

**Policy transfer as policy assemblage: making policy for the creative industries in  
New Zealand**

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## **Policy transfer as policy assemblage: making policy for the creative industries in New Zealand**

### *Abstract*

The study of policy transfer appeals to geography and cognate disciplines because it offers a powerful way of conceptualising how policy regimes travel and internationalise. This is reflected in its use for understanding uneven processes of recent state restructuring, usually referred to as neoliberalisation. This paper adopts an assemblage perspective on policy transfer that, instead of emphasising broad processes of change, focuses on how the objects of a transferred policy are constituted in different places. Using the case of the transfer of the creative industries policy concept from the UK to New Zealand as an example, it is argued that the rendering of policy objects using, in this case, specific calculative techniques constitutes them as a global form universal to different places. However, this process does not run smoothly; it requires that the policy object is articulated in a policy assemblage in the new site. The work of assembly requires a range of different kinds of work, including the alignment of divergent political motivations, the translation of different ideas, and the invention of new concepts and programmes. This demonstrates how policy transfer is political *and* technical, and that its study can benefit from analyses that traverse both these aspects.

## Introduction

Recent years have seen a growing interest in processes now routinely described as policy transfer (Evans, 2004; McCann, 2008; Peck and Theodore, 2001; Stone, 2004; Ward, 2006). This refers to the manner in which policy programmes developed in a particular time and place come to influence the development of a similar programme in another time and place (Dolowitz and Marsh, 1996): thus it captures an aspect of the internationalisation, transnationalisation or globalisation of policy regimes, but emphasises the people, places and moments through which this situation eventuates. For geographers, the appeal of policy transfer studies lies in its implicit appreciation for the spatiality of processes of political and economic change, offering powerful insights into how particular policy regimes spatialise and providing a fresh geographical perspective on uneven processes of restructuring in the global political economy (Peck, 2001). For this reason, much of this research is closely linked to debates around how neoliberalisation is understood as a feature of restructuring processes (see esp. the research collected in England and Ward, 2007; on the debates see Barnett, 2005; Castree, 2006; Larner, 2003; Peck, 2004). In the context of these debates, ongoing empirical and conceptual work on policy transfer is necessary to further refine how we understand the forces driving political-economic change more broadly, whether neoliberal or otherwise, as involving real people, places and times.

While most geographical work on policy transfer is broadly characterised by a state restructuring approach (e.g. Jessop and Peck, 2001; Peck, 2002; Peck and Theodore, 2001; Ward, 2006), this paper considers the insights offered by an assemblage perspective on these processes. Drawing particularly on the work of Collier and Ong (2005), two arguments are made. First, policy transfer involves technical processes through which the objects of the policy being transferred are defined, delineated and made thinkable in the place it is being transferred to. This makes the policy object into a *global form*: an object with universal validity in both places through its situation in self-referential technical systems. Second, that the making of a global form necessarily involves the making of a *global assemblage* that provides the means for a particular global form to be articulated in a particular place. The making of the assemblage is far from straight-forward and, as will be shown, often proceeds in a haphazard and disjunctive fashion, but it is in the making of an assemblage that a policy transfer is effected. As such, the paper will demonstrate how policy transfer processes are political *and* technical.

These themes are explored through an analysis of the emergence of ‘creative industries’ policy in New Zealand since 2000 (Kaino, 2007; Larner et al, 2007). The term ‘creative industries’ was initially developed as a policy concept in the UK in the late 1990s by the newly elected ‘New Labour’ Government and has since transferred to other nation’s policy programmes as well as academic and popular discourses. This concept was part of an overarching political project that emerged at the intersection of New Labour attempting to sell itself as a truly post-‘old’ Labour, post-Thatcher government and the reimagining of the recovering British economy after deindustrialisation. The most significant of a number of documents produced analysing and celebrating the creative industries was the *Creative Industries Mapping Document* (CIMD) first published in 1998 (Department for Culture, Media and Sport (henceforth DCMS), 1998; 2001). This document ‘mapped’ these industries into the British economy by measuring their contribution to employment, export earnings and revenue, in the process constituting them as a distinctive economic sector (Christophers, 2007). Since this time the creative industries have come to feature in a variety of regional initiatives and a national ‘creative economy programme’ originally intended to shore up intellectual property law.

Meanwhile, the New Zealand Government has contemporaneously used the creative industries concept and the practice of mapping in the development of policy since 2000. This has occurred in three distinct, though overlapping, stages. The creative industries were introduced to New Zealand policy discourses around the time of the November 1999 election which saw the Fifth Labour Government come to power. Here they were relatively peripheral and featured mainly as an appealing concept in discussions between the government and the self-identified New Zealand ‘cultural sector’ on how the latter could be reinvigorated after years of neglect. The second phase, begun soon after the election, was an attempt at a cultural policy solution known as the ‘Heart of the Nation’ or ‘HotNation’ project. This made the concept of the creative industries central to its policy solution through a deep engagement with the methods and practices of the CIMD applied to the New Zealand context. For reasons to be discussed below, this was a failure, but it resulted in the creative industries becoming a useful concept for other policy actors less ideologically tied to the cultural sector. As a consequence, in the third phase the creative industries became a concept that informed the formation of New Zealand economic policy based on its contribution to export revenue and its potential as an ‘enabler’ for other

industries. As a result, they had a central place, alongside biotechnology and information technology, in that government's economic strategy.

The paper begins by fleshing out an assemblage perspective on policy transfer. It is argued that the dominant state restructuring perspective that has informed many analyses of policy transfer can be extended by focusing on the technical aspects of a transfer and how these interact with the complex processes of policy assembly in which divergent political motivations are aligned, translations are effected and new policy forms are created, resulting in the co-constitution of the policy object as a global form and the associated policy programmes as a global assemblage. The bulk of the paper considers the effective extension of this global assemblage to New Zealand as a process of creative industries policy transfer. This is described first as a technical process in which the creative industries are constituted as a policy object in New Zealand in much the same way as they were in the UK. Second, the complex processes that made this constitution possible are described through a discussion of the three-phase development of creative industries policy in New Zealand. It is concluded that a consideration of the technical aspects of a policy transfer through an assemblage approach can reveal the diversity of techno-political work that can go into a seemingly straight-forward policy transfer.

### **Taking an assemblage approach to policy transfer**

Existing work by a number of geographers and cognate social science scholars has demonstrated that policy transfers occur in the context of projects of policy formation in particular policy-making centres. They have illustrated a number of aspects of this process necessary for understanding its mechanics and frequency. For one, policy transfers rarely, if ever, result in carbon copied policies being instituted in different places. Differing political contexts, cultural and social norms, local path dependencies and institutional variation inevitably mean policy programmes change as they travel (Phelps et al., 2007; Peck and Theodore, 2001). Indeed, and secondly, the reality of the differences between places mean policy transfer generally involves a range of tactics on the part of the policy-makers to make extra-local policy programmes applicable in local circumstances. This usually involves the ostensible 'tailoring' of transferred policies to make them more responsive to the particularity of place, although these tactics are often designed to skirt around the problem of particularity. For example, Peck and colleagues (see Jessop and Peck, 2001; Peck, 2002;

Peck and Theodore, 2001) describe processes of ‘fast policy’ transfer that invoke the supposed accelerated pace of the ‘real world’ enabling policy-makers to construct crises that demand urgent action and bring in policies deemed to ‘work’ elsewhere in response. Such transfers depend on essentialising and delocalising policy programmes, converting them into ‘how-to’ manuals of policy implementation, and, importantly, using charismatic experts and consultants to convince other policy-makers of its effectiveness.

Third, these policy consultants and experts now constitute a growing cabal of increasingly internationalised individuals who act as policy advisors at a range of levels and in a variety of capacities. Often housed in think-tanks, consultancies and international institutions, they populate increasingly transnationally stretched networks of policy actors with democratically disproportionate influence over the shape of policies at more and more administrative sites around the world (Phelps et al., 2007; England et al., 2007; Ward, 2006; Peck, 2002; Stone, 2004). Finally, much of this work has emphasised the role of policy transfer in processes of state restructuring, understanding instances of policy transfer as a lens into, and a technology of, processes of neoliberalisation (England and Ward, 2007; England et al., 2007; Peck, 2003). Thus the study of policy transfer allows for consideration of the actors, agencies, networks, tactics and texts involved in the uneven spread of neoliberalism.

But policy transfer is not purely a political project. As McCann (2008) and Larner and Le Heron (2002) show, the circulation of particular forms of knowledge, such as benchmarking, open spaces of comparability between different places, enabling the back and forth flow of particular discourses and practices. These circulating knowledge forms discipline policy-makers into assessing policy alternatives in certain ways and selecting particular policy options. On the other hand, they can provide the necessary tools for conceptualising novel (for the policy-maker) ways of thinking about the objects of policy and opportunities for reformulating existing policy programmes and aligning divergent or competing interests around a new agenda. Making different places comparable in this way can mean what Ward (2006, page 70) refers to as policy “diffusion channels and distribution networks” are often opened in a fashion that is as much *technical* as it is political (McCann, 2008).

Technical systems are widely recognised knowledge forms, such as statistical and calculative techniques, that define, delineate, codify and measure particular policy objects, rendering them available for comparison, evaluation and policy formation. The technical is differentiated from the political because it is set up to be impartial and neutral, while the latter describes intentional action for a particular interest. Although technical systems will often be deployed by political interests seeking to benefit from their apparent neutrality, this quality by definition creates a distance between the political interest and the technically-informed claims they are making. As a result, policy transfers that rely on technical forms of knowledge can be difficult for any one interest to control and can occur in unplanned, unexpected and non-sequacious ways. A focus on the generalised and particular neoliberal politics of policy transfers can obscure the technical work that goes into making particular transfers conceivable and, more saliently, the moments where a particular policy transfer takes an unexpected turn to become part of an unforeseen and/or novel policy assemblage.

Taking what I will call here an ‘assemblage approach’ to policy transfer can help us to theorise specific techno-political moments of transfer in a way that complements existing state restructuring approaches. The increasingly common social science concept of the assemblage appeals because it refuses an a priori privileging of the structural and the systematic without evacuating these elements completely to leave just thick description and cultural relativism. Hence it is “a resource with which to address in analysis and writing the modernist problem of the heterogeneous within the ephemeral, while preserving some concept of the structural so embedded in the enterprise of social science research” (Marcus and Saka, 2006, page 102). It takes account of the often overwhelming complexity of the world, qualifying, but not denying, structural explanations by pointing out that structures are intimately linked to, and emergent from, particular assemblages that have come together in complex ways (Allen and Cochrane, 2007).

The concept of the assemblage infers the importance of both materiality and practice to social formations (Collier, 2006; Collier and Ong; 2005; DeLanda, 2006; Li, 2007; Olds 2007; Olds and Thrift, 2005). They are material because they are assembled out of a variety of heterogeneous elements, potentially including bodies, texts, discourses, buildings and factories as well as ‘natural’ forms like trees, oil and carbon. In an assemblage elements are made to cohere together enough to appear systematic, or at least describable, as a city, a government, an institution, a commodity chain and so on. Thus a city can be an assemblage

of people, networks, buildings and ideas. A nation-state can be an assemblage of cities, institutions, policy programmes, local and central governments and discourses of nationhood. Singular assemblages can therefore be elements in 'larger' assemblages (DeLanda, 2006). Each assemblage will have a particular spatiality and temporality, but will be problematic to map as they inevitably remain blurry 'at the edges'. This highlights the importance of practices of assembly to the production and maintenance of an assemblage, and indicates that they are always fluctuating and in (re)formation (Li, 2007). Political and technical work is required to make the assemblage cohere. Failure here could result in the assemblage fracturing or failing altogether. Therefore, these practices of assembly, which are often mundane, everyday and seemingly trivial, constitute an important locus for analysis.

The assemblage approach offers a way of thinking about processes associated with globalisation and transnationalisation, including international policy transfer, which does not resort to the structurally scalar narratives such processes seem to demand. Collier and Ong (2005; see also Collier, 2006) posit the presence of 'global assemblages' that take shape co-constitutively around what they term 'global forms'. Global forms are particular objects, systems or techniques that can make a claim to universality insofar as their validity is not dependent on the context of their production. For Collier (2006, page 400): "(t)he implication is not that global forms are everywhere but that they have a distinctive capacity for decontextualisation and recontextualisation, abstractability and movement, across diverse social and cultural situations." However, universality is not an absolute condition. The claim a particular global form can make to universality depends on a global assemblage taking shape that extends the ability to articulate the form to a variety of new situations and spaces. This global assemblage will generally comprise a distributed set of interconnected, localised assemblages that define these situations and spaces, in this case through more geographically-specific policy programmes.

Global forms range from the insistent corporeal, such as genes and organs, to the highly abstract, such as economic models. In recent years, for example, the gene has become an increasingly global form as a language emerged around the reduction of all life to the level of genetics, but simultaneously this universality is dependent on "the extension of particular scientific knowledges and practices – in laboratories and at conferences, or through the mediation of state policy and law" (Braun, 2006, page 650; see Franklin, 2005).

Similarly, the neoliberal economic models guiding policy formation in a wide array of nation-states through their insistence on universal economic laws depend on their adoption in important supranational organisations, the increase and spatial extension of ‘free market’ think tanks and research institutes, and the continued production of a particular kind of economics graduate. Thus across space interconnected assemblages emerge which support global forms and make particular conditions, processes and objects seemingly universal. By interrogating global assemblages we can discern what Collier and Ong call ‘the *actual* global, or the global in the space of assemblage’ (2005, page 12, emphasis in original). This means we can think about ‘global’ and ‘transnational’ processes, including policy transfer, without privileging scale or similar structural concepts.

An implemented policy is an assemblage of texts, actors, agencies, institutions and networks. They come together at particular *policy-making locales* that are constituted by a complex of relations, including the increasingly spatially stretched relations constitutive of globalisation (Amin, 2002; Latham, 2002; Massey, 1993). These are constituted by circuits of, as Peck and others have recognised, texts, practices and experts travelling on often transnational networks, not only ‘fast policy’ networks but media networks (McCann, 2004), research and think-tank networks (Stone, 2000; 2004), networks of circulating consultants and policy gurus of the sort described by Thrift’s (2005) notion of the ‘cultural circuit of capital’ (Olds and Thrift, 2005; Swain, 2006), and other connections of varying spatial extensiveness (see esp. McCann, 2008). These circuits are techno-political in nature; where the technical and the political come together.

When they intersect in policy-making locales the circuits merge as a matter of *translation*: the negotiation of the co-existence of two or more circulating knowledges through the alteration of each to accommodate the existence of others, often resulting in a synthesised form (Callon, 1986; Czarniawska and Sevón, 2005; Lendvai and Stubbs, 2007). Thus the moment of policy transfer is also a moment of policy formation and the translation of the policy knowledge with these other knowledges will often produce something new. As a result, policy programmes are assembled over time in *particular* locales that are nevertheless *transnationally* constituted. The codified documents and new forms of expertise that result from the assemblage can then travel out again on these and other circuits to be translated into other policy-making locales.

The remainder of this paper focuses on the formation of creative industries policy in New Zealand. This draws on an analysis of policy and policy-related documents in the UK and New Zealand, newspaper reports regarding the transfer, and transcripts of two policy events, entitled ‘Cool Aotearoa’<sup>1</sup> and the ‘Creative Industries Forum’, held in New Zealand. This was supplemented by semi-structured interviews with 16 key informants in and outside New Zealand who have been involved in the development and execution of creative industries policy in New Zealand. To begin, however, it is necessary to consider how the creative industries have emerged as an integral feature of policy discourses all around the world.

### **Making the creative industries into a global form**

The creative industries have become increasingly prominent in global policy discourses in the last ten years (Hesmondhalgh and Pratt, 2005). Countries and cities as diverse as Australia, Hong Kong, New York, Tanzania, Zurich, China, Fiji and Columbia refer to the creative industries and the need to develop them in policy and strategy documents. In addition, a growing number of international agencies, such as the World Intellectual Property Organisation, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) and the European Commission now routinely refer to the creative industries in their publications. Academia too now regularly discusses the creative industries and their particular configurations, dynamics and distributions. There is even a new *Creative Industries Journal* published by Intellect. The term has become so ubiquitous it is hard to believe it was coined so recently, in 1998. In fact, this initial moment has proved important to the relatively consistent way that the concept has been reproduced.

The creative industries were first described in the UK where the new Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) published the *Creative Industries Mapping Document* (CIMD) (DCMS, 1998; 2001). This document, produced under the Blair Labour Government elected the previous year, contained three key elements. One, a sectoral definition:

“Those industries which have their origin in individual creativity, skill and talent and which have the potential for wealth and job creation through the generation and exploitation of intellectual property” (DCMS, 2001, page 5).

Two, the set of industries comprising the sector:

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<sup>1</sup> Aotearoa is the Maori name for New Zealand.

“Advertising, architecture, the art and antiques market, crafts, design, designer fashion, film and video, interactive leisure software, music, the performing arts, publishing, software and computer services, television and radio” (DCMS, 2001, page 5).

And three, the technical ‘mapping’ of the sector, which involved the measurement of the contributions of each creative industry sector in terms of revenue, exports and employment. While there have been slight variations in the policy documents of other countries and cities, especially as we move further from 1998, this three-legged stool of definition, industrial constitution and measured contribution are what have been widely reproduced in creative industries policy programmes around the world.

The creative industries concept emerged in the UK just when the ‘New Labour’ project was getting into full swing. The sector was held up as representing New Labour’s reimagining of the British economy and society down a post-‘old’ Labour, post-Thatcher ‘third way’ (see Blair, 1998; Giddens, 1998). The UK was to be understood as part of a global economy in which it could no longer compete on its traditional manufacturing base. Instead it would draw on the geographically embedded creative talents of its population through the active development of a ‘knowledge-driven economy’ with the creative industries at its forefront (Garnham, 2005; see DCMS, 1998; Department for Trade and Industry, 1998; Leadbeater, 1999; Smith, 1998). Furthermore, a focus on the creative industries would transcend the elitist divisions between ‘popular’ and ‘high’ culture that haunted the country (Hughson and Inglis, 2001), as well as the perceived cultural philistinism of the Thatcher years. According to the rhetoric, this would mean all cultural forms could be celebrated for their contribution to British identity and, arguably more importantly, export earnings (see Smith, 1998): an attitude first captured in the much derided notion of ‘Cool Britannia’.

The most significant manifestation of the New Zealand creative industries project is in the 2002 Growth and Innovation Framework (GIF) produced by that country’s Fifth Labour Government in power at the time. Here the creative industries were marked out as one of three sectors, biotechnology and information and communication technology being the other two, to be targeted for growth as the government tried to institute a shift away from a land-based agricultural economy to an economy based on an increased ‘value-added’ component in exported commodities. In certain ways it emerged in a political-economic

context similar to that of the UK. There had been a comparable shift in party politics, this one symbolised by the election of the New Zealand Labour Party to government in 1999. Like UK Labour they explicitly rejected the ‘neoliberalism’ (Prime Minister Helen Clark’s own words, see Clark, 2002) of previous governments, as well as the ‘big government’ traditionally associated with the political Left (Goldfinch and Malpass, 2007), and embraced a turn down the ‘third way’. They wanted to resuscitate New Zealand’s cultural scene after years of alleged neglect by government at all levels. And, as expressed in the GIF, they wanted to promote more knowledge intensive sectors to increase New Zealand’s competitiveness in the global economy. With regard to the creative industries, however, like other creative industries projects around the world, the most striking similarity between the two countries was the technical means of delineating their respective creative industries sectors.

As Christophers (2007) argues, the calculative techniques that ‘mapped’ the economic contribution of the creative industries are significant because rather than just measuring a pre-existing economy, they *constitute* the creative industries as a definable, describable and knowable economic sector. Although activities described as architecture, performing arts and publishing existed before the CIMD, the act of ‘mapping’ them as ‘creative industries’ marks them out as equivalent to each other through their reliance on creativity and on this basis as distinctive from other economic activities. Thus it was possible for the CIMD and its successor documents to claim that creativity contributed to 5% of the British economy by 2001 and that these industries were growing more than twice as fast as the rest of the British economy. The use of calculation here was significant for more than their content: the certainty associated with numbers gives the claims made about the sector an air of authority. But, paradoxically, this authority was not based on the accuracy of the numbers – in fact these figures were often disputed by politicians, academics and journalists. Rather, the supposed neutrality of numbers meant the idea they were representing something that is nevertheless real – whether one wishes to understand them as creative industries or in some other way – comes to be taken for granted (Mitchell, 2002). Thus ‘the creative industries’ become an object available for governmental intervention either into the industries themselves or through them for some wider purpose (Christophers, 2007).

This calculative approach to the creative industries was adopted in New Zealand, which sought to emulate British example. Most explicitly, this occurred in a report produced by

the New Zealand Institute of Economic Research (NZIER) in 2002 entitled *Creative Industries in New Zealand: Economic Contribution*. Commissioned by the government agency Industry New Zealand (part of the Ministry of Economic Development), the report's brief stated that it was to "use the same definitions as used in the UK Creative Industries Mapping Document" (NZIER, 2002: 1). To this end the report adopted the definition, the greater part of the industry coverage (some adjustments were made because of a lack of data in industries like antiques trading), and the "methodology and data focus" (NZIER, 2002: 1). They concluded that the creative industries comprised 3.1% of New Zealand's GDP, comparable to the financial and education sectors. Alongside this report the calculative logic was extended into more specific 'scoping' reports of various creative industries in New Zealand. In these reports industries like designer fashion, film and publishing were broken down into more specific components and their strengths and weaknesses were identified. As in the UK, these calculations made the idea of a New Zealand creative industries sector knowable (although, as will be shown below, this was partly due to an earlier calculation performed for different reasons) and useful to governmental intervention: they provided the representations which made the inclusion of the creative industries in the GIF conceivable and defensible. In a manner that emulated the UK, the creative industries were rendered as an economic sector in New Zealand.

What we are seeing is a transfer that is not just political but technical; that is to say, it is a transfer of a specific technique constitutive of an economic sector that had not existed previously in the governmental sense. As a similar transfer is occurring to more and more countries and cities, these other places also produce 'mapping' studies describing their creative industries and policies that institutionalise governmental action upon them. Thus there is a dual emergence of a global form and a global assemblage. The global form is the concept of the creative industries itself, which takes on a sense of universality as a real sector of virtually any economy through their articulation in an emergent global assemblage of linked creative industries mapping studies, policy programmes, and the actors and agencies behind these. But, as the following discussion will demonstrate, this is far from a seamless process. Global assemblages emerge through the work of making links, and of making links work; a process governed as much by expediency, contingency and innovation as by emulation.

### **Assembling creative industries policy in New Zealand**

The creative industries were not a self-evident choice for the GIF. Their inclusion was the result of often expedient politicking, attempts at aligning divergent motivations, expert interventions, translation, innovation, invention and failure. This is reflected in the fact that the original use of the creative industries policy concept in New Zealand was as a part of a cultural policy solution, but, resulting directly from this initial foray, it ended up being a part of the economic policy sphere. This section will discuss how this occurred. It effectively went through three stages. First, the creative industries concept was part of a wide ranging discussion by a variety of political actors seeking to capitalise on the commitment the New Zealand Labour Government had made to the cultural sphere. Second, and slightly overlapping with the discussion of the first stage in time and in the people involved, was a deeper engagement with the concept through the government-commissioned ‘Heart of the Nation’ project that was expected to ‘re-energise’ New Zealand’s cultural sector but failed to do so. And third was the subsequent shifting of the concept to economic concerns through the NZIER report and scoping documents.

### **‘Cool Aotearoa’**

The election of New Zealand’s Fifth Labour Government in November 1999 was seen by many, including the new government, as an opportunity to move New Zealand away from the parsimonious and destructive neoliberal policies of the previous fifteen years. The extent to which this has been achieved is debatable, but in the first months following the election a variety of previously marginalised interest groups saw an opportunity for some time in the sun. One such group was the heterogeneous group of agencies and individuals who constituted what was understood as the New Zealand ‘cultural sector’. In the lead-up to the election Labour promised the sector a NZ\$25m funding boost. In the same pre-election document, entitled *Uniquely New Zealand*, they made reference to a desire to “back a strong creative industry sector which provides sustainable employment and is able to contribute to economic growth and prosperity” (Labour Party, cited in Wong, 2000). Although this barely registered at the time it was indicative of how New Zealand Labour was superficially following the lead of UK ‘New’ Labour through the use of language, such as the ‘third way’, and campaigning techniques: New Zealand Labour imitated the New Labour ‘Pledge Card’ approach by listing key policy commitments on a wallet-sized card.

After the election Labour’s commitment to the sector was confirmed when new Prime Minister Helen Clark made herself Minister of the Arts and Culture, symbolically placing

the sector at the ‘heart’ of power, and increased the promised funding boost – called the ‘Cultural Recovery Package’ – from NZ\$25m to NZ\$86m. In addition, the new government initiated a consultation process with various representatives of the New Zealand cultural sector, thus constituting the sector as a relatively coherent and singular actor. These representatives, who were usually associated with cultural agencies like Creative New Zealand and Maori Arts organisation Toi Maori Aotearoa, contributed through newspaper articles, televised debates and staged events. One such event demonstrated how the creative industries concept was just one of a number of transnationally circulating concepts drawn on by New Zealand Labour. Held in March 2000, ‘Cool Aotearoa?’ was organised by Creative New Zealand and chaired by its chief executive Peter Biggs. It sought to apply the ‘Cool Britannia’ concept to the New Zealand context as a way of fostering a new national identity. As Associate Minister for the Arts Judith Tizard reflected:

“I think it is a sign that this government is as passionate as it is about doing something real about New Zealand being a creative nation that we are having audiences like this talking about the sort of issues we are... I hope that this debate will be part of the ongoing debate which... this government will be able to put real resources and real energy behind” (cited in Creative New Zealand, 2000a, page 1).

However, ‘Cool Aotearoa’ proved a false start. Biggs’s inaccurate characterisation of Cool Britannia as a “series of policy initiatives introduced by the Labour Government over there in 1997 to foster creativity in the United Kingdom” (cited in Creative New Zealand, 2000a, page 3) rather than the marketing slogan it really was shows just how shallow the engagement was at the time. The British guests on the panel very quickly disabused Biggs and the audience of the possibility that it still had credibility in the UK. One panellist, Michael Billington, theatre correspondent for *The Guardian* newspaper, stated:

“I think with the benefit of hindsight it seems to have done Labour quite a bit of damage actually... it came to be taken to mean that they were actively hostile to the traditional arts... I think it’s a phrase that needs to be handled with a good deal of caution” (cited in Creative New Zealand, 2000a, pp 3-4).

The panel’s other British representative, Paul Smith of the British Council, concurred, adding: “I think the label is now rightly neglected in Britain” (cited in Creative New Zealand, 2000a, page 4). The term ‘creative industries’ was mentioned only once at the

event by Smith who suggested it was “maybe most constructively useful as an example to New Zealand... (After some statistical work was carried out) we were looking in the Arts and Creative Industries at the second largest sector in the British economy” (cited in Creative New Zealand, 2000a, page 5).

This shows how connections to overseas policy programmes can be contingent and superficial, offering little more than a gloss for policy debates. It also shows how agencies will often use imported language in an effort to position themselves as indispensable components – “a catalyst in making the creative society happen” according to Peter Biggs (cited in Creative New Zealand, 2000a, page 2) – of the emerging policy solution. Creative New Zealand’s positioning as a “catalyst” paid off through a generous funding boost of NZ\$20m over three years as part of the Cultural Recovery Package in May 2000 (Clark, 2000). But, as the next section shows, such ‘shallow’ transfers can lead to expected and unexpected ‘deeper’ transfers (Ward, 2006, page 63) in the future, and these can have expected and unexpected consequences.

### **‘Heart of the Nation’**

The second phase of the policy assembly involved a deeper engagement with UK creative industries policy. This was the ‘Heart of the Nation’ (abbreviated as ‘HotNation’) project commissioned by the government at the end of March 2000. The project was to develop a strategic plan which would form the basis for:

- Vibrant arts and cultural activities which all New Zealanders can enjoy and through which a strong and confident cultural identity can emerge; and
- A strong and vibrant creative industry sector which provides sustainable employment and economic growth within an innovative environment

(New Zealand Government, in HotNation Project Team, 2000, Annex A ii).

Taking its cue from these terms of reference, the HotNation project team systematically engaged with British creative industries policy, particularly the CIMD, using it to shape their final report.

The HotNation report, entitled *The Heart of the Nation: A Cultural Strategy for Aotearoa New Zealand* (HotNation Project Team, 2000), conceived the creative industries as a commercial sector linked to the cultural sector in important ways. This conceptualisation drew directly on the CIMD. Compare:

“Those industries which *have their origin in individual creativity, skill and talent* and which have the potential for wealth and job creation through the generation and exploitation of *intellectual property*” (DCMS, 2001, page 5, emphasis added), with:

“a range of commercially-driven businesses whose primary resources are creativity and *intellectual property*... a range of activities which *have their origin in individual creativity, skill and talent*” (HotNation Project Team, 2000, page 5, emphasis added).

The method of populating the sector with a range of specific industries is also utilised. Although some different industries are included, it is notable that, like the CIMD, it groups together industries once seen as disparate, like design, the performing arts, advertising, architecture and the recording industry.

The final report proposed a restructuring programme that would dismantle certain existing agencies, notably Creative New Zealand, and replace them with a new integrated structure. These included a separate Ministry for Maori Culture and Heritage to sit alongside the existing Ministry for Culture and Heritage, and a Creative Industries Development Agency that would work with existing practitioners in developing careers, markets and products for the sector. This process shows how the policy transfer is a matter of translation (Lendvai and Stubbs, 2007; Lofgren, 2005; Olds, 2005). The HotNation report drew directly on the CIMD, but despite its obvious influence it did not descend fully-formed and straightforwardly applicable from global policy networks. Rather, it was translated through the knowledges that intersected at the site of the project and a new policy form was created. The way the definition was taken apart and put back together in a different way – resulting in a definition for which arts and culture are not understood *only* in terms of the creative industries as they are in Britain – allegorises this process. The ideas of the CIMD combined with other forms of knowledge to produce the alloy of the final report. The importance of a distinct Maori culture was recognised through the proposal for a Ministry of Maori Culture for example, and the statistics demonstrating the economic contribution of the sector involved its articulation with an approach taken by Statistics New Zealand several years earlier when they produced the *New Zealand Framework for Cultural Statistics* (Statistics New Zealand, 1995) using a set of similar categories: this provided the researchers with an existing proxy for measuring the cultural sector and its creative industries. Hence, the

CIMD had a definite influence on what was produced, but the end result came out of the active translation of the CIMD and its articulation with other knowledges.

In the end, however, HotNation was rejected. It was argued that the proposed reforms would be too costly to implement and ran against the grain of the government's vision of a sector capable of sustaining itself beyond the purview of government (Matthews and Clark, 2000). The report was to bind the intended assemblage together, but as a result of its rejection very few copies even exist. However, despite this failure, the project proved to be pivotal in increasing the circulation of the concept around more than just cultural policy circles. Now beyond the control of the authors, parts of the report remained instrumental as the creative industries came to be resituated in a different policy context.

One effect was that the creative industries were now consolidating in policy discourses. The term itself was proving useful to policy, media and industry actors for describing particular industries in New Zealand whose recent developments had received widespread media attention. Framing them in this fashion fed into an emerging image of New Zealand as a particularly 'creative' place. Three industries were especially prominent. Popular music was increasingly seen as having a distinctive sound and an untapped potential for export earnings (see Music Industry Export Development Group, 2004). New Zealand designer fashion was being celebrated through the inaugural New Zealand Fashion Week in 2000 which built on the acclaim and commercial success that New Zealand fashion designers had enjoyed the year before at London Fashion Week and since 1997 at Australian Fashion Week (Goodrum et al, 2004; Lewis et al, 2008). And film-making was receiving a disproportionate amount of attention at the time due largely to the filming of *The Lord of the Rings* in New Zealand by local director Peter Jackson which utilised locally designed 'cutting-edge' special effects technology (Jones and Smith, 2005).

By September 2000 the idea that these were all 'creative industries' was increasingly accepted. The creative industries concept served to arrange them alongside each other and in relation to the rest of the New Zealand economy. This was illustrated at an event similar in nature to 'Cool Aotearoa?' entitled simply the 'Creative Industries Forum' (Creative New Zealand, 2000b). Organised again by Creative New Zealand, this time in conjunction with the British Council, the forum's participants were a reflection of how these industries were being understood *together* as creative industries and in parallel with a similar sector being

developed in the UK. The main speaker was the British Secretary of State for Culture, Chris Smith, alongside Judith Tizard and a panel of New Zealand speakers representing music, designer fashion and film, described here as “three of the key creative industries” (Harcourt, cited in Creative New Zealand, 2000b, page 1). The presence of Smith and the industry representatives on the stage with Tizard was in marked contrast to the ‘cultural’ experts from the UK and New Zealand who spoke with her about ‘Cool Aotearoa’. The focus now was on the creative industries – a fact explicitly laid out by the Chair who linked Smith to the creative industries in the UK and introduced the creative industries themselves through reference to the CIMD. While the event was a discussion of how New Zealand might learn from the UK example, its significance lay in the way it ordered these New Zealand industries as conceivable *together* through this British policy example.

The HotNation project was an attempt to create a policy assemblage that involved the deep policy transfer of the CIMD from the UK. It demonstrated three important features of this process. One, that policy assembly, and the policy transfers that this can involve, is a matter of translation. Two, that these attempts at assemblage will not always be successful. And, following on from this, three, that even where the intended assemblage is unsuccessful, the policy transfers that are effected in the course of assemblage can still have a significant impact. Thus, according to one New Zealand government official:

“The focus on creative industries as developed in New Zealand did result to a significant degree from the work on Heart of the Nation. This was more as a result from the process involved in developing the report and work on next steps after the report than necessarily from the content of the final HotNation report itself. This focus on creative industries was further reinforced by the mapping work going on in the UK, which the visit of Chris Smith further crystallized” (interview with author, 2006).

The discourse of the creative industries that the HotNation report had a significant hand in introducing to New Zealand did not disappear when the policy solution it envisioned failed. Instead it was constituted as a useful concept for other actors with policy ambitions of their own. The creative industries concept is not the only way that these industries might have been conceived for governmental purposes. In fact it was not the only attempt to do so: in an effort to gain more recognition and funding the New Zealand Film Commission commissioned a report that explored the notion of ‘cultural capital’ and whether the government should get involved in encouraging its production (see Barker, 2000). This was

not as successful as the concept of the creative industries, not only in terms of its circulation in policy discourse but in the use of the term by actors in these sectors.

Like bricks taken from one fallen building and used in the construction of another, the creative industries concept became a constitutive element in another policy assemblage. As will be shown in the next section, this was achieved by actors less ideologically tied to the idea of a New Zealand cultural sector.

### **‘Economic Transformation’**

The shift of the creative industries into economic policy, via the NZIER report on their economic contribution, came directly from the failure of HotNation. After stating that the HotNation report would still be a “useful input” to policy development (Mathews and Clark, 2000, unpaginated), later in 2000 Helen Clark handed on the section of the HotNation report that referred to the creative industries to the newly created Ministry of Economic Development and its associated agency Industry New Zealand (INZ) (Smythe, 2005). The calculative profile produced with the Statistics New Zealand data meant the creative industries concept could be introduced as a valid category to the kind of economic calculation occurring at these sites. The report had gone from ‘cultural plan’ to economic ‘mapping document’. From here the creative industries were translated into a constitutive part of a programme of ‘economic transformation’ where policy for them continues to evolve.

The agency INZ, in association with the new Ministry for Economic Development, had been set up by the new government in 2000 as part of its attempt to assemble a post-neoliberal policy programme for the New Zealand economy. Like the cultural sphere, the nature of the New Zealand economy, and the role that government could play in it, was being reimagined through a variety of commissioned studies, forums and agencies (e.g. Boston Consulting Group, 2001; L.E.K. Consulting, 2001). This is increasingly understood through discourses of “economic transformation” which conceive New Zealand as linked into a competitive global environment via ‘value-chains’ (see Cullen, 2006; Mallard, 2006; Ministry of Economic Development, 2007). One government official directed me towards a paper by the Harvard economist Dani Rodrik (2004) which has been highly influential in thinking about the economy in New Zealand. The paper makes an argument for ‘intelligent interventions’ in which public and private actors work together to identify the most widely

beneficial economic actions. The emergence of this new strand of governmental thinking within New Zealand policy circles has shaped, and been shaped by, ongoing engagements with the creative industries.

One of INZ's tasks in this regard was to follow up on the findings of the HotNation report and produce a comprehensive analysis of the place of the creative industries in the New Zealand economy. This was the context in which the NZIER report and the industry specific 'scoping' reports were produced. The scoping reports on the creative industries of designer fashion (Blomfield, 2002), design (Haythornthwaite, 2002), music (Douche, 2001), film<sup>2</sup> (Yeabsley and Duncan, 2002) and interactive gaming (O'Leary, 2002) were more than just boundary drawing; these industries are also activities defined by certain aspirational associations with creativity. So, for example, designer fashion was separated out from the production of textiles and other clothing due to the possibility it could "gain an international profile for New Zealand" (Blomfield, 2002, page 51). The mapping study and the scoping reports provided both the numbers and the ideology to make the creative industries a constitutive element in New Zealand's 'economic transformation'.

This was articulated in the 2002 GIF (Office of the Prime Minister, 2002) where the project of economic transformation manifested in policy form. As one of the three sectors considered to have high growth prospects *and* the potential for significant impact across the economy, the creative industries are seen as having either a competitive competency, like film, or as enablers offering innovative design and unique identity that cannot be replicated elsewhere. The creative industries are less the economically viable outcome of cultural production, as they were under HotNation, and more a realisation of an economic ideology that "creativity is at the heart of innovation" (Office of the Prime Minister, 2002, page 56).

What economic transformation means in practice continues to roll out through novel policy forms and interventions. The creative industries continue to feature but are periodically re-translated and re-articulated into new policy roles. Their key role at present is adding to the 'value-chain' for exportable products within New Zealand. This means the creative industries are expected to increase the proportion of the value of a product

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<sup>2</sup> This report was commissioned by the New Zealand Film Commission but utilised by INZ with special reference to the impact of *The Lord of the Rings*.

produced in New Zealand. The ‘Better By Design’<sup>3</sup> project, for example, formed as the result of the work of a creative industries design taskforce at the agency New Zealand Trade and Enterprise (NZTE),<sup>4</sup> focuses on improving the linkages between New Zealand’s design industry and export companies. ‘Brand New Zealand’ is a wider cross-government and private sector project which draws on the identity the creative industries are expected to provide for New Zealand, alongside longer standing associations with the country as a ‘clean green’ paradise, to give New Zealand commodities like wine and wool products a more distinctive position in the international marketplace. More prosaically, screen production continues to be supported as a matter of what one policy official referred to as “strategic opportunism”. This refers to the large tax and revenue windfalls that can be garnered when big-budget films, such as *Lord of the Rings*, are made in the country and the advantages that the movie technology and tourism industries can leverage from this. Thus, having entered New Zealand policy discourses as a concept for organising cultural policy, the creative industries policy concept has informed, along with the project of economic transformation, the formation of a set of new economic policy programmes.

These actions and interventions give New Zealand’s creative industries assemblage its shape. The shift of the creative industries from a cultural to an economic policy programme has left some agencies involved in the former out of the emergent assemblage. After HotNation called for the abolishment of Creative New Zealand in 2000 the agency’s head Peter Biggs claimed that they had moved “beyond the pure arts and into the creative industries” (Cardy, 2000, page 10), but by June 2006 they had distanced themselves from the concept – when I requested an interview with the chief executive she responded that Creative New Zealand was primarily an arts agency and did not have a creative industries focus. On the other hand other agencies continue to seek to become a part of the assemblage: officials from the Ministry for Culture and Heritage sidelined from policy formation are currently seeking a fuller strategic engagement with the creative industries, through a renewed focus on the concept of the *cultural* industries and their role in the production of national identity, that they feel is currently lacking due to NZTE’s dominant position and unrelenting commercial focus (see Maharey, 2007). Through such actions, which can include continuing policy transfers, the edges of the assemblage remain blurry and its shape continues to change.

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<sup>3</sup> See [www.betterbydesign.org.nz](http://www.betterbydesign.org.nz)

<sup>4</sup> New Zealand Trade and Enterprise formed in 2002 out of the amalgamation of Industry New Zealand and Trade New Zealand. It is the primary delivery agency for the GIF.

## **Conclusion**

The emergence of the concept of the creative industries in policy and popular discourses over a relatively short space of time can be attributed to the successful transfer of the concept from the UK to other political contexts, such as the one described in this paper. While other 'New Labour' concepts have dropped out of common usage, notably the 'third way', the creative industries concept has endured as a result of this success. This paper has suggested that this can be explained by the way the creative industries concept has emerged as a global form as described by Collier and Ong (2005). This indicates that the transfers have been successful not only because they have been politically driven but because they have revolved around the constitution of the creative industries in self-referential, technical terms. The transfer of technical systems that defined, codified, delineated and measured the creative industries made them knowable and thinkable in different contexts. These apparently apolitical techniques constituted them as a sector that demanded their repoliticisation through a policy response.

But, as the case has demonstrated, this is not a smooth process. Collier and Ong (2005) argue that global forms co-constitute with global assemblages that keep them in place, and the formation of these is often disjunctive, haphazard and improvised (Larner, forthcoming). The particular moments of connection where policy actors in New Zealand drew on British policy examples – the initial use of the term by New Zealand Labour in pre-election statements, the use of the definition in the HotNation report, and the emulation of the CIMD by NZIER – each occurred for different reasons contingent on particular political moments rather than as elements of a specified policy transfer project. These connections were dependent on the translation of these British examples into what were regarded as the institutional and cultural realities of New Zealand, meaning the global form of the creative industries would become more variegated, reproducing national difference even as the technical systems implicitly tried to smooth these out. But there were also moments of innovation and invention, such as the wedding of the creative industries concept to discourses of 'economic transformation', resulting in the formation of creative industries policy not following a singular trajectory. Through such processes the assemblages that form around the technical systems that sustain the creative industries as a global form can take quite distinctive forms from one place to the next.

Ward (2006, page 71) has suggested that the study of policy transfer can help to “open up the ‘black-box’ of neoliberalization, to reveal what it means in different contexts, how it is experienced on a day-to-day basis, in part so it is not portrayed as all-encompassing”. I have avoided using the term neoliberalism to describe the creative industries in this paper so as to not situate them in a larger project and instead allow for a focus on the particularities of change that an assemblage approach demands. However, just as the implicit commodification of culture contained in the creative industries concept suggests they could very much be a feature of neoliberal programmes, so an assemblage approach can help to open up the ‘black-box’. Indeed, the policies and programmes that we describe as neoliberal emerge from the assembly work of aligning divergent political motivations, translating different ideas, and rendering appropriate subjects and spaces, the very work that gives substance to the claim that neoliberalism is always-already hybrid (Larner, 2003). This implies a productive site of analysis *and* politics is not just in the state and its overarching structures and systems but in technical practices that are often grounded in the everyday (Barry, 2001).

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