



Seminar on the Cultural Value of UK film

University of London
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Introduction

In welcoming the delegates to the seminar Carol Comley, the UK Film Council's Head of Strategic Development, set the tone for the day by asking everyone involved to be as challenging and provocative as possible. The seminar's goal was not simply to debate the current definitions and means of measuring cultural value but to open up new and unexpected vistas to explore.

The goal of the UK Film Council was to stimulate a competitive, successful and vibrant UK film industry and culture. The organisation was seeking to establish the indicators of a 'vibrant film culture' in order to set its priorities in this area. Cultural value was of particular interest to the UK Film Council as it took forward its work in making the case to Government for new film tax incentives, in contributing to the Government's review of bilateral co-production agreements and in bidding for a funding increase both in the Lottery review of spending on 'good causes' and in the Government spending review.

John Hill, Professor of Media at Royal Holloway, University of London, explained the rationale for the day's events. In the academic world, traditional assessments of cultural value had been subject to intense scrutiny as had the cultural merits of different kinds of British films. Within the policy sector, there had been a tendency to downplay the cultural significance of UK film in favour of assessments of economic and social utility. However, in her essay 'Government and the Value of Culture', published in May 2004, the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, Tessa Jowell, had argued against a narrow 'instrumentalist' approach to the funding of the arts and stressed the importance of valuing 'culture on its own terms'. This appeared to mark an important shift in Government thinking and presented the prospect of public policy placing increased emphasis upon the cultural value of the arts and creative industries in the future. It therefore seemed timely to address how the cultural value of UK film might be best understood and assessed in order to contribute to the debate surrounding policy in this area.

Session One

What is a UK film and why does it matter?

Panel:	Clare Wise (Chair)	UK Film Council International
	Baroness Lola Young	Cultural Brokers
	Paul Candler	Department for Culture, Media and Sport
	David Thompson	BBC Films

As Director of UK Film Council International, Clare Wise's role was to encourage inward investment in film, to promote the export of UK films and to facilitate co-productions. Sitting on the Working Groups of the

Government's Co-production Review, she had been closely involved in the process of proposing the means by which the cultural benefits to the UK of international co-production agreements would be measured in future.

It would be surprising to some that *Cold Mountain* and *Troy* were defined by Government as British Qualifying Films. The panel would explore the legal and policy framework surrounding the production, distribution and exhibition of UK films, and consider the extent to which cultural, and not just economic issues entered the equation.

Baroness Lola Young began by expressing the view, in line with the thinking informing the Co-production Review, that it was necessary and long overdue to remove the perception of there being a polarity between the instrumental and aesthetic value of culture. All arguments for the value of culture were equally valid parts of a continuum from which the case for public funding could be made.

She raised the question of what constituted a distinctive British film. The UK Film Council and the DCMS defined a British film as one which met certain criteria in relation to the proportion of a film's budget spent in the UK and the proportion of labour costs paid to qualifying individuals. This definition made no mention of culture. Indeed the most successful UK films of recent years, all of which were co-productions, presented a particular kind of British cultural identity. These included the James Bond, Harry Potter and Tomb Raider franchises, the central characters of which carried with them the British public school ethos. Whilst a significant number of tourists visiting Britain stated that the portrayal of the UK in films was a key motivating factor in visiting the country, it was to be wondered whether these tourists were not disappointed by the contrast between film and reality.

A handful of domestic UK films were made each year – 43 in 2003 and 27 in 2004. In comparison, India produced close to 1,000 domestic films a year. These domestic UK productions rarely fared well at the US or European box office, and even in the UK there was limited distribution and exhibition support. The most successful domestic production of 2004 was *Shaun of the Dead*. This film, along with *Bullet Boy* and *Enduring Love*, was an excellent example of a distinctive British film which challenged the more conventional, and bankable, conceptions of Britishness. Each film presented separate visions of London specific to a very narrow cultural and geographical location, and each felt far more vitally connected with UK culture as perceived by British citizens than any Harry Potter or James Bond film.

Clare Wise asked Paul Candler to outline the legal and policy framework underlying the Government's support for British Qualifying Films. He began by explaining that, under the 1985 Films Act, economic benefit to the UK was the determining factor in defining a film as British, with the cultural

factor being deemed of less significance. Consequently, a film production qualified as British if it passed the test set out in Schedule 1 of the films Act 1985 or qualified as an official co-production under one of the UK's co-production treaties or the European Co-production Convention. The Schedule 1 test had four parts:

1. The first is the **maker** test: the film must be made by a company registered and centrally managed or controlled in the UK or another state of the European Economic area.
2. The second is the **production cost** test, which is that 70 per cent of the film's production cost must be spent on filmmaking activity in the UK.
3. The third is the **labour cost** test: 70 per cent of the total cost must have been paid to citizens or ordinary residents of the Commonwealth, the European Economic area or a country with which the party signed a relevant agreement.
4. There is also a test about **previously filmed material**, which says that no more than 10 per cent of the film should be from a previous film.

Co-production agreements, following on from that, are used to pool creative, artistic, technical and financial resources among producers of treaty countries, and the producers from each country must raise an appropriate share of that total production cost. For bilateral agreements the minimum varies and for the convention it must be no less than 20 per cent and for the multilateral agreements, no less than 10 per cent.

It did not matter whence the film's capital derived so long as the correct proportion was spent in the UK. The UK was not alone in concentrating on economic factors. For example, recently in France the Centre National de la Cinématographie accepted that the film *A Very Long Engagement* should qualify for aids under the French incentive system; however, the decision was overturned in a court challenge because of the involvement of Warner Brothers in the making of the film.

Noting that in Australia broadcaster commitment to cultural content such as film was governed by a quota system, Clare Wise asked David Thompson to explain the BBC's position. He stated that the BBC had been equivocal in relation to film, but over the last decade it had become committed to supporting film as a contribution to UK cultural life. This had also been a recommendation of the recent Government Green Paper on the BBC and was in the spirit of the BBC's policy articulated in 'Building Public Value'. It was difficult to define cultural value – one knew it when one saw it. Films like *Billy Elliot* allowed UK audiences to transcend individual constraints and have a shared cultural experience which challenged them to reassess their prejudices and assumptions.

For the BBC, of equal importance to supporting the production of films was supporting the development of new talent and taking risks. *Bend it like Beckham* and *Billy Elliot* were examples of successful films which had been rejected before, during and after they were made. The difficulty in anticipating the success of a film offered the freedom to take risks and challenge expectations in contrast to television where there was a greater obligation to deliver to audiences what they wanted to see. Examples of such risk-taking films were *In this World*, *Dirty Pretty Things* and *Bullet Boy*. This last film was also a good example of the BBC's aim to encourage UK communities to express themselves through film, with a filmmaking programme having been established for local residents in Hackney during filming. Such films would leave a legacy in other ways. While the cumulative box office takings for *Bullet Boy* would be relatively small, it would live on through DVD and television, speaking to a broader audience.

New talent was supported through the BBC's Film Network website (www.bbc.co.uk/filmnetwork) which allowed budding filmmakers to upload and share their films online in order to learn from each other and gain exposure. More filmmaking would ensure more forms of expression up and down the UK and would cultivate a vibrant film culture.

In closing, David Thompson made a plea for such vibrancy to be protected by as flexible a British Qualifying Film definition as possible, including an appeal process for failed applications. The constraints currently placed on co-productions often had very detrimental consequences to the ability of UK filmmakers to realise their creative visions.

Q&A

Clyde Jeavons asked why categories were used to assess and qualify British films when a distinctive British style could be used. David Thompson replied that a single 'British style' should not be sought, rather as many different styles as possible should be encouraged.

Sylvia Harvey, Professor of Broadcasting Policy, University of Lincoln, stated that economic definitions of British Qualifying Films were not problematic except in cases where they were in conflict with cultural definitions. Baroness Lola Young agreed, but added that the problem was that sourcing funding for films often led to a skewing of their cultural value. Whilst it was not the solution to have the French system, which appeared too defensive, it was difficult to prevent non-UK economic and cultural input having some negative consequences. Paul Candler added that the Government would gladly foreground cultural benefits in measuring the value of films if the methodology could be established – in the meantime, economic value was the best way to justify public spending on film.

Ian Christie, Director of the Arts and Humanities Research Board (AHRB) Centre for British Film and Television Studies, asked what was happening at present in terms of co-operation with other European broadcasters on film

production – such co-operation in the 1970s could be said to have resulted in a renaissance in European cinema. David Thompson replied that this was a very good point, but such co-operation must not result in ‘euro-puddings’ which were compromised by having to mix together cultural elements of the nations of each co-financier. The solution was to co-finance films in the language and culture of the filmmakers which did not have to spread themselves artificially to cross all borders.

Alby James, Head of Screenwriting at the Northern Film School, called for any definitions of UK culture in assessing British Qualifying Films to be as broad as possible. Giving the example of the difficulty of defining a South African film in post-apartheid South Africa which had eleven official languages and a significant degree of US influence on its filmmakers, he stated that definitions of UK culture should encompass the ethos of all the diverse components of the UK’s multicultural society.

Session 2 Identifying the cultural value of UK film

Panel:	Professor John Hill (Chair)	Royal Holloway, University of London
	Professor John Ellis	Royal Holloway, University of London
	Sally Hibbin	Parallax Pictures
	Nick Roddick	Split Screen

John Hill began by noting that Tessa Jowell’s essay ‘Government and the Value of Culture’ made no reference to film, indicative of a prevailing assumption that film is not the same kind of cultural activity as other arts. While government policy might have been predicated upon the economic and social benefits that public investment in film could deliver, it nevertheless seemed important to identify and defend the artistic and cultural significance of film as well. Turning to the panel, he asked how the cultural and aesthetic value of film and UK film in particular was identified and conceptualised, whether the cultural value of UK film was sufficiently understood and promoted, and what policy frameworks and interventions were appropriate for addressing cultural value.

John Ellis emphasised the irony in concentrating on the economic benefits of films at the expense of their cultural value – cultural value created market value. The decision people made to go to see a film was influenced not by how much money had been spent on a film but by whether or not the film connected with something in their lives and the culture in which they lived. The cultural moment was also vital in endowing a film with significance and success. Releasing a film six months earlier or later could have a serious impact on its chance to succeed and connect with the cultural moment.

A film's cultural value outstripped and outlasted its market value. The Boulting Brothers' 1959 satire *I'm All Right, Jack* was not a box office success but it created a new idiom, which had since entered the language, for describing the kind of attitude displayed by a particular, self-defeating type of trade unionism. Films crystallised ideas in a way not possible for television. In challenging audiences' perceptions, films offered intellectual leadership, defining ideas for a long time and stimulating discussion. Another example was Stephen Frears' *Dirty Pretty Things* which represented an important cultural event in a manner not apparent from its low box office figures. It was extensively written about and discussed critically and changed the terms of the debate about immigration for people far beyond the original audience for the film.

The cultural value of films was revealed not just in altering perceptions and galvanising debate but also in their aesthetic influence. The way in which Channel 4's *Shameless* dealt with characterisation, set its tone and told ensemble stories would not have been possible without the artistic precedent of Mike Leigh's work for cinema. Film established new ways of seeing and new approaches to storytelling.

To measure cultural value, it was necessary to go beyond box office figures to examine the experiences of audiences over time and the impact of a film on the culture from which it was generated. John Ellis concluded by offering three possible methods of measurement. The first was to investigate which films and what aspects of those films remain significant to audiences over a period of time. A slightly less robust method which would still be revealing would be to measure the column inches and broadcast air time devoted to a film. Finally, critical acclaim was a reasonably certain indicator of cultural value.

Sally Hibbin began by asserting that one reason for the resistance in the UK to perceiving film as cultural was the declining access over the last decade to international cinema, both theatrically and on television. Audiences had come to see film as anything involving American actors or period costumes, and to see as television anything dealing with contemporary issues and situations. Hibbin's recent film *Yasmin* was a case in point. It was only after winning an award at the Dinard British Film Festival that the film secured a UK distributor, but then in response to the debate around civil liberties prompted by the Prevention of Terrorism Bill at the start of 2005, the decision was made to skip a theatrical release and screen it immediately on television. In this way, it received a great deal of critical attention and was watched and discussed by two million viewers, far more than would have paid to see it theatrically. The commitment to the pre-eminence of cinema for film was important, but an audience for UK film had to be built first. In the meantime television had an important role to play. It was a peculiarly British trait to perceive as failures films that were screened on television without a theatrical release.

Hibbin agreed with John Ellis that an aspect of the cultural value of film was its influence on the aesthetics of the moving image, not just on television but also on mainstream cinema. Specialised films could experiment with filmmaking and take risks in storytelling. The fruits of this experimentation and risk-taking trickled back to the mainstream. In this way, pioneering filmmaking could make a return on a financier's investment in terms of cultural prestige rather than financial recoupment.

Nick Roddick turned to questioning whether it was necessary to measure cultural value at all. He started by defining 'culture', something he felt had been avoided in the preceding discussions. Using the humorous analogy of penicillin, he defined culture as something which grew on the surface of jam. In the right conditions it grew, in the wrong conditions it didn't. He argued that UK film culture had not grown in the UK for a long time, and suggested that the reasons for this included the removal of the Eady Levy, the introduction of the 1985 Films Act and the abolition of the *bfi* Production Department. In the post-Films Act world, the value of film had to be justified and measured. This had the result that filmmakers, especially those involved in co-productions, were compromised by having to meet the obligations placed on them in return for funding. Instead of seeking a means by which to do more measuring, new ways of funding films should be explored, not in terms of discovering new ways to ensure the best return on investment but to decide which types of film should be made. The cultural case for film was that it was self-evidently worthy of public subsidy, along with opera and ballet. The challenge was to specify which films had cultural value with this being the sole criterion used to award funding.

Q&A

Steve Chibnall, Professor of British Cinema at De Montfort University, asked whether it was right to use the term 'cultural value' with the all-inclusive significance it had been afforded in the preceding discussions. A film like *Dirty Pretty Things* had artistic value as a piece of cinema and political value in stimulating public debate, but if few people went to see it its cultural value was questionable. John Ellis responded that it was not helpful to make such distinctions, when 'cultural value' could encompass all of these meanings and be more suggestive of creating a state of mind. David Thompson and Sally Hibbin added that Stephen Frears had aimed to make a mainstream film with *Dirty Pretty Things* but the attribution to the film of social or cultural value had damaged its box office takings. In the US the film had been marketed as a thriller, so reached a wider audience.

Staying with the topic of marketing, Bruce Hanlin from the Department of Sociology at City University stated that it was so difficult for UK filmmakers to source production funding that they did not have time to consider the problem of competing with US distributors in marketing their films. Nick Roddick added that it was impossible to compete because successful marketing required the recognition factor deriving from a star or a sequel, whereas it was difficult to market genres in a recognisable way. This view

was contested by a delegate from London Metropolitan University who suggested that marketing for UK films could be targeted to key audiences. She added that her students did not appear to judge films in terms of whether or not they originated in the UK. Alby James of the Northern Film School stated that he encouraged students to judge a film's performance in terms of international, rather than UK, box office takings. He added that it was possible to make UK films which UK audiences wanted to see by making bold judgements about which films it was important to make. Tom Harvey, Chief Executive of Northern Film and Media, proposed that the cultural value of film extended far beyond features for theatrical release, especially in the North East where the films with most cultural value were shorts made by local filmmakers and by young people through the First Light initiative.

Turning to the issue of making critical judgements of cultural value, Sylvia Harvey insisted that with the right support and development audiences could make their own judgements about a film in the same way as students were given the skills to assess literature. Margaret Dickinson, freelance, cautioned that it was difficult to judge the value of a film based on the audience reaction at a single viewing and questioned whether critics should be allowed to impose on audiences views of what was deemed culturally valuable.

Neil Watson, Strategy Adviser to the UK Film Council, expressed surprise that no one had mentioned digital technology in the preceding discussions. He asked the delegates to consider the opportunities for independent producers and distributors in the face of a revolution in the delivery of film and the potential of ancillary markets. Nick Roddick agreed and added that the internet was leading to the democratisation of film criticism on sites like imdb.com and the use by Hollywood of word of mouth marketing on sites such as aintitcool.com.

Sarah Street of the University of Bristol ended the Q&A session on a cautionary note, querying whether cultural value was retrospective or could be anticipated. To judge a film's cultural value at the pre-production stage in order to allocate funding could open a can of worms around the types of Britishness and national identities to be included or excluded.

John Ellis concluded Session Two with a couple of final points. First, cinema had always been a loss-leader, a cultural artefact to help a commercial endeavour such as selling popcorn. Yet cultural activity as a whole was simultaneously a loss-leader and vitally important. Second, UK film culture did not belong to the UK. The appetite of audiences was generally for American product and this was only now being addressed. *Shaun of the Dead* was an example of appropriating a US genre and turning it around to say something quintessentially English.

Session 3

Cultural value, diversity and participation

Panel:	Marcia Williams (Chair)	UK Film Council
	Catherine Johnson	Writer
	Karen Alexander	<i>bfi</i>
	Professor Sylvia Harvey	University of Lincoln

Marcia Williams commenced the discussion by raising the question of what part diversity played in defining and measuring cultural value. 'Cultural value' and 'diversity' were terms which defied easy definition, so part of the challenge was to find language with which meaningfully to define them. The present composition of the film industry was such that there was underrepresentation of minority groups. The outgoing government had highlighted the transformational power of arts and culture, and Tessa Jowell's essay had promoted the diversity of multicultural Britain as being the antidote to the homogenisation of culture. Connection, participation and recognition were all factors in this. The panel was introduced whose task was to discuss what is understood by the term 'diversity', to illustrate the relationship of ethnic diversity to cultural and artistic diversity more generally, to outline the role of UK film in the encouragement of diversity and to indicate what measures could be taken to strengthen participation and diversity across film production, distribution and exhibition.

Catherine Johnson opened the discussion by concentrating on the power of culture to promote understanding and respect for diversity through storytelling. As a writer, she believed that it was vital to comprehend that different stories appealed to different audiences. Working as writer in residence at Holloway Prison, she encouraged her students to tell their own stories, about who they are and where they are from. As a result, the stories were fresh and new. More work needed to be done in schools to give children across the UK the confidence to write about their own lives. Having written *Bullet Boy* she had taken the opportunity to talk to audiences about the film and discovered that they had appreciated the depiction of England 'as it is', the first representation of a new kind of Englishness. When director Saul Dibb approached her about the film, her heart sank when she saw that it was a film about black gun culture. However she soon saw the possibilities, especially when Dibb explained that he wanted to make a specifically English film with its roots in *Kes*. The only problem was that because there were so few films dealing with the concerns of black characters, films like *Bullet Boy* had to be all things to all people. The only way to relieve this burden would be to make as many films as possible covering different aspects of the UK's richly diverse culture.

Karen Alexander turned to the power of recognition and the ability of diverse filmmaking to break down barriers. She recounted a seminal moment in her childhood, seeing a recognisable representation of a black person on television for the first time. One only needed to imagine having never seen on screen a meaningful representation of oneself to comprehend

this. Lens-based media were increasingly validated as a means by which people could represent their lives. Minority-ethnic communities needed to be encouraged to engage in filmmaking, but audiences needed encouragement in parallel to broaden their cultural palate. Using the analogy of food, people now had access to cuisine from around the globe. Whilst they could survive on one type of cuisine, the importance of a rich, diverse diet was recognised. Audiences needed to be shown that the same applied to film. A set of maps showing the diverse composition of London in the Guardian on 20 January 2005 illustrated how vital this was. White communities congregated in greater London, with minority-ethnic communities being concentrated in the urban centre. Films, being the perfect vehicle for certain rites of passage across frontiers of difference, provided important opportunities for white audiences to engage with communities from which they had mentally and geographically cut themselves off. In so doing, films changed and defined the shifting cultural landscape.

Sylvia Harvey focused on what measures could be taken to strengthen participation and diversity across film distribution and exhibition. First, she proposed to add internationalism to multiculturalism to result in her preferred term, 'pluralism'. The evidence suggested that in looking for pluralism in cultural expression, film was a bad place to start. The 'rest of the world', that is non-North American/UK/Ireland, share of the distribution and exhibition market in North America was about 1%, and in UK and Ireland 2.7%.

Harvey asserted that cinemas had a key role to play in promoting pluralist perceptions and understanding. It was no good to say that film was now more 'a matter of clicks than bricks' in order to justify the closure of cinemas. It was essential to have a geographic locus for cinema, a centre which must: be part of a city or region's cultural development strategy; show the best of world cinema in all languages; combine screenings with events and be a focus for forward thinking and internationalist activity; employ at least one education officer to build audiences for specialised cinema and forge links with educational institutions in the area; and be living, accessible and inclusive.

There were of course obstacles to the UK-wide realisation of this kind of pluralist film distribution and exhibition. Independent distribution and exhibition was unprofitable and so would require ongoing public subsidy. The major distributors strongly resisted attempts to establish a major European distributor. UK audiences were generally unfamiliar with the 'language' of independent cinema, including the films' different tempo and rhythm and the alternative approaches to characterisation. While the pioneering experiment of the UK Film Council's Digital Screen Network was welcomed, technology never solved cultural problems – education was the answer. However, recent public film policy had always concentrated on the film industry rather than film culture.

Harvey outlined possible solutions which could strengthen participation and diversity in film distribution and exhibition. It was necessary for the DCMS and UK Film Council funding agreement to include a key performance indicator for regional film exhibition of non-mainstream product outside London. To build an audience for specialised film would take time and cultural change took longer than five year parliamentary cycles – a ten year strategy for long term growth was needed. Access to new cultural experiences required education, not marketing – the former allowed people to make informed choices, the latter merely pushed a product. The *bfi* should be removed from the 'at risk' register unless the UK Film Council spelt out exactly why there was a possibility the Institute might not deliver its objectives. Film culture in the regions needed better support. Harvey argued that Regional Development Agencies concentrated on the regional economy at the expense of culture, and Regional Screen Agencies had pushed regional film away from culture and towards industry, detaching it from arts policies, frameworks and strategies.

Q&A

Keith Taylor of Floella Benjamin Productions addressed Karen Alexander's point about the power of recognition. Using the example of the underrepresentation of black actors in *The Lord of the Rings*, Taylor argued that nowhere in Tolkien's books was it stated that Gandalf was a white man. Twenty years ago it was the belief in the advertising industry that 'black people did not sell products'. This had since changed, so Taylor asked the panel what could be done to produce the same effect on television and film. Catherine Johnson suggested that what was required was a 'snowball effect' so that the casting of minority-ethnic actors and recruiting of minority-ethnic crew members would have a gradual effect on attitudes. Karen Alexander added that it was important to respect cultural differences when casting underrepresented actors, for instance religious convictions might prevent them from appearing naked on screen. It was also necessary to explain to people from underrepresented communities that filmmaking could be accessed in different ways, and that producing features was not the only or best option. Margaret Dickinson suggested that universities had their role to play in strengthening the diversity of the workforce through supporting professional development and access to the industry for their students.

Dickinson returned to the problem of defining 'diversity'. Previous meanings when applied to film had included being a description of specialised cinema itself, equality of opportunity and cultural diversity. The UK Film Council's definition appeared to have shed many of these other meanings, so she asked if different terms were needed to render the separate definitions distinct. Sylvia Harvey commented that one type of diversity did not cancel out another and reiterated her preference for the term 'pluralism' which as well as encapsulating multiculturalism and internationalism encompassed human rights and freedom of expression. Marcia Williams explained that the

UK Film Council's use of the term 'diversity' included equality of opportunity. A broad definition was useful as terms such as 'cultural diversity' were too intimately linked with ethnicity. The UK Film Council wanted 'diversity' to express everything that marginalised minorities including sexual orientation, regional isolation and age.

Neil Watson concluded the session by countering Sylvia Harvey's contention that the UK Film Council and public policy for film was biased towards the industry. It was true that the balance had not always been right. For the decade after the 1985 Films Act, producers had managed to influence policy to centre around production. After 1997, the Labour Government had refocused on creative industries, developing coherent policies benefiting the whole film industry. Since 2001, balance was being restored by the DCMS with its new focus on the citizen and public value.

Session 4

Measuring the cultural value of UK film

Panel:	David Steele (Chair)	UK Film Council
	Stephen Creigh-Tyte	Department for Culture, Media and Sport
	Ann Bridgwood	Independent arts consultant
	Patrick Barwise	London Business School

David Steele stated that with regard to film, economics was normally concerned with box office and inward investment figures. The public good or cultural value aspect of film was, he said, the more 'magical' part, that which entered the national, political consciousness and informed people's understanding of who they were. It was a combustion effect that was very valuable. Government recognised this and invested accordingly. This was not to say that cultural value was reducible to pounds and pence. It was to say that there was a need to justify Government spending on culture other than in its instrumental use to health or education. Steele turned to the panel to invite them to begin a discussion covering the adequacy of existing methods for measuring the cultural value of film and UK films in particular, the relative advantages of qualitative and quantitative research methods in identifying cultural value, the usefulness of established econometric methods and whether or not there were other methods that could be used.

Stephen Creigh-Tyte began by explaining that it was not only culture for which it was difficult to value the benefits. There were similar difficulties in measuring the benefit of spending in other areas such as defence. Economics was chiefly concerned with private goods, units which could be traded. Since the 1960s the most interesting area of economics had been market failure. 'Revealed preference' was used in economics to examine the goods that people bought in ordinary or proxy markets. A problem occurred where revealed preference data were not available – and these tended to be areas of market failure. The challenge was to work out what

these areas were worth. To do this it was necessary to concentrate on those aspects of total economic value not expressed in market prices, e.g. 'non-use value', such as the option to use something in the future or to bequeath something to future generations. The objective was to estimate the willingness of people to spend money on something and any consequent sacrifices they were willing to make.

'Stated preference' contingent valuation or choice modelling studies were methods of attempting to measure the value of culture and cultural artefacts. They involved using a questionnaire to ask people to consider how much they would be willing to pay for something like restoring a cathedral or saving an endangered species of duck. They were problematic as they were expensive and needed to be meticulously planned in order to deliver useful results. Other problems were that as the respondents were not in fact having to spend any money, the conditions were artificial; and they might say they would give £5 to save one duck or to save 1,000 ducks. That said, since the 1970s the number of contingent valuation studies had gradually increased to the point where 28 had been undertaken around the world in the 2000-2002 period alone. The UK was building expertise in this survey method, and these surveys were providing the basis for policy decisions. In closing, Creigh-Tyte noted that it was also possible to economise with these surveys by taking the value of one survey and applying it elsewhere. However, it was necessary to ensure that there was clear congruence between the survey subjects – that is, it would not be meaningful to transfer the estimated value of a cathedral to the value of cleaning a cathedral.

Ann Bridgwood had been struck by the complexity of the issues surrounding cultural value discussed during the day and would attempt to demonstrate how it was possible to measure cultural value without losing that complexity. Nick Roddick had asked why it was necessary to measure cultural value at all. As former Director of Research at Arts Council England (ACE), Bridgwood stated that it was the duty of Non-Departmental Public Bodies (NDPBs) to justify the public money they received from Government and distributed.

She began by returning to the question of what was meant by cultural value. Culture could mean the arts and heritage, but also the reality in which people lived. Culture could be a reflection of society, but also a critique and a challenge to it. Films she had seen as a youth, such as Kurosawa's *Living*, had informed the development of her political identity. They also had the power to develop national and personal identities. However, as films were only one factor in this development, it was difficult to extricate this element from the rest. This power of films was not something which could be measured in statistics or surveys; it was part of a longer, deeper narrative. Turning to the question of how artistic expression enriched the culture of which it was part and contributed to its diversity, she gave the example of a recent Royal Shakespeare Company production of *Pericles* which had involved asylum seekers and homeless people in its development. Performed

in the middle of nowhere, the production had required the audience upon arrival to fill out the immigration questionnaire given to asylum seekers on entering the UK. The aim was to encourage empathy in the audience. ACE measured the cultural value of this production by means of a case study. This conveyed how the asylum seekers and homeless people involved had felt validated by the experience.

In measuring cultural value it was important to examine who was requesting the measurement and the reason why. It was also necessary to break cultural value down into inputs, outputs, outcomes and impact. ACE measured how many education sessions were offered by the Royal Opera House in a given period. These sessions could have long term, far-reaching impacts on people's lives which were not easily captured in surveys. Returning to social and economic justifications, ACE was exploring the impact of culture on the areas drawn out by PAT 10 (Policy Action Team): education, employment, health, crime and regeneration. It would soon be publishing a report on the link between experiences of art and culture and people's health. Regarding crime, ACE was measuring the relationship between participation by prisoners in art projects and reconviction rates.

Methodologies for measuring cultural value would depend on the question asked and the indicator chosen. It was vital to use a range of methods. Quantitative measurements were required to demonstrate statistical reliability to Government, while qualitative measurements would provide meaning and reveal the processes involved in the creation of cultural value. It was also important to accumulate many small pieces of evidence. A single small scale local project with cultural value might not justify Government spending, but many such examples collected together could make a compelling case. The methodologies for recording cultural value were works in progress, and in recognition of this ACE and the AHRB had awarded fellowships for research into the methodologies' improvement.

Patrick Barwise returned to the question of the influence of film on international perceptions of the UK and of the position of film in UK culture. He proposed that television was a far greater part of the UK 'brand' than film. Film was a far greater part of the US brand, and international perceptions of the USA were not only largely determined by film but were also congruent with reality. UK films were not nearly as fundamental to informing or precise in representing UK culture, but it was impossible to measure this incongruity as an indicator of cultural value. A willingness to pay for something such as the BBC was of course a means of measuring its value, and contingent valuation could produce significant results. Citizenship-type benefits were more difficult to measure. Broadcasting was rare as a public service in terms of its high level of cultural impact in relation to the relatively small amount of money spent on it. Economic arguments for the cultural value of film were too distant from the priorities people had for Government spending – they would always say it was more important to spend on health. Net public value was one way to indicate clearly the trade-

off between culture and commerce. In broadcasting terms, this could be expressed as the value to the public of the BBC producing a programme when traded off against the possible disbenefit in crowding out the independent production market. In closing, Barwise agreed with Bridgwood – people did not think of cultural value in terms of money spent. Measuring cultural value involved quantifying what could be quantified and complementing this with qualitative research.

Q&A

Mark Cosgrove, Head of Programme at Watershed, stated that measuring cultural value had to capture a complex web of factors. Working in partnership with local organisations, Watershed developed its audiences so that their experience of cinema went far beyond simply watching a film. He added anecdotally that walking into work recently a Watershed regular had stopped him to discuss the depiction of black characters in *Bullet Boy* in comparison to the depiction of Nazis in *Downfall*, and that a multimedia artist who used David Lynch's *Lost Highway* in a piece of work had experienced the film at Watershed. Measuring cultural value would somehow have to encompass all of this. Ann Bridgwood explained that the methodology would have to be flexible so as to allow for failure and the unexpected. To capture the social effects would require a qualitative, rich technique which could retain the complexity and the process of generating cultural value. This could then be complemented with statistics. Patrick Barwise reflected that audience appreciation figures gave quantitative data, but the figures were usually in the same range because people watched what they enjoyed. The more useful information was expressed in the 'it made me think' effect. This was where the cultural value of a programme could begin to be measured qualitatively.

Ben Gibson (London Film School) suggested that trying to measure the cultural value UK film was a bureaucratic process unrelated to the real activity of making British films, whether or not they are ostensibly commercial.

Margaret Dickinson returned to the point that it seemed that it was only possible to measure cultural value in retrospect and that attempting to anticipate cultural value seemed to be an exercise in ticking boxes for the benefit of Government. Ann Bridgwood reiterated that NDPBs were obliged to justify how public money was distributed. She rejected that such information on cultural value was for the benefit of Government. The research programmes underway were longer term than the life of one Government and were governed by a code of ethics independent from politics. Patrick Barwise added that researchers were specialists in research, not policy formation or funding allocation. Democratically, in an imperfect system, Members of Parliament were elected on the understanding that they would exercise judgement and be accountable for the decisions they made. Part of this accountability was measuring the success of judgements made,

and Barwise suggested that most people would like Government to be more accountable, not less.

Plenary

John Hill and Carol Comley returned to the stage to conclude the seminar. Hill began by responding to the points made by Ben Gibson, pointing out that in the current political environment all publicly-funded bodies, from hospitals to universities, were under an obligation to demonstrate the benefits generated by their use of public funding. However 'bureaucratic' this might seem, it was nevertheless important to try and work advantageously within this framework if funding for cultural activities was to be sustained.

One reason for organising the seminar was that the current measure of the value of film did not capture the reason why people were passionate about film in the first place – the experiences it provided and their cultural and emotional impact on both individuals and groups. The purpose therefore was to look at how to define and measure the cultural value of UK films in relation to the national, social and cultural life of a diverse, multi-regional nation, not only in terms of film production but also film distribution and exhibition, and not only in terms of features but across the whole range of filmmaking activity, including education. What, however, the day's discussions had not touched upon sufficiently was the language of aesthetics. Film possesses its own artistic vocabulary and an important aspect of the cultural value of film is how it tells new stories in new ways that extend the language of cinema (and our appreciation of it).

The seminar was not intended to produce a magic formula for identifying and measuring cultural value by the end of the day. It was planned to galvanise debate and discussion. It was to be hoped that bringing such a diverse group of people together to discuss cultural value had been beneficial in itself and that the discussion could continue.

Carol Comley brought the day to a close by thanking all of the organisers, speakers and delegates. She stated that the UK Film Council's intention in helping to organise the seminar was to facilitate the debate, not to own it. The debate would continue in each of the delegates' organisations and would contribute to the development of the UK Film Council's future priorities.