



## Learning the Language - Creative Industries & the Arts

*Initial Provocation*

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## Creative Industries & the Arts? Some Thoughts for Theatre Forum

It's been twelve years since the Labour Government in the UK showed first signs of a policy embrace with the Creative Industries – defined as a set of 13 sub-sectors. In 1998 and then 2001, the Department of Culture, Media and Sport launched Creative Mapping studies – seeking to codify what is essentially an abstraction of multiple activities that have one thing in common: they have creativity at their core.

Subsequently, the DCMS launched a Creative Industries Task Force – the centrepiece of a strategic programme that has catapulted the creative industries to significant policy heights. Very quickly, it seemed every city, region and nation had to have a creative industries strategy; and for many places, the creative industries were positioned as a panacea for economic woes, or as a major value-adder to strategic agendas that range from social cohesion to tourism, education to regeneration.

Ever since:

*"(T)he relationships between the arts and the creative industries have been subject of much debate. The initial definition of the creative industries deliberately included the traditional arts with the 'classical' cultural industries (broadcasting, film, publishing etc.), design-led industries (architecture, craft, design, advertising, fashion) and so-called new media (software, computer games and electronic publishing). There have been many questions around these definitions (why antiques and not museums and galleries; why was 'music' with the visual and performing arts?)" (Justin O'Connor 2009).*

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There are some real challenges here and it seems many of us have spent some of the last decade stuck in a definitional impasse, unable to find the terms or concepts adequate to describe a complex set of activities under one 'heading'; or to appreciate how something that has a starting point in 'culture' and notionally includes 'the arts' can have at least one outcome that is fiercely economic.

For example, the broad definition of the creative industries or its descriptive offshoots such as the 'Creative Economy' or even 'Experience Economy', perhaps over-assumes the compatibility between different activities. Are dancers working in the same sector as advertisers or TV companies? Also, what happens when definitions of the sector are not accepted by businesses and organisations that make up its constituent parts? For example, can 'theatre' be assumed as a creative industry if its core values relate to the intrinsic qualities of culture rather than its commercial appropriation?

Obviously 'creativity' does tie different parts of the Creative Industries together, but for many, this was never quite enough. Indeed, in recent years, even policy-makers have called for a wider approach to creativity, acknowledging the pervasiveness of creativity across different sectors that stand outside of the creative industries definition – such as in science. Moreover, creativity is also recognised as a core competency from school to the workplace – whether one works in the creative industries or not.



But what of arts and culture? The rise and rise of the creative industries as a favourite sector for policy-makers is driven primarily by an appreciation of their notional economic value. This can have the effect of sidelining that other, perhaps old-fashioned value for arts and culture – yes their intrinsic value as a good unto themselves and at their best the provider of transformational experiences. The intrinsic or non-instrumental value of arts and culture is one linked to traditional policy instruments of subsidy. By contrast, the dominant narrative for the creative industries is one of growth and competition. Correspondingly, policy solutions commonly include cluster development, specialised business support and investment, and market development. These are not couched in the language of subsidy, even if the tools used are strikingly similar.

*How then can an economic policy for the creative industries be inclusive of or complementary to arts and cultural policy that supports activities for which sustainable business models, let alone commercial opportunities, are hard to come by?*

*Or should there then be a clear separation between publicly subsidised 'art and culture' and commercially oriented creative industries? Do we need an industrial policy for creativity that stands apart from a policy for arts and culture?*

In my presentation at the Theatre Forum, I will introduce the strategic context for the creative industries and explore the shifting policy dynamic between art, culture and the economy. Here I will provide an overview of the core terms and themes developed over the last 12 years of creative industries policy, providing examples from our work internationally. I will then seek to locate arts and cultural policy within this overall 'creative economy' context.



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This will show how the best creative industries policy links investment in excellent, sustainable arts and cultural organisations to the growth and competitiveness of the overall creative economy. Here a strong and confident arts and cultural sector is key for developing talent, providing inspiration, and developing content for more growth-orientated creative businesses.

Also, I will suggest that even more of a link can be made between the 'subsidised' arts and the commercially-driven creative industries and wider 'knowledge economy' – as a tool in attracting and retaining talent to a place; and as a provider of an enabling environment for experimentation, risk and innovation.

I will conclude by introducing a new set of possibilities for Ireland:

- Where the arts and cultural sector is nurtured as the R&D ecology for the wider knowledge economy.
- Where the social value of the arts – a provider of confidence, different types of consciousness, inspiration, 'soft' and 'hard skills' – is recognised as critical for places and economies that combine wellbeing with economic development.
- Where an arts and cultural sector that effortlessly crosses boundaries, embraces risk, and champions innovation, ends up being a provider of enormous economic value, whether or not this is intentional.

**Overall I will ask whether a future 'Creative Industries policy' should have arts and culture at its heart- as its core business. If we get over definitions and move on to nurturing the progressive connections between different parts of the 'creative economy', then we have a chance.**



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