

**An Analysis of the Policy Background to the  
Establishment of a Creative Industries Network in the  
Dundee Area in the late 1990's**

*a Public Policy essay*

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## The Network

In the period of the mid 1990's to the turn of the millennium, a significant network of relationships across a wide sector of public agencies has been established in Dundee City. This network supports the Creative Industries sector in the area. The line between some public agencies and private interests is blurred. VIS Entertainment<sup>1</sup>, Real Time Worlds<sup>2</sup>, Denki<sup>3</sup> and Visual Science<sup>4</sup> are the major local video games development companies, all with Dundee as their primary base and all with a track record of world number one selling video games. The local education sector, through the University of Abertay Dundee<sup>5</sup>, Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art and Design<sup>6</sup> and Dundee College<sup>7</sup> is interlinked to these companies and the wider creative industries sector through its employment of staff for research and teaching in the field.

To this has been added the Dundee City Council<sup>8</sup>, Scottish Enterprise Tayside<sup>9</sup> (SET) and Dundee Contemporary Arts<sup>10</sup>. SET call the network Interactive Tayside<sup>11</sup>, but this does not reflect the range of interactions, hidden forces or outworkings of this networks of agencies, companies and individuals, nor its unclear future. Neither does it easily explain outworkings such as Scottish Screen's Dundee-based Alt-W<sup>12</sup> initiative (a national scheme which funds traditional-medium artists converting into the digital medium) that brings together all the above partners except SET.

This essay will investigate the policy background to government attempts to support the creative industries in the Dundee City area. This will be done first from a historical perspective – how did we get where we are now? - then from a comparative analysis of the network as an example of corporatist and/or pluralist policy thought, and finally an analysis of the implications of the network upon the City of Dundee from a democratic and communitarian perspective.

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.visentertainment.com>   <sup>2</sup> <http://www.realtimeworlds.com>   <sup>3</sup> <http://www.denki.co.uk>  
<sup>4</sup> <http://www.vissci.com/>   <sup>5</sup> <http://www.abertay-dundee.ac.uk>   <sup>6</sup> <http://www.dundee.ac.uk/djcad/>  
<sup>7</sup> <http://www.dundeecollege.ac.uk/>   <sup>8</sup> <http://www.dundee.gov.uk/>  
<sup>9</sup> <http://www.scottish-enterprise.com/tayside>   <sup>10</sup> <http://www.dca.org.uk>  
<sup>11</sup> <http://www.interactivetayside.com/>   <sup>12</sup> <http://www.alt-w.com/>

## Dundee

“To be sure, the rich, industrial countries can defend themselves (ease but not eliminate the pain) by remaining on the cutting edge of research, by moving into new and growing branches (creating new jobs), by learning from others, by finding the right niches, by cultivating and using ability and knowledge ... helping others to learn new skills, get new jobs ... much will depend on their spirit of enterprise, their sense of identity and commitment to the common weal, their self-esteem, their ability to transmit these assets across the generations” (Landes (1998), p523)

Dundee has existed since earliest times and has seen many commercial successes and failures including ship building, whaling and jute manufacturing [Lenman (1977), p240-1; Lynch (1991), p173; Keay and Keay (1994), p261-7]. Its post-industrial decline started early; by 1939 there was “a chronic surplus of labour” [Keay and Keay (1994), p264].

The city’s population has significantly also declined as Scotland has become less urban [Hearn (2003)]. Yet, as Harvie (2000) argues Dundee has a vivid personality and a strong local élite, intelligensia and recognisable distinctive artistic style. The Dundee Courier sells 117,000 copies (McInnes (1992)), the High School of Dundee was founded in AD1239 [Carrick Media, 1998]. Yet it has no significant airport, Scottish Arts Council presence, civil service sector and until recently no significant tertiary education sector.

“By the late 1950’s it was commonplace to concede that Britain was falling behind industrially ... [and] that investment and productivity were low” [Coates (1989) p39]. Dundee suffered the “holocaust of Scottish manufacturing” and “the situation was ... desperate” [Knox (1999), p254pp]. It is not surprising that fifty years ago (P. Hume Brown (1955)) could then find only four things to say about the city.

Major governments initiatives were applied to the situation. These concentrated upon two major external forces: the rise of the “new electrical and electronic industries” [ibid] and “the drift of ownership and control away from Scotland and towards England and America” [Scott (1983), p161]. The former early perceived by [Evans (1979), p101] as the “Computer Revolution ... in full swing.” The latter part of a “burgeoning globalisation /marketisation” [Scott, 1998]. Together they constitute a

“process for getting cultures to conform with each other on a planetary scale, the global spread of a mass popular culture” [Hobsbawm (2000), p121] evidenced by Dundee’s new success in the creative industry sector and, in particular, video games production. [Hutton (1996), p1] states that the UK’s “great industrial cities are decaying and listless, while in new industries and technologies Britain is barely represented”; yet this does not appear to apply to end of the millennium Dundee. By 1999 Tom Devine could confidently increase his coverage of Dundee *vis a vis* Scotland to over 60 entries. The ugly duckling may not be a swan, but it had ceased to wobble and quack.

## **Enterprise in Dundee**

The Dundee network focus is upon the creative industries. The government has looked hungrily at an industry with a significant recent track-record:

“Nintendo, a Japanese manufacturer of playing cards, launched Game Boy in 1989 and by 1993 was Japan’s third most profitable company”

“By 1999, revenues from PS1 consoles and games brought in 25% of Sony’s income and 38% of profits”

“Super Mario and Donkey Kong [video games] had worldwide revenues in excess of \$5,500,000,000”

“Global turnover in video games is about \$17,000,000,000”  
[Howkins (2001), p114-5]

(Skillset (2001), p109) reported to government that “the creative industries cluster in Scotland ...[has] the potential to underpin the development of a successful digital creative content sector.” The UK industry turns over £300m per annum and employs 20,000 staff and “Dundee is at the forefront of one of the world’s most vibrant new industries: games”.

The major economic partners are Scottish Enterprise Tayside and Dundee City Council. This reflects an awkward relationship highlighted in two papers by John Fairley. He points out “the acquisition by local authorities of a clear, statutory locus in economic development.” Earlier [Fairley, 1996] defined among Scottish Enterprise’s general functions, “the development of Scotland’s economy and

providing, maintaining and safeguarding employment” [Fairley, 1995]. The City Council is a democratically elected body of councillors answerable to the local electorate whilst Scottish Enterprise Tayside is a private company with an, albeit, “locally” [ibid] appointed board.

Dundee City Council reflects a politically radical city [Divine (2000), p208ff] where the SNP and Scottish New Labour split the votes evenly. It has suffered under recent Conservative governments, not least in losing suburbs in 1996. SET is a quango; quangos – “big and nasty” [Hogwood (1995)] - were “readily associated with Conservative control of a country that had not endorsed Conservative policies” and that it was perceived “the Conservatives were appointing their own supporters to the [quangos] committees.” [Paterson (2000), p31.] SE was lampooned as “the Conservatives ‘Scottish solution to a Scottish problem’ ... the brainchild of Glasgow businessman and leading Tory, Bill Hughes.” [Smith (1993), p13]

As Paul (Hirst, 1995) said, “Quangos must thus be, almost by definition, a matter of concern for anyone committed to democratic accountability”.

SE’s aim is to build a creative industries ‘cluster’. As Botham and Downes (1999) state,

“As a means of strengthening, developing and diversifying Scotland’s main industries, cluster approach offers some highly relevant ideas for both the policy and practice of economic development ... a means through which companies can form beneficial relationships with ... research institutes, education ... [if] properly organised and focused, improve company performance, increase business birth rate, generate innovation and attract knowledge-based inward investment.”

This paper and that by Botham (1999) show how the idea was imported from the United States of America.

## **Education in Dundee**

The other significant local actors are the three city tertiary education establishments. Each has brought a significant experience of the creative industries sector. Duncan of

Jordanstone (DoJ) is a major Arts college that has courses in such as animation. The University of Abertay Dundee (UAD) has courses in computer games programming and development, and in digital artworks creation. Dundee College has courses in music and artworks creation. But, DoJ was once a part of the UAD predecessor college, the Dundee Institute of Art and Technology [Shaw, RW (1997)] and is now a part of the University of Dundee, with whom UAD has a poor relationship. Dundee College, a typical FE college, is the city's largest tertiary educator [Gallacher, 2002] and is also fiercely independent of both universities.

Further, Hogwood (1995) extends his definition of quangos to include “universities [and] Colleges of Further Education” which Hirst (1995) accuses of , like SET, a placing if “public money and government functions in the hands of unelected persons whose links to the elected bodies that supervise government are tenuous at best.”

To complete the complex trio of enterprise body, local authority and education, SE has a “two-headed remit for training and economic development” [Smith, 1993] unclear even at the higher level where “the demarcation between Education and Enterprise and Lifelong Learning is ... less clear-cut.” [Parry (1999)]. But, all three partners see their role as vocational education and training providers in this industry sector and its place as being “central to economic development” [Fairley 1996].

Attempts have been made to widen this to include Angus College (Arbroath), Perth College and the University of St Andrews, without any success. There is perhaps a dichotomy here of “Scottish education being less open to innovation and experimentation” [Scott, 2000] evidenced in Perth, Angus and Fife whereas the Dundee institutions have shown a “commitment to increasing educational opportunity and working in flexible and innovative ways with business and local communities.” [Shaw, RW (1997)]. However, it may too early to tell as “Scottish higher education is [still] going through one of the biggest upheavals in its history” [Paterson, 1994]

### **The Trust Network**

“Higher education in the future will be organised ... on coherent partnerships ... between institutions ... [and] *across* sectors” [Crawford, 1997]. To deliver a working

relationship that involves so much potential distrust involves building a community of actors from each partner. In the Dundee creative industries network this has been done by a very few people – between 1 and 3 - from each establishments. All have a wider commitment to their work and to the city than to a narrow employment perspective. Yet all are committed to the success of their employer. A balance of several forces is visible, and one that rarely works well when outside agencies are involved. This group of relationships appear to fit under the trust networks and/or social capital headings [Alan (1974), Jordan (1990b), Mitchell (1990), Schuller et al (2000), Shaw et al (2000)].

Wright (1988:606) states a “policy community identifies those actors or potential actors drawn from a policy universe who share a common identity or interest ... transact with each other, exchanging resources in order to balance and optimise mutual relations”. It is to the mutual benefit of Dundee City Council, SET, DoJ, UAD and Dundee College – or at least the individual actors - that this policy – of embedding and strengthening the creative industries sector in Dundee – succeeds. “Individuals with common goals will necessarily form organizations to further their common interests and/or values” [Mitchell, 1990], but only when it is these common goals that are involved.

There remains the important issue of trust. “Norms and trust are the means by which common objectives are achieved” [Scholler et al (2000)] and the (New Webster Dictionary, 2003) defines trust as including, “assured reliance on the character, ability, strength, or truth of someone or something in which confidence is placed.” But, Zand (1972, p230) defines trusting behaviour as “consisting of actions that ... increase one’s vulnerability to another”.

Speaking both generally and specifically, each partner provides statutory support for education and enterprise, but each partner is differently constituted and, to degrees, is in competition with another partner or partners in the network. Each must trust the others for both the personal, and higher social and community good.

These may explain why the network is purely Dundee-based. There is a common commitment to Dundee. Success for Dundee is required for more localised success.

Each partner requires this to happen city-wide and to see their known localised success. A breach in the trust network weakens self, city and the other partners. A metaphorical Mexican Embrace - *el abraza* - where the partners must hold each other so close and so often that trust is enforced.

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Zand (1972)???