

The Cultural Production of Enterprise: Understanding Selectivity as Cultural Policy

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Abstract: Within the context of a conceptualisation of the phenomenon of enterprise culture which focuses on the link between culture and government, this paper represents an attempt to make visible the cultural dimension of government policies such as selectivity. The paper sets out to explore firstly an understanding of enterprise culture which focuses on the link between the practices of government and the practices of individuals. Secondly as a corollary of this, it explores the notion that policies as instruments of government, have a cultural dimension in the sense of influencing how the phenomenon of enterprise culture is actually produced. It will be argued that the policy of selectivity aims to do more than identify fast-growth firms or get value for state resources, it also attempts through its "advisory" function to shape and regulate the conduct of entrepreneurs with the aim of ensuring the optimal performance of the market order. Empirical data drawn from interviews with personnel from an Irish state development agency, which centre on the operationalisation of the policy of selectivity, will be presented. This data is introduced as part of the exploration of the cultural production of enterprise and the role policies such as selectivity play in this.

I INTRODUCTION

I used to have a nightmare for the first six years in office that, when I got the finances right, when I had got the law right, the deregulation etc., that the British sense of enterprise and initiative would have been killed by socialism. I was really afraid that when I had got it all ready to spring back, it would no longer be there and

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it would not come back ... But then it came. The face began to smile, the spirits began to lift, the pride returned.

(Margaret Thatcher, *Sunday Times*, 8 May 1988)

... every type of social order, without exception, must, if one wishes to *evaluate* it, be examined with reference to the opportunities which it affords to *certain* types of persons to rise to positions of superiority through the operation of the various objective and subjective factors.

(Weber quoted in Hennis, 1983, p. 170)

“Culture” is one of those concepts which burst on to the intellectual landscape in the 1980s and since then has exerted considerable influence in a variety of spheres including the academy, businessworld and formal politics (Green, 1995; Du Gay, 1996). Within organisational discourse the pre-eminence of “culture” is obvious, clearly revealed by the importance attached to “culture” in governing contemporary organisational life. However despite the pivotal role assigned to culture, what is meant by this concept is by no means clear (Hebdige, 1979), and is according to Wallerstein (1990, p. 31) “... probably the broadest concept of all those used in the historical and social sciences”. Such broadness means that “culture” can lend itself to an enormous range of intellectual and practical uses.

This ambiguity is reflected in cultural studies in general, which despite an overall commitment to assessing cultural practices and their entanglement with relations of power, covers a diffuse array of theoretical and political positions (Bennett, 1992). Such ambiguity is heightened by the perceived gulf between the political aspirations of cultural studies and its practical effects, with tenuous links existing between cultural critique and the “real-world” of politics (McGuigan, 1996). This reality has fuelled a desire within cultural studies to become useful in a more practical sense, and has led to calls on the part of some commentators to put “... ‘policy’ into ‘cultural studies’ theoretically, practically and institutionally” (Bennett, 1992, p. 24).

Nowhere are such concerns more clear than around discussions of *enterprise culture*, which like the general concept of culture can be extremely difficult to “pin down”, and whose relationship with policy and practice can also be ambiguous. Despite being presented as the justification for numerous policy initiatives, the concept of enterprise culture, in the British or the Irish context, is often not well defined in policy terms (Du Gay, 1996a). In general, enterprise culture is given a privileged position because it is seen to shape the way people think, feel and act within a business setting. It is also

recognised that a market order "will not produce the best results for society as a whole unless one has the sort of men (sic) who can in fact be *trusted* (my emphasis) to behave in a way that the market order requires" (Marquand, 1988, p. 168). Within this context two concerns emerge: first, how is such a cultural change produced so that the self-actualising abilities of individuals as subjects, as citizens, as selves (Rose, 1992), are aligned with the aims and objectives of the enterprise economy within which they are located. Second, the issue of changing attitudes, values and norms, so that individuals are able to make the right choices and respond positively to the enterprise environment which is held out to them.

In this paper I will argue that understandings of culture in general and enterprise culture in particular, should encompass notions of "government" so that the above two concerns can be addressed. It will be argued that it is preferable to treat (enterprise) culture "... as a historically specific set of institutionally embedded relations of government in which the forms of thought and conduct of extended populations are targeted for transformation ..." (Bennett, 1992, p. 26). The necessary corollary of this orientation to (enterprise) culture is that it can be suggested that policies, as instruments of government, have a cultural dimension in the sense of influencing "... the conditions of culture, the material and also the discursive determinations in time and space of cultural production and consumption" (McGuigan, 1996, p. 22).

Therefore, I will suggest three things in this paper: first that essential to any understanding of a phenomenon like enterprise culture is a focus on the link between culture and government. Second, that to understand enterprise culture we must move beyond statically conceived notions of this phenomenon to focus on the process of enterprise cultural development. This can be done by conceiving of culture in terms of norms, practices and modes of behaviour (Du Gay, 1996; Featherstone, 1995). Third, that policies such as selectivity give expression to the norms and practices required within an enterprise culture. It will be argued that such a policy aims to do more than identify fast-growth firms or get value for state resources, it also attempts through its "advisory" function to shape and regulate the conduct of entrepreneurs. Understanding selectivity as a cultural policy in this sense we will see that it is concerned with the formation and reformation of the capacities and attributes of entrepreneurs. As a cultural policy it not only aims to identify those firms which are eligible for state support, it also seeks to regulate the desires, needs, ambitions, capabilities and attitudes of the entrepreneurs who come within its ambit. Data drawn from interviews conducted in April 1994 with state personnel will be advanced to illustrate the above.

II BACKGROUND TO THE DATA

This paper derives from research on enterprise and entrepreneurship within the Irish context. One of the aims of this research was to examine the essence and characteristics of interactions that occur between various economic actors, within the context of attempts to establish and promote an enterprise culture in Ireland.¹ This examination centred on the operationalisation of the policy of selectivity, understood simply as the targeting of state resources at Irish small businesses most likely to grow successfully, and the economic actors who were involved in its implementation. These included state personnel working in the state development agency Forbairt,² bank personnel working in the associated banks,³ and a group of small business owners from a variety of sectors. A total of 72 semi-structured interviews were conducted with individuals from these three groups between September 1993 and April 1994. Prior to this twelve pilot interviews were obtained. In this paper reference will be made exclusively to the interviews with Forbairt personnel. For this reason I shall detail only the procedures followed when collecting this particular set of data.

This research focused on the Dublin area, one of the regions around which Forbairt is organised. At the time of this study there were 33 project executives working in this region. From this, 13 project executives (11 male, 2 female), were interviewed. The breakdown of these respondents is outlined in Table 1 below.

Two qualifications of this sample of interviewees must be made. First, it is not a representative sample of Forbairt project executives. Access to Forbairt was gained through formal and informal contacts; use was made of an informal relationship with a Forbairt manager established through a personal friend. From this starting point formal contact was established with the head of the Forbairt Small Business Section. This person granted me permission to interview Forbairt personnel. My informal contact identified 13 Forbairt project executives and managers working in the Dublin region who agreed to be interviewed. Second, the small sample size must be understood within the context of the overall research. Interviews were also conducted with 26 bank managers and with 33 small business owners. Given the low

1. Ireland, throughout this paper, refers to the Republic of Ireland.

2. Forbairt was formerly part of the Industrial Development Authority (IDA), an autonomous body with national responsibility for the implementation of Irish industrial policy. In 1993 the IDA was dissolved and reformulated as Forbairt (responsible for the promotion of Irish indigenous industry), IDA Ireland (responsible for attracting foreign investment), and Forfás (responsible for co-ordinating overall policy). Forbairt is an Irish word which has two meanings. One is growth or development, the other is wart of boil.

3. Bank managers from Allied Irish Banks; Bank of Ireland; Ulster Bank; and the National Irish Bank were interviewed.

Table 1: *Forbairt Respondents Selected for Interview**

	<i>Project Executives</i>	<i>Managers</i>	<i>Total</i>
Small Business/ Company Development	8	1	9
Enterprise Development Programme	2	1	3
International Services	1	-	1
Total	11	2	13

*It should be noted that the position of "manager" in Forbairt does not always imply different duties to project executives in general. For example at the time of interviewing the Enterprise Development Programme was run by six senior executives including an individual of management status, but he was not in charge overall. One project executive stated that "... we work very much as independent consultants ... I suppose it's not untypical of a consultancy but fairly heavy workload in the sense that everyone has stuff coming at them all the time, and how you manage it is very much up to yourself ...".

numbers involved and the unrepresentative nature of the sample, the research presented here is intended to illustrate the nature of the operationalisation of the policy of selectivity, rather than as a definitive account of this process.

The interviews with the 13 Forbairt personnel were conducted in the Forbairt head office during office hours. The fact that they took place during working hours did restrict the length of the interviews, but the majority lasted two hours. These were supplemented with informal conversation conducted after the "official" interview was terminated, or over lunch in the Forbairt canteen in two cases. All of the interviews except one were taped, the latter was written up from notes and memory afterwards, while the taped interviews were transcribed. The data presented in this paper are drawn from all 13 interviews, and the identity of individual respondents is not revealed for reasons of confidentiality.

III REFLECTIONS ON CULTURE AND ENTERPRISE CULTURE

According to McGuigan (1996) the interpretation of the meanings of the term "culture" provided by Raymond Williams stands at the fountain-head of cultural studies. Williams (1994) argued for a broad approach and as part of this developed a loose anthropological definition of culture. His stance is criticised by both Hunter (1988; 1993) and Bennett (1992) for paying insufficient attention to the institutional systems and moral techniques which

produce culture. In other words the relationship between culture and government is downplayed, and in not pursuing such a relationship, Bennett (1992) suggests that Williams did not take into account the way in which culture figured as both an object and an instrument of government. Thus commentators like Bennett and Hunter present the case for an aesthetically narrower understanding of culture (McGuigan, 1996). In particular if we want to move away from static notions of culture we need to focus on the "cultural technology" (i.e., institutional and organisational structures and policies), which produces a distinct cultural configuration.

Similar concerns adhere to the concept of enterprise culture. As with culture in general, definitions of enterprise culture tend to be broad and universalist in nature. For example it has been described as follows:

Enterprise culture is defined as the full set of conditions that promote high and rising levels of achievement in a country's economic activity, politics and government, arts and sciences, and also the distinctively private lives of the inhabitants (Morris, 1991, p. 23).

As with general notions of culture, the conventional approach to the phenomenon of enterprise culture sheds little light on how such a culture is actually produced, and avoids any specific examination of the relationship between enterprise culture and government. For example Morris (1991) argues that despite endless studies of the political phenomenon of Thatcherism, too little attention has been paid to the analysis of the concept of enterprise culture. Given this he attempts to delineate the genesis and advancement of the enterprise culture concept in Britain. However, in his analysis of enterprise culture Morris provides a broad overview of its development through the identification of various phases, but sheds little light on the actual mechanics of enterprise culture production. His analysis is also incapable of adequately assessing (except as paradox) why despite calls for a "rolling back of the state", the cultural change called for entails extensive government intervention.

Given this it is my view that to truly understand the essence of enterprise culture, one must adopt an "... aesthetically narrower ..." understanding of this phenomenon. Such a conceptualisation would concentrate on the link between the practices of government and the practices of self, a linkage which can be understood in terms of the strategies and policies drawn upon for the direction of the conduct of free individuals (Dean, 1994), within an enterprise culture. "Practices of government" relate to the ways in which state authorities and agencies attempt to influence and shape the conduct, aspirations, and desires, of specified social and political categories in the achievement of certain goals. "Practices of self" refers to the practices and

techniques adopted by individuals in the regulation of self, as well as the means by which individuals seek to question, know and act on themselves (Dean, 1995). By conceptualising of enterprise culture in these terms it allows us to first assess how the phenomenon of enterprise culture is actually produced; and second, we can clearly see the cultural dimensions of policies such as selectivity. The intellectual basis for this "... aesthetically narrow ..." understanding of enterprise culture derives from Weber's *Protestant Ethic* and Foucault's concept of governmentality.

IV PUTTING "POLICY" INTO ENTERPRISE CULTURE — WEBER, FOUCAULT AND SELECTIVITY

Interpretations of Weber's work are usually developed around a perceived central interest which for a long time has been designated the development of western rationalism. However a number of commentators e.g., Hennis (1983) and Gordon (1987) have reformulated the way in which we can understand Weber's interest in the rationalisation process. It is argued that his central interest is the development of *Menschentum* (humankind). Specifically it is suggested that *Lebensfuhrung* which is translated in the *Protestant Ethic* as the "conduct of life" (or to be more exact the "manner of leading one's life"), and the forms of the rationalisation of *Lebensfuhrung*, are the "central interest" of Weber's sociology (Hennis, 1983; Gordon, 1987). Weber's theme is therefore not the process of rationalisation in general, but rather the rationalisation of practical *Lebensfuhrung* without which modern capitalism could not have developed. In attempting to illustrate how modern capitalism was possible, Weber is demonstrating the relationship between a particular type of individual and a particular form of social order.

... every type of social order, without exception, must, if one wishes to *evaluate* it, be examined with reference to the opportunities which it affords to *certain* types of persons to rise to positions of superiority through the operation of the various objective and subjective factors (Weber quoted in Hennis, 1983, p. 170).

Strong similarities are evident between Weber's emphasis on the centrality of a particular type of individual for the possibility of modern capitalism, and the suggestion that the creation of a market order is crucially dependent on the behaviour of enterprising individuals. It is clear that enterprise culture will not succeed in the sense of producing the best results for society unless individuals behave in a manner conducive to the market order. However the broad, general, conceptualisation of enterprise culture does not shed any light on the links between individual activity and the wider enterprise culture

environment. In presenting a narrower conceptualisation of enterprise culture, I am therefore suggesting that we should concentrate, as Weber did, on developing an understanding of the rationalisation of the subjectivity and activity of individuals. Policies such as selectivity can therefore be understood as an aspect of such rationalisation. Such policies are cultural techniques and are the means by which the phenomenon of enterprise culture is produced.

A further understanding of this process of rationalisation can be gained from a consideration of the link between the practices of government and the practices of self which Foucault refers to as governmentality. Governmentality is a concept which allows us to assess how a state acts on individuals, either together or singly, with the aim of shaping, guiding, correcting, and modifying the ways in which they conduct themselves (Burchell, 1996). Its ultimate aim is to understand how freedom is practised. In developing this concept Foucault describes the historical emergence and deployment of a variety of political technologies, discourses, techniques of calculation and forms of social supervision. The effect of this, according to Hunter (1993, p. 177)

... was the gradual transformation of the exercise of political power into a "rational activity" in the Weberian sense; that is; into an activity responsible for subjecting a department of existence to technical control through the methodical deployment of particular instruments of calculation and intervention.

Therefore for Foucault "government" is defined as the "conduct of conduct" which according to Gordon (1987) is a phrase that could hardly have a stronger Weberian ring to it. Foucault's characterisation of government as "the conduct of conduct" delineates an extensive "... domain between the minutiae of individual self-examination, self-care and self-reflection, and the techniques and rationalities concerned with the governance of the state" (Dean, 1994, p. 177). Governmentalisation refers to the numerous diverse techniques of government which are not necessarily inherent to the state, or operationalised in an intentional fashion. It is an array of technologies of government i.e., strategies, methods, and procedures, which different administrations use to set in train government programmes in a variety of areas. It should be understood as the complex of institutions, procedures, analyses, reflections, calculations and strategies which have sought to act upon the lives and behaviour of individuals, in order to achieve such goals as health, wealth and tranquillity within a state (Foucault, 1991; Rose, 1992). It is hoped that the combination of forces, techniques, and devices, will regulate the decisions and actions of individuals, groups and organisations in relation to authoritative criteria (Rose, 1996).

Nevertheless, we need to be clear that though such government strategies may lead to the efficient management of individuals, one cannot assume that there is by definition a causal link between these strategies and a centralised state power (McNay, 1994). According to Foucault (1982, p. 214) the modern state should be thought of as a highly sophisticated structure "... in which individuals can be integrated, under one condition: that this individuality would be shaped in a new form, and submitted to a set of very specific patterns". The notion of state activity and government which Foucault presents is one which accentuates the multiplicity of strategies, techniques, knowledge's and powers involved in opening up areas to intervention, but state control remains incomplete, confused and contradictory (Miller and Rose, 1990; Smith, 1995). Therefore within the "... aesthetically narrower ..." understanding of enterprise culture which I am proposing, the policy of selectivity can be understood as a type of "governmental rationality" which aims "... to develop those elements constitutive of individuals' lives in such a way that their development also fosters that of the strength of the state" (Foucault quote in McNay, 1994, p. 121).

The emergence of selectivity as a significant policy within the Irish industrial policy arena can be traced to the Telesis Report (1982), the White Paper on Industrial Policy (1984), Review of Industrial Performance (1990), the Culliton Report (1992), the Moriarty Task Force Report (1992), and the subsequent response by the Department of Employment and Enterprise (1993) to the latter two reports. The general argument of all of these policy documents is that blanket support for new firms and business in general is inefficient, and that a policy of selectivity is more appropriate, giving the best value for money in terms of state resources. In this only a few chosen firms are eligible for state support but this support is said to make a significant contribution to the growth and development of the business (MacDonald and Coffield, 1991), as well as making a meaningful contribution to the national economy.

According to the 1990 Review of Industrial Performance there was little economic justification for the state supporting large numbers of start-up companies, or expanded small industries, if they make no significant contribution to the national economy. The general view was that state resources should be targeted where they can generate the highest return, rather than be squandered (through blanket support) where the return is at most marginal, and at worst detrimental to the long-term interest of the economy (Kinsella *et al.*, 1994). Such a view was supported by commentators such as Storey (1994) and Storey and Johnson (1987, 1987a). It was also borne out in the interviews for this research with respondents stating that "... it was much worse in the past ...", when the emphasis was on "... volume ..." and they were

“... inundated with ... projects ...”. This created a situation where project personnel were in favour of “... discrimination ...” as the following illustrates:

There was a time when we got a lot of applications. I mean you'd have sectors or projects that might be in vogue, for example bottled water. As soon as Ballygowan started becoming well known everybody and anybody that had a swampy patch in their back garden wanted to do bottled water and that's a fact and that went on for years. Now there isn't that much ... chips sorry potato chips was another one. Every now and then you get these little waves of projects, I suspect that maybe in the next year or two you'll have recycling, I reckon we'll be inundated with recycling projects ... all the problem with rubbish disposal and all that, we're going to get them coming out of the woods.

... it was much worse in the past when the IDA was hell bent, and particularly in the small business area, on volume, put through proposals. There was a famous saying: “if it moves grant aid it and if it doesn't move give it a kick in the arse and grant aid it”. There was ... there's always more enthusiasm at grassroots level and Project Officer level for discrimination and for the ability if you like to refuse, than it was higher up where it was seen as a political imperative to be active.

We might suggest that reflected in these arguments in favour of selectivity are Foucaultian sentiments, that such a policy should aim to develop aspects of individual entrepreneurs and their companies, which not only strengthen their business, but also strengthen the wider economy and state.

Central to the notion of modern governmental techniques developed by Foucault is the theme of pastorship. Individuals are made subject through pastorship with “pastoral” officials such as police or state personnel acting as a type of interface between governmental activities and the self-formation ascetic practices of individuals. Within the interviews respondents presented themselves as the “... interface ...” between the individual firm and a “... formal sanctioning ... decision making board⁴ ...” as follows:

4. The power of the government here is refracted through the Industrial Development Act 1986. This act is a consolidation of the Industrial Development Authority Act 1950, the Industrial Development Acts 1969 to 1981, the Undeveloped Areas Act 1952 to 1969 and the Industrial Grants Acts 1959 to 1969. It is from this legislation that the power of the IDA as an instrument of government derives. It is also from this legislation that the restructured development agencies i.e., Forbairt, IDA Ireland and Forfas derive their power. According to the act the IDA is an autonomous body which has national responsibility for the implementation of industrial development policies. This responsibility includes the provision and administration of grants and financial facilities for industry authorised by the Oireachtas; to advise the relevant Minister on the future development potential of Ireland; and to give advice and guidance to those who are contemplating establishing a new business or expanding an existing one. Further the act states

The individual project officer is very much the interface with the individual company through all the contacts and channels, and who is ultimately responsible for presenting ... writing and presenting a case which gets the formal sanctioning from a decision making board ...

This advisory and “shepherding” role was emphasised throughout the interviews with all respondents presenting themselves as small business advocates, whose role was not only to guide applicants through the selectivity process by “... encouraging them to get information ...”, but to “... fight the case ...” to a higher board as follows:

... I have taken proposals to board and I haven't gotten through the ... maybe there was x, y and z and they weren't quite happy, and I would ... its probably deferred which has happened to me and if I felt really, really strongly about it, and I felt that maybe it wasn't coming across the way it should have, I would go back and do more research with the company, and go back and fight the case because of what I felt were the strengths and weaknesses of the company, and I have done it and it has worked.

Nevertheless, it must be recognised that these agents are not only “caring” for the welfare of the companies and entrepreneurs they are working with, they are also “governing” and “exploiting” them in the sense of “encouraging” firms to behave and present themselves in a particular way. This recognition captures the essence of governmentality as being a form of individualisation and a form of totalisation “... in which human beings are regarded as both self-governing citizens *and* members of the flock who are governed, members of a self-governing political community *and* members of the governed population” (Dean, 1994, p. 185).

In the above I have outlined the essence of my proposed “aesthetically narrower” understanding of enterprise culture. This suggests that our understanding of enterprise culture should focus on how attempts are made to align the sense of purpose of small business entrepreneurs, with the values that are designed into state activities, and the role policies such as selectivity play in this. Within enterprise culture these values can be understood as the priority given to the economy in terms of the progressive enlargement of the market, and the requirement that individual and commercial entities display enterprising qualities (Du Gay, 1996a; 1996b). The process of alignment is

that the IDA may perform any of its functions through members of staff authorised to do so. This includes the delegation of its grant making powers to a *board or committee* constituted by the IDA or any of the Authority's staff members. These powers are now bestowed on Forbairt, IDA Ireland and Forfás.

facilitated through the relationship between state personnel (pastors) and individual entrepreneurs. Such “pastors” can in my view be conceptualised as “cultural specialists” who within the context of enterprise culture implement its “cultural techniques”, i.e., those agents who are actively involved in enterprise culture creation through the implementation of policies such as selectivity. The next section explores how further data drawn from interviews with Forbairt personnel supports the narrower understanding of enterprise culture that I am proposing, and the role policies such as selectivity play in its creation. This will be done by focusing on the way in which selectivity attempts to shape and mould the entrepreneurial activity of Irish small business.

V SELECTIVITY AND THE “CULTURAL PRODUCTION” OF ENTERPRISE

Attempts to construct an enterprise culture in countries such as Britain and Ireland have centred on the privileging of “the market”. Associated with this is the emergence of a “discourse of economy”, illustrated by such phrases as “... letting the market decide ...”, “... levelling the playing field ...” and “... living in a competitive world ...” (Du Gay, 1996a; Gibson-Graham, 1996). The creation of such a culture for enterprise comprises of two interwoven strands. First, an institutional strand which identifies the private “commercial enterprise” as the form of organisation in which the provision of goods and services is best facilitated. Second, an “ethical” strand which refers to the forms of conduct and practices of both individuals and organisations which display “enterprising” qualities. Such qualities include a willingness to engage in activities which involve risk-taking, demonstrating initiative and a daring spirit, being self-reliant, and accepting responsibility (Keat, 1990; Du Gay, 1996, 1996a; McGuigan, 1996). An entrepreneur is also expected to competently perform a range of managerial skills including planning, organising, budgeting, staffing, controlling, co-ordinating, to enhance the strength of the business, and allow it to successfully negotiate the growth process. The latter is associated with the management school of entrepreneurship which associates successful entrepreneurship with the successful performance of managerial tasks (Barton Cunningham and Lischeron, 1991).

Within the discourse of economy and enterprise these two strands are intricately entwined. This is demonstrated by the strong belief that it is within the institutional context of the commercial enterprise (as a business entity), that individuals are likely to demonstrate the ethic of enterprise (as an activity) i.e., display enterprising qualities such as risk-taking etc. However, a significant qualification needs to be made here. Despite the

linkage that exists between the institutional and ethical strands of enterprise, there would seem to be a suggestion that commercial enterprises are not always completely enterprising. Therefore, they must be encouraged to thoroughly express enterprising qualities i.e., a daring spirit and managerial skills. Such attributes are thus given an instrumental value in relation to the performance of a market economy (Keat, 1990).

In my view it is here that the unrecognised cultural dimension of policies such as selectivity comes into play, in that entrepreneurs are required to exhibit such characteristics when attempting to access state resources. If they do not exhibit “enterprising” characteristics they are actively encouraged to acquire them, particularly “enterprising managerial” characteristics, which can include “... a lot of gathering information from outside sources and seeking a lot of expert advice ...” as the following illustrates:

... often you can get a person coming in at a fairly early stage ... what you're probably doing is encouraging them to get information. Its something that becomes essential as you go along but not ... you don't throw somebody out the door just because they haven't quite got the right answers ... In other words you're saying “look there's information needed here, we need to work together to get that” ... So there (can be) a lot of gathering information from outside sources and seeking a lot of expert advice on it where we feel that you (entrepreneur) don't know it yourself.

Such “encouraging” is what Du Gay (1996b, p. 19) refers to as “... a material-cultural process of formation or transformation whereby (‘encouraging’) the adoption of certain habits and dispositions allows an individual to become — and to become recognised as — a particular sort of person”. Thus a policy such as selectivity gives expression to the practices and habits required of Irish organisations and individuals for the optimal functioning of the Irish market economy, and is one of the means by which the conduct of Irish small business entrepreneurs is shaped, moulded and regulated.

The commitment to attempts to influence, shape and regulate entrepreneurial conduct emerged in all the interviews with respondents stating that selectivity is “... not just about giving money ...”; it is about giving “... proper advice on how to structure the company ...”; “... bringing a lot of expertise and help ...”; making “... sure that all the bases have been covered ...”; giving “... whatever non-monetary assistance we can, directed towards building up the company ...”, as the following illustrates:

I think we have a lot of expertise in start-up situations and how you structure them, what's important, what might make them work and I think our ability to appraise, and also to help individuals. One of the things you often find with people in a start-up situation, often they don't have a network of people who can advise them very well and we can give them that network as well. I mean we know a lot of very good accountants who have been very helpful, given proper advice on how to structure the company. We know the banks that are friendly to deal with, we know where the experts are in various industries that people should talk to. So we're often expanding their network and their knowledge which is very important, because people can work in isolation ... it can be very difficult, and they may be operating from a basis of knowledge that is slightly flawed, in that case they need experts and quality.

Another respondent stated:

... I think what we often bring to the product, I think, is you know very good experience and judgement of parallel situations. ... its not just about giving money. Its about bringing a lot of expertise and help, and where people often need access to extra expertise and part of what we do is maybe introduce them to the right people who maybe have that expertise.

Such views were unanimously supported as follows:

Generally they will have gaps in their information, so before they actually start-up and spend the kind of money that they're going to spend on start-up, we encourage them to fill in the gaps in their information. ... We have control not so much over whether they're viable or not, but we're putting money in, we want to make sure that all the bases have been covered and that's part of our role.

We like to feel we offer a range of services, advice, and brokering contacts and generally trying to give whatever non-monetary assistance we can, directed towards building up the company ...

In implementing the policy of selectivity small business entrepreneurs are "encouraged" to acquire and apply a range of managerial skills which are said to be crucial for successful entrepreneurship. From the above quotes we can see the strong emphasis that is placed on the strengthening of managerial skills in the belief that this will enhance the commercial viability of businesses which request state support. This is seen as beneficial for the entrepreneurs involved and the Irish economy in general. In requiring

“... that all the bases have been covered ...” Forbairt personnel are actively involved in moulding and shaping the way in which Irish small business entrepreneurs “do business”, i.e., they are “businessing” businesses (Peters, 1992), and ensuring that Irish small business is as “enterprising” as possible. Through a variety of interlinked practices and routines (e.g., requiring entrepreneurs to provide a range of information on the proposal or expecting entrepreneurs to adhere to a set range of criteria), selectivity as a form of government encourages entrepreneurs “... to adopt a certain entrepreneurial form of practical relationship to themselves as a condition of their effectiveness and of the effectiveness of this form of government. In other words, this form of government ‘makes up’ the governed as entrepreneurs of themselves, as enterprising sorts of persons” (Du Gay, 1996b, p. 22). Therefore adopting the “... aesthetically narrower ...” definition of enterprise culture which conceives of this phenomenon in terms of practices and techniques of conduct, the policy of selectivity can be understood as the means by which Irish entrepreneurs are “fashioned”, so as to ensure the optimal performance of the market order. Thus I would suggest that policies such as selectivity are the site of enterprise cultural production.

This shaping and moulding of Irish small business entrepreneurs becomes clearer if we examine the criteria around which the policy of selectivity is operationalised, as inherent to these criteria are the institutional and ethical strands of enterprise culture. The official criteria benchmark for the policy of selectivity is the Industrial Development Act, 1986. This sets out strict rules for grants, setting limits for grant assistance; focusing assistance on internationally trading companies and the development of export markets; and requesting firms to provide new employment, increase local value added and improve research and development (Drudy, 1995). The list of criteria provided by this legislation, around which entrepreneurs who approach state agencies such as Forbairt must “fashion” themselves, contains a mixture of what I call “development” (potential employment, growth orientation, trade on international markets, import substitution), and “enterprising” (business plan, equity, commercial viability) criteria.⁵

5. Labelling the various criteria as either “development” or “enterprising” was in the main unproblematic i.e., the orientation of each criterion was clear. However, some of the criteria namely “growth orientation” and “trade internationally” could have been assigned to either category. For the purposes of this research they were placed in the “development” grouping, largely because encouraging indigenous business to grow through international trade is a key aim of industrial policy, as it is believed that this will contribute to the overall development of the Irish economy.

Table 2: *Forbairt Rating of Selection Criteria*

<i>Selection Criteria</i>	<i>Very Important</i>	<i>Important</i>	<i>Worth Considering</i>	<i>Of Limited Importance</i>	<i>Not Important</i>
	%	%	%	%	%
Business Plan	77(10)	15(2)	8(1)	—	—
Cash Flow Projections	54(7)	31(4)	15(2)	—	—
Market Research	39(5)	39(5)	15(2)	8(1)	—
Management Team	39(5)	39(5)	23(3)	—	—
Individual Applicant	39(5)	23(3)	39(5)	—	—
Entrepreneur's Equity	8(1)	54(7)	8(1)	31(4)	—
Overcapacity in Sector	69(9)	23(3)	—	—	8(1)
Sector <i>Per Se</i>	23(3)	39(5)	15(2)	15(2)	—
Potential Employment	8(1)	8(1)	54(7)	23(3)	8(1)
Growth Orientation	15(2)	46(6)	15(2)	15(2)	8(1)
Trade Internationally	23(3)	31(4)	31(4)	8(1)	8(1)
Import Substitution	8(1)	31(4)	38(5)	8(1)	15(2)
Economic Climate	—	23(3)	31(4)	23(3)	23(3)
Political Considerations	—	—	—	31(4)	69(9)

Looking at Table 2⁶ we can see that though there is some variability in selection procedures across the Forbairt “pastors”, a fairly clear pattern emerges. For the most part the majority tend to place more emphasis on the “enterprising” aspects of business ventures as opposed to their “development” aspects. A majority of respondents cited “enterprising” criteria such as “business plan” (92 per cent), “cash flow projections” (85 per cent), “market research” (78 per cent), “management team” (78 per cent), “individual applicant” (62 per cent), “entrepreneur’s equity” (62 per cent) “overcapacity in sector” (92 per cent), as important or very important. In contrast less emphasis was placed on the “development” criteria. Of particular significance here is the lack of importance attached to “potential employment” as a criterion, rated by only 16 per cent as important or very important. This *should* be surprising as one of the strongest justifications presented for implementing a selectivity policy, is the need to identify those firms with the greatest employment potential, so that state resources can be targeted at them (Storey and Johnson 1987; 1987a).

6. A listing of the criteria (derived from the 1986 legislation, literature in the area and pilot interviews) drawn upon by Forbairt personnel when assessing business proposals was constructed. Respondents were asked to indicate the importance they attach to each of the criteria when judging business proposals as follows: “very important”, “important”, “worth considering”, “of limited importance”, and “not at all important”. The respondents were also asked to rank the criteria. The results of this exercise are presented in Tables 2 and 3. The figures in brackets refer to the number of respondents.

However in my view the lack of attention paid to “potential employment” as a criterion is indicative of the strong “enterprise” ethos surrounding a policy such as selectivity. It would appear that the original ethos of industrial policies in Ireland was a “development” one, illustrated by an article published in *Administration* in 1972 which announced that “the IDA’s job is to create jobs” (McLoughlin, 1972, p. 27). However by the 1990s the move to an “enterprise” ethos was clearly exemplified in policy documents such as the Culliton Report (1992), the data contained in this paper, and comments such as one made by a former chairman of the IDA, a Mr. Martin Rafferty in 1993. He stated: “We do not create jobs, we provide the incentive. Our project analysis has become more professional and rigorous” (Murphy, 1993). In implementing a policy such as selectivity therefore, the emphasis has shifted towards developing a system of selection rules that will identify viable businesses, largely by encouraging commercial enterprises to thoroughly express “enterprising” qualities. Other “development” criteria such as “growth” and “trade internationally” which were given a strong *rating* by 61 per cent and 54 per cent respectively, decrease substantially in importance when these criteria are *ranked* in Table 3.

Table 3: *Forbairt Ranking of Selection Criteria*

<i>Selection Criteria</i>	<i>High Ranking</i>	<i>Middle Ranking</i>	<i>Low Ranking</i>
	%	%	%
Business Plan	92(12)	8(1)	–
Cash Flow Projections	61(8)	31(4)	8(1)
Market Research	46(6)	46(6)	8(1)
Management Team	69(9)	31(4)	–
Individual Applicant	85(11)	15(2)	–
Entrepreneur’s Equity	39(5)	39(5)	23(3)
Overcapacity in Sector	38(5)	54(7)	8(1)
Sector <i>Per Se</i>	23(3)	31(4)	46(6)
Potential Employment	15(2)	46(6)	39(5)
Growth Orientation	15(2)	70(9)	15(2)
Trade Internationally	15(2)	62(8)	15(2)
Import Substitution	–	31(4)	69(9)
Economic Climate	–	23(3)	77(10)
Political Considerations	–	–	100(13)

In Table 3 the pattern of placing overall emphasis on the “enterprising” profile of a business venture as opposed to its “development” profile (e.g., amount of employment it provides) is further illustrated. The Forbairt respondents were asked to rank the criteria listed in order of importance

when assessing a business proposal where 14 = most important and 1 = least important. Ranking here means ordering the criteria in terms of which criterion each project executive looks at first, second, third, etc., when assessing individual business proposals. This ranking was collapsed into three categories as follows: 1 to 5 = low ranking, 6 to 10 = middle ranking, and 11 to 14 = high ranking. As with Table 2 a clear trend emerges. The majority of Forbairt respondents are more likely to give “enterprising” as opposed to “development” criteria a high ranking as follows: “business plan” (92 per cent), “cash flow projections” (61 per cent), “market research” (46 per cent), “management team” (69 per cent), “individual applicant” (85 per cent), “entrepreneur’s equity” (39 per cent), and “overcapacity in sector” (38 per cent). In contrast the “development” criteria are only highly ranked by a minority as follows: “potential employment” (15 per cent), “growth orientation” (15 per cent), “trade internationally” (15 per cent) and “import substitution” (zero per cent). In requiring that entrepreneurs adhere to “enterprising” criteria the Forbairt “pastors” are attempting, I would suggest, to influence and direct how entrepreneurs run their businesses by encouraging them to fully express “enterprising” qualities.

A question may be raised here as to the exact nature of these criteria. For example it might be argued that the criteria around which selectivity is operationalised are *bureaucratic* in nature as opposed to *enterprising*. However, in my view the nature of the criteria can be understood as both *bureaucratic and enterprising* at one and the same time i.e., bureaucracy in the form of Forbairt is using “enterprise” as the means to perform its task which is to identify businesses which can be allocated state funds. This can be connected to the “governmentality” shift of selectivity from a “development” orientation to an “enterprise” orientation mentioned above. It can be suggested that such a shift materialised in response to the criticism of Forbairt (formerly the IDA) which commenced in 1982 as a result of the Telesis Report. This “critical evaluation” of the performance of the state development agency continued into the 1990s and may be one of the reasons why the increased emphasis on “enterprise” emerged. Within the context of this criticism the benefits of this approach for the Forbairt bureaucracy are threefold:

- (1) Forbairt gains legitimacy through its enterprising orientation.
- (2) Forbairt’s promotion of an enterprise culture and attempts to actively make individuals behave in an “enterprising” manner contributes to its own survival. This is largely because it can present itself as a crucial component of attempts to create an enterprise culture in Ireland.

- (3) The emphasis placed on “enterprise” can be used by Forbairt as a means to secure resources. The number of support agencies has rapidly increased in Ireland in recent years and now numbers nearly 100. These include such entities as County Enterprise Boards and Local Development Partnerships. Within this context attempts by Forbairt to develop its business relevance through the promotion of “enterprise” can help it maximise its funding.

The adoption of “enterprise” by the Forbairt bureaucracy in the performance of its tasks should not necessarily surprise us given the recent insertion of market reasoning and new managerialism into the state and state-related agencies. This requires that organisations, that are not themselves private businesses, to think and function as if they were i.e., state organisations and individuals within them are criticised for not being enterprising. The twist here is that these self-same organisations and individuals are first suggesting the same thing about private sector commercial businesses, and second requiring that private sector businesses demonstrate their “enterprise” credentials if they want to access state resources. Though recognising the importance of the “enterprising” nature of bureaucracy, an in-depth consideration of this issue is outside the remit of the current paper.

The “enterprising” qualities discussed above largely refers to the performance of a range of managerial skills. However, as part of the process of selectivity Forbairt personnel also actively assess the “enterprising” character of the individual applicant. The importance of the individual was signalled in Tables 2 and 3 where the criterion “individual applicant” was rated and ranked highly. This assessment of the individual is mainly based on whether the entrepreneurs they are dealing with are “enterprising” in the sense of demonstrating initiative, a daring spirit, self-reliance and “... dynamism ...”. Their perception of this will influence “... how much faith ...” they can have in the management skills and management documentation which the entrepreneur submits as the following illustrates:

... you never capture it on paper. The guy never does himself justice on ... in his document and its only till you meet them, meet the person, get a feel for their personality, their dynamism etc. to make an informed view on how credible they are...how much faith you can have in the numbers that are down there in the business plan ... if the project officer forms a view that the entrepreneur isn't credible he will be forever finding ... finding you know ways to turn him down and then it can be a messy scenario ...

Other respondents supported these sentiments as follows:

I would say that if someone comes to me with a good idea and their plans are fine but if I don't think that they have the experience for it that's one thing and if I don't think they have the capability of doing it either ... its very difficult for me to say I think your project is great but I don't think you'll be able to do it ... that can be difficult because you're telling somebody they've a great idea but you're really saying it would be better without you almost.

... you look at the plan and the figures and you do the assessment on that, you get a fairly good idea of how commercially viable the project is going to be, but the missing bit is how good the promoter is. You know its judgement too and you have to kind of live with people a bit to find out whether they're really capable ... a good promoter that's a key one because a good promoter can survive a bad project but seldom will a good project survive a bad promoter.

From the above we can see the clear "enterprise" ethos which surrounds the operationalisation of the policy of selectivity. This is clear first in the emphasis that is placed on enhancing the commercial viability of business proposals, and second in the attention that is paid to the daring, dynamic qualities of entrepreneurs that come within its ambit. Entrepreneurs must be willing to subject themselves to such enterprise "fashioning" if they want to access state resources. In Weber's and Foucault's terms selectivity is one of the means by which the subjectivity and activity of entrepreneurs is rationalised in the sense of making entrepreneurs and their enterprise "... fully enterprising ...".

VI CONCLUSION

To understand "enterprise culture" it is important that we have an appreciation of the centrality of "enterprising" individuals for the possibility of this form of social order. Allied to this we must understand how such "enterprising" individuals are cultivated to ensure the optimal performance of the market economy. It is here that a narrow conceptualisation of "enterprise culture", which focuses on the link between culture and government, can prove useful. Understanding this phenomenon as the ensemble of norms and techniques of conduct, that enable the self-actualising capacities of entrepreneurs to become aligned with and provide the basis for the optimal performance of the market economy, allows us to assess the actual practices of the cultural production of enterprise. Within this context the operationalisation of the policy of selectivity can be understood as a series of enterprise cultural techniques which attempt to shape and regulate the

personal capacities of Irish entrepreneurs. The aim of such cultural technology is to "... translate the goals of political, social and economic authorities into the choices and commitments of individuals" (Rose, 1992, p. 159).

However, even a suspicion that applicants may be "deceitful" in the sense of fraudulently presenting themselves as "enterprising", does not negate the argument that Forbairt tries to mould the behaviour of Irish entrepreneurs. Whether an enterprise culture is *truly* created or business people are *truthfully* enterprising is not the issue. Rather it is that Forbairt through its deeds actively sets out to imbue entrepreneurs with an ethic of enterprise, and is using "enterprise" as the means to perform its tasks. Nevertheless, what does need to be taken into account is the possibility of resistance on the part of those subject to a policy such as selectivity, an issue I have dealt with elsewhere (Carr, 1996). What can be emphasised here however, is that government is inherently problematic and that the "will to govern ... needs to be understood less in terms of its success than in terms of the difficulties of operationalizing it" (Miller and Rose, 1990, p. 11). Resistance will contribute to such difficulties.

Selectivity as a policy can therefore be understood as a government rationality (in Gramsci's terms (1971, p. 181) an "instrument of rationalisation") which attempts to imbue entrepreneurs with an ethic of enterprise, and as such is a site of enterprise cultural production. Forbairt personnel who operationalise this policy can be understood as adopting a pastoral role of enterprise adviser, assessing the enterprising qualities of entrepreneurs who approach them for state aid, through the application of selective criteria to business proposals. The aim of this process is to cultivate and promote enterprise within individuals' lives in such a way that the market economy performs optimally, thus strengthening the Irish state.

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