

# The birth of the creative industries revisited

An oral history of the 1998  
DCMS Mapping Document



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## FOREWORD



It is rare to be able to pinpoint quite so accurately the moment at which a new sector of the economy was born. But the publication in 1998 of the UK government's *Creative Industries Mapping Document* was such a moment – and it changed forever the discourse around the creative and cultural sectors and the ways in which they generate and deliver value.

This report throws new light on a document that has proven to be one of the most influential and far-reaching interventions of modern cultural policy. Authored by Jonathan Gross, *The Birth of the Creative Industries Revisited* brings together the recollections of many of those people who were directly involved in the creation of the *Mapping Document*. It is based on a series of one-to-one interviews as well as a witness seminar – a format employed at King's College London to explore key political, social or cultural events and institutions, capturing the vital perspectives of those people involved and taking us to the heart of seminal moments of the recent past. On this occasion, members of New Labour's Creative Industries Task Force came together to discuss the origins of the *Mapping Document* in front of an audience of academics and sector experts, producing from their lived experience an oral history that would not otherwise exist.

The how and why behind the invention of the creative industries brings together the macro (political and economic change) and the micro (the ideas, energy and actions of a small but ultimately influential group of people). In telling the story of the 1998 *Creative Industries Mapping Document* at these multiple scales – and how they did not always neatly align – Dr Gross reveals valuable lessons for understanding how policy is made and why political change does (and often doesn't) happen.

More than 20 years on, the creative industries are widely accepted to play an important role in the economic and cultural life of the UK, while contributing to our success on the global stage. Nevertheless, it could be argued that policymakers could do more to create the conditions in which they will continue to flourish. I hope that returning to this key moment in cultural policy will generate renewed interest not only in this fascinating point in history, but in what it might teach us about the future.

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# INTRODUCTION

**F**ew pieces of cultural policy have achieved the visibility of the 1998 *Creative Industries Mapping Document*. Within cultural policy studies it is commonly treated as the foundational text of the New Labour era: emblematic of the Blair government's modernisation agenda, and the emergence of the creative industries as a keyword.<sup>1</sup> But while the document has been the subject of extensive debate – particularly the definition of the creative industries that it offers – less attention has been paid to exactly how it came to be written.

In late 2018, 20 years after the publication of the *Mapping Document*, I undertook a piece of oral history research to investigate the process through which it was developed. This had two phases. The first was to conduct interviews with a range of people directly involved with the production of the document – civil servants, politicians and members of the Creative Industries Task Force. (For a full list of interviewees, see Appendix.) These interviews generated valuable data in their own right. They also laid the groundwork for the second stage: a witness seminar, in which some of these key figures took part in a public discussion.

The witness seminar is a format that has been developed by researchers of contemporary British history, including Dr Michael Kandiah and colleagues at King's College London.<sup>2</sup> It brings together a small number of people involved in a political event, process or institution, and can be compared to the BBC Radio 4 programme *The Reunion*. The format allows for a variety of perspectives to be developed in relation to each other, and to create a public record of those testimonies. Recent examples held at King's include a seminar on the role of women in the Northern Ireland peace process, and a session to mark the 70th anniversary of the formation of the Arts Council (Doeser 2016). The witness seminar for this project was held at Somerset House on Tuesday 11 December 2018. The full transcript of the event, including contributions from the audience, can be accessed here [doi.org/10.18742/pub01-018](https://doi.org/10.18742/pub01-018).

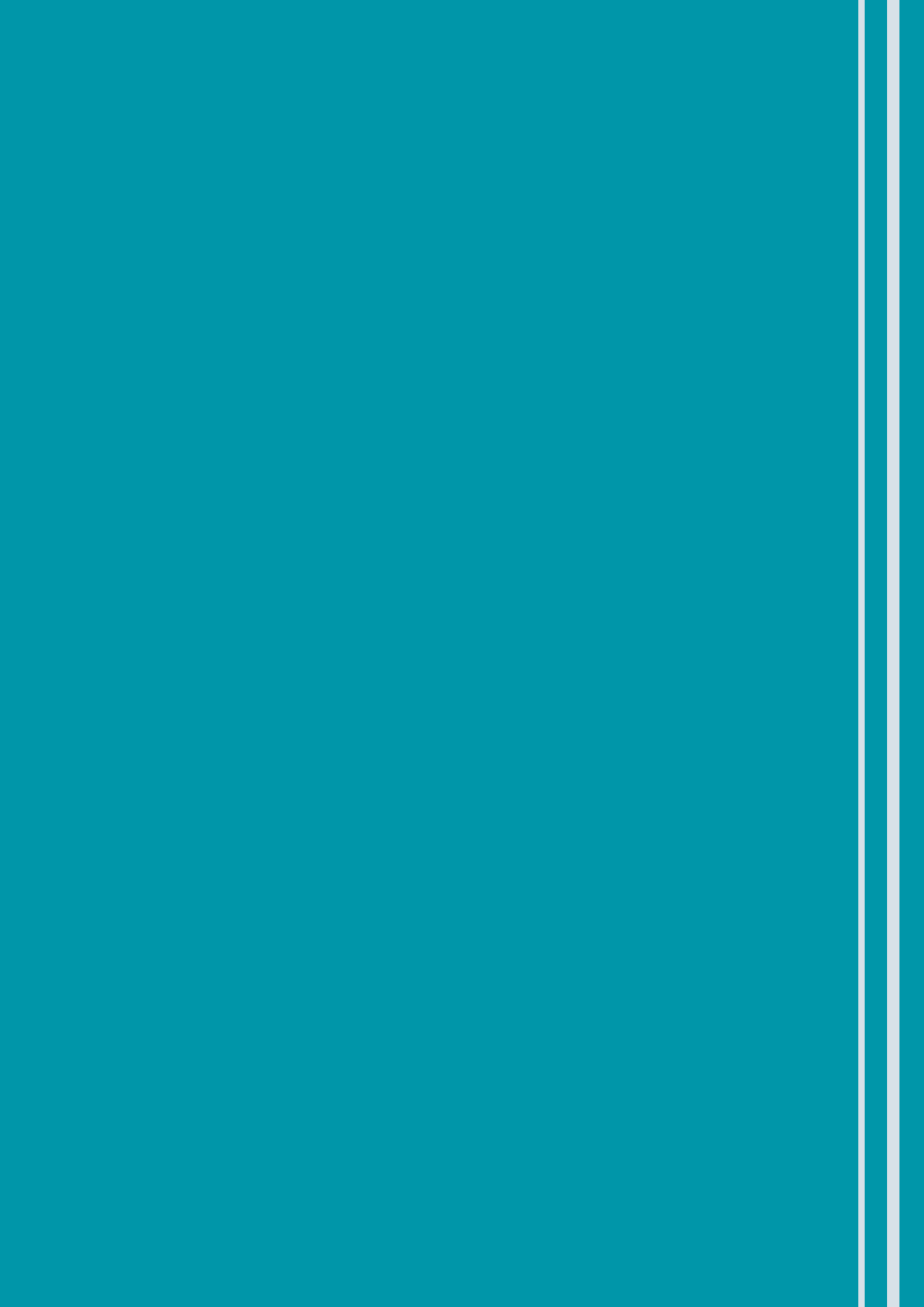
While much cultural policy research focuses on the analysis of documents, the approach of this project was to speak directly to those involved. In doing so, the research addressed three central questions. These provided the framework for the interviews and the witness seminar, and they constitute the structure for this report.

1. Why was the 1998 *Creative Industries Mapping Document* created?
2. How was the 1998 *Creative Industries Mapping Document* created?
3. What were the consequences?

This report provides an overview of the findings.

<sup>1</sup> Raymond Williams famously demonstrated the importance of studying 'keywords', as the emergence and shifting uses of particular terms can reveal 'deep conflicts of value and belief' (Williams 1983: 23) and throw new light on broad processes of social change.

<sup>2</sup> The format was originated by the Institute of Contemporary British History, which was founded in 1986. The first witness seminar was held in 1987.



## 1

## WHY WAS THE 1998 CREATIVE INDUSTRIES MAPPING DOCUMENT CREATED?

The birth of an idea is seldom traced so precisely to a time, place and group of people as the ‘creative industries’ is to the 1998 *Creative Industries Mapping Document*, and the Task Force that commissioned it. Terry Flew’s account is typical of many commentaries.

*The formal origins of the concept of creative industries can be found in the decision in 1997 by the newly elected British Labour government headed by Tony Blair to establish a Creative Industries Task Force (CITF), as a central activity of its new Department of Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS). (Flew 2012: 9)*

But ideas do not arise out of the blue, and researchers have examined the origins of the term creative industries by analysing its relationships with pre-existing concepts including the culture industry, the cultural industries, the knowledge economy and the information society (Garnham 2005; Hesmondhalgh & Pratt 2005; Galloway & Dunlop 2007; O’Connor 2010). This report makes a further contribution to understanding the emergence of this keyword, taking a distinctive approach: seeking to apprehend – from the perspective of those most centrally involved – why, how and with what consequences the first mapping of the creative industries took place.

### 1.1 Who drove this agenda? Labour in opposition, and first days in government

When New Labour took power in May 1997, the Blair government reorganised and renamed the Department of National Heritage<sup>3</sup> as the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS). The significance

of this renaming has been widely discussed. (See, for example, Garnham 2005.) For some commentators, these institutional changes signalled a greater seriousness, significance and coherence being afforded to culture as a policy domain (Flew 2012). It was within this context that the Creative Industries Task Force was formed. But why exactly was the Task Force created? And how deliberately was it positioned within the overall New Labour project?

The idea to set up the Task Force came from Chris Smith, appointed by Blair as the UK’s first Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport. In opposition, Smith had been Shadow Secretary of State for National Heritage from July 1994 to October 1995, before being appointed to Shadow Secretary of State for Health. As he explains, ‘I hadn’t really been expecting to be given the culture portfolio when we came into government. I’d done the old National Heritage job on the opposition front bench about three years earlier, but I hadn’t really thought through these kinds of issue until I became Secretary of State, and had to think very rapidly on my feet.’ Once in post, he quickly established four aims for DCMS. These were ‘excellence’, ‘access’, ‘creative industries’, and ‘education’.<sup>4</sup>

To what extent had the notion of creative industries been developed in opposition? On the one hand, Smith had not been expecting to be appointed culture minister. On the other, a small group of people within the Labour Party had been working on these ideas. One of the key figures was the film producer David Puttnam, who had been actively involved with the Labour Party since the 1980s. Following success in the UK film industry he had worked in the USA, and by the 1990s one of his concerns was to support conditions in which UK cinema could be more than a ‘cottage industry’.

<sup>3</sup> The Department of National Heritage had been established by the previous Prime Minister, John Major, in 1992.

<sup>4</sup> See Smith’s book of speeches and essays, *Creative Britain* (Smith 1998), for several statements of these aims.

This led him to thinking not only about film policy, but more broadly about the 'creative sector'. He explains that, during the mid-90s:

*I was basically funding an informal [...] creative industries thinktank. [...] I think what we contributed was a bit of coherence. We actually got them to see the arts, or what we then termed the creative industries – because that was the big shift, moving the words from the arts to the creative industries – we got them to see it as a potential economic driver, not simply as a 'nice to have'.*  
(Puttnam)

Those involved included John Newbigin – who became Smith's special advisor once Labour was elected – and speechwriter and consultant Ben Evans.<sup>5</sup> The idea for the Task Force, then, was driven by Smith in office. But some of the key thinking underlying the initiative had been developed by a small group of associates in opposition. Notwithstanding those accounts that attribute the decision to form the Task Force to Blair, Smith indicates that the Prime Minister had to be persuaded. In February 1997 Blair gave a speech at Mansion House in London, in which he signalled the significance of creativity. It was a notable moment. Just three months before a general election he was widely expected to win, Blair was championing creativity 'on the record' (Newbigin). This was a speech that Newbigin and Evans wrote, and which they encouraged the then Leader of the Opposition to make. Yet Blair did not give another major speech on cultural policy until the final days of his premiership, in 2007 (Hesmondhalgh, Oakley, Lee & Nisbett 2015).

I asked Puttnam whether Blair was actively involved in the conversations that he, Newbigin and Evans were having during the mid-90s, developing new ideas for cultural policy.

*I'm going to say yes and no. He was actively good about it. I remember having a dinner one night [...] and the whole issue of the*

*film industry came up and he said, 'Well, of course, we're leaving all that to people like David.' I remember thinking, 'Thanks a bunch!' He assumed we'd get on with it. We were given a very, very free hand.*  
(Puttnam)

Similarly, Newbigin comments that one of Blair's strengths was his willingness to encourage people, if they had an idea, to pick it up and run with it. It is in this spirit that he sees Blair as having supported the creative industries work. For Newbigin, Blair was 'not interested in the "arts" per se, but he was interested in creativity as a symbol of modern Britain'. The idea of *modernisation* was used by Blair as a politically neutral term for quite significant changes in economic policy, and creativity resonated with this concept and approach. Moreover, according to Newbigin, Blair was amenable to the idea of promoting the creative industries because it 'seemed an easy thing'. It did not require lots of money. This was important at a time at which the Labour Party, after 18 years in opposition, was under pressure to prove its credentials for economic management, and had committed itself to the previous Tory government's spending plans for the first two years of its administration.

Newbigin explains that the 1997 Labour party manifesto 'hardly set out any indication that there was going to be a major piece of work on the creative industries, but there was quite a lot going on [about this] in the zeitgeist'.

*It was clear that, once the new government [...] had been established, one of the things that we, collectively – who had been involved in thinking about overall policies for the Labour Party – were committed to was doing something around the cultural and creative industries, which had had a pretty bad run. People like John Myerscough had produced books about the cultural industries that had been pretty much trashed by the Treasury as not being respectable pieces of work. Finding something that brought all this together in a*

The idea for the Task Force [...] was driven by Smith in office. But some of the key thinking underlying the initiative had been developed by a small group of associates in opposition.

<sup>5</sup> For a brief profile of Ben Evans, including some discussion of his involvement in the development of the creative industries, see Arts Industry 2018.



Some interviewees understand the new attention given to the creative industries as an important part of [New Labour's] overall process of 'modernisation'. But others indicate that, upon taking office, the creative industries were some distance from being a top priority for the new government.

*realistic and effective way was high on the list of priorities. (Newbiggin)*

One civil servant, David Fawcett, comments that some of the earliest work that Smith wanted to put in place was 'his wish to bring DCMS more to the forefront of policy making in Whitehall'. The Task Force would be central to this. Fawcett served in the Department of National Heritage before 1997, as well as within the newly formed DCMS, and he emphasises continuity as well as change.

*There was a general push in 1997 [...] for something that had actually been recognised before then but hadn't been particularly given a name, or been given coherence. I think it would be unfair to say that Chris Smith's predecessor [Virginia Bottomley], who I worked closely with, wasn't interested in the economic value of her department. She absolutely was [...] and made a noise about it whenever she could. But [before 1997] there wasn't a Number 10 driven policy objective of driving the creative industries, and the new economy, at the public consciousness. (Fawcett)*

For Fawcett, there was the perception that the creative industries agenda was backed at the heart of government (echoing Flew's narrative, above). However, in Smith's account, Blair was 'rather reluctant' for the Task Force to be established, as 'he thought that this was a bit of bureaucracy that was being put in place'. Smith had to make the case, convincing Blair that this was an important initiative, 'that we had to put these industries on the map, [and] that they were far more successful [...] than anyone previously thought'. There was not a great deal of immediate enthusiasm from the Prime Minister, and it was due to the Secretary of State's determination that the Task Force was formed. Blair assented, with Smith explaining, 'Eventually, a little bit grumblingly, he said, "Yeah, OK. Go ahead, do it." It was very much my initiative. It was my insistence it should happen. I persuaded the ministers from the other departments to come along. I approached the outside people to draw them in and we got it off the ground.'

The different inflections within these accounts raise the question of how far the positioning of the creative industries as a key

site of post-industrial growth and the UK's emerging competitive advantage should be seen as a deliberate aim of New Labour's policy programme. Some interviewees understand the new attention given to the creative industries as an important part of the overall process of 'modernisation'. But others indicate that, upon taking office, the creative industries were some distance from being a top priority for the new government.

## 1.2 What was the need for the mapping? the Task Force in action

The Task Force included ministers from nine government departments and four non-departmental public bodies. In addition to DCMS, the departments represented were Education and Employment; Trade and Industry (DTI); Environment, Transport and the Regions; the Foreign and Commonwealth Office; the Offices for Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland; and the Treasury. Allan Ferries, the civil servant who succeeded Fawcett at DCMS, comments that, 'Some of them sent ministers of state, others sent junior ministers. Some were enthusiastic, some were making up the numbers. But [...] it was worth it for the enthusiasts.' Alongside these ministers sat executives from areas including film, music, publishing, advertising and fashion who 'knew what it was like on the ground' (Fawcett). Gail Rebeck, Chair and CEO of Random House UK at the time, explains that one of the motivations they had for involvement was frustration at being regarded as a 'bunch of luvvies. In fact, we were all running quite complex and successful businesses. So the opportunity to see what we could do together was very exciting'.

The Task Force brought these two groups of people together and 'got them talking' (Smith). It was Fawcett's role to set up the body. 'The perception I had was that there was a pretty-well worked up list by the time the Labour government came into office of people in the industry who shared their view of the importance of these industries and how they could be enhanced. [...] There were some obvious big names of people who shared this vision of the creative industries as something really big for the UK.' He goes on to reflect on what the members of the Task Force were trying to achieve.

*I think there was certainly a feeling that, if not overlooked, [the creative industries] were being rather downplayed. There was, I think, the general New Labour positioning of being modernising and forward-looking, attaching themselves to these – if not ‘new’ industries, then – very fast evolving industries. I suppose the twin drivers were to ensure that these industries were taken seriously enough in Whitehall, but also that there was action taken across areas where there might be barriers to their future growth – so, for example, piracy [...] – that might need policy responses. (Fawcett)*

The Task Force quickly identified the need for better data. Smith explains, ‘We were flying blind; we had no real information, no statistics. We felt that all of this was clearly important, but we had no idea how important. And so we thought, “Right, we ought to try to put some data together.”’ Janice Hughes of Spectrum Strategy Consultants, who sat on the Task Force, reports that, ‘We realised after a while, at the early meetings, that there was very little data to underpin a report and analysis. [...] We could see this was going to be really a challenge’ to the Task Force achieving its aims. Puttnam goes even further, saying that at the first meeting it became clear that:

*No one really knew what the scale of the creative economy was. We were talking about something that no one, frankly, fully understood. And that’s where [...] the idea of a mapping document emerged from. It emerged from the fact that we found ourselves desperately ignorant. [...] We had two problems. How to define the creative economy, and then trying to put a number on actually what it was worth. [...] We needed a starting point. We needed to know what we were talking about. I also remember; [...] we agreed at the time that we do a second one in five years. [...] We needed a direction of travel, we needed to know where we were in order to be sure where we were going, and whether we were heading in the right direction. [...] Once you defined a sector, once you’ve mapped out what its growth is, then that allows you to start prioritising different areas of policy development. (Puttnam)*

It is interesting to note the variation in language here, between *creative industries* and *creative economy*. Nicholas Garnham

observes that in the run-up to the 1997 general election the Labour Party’s documents had made use of the term *cultural industries*, and that it was only once in government that the shift to *creative industries* took place (Garnham 2005). During this research I was able to access a copy of Blair’s Mansion House speech. On the front page it is billed as ‘The Creative Economy in the 21st Century’. It refers frequently to the ‘cultural industries’ and several times to the ‘arts and cultural industries’. There is no direct mention of the creative industries. The decision to undertake the mapping exercise was made not only in the context of empirical uncertainty as to what these areas of activity contributed to the UK economy. There was also a lack of conceptual clarity that needed to be addressed.

Smith provides a succinct summary of what the members of the Task Force hoped the *Mapping Document* would achieve. They were seeking to provide a basis upon which ‘the whole of the rest of government, at all levels, from central government right the way through to regional and local government, would understand the enormous importance of these industrial sectors, and would make public policy decisions accordingly’. The document would not only demonstrate the existing size of these sectors, but would point towards ‘blockages’, encouraging policy makers to address the question, ‘What are the things that might be holding up even greater success?’

Members of the Task Force felt that these areas of the economy were being overlooked by government. As Hughes describes, ‘If you did go to the Department for Trade and Industry or the Board of Trade, as far as they were concerned the creative industries did not exist. They were not on the radar.’ Similarly, Newbigin comments that there were emerging areas, such as the video games industry, in which ‘nobody had done any work’ to understand their size and significance, while ‘the already existing activities that were seen as quite important in their own right did not have enough heft together to constitute a sector of the economy’.

As Ferries puts it, there was a need for a ‘big picture’, providing a coherent overview of the structure of these sectors, ‘so that people could see what’s happening here

Members of the Task Force felt that these areas of the economy were being overlooked by government.

actually relates to what's happening over there. And how much more potential there is'. Smith uses the same metaphor. It was 'to put the full picture in place that the mapping exercise was all about'. What, then, would be the value of having established a big picture? Fawcett explains that the document was created 'largely to galvanise Whitehall', by highlighting the value of the creative industries. The aim was to achieve recognition within government that there was something called the creative industries, that they could be measured, and that they were a significant part of the economy. For Fawcett, the idea was 'to get people to sit up and take notice'. This was principally people within Whitehall, but also more widely in the 'political establishment', opinion formers and the press.

### 1.3 Central or peripheral? a paradigm shift on a shoestring

Cultural economist David Throsby suggests that the model of the creative industries offered by the 1998 *Mapping Document* 'derives from the impetus in the late 1990s in the UK to re-position the British economy as one driven by creativity and innovation in a globally competitive world' (Throsby 2008: 220). But appreciating the micro-conditions within which the document was produced raises questions about the drivers for this work, complicating this story. In 1997 a Creative Industries Unit was set up within DCMS. In the first instance this was a sole civil servant (Fawcett). As he describes, at first this was 'just me trying to make sense of what the Secretary of State wanted to do and to set up. Later I got an assistant to help me set up. But I was in an office in a different building to the rest of the department'. At this stage the creative industries were, quite literally, peripheral.

Other interviewees also commented upon how limited resources were. DCMS was (and remains) one of the smaller Whitehall departments. But in addition to this, much of the money that it received from the Treasury went straight to non-departmental public bodies. This meant there was only

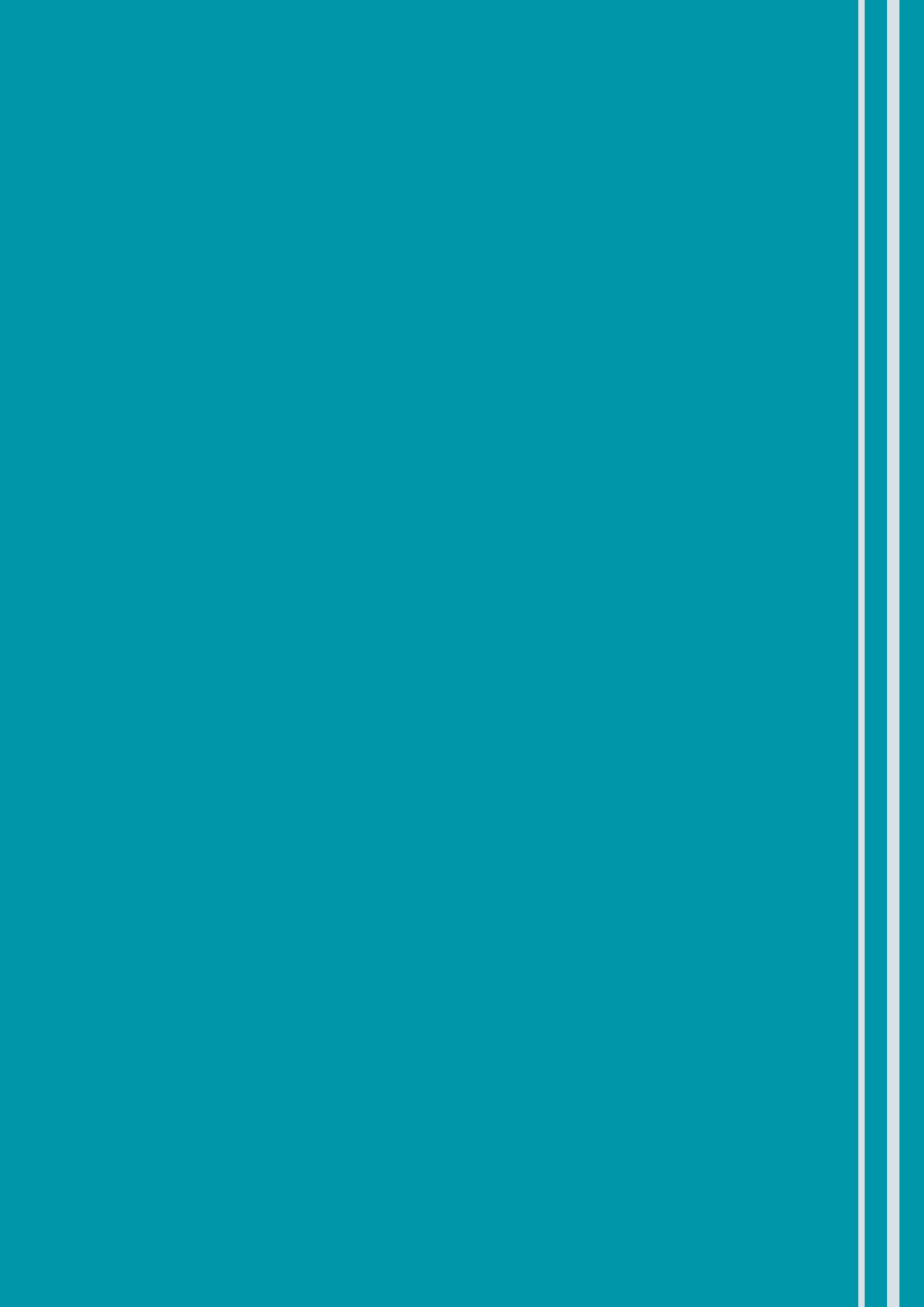
'a very small amount of core funding in the department' (Ferries). With such meagre resources, 'the truth of the matter was, it wasn't the DCMS itself [that] could do things, but what we could do was, we could bring the players together'. (Ferries)

On the one hand, then, the idea of the creative industries resonated powerfully with Blair's modernisation agenda, and the overall spirit and direction of the New Labour project. On the other, there was a tiny amount of resource devoted to the nascent DCMS, the Creative Industries Unit, and the Task Force. This is not the place to attempt a full assessment of New Labour cultural policy.<sup>6</sup> However, a key question raised by this research is: how central were the creative industries, really, to New Labour? The Task Force and the *Mapping Document* have been viewed as 'prototypical of that government's "Third Way" ideology' (Flew & Cunningham 2010: 119). But as the preceding discussion has shown, those involved paint a mixed picture regarding the extent to which this was an agenda of any great importance within that overall New Labour project.

A central theme of this report, therefore, is the need to consider the relationship between the multiple scales at which we understand the emergence of the 1998 *Creative Industries Mapping Document*: from macro-economic transformations, to political parties rebranding, to a small group of people developing some ideas. Notwithstanding its exceptional status as representative of the Blair era, the *Mapping Document* may reveal a more general phenomenon: the overestimation of how neatly aligned are the different factors (at multiple scales of explanation) that bring a piece of policy into the world. As we will see further in section 2, while it became iconic, with all kinds of paradigm-shifting consequences attributed to it, the *Mapping Document* came about through a process that was strikingly ad hoc.

The aim was to achieve recognition within government that there was something called the creative industries, that they could be measured, and that they were a significant part of the economy.

<sup>6</sup> For perhaps the most comprehensive and authoritative evaluation of New Labour cultural policy published to date, see Hesmondhalgh, Oakley, Lee & Nisbett 2015.



## 2

## HOW WAS THE 1998 CREATIVE INDUSTRIES MAPPING DOCUMENT CREATED?

## 2.1 A finger in the air: defining the creative industries

The difficulties of measuring the size of the creative industries have been widely discussed. (See, for example, Higgs & Cunningham 2008.) Part of the challenge is that the areas of work under consideration are not structured in the same way as the industries for which the Standard Industrial Classifications (SIC) were designed (Flew 2012). Indeed, Flew and Cunningham suggest that one of the drivers underlying the development of creative industries thinking<sup>7</sup> was, precisely, ‘the limitations of “industrial era” statistical modeling in capturing the economic dynamics of services and information-based sectors’ (Flew & Cunningham 2010: 116-7). As the limitations of SIC codes indicate, the challenges of mapping the creative industries are both empirical and conceptual. Concepts, definitions and models matter. As Throsby notes, differences between alternative models of creative industries have consequences not only for their calculated ‘size’, but also for the types of policy that follow (Throsby 2008).

Notwithstanding its enormous subsequent influence, the definition of the creative industries contained within the 1998 *Mapping Document* was not established via a sustained or systematic process of research. It was much more informal. Smith describes the process of developing the definition as follows:

*I sort of dreamed it up. What I was trying to do was to establish, in a fairly precise form of words, what it was that made these activities different. And I was also wanting, I remember distinctively, to record in that definition the crucial importance of protecting intellectual property value.*

*Because that, of course, was increasingly becoming a big issue – that’s where the economic value was enshrined, especially in a digital environment where you can transmit intellectual property in a moment across the world. Finding the right ways of establishing the remuneration path back to the creator becomes really important. So highlighting the creation of intellectual property as being at the heart of this process was, I think, very important. (Smith)*

The definition of the creative industries provided in the *Mapping Document* is, ‘those activities which 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’. The document goes on to say, ‘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)

Newbiggin provides his own account of the process through which this definition was reached. Like Smith, he emphasises its informality:

*The discussion about the definition was something that just rolled around within the department, with the team of civil servants, and also obviously with the Secretary of State and myself. We would sit around discussing how we were going to pin this down. [...] We took some of the ideas from Creative Nation<sup>8</sup> and various other sources – [...] there was the Intellectual Property Association in the US, and one or two others as well – to try to pin something down*

<sup>7</sup> And ‘information society’ thinking.

<sup>8</sup> In 1994 the Australian government published *Creative Nation: Commonwealth Cultural Policy* (Department of Communication and the Arts (Australia) 1994), a document Tony Blair admired. Cunningham and Potts attribute the first usage of the phrase ‘creative industries’ to the Australian strategy consultants Cutler & Company (Cunningham & Potts 2015: 387).

*which was a workable definition, which had intellectual property at its heart, but defined as tightly as we could the sectors that we were trying to identify. [...] So, where we got to: they were all things that had their creative roots in culture, in individual acts of creativity. So one of our arguments was, 'Yes, the creation of a new drug by the pharmaceuticals industry is creative, but it's a team effort that is approached on a kind of scientific deductive basis of experiment. The industries that we're talking about are much more acts of individual intuition: somebody writes a book, somebody writes a song, somebody creates a video game, somebody creates a new fashion concept. They're individual acts of creativity that have got some kind of root in the arts and culture rather than in science, and its real value is in the fact that they're generating intellectual property. The value is in the concept rather than the product, so to speak. (Newbigin)*

The role of the Task Force in this process was not to formulate the definition, but to sense-check it, and they 'gave it their blessing' (Newbigin). Newbigin explains that those involved:

*were very conscious at the time that it was an imperfect definition. Because at the very simplest level people kept saying, 'Well, all industries are creative. [...] The pharmaceutical industry is creative. The health sector is creative. Engineering is creative. What do you mean 'creative'? The definition that we got about individual acts of creativity, where the value of what was being generated was reflected in intellectual property, that was a kind of 'finger in the air' definition. Actually, one of the surprising things [...] for me is it's been pretty robust. I think it's evolved, but it has actually stood the test of time.*

Over the next 20 years, this definition has been a matter of heated discussion. Newbigin indicates that this was the case

from the beginning. 'There were all kinds of quite intense debates about what was in and what was out. We knew that there would be – wherever we drew the line – there would be controversy.' One of the points of contestation in the years since has been the shift from *cultural industries* to *creative industries*, and the motivations for and coherence of this name change.<sup>10</sup> During the witness seminar, academic Andy Pratt raised this issue, suggesting that the choice of language was 'the signalling of old and new Labour'. Newbigin's account of this change is as follows:

*Well, the term cultural industries was already reasonably well established but it was also very controversial [...]. Because lots of people working in the arts said, 'That's a complete oxymoron. Culture is not industry, it's culture. It's a ridiculous reductionist exercise to try to work out what the British theatre is worth to the British economy because it's not about the economy, it's about human spirit.' So cultural industries was clearly not a term that we were going to use, because it was already massively discredited both on the practitioner side – if you like, people working in the arts – but also on the Whitehall side. Because [...] people like John Myerscough had attempted to produce these definitions of the cultural industries and it had all been systematically trashed by the Treasury. [...] We chose the term creative because it was not cultural and it was as close as we could get to what we were talking about. And of course then it got into all the debate about, 'Well, engineering is creative and pharmaceutical is creative,' and all the rest of it. We said, 'Well, nevertheless, creative industries is the closest we can get to a term.' So that was it. And everybody was reasonably happy with it. (Newbigin)*

For writers including David Hesmondhalgh (2012), Kate Oakley and Justin O'Connor (2015), and Angela McRobbie (2016), there is importance to reintroducing the notion

This definition has been a matter of heated discussion.

<sup>9</sup> Mark Banks and Justin O'Connor articulate this strand of criticism as follows: 'one of the earliest objections to the notion of "creative industries" was not its pragmatism ("let's avoid the word culture so as not to frighten the economists") but an over-extended use of "creativity". [...] If everything can be creative – a management model, a kidney dialysis machine, package holidays – then wherein lies the specific value of the cultural/creative industries?' (Banks & O'Connor 2009: 367)

<sup>10</sup> See, for example, Garnham 2005; Oakley & O'Connor 2015; Hesmondhalgh, Oakley, Lee & Nisbett 2015; McRobbie 2016.

For those involved, the primary driver for seeking to define the creative industries was being able to have a term that was simply good enough to be able to work with.

of the cultural industries. The grounds for doing so are both conceptual and political. Conceptually, there is the need to make clear that the cultural industries have the production of symbolic goods at their centre. Politically, the language of cultural industries is an important way of recovering previous discussions of the role of cultural production within broader programmes of progressive politics, such as those associated with cultural industries policies of the Greater London Council during the 1980s.

During the witness seminar, discussions of these terminologies arose, and Newbigin provided further explanation as to why those involved in creating the *Mapping Document* had found the language of the *creative* industries useful. While the term 'creative' is now devalued through overuse, at the time it was the best form of language they had in order to make the case for the economic significance of these areas of activity. Notwithstanding the amount of conceptual discussion that has followed in its wake, Newbigin makes clear that, for those involved, the primary driver for seeking to define the creative industries was being able to have a term that was simply *good enough* to be able to work with, in generating the new data they were seeking.<sup>11</sup> In this sense, he suggests, the definition achieved its aim. This was a heuristic formulation: enabling statistics to be generated, and a political case to be made. It succeeded in enabling the Task Force to begin 'pinning down some numbers and then being able to track those over time, to see how they have changed and grown – [and] that is the thing that has really made the sector acquire the salience that it has'.

## 2.2 A mixed picture: gathering the data

Some accounts of the *Mapping Document* imply that the statistical work involved was undertaken by 'DCMS statisticians' (Hesmondhalgh, Oakley, Lee & Nisbett 2015: 64). However, there were no DCMS statisticians. Smith explains that the

first challenge was coming up with the definition. The second was, "How on earth are we going to find the resources to do the mapping exercise?" Because I had no money. We'd set up the Task Force with no resources whatsoever.' The ministers came as part of their ministerial duties, and the creative industries leaders gave their time and contribution for free. A small department with extremely limited resources, DCMS was not in a position to do the research, but instead 'could bring the players together.' (Ferries). The challenge, therefore, was not only to identify what data was available that could provide an initial overview of the creative industries, but to find a way to do so with almost no budget.

The research was undertaken by Spectrum Strategy Consultants, led by Janice Hughes. Spectrum had six or seven staff working on the project, and it was undertaken pro bono. Hughes had worked with Puttnam and Newbigin in the mid-90s. They then introduced her to Smith, and she was invited to sit on the Task Force. Spectrum had particular expertise in telecommunications, and had undertaken a range of economic impact analyses, including for the UK's financial sector. Hughes explains that the company had been set up in 1994 to advise governments and businesses 'on the cutting edge of telecoms, media and sport, to understand how technology would reframe these sectors, and bring about greater convergence'. Newbigin describes Hughes as 'a very, very competent business analyst, who was deeply interested in the whole idea of the creative industries'.

It is Hughes who provides the most detailed account of how the *Mapping Document* was actually created. She explains that there were two parts of the process of generating the material. The first was to undertake desk research. The second was to speak to creative industries leaders. The purpose of these conversations was to be guided towards existing data sources. It was also to discuss the specific concerns of each sub-sector (be it fashion, publishing, music or architecture) to identify 'opportunities

<sup>11</sup> Michael Volkerling goes so far as to argue that a lack of definitional precision was a necessary and effective feature of creative industries *realpolitik*, suggesting that, 'The [legitimizing] rhetoric associated with the new cultural policies has been based on a combination of numerical specificity and conceptual ambiguity.' (Volkerling 2001: 441)

and bottlenecks' (Hughes), to explore how easy it was for them to grow, and what kind of support they needed. Spectrum had a lot of existing contacts, and was able to draw upon these in undertaking the research.

Even with this range of contacts, however, Hughes makes clear that 'it was very difficult to obtain the data'. Part of the problem was the variability of information across different sub-sectors. In some cases, such as publishing, good quality economic data was readily available. For many others, this was not the case. A second part of the problem was that, 'instead of being able to go into the government and look it up, we had to persuade the Statistics Department to create a framework for collecting the data, for analysing it, and then presenting it back in the government's statistics'. Hughes explains that, 'the government data was utterly lacking, apart from some buried in data on exports'. Reflecting on this situation, and the circumstances in which she and her team were undertaking the research, she says, 'we were actually missing that data altogether [...] in the UK GDP'.

Because of the difficulty of obtaining the information they needed, the process of developing the *Mapping Document* took longer than was first hoped. Where the government was unable to provide the data they were seeking, the Spectrum team not only sought the guidance of creative industries executives, but also trade associations. The task was then, as Hughes puts it, to 'pull it together into coherent chapters that formed the basis' of the *Mapping Document*. This final stage of the process was undertaken in collaboration with the small DCMS team, and drafts were shared with the members of the Task Force for feedback.

### 2.3 Uncharted territory: mapped for the first time

Those involved in the *Mapping Document* knew that, as a piece of research, it had considerable limitations. Newbiggin comments:

*I think it would be true to say we chose the term 'mapping' document quite carefully because we said, 'This is unchartered territory. This is the first shot. It may not be perfect but we build from this.' The data sets were quite difficult to pull together*

*and we wanted to make sure that the data sets were robust so that they could not be dismissed by the Treasury or by sceptics as being over optimistic or inaccurate, or whatever. It was all quite conservative and quite cautious in terms of the numbers.*  
(Newbiggin)

Hughes acknowledges that they were 'hugely underestimating' the size of the creative industries. As just one example, while theatre was included, the economic value of musicals that originated in the UK and then travelled around the world was 'utterly underestimated'. Smith readily admits that the first mapping exercise had significant limitations. 'I think everyone would accept it was a pretty rough and ready exercise. Some of it was done by guesswork, some of it was done by extrapolation, some of it was done by real research. But it gave us a pretty good indication of what the shape of the overall sector was.' He explains that by the time the mapping exercise was repeated in 2001, sufficient funds were available to 'commission it properly', with City University undertaking the work. The second iteration was 'by that stage a more accurate document in terms of the facts and figures it came up with. But the 1998 document was a very good first stab'.

Looking back, and considering whether he would have wanted anything done differently, Smith says, 'If we'd been able to get it done in greater detail and accuracy from the outset that would have been good, but it simply wasn't an option. We had to rely on what help was available, rather wonderfully available.' While recognising these limitations, Smith makes clear that he is 'really proud of what we did, and especially of the fact that we did it. Because it was the first time really anywhere in the world that anyone had realised the possibilities of this, and put something in place'.



## 3

## WHAT WERE THE CONSEQUENCES?

When it comes to assessing the influence of the *1998 Mapping Document*, many of those involved tell an ambivalent story. The document is frequently cited as a key moment in the development of cultural policy in the UK and internationally.<sup>12</sup> Moreover, for some writers, New Labour's celebration of the creative industries has played a consequential role in broader processes of economic and political transformation. This includes, for example, Angela McRobbie's account of popular representations of creative work – and the imperative to 'be creative' – as having a key function within the overall neo-liberalisation of the UK economy (McRobbie 2016). But Gail Rebeck reflects the views of several of those involved when she suggests that the consequences of the *Mapping Document* were 'everything and nothing'. In this final section, I discuss why this might be the case.

### 3.1 Everything and nothing

The DCMS *Creative Industries Mapping Document* was published on Wednesday 11 November 1998. Several thousand copies were printed, and it was made available online. A launch event was held, and the publication received some press coverage.<sup>13</sup> But what happened next?

Ferries was the civil servant in charge of disseminating the document and developing DCMS's work on the creative industries beyond publication. 'For more than three years we had a core script that had the key bits of information,' he explains – namely, the creative industries' contribution to the UK economy, and 'the potential for growth, building on British success'. A

range of work programmes was established within DCMS, including efforts to embed the creative industries agenda within other government departments, and there were quite straightforward tangible consequences of the work in terms of the creation of bodies within Whitehall to support the creative industries. These included a Music Advisory Group, jointly chaired by DCMS and DTI, and an Export Advisory Group.

Having the economic numbers enabled civil servants and their ministers to make the case for the significance of creative industries within Whitehall forums that they would not otherwise have been able to, and there were 'trade delegations where the creative industries took [...] a far more central role than they would have done' (Fawcett). In these ways, Fawcett suggests, 'there were moves within Whitehall that reflected the overall new policy direction. So, the work that we were doing on the mapping exercise, and in other areas of Task Force work, was starting to have an impact in terms of the discourse in government.'

However, the Treasury was slow to fully engage with the idea of the creative industries. Smith comments on his disappointment:

*The really frustrating thing was that the Treasury didn't really wake up to its importance. Even though Geoffrey Robinson, one of the junior Treasury ministers, very close to Gordon Brown, had been on the Task Force and he had personally absolutely understood the importance of what we were doing [...] the Treasury generally simply didn't pick it up and run with it. It took them*

<sup>12</sup> Philip Schlesinger writes, 'New Labour's definition, first aired in the *Creative Industries Mapping Document*, [...] proved astonishingly durable and has been widely exported.' (Schlesinger 2009: 12) Nonetheless, it is important to recognise that this has not been a straightforward process of the creative industries script being simply 'transferred' around the world. For example, Hye-Kyung Lee's comparative study of the UK and South Korea demonstrates that contrasting approaches to creative industries policy have developed under the influence of the specific political conditions of each country (Lee 2019).

<sup>13</sup> See, for example, the coverage of the *Mapping Document* on an early version of the BBC news website, which had itself been launched just a year before: [news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk\\_politics/209198.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk_politics/209198.stm) [Accessed 25.09.19]

*another six or seven years before they really understood it properly.* (Smith)

He comments that if there had been 'more encouragement from Number 10 and Number 11, really to go out and push the message early on, that would have been good'. Had the Treasury been more engaged, this would have had the benefit of enabling the readier development of policies, including 'facilitating access to finance for start-up creative businesses, helping cities and regional development agencies to support spaces for creative businesses, and strong export support for the creative sector'. Smith provides an account of listening to an interview with Gordon Brown, as Chancellor, on BBC Radio 4's *Today* programme, six or seven years following the publication of the *Mapping Document*.<sup>14</sup> In previous speeches Brown had listed the industries of the future as biotech, science and financial services. On this occasion, however, he added the creative industries to this list. Smith says, 'I can remember leaping out of bed saying, "Hooray! This is wonderful. He's got it at last."' And almost from that moment onwards that became the mantra. That was where I was initially hoping to get to with the publication of the *Mapping Document*, but it took some time before it did.'

Smith comments that it was difficult to get the Department of Education on board with the development of policy. He indicates that it was not so much the challenge of gaining ministerial support, as getting their senior officials to take it all seriously. 'It really was like pushing treacle uphill. Really, really difficult to get them seized of all of this. I think they're getting better, but it's still a struggle.' On the other hand, he explains:

*The people who immediately got it were the people in local authorities and the regional development agencies. They immediately saw that the development of creative clusters [...] could help enormously in the economic regeneration of an area. It was really heartening to see, right the way through that period when the Treasury was being deaf.*

[...] [They were] *really seriously getting it and understanding it, and beginning to develop local policies to stimulate the creative sector.* (Smith)

The language of people 'getting it' was used frequently by interviewees. This formulation implies an established, objective fact – the significance and potential of the creative industries – that is there to be apprehended (or overlooked). It would be interesting to hear from people who were also in government at the time, in the Treasury and other departments, to have their perspective on this period and the potential significance of the creative industries. Were they not persuaded by the case for the importance of these areas of activity? Were they overburdened with other priorities? Did they recognise the significance and potential of the creative industries but for reasons of resourcing, or political positioning, were unable to develop supportive policy measures for some years subsequent to 1998?

Newbigin suggests that the publication of the 2001 *Creative Industries Mapping Document* was a significant 'turning point' in the level of interest the Treasury was taking. Only with a second set of data was it possible to indicate the creative industries' rate of growth. For this reason, he says, it is 'in a way perfectly legitimate' that it was the 2001 document that generated more of a response from the Treasury.

Smith comments that, while it took several years for key parts of central government to respond fully to the mapping, 'over time it has had a transformative effect on the attitude of government to this whole economic sector. It is now a part of the common acceptance within government that the creative industries are hugely important, that they require government love and attention and promotion, and that we ignore their needs at our peril. That's common understanding now, across the entirety of government from Prime Minister downwards'. This would not have happened, he suggests, if it had not been for the initial work of the 1998 and 2001 mapping documents. To what extent

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Had the Treasury been more engaged, this would have had the benefit of enabling the readier development of policies.

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<sup>14</sup> This story was relayed during Smith's interview with the author. It is also reported in Hesmondhalgh, Oakley, Lee & Nisbett 2015.

While those involved in the *Mapping Document* indicated that a coherent and sustained approach to supporting UK creative industries has not been established, they also took the view that the document was, nonetheless, very consequential.

would others agree with Smith that this is now an established understanding across UK government? To what extent has the promotion of the creative industries been embedded as a permanent and prominent policy concern?

Hughes questions whether there is anything close to a strategic approach to creative industries policy in the UK. 'What we've lacked is that coherent push and understanding that I would argue the financial services sector and even manufacturing has.' She suggests that there is much more that could be done. 'I still believe, actually, that the DCMS is ridiculously under-resourced relative to the business value that it represents. It's crazy.' At the same time, the DTI are 'still so oriented on what I call the manufacturing heritage'. The creative industries remains a growth sector and yet 'still massively under-resourced, under-focused, under-led. It's not really there on the map. So has the government learned anything in the past 20 years?'

Smith describes how, in the work of the Task Force beyond the publication, they identified four areas they felt government could help to address. These were: access to finance for creative start-up businesses, the role of creativity in the education system, the availability of affordable workshop and studio space, and how to secure the protection of intellectual property globally. In both his interview and his recorded contribution to the witness seminar, he said there is still lots of work to be done in respect of each of these, commenting, 'I think they remain the key issues for the development of the creative industries', and 'we're still not that far along the road of solving them'.

Other members of the Task Force agree that progress has been slow. During the witness seminar Rebuck said that, looking back to 1997, 'Simply not enough has changed'. Getting 'access to finance is still difficult. Getting loans is difficult for start-ups', and 'creative education in schools has been downgraded'. Newbiggin concurred:

*Government is still struggling to work out quite what it should do. As Chris Smith said, it is not a matter of subsidy but of policies. [...] I still think it is odd, however, that it has not made that transition into being a core part of thinking about industry and finance, really, even in this country, where there has been more engagement by politicians and certainly by officials and by financial institutions than almost anywhere else in the world. There is still a hell of a long way to go, it seems to me. (Newbiggin)*

During the witness seminar, Haydon Phillips, who was the Permanent Secretary at DCMS at the time the *Mapping Document* was written, suggested that government does not always perceive 'all the skills you need to get a creative operation going'. Government still does not understand the arts and creative industries, and 'institutionally, it is unimaginative'.

However, while those involved in the *Mapping Document* indicated that a coherent and sustained approach to supporting UK creative industries has not been established, they also took the view that the document was, nonetheless, very consequential. Newbiggin described the mapping exercise as having been a process of 'kite flying'. Similar metaphors were used by other participants in the witness seminar, including 'sending fireworks up into the air'. Newbiggin indicates that this was an important and successful approach. The *Mapping Document* started a conversation, and that was the most important thing that it did. For Hughes, the process of mapping the creative industries 'gave us a language. From this, we were able to think about it in a different way. We were able to see this proliferation across the UK into all the regional bodies, which was fantastic, with people embracing it and knowing how to talk about it'.

Towards the conclusion of the seminar, Newbiggin summarised his own sense, like Rebuck, that the consequences of the *Mapping Document* have been everything and nothing. 'At the end of the day, it seems to me that the creative industries were really

a kind of branding exercise.<sup>15</sup> At one level, he suggested:

*The consequences have been beyond our wildest imaginings, in the sense that this is now seen as a significant part of the global economy and is taken seriously by almost every government. [...] In another sense, it is extraordinary to me that, 20 years on, it is still primarily located in the culture department and has not really transitioned into the core of Whitehall. Someone said to me the other day, talking about the Industrial Strategy, 'At the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy [...] they pretend to understand the creative industries but still do not really.' It may be an unfair criticism, but it is interesting how difficult it has been for government to engage with this whole agenda. Doing things in other countries, I quite often come across people asking, 'Where should the creative industries be located: the culture department, the education department, the economic-planning department or the business department?' Of course, it runs across all of them, so it naturally gives government a headache and probably always will, because it is such a tricky beast. (Newbigin)*

### 3.2 The death of the creative industries (long live the creative economy!)

During these final stages of the witness seminar, the conversation turned to whether the notion of the creative industries has had its day. The writer and consultant John Howkins suggested that the terminology of the creative industries 'was perfect then, in the late 90s', but the phrase is now a problem, with connotations of an outmoded, top-down view of governments focusing on old-fashioned jobs. He suggested that *jobs* need to be distinguished from *work*, and that the changing nature of work is not effectively grasped by government, or

by the notion of the creative industries. Similarly, the arts administrator Dick Penny raised the question of whether the creative industries are an 'industry' at all, an issue many commentators have been interested in over the past 20 years. Penny concurred with Howkins and Newbigin that it was valuable to use the language of creative industries in the late 90s, to make the case to government. But, he suggested, this form of activity now needs to be understood as an 'eco-system'.<sup>16</sup>

For Newbigin, the language of creative industries was born of a particular moment in time. That time, he indicated, has now passed. He agreed with a number of contributors that:

*in talking about a creative economy and the fact that there are all kinds of new skills and new industries that are emerging, it becomes less and less valuable to try to define it as a sector. [...] It is moving from being a sector – 'this is a creative industry and that is not a creative industry' – [but] we had to start somewhere. It was a mapping document. Already we have moved on sufficiently that that terminology is not useful, so I agree with you. (Newbigin)*

During the witness seminar a range of important questions were raised regarding the relationship between the creative industries and the wider economy. To what extent was an underlying driver for this work an anticipation, by Task Force members, of the transformation of the economy by digitisation? On the basis of the research interviews and the witness seminar, it does not appear that those involved with the *Mapping Document* were collectively undertaking a sustained engagement with issues of digital transformation. Newbigin commented that 'all this thinking about the creative industries was opening, in an unanticipated way, a Pandora's box of all these other issues about the switch to a

For Newbigin, the language of creative industries was born of a particular moment in time. That time, he indicated, has now passed.

<sup>15</sup> Newbigin has recently written the following, which elaborates this point: 'The term 'creative industries' was as much a branding exercise as an attempted definition; it was a political initiative, aimed at raising the profile of an eclectic jumble of generally IP-based, culturally-rooted businesses that governments and banks had conspicuously failed to understand or take seriously as part of the economy.' (Newbigin 2019: 21)

<sup>16</sup> This suggestion resonates with the growing body of research offering accounts of creative/cultural ecology and eco-systems. (See, for example, Howkins 2009; Holden 2015; Dovey, Moreton, Sparke & Sharpe 2016; Gross & Wilson 2018, 2019.)

The *Mapping Document* played a distinctive role in raising fundamental questions about the changing relationships between macroeconomics, creativity and the very nature of work.

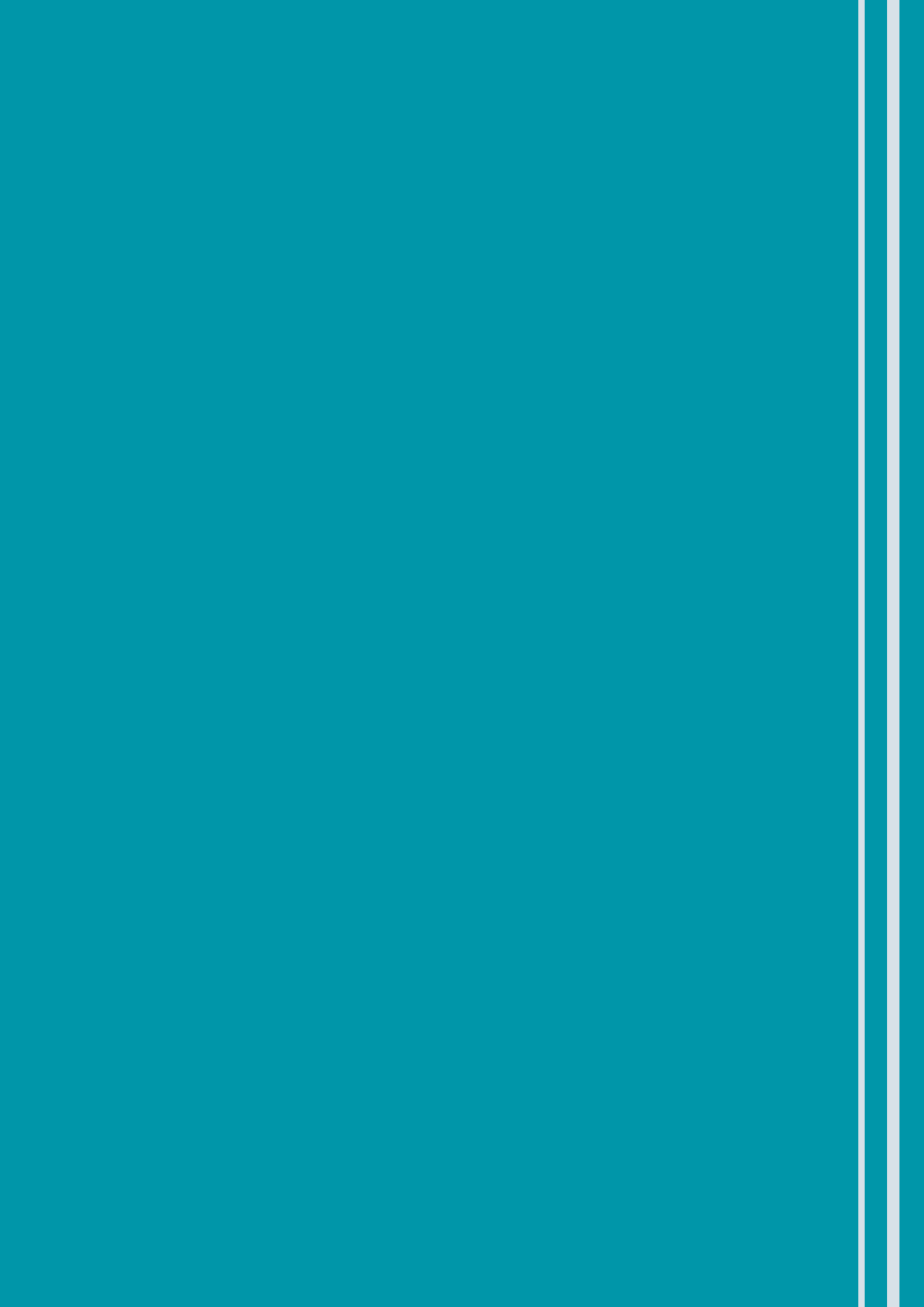
digital economy and the switch to individual creativity being such an important driving force'. As we have seen, the *Mapping Document* was based upon a small piece of ad hoc research. It was not positioned to deal in depth with these challenges, and one of the consequences of this was that while it provided provisional answers to some particular questions, it raised a great many more.

Newbigin indicates that at the time the *Mapping Document* was written, one of the aspects of the creative industries that made them of interest was their 'labour intensity'. During the witness seminar he reiterated this point, indicating the enduring significance of creative work and its labour intensity – 20 years on – within the context of technological transformations of the economy. These changes will have 'a huge impact on jobs and change the labour market. I am not suggesting that the creative industries are the answer, but they are going to remain labour-intensive in some areas longer than, or in different ways to, many other sectors of the economy'. Similarly, Hughes emphasised the ever-growing significance of the creative industries, given the rise of automation. Because 'what the machines can't replace, what's much more difficult for them to replace, [is] the design element'. Newbigin referenced the 2013 NESTA manifesto in which a shift is discussed from creative industries to creative economy (Bakhshi, Hargreaves & Mateos-Garcia 2013). Part of this shift, he suggested, is that 'design thinking is beginning to permeate every aspect of the economy. In a while it will be pointless to talk about the creative economy in the same way that it is pointless to talk about the digital economy'.

We have travelled some distance since 1998: from the creative industries to the creativity economy and soon, perhaps, to a stage at which creativity becomes so embedded within understandings of what the economy is, and how contemporary economies function, that the adjective becomes redundant. This is simply 'the economy'. Nonetheless, within a context of rapid technological, political and ecological change, an urgent and fundamental question is how the economy is (re-)conceptualised, and what forms of policy intervention are possible and desirable. Any such re-conceptualisation will need to regard creativity as integral to what economies are,

just as it will treat digital technologies as an integral feature, not a sector.

As discussed at the end of section 1, this report draws attention to the need to analyse policy processes across multiple scales, from the macro to the micro. In this section we have seen that those involved in the creation of the 1998 *Mapping Document* – a small group of people, with extremely limited resources – were identifying some enormous issues of economic transformation. They did so *in medias res*, in the middle of the action, so to speak. The consequences were everything and nothing: enormously influential, and, for those involved, disappointingly limited. But in both the successes and the failures, the insights and the blind spots, for good or ill, the *Mapping Document* played a distinctive role in raising fundamental questions about the changing relationships between macroeconomics, creativity and the very nature of work.



## CONCLUSIONS

The Creative Industries Task Force, and the 1998 *Creative Industries Mapping Document* it produced, was a watershed moment for cultural policy. Via a witness seminar and interviews with some of those most centrally involved, this report has revisited that moment to reassess how, why and with what consequences the *Mapping Document* was created. The overall conclusions are as follows:

1. The development of the 1998 *Creative Industries Mapping Document* was ad hoc. The process of defining the creative industries – and the process of establishing the data – were far from systematic. The work was undertaken on extremely limited resources, with the underpinning research conducted on a pro bono basis by Janice Hughes and her colleagues at Spectrum Strategy Consulting. There were no DCMS statisticians.
2. In 1998 the available data with which to map the creative industries was extremely limited, and there was considerable variation in the availability of information for each of the 13 sub-sectors. It was not until the 2001 iteration of the *Mapping Document* (which enjoyed a number of advantages, including the opportunity to build on the previous work, and being much better resourced) that data could be established on a more reliable basis.
3. Caution should be exercised in reading the *Mapping Document* as a very central or deliberate part of the New Labour project. The evidence of this research suggests that while conditions within Blair's Labour Party proved conducive to the mapping work, it was essentially driven by Chris Smith as the first Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport and a small group of people with who he was working.
4. The *Mapping Document* was both an enormous success and a disappointment. It succeeded in naming a new sector of the economy. The consequences of this

have been enormous. On the other hand, its direct impact on UK public policy was considerably smaller than its authors and commissioners had hoped.

5. After 20 years of contestation regarding the definition of the creative industries, the debate has now reached a point at which even some of those most centrally involved in the Task Force take the view that the notion of the creative industries was valuable at the time, but has since been superseded. New vocabularies and models are required – and are being developed – with which to understand the role and significance of creativity within the economy.

During the witness seminar, John Newbigin suggested that the creative industries agenda had impetus in 1997 for three reasons. First, the Labour Party's 'modernisation programme'. Second, the transformation of the economy via digital technologies, with convergence 'clearly coming down the track'. Third, 'the fact that our education system needed radical overhaul'. On the other hand, there were very specific circumstances in which this work was undertaken. 'One of the reasons why this took off is because it was a new government. It was a bunch of people who had not been in government for a very long time and, therefore, wanted to do some new things and make them happen – and make them happen quickly.'

There are strong grounds for understanding the 1998 *Creative Industries Mapping Document* as emerging from and indicative of major transformations in the political, economic and technological conditions of late 20th-century Britain, and it is with good reason that it is widely treated as emblematic of the New Labour era. Yet the creation of the document, and its famous definition of the creative industries, was driven by a small number of people working fleet of foot.

Exploring this history via the perspectives of those directly involved, this report has demonstrated the importance of paying attention to different scales of explanation at the same time. In the present case, this includes: macroeconomic transformations, the repositioning of the Labour Party, the (often unwieldy) machinery of government, and the micro-conditions of policy development. A methodology of this kind supports examination of the *tensions* and *disconnections* between multiple explanatory factors, as well as their alignments. This better places us to trace exactly why such a policy document came into being, and how it came to have the specific characteristics that it did. Moreover, it enables a fuller understanding of the complex afterlife this particular document has led: widely criticised for its empirical, conceptual and political shortcomings, and enormously influential.



Photos taken at the witness seminar held on Tuesday 11 December 2018, at Somerset House, London.

Images (clockwise, from top): John Newbiggin and Janice Hughes; John Newbiggin, Janice Hughes and Ian Hargreaves; Ian Hargreaves and Gail Rebeck; Deborah Bull



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## APPENDIX: LIST OF INTERVIEWEES

**David Fawcett.** Civil servant within DCMS, 1997–98.

**Alan Ferries.** Civil servant within DCMS, 1998–2001.

**Janice Hughes, CBE.** CEO and Founder of Spectrum Strategy Consulting, and a member of the Creative Industries Task Force.

**Lydia Kan.** Project manager for the 2001 *Creative Industries Mapping Document*, City University.

**John Newbiggin, OBE.** Special Advisor to Chris Smith, 1997–2001.

**Lord David Puttnam, CBE.** Film producer and member of the Creative Industries Task Force.

**Baroness Gail Rebuck, DBE.** Chair and Chief Executive of Random House UK, and a member of the Creative Industries Task Force.

**Eric Salama.** Strategy Director of WPP Group PLC, and a member of the Creative Industries Task Force.

**The Rt. Hon. Lord Chris Smith.** Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, 1997–2001.

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