

‘Fleshing out’ expertise: the making of creative industries experts in the United Kingdom

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Abstract

The place of expertise in modern systems of government continues to be of concern to critical social scientists. Recent years have seen something of a shift away from conceptions of expertise that tended to see it as distant, overly technical and aligned with the needs of the state and capital. Expertise is increasingly recognised as having a more complex relation with the subjects of government than just as a means for shoring up authority, offering them a space for engagement, critique and counter-expertise. This paper argues that focusing on particular experts and their changing roles in governmental assemblages can flesh out one-dimensional conceptions of expertise and provide insights into governmental change. Drawing on a variety of literature, it is argued that expertise can usefully be conceived as; first, a *social relation* based on one party having access to knowledge which gives them authority over another; second, as *distributed* across a governmental assemblage in a particular way, with some expert relations being positioned to have more influence, understood here as *expert power*, across the assemblage; and third, as a matter of *strategic engagement* on the part of experts located in particular epistemic communities seeking to gain expert power. The potential of this perspective is explored through an analysis of an emergent expert system for the creative industries in the UK where a small community of actors have realigned their practices and cast themselves as creative industries experts. This has allowed them to reshape the governmental assemblage forming around this economic sector in a direction favourable to their own ideas. It is concluded that efforts to convert expertise into greater expert power is a key dynamic transforming governmental assemblages.

Key Words: expertise, experts, creative industries, cultural industries, governmental assemblages

1. Introduction

Expertise has long been a feature of modern systems of government (Barry, 2001; Mitchell, 2002; Rose, 1999). Liberal democracies especially have been dependent on different forms of expertise to mark out the terrains of government where arbitrary political power can act, such as public health or economic management, by buttressing it with the force of reason regarding what must be done to achieve overall social well-being. While ambivalence about this privileged place of expertise is nothing new, recent and increasingly global controversies over such issues as climate change and biotechnology have contributed to an ongoing pattern of heightened public distrust in the claims of expertise and the ability of governments to take appropriate action (Whatmore, 2009). The gravity of some of these issues and the clear disconnect they have with some sections of the public (and many state actors) feeds into ongoing critical social science research into understanding the contours of emergent forms and zones of expertise and their implications for society (Collins and Evans, 2007).

Movement away from relatively high levels of public trust in science and towards increased questioning of expertise has been shadowed by similarly critical thinking in the social sciences. There is an established tradition of conceiving expertise as sequestered in particular institutions and disciplines that are closely bound up with political and economic power and from which it acts to change the lives of far less powerful others (e.g. Goldman, 2007; Peet, 2007). This propensity for making expertise a pejorative label (Wilson, 2006) has also materialised in work focused on the contest between expert knowledge and 'lay' knowledges where a distant, highly technical and abstract sphere of expertise is separated from a sphere of practical, vernacular knowledge (Wynne, 1996). The vision of society that such conceptions imply, where expertise is distant, technical and mobilised by often unseen but nevertheless powerful interests, certainly resonates with popular discontent about the role of expertise in democracies, as well as with quite real concerns about the means by which powerless groups around the world have their lives upheaved. But the lack of subtlety in this conception struggles with the pervasiveness and multiplicity of forms of expertise at many levels and sections of society, and with the complexity of the relationship between expertise and other societal dimensions. As such, many studies of expertise soften this position, recognising expertise comes in a variety of forms (e.g. Bondi and Fewell, 2003), can be counter-hegemonic as well as hegemonic (e.g. McKinnon, 2007), and is not necessarily reducible to state and capitalist logics (e.g. Li, 2007b).

This paper contributes to efforts to analyse expertise in the context of the governmental system it is situated in (e.g. Bebbington and Kothari, 2006; Bondi and Laurie, 2005; Grundy and Smith, 2007; Jenkins, 2008; Kothari, 2005; Laurie et al., 2005; Nightingale, 2005; Wilson, 2006). While expertise, as stated above, is recognised as central to modern systems of government, how can we think about the relationship between them? This paper argues for a focus on the day to day realities of expertise which may allow us to consider it in less abstract terms. This means fleshing out one-dimensional conceptions of expertise by focusing on specific experts as actors who perform particular tasks that constitute, reconstitute and reconstruct the particular governmental systems in which they are situated as experts.

The themes of the paper will be explored through a case study of the ‘creative industries’ in the UK. This economic sector is of interest because despite its relatively recent – 1998 – invention in governmental discourses there has already emerged a cabal of experts governing its existence. These experts have contributed to the concept’s prominence in national and international policy debates and academic and popular discourses. While other studies of the creative industries have focused on how the creative industries have been enframed through particular technologies and discourses for various governmental purposes (Christophers, 2007; Jayne, 2005), this paper will explore how a particular community of actors were cast as creative industries *experts*. Their engagement with the creative industries concept has changed both their own expert subjectivities and the nature of the creative industries as an object of government. The case therefore shows how experts co-constitute with objects of government, producing the *governmental assemblages* that give those objects their objective existence.

The paper is in two parts. The first half explores how expertise and experts are thought about in a variety of critical social science literatures. It is argued that although expertise is prominent in these literatures, more consequential is the place of *expert power*. This describes the degree of influence a particular form of expertise has over policies and programmes in different spaces and times. Given this distinction, it is argued that expertise can usefully be conceived as, first, a *social relation* based on one party having access to knowledge which gives them authority over another; second, as *distributed* across a governmental assemblage in a particular way, with some expert relations being positioned to have more influence, in other words more expert power, across the assemblage; and third, as a matter of *strategic engagement* on the part of experts located in particular epistemic communities seeking to gain expert power. This conceptualisation will be used in the second half of the paper to consider how a group of ‘creative industries experts’ formed in the UK in the years after the term was first coined. It is shown that this was not a case of preconstituted experts being rolled out by the state or aligning themselves with a coherent governmental project. Rather, this was a small group of cultural sector practitioners, council officers, researchers and entrepreneurs recasting themselves through an organisation called the Forum on Creative Industries, or FOCI. Through this reshaping of their expert subjectivities these actors have been able to reshape and redirect the governmental assemblage that has emerged around the creative industries. The case demonstrates that the particularity of who the experts involved in an assemblage are, and how they engage with governmental problems and objects, has consequences for the nature of government systems. The paper concludes with a distillation of the empirical and theoretical consequences of the argument.

2. Thinking about expertise and experts

A central argument of this paper is that understanding why a particular form of expertise is influential requires differentiating between expertise and expert power. Expertise describes the condition where a particular community of actors possess specialist knowledge that cannot be adjudicated on its own terms by actors from outside the community. For Strathern (2006, p. 194, emphasis in original),

other people’s expertise may be endlessly questioned, side-stepped, and compared, but it cannot be *rectified*. One can choose what to take from it, but a non-expert is

precisely one who cannot judge in terms of the quality of the information itself what can be thrown away and what should be kept.

Expert *power*, on the other hand, describes the particular power to shape governmental relations, policy and so on that possessing expertise conveys on the community. Ascertaining why a particular community of actors have expert power depends on how they are positioned in what I am referring to as *governmental assemblages*.

The concept of the assemblage has come into increasing prominence in social science thought because of the way it captures the contingent and complex ways that governmental systems come together (DeLanda, 2006; Li, 2007a; McFarlane, 2009; Ong and Collier, 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 (DeLanda, 2006). Here I use the qualifier governmental because the assemblage I am interested in is that which seeks to govern people and places. As the governmentality literature has recognised, this involves all the technologies that count, measure, define and direct spaces and subjects, and which have been organised into programmes of government (Larner, 2002; Rose, 1999). It is here that expertise is able to exercise its authority, shaping programmes that reassemble the assemblage, but it is also where the power of a particular form of expertise can be curtailed.

Reflections on expertise feature in a range of critical social science work. Development studies, usually of non-Western countries, argue that Western expert knowledge, which is presented as highly technical and stripped of the conditions of its production, fails to grasp local specificity, marginalises more relevant local knowledge, and, at worst, reproduces colonial relations between ‘the West’ and ‘the rest’ in a new form as a tyranny of expertise (e.g. Escobar, 1994; Ferguson, 1994). Science and technology studies relativise expertise by showing that expert knowledge production has sociologies and geographies with particular rituals, practices and discourses that do not necessarily make it more valid than other forms of knowledge production (see Jasanoff et al., 2001). And governmentality studies focus on how expertise is put to work in the government of individuals and populations within, across and beyond the state. In the parlance of the literature, expertise allows for ‘the conduct of conduct’ (e.g. Dean, 1999; Rose, 1999). In what follows these literatures are synthesised in an argument for thinking of expertise as *relational*, *distributed* and *strategic*. It is argued that this approach allows us to situate expertise in governmental assemblages not just as a source of authority but as a useful vector for conceptualising how governmental assemblages form and change.

2.1 *Expertise is relational*

Expertise is understood in this paper in relational terms rather than as code for those possessing highly technical, mathematical and universalised knowledge imprinted on them in an elite institution. Expertise is therefore a social relation where a particular actor has authority over another actor through their possession of a particular form of knowledge: the way a doctor has

authority over the patient for example. Possession of this knowledge results from the expert's situation in a particular epistemic community and his or her enculturation with that community's 'knowledge culture'. The science studies tradition describes knowledge cultures as social and technological milieus in which 'structures of meaning that enable and constrain action' are socially negotiated (Riley, 2008, p. 1279). They provide the 'means for interaction' that enable enculturated actors to understand the significance of particular phenomena (Tsouvalis et al., 2000, p. 912). The emblematic example has been the knowledge culture of farmers and how this is differentiated from the knowledge cultures of the agricultural scientists, information technologists and other state sanctioned 'experts' and yet yields useful knowledge that is often not recognised by the latter (Morris, 2006; Riley, 2008; Tsouvalis et al., 2000; Wynne, 1996). Initially a critique of the institutionalised, technical and scientific ways of knowing that were regarded as indicative of expert knowledge, this notion is now an argument for a less narrow conception of expertise, one capable of valorising the knowledge of other knowledge cultures as a form of expertise (Collins and Evans, 2007). The lesson here is that what we can understand as expertise forms in particular cultures and communities.

As I stressed earlier, it is important not to conflate expertise with expert *power*. The possession of expertise is a necessary but not sufficient condition for possessing expert power. In situations where expertise that results from one knowledge relation has more influence over the actions and decisions of others than the expertise that results from another, arguably equally valid, knowledge relation, then the former expertise can be said to have more expert power. For example, Bickerstaff and Simmons (2004) show how two different sets of experts, epidemiologists and veterinary scientists, both of whom had claims to scientific expertise, offered contrasting policy solutions to the 2001 outbreak of Foot and Mouth Disease in the UK. In the end, as a result of trends in government policy formation that favoured quantitative approaches, the epidemiologists' solutions were favoured. The fact the discourses of the epidemiologists' expertise resonated with the policy-makers in a way the discourses of the veterinary scientists did not shows the former had a higher degree of expert power than the latter despite the fact both could claim scientific authority. This resulted from the way their particular forms of knowledge production, which are largely quantitative and population-level in form, resonated with a policy-making apparatus that shared this approach and focus.

So not all expertise is equal in terms of their expert power, but the differentials are determined not by some objective internal value specific to each form of expertise but by how they are situated in the governmental assemblage. Expert power has a very specific meaning here, referring to the ability of a particular form of expertise to influence policy and other programmes that shape assemblages. The greater the expert power of a particular body of expertise, the greater its influence on policy formation and so on. Although at any one time expert power may lie with a particular set of actors (such as economists) associated with particular institutions (such as elite Western universities) this capacity is, in principle, linked with the privileged position they hold in the assemblage ahead of their association with those institutions and disciplines – although if such associations exist it indicates these institutions' privileged situation in the broader assemblage. This has two important consequences: one, in practice the function of the expert in a governmental assemblage can be performed by a variety of different actors (McCann,

2008). And two, the analytical focus here is on how *particular* actors and sites came to hold higher degrees of expert power.

2.2 *Expertise is distributed (and redistributed)*

The shape a particular governmental assemblage takes depends on the distribution of expertise within it (Larner, 2002; Whatmore, 2009). This is both a spatial distribution of experts and the distribution of expert power amongst them. The former refers to where experts are located, how they are situated, and how they circulate. This means they could be located in particular universities, think-tanks or international organisations, situated within an epistemic community of, for example, free market economists or genetic scientists, and circulating by a variety of means such as conferences, research projects and consultation activities in administrative and knowledge producing sites in a variety of countries (Swain, 2006; Thrift, 2005). The distribution of expert power, on the other hand, refers to *which* experts have greater influence over the development of policy programmes and so forth given existing governmental assemblages. Different experts have different degrees of influence in different contexts. But the relational constitution of expertise means this is not static. As relations of different types and intensities change, so governmental assemblages change and so does the distribution of expertise and expert power within them (Chilvers and Evans, 2009).

In relation to post-colonial development processes in Egypt, Mitchell (2002, p. 473) has argued that the ‘new politics based on technical expertise... represented a concentration and reorganization of knowledge rather than an introduction of expertise where none had been before’. The point is not so much that there is now an egregious expertise changing and distorting natural processes in Egypt – the country had its own governmental systems with actors who could be regarded as possessing expert power – but that ‘Development’ introduced and valorised new expert relations; it redistributed which forms of expertise possessed expert power in Egypt (see also Birkenholtz, 2008). Numerous postcolonial scholars have argued that the expertise that came to be valued and influential was Western, technical and driven by experts coming out of the World Bank and other development agencies (Escobar, 1994; Ferguson, 1994). But there is now another redistribution underway.

This new redistribution involves new practices, such as participation (Chilvers and Burgess, 2008; McGuirk, 2001; Petts and Brooks, 2006; Walker et al., 2007). The shift to participatory and communicative models has resulted from the critique of technical and Western expertise as dictatorial and undemocratic (Cooke and Kothari, 2001). These new models encourage consultation with various stakeholder groups and interested communities to develop consensual and therefore legitimate policy programmes. These force a change in practice for existing expert groups, introduce other forms of expertise from other knowledge cultures into processes of policy formation, and involve the development of tools, such as specially designed consultation sessions (Chilvers and Burgess, 2008), through which the new balance of expert power is expressed and managed. They also result in the formation of new kinds of experts who understand themselves as in a post-expert role fashioning and facilitating participatory processes (Chilvers, 2008). Although these new models of expert engagement have proven problematic

and occasionally unworkable (Chilvers and Burgess, 2008; McGuirk, 2001), they represent a deliberate and programmatic redistribution of expertise.

This redistribution is creating newly valorised expert networks populated with new expert subjectivities. For example, Bondi and Fewell (2003, p. 530) describe counsellors who resist the designation of 'expert' because of its negative connotations around normalisation and externalised management as, nevertheless, adopting a set of practices that they are expert in: 'experts in not being experts'. For development scholars, processes of 'professionalisation' describe the conversion of 'local' actors into development practitioners, often after these actors have occupied activist positions antithetical to development processes (Bondi and Laurie, 2005). It is argued that indigenous professionalisation represents the moments where novel policy programmes emerge that negotiate between Western and local expertise and create new spaces and subjects of development (Jenkins, 2008; Kothari, 2005; Laurie et al., 2005; Nightingale, 2005). In ostensibly more developed contexts similar processes are occurring as 'civil society' actors increasingly participate and intervene in scientific controversies through their own mobilisations of expert knowledge (Chilvers and Evans, 2009). Processes like professionalisation and participation can be read as representative of the redistribution of expertise within governmental assemblages. The revalorisations and reorganisations of knowledge associated with them can give a sense of the often uneven and complex transformations that occur within and across spatialised governmental assemblages.

Thinking of expertise as relational *and* distributed means moving beyond dualisms where 'scientific', 'abstract' or 'Western' forms of knowledge are opposed to 'lay', 'contextual' or 'non-Western' knowledge to recognise that particular knowledge cultures do not always take shape in complete isolation from one another (Tsouvalis et al., 2000; Wynne, 1996). It follows that particular forms of expertise will also not always take shape in isolation from other forms. This credits the ability of individuals and institutions to respond to changes in their political-economic environment. For example, rather than seeing 'Western' development professionals as ciphers for a coherent development project, space is opened to recognise how they interact with development theory and practice in different moments and places (Tamas, 2007; Wilson, 2006). Such engagements, and the new governmental forms they produce, can feed back into the institutions that produce development and other professionals, leading to changes in their practices (Hall, 2008; Thrift, 2005). Thus contemplating the distribution and redistribution of expertise and expert power can give us insights into the transformation of governmental assemblages.

2.3 Expertise is strategic

The redistribution of expertise is associated with change in the governmental assemblage. This is driven by a number of factors. One of these is resistance and contestation of received expert narratives and programmes (Holifield, 2009; Scott and Barnett, 2009). As discussed above, the practices of participation emerged out of resistance to dictatorial and impositional expert narratives of development (Cooke and Kothari, 2001; Walker et al., 2007). The contestation of the expertise behind a particular governmental programme can result in the emergence of hybrid programmes which imply a revalorisation and redistribution of the expertise that informs the

assemblage those programmes are a part of (Birkenholtz, 2008; Mitchell, 2002). But redistributions are not always the direct result of the clash of opposing forces. They often involve shifts that require a more nuanced form of analysis.

A key factor in the redistribution of expertise is what has been referred to in the governmentality literature as the problem of government. This describes government not as an institution – i.e. the state – but as a practice that emerges and changes around specific moments when existing governmental practices are called into question (Dean, 1999). During these moments, expertise is often deployed to make the particular situation intelligible and understandable through, for example, numerical or graphical analysis, and to reconstitute or create new governmental programmes that ‘solve’ the problem in the terms that it has been understood. Such deployments of expertise are conducted by a range of actors aiming to achieve specific ends (Rose, 1999). Larner (2002), for example, identifies the deployment of ‘post-welfarist’ expertise – human resource companies, training providers and so on – in the formation of new ‘global’ economic spaces during the late 1990s and early 2000s. The emergence of new problems of government, such as the globalising economy (Larner and Le Heron, 2002), and new ways of acting on those problems, such as audit (Power, 1997), had shifted which experts were valued in the assemblage, away from social scientists and bureaucrats and towards economists, accountants and other ‘technical’ experts. This has been described in the literature as ‘advanced liberalism’ (Dean, 1999; Rose, 1999).

But the possibilities of expertise are also actively engaged by different types of experts (Grundy and Smith, 2007; Scott and Barnett, 2009). Experts in a governmental assemblage are not blank subjects with varying degrees of expert power conferred upon them: they are active subjects who deliberately and strategically seek to gain expert power. This often involves engagement with particular ways of knowing and other knowledge cultures. It can involve changes in the knowledge practices of a particular group of experts so that their particular expertise gains influence in the governmental assemblage, and they themselves gain more expert power (Holifield, 2009). The shift to advanced liberalism has meant greater emphasis on notions of evidence, particularly quantitative and numerical forms (Bickerstaff and Simmons, 2004), but this has not just been about the relentless conversion of everyday life into calculative forms. The rise of these technologies has provided an opportunity for marginalised groups to engage and influence the assemblage in new ways. The shift in expert power to a new set of knowledge cultures has meant the new or reconstituted outsiders to these cultures must find ways to draw on these new cultures and become influential, often meaning abandoning traditional forms of advocacy to strategically engage with currently legitimated calculative forms (Grundy and Smith, 2007). This engagement changes both the governmental assemblage and the engaging expert.

3. Assembling the creative industries

As discussed earlier, the concept of the governmental assemblage is used to highlight the contingency, heterogeneity and complexity of systems of government while allowing for a sense of overall coherence. It also points to the importance of the work that goes into constructing and maintaining the assemblage as a relatively coherent whole; the governmental practices of assembly (Li, 2007a). Experts have a key role in this, but it should not be assumed that either the

intention or effect of experts' efforts is to simply reproduce the governmental assemblage in its present form. Indeed, the constant changes and transformations across and within governmental assemblages call for analyses that focus in on the contribution of experts and expertise in assembling the assemblage and producing that change. Drawing on the lessons highlighted in the review above, we can think about how experts are key drivers of change in governmental assemblages.

This requires a methodological focus on who the experts involved in a particular assemblage are, their motivations and goals, and how they go about achieving, or failing to achieve, the latter. This asks how particular experts are able to claim expertise in relation to the objects and subjects of the assemblage – what gives them a claim to speak in the capacity of an expert. It considers their intentions for using this capacity in terms of the changes they would make to the assemblage that they see before them and the outcomes they expect from this. And it examines the particular strategies and tactics that are used to convert their claims to expertise into expert power through strategic engagements with existing power distributions.

This recognises that experts are not simply blank subjects with a hegemonic discourse being spoken through them but are capable of engaging and interacting with the knowledge that gives them power. It examines how actors get cast as experts, something that is generally associated with particular institutions and disciplines, but to understand this casting in the context of changing assemblages of government. In other words, to figure the co-constitutive relationship between particular actors becoming experts and the emergence of the particular governmental assemblage they are situated in. This approach will be able to illustrate the inevitably uneven geography and sociology of this co-constitutive process, but it also allows for nuanced pictures of particular governmental assemblages that can show their flexibility and adaptability (Barker, 2008).

The particular governmental assemblage that I am interested in here has emerged over the last decade or so around a particular object of government: the creative industries. The term 'creative industries' was first coined by Tony Blair's 'New' Labour administration in the UK soon after they came to power in 1997 (Department for Culture, Media and Sport, henceforth DCMS, 1998). These industries were held up as a significant and growing part of the UK economy and therefore worthy of governmental attention. This argument was most explicitly realised in the Creative Industries Mapping Document (CIMD) released in 1998. This provided a definition of the creative industries sector:

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, p. 5).

A list of those industries that constituted the sector:

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, p. 5).

And a statistical ‘map’ of the creative industries measuring their contribution to the economy in revenue, employment and exports. They were, it was claimed, 5% of the British economy and growing faster than any other sector.

This act of calculation was significant. As Christophers (2007) shows, this was not just the neutral measurement of a coherent, pre-existing sector: it was central to its constitution. The use of statistical techniques gives a sense of certainty to the existence of the sector. Although the accuracy of the representation given by the numbers could be questioned, the idea that there is something ‘out there’ being represented had already taken hold. The representation delineates an aspect of ‘reality’, maybe poorly or partially, but reality nonetheless (Mitchell, 2002). This is given further weight by the existence of precedents in constructions like the ‘cultural’ and ‘copyright’ industries (Garnham, 2005). But the CIMD not only extended these other constructions to include industries like advertising and architecture, it gave them ‘*internal equivalence*: the industries belong together because they all share the central, defining feature of creativity’ (Christophers, 2007, p. 240), and situated them at the forefront of the UK’s knowledge-driven economy strategy for engaging with the globalising world (Garnham, 2005).

The circulation of the CIMD as what the actor-network literature describes as an immutable mobile (Latour, 1987) was vital in enrolling and reconstituting a variety of institutions, agencies and individuals as part of a governmental assemblage that took the creative industries as its focus. Not only could the creative industries now be an object of policy action as a whole, but through them various governmental projects could be performed: national and regional economies could be revived (Jayne, 2005), social exclusion could be tackled (Oakley, 2006), and cultural practitioners and agencies could be disciplined in line with the needs of the knowledge-driven economy (Christophers, 2007). These have not necessarily been successful: like many governmental projects, they have had unexpected effects and produced diverse sociologies and geographies of government. As a result, the governmental assemblage has transformed across time and space with changing creative industry discourses, policy foci, institutional arrangements and scales of action. For example, after the creative industries lost their ‘champion’ at cabinet level through the demotion of Secretary of Culture Chris Smith in 2002, the creative industries dropped off the national agenda and became a more regionally centred discourse, only to return with a vengeance at the national level after concerns were raised about digital music piracy (a marginal concern in the late 1990s) by major music industry labels, resulting in a new central government programme and even a new ‘Minister for the Creative Industries’ (see Purnell, 2005). There is also no doubt that as the creative industries concept took hold in the UK and across the world it overlapped and was in part driven further along by Richard Florida’s refrain about the importance of the ‘creative class’ (see Florida, 2002), leading many to refer to both in the same breath (Bayliss, 2007; Bontje and Musterd, 2009; Hartley, 2005; Long, 2009).

Accounting for such transformations, both small and large, in this assemblage needs to go further than metaphors of evolution with their inbuilt assumptions of natural ‘survival of the fittest’ type change. The transformations are driven in part by different types of experts, such as Richard Florida, making claims for both expertise and expert power, with varying degrees of success and both expected and unexpected outcomes. The work of various experts, located at a range of sites, in calculating the impact of the creative industries, devising technologies for

increasing their contribution, figuring new ways of augmenting their presence, and so on, has been central to the governmental assemblage forming around the creative industries. As these experts have changed their practices of assembly, so the assemblage has changed.

In what follows I will focus on a group of creative industries experts who have tended to function within urban and regional administrative scales in the UK, but recently have begun to gain influence outside the country. This particular group, known as the Forum on Creative Industries or FOICI, demonstrate how governmental assemblages tend not to involve the rolling out of pre-constituted experts who will realise central government's vision but will often involve experts who are already 'out there', situated in epistemic communities for whom a document like the CIMD has important ramifications for their knowledge, practices, and constitution. They have been chosen in part because their work at the regional scale kept the creative industries on the governmental agenda between 2002, when they dropped off the national stage, and 2005, when they returned in a new central government programme, thus avoiding the fate of other New Labour concepts like the 'Third Way' and 'Cool Britannia'. But these experts also illustrate how governmental expertise does not necessarily just reproduce the governmental line, and how the experts' own histories and intentions can result in engagements that both reshape the assemblage and their own expert subjectivities.

The following discussion draws on research on the governmental assemblage for the creative industries that has emerged in the UK since the late 1990s. The research has comprised interviews with 22 UK-based key informants involved in the assemblage in some way, analysis of key policy, research and communication documents, and attendance at a number of events, conferences, seminars and symposia on the creative industries in the UK. The interviews focused on the informants' work histories and in particular their engagement with the creative industries concept after the release of the CIMD, drawing out how they translated their aims and ideals into strategies for engaging with the creative industries governmental assemblage they saw before them. As it became clear that the formation of FOICI was a key strategy for several informants – eight were members of FOICI, including key figures central to its initial formation, and several other interviewees had associations or experiences with the group – the group and its work became a central topic of research. FOICI were not the only group of experts to engage with the creative industries concept (e.g. Work Foundation, 2007), nor were they necessarily the most significant or successful, but their experiences are illustrative of some of the promises and perils of producing expert knowledge.

4. (Re)-making and (re)-distributing creative industries expertise

As referred to above, although the specific concept of 'the creative industries' was new at the time of the release of the first CIMD in 1998, its focus on economic sectors like music, theatre, film and publishing meant it had significant areas of overlap with concepts that were already circulating in some policy spheres, such as the 'copyright' and 'cultural' industries. This latter notion of the cultural industries was particularly significant for a specific group of policy, council and research actors in especially the North of England who had been working with these ideas for the previous decade. Indeed the fomenting knowledge culture of this group took its cue from the work of the Greater London Council (GLC) of the early 1980s. Although it was never put

into practice because the Conservative Government of the time abolished the Council in 1986, the London Industrial Strategy (Greater London Council, 1985) was a focal point of alternative economic thinking in the context of the apparent failure of state socialism and the rise of the 'new right'. Included in the document was a chapter on the cultural industries (Greater London Council, 1985, pp. 169-81), a radical departure at the time from thinking that culture and economy were opposed and antagonistic spheres. For many of these actors, the London Industrial Strategy and the GLC were emblematic of what they want to achieve:

The GLC had been the incubator of cultural industries thinking... In the end the abolishment saw it disperse to all these Northern Councils... I went to conferences, I read voraciously the documents that they were putting out and a lot of the stuff that was coming out of (independent publishing house and now consultancy) Comedia at the time... (In the mid to late 1980s) I was trying to put some of those ideas into practice at the local level (FOCI member A, Personal Communication, 2006).

After 1986 it was in the North of England that a range of cultural industries strategies, including the Huddersfield Creative Town initiative, the Sheffield Cultural Industries Quarter and the Manchester Cultural Industries Development Service (now Creative Industries Development Service), were put into place by individuals who would later become part of FOCI.

The knowledge culture associated with the development of these urban and regional cultural industry development programmes imbued FOCI's actors with a claim to a particular form of expertise (Riley, 2008; Tsouvalis et al., 2000). But given such programmes had grown from the scattered remnants of the GLC's attempts to realise an alternative economic vision in a period when neoliberal discourses of economic management were in the ascendant they remained relatively marginal, often struggling for funds and relying on European funding that was being directed at economically lagging regions. So despite their claims to expertise, expert power remained moderate and locally-focused.

According to one FOCI member, '(i)n 1997 we were a small group of people, outsiders to the mainstream, knocking on the door of the big government agencies wanting attention' (FOCI Member B, Personal Communication, 2006). For this group the release of the CIMD suggested the possibility of leveraging their expertise for a qualitatively greater degree of expert power – the prospect of greater recognition for work in their field, enhanced funding opportunities, and contact with national policy-making institutions. But this was not a foregone conclusion:

(P)eople like (us)... who had been working in Sheffield and Manchester and so on all those years were thinking, 'great, finally somebody is speaking our language' but feeling at the same time they weren't actually talking to us about it (FOCI Member A, Personal Communication, 2006).

The newly circulating discourse encapsulated in the CIMD would need to be engaged to ensure 'the door of the big government agencies' would be opened. During 1998 this relatively loose network of around thirty practitioners, consultants, council officers and researchers, with their interest in what they would describe as cultural industry and cultural development planning at especially the local and urban scale, formed the Forum on Creative Industries.

Although FOCI present themselves as “a network of experienced professionals concerned to inform and influence the current debates around the creative industries”,¹ its formation is an example of the process of professionalisation around a particular object of government, in this case the creative industries. Bondi and Laurie (2005, p. 395) argue that professionalisation involves “processes of representation, negotiation and embodiment”. FOCI served as a vector for all three. The act of formalising as FOCI had the effect of not only creating a space through which a number of disparate individuals could come together to exchange ideas and discuss issues of mutual interest, it gave them a form of collective authority achieved through the uniting of a collection of expert voices. It was a vehicle to represent their views, evoking their existing, if until now marginalised, expertise as ‘experienced professionals’ in the creative industries. But being heard in this capacity would also require negotiating the discourses of the CIMD. The very act of calling themselves the Forum on *Creative Industries* was recognition of the importance of the new label, a label they would have to use if they were to be heard, despite several of FOCI’s members expressing a profound disregard for it:

Where the word creative came from nobody knows. The specific definition was very individualistic. It completely came from left of field for people who had been talking about cultural industries and value chains and complex ecologies of distribution systems, and suddenly it was just about creative entrepreneurs exploiting IP (Intellectual Property). It was quite a weak understanding (FOCI Member C, Personal Communication, 2006).

Thus, in the face of their own objections FOCI’s members effectively cast themselves as creative industries experts.

The other key strategy of engagement revolved around how they went about inserting themselves into the emerging creative industries governmental assemblage. FOCI’s expertise has been focused at the local and regional scales which had been conspicuously absent from the initial DCMS framework despite New Labour’s ‘new regional’ agenda. This provided an opportunity for FOCI’s experts to increase their expert power and influence policy programmes. According to one member, their strategic insertion in regional policy processes was made possible by the CIMD garnering broad political support but in itself not being a policy programme, resulting in something of an impasse for DCMS:

The regions were well placed to do something about (the creative industries) because in a way this was what they had always been doing. But, and this is an important point, that could never be admitted. Part of the reason that creative industries and not cultural industries was selected was so that New Labour could distance itself from ‘Old’ Labour. ‘Old’ Labour had much of its support in the old metropolitan counties and much of what it had done was local economic development which was against the neoliberal orthodoxy which New Labour had taken over. There was a tension there... So FOCI... became a convenient sort of method for DCMS to talk to the regions – it inserted itself into the process... serving as an intermediary

¹ See www.foci.org.uk. Initially FOCI was brought together by three individuals: Phil Wood, a consultant for the urban-cultural consultancy Comedia and former head of the Huddersfield Creative Town initiative of the 1980s; Justin O’Connor, an academic from Manchester Metropolitan University and associate of Manchester’s Cultural Industries Development Service; and Josephine Burns, co-director of cultural consultancy the Burns-Owens Partnership (now BOP Consulting).

between public and private and all those interests. It could talk to people between different spheres and pass information along (FOCI Member D, Personal Communication, 2006).

FOCI's members embodied the roles of creative industries experts supplying necessary knowledge in the emerging governmental assemblage.

FOCI became a part of the creative industries policy network. It acted as a proxy for drawing in knowledge once linked to the GLC while disguising that such a link existed. The result was the ability of FOCI members to shape policy through membership of DCMS taskforces and influence at the newly formed Regional Development Agencies and Regional Cultural Consortiums:

In the early days we were able to guide policy, particularly at the regional level because there was a complete lack of knowledge. The organisations had been set up at the regional level with people who didn't really know anything about the area. So we saw ourselves as befriending these regional agencies and guiding them in a way that we wanted them to use their resources. Ultimately several FOCI members got into jobs as creative industry coordinators. I think FOCI members did just about every piece of research at the regional level which established policy for the Regional Development Agencies (FOCI Member A, Personal Communication, 2006).

FOCI's expert power increased through the formation and authorisation of regional and local policy programmes, a process that signified their professionalisation as creative industries experts (Bondi and Laurie, 2005; Jenkins, 2008; Laurie et al., 2005; Nightingale, 2005).

Following Mitchell (2002, p. 41), the emergence of FOCI is symptomatic of "a concentration and reorganisation of knowledge rather than an introduction of expertise where none had been in use before." As in Mitchell's colonial context where expertise disguised its extra-scientific origins, here expertise engaged with the CIMD to disguise the political origins of its knowledge. So while the CIMD has been central to the emergence of a governmental assemblage around the creative industries, the requisite experts that populate and reproduce the assemblage are not blank slates onto which the CIMD has been written. Rather, already existing forms of expertise have mobilised through processes of strategic engagement, in this case through organisational consolidation as FOCI, re-branding, despite misgivings, from cultural to creative industry experts, and the supply of knowledge to agencies that lack the necessary intellectual capital to fulfil their mandated role of developing the creative industries. The 'reward' for this engagement has been increased levels of expert power through influence at these new and emerging policy and administrative entities at the regional level of the UK. Achieving this redistribution of expert power has meant changes in discourse and orientation for many of FOCI's members. But, as I discuss in the next section, this should not be mistaken for simple co-optation (Kothari, 2005).

5. Re-assembling the creative industries

FOCI's collective role in the emerging assemblage is not as a neutral cipher for central-government-defined creative industry policy. As creative industries experts they play an active, constitutive role in the emerging assemblage. While this involves all the day to day activities and

minutiae of working in policy, research and advocacy roles that reassemble and reproduce the assemblage everyday, there are clear moments where strategic attempts to reshape the assemblage manifest. This section will focus on the production of a particular policy document, the DCMS Evidence Toolkit (DET) (DCMS, 2004), which resulted from some of FOCP's strategic efforts to negotiate different ways of knowing cultural and creative production. It is indicative of three points about expertise in governmental assemblages: first, it shows how governmental assemblages can be reshaped through the strategic engagement of the experts that (re)produce it. Following on from this, second, it suggests a focus on the intentionality of those experts within the context of the assemblage matters. And third, it shows how thinking about the work of assembling is more complex than naked grabs for resources (Li, 2007b).

The DET was ostensibly a response to 'the urgent need, expressed by all the English Regional Cultural Consortiums, for a more robust and reliable evidence-base on which to develop policies for the future' (DCMS, 2004, p. 1). It serves as a guide for the collection of cultural statistics, including the creative industries within the DCMS remit, and is intended to standardise this practice at the regional level, thus becoming another immutable mobile circulating through the assemblage. Like the CIMD, the DET makes the link between a concept, in this case the cultural sector, and the need for calculation to constitute it as knowable and actionable:

It is only relatively recently that this sector has been brought together in the same policy framework. There are no shared definitions, systems and methodologies... there has been a lack of knowledge and expertise in drawing together credible data for policy-making (DCMS, 2004, p. 1).

To this extent the DET continues with the approach of using calculation to render certain unified spaces and subjects as available to governmental intervention, a strategy in common with not only the CIMD but New Labour's quantitative 'evidence-based' approach to policy making (Bickerstaff and Simmons, 2004; Grundy and Smith, 2007). However, the DET differs from the CIMD in certain key respects. This is not just that they target the 'cultural' sector – the DET is a deliberate attempt to alter the way that both of these sectors are conceived in policy knowledge.

Apart from a reference to them in a section on definitions, the creative industries are not mentioned in the DET. However, it is clear that these two sectors overlap one another in terms of some of the 'cultural' industries referred to. But this is not a case of shifting the analytical lens and using the same statistical approach as the CIMD for measuring the performance of a slightly different set of activities. The focus of the DET is on the cultural sector and the economies in which it is situated:

Culture has both a 'material' and a non-material dimension. The definition of the Cultural Sector must focus upon material culture, and we understand this to be the sum of activities and necessary resources (tools, infrastructure and artefacts) involved in the whole 'cycle' of creation, dissemination, exhibition / reception, archiving / preservation, and education / understanding relating to cultural products and services (DCMS, 2004, p. 10).

While the CIMD measured output and revenue, the DET uses *production chain* logic to guide the development of the statistical framework. This focus on production has parallels with the approach of the GLC's London Industrial Strategy (see Rustin, 1986). Set against the

consumption-revenue generating definition of the creative industries that describes the ‘present approach of DCMS’ (i.e. the CIMD), this productivist definition emphasises not just the returns of the industries themselves but the role of all the facets of production:

(A)n analysis of one function within Film, film production, would not simply cover film production companies, but would seek to include set design, costume hire, post-production, special effects and so on. In addition to the introduction of functions that are not presently considered by DCMS (e.g. film education), a more rigorously applied concept of the production chain works to ‘deepen’ the cultural domains when compared with the present approach of DCMS (DCMS, 2004, p.11).

The result is a challenge to the prevailing knowledge (Budds, 2009; Scott and Barnett, 2009) exhibited by the CIMD. The statistical representations that would be produced under the framework, with its emphasis on *all* the inputs that go into cultural production, would suggest the presence of a creative industries sector that looks quite different to that contained within the former. The implication of this is recognised by the authors: ‘the concept of the production chain enables policymakers to ‘see’ the totality and interrelations of an industry or domain, which improves their ability to properly target interventions’ (DCMS, 2004, p.11). The overlap of the two sectors aside, this language indicates that the DET is a deliberate attempt to force a different representational map of the cultural and creative industries sectors, resulting in a different policy focus.

The DET itself was authored by the academic and FOCI member Andy Pratt and several consultancies including the Burns-Owens Partnership, Positive Solutions and Experian Business Strategies. Nonetheless FOCI had a strong influence. According to one member:

It was the subject of a lot of debate in FOCI. We all inputted into that. We had many, many long debates about it. There were several people from the FOCI group who were involved in developing it (FOCI Member E, Personal Communication, 2006).

It was Pratt, however, who was most responsible for the production chain conceptualisation of the creative industries – it was an approach he had worked with before when studying what he called the cultural industries sector (Pratt, 1997). One of the authors is definitive about what they hoped this would achieve:

The failing of the mapping document was its conceptual basis where it was concerned with consumption but not with the interconnectivity of cultural production. By creating this model about the circuit of production it was like inserting a time-bomb into the whole statistical framework... they’re now beginning to realise that their entire framework is based around this (production chain concept) and they’ve actually got statistics on this and they have to think about cultural production more generally. It’s (our) way of figuring policy. (We’ve) inserted this policy imperative in the centre. (Jokingly) It’s like a virus (DET Author, Personal Communication, 2006).

By creating this alternative framework to the CIMD a different type of evidence base is expected to result. FOCI’s goal is to change the way the creative industries, and the cognate cultural sectors they are also interested in, are understood and acted upon in evidence-based policy.

Some members claim that it has already had some success in changing the terms of the debate so it is possible this strategic deployment of knowledge, taken when a political opening occurred thanks to the efforts of FOCI, may have shifted the terrain of the creative industries in a significant way.

The production of the DET illustrates how assemblages that rely on the work of distributed expertise can be reshaped through intentional, strategic engagements by those experts. Here it is a strategic engagement that engages with the calculative, evidence-based approach of the powerful national government centre of the assemblage represented in the CIMD, thus ensuring its general acceptance, but also resituates this approach in the kinds of logics those experts regard as more appropriate to the subject matter – in this case a production chain logic. The result is the possibility of an assemblage that is reshaped over time to be more in line with the general ‘cultural production’ focus of FOCI. Such deliberate action should not be reduced to opportunistic self-interest (Li, 2007b) – the production chain logic has an intellectual heritage stretching back to the GLC. But because of FOCI’s expertise in this particular area, any shift in this direction will likely translate into greater expert power for them as they are well positioned to provide expert advice in this policy context. Indeed recent years have seen a growing international policy focus on the creative industries, and the UK’s status as a leader in the field has meant some FOCI members are now travelling to overseas sites, such as China, South Africa and Australia, and taking their reconstituted expertise with them. As their expertise is transnationalised they contribute to a deepening of the fomenting global governmental assemblage emerging for the creative industries (Ong and Collier, 2005).

6. Conclusions

The process of converting expertise into expert power has a key role in shaping and reshaping governmental assemblages. Although the success of attempted conversions, and whether they have the intended outcome, is an important factor, this dynamic is a defining feature of the relationship between expertise and systems of government. But the process is more complex than naked power plays by clearly defined expert factions. For one, it requires strategic engagement which can change the subjectivity of those experts and resituate them in a new governmental context with different networks and institutional affiliations. The formation of FOCI recast its members as creative industry experts from cultural policy and cultural industry workers, reorienting their expert knowledge towards a greater regional and national policy project focus. Their successful insertion at the regional level gave them some control over the direction of creative industry policy formation – a degree of expert power – in the new regional administration edifice, with the effect of giving the emerging assemblage a particular flavour at this level.

Furthermore, the conversion of expertise into expert power always occurs in the context of the assemblage itself. Assemblages are held together in part by the knowledge forms, often ossified into immutable mobiles, circulating through them. The circulation of the CIMD was a key moment in the formation of the creative industries governmental assemblage as it currently stands. It gave already existing forms of expertise the opportunity to claim more expert power through their strategic entry into the emerging assemblage. Ongoing expert power claims will

mean engaging with this knowledge to produce new and renovated forms that have the potential to circulate widely and accrue greater influence to its authors, as FOCI did with the DET. Focusing on how experts interact with assemblages can add to discussions of the latter by moving beyond the descriptive to consider intentionality on the part of the experts in the assemblage as a driving force, although, as is clear here, that intentionality is very much constituted within and constrained by the assemblage itself.

Overall, the paper shows how a focus on experts can produce nuanced accounts of the constitution and transformation of governmental assemblages. It recognises that expertise is an important part of governmental assemblages, not just because the authority of expertise is one of the forces that make government possible, but because how and why expertise *engages* – the intentionality of the experts themselves – is what gives the assemblage its distinctive sociology and geography. By fleshing out experts and making them more than just automatons of the state or particular disciplines or institutions, we can discern how their own micro-geographies shape their engagement. It seems reasonable to suggest that this could be taken further – if experts do have intentions in the context of assemblages, then it is worth focusing on their learning and reflexive capacities to consider how these develop and impact on ongoing transformations in governmental assemblages, as well as considering whether there is a sociology and geography to the development of these capacities. Further research may also consider other factors that shape assemblages and how these interact and imbricate with attempts to gain expert power. The obvious example here would be a consideration of the political economy of expertise, and how opportunities to convert expertise into different forms of capital shape and transform an assemblage. Most importantly perhaps, by recognising the dynamics of the multiple layered geographies and sociologies of expertise, such research can consider the impact of those forms not interested in reproducing the status quo, providing a rejoinder to representations of the tyranny of expertise and pointing to the possibility of its redemption in alternative governmental visions.

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