International Journal of Press/Politics
Volume 14 Number 1
January 2009 3-20

10.1177/1940161208328898
http://pp.sagepub.com
hosted at
http://online.sagepub.com

Creativity and the Experts

New Labour, Think Tanks, and the Policy Process

Philip Schlesinger
University of Glasgow

This article explores the role of expertise in public debate on creative industries policy in the United Kingdom. The first section gives an overview of the emergence of expertise in government and the rise of think tanks, locating this within a wider sociology of the intellectuals. It discusses the development of New Labour expertise in response to that of Thatcherite Conservatism in the battle to dominate public policy agendas. The second section illustrates the growth of the New Labour "policy generation" and the emergence of a cohort of experts in the fields of media, communications, and culture and discusses routes taken by them into government. The final section, based on interviews, discusses the power plays behind New Labour policy making in the creative industries field. It considers the impact of ministerial changes on the policy process, illustrates how interdepartmental rivalries introduce complexity and demonstrates how civil service expertise may be mobilised to neutralise that of outside experts. The conclusion addresses the implications of this analysis.

Keywords: *creative industries; creative economy; expertise; government; intellectuals; think tanks; public policy; United Kingdom*

This article examines the role of expertise in the public debate on creative industries policy in the United Kingdom. Think tanks have been prominent in this. However, in the extensive literature on British think tanks, their relations with the fields of media, culture, and communications have been completely neglected. This is a strange omission, given the centrality of these fields to public life—and not least, to the polity and economy.

As well as addressing questions in public policy analysis, this article also contributes to the sociology of the intellectuals. It is the politico-intellectual field in which think tanks are situated—between universities and the political institutions. In that location, the connections between think tanks and news media (as well as the

Author's Note: This work is based on research undertaken for an Arts and Humanities Research Council-funded project on "Creativity, Policy and Practice: A Study of the UK Government, the BBC and the UK Film Council" (ID No. 112152). Thanks to my co-investigators, Simon Frith and Richard Paterson, and also to Gillian Doyle and the *IJPP*'s reviewer for his or her critical comments.

political system) are key because some key think-tank players are also "media intellectuals." The practice of think tankery is above all about the mediation of ideas, and their brokerage in the public domain, with intended policy effects. We may argue, therefore, that think tanks—as producers of reproducible mediated discourse—are themselves part of a wider communications industry. Indeed, their personnel often gravitate toward the world of communications and cultural policy, and—not infrequently—they have various kinds of media background. Elsewhere (Schlesinger and Tumber 1994; Schlesinger et al. 2001), I have shown how news reporting is deeply enmeshed in the strategic action of sources as part of a wider argument against taking an exclusively "media-centric" focus. The present analysis extends the examination of sources' strategic action beyond the more usual focus on government, major institutions, enterprises, and social movements to the think tanks themselves—which may (and usually do) have a variety of connections with each of the foregoing.

Three main themes are addressed. First, some key historical moments in the evolution of think tanks in the United Kingdom in the wider context of the sociology of intellectuals. Second, that broader sociology is related to the "policy generation" at the heart of New Labour in power, 1997–2008. Third, a case study of policy making is presented, showing how think tanks—and other forms of expertise—may contribute to the shaping of the policy process. The present focus on the struggle for power and influence of ideas-producers in the marketplace underlines the continued relevance of ideology (and therefore of ideology critique) for contemporary cultural analysis (Downey 2008). And while we limit ourselves here to the peculiarities of the British, this study suggests a theme for the comparative analysis of policy expertise (cf. Stone and Denham 2004).

I shall focus on the development of creative industries policy. Since the Labour Party came to power in 1997, ideas brokerage has turned this into a broader discourse on the "creative economy." These terms mark the difference between considering selected industrial sectors as constituting special objects of a common policy and regarding "creativity" as a fundamental shaping force for the entire economy.

Think Tanks in the United Kingdom

The workings of think tanks—along with policy specialists in government, consultants, and lobbyists in the wider "policy community"—may be analysed in terms of a sociology of knowledge and intellectuals in the present phase of modernity. Think tanks are not easily defined, although an extensive literature attempts to offer viable categorisations. For present purposes, I take think tanks to be organisations that describe themselves as such and that are engaged in the production of policy discourses that make claims to knowledge. Those who work in think tanks, as policy advisers or consultants, are a tiny and select segment of the university-educated intelligentsia. They operate within elite circles where the costs of entry to

knowledgeable policy discussion are high. Their exclusivity—or as Pierre Bourdieu (1986) would put it, their "distinction"—is based in the claims to expertise made by the 'thinktankerati.'

In a major study of British think tanks, Diane Stone (1996) suggests that these be seen as "independent policy research institutes." Whether they are "independent" is a matter of empirical judgement. For as Stone notes, the line between "policy analysis and advocacy does get blurred" (ibid.: 13), not least because think tanks engage in "building networks within policy communities and tailoring their product to the needs of decision makers and opinion leaders" (ibid.: 23). Stone argues that think tanks occupy a strategic position in the "epistemic communities" in which knowledge about policy is debated. Such "knowledge based networks . . . articulate the cause-and-effect relationships of complex problems" (ibid.: 37). Because think tanks operate within a highly structured market place for ideas, marketing and promotion are central to their quest for influence over government. Consequently, their ability to achieve resonance within the media is of central importance; they are a major resource for journalists (Stone 1996: 71).

Stone (1996: 110) suggests that we conceive of think tanks as having "influence" rather than a direct impact on policy formulation; she argues plausibly that they have changed how policy is "debated and decided" and that "they help to provide the conceptual language, the ruling paradigms, the empirical examples that become the accepted assumptions for those in charge of making policy."

Indeed, we can go *beyond* this to note that the terms of the discourse may become so compelling that *not* to buy into these is tantamount to self-exclusion (Schlesinger 2007). If those in charge of policy sing from their own hymn sheet, those who want policy to work for them are obliged to join the congregation in full voice. This is demonstrably the case in the debate over "creativity" that has dominated thinking about the cultural industries for more than a decade in the United Kingdom and that has increasingly been exported elsewhere by its exponents.

Expertise and Government

Michael Schudson (2006: 499) has characterised an expert as "someone in possession of specialized knowledge that is accepted by the wider society as legitimate. . . . What defines an expert as a sociological type is willingness to submit to the authority of a group of peers." Contrary to those who see expertise as a threat to democracy, Schudson (2006: 500–1) sees it—ideally—as speaking truth to power, clarifying the grounds of public debate, and offering a diagnostic service.

Schudson's (2006) optimism needs to be tempered somewhat. The costs of entry to expertise create barriers between those with know-how and those without it. Experts advising those in power may lose their critical, democratic edge when faced by the seduction of power and influence. Furthermore, an educated public may not

be able to muster the requisite arguments in forms capable of counterbalancing insider know-how. In short, being able to take one's critical distance from expertise does still matter, given the continuing—and indeed, growing—importance of expert knowledge for the policy process.

Think tanks, arguably, helped create the climate of ideas that aided the rise to power in the United Kingdom of Conservative Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher in 1979 (Collini 2006: 194). In reaction to Thatcherism's ideologues, the New Labour opposition prepared for the end of its seventeen-year exile from the levers of government by encouraging the growth of its own think tanks. Think-tank formation and reorientation is a lead indicator of impending political change.

Contemporary policy expertise is deeply connected with modern party politics. As Rod Eyerman (1994: 106ff) has shown, "the formation of a new intellectual role—the professional expert" in Britain—as elsewhere—occurred during and after World War I. John Maynard Keynes was an exemplary case of a state expert in the field of economics who exercised global policy influence. He was also the progenitor of the Arts Council of Great Britain (ACGB), the key instrument of cultural policy delivery in the United Kingdom after World War II. Keynes's model for the ACGB emerged from his longstanding and intense involvement in the artistic and intellectual milieu of the Bloomsbury Group. It also reflected his knowledge of the British state's bureaucracy and of government's ability to create intermediary bodies such as the BBC and the University Grants Committee, the models for the "arms length" ACGB (Upton 2004).

It was in the post–World War II period that new style Conservative-supporting think tanks emerged: The Institute of Economic Affairs was set up in 1955, the Centre for Policy Studies in 1974, and the Adam Smith Institute in 1977. Although the precise impact of such "New Right" think tanks is a matter of debate (Denham and Garnett 1998), arguably they inflected both the political discourse and shaped the intellectual terrain. Left-oriented analyses, such as the "New Times" arguments elaborated during the 1980s in the left-wing monthly *Marxism Today*, were deeply influenced by Antonio Gramsci's conception of the struggle for hegemony. The issue was how to make both discursive and institutional responses to the prevalent neo-liberalism (Desai 1994). The goal of recapturing the "nation" as a discursive object, the celebration of popular culture, and the drive for constitutional reform came out of this moment (Hall and Jacques 1989).

Colin Leys (2006) has argued that given regimes provide key background conditions for understanding how expertise is mobilised and articulated. Thus, in liberal/social democracies, a generalist civil service may call upon various kinds of public inquiry to provide external advice. Leys holds that state interventionism engendered the development of research departments and policy centres and a shared commitment to objectivity "in the sense that policy proposals should be judged on the basis of rational argument and sound evidence" (ibid.: p. 3). The public domain is one in which "professionals" hold sway. Post-1974, monetarist thinking dominated during the global financial crisis, and there was a marked shift to a neoliberal policy regime. "Its key feature," argues Leys, "is that policy is now fundamentally

about national competitiveness and responding to global market forces" (ibid.: 2). Private sector secondments to government, special advisers, and communications experts displaced the career civil service, which has been "radically reorganised on business lines, following the doctrines of the 'new public management'" (ibid.: 5). According to this argument, more policy-making opportunities have been created for the 'thinktankerati' and other experts. For Leys (ibid.: 7), the new ideal type is the *entrepreneur* rather than the rational Weberian bureaucrat.

According to this argument, the rise of think tanks in the United Kingdom is part of a broader, long-term movement in the mobilisation of expertise for purposes of government and, in particular, for winning public policy arguments. "Professional" policy expertise has counted at least since the early twentieth century (Schudson 2006). The *composition* of such expertise and the *use* made of it takes different forms according to the regime conditions in place.

Alongside the evolution of institutionalised expertise in the broader policy community have come changes within government itself. The first think tank expressly installed at the heart of British government came at the behest of Conservative Prime Minister Edward Heath. Set up in 1970, the Central Policy Review Staff ("the Tank" to insiders) was situated in the Cabinet Office and deployed a wide-ranging strategic agenda, working as an "outside consultant" and "external catalyst" (Hennessey 1990: 221–22, 246). It survived until 1983. As an alternative to this Conservative-inspired body, also situated in the Cabinet Office, the Policy Unit was established in 1974 in Number 10 Downing Street to support Labour Prime Minister Harold Wilson. Two of the economic experts in the Policy Unit, Andrew Graham (b1942, adviser from 1974 to 1979 and later a member of the Channel 4 TV board) and Gavyn Davies (b1950, adviser from 1974 to 1976 and 1976 to 1979, and later chairman of the BBC from 2001 to 2004) had an impact on broadcasting policy and practice, Davies particularly so (cf. Graham and Davies 1997). The Policy Unit is an instrument for the prime minister's power operating, in one Cabinet Office insider's words, "like the court of a king."[1]

Labour was out of power from 1979 to 1997. From the late eighties, it began to equip itself for the battle of ideas. After a disastrous 1983 general election campaign, the party began to follow the painful road of "modernisation," first under Neil Kinnock (who lost the 1987 and 1991 general elections) and subsequently under John Smith. Smith's premature death in 1994 ushered in the present New Labour phase under the, often tense, duumvirate of Tony Blair as Prime Minister and Gordon Brown as Chancellor of the Exchequer. Brown replaced Blair at Number 10 in June 2007.

New Labour's "Policy Generation"

Like their Conservative predecessors, New Labour–supporting think tanks have provided a cadre of recruits for advisory posts in government and also for ministerial careers. Second, they have been a space in which a new *generation* of politicians

has been formed. As Ron Eyerman (1994: 71, original emphasis) has observed, "*Intellectual* generations . . . because of the linkage with cognitive traditions and the need for public expression connected with the role, exhibit particular characteristics." The group examined below has been shaped by all or some of the following: attendance at elite universities (mostly Oxbridge), early association with Labour's "modernising" drive to achieve success at the polls, policy analysis and development to fit in with this objective, time spent in the worlds of policy advice and/or management consultancy, and—often profound—exposure to cultural and communications policy and strategy issues.

In what follows, I sketch connections between two key think tanks—Demos and the Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR)—and New Labour to demonstrate how, for individuals now highly prominent both in political and public life, these links have facilitated their career paths. I shall first focus on those who have mostly worked on media, cultural, and communications policy issues and second, by way of a case study, go on to delineate how these connections—and the use of expertise—have played into shifts in creative industries policy over the past decade.

The first New Labour–sympathising think tank was IPPR, established in 1988. Following Labour's electoral defeats in 1983 and 1987, "the impetus for establishing the IPPR came out of the need to recreate a modernising left-wing intellectual community, able to suggest new policies to solve problems caused or ignored by free marketeers, without alienating a moderate electorate" (Ruben 1996: 66). Patricia Hewitt (b1948), previously director of Liberty (the civil liberties lobbying group), was IPPR's deputy director from 1989 to 1994 and was said to be the organisation's driving force.[2] Hewitt had earlier been press secretary for Labour Party leader Neil Kinnock from 1988 to 1989 (Ruben 1996: 67) and involved in the first stage of the party's "modernisation." She then headed research at Andersen Consulting from 1994 until elected to Westminster in 1997. She subsequently occupied several ministerial roles in the Blair governments, including Minister for Small Business and E-Commerce and Secretary of State for Trade and Industry. At the Department for Trade and Industry (DTI), Hewitt had presided over the creation of the new-style communications regulator, Ofcom, the Office of Communications. She left the Cabinet in June 2007 and while still an Member of Parliament (MP) was appointed a nonexecutive director of telecommunications giant BT in March 2008.[3]

The world of consultancy and think tanks impressed itself even more on the careers of a subsequent New Labour generation. Matthew Taylor (b1961) directed IPPR from 1999 to 2003. From IPPR, Taylor went on to the Number 10 Policy Unit as Chief Adviser on Strategy to Prime Minister Tony Blair in September 2003. An *Observer* profile commented, "His decision to move to number 10 will confirm the widespread view that IPPR is merely 'the New Labour civil service.'"[4] Taylor moved on in November 2006, becoming Chief Executive of the Royal Society of Arts, the civil society and innovation fellowship. Even more than Hewitt, Taylor had a considerable Labour Party hinterland: From 1994 he ran the party's "rapid rebuttal"

operation and centralised the policy-making machine. He was Director of Policy in the 1997 general election campaign and then the Party's Assistant General Secretary until December 1998.

IPPR was also the starting point for the career of David Miliband (b1965), who became Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs in June 2007, in Gordon Brown's post-Blair 2007 cabinet. Miliband was a research fellow at IPPR from 1989 to 1994. He had been Labour's Head of Policy when Blair was the Leader of the Opposition, then becoming Head of the Prime Minister's Policy Unit when Labour came into power. He was rapidly promoted in government.[5]

There are other parallels to this career path. James Purnell (b1970) became Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport in July 2007 in Gordon Brown's new cabinet. He had previously been Minister for the Creative Industries. Purnell's tenure at the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) was short-lived, as he was reshuffled due to a ministerial resignation in January 2008. However, while at the DCMS, Purnell was widely seen in policy and industry circles as extremely well qualified to undertake the post in virtue of his knowledge of media and communications policy and wide cultural interests. Purnell had worked as a researcher for Tony Blair, when in opposition. Later, he was Head of Corporate Planning at the BBC "before heading back as special adviser on the media in Tony Blair's office . . . and there he helped outline the Communications Act."[6] Purnell played a role in the IPPR research project that crystallised the idea of Ofcom as a "converged regulator" (Collins and Murroni 1996).

Purnell's successor at the DCMS was Andy Burnham (b1970), also with a background in the policy field, having worked "as a research assistant to [Culture Secretary] Tessa Jowell and special adviser to Chris Smith, Labour's first Culture Secretary, and the work he did paved the way for the Communications Act 2003 that transformed the regulation of the media industry." Burnham has been a longstanding friend of Purnell's, both having played for the New Labour football team.[7]

The other main think tank to provide New Labour policy personnel was Demos, set up in 1993. Geoff Mulgan (who has a PhD in communications) developed the Demos idea along with Martin Jacques (once editor of *Marxism Today*). Mulgan worked as chief adviser for Gordon Brown in the early 1990s, then Labour's trade and industry spokesman. IPPR was already on the scene and Demos's founders "decided that it should deliberately eschew too close an identification with the left of the party-political spectrum" (Bale 1996: 23). In its heyday, Demos was seen as having an "effective media presence" with access to the opinion-forming quality press that "would make the average university social scientist more than envious" (Bale 1996: 29, 31).

From 1997 to 2004, Mulgan "had various roles in the UK government including director of the Government's Strategy Unit [for four years] and head of policy in the Prime Minister's office."[8] Mulgan (2006: 150) has described the government's strategy units as internal departmental think tanks. Despite his background in communications research, he did not work directly in this area when in government. However,

the Strategy Unit's policy research on "public value"—intended to provide theoretical underpinnings for public service reform—*did* have a major impact on the debate about the BBC and public service broadcasting more generally, as well as shaping much current discourse about the rationale for cultural policy. Mulgan left government in 2004, becoming director of the Young Foundation, a social innovation institute.

Mulgan (1996: 94, emphasis added) has argued that "parties are now more clearly defined as *users* rather than generators of ideas." He has deemed both the universities and the civil service to lack policy firepower. Consequently, Mulgan (1996: 96) suggests that "straddling institutions" such as think tanks, consultants, and major accountancy firms have become key advisors in government reform and public sector restructuring. Think tanks, Mulgan maintains, have secured a position in "intellectual arbitrage": "Successful and rising think tanks can convert political access into money, money into ideas, and ideas into legitimacy, and by doing so they can attract ambitious contributors" (Mulgan 2006: 148).

And indeed, access is key. The public face of think tankery is concerned with airing ideas, in particular through media coverage. A much more discreet exercise of think-tank influence lies in an ability to attract ministers and other key policymakers into seminars, thereby seeking to shape the terms of debate and provide personnel to advise on policy formation.

Expertise may also be gained by working in the policy machinery of a major communications body, such as the BBC or Ofcom. The career paths of Ed Richards and Stephen Carter illustrate other options open to the New Labour policy generation. Inside Labour in opposition and later at the BBC, James Purnell worked alongside Ed Richards (b1966)—another member of the New Labour football team—who became Chief Executive of Ofcom in October 2006. Before Ofcom, where his first job was Chief Operating Officer, Richards had been Senior Policy Advisor to Prime Minister Tony Blair for media, telecoms, Internet, and e-government. He took that role in 1999 after having been Controller of Corporate Strategy at the BBC.

As Number 10's media adviser (working with Burnham and Purnell), Richards helped draft the Communications Act that set up Ofcom. Before that, Richards had worked in consultancy for London Economics and—like Mulgan—also for Gordon Brown (Ofcom 2008). In 2002, when Richards was still at Number 10 Downing Street, the *MediaGuardian* listed him as Number 15 in the roll call of media movers and shakers. By 2007, Richards was in eighth place in the list, being described as a "quintessential New Labour man"; he retained that position in 2008.[9]

Richards's predecessor as Chief Executive of Ofcom, Steven Carter (b1965), became Prime Minister Gordon Brown's Chief of Strategy and Principal Adviser. After leaving Ofcom, Carter—who had always worked in the communications sector—became chief executive of Brunswick, the City of London public relations and lobbying firm from which he transited to Downing Street. His role at Number 10 was to reshape Labour's communications strategy, in deep trouble when he was appointed in January 2008. The shift from Blair to Brown did not change the fundamental New Labour belief in political communications management.[10]

A New Labour creation, Ofcom has been a noteworthy source of specialist expertise on communications, drawing in personnel who would otherwise work in academic research, think tanks, agencies, or consultancies. Aside from providing pertinent experience for Carter's transition to Number 10, as its experts have headed back into the market place, Ofcom has spawned second order expertise, for instance in the shape of Ingenious Consulting, which is focused on selling policy and regulation know-how.[11]

To sum up, the New Labour policy generation has taken different (but closely related) routes to power. Four ideal typical career patterns look like this:

1. Labour party research/activism—think tank/policy adviser/BBC strategist—MP—Minister (Purnell, Burnham)
2. Labour Party administration/senior adviser—think tank/consultancy—MP—Minister—MP/company director (Hewitt)
3. Labour Party activism/administration—think-tank director/media intellectual—PM's policy adviser—civil society organisation director (Mulgan, Taylor)
4. Labour Party—communications company CEO—Ofcom CEO—communications company CEO—PM's strategy adviser (Carter).

From the Creative Industries to the Creative Economy

My argument so far has been that a New Labour policy generation has emerged, strongly shaped by its origins in think tanks. Some of these became key players in the evolution of creative industries policy. Moving focus, we shall next consider the shift in policy conception from the "creative industries" to the "creative economy" over more than a decade of New Labour in power. Particular emphasis will be placed on the role of *expertise* in the Creative Economy Programme (CEP), from its initiation in October 2005 to the unveiling of the U.K. government's action plan for the creative industries in February 2008.

In a complementary study, I have analysed creative industries discourse as a *product* showing how it has acquired the look of an increasingly closed ideological system (Schlesinger 2007). In what follows, drawing on interviews with policy insiders, I shift the focus to the *production* of creative industries discourse and the use of various kinds of expertise to underpin ministerial needs for a policy "narrative." I shall also illustrate how outside expertise may become subject to the stratagems of bureaucratic politics.

Launching Creative Industries Policy

The U.K. government appears to have pioneered the idea of the creative industries in a European context. When New Labour entered office in 1997, the DCMS

was set up to replace the Conservatives' Department of National Heritage. The first Secretary of State was Chris Smith (1997–2001), a protagonist of the new policy turn, who adumbrated some of the underlying thinking in his book *Creative Britain* (Smith 1998). Behind the scenes, key influences were the film producer David (later, Lord) Puttnam and John Newbigin, a special adviser to Smith from 1997 to 2000. Andy Burnham was also working closely with Smith.

Creative industries policy had its antecedents, particularly in earlier Labour "cultural industries" thinking—to which Geoff Mulgan had contributed—which was heavily focused on economic and urban regeneration. The new shift, however, replaced culture with creativity.

New Labour's definition, first aired in the *Creative Industries Mapping Document*, published by the DCMS, proved astonishingly durable and has been widely exported. In 1998, creative industries were defined as

> those activities that have their origin in individual creativity, skill and talent and which have a potential for wealth and job creation through the generation and exploitation of intellectual property.
>
> These have been taken to include the following key sectors: advertising, architecture, the art and antiques market, crafts, design, designer fashion, film, interactive leisure software, music, the performing arts, publishing, software and television and radio. (DCMS 1998: 3)

Despite the more recent development of arguments about the "creative economy," the thirteen sectors identified in 1998 remain an obligatory point of departure for debate in the United Kingdom and further afield.

From the start, the logic of economic policy has prevailed. The core purpose of the Task Force set up by the DCMS was "to recommend steps to maximise the economic impact of the UK creative industries at home and abroad" (ibid.).

The Task Force's membership included representatives of thirteen government departments or public bodies. Nine prominent "industry advisers" came from publishing, music, advertising, design, television, and film (DCMS 1998: 4). Creativity policy became a national project, "branding" the United Kingdom as at the global cutting edge. Two key policy nostrums have been in play from the beginning.

First, the United Kingdom is imagined as a *competitive nation* for which developing a "knowledge economy" is key. Over the past decade, this line has become increasingly emphatic with the realisation that the "BRIC" countries (Brazil, Russia, India, and China) present an increasing threat to high-end "creative" activities. Education and training and their articulation with the creative industries, therefore, have become key policy arenas.

Second, *government intervention* in the market, especially in establishing conditions that enhance company performance, is justified as helping to secure the knowledge base. "Creativity"—like innovation—has become a generalised value in itself,

still largely unquestioned. It is supposed to inform education at all levels and, indeed, to become part of the warp and woof of organisational and personal life everywhere.

Toward a New Paradigm

While creative industries policy enjoyed considerable attention at the start of Chris Smith's period as Secretary of State, it gradually lost prominence as other major policy issues began to dominate the agenda. As one of Smith's close collaborators noted, "Chris was very determined to get that creative industry agenda going on a broader front than just the DCMS," although other departments lost interest quite quickly.[12] When Tessa Jowell became Secretary of State (2001–2007), she had to deal with the framing and passage of the Communications Act 2003 and the BBC's Charter Review (completed in 2006). After Chris Smith's departure from office following the 2001 general election, the focus shifted. As one adviser put it, "if you're really looking at what it is that makes a difference, what are the levers that create policies, it's always people and their passions."[13] Of course, "passions" only explain so much, given the wider constraints on policy making, but they do account for differences of emphasis, to some extent.

Creative industries policy achieved a renewed push only in October 2005, when Tessa Jowell signalled rekindled government interest in a speech. However, earlier, there had been straws in the wind. In June 2005, the Creative Industries Minister, James Purnell, speaking at an IPPR conference, had proposed that the United Kingdom become "the world's creative hub" (Roberts 2006).

In November 2005, at Purnell's initiative, the DCMS launched the CEP, setting up seven working groups. Their composition reflected the established practice of drawing on a coterie of advisers. This was a weaker, lower profile rerun of the process initiated in 1998. Each of the working groups published a report: These covered infrastructure, competition and intellectual property, access to finance and business support, education and skills, diversity, technology, and evidence and analysis.

Of especial interest is the *rethinking* of the original idea of the creative industries. Civil servants came to recognise—after a decade—that their own data were not robust enough for policy making. They also came to acknowledge (at least implicitly) that the original idea of the creative industries was too broad and needed refinement—for one, that it needed to be disaggregated, and second, that the policy-building process had not been sufficiently self-critical. One veteran adviser thought that there had been serious flaws from the very start:

> It became a propaganda effort to persuade the whole of government to take creative industries seriously rather than [make] an intellectual effort to interrogate what was the necessary and desirable relationship between government policy and the evolution of these industries.[14]

Confirming this, one Treasury source accepted that little was known about the key factors driving the creative industries.[15] It is not surprising that a rethink was on the cards. Work undertaken conducted by the consultancy, Frontier Economics, for the CEP's evidence and analysis group distinguished between those parts of the creative industries engaged in "production" (such as publishing and broadcasting), those that could be classified as "arts and crafts" (such as performing arts and antiques), and those providing "services" (such as advertising and architecture). But even these groups were seen as overlapping. In essence, this work argued that the "13 CIs for which DCMS is responsible" fell into "three broad industry types" (Frontier Economics 2006: 8). A similar critique came from the National Endowment for Science, Technology and the Arts (NESTA 2006), which also underlined the conceptual shortcomings of the DCMS's original definition and emphasised the precise targeting of advice, support, and investment to specific sectors.

Alongside these analyses, the CEP mobilised several kinds of expertise. First, "stakeholder" know-how was brought into six of the seven working groups. This echoed the practice of the first creative industries task forces. However, unlike its predecessors, which had conscripted prominent figures from the commercial and business worlds, the groups were overwhelmingly drawn from public sector bodies. In industry circles (and among some of those actually involved), this recruitment was seen as reducing the credibility of the exercise.

The CEP's working groups produced a series of interim reports. Some ideas were floated and then simply disappeared. Others survived in the circulatory system of policy making. For example, the idea of a "creative summit," branding London as the "global hub for creativity," endured until publication of the DCMS's strategy document in February 2008.

The CEP was refocused once again when Purnell was moved to another department. According to insiders, his replacement as Creative Industries Minister, Shaun Woodward, was very keen to make his mark. Woodward was unhappy with the outcomes achieved so far by the CEP working groups and wanted a new "narrative." This is typical of ministerial change: One government adviser pertinently described ministers as "marketeers" engaged in "marketing ideas to the public in order to win elections and they're marketing ideas to industry and officials to see them implemented."[16]

Woodward called in an old colleague from his BBC days, Will Hutton, director of the Work Foundation, a research and policy consultancy. In the early Blair years, Hutton (1995), a former editor of *The Observer* and a regular economics columnist, had published *The State We're In*, a diagnosis of the United Kingdom's ills, which enjoyed a brief vogue in New Labour circles. Woodward "wanted a *State We're In* for the creative industries," according to a source close to the action. Reflecting subsequently on his task at a creative industries "summit" organised by NESTA on Feb. 15, 2008, Hutton said that it had been an "intriguing commission" for an outsider to write such a strategic analysis.

The Work Foundation team (which drew on NESTA's expertise) worked out its ideas during Spring 2007. Informants inside the DCMS readily acknowledged the key role of the Work Foundation's research team in thinking through a new conceptual framework.[17]

The underlying tensions in the drafting process surfaced in June 2007. I had been told that the DCMS firmly intended to publish a "Green Paper" by then. However, two sets of difficulties arose. The department (like others in Whitehall) was expecting ministerial changes in the wake of Gordon Brown's appointment as prime minister in succession to Tony Blair. The civil servants therefore held their fire. This was the "official" reason offered for the delay.

However, there were other considerations. The Work Foundation had had disagreements with civil servants about how to shape the report. The team (according to an insider) had been "deliberately ambiguous" about where the arguments were heading. The Work Foundation's aim was to keep controversy at bay while the project was completed. However, senior officials had considerable reservations about the team's analysis and recommendations. Repeatedly, in interviews with key players, I was told that tensions had arisen over the clash between "blue skies" thinking and the pragmatics of realisable policy.[18]

The Work Foundation's report finally emerged late in June 2007, and it was not, contrary to what had been bruited, "twinned" with a government strategy paper (The Work Foundation 2007). As a government-commissioned document, *Staying Ahead* had needed "clearance" before publication. Questions had arisen over which departments would actually endorse it. In the end, only the DCMS did so, in the shape of Secretary of State Tessa Jowell's foreword. That same month, James Purnell replaced Jowell.

Partly as a result of this ministerial change, the DCMS's own strategy paper did not see light of day until Feb. 22, 2008. Titled *Creative Britain* (DCMS 2008), it was published as a "partnership" document with the Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills (DIUS) and the Department for Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform (BERR). It carried a foreword by the Prime Minister, Gordon Brown. Its title simply reprised that of Chris Smith's book, which might be judged to be either a homage or, less charitably, a total failure of imagination.

The document underwent no less than five drafts since the previous summer. According to one DCMS source, this work had been done in-house; in fact, a trusted external adviser made a major input into the initial drafting.[19] The civil service wanted to take its distance from the Work Foundation's vision. Relations had not always been easy. One Treasury source underlined the "difference between a think tank and the policy making process." True, the team had produced "a very good think tank piece but it couldn't ever be published as a government document," a view echoed by others.[20] A source in DIUS laid blame for the CEP's ultimate lack of policy weight on the Work Foundation.[21] Others said the team had little understanding of policy-making processes or detail and officials had needed to ask for more

evidence. On the Work Foundation's side, it was observed that the officials had wanted more recommendations and those provided had been misunderstood. Implied criticism of "short-termism" and the shortcomings of financial markets had set off alarm bells in the civil service as *Staying Ahead* had been perceived as too interventionist and critical of the creative industries.[22]

In part, the Work Foundation had encountered a more general disenchantment with think tanks and consultants. One DCMS source reflected that after more than ten years in government:

> The gene pool is drying up a bit. We're at the third generation of people coming in from think tanks to be special advisers and half the Cabinet started off in think tanks and that means that the expertise inside government is such that there's less appetite to ask Will Hutton to write a report.[23]

To compound the difficulties, there had also been differences of view between the two key departments involved: the DCMS and the DTI (subsequently BERR). When the CEP began, the DTI had considered that much of it "effectively" covered its own territory of "support for small businesses, access to finance, regulation and competition . . . the heart of economic things for DTI to be very much actively engaged in and quite possibly leading on."[24] The CEP therefore had to be a joint project. The DTI/BERR had insisted that it "owned" software, whose economic impact officials felt was understated by the DCMS. The DTI/BERR took a generally sceptical line, questioning whether the creative industries were unique and regarding the Work Foundation's report as not convincing. Furthermore, the thirteen creative industries were not seen as bound together, and while it was worded cautiously, inside DTI/BERR, the figures the Work Foundation had assembled were judged (on the basis of what the industries themselves had reported) to have inflated the *creative* component of software production and publishing.

If such scepticism about the DCMS's position was not enough, the Work Foundation team itself saw the department as having uneasy relations with the Treasury and had asked a Treasury adviser assigned to help the research team to keep its own lines open. DCMS officials had been unhappy about this, wishing to control communication about the project themselves.

The long and winding road to publication of *Creative Britain* encountered other complications. Margaret Hodge replaced Woodward as Creative Industries Minister in June 2007. Hodge was seen as importing "DTI scepticism" to the post and reported as taking some time to "buy in" to the creative industries. Extending the delay was a further round of ministerial changes early in 2008. On Jan. 24, James Purnell was again moved from the DCMS in an unscheduled ministerial change. Andy Burnham, who had been a DCMS adviser to Chris Smith, replaced his close friend Purnell.

The U.K. government's strategy paper—*Creative Britain: New Talents for the New Economy*—certainly accorded with the dictates of practical politics rather than

blue skies thinking. According to one key figure involved in the drafting, it was "a significant step forward" by "properly integrating education, training, skills and economic policy." However, it was conceded that the CEP had not established "this sector of the economy as a real heavyweight player." The Work Foundation had envisaged a radical new conception of an economy with creative activity at the core. What emerged instead was a plethora of stitched-together policy proposals already in the machinery of DIUS, BERR, and the DCMS.[25]

Conclusion

Governments use various forms of expertise to fly kites and to inform the policy formation process. In a double movement, ministers both aim to secure their own legitimacy by seeking expert solutions and at the same time—when flying kites—to shift responsibility for new thinking outside the governmental machinery. Although we should be cautious in making inferences from just one case study, a number of characteristic features of the policy process may be identified.

First, a small number of actors may act as the effective protagonists of a policy. At any one time, there are preferred suppliers of ideas and evidence. Although there have been intellectual antagonists able to raise fundamental questions about whether creative industries policies actually work or whether the intellectual framework itself is meaningful and robust, these criticisms have not had any significant impact on how policy is conceived. At the same time, there has been no shortage of conceptually compliant interests jostling for advantage. Indeed, what is most apparent is the Hallelujah Chorus of self-sustaining approbation. This has come from the "gurus" who have profitably marketed the concepts, the consultants who have worked to their briefs, and much of the United Kingdom's academic community researching or teaching the creative industries.

Second, creative industries policy making has been characterised by turf wars, so what emerges is an outcome of interdepartmental compromise. Contrast *Staying Ahead* (The Work Foundation 2007) and *Creative Britain* (DCMS 2008) to illustrate this point. Continual intragovernmental competition is hard to discern if we limit ourselves simply to reading the *products* of policy discourse, which typically constitute a lattice work of conformity to a small number of policy prescriptions underpinned by a belief system.

Third, at given moments in the life of a government, ministerial "ownership" of policies is important for the focus achieved by particular areas of activity. As we have seen, such assertions of ownership may be for reasons of personal advancement or—more honourably—because of a deep familiarity with a given area and a belief that it really matters.

Fourth, while in small departments such as the DCMS, officials may need outsiders to develop the broad lines of policy thinking, civil servants are also protective

of their own space and in particular their own need to find workable and practical solutions that enable them to implement policy. The DCMS had to manage the scepticism about its initiatives that abounded in larger and more important ministries such as DIUS, DTI/BERR, and the Treasury. Where work has been commissioned that doesn't quite fit the bill—as in the case of the Work Foundation's *Staying Ahead*—bringing in a trusted "fixer" to rework the text is one option.

Last, there are intriguing hints in the account given above of how a policy field—and its underlying political generation—may "mature." Some of those involved in policy advice—who began their careers in think tanks—have now taken their distance from them, and while they do not necessarily deny their origins, they may disparage their previous occupation from a position of insider influence. To put it differently, one form of expertise has made its necessary transition. The equivocal status of think tankery has been refined into practical political knowledge, embodied in ministers who have transcended their origins.

Notes

1. Personal communication, May 23, 2008.
2. Interview, Apr. 4, 2008.
3. Richard Wray, "Hewitt Takes Her Telecoms Experience to BT," 2008. Accessed July 24, 2008, from http://www.guardian.co.uk/business/2008/mar/btgroupbusiness.telecoms/print
4. David Rowan, "Matthew Taylor Profiled," *The Observer*, Sept. 7, 2003. Accessed July 27, 2008, from http//:david.rowan.com/2003/09/observer-matthew-taylor-profiled.html
5. http://www.fco.gov.uk/resources/en/news/2007/11/fco_obj_davidmiliband. Accessed May 3, 2008
6. Liz Thomas, "Right Man for the Job?" *Broadcast*, July 6, 2007:20.
7. Chris Tryhorn and Owen Gibson, "The Reality of a Dream Job," *MediaGuardian*, Jan. 28, 2008:1–2.
8. http://www.youngfoundation.org/about-us/people/general-/-all/geoff-mulgan. Accessed April 17, 2008.
9. "15 Ed Richards." Accessed March 28, 2008, from http://www.guardian.co.uk/media/2002/jul/08/mediatop100200240/print; "8. Ed Richards." Accessed March 28, 2008, from http://www.guardian.co.uk/media/2007/jul/09/mediatop1002007.mondaymediasection7/print; "8. Ed Richards." Accessed July 14, 2008, from http://www.guardian.co.uk/media/2008/jul/14/mediatop10020087/print.
10. Gaby Hinsliff, "Get Carter! Why Gordon Brown Sent for the Master Fixer," *The Observer*, March 23, 2008:28–29; Patrick Wintour, "New Strongman at No 10: Brown Hires a High-Flyer to Help Him Get Back on Course," *The Guardian*, Jan. 8, 2008:4.
11. Owen Gibson, "A 2+2=5 Situation," *MediaGuardian*, March 31, 2008:5.
12. Interview, April 7, 2008.
13. Interview, April 7, 2008.
14. Interview, April 7, 2008.
15. Interview, April 8, 2008.
16. Interview, April 7, 2008.
17. Personal communication, June 12, 2007.
18. Interviews, April 7-8, 2008.
19. Interviews, February 15, 2008 and April 7, 2008.
20. Interview, April 8, 2008.

21. Personal communication, May 28, 2008.
22. Interview, April 8, 2008.
23. Interview, April 7, 2008.
24. Interview, June 26, 2007.
25. Contrast the figure of the "stylised typology" of the creative industries in *Staying Ahead* with that of the "creative hub" in *Creative Britain* to get the measure of the shift.

References

Bale, Tim. 1996. "Demos: Populism, Eclecticism and Equidistance in the Post-Modern World." In *Ideas and Think Tanks in Contemporary Britain*, ed. Michael David Kandiah and Anthony Seldon. Volume 2. London: Frank Cass.

Bourdieu, Pierre. 1986. *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*. London and New York: Routledge & Kegan Paul.

Collini, Stefan. 2006. *Absent Minds: Intellectuals in Britain*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

Collins, Richard and Cristina Murroni. 1996. *New Media, New Policies: Media and Communications Strategies for the Future*. Cambridge, MA: Blackwell.

Denham, Andrew and Mark Garnett. 1998. *British Think-Tanks and the Climate of Opinion*. London: University College London Press.

Department for Culture, Media and Sport. 1998. *Creative Industries Mapping Document*. London: Department for Culture, Media and Sport.

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

Desai, Radhika. 1994. "Second-Hand Dealers in Ideas: Think-Tanks and Thatcherite Hegemony." *New Left Review* 203:27–64.

Downey, John. 2008. "Recognition and the Renewal of Ideology Critique." In *The Media and Social Theory*, ed. David Hesmondhalgh and Jason Toynbee. London and New York: Routledge.

Eyerman, Ron. 1994. *Between Culture and Politics: Intellectuals in Modern Society*. Cambridge, UK: Polity.

Frontier Economics. 2006. *Comparative Analysis of the UK's Creative Industries: Report to DCMS*, Aug. 3. London: Frontier Economics.

Graham, Andrew and Gavyn Davies. 1997. *Broadcasting, Society and Policy in the Multimedia Age*. Luton, UK: University of Luton Press.

Hall, Stuart and Martin Jacques, eds. 1989. *New Times*. London: Lawrence & Wishart.

Hennessey, Peter. 1990. *Whitehall*. London: Fontana Press.

Hutton, Will. 1995. *The State We're In*. London: Jonathan Cape.

Leys, Colin. 2006. "The Cynical State." *Socialist Register 2006*. Accessed Aug. 5, 2008, from http://socialistregister.com/recent/leys

Mulgan, Geoff. 1996. "The Market Place of Ideas." In *Ideas and Think Tanks in Contemporary Britain*, ed. Michael David Kandiah and Anthony Seldon. Volume 2. London: Frank Cass.

Mulgan, Geoff. 2006. "Thinking in Tanks: The Changing Ecology of Political Ideas." *The Political Quarterly* 77(2):147–55.

National Endowment for Science, Technology and the Arts. 2006. *Creating Growth: How the UK Can Develop World Class Creative Industries*. London: National Endowment for Science, Technology and the Arts.

Ofcom. 2008. "Ed Richards: Chief Executive Officer." Accessed March 28, 2008, from http://www.ofcom.org.uk/about/csg/ofcom_board/biogs/e_richards

Roberts, Paul. 2006. *Nurturing Creativity in Young People: A Report to Government to Inform Future Policy*. London: Department for Culture, Media and Sport.

Ruben, Peter. 1996. "The Institute for Public Policy Research: Policy and Politics." In *Ideas and Think Tanks in Contemporary Britain*, ed. Michael David Kandiah and Anthony Seldon. Volume 2. London: Frank Cass.

Schlesinger, Philip. 2007. "Creativity: From Discourse to Doctrine?" *Screen* 48(3):377–87.

Schlesinger, Philip, David Miller, and William Dinan. 2001. *Open Scotland? Journalists, Spin Doctors and Lobbyists*. Edinburgh, UK: Polygon.

Schlesinger, Philip and Howard Tumber. 1994. *Reporting Crime: The Media Politics of Criminal Justice*. Oxford, UK: Clarendon.

Schudson, Michael. 2006. "The Trouble with Experts—and Why Democracies Need Them." *Theory & Society* 35(5-6):491–506.

Smith, Chris. 1998. *Creative Britain*. London: Faber and Faber.

Stone, Diane. 1996. *Capturing the Political Imagination: Think Tanks and the Policy Process*. London; Portland, OR: Frank Cass.

Stone, Diane and Andrew Denham, eds. 2004. *Think Tank Traditions: Policy Research and the Politics of Ideas*. Manchester, UK; New York: Manchester University Press.

Upton, Juliet. 2004. "John Maynard Keynes, the Bloomsbury Group and the Origins of the Arts Council Movement." *International Journal of Cultural Policy* 10(2):203–17.

The Work Foundation. 2007. *Staying Ahead: The Economic Performance of the UK's Creative Industries*. London: The Work Foundation.

Philip Schlesinger is a professor in cultural policy and academic director of the Centre for Cultural Policy Research at the University of Glasgow, Scotland. His current research includes creative industries and government policy, Europeanness and cosmopolitanism, and ethnography and exile. He is co-investigator of a U.K. Arts and Humanities Research Council–funded project on "Music and Dance—Beyond Copyright Text?" His most recent book, edited with John Erik Fossum, is *The European Union and the Public Sphere* (Routledge, 2007).