted culturally in some way, but it also has a logic that is outside the lifeworld, a systemic character that has an autonomy that cannot be abolished by exposing its historical and thus arbitrary foundations.¹⁸ This is even more so in that the contemporary finance-driven economy is based on hugely accelerated flows of signs, which are no longer symbolic in the linguistic sense but act directly – through digital machines and their human keepers – on material flows. These flows of information signs increasingly determine how cultural signs are produced and circulated with the global economy.¹⁹ These are new challenges for cultural analysis and cultural policy that are hardly yet being broached.

Cultural economy rejects the ontological distinction between economics and culture. If the economic is historically constructed as a distinct entity, dis-embedded from other forms of social life and values, then so too is culture. But unlike some writers, we do not see its historical contingency as a reason for disallowing the values it articulates. As writers as different to each other as Pierre Bourdieu and Jacques Rancière have argued, and as too did Raymond Williams, the historical genesis of the value of culture is both to be explained and to be valued as a gain, a site around which a democratic politics can be played out.²⁰ Recognising the historicity of culture attunes us to the fragility as well as the resilience of its value, and keeps us open to its changing forms.

We cannot see culture as the ontological space of value and meaning, as opposed to that of necessity or instrumentality. This is one of the drawbacks of

the 'culture as fourth pillar' approach. In simply adding the 'pillar' of culture to those of social, economic and environmental sustainability, we cannot be sure if it is to remain separate from these others or provide the ultimate ground of value and meaning for them. In the first case it leaves economy (and the social and the environment) as a separate sphere somehow apart from cultural value; in the second it provides the meta-foundation for these other three pillars. Neither of these is feasible or desirable.

We are not unsympathetic to this attempt. Here the traditional distinctness of the cultural sphere is being used to assert human values different from the dominating metrics of economic growth, or material indexes of social progress (or 'happiness'). It is simply that we do not think culture can be asserted in this way, as corrective or supplement, without at the same time directly challenging the system of the economy and how it is organised. What alternative approaches to economics have shown is how people's economic behaviours are inextricably wrapped up in other forms of value – family, communal, cultural, environmental – and which actively inform the dynamics and modalities of that system of exchange and the allocation of resources. All of these, ultimately, are implicated in cultural policy.

Karl Polanyi showed this over fifty years ago in his book *The Great Transformation*²¹ His account, reaching back to early European modernity, outlines how the activity of exchange was progressively dis-embedded from wider social practices and values. Its expansion into the dominant logic of the imperialist capitalist countries of Europe and North America not only produced a very narrow view of human practice and value but progressively subjected the basic attributes of human life to the abstract law of the commodity. With disastrous consequences. For Polanyi this meant fascism and totalitarian Communism. His revival has come as we face our own forms of impending disaster.

What the GCEN network is calling for are new languages, new concepts, new tools for understanding the values at play in the cultural economy, and how they can become effective at the level of policy. We do not have all the answers – by any means. What we do think is that reasserting

¹⁸ Sum, N-L. and Jessop, B. (2013) *Towards a Cultural Political Economy: Putting Culture in its Place in Political Economy*, Cheltenham: Edward Elgar.

¹⁹ Lazzarato, M. (2013) *Governing by Debt*, South Pasadena, CA: Semiotext(e).

²⁰ Bourdieu, P. (1996) *The Rules of Art*, London: Polity. Part III; Rancière, J. (2004) *The Politics of Aesthetics, The Distribution of the Sensible* (trans. Gabriel Rockhill), London: Continuum; Williams, R. (1984) *Culture*, London: Fontana.

²¹ Polanyi, K. (1957) *The Great Transformation: The Political and Economic Origins of Our Time*, Boston, MA: Beacon.

cultural value against the creative economy, holding it to the promises often buried in its narrative, will involve an engagement with the full range of economic, cultural, political and social practices involved in its production.

This task will involve the retrieval and re-invention of the language of cultural value in a new context. This assertion of cultural value needs to go beyond the cosy corner of 'the arts' into which it is frequently pushed, re-engaging again those concerns with media and communication, urban planning and the crisis of public and democratic values present in the political economy work of the 1970s and 1980s. The current moment is marked by an impasse between social democracy and neo-liberalism. The former has lost its tongue, the latter (dominant for the last 30 years) can be described as 'a dead man walking'. The links between cultural policy and social democracy are very strong; so too those between creative economy and neo-liberalism. Cultural economy seeks to explore a new policy agenda at a moment of impasse, but also one in which the world has been brought closer and made more multi-centred. The task now is less to give voice to this multiplicity than to listen to it.

Key areas the Cultural Economy policy needs to address

Industry policy: despite all the hype, very little has been done in terms of developing a concerted industry policy. Creative industries policies – with a few exceptions in East Asia – have been grotesquely underfunded given the tasks for which they are charged. Creative industry policy is often simply about skills training, a few showcasing events, and a space and place strategy that usually becomes driven by real estate. We certainly should explore the reasons for this gap between rhetoric and reality and argue for more and better targeted funding – but we need to bear in mind two aspects.

First, that if the cultural sector is not an industry like any other – if it involves multiple values at all levels of production and consumption – then what implications does that have for a cultural economy policy? What would an industry policy look like that also had cultural policy objectives? This ambition was there in the initial cultural industries approach (with Jack Lang during the Mitterrand Presidency in France, or the GLC, the Greater London Council closed by Prime Minister Thatcher in 1986). It has also been

there in various policies for national broadcasting systems. Can we learn from East Asian approaches that have tried to apply the top-down mechanisms so successful for them in other areas of industry policy, but with cultural values either instrumentalised (national characteristics as unique selling points) or bracketed out (assigned to a protected heritage culture)? And if these have limits – as is clear in China, for example – what lessons can we take from these that don't involve 'West is Best'?

Second, if we do introduce the question of cultural value into industrial policy then this cannot be simply a strategy for production – as Nicholas Garnham saw long ago.²² The market, the audience, the public and how they consume, access, participate, judge, learn, share and adapt has to be an essential part of an 'industrial' strategy. Production and consumption have to be seen as a whole in terms of cultural as well as economic value.²³

Third, a cultural economy policy has something to say about the way the cultural economy is organised – a point made clearly within the UNESCO 2005 Convention – but also on the way the 'economy' itself is conceived and valued.

Media policy: how can we re-unite cultural and media policies that, we suggest, have tended to diverge since the 1980s. Paradoxically, the foregoing point is contradicted by the level of investment in media policy, which was closely linked to, and then increasingly uncoupled from, public service broadcasting. Forces of globalisation, convergence and de-regulation, coupled with the expansion of the Internet and other communication technologies, have made media as cultural policy difficult but absolutely pressing. Media policy and practice was a central focus of the political economy of culture approach but it was always only tangentially related to the creative/ cultural economy debate. At international agency level it tended to be more concerned with media freedoms and the public sphere. Recent work within the framework of the UNESCO 2005 Convention – on digital media and public service media²⁴ – points to new intersections of the agenda for culture and media. We would

²² Garnham, N. (1990) 'Public policy in the cultural industries', in *Capitalism, and Communication: Global Culture and the Economics of Information*, Sage, London: 23–37.

²³ A point well made recently by Kate Oakley and Dave O'Brien (2015) *Cultural Value and Inequality: A critical literature review*, London: Arts and Humanities Research Council.

²⁴ See the UNESCO 2005 Convention Monitoring Report 2015 <https://en.unesco.org/creativity/monitoring-reporting>.

suggest that the issue of media policy as cultural economy policy needs addressing urgently.

Urban policy: so-called 'culture-led urban regeneration' was positioned as a replacement for old, dirty out-dated heavy industry, as well as a call for a radical re-thinking of the production-focused Fordist city-machine. In this it mobilised many of the cultural political aspirations of community arts, urban popular culture and the 'new left' cultural policy thinking of the likes of Jack Lang and the GLC. The creative economy re-charged its libido through the information and innovation economy agenda, exemplified by 'the digital' and the new 'start-up' economy is heralded. Neither of these have adequately addressed the multiple problems facing the post-industrial city, and in many ways have been complicit or exacerbated them.

On the other hand, the urban has been the site of detailed empirical work around the cultural economy, drawing on economic and industrial geography, as well as work explicitly badged under creative economy research. Equally, the success of Richard Florida's Creative Class thesis has begun a complementary process of mapping (and acquiring) urban cultural assets (often at the 'arts' end of the spectrum) that are set to work on rebooting the cultural consumption infrastructure and branding strategies of cities. This focus on both production and consumption has tended both to bifurcate – with strategies for one conducted in isolation from (or wrongly subservient to) strategies for the other – and to become separated from discourses of the value of the urban. By that we mean themes of citizenship and solidarity, collective meaning and identity, and the civilizational value of urbanity that enthused older generations of architectural and urbanistic planners and writers. The symbols of the Creative City, from the cool café district to the gleaming new startchitect-build eye candy, became uncoupled from the collective enterprise of living together in the city.

The consequences of this failure can be seen in the rapid emergence of the 'smart city' to replace that of the 'creative city'. The combination of social media, real time sensors and massive computing powers, have held out the promise that urban governments can bye-pass the 'social' and the 'cultural'. The enormous implications of these agendas, as well as the more democratic possibilities that they might also entail, has been missed by an

urban cultural policy agenda now thoroughly immersed in marketing strategies.

Art, Artists and Cultural Labour: Investigations into the conditions of cultural work now make up a extensive literature. The 'conditions of artists' is a long standing concern in cultural policy. But the extension of the cultural economy itself has brought new problems. The intersection of the cultural economy with new flows of global migration, finance and digital signs enabled by new communication technologies and international regulatory regimes have allowed new forms of the International Division of Cultural Labour to emerge. This raises questions of labour conditions and how these might be made more equitable, but these are in part dependent on the way in which cultural production is valued. This is not to make cultural workers a labour exception, simply to acknowledge the kind of under-employment, precarity and 'self-exploitation' found amongst this group are to be seen as an aspect of their pursuit of cultural value. Though employment legislation is crucial, part of the issue is about the wider social and economic context in which cultural producers (and consumers) live and work. That is, the question of cultural labour is also a question of cultural value – how we value cultural workers within the wider economy of culture.

The creative economy agenda caused a major shift in the way in which artists have to position and legitimise their work. Many feel the need to present their artistic ambition and curiosity in terms of economic and entrepreneurial correctness. This problem speaks to the changing nature – indeed the very possibility – of the contemporary space of the artist. What does this position now entail? What kind of 'calling' (vocation) might it represent in the light of the declining space and time for cultural labour to work autonomously.

Perhaps a cultural economy approach might be able to explore new ways of turning a representational curiosity or even playfulness back into something of a public value. This in turn points to a shift in the position of 'art' – an area which occupies the most ambiguous position vis-à-vis the creative economy. On the one hand it is heritage culture, a publicly subsidised 'market failure', somewhat elitist or nostalgic. On the other hand its practitioners provide a contemporary role model for the ideal creative self, its institutions spear-head urban regeneration projects and global city branding,

and its products act as synecdoche for a general atmosphere of creative innovation and blue sky R&D.

Identifying the changing valence of art, the arts, creativity and the cultural economy lies at the heart of the current challenge for cultural policy, as we outline below.

Culture and Sustainability: it is often assumed that culture and sustainability go together. In part this relates to the idea that social and economic development rooted in culture is more reflective of human values and the lifeworld that sustains these, and thus provides space for the conservation and nurturing of culture with a view to future generations. At the same time it is assumed that as culture affirms human values that, if not set against are at least distinct from the purely commercial, then they provide a space in which the human and environmental degradations generated by unrestrained development can be countered and attenuated. It is on these grounds that cultural and environmental sustainability agendas have been seen as natural allies both philosophically and as practical policy.

However, set against this are some of the realities of the cultural economy: 'No digital without copper' is a phrase we might use by way of pointing to the huge environmental impact of the digital economy, from the mines of Indonesia and the heat-generating data centres in Utah, to the piles of discarded metal-and-plastic hardware in whatever country agrees to take them. In addition, it is frequently overlooked that one of the main platforms of the creative economy, and that of the 'pre-digital' cultural industries, was that these new growth sectors would form a new post-industrial economy based on a non-utilitarian consumption which, because it was non-utilitarian, was expandable *ad infinitum*. The goods and services involved in this creative economy demand material and energy resources that are by no means negligible. The shift to the digital has not attenuated such processes as the 'thingification of the media,'²⁵ the attachment of images to objects in the form of a range of cultural goods that are fully participant in that huge expansion of global transport manifested in containerisation, distribution warehouses and global logistic chains. Finally, the notion of creative production and consumption itself

fits snugly with the ideological and systemic commitment to ever-expanding consumption, ever increasing growth as crucial to the sustainability of capitalism itself.

The failure to get culture onto the emerging UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) might be – as one commentator wrote²⁶ – a lucky escape. It provides a moment to reflect not only on cultural policy's marginalisation, but also on the debasement of the notion of sustainability before the global development industry. In any event, the easy connection between culture and sustainability needs to be – in the parlance of our times – *disrupted*, if it is to retain any critical meaning.

We should not end this section without noting some positive developments in this area. Without doubt, the publication by UNESCO/UNDP of a third Creative Economy Report in 2013 represented a coherent, evidence-based, locally informed and globally inclusive attempt to re-assert the value of 'culture and development' in a post creative economy context. Such a document might not have been what the proselytisers of the jobs and innovation school of creative economy would have wanted, but it brought many activists back toward engagement with a policy agenda around culture, economy and development. It is something on which to build.²⁷

Conclusion: Cultural Policy in Crisis:

This paper began with an appeal to a 'we', a ramshackle epistemic community that emerged around a confluence between culture and economy

²⁶ "As I have remarked in an earlier note on this subject, this is better viewed as a gain than a loss. On the debit side, 'culture' will remain external to the conventional idea of 'development' for the 2015-2030 period. But, that is a debit only if you had decided that the planned SDGs/post-2015 inter-governmental processes were in fact about people and systems of governance. They are not so, for the most essential aspects of the SDGs have been contracted out to banks and financial institutions, global management consulting firms, the extractive industries (petroleum products and coal), law firms that specialise in international trade (WTO, TTIP, TPP, bilateral trade, FTAs, trading blocs), media and communications firms (and their PR subsidiaries), the corporate social responsibility (CSR) departments of the world's largest consumer goods and retail companies, and a host of think tanks and 'NGOs' whose expenses are underwritten directly by individual companies that occupy the categories mentioned. That is why I do not consider it a debit. We would not want to have 'culture' mixed up in this apparently noble but actually quite mercenary activity. Not only mercenary, but also ecologically blind". Rahul Goswami: Private Communication.

²⁷ UNESCO and UNDP (2013) *Creative Economy Report*, Paris and New York, NY: United Nations. See also a discussion on this by David Bell and Kate Oakley (2015) *Cultural Policy*, London: Routledge: 148-158.

²⁵ Lash, S. and Lury, C. (2007). *Global culture industry: the mediation of things*, London, Polity.

that we felt represented a potential for positive social change. This hope might be characterised as the 'culturalisation of the economy'. What we have been trying to register here is the slow morphing of this into the 'economisation of culture'. The erosion of the boundary between culture and economy was not some win-win 'reconciliation' but a process in which a new 'cultural capitalism' has now so thoroughly penetrated into the lifeworld, is so intertwined with our everyday individual and communal practices, that any appeal to some cultural value apart from the economic is now increasingly hard to sustain – especially at the level of government policy.

It is not just that 'culture' has been reduced to its economic value ('the price of everything and the value of nothing'). Rather than being ignored or marginalised, culture has been actively deployed to facilitate and accelerate the generation of new forms of economic value in which culture plays the role of hitherto untapped resources available to exploitation (Marx's 'primitive accumulation'). It has been deployed in ways that have fundamentally altered many of the key parameters of cultural policy as it has developed over the last hundred years. Take media policy, where content is no longer a factor to be considered in relation to ideology, legitimacy, identity, citizenship, social cohesion, and so on. These are now to be secured via processes inherent to the economy itself, of which culture is merely one facet. Media policy is now judged in terms of 'efficiency' – that is, a combination of consumer satisfaction (purchase) and consumer rights framed around the 'affordance' of currently available technologies.

Or take two elements of Raymond Williams' famous tripartite definition of culture – "a general process of intellectual, spiritual and aesthetic development" and "the works and practices of intellectual and especially artistic activity".²⁸ We can see how these ideals of individual and communal development ('you must change your life')²⁹ have deeply informed ideals of a liberal subjectivity compatible with a democratic citizenship. These ideals of value have formed the ground for the extension of citizenship claims around culture across the population and deeper into the social democratic

state itself. We might also say therefore that these ideals have increasingly converged with Williams' third definition of culture – "a particular way of life, whether of a people, a period, a group, or humanity in general" – where 'arts' policy becomes 'cultural' policy, seeking positive social change through culture. The UNESCO 2005 *Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Cultural Diversity of Cultural Expressions* – the nearest thing we have to an international convention on the cultural economy – itself is part of this, as were the cultural industries and even creative city agendas.

This value for culture, as an ideal vehicle of individual and collective development, has now fundamentally altered. Culture, as economically focused 'creativity', is not simply generative of value but linked to new forms of behaviour modification, new norms of subjectivity, new ways of socialising, and new imaginaries of the future ('disruptive innovation') in line with an economic rationale that has little use for older notions of culture, and upon which these older ideals have little purchase.

Why did culture get left out of the UN's Sustainable Development Goals? Was it bad tactics, behind the scenes machinations, some obscure veto? I do not know. What I do know is that for this to happen after twenty years of work at least (since the decade of culture and development), and despite the lobbying of UNESCO and other international agencies backed by a legal convention, is something serious we have to face.

We cannot claim to be negotiating with some kind of slightly slow, cumbersome development bureaucracy that doesn't really 'get it' and has to be talked through it slowly – the kind of slightly frustrated, condescending approach many in cultural policy take (*mia culpa*). We are trying to negotiate with people who not only do not 'get' culture, nor even do not care about culture – they actively dislike it. Do I mean they don't like opera, or literature, or music? No. I mean they actively dislike the ideals culture sets against a system of governance exclusively concerned with a particular sort of finance-inflected economic growth agenda. They like consuming culture, but actively refuse any social, political or economic implications that might be taken from this culture.

Cultural policy has been engaged in a 'softly softly' approach to getting its agenda accepted, gently redirecting the locomotive of economic development towards more socially and culturally embedded

²⁸ Williams, R. (1976) *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

²⁹ Sloterdijk, P. (2013) *You Must Change Your Life*, Cambridge: Polity Press.

After the Creative Industries: Cultural Policy in Crisis

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forms. In fact, the locomotive is travelling in precisely the opposite direction. To change the metaphor: we have been thinking to peel the onion layer by layer, when in fact we have been trying to peel a tiger claw by claw. It is now consuming us.

Cultural policy is being actively pushed out, not progressively adopted. Perhaps many of us register this privately, but it is time to do so publicly. What do we do about this? We have the 2005 Convention that I do not believe would be accepted if it were proposed today, and the proliferation of bi-lateral and area trade agreements that have already undermined its sharper bites. What we have is a legal instrument with very few resources and even fewer sanctions with which to set against a world order dominated by global finance and the corporations with which it is intertwined, governed by a complex range of state based and international agencies, non of which are directly accountable (if they are accountable at all) to the demos which (in some cases) elected them and in whose name they rule.

If any of this is true, where does this leave us as policy activists – as critical, engaged intellectuals working in the field of cultural economy? Is it time, in the words and images of Vertov's *Man with a Movie Camera*, to Wake Up! Open your Eyes! Vertov's call was to the masses, this one is to the cultural policy world itself, which is sleeping its way into historical redundancy. In 1928 the masses were to awake to their own creative power, to recognise and seize hold of the vital pulse of the present. In any polemic like this we have to recognise the possibilities in the present moment, its potential, as well as the threats that seek to co-opt or smother it. The positive embrace of the transformative energies of the present characterised the cultural economy moment of the 1990s. Now (as with Benjamin in 1938) we face a moment of danger in which the alarm makes us, in the title of the film, *Wake in Fright!*³⁰

³⁰ *Wake in Fright* (1971) Dir. Ted Kotcheff from a book by Kenneth Cook (1961).