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Informing Cultural Policy in Scotland

Computer Games + Cultural Policy
10 June 2003, Paisley University

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Presentation Structure

- What is cultural policy
- Cultural policy in Scotland
- Contributing to the debate in Scotland and beyond

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What is Cultural Policy?

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Approaches to Cultural Policy (CP)

- “Cultural policies produce and animate institutions, practices and agencies. One of their goals is to find, serve, and nurture a sense of belonging, through educational institutions and cultural industries.” (Lewis & Miller, 2003)
- CPs are a means of governance, of formatting public collective subjectivity. This can be done in various ways...
 - in the name of maintaining culture – tends to invoke cultural hierarchies
 - in terms of economic development – tends to embrace developments in the social technology of culture (new modes of expression)
- “Cultural policy is a site for the production of cultural citizens, with the cultural industries providing not only a realm of representations about oneself and others, but a series of rationales for particular types of conduct.” (Miller, 1993)

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Recent origins of CP practice + discipline

- UNESCO 1960s, 1970s: lobbying for the creation of a ministry/department of culture in every nation state
- The discipline today: CP vs cultural studies
 - Cultural policy as “the missing agenda” of cultural studies: it offers a *programme* for change besides distanced critique (McRobbie, 1996)
 - Tensions: combining theory and practice is misplaced in the cultural field – academic practice tends to disdain such relationships
 - The need for a ‘critical cultural policy’ (Lewis & Miller, 2003): applying cultural studies can be progressive if a shift from utopian critique to implemented policy is allowed
 - An example: influence of N Garnham on GLC (1980s): crafting a “cultural industries” strategy removing class distinctions from CP

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Culture in the context of public policy

- The aesthetic notion of cultural policy – focused on self-consciously artistic output emerging from creative people
 - Predominant in 19th century, still survives in current agendas
 - Emphasis on protecting traditional and ‘high’ arts
 - Expert elite tends to control the criteria of ‘worth’ even when trying to make it accessible (‘cultural democracy’)
- Process-driven intervention: democratisation of culture (1960s, 70s)
 - Emphasis on participation: community arts, multicultural arts, arts & disability
- Market-driven cultural practices - cultural industries (1980s on)
 - “Commercial arts making money in the market place”. Emphasis on “choice”
- The identification ‘culture = arts’ tends to predominate over the anthropological sense of culture as ‘way of life’.
- Aspiration to blend cultural democracy and democratisation of culture

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Cultural Policy in Scotland

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Actors and agendas

- Scottish Executive – Ministry for Culture, Sport & Tourism
 - “culture as a way to promote active citizenship, communitarism, mutuality, education, health and welfare.” (Hamilton & Scullion, 2002)
 - midway between cultural democracy and democratisation of culture
- Myths or reality?
 - Culture as the motive force behind Scotland's political devolution
 - Praise: varied representation, international potential, greater sustainability
 - Questions: how much of Scottish culture in 1980s was about re-action to Westminster and how much about defining a new Scotland?
 - Trend: debate on Scottish culture centres on its instrumental role in delivering social change, economic diversification and prosperity. Common trend in other states and nations. Make it unique to Scotland

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The National Cultural Strategy

- First published in August 2000, updated and revised regularly
- Format and remit
 - Presented as a 'framework' for action, emphasizing 'national identity'
 - Promotes a broad definition of culture ('heritage' as well as 'new ideas')
 - Celebrates relevance of creative industries in Scotland although it ignores broadcasting companies, including BBC Scotland
- Criticisms
 - Lack of vision and precision of goals. It does not seem particular to Scotland
 - Maintains old-fashioned assumptions: opposing commercial and subsidized arts, community and professional practices
 - Does not discuss criteria for funding / supporting arts and culture
 - Lacks confidence in examining cultural infrastructures and power structures in existing and new national institutions. Lack of 'joined-up' thinking

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Creative Industries and CP

- 'Creative Industries Strategy' by Scottish Enterprise
 - £25m on offer to develop the sector in Scotland
 - Criticism that strategy focuses too much on games industry.
 - But Scotland has benefited from this support: the UK is 3rd biggest market in the world after US and Japan
- There is as yet an unclear relation between creative industries and traditional arts from a policy perspective.
 - 'Creative Industries Group' established by Minister for Tourism, Culture and Sport (May 02). Contributed to National Cultural Strategy with focus on music, film and design industries
 - The SAC separates dance, drama, literature, (trad) music, crafts and visual arts from 'new media'
- Lack of direct references to the Games industry in cultural policy docs but trend could change: 'Games on' exhibit

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Contributing to the debate in Scotland and beyond

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Creative industries vs classic artforms?

- Need to accept that boundaries are dissolving
 - No use to separate fashion from games, architecture, graphics, film. The blending also applies, increasingly, to music, visual arts, literature
 - Question traditional opposites: culture and commerce, production and consumption. They make no sense for practitioners & user
 - Question current criteria for arts funding (i.e. SAC grant applications)
- Need to re-define policy (MacDonald, 2002)
 - Make policy-makers understand what is industrial creativity and how it differs from traditional self-referencing arts introspection
 - Fill this void in policy with more innovative approaches to education, training, management & business support – incl. finance advise
 - Explore best management relationship culture, creativity & economy
 - In Scotland, study better linkages Scottish Executive, Scottish Enterprise, NESTA, SAC

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Areas of opportunity for Games industry



- Leading the way towards new forms of cultural policy
 - Clear example of 'format' blend: music, design, writing, fashion...
 - Bringing current agendas a step forward: allowing for new education formats, tackling social inclusion, diversity, disability
 - Potential to bring a 'difference' to the Scottish policy approach
- Influencing the debate
 - What leads to prioritising one over another agenda?
 - What is missing? What could be changed?
 - How could Scotland lead the way?

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