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NEW DIRECTIONS IN CULTURAL POLICY RESEARCH

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# Cultural Policy is Local

## Understanding Cultural Policy as Situated Practice

*Edited by*  
Victoria Durrer · Abigail Gilmore  
Leila Jancovich · David Stevenson

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# New Directions in Cultural Policy Research

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Victoria Durrer • Abigail Gilmore  
Leila Jancovich • David Stevenson  
Editors

# Cultural Policy is Local

Understanding Cultural Policy as Situated Practice

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*Editors*

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The editors would therefore like to acknowledge this support and thank all the authors who have contributed to this book, our earlier special edition of *Cultural Trends* and the many people who have participated in discussions, conference panels and symposium with us over the years while we have been developing our interest in this field.

## Praise for *Cultural Policy is Local*

“This refreshing collection demonstrates that not only is the local a critical site of cultural policy in its own right but understanding the framing and implementation of cultural policy at all levels of governance, including the local, is essential to appreciating the dynamics of this multifaceted policy domain.”

—Deborah Stevenson, *Western Sydney University*

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## ABBREVIATIONS

ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
ACB	Arts & Culture Branch
ACC	African Centre for Cities
ACE	Arts Council England
ACI	Arts Council Ireland
AFTA	Americans for the Arts
BEIS	Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy
CAT	Community Asset Transfer
CCMA	County and City Manager's Association
CCT	City of Cape Town
CMP	Cultural Mapping and Planning
DAWE	Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment
DEI	Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion
dlr	Dún Laoghaire Rathdown County Council
DCLG	Department for Communities and Local Government
DCMS	Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport
ECoC	European Capital of Culture
GoI	Government of Ireland
GMCA	Greater Manchester Combined Authority
IMD	Index of Multiple Deprivation
KTP	Knowledge Transfer Programme
LAA	Local Arts Agencies
LIS	Local Industrial Strategy
LSOA	Lower Layer Super Output Area
M-UF	Mistra Urban Futures
NDSAC	National Department of Sports, Arts and Culture
NEA	National Endowment for the Arts

NPF	National Planning Framework (Ireland)
RCC	Regional Cultural Consortium
SAA	State Arts Agencies
UCT	University of Cape Town
WMCA	West Midlands Combined Authority
VAI	Voluntary Arts Ireland

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## CHAPTER 1

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# Reflecting on Place and the Local

*Victoria Durrer, Abigail Gilmore, Leila Jancovich,  
and David Stevenson*

### WHY WORRY ABOUT ‘THE LOCAL’ IN RELATION TO CULTURAL POLICY?

In common with other texts on cultural policy, this book provides a call to action to all those interested in how the arts, culture and creative practices are governed and promoted, regulated, resourced and valued. Our

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particular proposition is the urgent need for greater understanding on the role of place within these processes and for critical reflection on the contingent nature of policy with locality. This might be a somewhat bold request given the predominant focus in academic publications on cultural policies as the preserve of the national, and the forces that challenge them as inter-, trans- and supranational (Durrer et al., 2018). However, we make this call at a time when there has been a re-focus on ‘the local’—in its varied forms—in much policy discourse.

There is a growing policy interest globally in addressing long-standing divisions, inequities and inequalities within, as well as between, nations. Supranational and national policies are called upon to remove structural inequalities between towns and cities, the rural and the urban, or to challenge geographic disparities between regions through targeted interventions or by rebalancing investment. Inequalities between places are highlighted by the inclusion of sustainable cities and communities as one of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (United Nations, 2015); in the UK a “levelling up” agenda aims to target the distribution of funding to address the sharp economic and productivity disparity across the nation (DLUHC, 2022). There are similar concerns elsewhere in the Global Northwest, even in federal countries such as Canada (Paquette, 2019), and in small nations such as Ireland (Arts Council Ireland, 2022). Within the Global South, smart cities and ‘start-up urbanism’ are dominating policy agendas in African nations, bringing together statecraft with capitalist interests (Pollio & Cirolia, 2022) alongside accusations of financialised neo-colonialism (Langley & Leyshon, 2022). Meanwhile, what constitutes the ideal scale for government intervention through which to sustain development and support equity of life chances is under scrutiny, with the idea of a ‘20-minute neighbourhood’ or ‘15-minute city’ gaining traction within planning practices in cities such as Melbourne and Adelaide (Thornton et al., 2022).

Academic interest in place-based approaches has examined such attempts to foster conditions in which places might thrive, including the role of cultural and creative industries in local development. Within the literature on place-making, place-branding and culture-led regeneration are both advocates and critics of the use of arts and creative industries, and models from creative cities (e.g. Evans, 2001; Landry, 2000, 2008) and creative classes (e.g. Florida, 2002, 2017; Peck, 2005) to cultural quarters (e.g. Bell & Jayne, 2004), flagships, designated titles and mega-events (e.g. Campbell & O’Brien, 2019; Garcia, 2017). It is no accident that

many of these approaches, and their theorisation and analysis, has come from the Global North, and have been mobilised and assembled elsewhere through policy transfer (Prince, 2010). For such approaches to be effective, it is important to understand why it is that some places seem to have more sustainable, vibrant and valued cultural scenes, ecosystems and economies and how these have come about. To do so we need to be able to assess how differences at the level of specific localities affect the functioning of policy and in turn how policy affects specific localities differently. In editing this book we therefore consider place and the local as separate but related concepts and sought out authors who could offer an examination of cultural policy in practice with a sensitivity to its scalar dimensions and within specific situated contexts. We also looked explicitly for a range of disciplinary contributions that might offer distinctive insights and tools through which to understand the situated practices of policy in place.

While the chapters were all written before the coronavirus pandemic, this is a particularly timely discussion as a re-focus on ‘the local’ has been further enhanced by lockdowns and travel restrictions, which saw people confined to their immediate locality in a manner that many people may never have experienced before. These restrictions put further attention on the proximate and the domestic, as the world spent more time at home and in places to which they could walk or more immediately access. While there is evidence to suggest arts audiences and participants have always valued opportunities to take part locally (see Jancovich & Hansen, 2018, Jancovich, 2018) a return to the local became more entrenched during Covid as arts experiences had to either move online or closer to home. Some cultural organisations made a rapid response by reflecting on their civic responsibilities during lockdown; other organisations and artists made a “pivot to digital” and reached out beyond their local audiences (Noehrer et al., 2021). Digital engagement was not universally possible, exposing weaknesses and limitations within local and national cultural infrastructures and highlighting a continuing digital divide (Dragičević Šešić & Stefanović, 2021; Sibanda & Moyo, 2022; Yıldırım et al., 2022). The parts of the creative and cultural sector where there is a reliance on social interaction, co-presence, and real-time experiences through live presentation of art and creativity in open venues, were particularly affected by Covid and found it more difficult to adapt. Restrictions had particularly detrimental effects in places where a prior reliance on visitor economies for the business models of cultural destinations and venues has put the financial sustainability of these organisations at risk (Walmsley et al., 2022).

At the same time, the pandemic underlined an implicit system for valuing different aspects of society, pitting different industries and sectors and their workers against one another amidst employment insecurity and structural inequalities. Within the professional cultural sector this was particularly the case for those freelancers working outside of institutions. The closing of venues impacted the livelihoods of arts workers maintained through arts production, consumption and participation made available on and off-line (Jeannotte, 2021). It also further underlined longstanding geopolitically informed inequities at both at an international level as well as those spatial and social divides existing within nations, raising further awareness of the precarity of our efforts to promote the Sustainable Development Goals. To “build back better” we therefore need to avoid the tendency to create best practice models that are replicated between places through a process of policy transfer or diffusion (Marsh & Sharman, 2009) and instead develop a better understanding of the different needs and values in different local contexts.

This position is not just an ethical stance but also a practical one, which we argue the cultural sector needs to embrace in order to have any relevance. As people, places and organisations attempt to reimagine a “new normal” post pandemic there are questions about how all those involved in the development and implementation of cultural policy should deal with both the crisis in the cultural sector and the inequalities and inequities that have been made further visible between different locations. To do so requires acknowledgement that arts and cultural policies can act as means to enhance recovery of places but can also exacerbate inequalities. There remains very limited examination in cultural policy studies of how this plays out within different locations and sites (Simjanovska, 2011; Gilmore et al., 2019) or indeed how place-based policy can be used to support recovery of local cultural ecosystems with fairer, more accessible and equally distributed resources for creative production, consumption and participation.

Despite apparent recognition that a) the practices of culture are always situated (and hence local) (Gilmore, 2013; Gibson, 2019), and b) policy is embodied, temporal, territorial, spatial and scalar (Bell & Oakley, 2015; Paasi, 2004), contemporary cultural policy research tends to privilege the national or international as the primary site at which cultural policy is enacted and thus, can be reformed (Durrer et al., 2018). Within cultural policy studies, a place typically serves to represent a form of “case study”, often presented as an example of best practice that may be replicable in

other locations, rather than a topic of study in its own right. We argue instead that it is becoming more urgent to understand the organisation of culture at a local level and the implications of different approaches in different locales to consider the efficacy of cultural place-making as a way to address the persistent inequalities and inequities that exist between different locations. In light of this, a re-appraisal of ‘the local’ in relation to cultural policy is, we argue, long overdue.

We began to address this gap pre-pandemic in a journal special edition that challenged one-size-fits-all approaches to policymaking and instead called attention to “the importance of viewing policymaking as a horizontal, dynamic and relational process involving multiple agents, with different perspectives, areas of skill, knowledge and interests” (Gilmore et al., 2019, p. 1). However, trying to identify and define local cultural policy in practice seems unreasonably hard. Like magnets reversed so that their poles push against each other, the notion of local forms of policy specific to culture (or indeed, cultural forms of policy specific to localities) conjures up more questions than satisfactory answers.

This book offers an opportunity to reflect on these questions, and sets the challenge of whether it is even possible to have non-local cultural policy. Before rushing to a conclusion—which after all is hinted at in the title of this volume—this introduction aims to summarise some of the ways both place and ‘the local’ have been conceptualised. In doing so we seek to address what we see as a critical absence in the field of cultural policy studies and thus the contribution of the chapters in this book.

### CONCEPTUALISING THE LOCAL

As stated above, engaging with both place and ‘the local’ has become an important part of cultural policy rhetoric in many countries, from the resurgence of city-regional governance models to calls for new forms of “localism” involving participatory governance approaches (UCLG, 2019; UNESCO, 2013) intended to engender more active citizenship and to help people feel more empowered regarding the decisions that affect them (Fung & Wright, 2003). One of the dominant discourses about ‘place’ in the academic field of cultural policy studies draws on conceptualisations of creativity (Campbell, 2018) and creative class theory (Florida, 2002) that see culture and creativity as drivers for economic growth and regeneration (García, 2004; Montgomery, 2004). Cultural policymakers have been keen to align themselves to such theories and attempt to put theory into

practice by employing cultural industries strategies to address wider industrial decline. In so doing, culture and place are seen as inextricably linked. However, within wider public policy such economic approaches have been increasingly problematised for creating competition between places that increases, rather than decreasing inequality (Campbell, 2018; Florida, 2017; Pratt, 2008, 2011). Far from cultural policy addressing inequalities in places it has been accused of gentrifying them (Pratt, 2018) and being complicit in a process of ‘artwashing’ that pushes out or silences other voices and values (Pritchard, 2020).

Furthermore, such conceptualisations are largely dominated by a focus on the creative city model (Whiting et al., 2022), not only in cultural policy studies, but in the formation of policy as well (UCLG, 2019). Approaches that “work” (or not) in urban areas have been unhelpfully applied (or tried) in other types of locality, for example, towns, and suburban and rural areas (Bain, 2013; Bell & Jayne, 2010). The European Capital of Culture, for example, has begun to shift its focus from cities to regions of culture in the hope of spreading the perceived benefits more widely (Jancovich, 2018). Yet, despite concerns raised in academic literature that such moves ignore contexts and our own call for more situated analysis to better understand these processes in practice, the transfer of creative industries policy on a global scale still informs the main approaches to culture- and knowledge-based economic development for addressing industry development and the globalisation of labour. At its most extreme, in the case of China this has seen a political decision to shift emphasis from industrial development reliant on global supply chains towards cultural development that focuses on innovation, intellectual property and knowledge economy, in a shift from “made in China to created by China” (Liu, 2016).

Depending on their approach, national interventions can exacerbate existing socio-economic inequities between places. Allocation of national investment on a competitive basis requires criteria for eligibility and existing capabilities in making the case for support. While such allocations facilitate ways in which national government bodies and agencies can interact with a specific place, many places do not have the infrastructure to broker such local to national relationships or win resources (Gilmore et al., 2021). Competitive allocation privileges those with this capacity, and hence is likely to reproduce, if not widen, inequalities. Funding approaches favour capital investment as part of broader regeneration as it can meet the metrics of economic development objectives and prove legible to other

policy agendas. Such approaches often follow a national notion of “what works” rather than a place-based, situated analysis of what is needed or wanted at any given place. This can lead to what could be understood as a form of “isomorphism” (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983) with projects and policies that are uniquely ‘local’ to nowhere. They risk investing in infrastructure—flagship buildings, incubation hubs, educational facilities and cultural quarters—without due consideration to sustainability within locations. Furthermore, they do not take into account the mobility of cultural workers or the complexity of their lived experiences, and how their mobility (or stasis) can impact and transform notions of what is local and what is national (Durrer & Henze, 2020).

For these and other reasons, we argue the case for decoupling policy from ‘the national’ whilst recognising the significance of the local. In practice, cultural policy is carried forward (or not) through local infrastructures, social groups and structures, and strategies, which act as boundary objects (Gilmore & Bulaitis, this volume), translating policy discourses across diverse geographies with distinct political, socio-economic and ethno-cultural and historical identities, including, but not limited to, city-regions, districts, seaside resorts, territories, archipelagos, suburban enclaves and rural hinterlands. Following Prince (2010), for policy transfer and realisation to occur it requires policy assemblages that work within the specific “political contexts, cultural and social norms, local path dependencies, and institutional variation” (p. 171), requiring adequate technical knowledge to bring policies into land. These assemblages are needed to implement policies in place, and their success or failure will also depend on the presence of epistemic communities (Haas, 1992), of local and national state actors, funding officers, entrepreneurs and corporate, cultural and community leaders who are part of the mix. The challenge for policymakers is that statecraft at a national level inherently has an idea of culture that it tries to curate from the top down, in tension with the competing needs, interests and discourses hoping to develop culture from the ground up. In reality, the local provides the sites for assemblage, in which different trajectories, capacities and approaches can interact—and so it is also the site at which there is most contestation over questions of what culture is valued and resourced.

Localism, as an alternative conceptualisation to that of place, addresses the significance of the local context to the everyday lives, health and well-being of citizens. It shifts attention from the provision of physical infrastructure to a people and place-based approach often concerned with

building capacity, focusing on assets rather than deficits and collaboration from the bottom up (Munro, 2018). It also highlights the fallibility of development approaches that are growth-dependent economic models (van Barneveld et al., 2020). Within public policy and development studies these critiques have led to a discourse about the local, as something distinct from place, which recognises the unique and non-replicable nature of what may be happening within different contexts, which we argue in this book is essential for cultural policy studies.

Policy approaches that adopt the localism agenda can often seek to fill what is perceived as a gap within a location. Rather than seeking to invest in specific, pre-determined aims, such approaches provide resources with little to no preconditions and allow ‘the local’ to create its own governance models and engage with ‘the national’ if, when and how they want to. While a top-down approach to local development often assumes a one-size-fits-all replicable model between places, the localism agenda frames ‘the local’ as the most authentic and legitimate site of decision-making. Yet specifically in relation to cultural policy, there are those who argue that it is not possible for national policymakers to offer resources in every place let alone to attempt to understand and respond to what every place wants to do culturally. As such, there is an inevitable drift towards supporting local culture that most readily aligns with a national conception of what ‘good’ culture looks like. In such cases, localism becomes a mode of governance that has little to differentiate it from previous approaches.

Furthermore, critics of the localism agenda argue that such approaches have a “tendency to essentialise and romanticise the local” (Mohan & Stokke, 2000, p. 249) and risk ignoring the complex, contingent and contested nature of decision-making processes. In particular, there are concerns that without consideration of relations of power that may exist locally, localism offers privileged backstage access to decision-making within localities to exclusive groups. Connotations associated with ‘the local’—both positive and romantic, but also negative signifying mediocrity and provincialism—can mask important ways in which political and ideological values are attached to policy instruments that aim to reform and govern localities in ways that align with national priorities but which the people who live there have not asked for and may not want. In this sense, the concept of localism is used by policymakers as a way to render policy transfer more manageable and legitimate for national policy agencies by co-opting local systems of governance as ‘partners’. As such, more acutely calibrated attention is needed to articulate the relations of power

and the locus of political agency that shapes and defines how ‘the local’ is defined. In addition, any place getting taken into the sphere of policymakers as a site at which ‘the national’ can work can become defined as local *relatively*, by being positioned/positioning itself in relation to a larger and more distant place. Hence, regions can be local if they are framed in opposition to the national government, or the capital city. Towns can be local when they are framed in opposition to regions and regional authorities. Neighbourhoods can be local when they are framed in opposition to district councils, and so on. This capacity for places to be simultaneously ‘local’ and ‘non-local’ depending on the vantage point draws attention to the importance of discussions about who makes decisions on behalf of each location under the auspices of ‘being local’.

The explicit need to take the local into account in any way is challenged by theories from new economic geography that emphasise the need to improve connectivity and mobility of production and capital between regional economies for development (Mel’nikova, 2015). Such theories call for “place neutral” or “spatially-blind” approaches to address global challenges. They emphasise the interdependence of local and global living, and that people are mobile and not bounded by the place they live at any given time. They make the assumption that the similar policy solutions can be delivered more efficiently through tried and tested models for three ‘i’s—institutions, infrastructure and interventions, which are space-blind and have consciously removed the nuances of space and place context (Barca et al., 2012).

The othering of the local, and its conscious removal from policy design, run counter to the case made above for the agency of the local, its importance as a site for establishing sensitivity to context and its potential for democracy, through the devolution and decentralisation of power and decision-making, affording governance to place. This could be considered a driving motivation for denying place in policy. Place-based approaches and the localism agenda are seen as part of the same problem in policy-making whereby places are at best understood in isolation and at worst required to compete to be seen as most deserving (on the basis of existing strengths) or in need (on the basis of limits of capacity) of the resources available. Places are required to align ‘local’ priorities to national agendas to gain access to resources, pre-determined measures of what makes a deserving case for strategic investment, and what constitutes need.

This short summary has shown how conceptions of ‘the local’ in policy can vary significantly and as such we argue that greater consideration is

needed regarding the structures, procedures, processes and capacities enacted whenever cultural policy seeks to govern ‘the local’. This requires an examination of the process of situating ‘the local’ as it occurs in policy-making as well as what happens in ‘the local’ as a result or even despite that positioning. Our concern in this book therefore is what happens to places once they are labelled as ‘local’ in cultural policy. To answer this question we want to move beyond economic geography, and consider different disciplinary contributions to the meaning and interpretation of ‘the local’, to recognise its importance, the policy implications of its use and the practices of enacting ‘local’ cultural policies.

### BOOK STRUCTURE

Our book is structured around three themes highlighted above: disciplining the local, through examination of particular understandings of the key concepts from different academic fields of study; managing the local, through examination of policy approaches that engage with the idea of ‘the local’ in different ways; and practising the local, through case studies of how ‘local’ cultural policies are being enacted in places of differing scale and geography.

The contributors to this volume collectively bring different ontological and epistemological frames that shape our understanding of ‘the local’, its position and agency within policymaking and the tensions that emerge as a result for people and places. In so doing they situate ‘the local’ as both a source and lens for cultural policy by allowing us to consider the following overarching questions:

How are places understood as ‘local’, and in what ways are local places ‘made’ through cultural policy?

What tensions emerge as a result amongst the ontologies and scales of policymaking (e.g. national, local, international, centralised, participatory)?

How do cultural policy practices mediate and translate international and national policy discourses to encourage their adoption at a sub-national level?

How do localities resist, adapt and reform this translation in situ? What forms of policy assemblage are created and what and who do they involve?

## PART I: DISCIPLINING THE LOCAL

As acknowledged above, this book makes an implicit critique of cultural policy studies by highlighting an area we feel is long overlooked within the field, and inviting contemplation of new research from other fields, which concerns situated cultural policy practices that have something to offer in addressing this gap. With this in mind, we searched for contributors who could cast a wider conceptual net in consideration of the objects and agents of policy, spatial dimensions and classifications, and geographical and cultural context, to provide a multi-dimensional, multi-scale understanding of the discourses and practices of cultural policy as it relates to the local.

The methodology of the book draws on contributions from a multidisciplinary field of scholars, inviting specific domains of knowledge to engage with the interactions between policy, culture and place. In planning the book we considered what it was that commonly held cultural policy scholars back from presenting local cultural policy as a legitimate area of study, and where we might find work that helps make its significance less abstract.

Cultural, human and economic geographers routinely examine what happens in the local, and define how geographies and spatialities are classified, understood and administered by social, cultural, economic and political forces. Some adopt the position of outside observer in order to comment on their own field, as Paasi does when he takes on the concept of ‘the region’, the resurgence of a “new regionalism” (2011, p. 10) and its ties to questions of identity and ideology. We therefore thought it would be essential to engage with geographers to bring conceptual clarity to epistemological questions about specific spatial categories and think about whether cultural policy could exist outside of ‘the local’, or at least in non-local forms.

Similarly, we wanted to get insights from political scientists who could explore the influence of the idea of ‘the local’ on democracy and participation, and offer insights into the role of arts and culture in governance processes with more neutrality than those who align themselves to cultural policy studies. In our own work the editors of this book have drawn much from the field of political science and policy studies to explore the relations of power within cultural policymaking and to consider different claims about how these might be shifted. Similarly much of the localism agenda itself builds on work regarding “deliberative democracy” (Dryzek & List,

2003) and “participatory governance” (Fischer, 2006) which it has been argued is most effective when employed at a local rather than a national policy level. We therefore argue that a greater understanding of and affinity with the theories of political science would help cultural policy scholars enrich the field of investigation.

But clearly in any book on policy we also wanted theoretical perspectives that could explain how values are ascribed onto the idea of ‘the local’ and become legitimated within the situated interactions between different policy and non-policy actors, and across different spatial levels. For this we turned to a specific cultural sector—heritage—which places, perhaps more than any other cultural province, very special significance on the value of ‘the national’ when making decisions about what should be protected and promoted. In so doing we wanted to look in detail at the contested discourses about both meanings of policy and place for different actors.

The first part of this book therefore offers a trio of perspectives from these different disciplinary contexts: politics, geography and heritage.

The first contribution is from Mark Evans of the University of Canberra, Australia. His chapter, *Bridging the Trust Divide: Understanding the Role of ‘Localism’ and ‘the Local’ in Cultural Policy*, offers a critical reflection on the theory and practice of localism that has been developed in the disciplines of public policy and human geography. Evans identifies public value governance as a site of common ground but highlights that in order for it to be successful at a local level, it needs to be used as a tool for enhancing participation in democratic governance and with a focus on how ‘local’ social issues are understood by those they affect. The chapter goes on to consider how cultural institutions can support public value governance at the local level concluding that in order for them to do so they must be “expert, inclusive, and representative of the communities they serve” (p.?).

In the second chapter, David Bell and Lourdes Orozco from the University of Leeds, England, illustrate the complexity of the geography of cultural policy. They bring perspectives from human geography to the study of local cultural policy, drawing particular attention to spatial scale and the scale of ‘the local’ within cultural policy’s geographies. Through the use of a case study on the Donut Pilot Project in Leeds, England, they argue that cultural policy is translocal, describing this as a more dispersed, networked view of the local where local cultural policy is dependent upon multi-scalar and multi-local relations and connections and often embodied in the lives of residents.

The final chapter in Part I is by Helen Graham, also from the University of Leeds, England. This chapter considers the ontological space of heritage policy in terms of its scalability, the visibility (or otherwise) of what is deemed significant and valuable, and the distinct political ontologies relating to, and revealed by, examination of ‘the local’. Graham claims policy as method rather than as document, drawing on Callon and Latour’s (1981) notion of the black box as hiding the terms through which national heritage significance is designated (and providing a platform for dominant and legitimating narratives to stand upon), and Donna Haraway’s (Haraway, 1988) ‘situated knowledges’ as a corrective to show how policy is *always* explicitly localised ontologically. She builds the case for this argument by discussing the disputes that played out around a new visitor centre for Clifford’s Tower, a motte which was once part of a castle in York, northern England.

There are of course other ‘single discipline’ areas that have much to offer this project, from literature, linguistics and history to creative writing, art history and musicology. These disciplines bring insight into the historical and contemporary making of (sense of) place, place identity and locality, through creative expression and cultural production; however, we felt they lacked perspectives with which to offer conceptual clarity of the political ontologies that drive policy and governance processes. We therefore sought the insights brought by particular disciplinary positions to help establish parameters to this enquiry, and—sticking with an analogy of lenses for closer scrutiny—to sharpen the focus and set the apertures to provide depth of field and vanishing point, rather than simply present a compositional frame. Furthermore, we wanted to offer as diverse a range as possible (within a short edited volume) of case study examples through which to apply this looking, across the two main axes of policy and place. The following parts therefore draw on contributions from other fields of study to look at policy and practice.

## PART II: MANAGING THE LOCAL

While Part I takes us outside the field of cultural policy studies, this second part takes us right back into it. As an academic field it first grew out of cultural studies and a desire for research on culture to be useful to practitioners and policymakers (Bennett, 1992; Scullion & García, 2005). Many cultural policy scholars have had close relationships with both policymakers and the professional cultural sector, for example, contributing to the

evaluation of practice and the measurement of cultural value (Crossick & Kaszynska, 2016) and economic value of culture (Throsby, 2010). In the study of the relationship of culture and place, cultural policy scholars have identified models for creative city development (Landry, 2000) and approaches to cultural sustainable development (Kangas et al., 2019). This proximity with policy and practice has been criticised for jeopardising the independence of scholars, turning academics from disinterested researchers to advocates (McGuigan, 1996). However, critical cultural policy scholarship has maintained a distanced scrutiny of policymaking processes and environments, exposing the discursive practices surrounding the use and production of evidence (Belfiore, 2022) and instrumental uses of culture as a “policy attachment” (Gray, 2007) beyond aesthetic or expressive domains, to other policy agendas such as place-making, economic development, health and well-being and social change.

Correspondingly, there is a growing number of scholars working outside of arts and humanities, in departments of planning and public policy, sociology, geography and politics who are making valuable contributions to the field of cultural policy studies. As material objects of study, culture policies can be seen as texts, articulating power, interest and distinction, and as processes which are evolved and changing they are experienced and practised (Bell & Oakley, 2015). Methods for policy analysis are therefore informed by this interdisciplinarity, drawing on discourse and content analysis from philosophy, classics, communications studies and cultural studies to present critical reading of policy texts and documents (Nisbett, 2013) and assess the quantitative and qualitative evidence of policy problems, actors and actions that are presented within policy life-cycles (Cairney, 2020).

In seeking out contributors for this section therefore, the editors called for policy reviews that came from different academic fields but used analysis of local cases to examine policymaking processes. Each author in this section considers a different policy initiative in a different geographic context. The examples are drawn from England and America but are not concerned with these geographies per se; rather they aim to highlight the contested nature of policy implementation and draw attention to the relationship between theory, policy and practice at a local level. In so doing each chapter considers different forms of policymaking alongside reflections on the organisation of power through policymaking in order to ask questions about who benefits from a focus on ‘the local’ and how.

Considering cities within the context of the United States, the contribution of Eleonora Redaelli, from the University of Oregon, USA, highlights the importance of examining local government engagement in cultural policy development. Despite the development by several American cities of local cultural plans, there has been very limited critical examination of the goals of these plans. Through her close examination of five cultural plans published between 2011 and 2018 in Chicago, Denver, Dallas, New York and San José, her study highlights common themes and goals emerging within quite different and geographically distant urban contexts, raising new questions regarding policy transfer across different localities and the extent to which these plans can be understood as ‘local’.

The next chapter comes from Bethany Rex from the University of Warwick, England. Titled *Community Management of Local Cultural Assets: Implications for Inequality and Publicness*, the chapter examines the localism agenda, as it has played out in the UK’s policy to support community asset transfers as a means towards ensuring cultural spaces “are more community-responsive and more closely related to local needs” (DCLG, 2007, p. 16). This national policy has seen at least 6325 previously state-owned assets being transferred from local authority to community control (Power to Change, 2019, p. 21) often without ongoing public investment. She asks important questions about the kinds of future asset transfer promises for such spaces within this context and demonstrates through empirical case studies how the approach risks embedding inequality and reducing the ‘publicness’ of public space.

Focused on discursive practices, the final chapter in this part, *Devolved Responsibility: English Regional Creative Industries Policy and Local Industrial Strategies* comes from Zoe Bulaitis of the University of Bristol, England, and Abigail Gilmore of the University of Manchester, England. Using an initiative to pilot Local Industrial Strategies (LIS) in two regions of England as a case study, Bulaitis and Gilmore consider the social relations between cultural and creative industries (CCI) strategies, regional governance structures and national policy agendas concerning place. They argue the Local Industrial Strategies act as boundary objects, mediating ‘the local’ and facilitating interaction between policy actors at different levels of government by promoting symbolic repertoires that align different political interests through a common language, although not necessarily by establishing shared meanings.

## PART III: PRACTISING THE LOCAL

The first two parts examine how ‘the local’ is conceptualised and activated from elsewhere, by different academic disciplines or by national and regional policymakers. The final part of this book provides a microscopic lens on places within which it is played out in practice through policy. The aim here is to move beyond the tendency to use cases to represent places or offer replicable policy models. Rather they are chosen as objects of study in their own right, to examine the range of tensions within policy assemblages operating locally. We take the view that policy is not something simply done to a place by governments and funding bodies, but rather is practised and enacted by anyone with the ability to exert power and influence decision-making within that place. As such the chapters consider policy delivered in as well as policy developed by locales. But we are also cognisant of the fact that local decision-making is subject to discursive power, exclusions and vested interests as it is at a national level. As such, the contributors have been encouraged to think critically about who gets to make policy decisions locally and in particular who gets to define what ‘cultures of place’ are valued. In so doing the chapters problematise questions raised elsewhere in the book, about how power, distinction and culture are negotiated locally. The cases considered come from Australia, Greece, Ireland and South Africa. They examine different policy actors and the relationship between ‘the national’ and ‘the local’. They demonstrate the way ‘local’ culture can be appropriated or romanticised in some cases and in others question who gets to make local cultural policy and how. They consider bottom-up models of policy development and the role of expertise and the state. All of them contribute to our understanding of policymaking as an action or process rather than an aim or outcome.

Olga Kolokytha, from the University of Vienna, Austria, considers the meaning and importance of the rural in local cultural policy in her chapter *Reclaiming Place: Cultural Initiatives in Cretan Villages as Enablers of Citizen Involvement, Local Development and Repopulation*. Kolokytha presents Giortes Rokkas, a cultural event organised by the residents of two small villages on the island of Crete, as a case study that challenges established notions of expert programming and cultural expertise, as well as the role of the state in cultural policy. The chapter shows how the local community has simultaneously fulfilled the roles of policy maker, producer and audience, driven by a desire to secure a sustainable future for their villages built on a distinctive, local, cultural identity.

Victoria Durrer from University College Dublin, Ireland, provides a chapter called *The Public Administration of ‘place’: Labels and Meaning in Local Government Arts Development in the Irish Urban-Fringe*. Durrer explores the effects of cultural policy processes on making and re-ordering places at micro- and meso-levels through a case study of local government activity in Ballyogan, on the outskirts of Dublin city in the Republic of Ireland. The chapter charts how practices of local arts administrators form specific representations of place in Ballyogan through the knowledges acquired and shared during a programme called Exit 15, which was designed to remedy a perceived deficit in participation within this suburban residential estate. Durrer shows how the dominant labels and “place-meanings” for Ballyogan—as cut-off, obscured and disadvantaged by socio-economic deprivation—are challenged by the processes that the arts officers gradually adapt and adopt when delivering policy resulting in a more place-sensitive approach, which may endow new place-meanings to the locality.

*From Streets to Silos: Urban Art Forms in Local Rural Government and the Challenge of Rural Development* by Emily Potter and Katya Johansson, both from Deakin University, Australia, present the Wimmera-Mallee Silo Art Trail in Victoria, Australia, as a case study that highlights the benefits and risks of employing creative place-making as part of a local government-driven desire for rural development. The Silo Art Trail showcases the benefits to communities of collaboration between a rural local council, higher levels of government and private corporations, when it is led by locally generated needs and insights. At the same time, despite the achievements of the Silo Art Trail, a lack of explicit cultural policy and the differing priorities of different policy agencies created tensions between competing priorities. Reflecting on this case offers opportunities to consider the ongoing significance of local government to cultural and economic development and strategies to strengthen its capacity to achieve positive impact, especially in rural contexts.

The final chapter in the book comes from Rike Sitas of the University of Cape Town, South Africa. Sitas reflects on a five-year collaboration between the African Centre for Cities where she is based and the City of Cape Town’s Arts & Culture Branch. Her chapter focuses on what it means to make and do policy locally, on an everyday basis. Revealing considerations of how policy is something that is constructed and negotiated as a daily practice within the context of fiscal restraints (exacerbated by the

Covid-19 pandemic), shifting politics and urban priorities, the study gives pause to think about local cultural policy as an experience and process that is *embodied, emplaced, enacted* and *embedded*.

## CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

Collectively, the chapters in this book provide a multi-dimensional, multi-scale understanding of the discourses and practices of cultural policy as it relates to ‘the local’. Some examine how the idea of ‘the local’ brings places into dialogue, conflict or collaboration with ‘the national’, while others consider how a place comes to be labelled as ‘local’ and what this does to our understanding of who makes policy and how. The contributing researchers suggest that focusing on ‘the local’ will help us to understand the diversity and disparate nature of places, which in turn will lead to better policymaking. However, there is also evidence that ‘the local’ remains primarily a rhetorical vehicle through which national policy actors can enact performative processes to legitimise their priorities and help maintain control over very different places.

What appears clear is that ‘the local’ is a floating signifier that is regularly employed in cultural policymaking without a shared conception of what it refers to or why it is important. Being ‘local’ is employed as a proxy for relevance and in turn bestows a form of legitimacy onto policies that are discursively attached to it. However, the labelling of any given place as ‘local’ in a cultural policy context necessitates a process of othering by which alternative locations are seen as ‘less local’. The realpolitik of cultural policy means for top-down rather than federal regimes, only a limited number of places can be supported through the resources from national funding pots, so there is a material incentive for places to claim this label and to do so by questioning the ‘localness’ of other locations.

While in this short edited volume we have attempted to offer a diversity of perspectives on ‘the local’ from across a range of disciplines and localities, the breadth of what remains absent highlights the difficulties in attempting to represent ‘the local’ in all of its forms. Everywhere is local to someone and thus irrespective of the site of its inception, all policy can be understood locally at the point of implementation. Indeed one of the arguments that is made on the back of the contributions in this book is that any analysis of cultural policy that does not consider how it has been understood, implemented, adapted and resisted across different locales will only ever be partial. The absences also serve as a reminder to cultural

policy scholars that our insights on questions of national and international policymaking are heavily informed by what is ‘local’ to us. In turn, the way in which ‘the local’ is imagined within cultural policy studies is skewed towards the places, locations and locales with which those studying cultural policy are most familiar, reproducing perceptions and epistemologies, which reify particular policy models and potentially reproduce inherent spatial inequalities. Conversely, therefore, we argue that by anchoring our understanding of policymaking for culture in the local, we can recognise these biases, to critically inform cultural policies that are both place-sensitive and extra-local.

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PART I

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Disciplining the Local



## CHAPTER 2

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# Bridging the Trust Divide: Understanding the Role of ‘localism’ and the ‘local’ in Cultural Policy

*Mark Evans*

*Trust is at a breaking point. Trust in national institutions. Trust among states. Trust in the rules-based global order. Within countries, people are losing faith in political establishments, polarization is on the rise and populism is on the march.*

—Antonio Guterres, United Nations Secretary General, 25  
September 2018.

There is much evidence that suggests that declining public trust is not just a problem for government to solve but requires active citizenship and civic action at the local scale (Dalton & Welzel, 2014). Cultural institutions can play an important enabling and educative role in fostering and strengthening democratic governance as they have a uniquely trusted position on the frontline of community democracy, civic agency and learning. Research

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shows that, at a time of declining trust around the world, cultural institutions are trusted for delivering credible evidence-based content, giving voice to a plurality of perspectives and presenting an impartial interpretation of complex problems (Falk & Dierking, 2018). In an era of ‘truth decay’ (Kavanagh & Rich, 2018), they are uniquely placed to make sense of the contest of ideas and address uncomfortable truths. But how can social researchers conceptualise this role in the context of civic action at the local scale? This chapter critically evaluates the theory and practice of localism which has emerged in the disciplines of public policy and management, geography and governance to examine the role that local cultural institutions could and often do play in enhancing democratic governance, social cohesion and building public trust and value.

## THE POLICY CONTEXT—IN CULTURAL INSTITUTIONS WE TRUST

The COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated the global erosion of public trust in liberal democratic institutions. There is widespread concern among scholars and in popular commentary that citizens have grown more distrustful of politicians, sceptical about democratic institutions, and disillusioned with democratic processes or even principles (Evans & Stoker, 2021). Weakening political trust is thought to: erode civic engagement and conventional forms of political participation such as voter registration or turnout; reduce support for progressive public policies and promote risk aversion and short-termism in government; and, to create the space for the rise of authoritarian-populist forces (Diamond, 2019). There may also be implications for long-term democratic stability as liberal democratic regimes are thought most durable when built upon popular legitimacy. The 2021 Edelman Trust Barometer reveals ‘an epidemic of misinformation and widespread mistrust of societal institutions and leaders around the world’. Declining public trust is also associated with democratic satisfaction. *The Global Satisfaction with Democracy Report 2020* found that the share of people who express dissatisfaction with the performance of democracy had risen by 10 percentage points to 57.5 per cent. The report concludes that ‘across the globe, democracy is in a state of deep malaise’ (Foa et al., 2020, p. 3).

In contrast, trust in cultural institutions remains high particularly in the parliamentary democracies and the USA (see: Hill Strategies, 2019; and, New Zealand Ministry for Culture and Heritage, 2021). A recent study

(Evans, 2021) surveyed a sample of senior administrators of cultural institutions in Australia and the United Kingdom and asked them—what is it to be a ‘trusted’ cultural institution? For them, a ‘trusted’ cultural institution is:

1. ‘Driven by small ‘I’ liberal values’.
2. ‘Independent’.
3. A local ‘safe space’ for democratic dialogue on ‘wicked’ (intractable) problems.
4. ‘Culturally relevant’—‘audiences personally connect to the content or experience. Younger people are particularly inspired by social change’.
5. ‘Active in removing barriers to social inclusion’, demonstrating social impact and embracing diversity (a key concern of cultural institutions in Australia given the need to close the social and economic development gap for Indigenous Australians).
6. Expert—they engage in ‘evidence-based practice, combat ‘truth decay’ in their areas of expertise’ and are ‘impartial entities, civic educators trusted to present the facts as they relate to their stated missions’.

In sum, while cultural industry elites believe that public trust is ‘relational and qualified’ and many institutions are not achieving or even exhibiting some of these attributes, they genuinely believe that they can perform a legitimate bridge-building role between government and citizen on the frontline of community democracy, civic agency and learning.

But how would they go about performing this role? The answer to this question is not easily answered from a social science standpoint as there is no precise conceptualisation of how it works in practice. However, the most promising lines of inquiry can be located in various heuristics of ‘localism’, the ‘local’ and associated concepts which have emerged (with different concerns) in the disciplines of public policy and management, geography and governance. We will explore the disciplinary differences in approaches to the broad issues discussed here in more detail later, before turning to look specifically at areas of common ground which pivot around the role of cultural institutions in generating public value through participatory modes of governance. We will also examine various barriers to action. But first we must examine the origins of the concept of localism to understand its political genealogy.

## ORIGINS—DEVELOPMENTS IN THE FIELD OF ACTION

The flirtation with localism in parliamentary democracies emerged as a policy mantra in the Blair and Brown New Labour governments (1997 to 2010) in the UK. We will use the United Kingdom (UK) case to illustrate the emergence and development of the concept. Localism is a case of new wine in old bottles previously described as ‘area-based’, ‘place-based’, ‘action zone’ or regenerations experiments (Davies & Imbroscio, eds., 2013) but this time framed in the context of New Labour’s core focus on evidence-based policy, ‘top-down’ direction and an overarching managerialism (Lowndes & Pratchett, 2012). The evidence suggests that managerialism limited New Labour from ever really developing a localist agenda that had any political bite. The Cameron government’s adoption of the mantra of localism through the hollow concept of the ‘Big Society’ was initially a political manoeuvre to support their criticism of the perceived ‘top-down’ ‘control freakery’ of New Labour but quickly became and has remained part of an anti-state agenda that sees for the UK a future that moves it further from the continental welfare state tradition. Prime Minister Theresa May was too distracted by Brexit to give the local much thought; while localism has become a barometer of whether the current UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson has a guiding normative compass and will deliver on his professed localist credentials (forged while Mayor of London) or remain pragmatic to the core. The early signs are that greater localism and power for communities will form part of the post-COVID-19 settlement and extend the English City deals to towns and counties (Ross & Donaldson, 2021).

The Labour Party under Ed Miliband reacted by offering, in turn, a much more value-driven understanding of politics than that offered by New Labour and embraced community localism for a short period. In turn, this was usurped by the centralised planning tendencies of Jeremy Corbyn and particularly Shadow Chancellor of the Exchequer John McDonnell who saw the appeal of managerial localism for ‘top-down’ socio-economic transformation. We await Keir Starmer’s desired brand of localism. The evidence also suggests that managed localism has been the preferred approach in the devolved governments of the UK in Scotland (Pugh, 2014), and Wales (Heap & Paterson, 2021) and for local government in England (Stanton, 2018).

In short, over the last two decades, the UK has witnessed the emergence of varieties of localism but a managerial localism has dominated. But

what of the key academic literature—how has it sought to understand localism? In the field of theory, the concepts of ‘localism’ and the ‘local’ have been an ongoing concern in the disciplines of public policy and management, geography and governance.

### WHAT IS LOCALISM? A PUBLIC POLICY AND MANAGEMENT APPROACH

It is almost impossible to conceive of a strong liberal democratic system without a vibrant system of local democracy augmented through various localism strategies. Although a contested term, for the purposes of this chapter localism is defined from a public policy and management perspective as an umbrella concept which refers to the devolution of power and/or functions and/or resources away from central control and towards frontline managers, local democratic structures, local community-based institutions and local communities, within an agreed framework of minimum standards (see Table 2.1). This definition encompasses and develops various strategies of localism described by Paul Hildreth (2011). Simply put, different central governments in different nation states deploy different strategies of localism to deliver different organisational tasks and goods and services. Table 2.1 provides a heuristic of how these strategies work in practice.

We can normally identify three strategies of localism at work—managerial, representative and community localism—reflecting different degrees of community involvement in decision-making. While all three forms of localism have always existed, representative localism was always first amongst equals at least in terms of its political dominance. This is no longer the case; in an era of governance where governmental organisations rarely assume a dominant service delivery role, it is the mix of strategies that matters and the balance between the three will differ from jurisdiction to jurisdiction.

Managerial localism involves the conditional devolution of delegated decision-making or delivery functions from the centre to the locality based on achieving agreed objectives (see Table 2.1). Policy is decided at the centre but policy settings and delivery functions are devolved to the locality under a strict regulatory framework. Success is evaluated on the ability to meet centrally derived performance targets. In representative localism, powers and responsibility for specific governance tasks are devolved

**Table 2.1** Three strategies of localism

	<i>Managerial localism</i>	<i>Representative localism</i>	<i>Community localism</i>
Defining mechanism	Conditional devolution of decision-making based on achieving agreed objectives	Provision of powers and responsibility to local government elected on universal suffrage	Rights and support given to citizens in communities to directly engage in decisions and action
Delivery mechanisms	Intergovernmental networks	Hierarchical delivery networks	Community network governance, direct and deliberative democratic initiatives
Metrics for judging success	Targets and evidence	Electoral triumph or failure	Cohesiveness and capacity of network arrangements. Attainment of network goals and fairness of process
Strengths	Makes sense in the context of multi-level governance and complexity	Delivers clear identification of responsibility and accountability and capacity to meet localised needs	Delivers ownership, local knowledge and engagement by citizens in defining problems and supporting solutions
Weaknesses	Can be too 'top-down', lack of downward accountability, associated with a 'government knows-best narrative for change', ignores locally derived sources of knowledge. Focus in the end is on externally imposed objectives rather than local choices	Resource issues (both financial and technical) may undermine delivery; accountability in practice may be weak	Potential for network capture by local elite interests persists. Uneven distribution of capacity among community-based institutions to respond leads to engagement of some but not all. Accountability structures can be opaque with weak democratic control. Minority voices can be silent

directly to elected local government. Success is evaluated on the basis of re-election. In contrast, community localism involves the devolution of rights and support directly to citizens in communities to allow them to engage in decisions and action. This is underpinned by a participatory

view of democracy which is based on the notion that legitimate governance requires ongoing engagement with the citizenry and their inclusion within certain realms of decision-making (Stoker, 2011).

As noted in Table 2.1, the key delivery mechanisms of community localism are through network governance and potentially through the inception of direct and deliberative democratic initiatives to solve specific community problems such as citizen juries, deliberative polls or participatory budgets (Evans & Stoker, 2021). In times of instability, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, community localism becomes even more important in delivering national as well as local goals, for example, in ensuring adherence to lockdown measures or encouraging vaccine take-up. Crucially, however, there is increasing evidence to suggest that the top-down managerial approach to localism does not work (see Penny, 2017).

The reason for this is not new or surprising. In an era of governance, citizens' engagement in policy and delivery has become crucial to the achievement of social progress. Not least because all that public organisations do require co-production and adaptive behaviours from citizens and often stakeholders. Moreover, the critical challenges confronting policy-makers in a complex, fragmented world require the most adaptive form of power to enable local interests to blend their capacities to achieve common purpose. Here Joseph Nye's (Nye, 1990) concept of soft power developed in the field of international relations and described as *the power to persuade* is a useful reference point. Localism is for public policy and management academics a key policy instrument for achieving soft power.

In theory, localism provides central and local authorities with a range of strategies (managerial, representative and community-focused) for inputting community-based preferences into formal decision processes which shape the development of local communities. The arguments in support of localism can be organised into three categories: capacity development benefits, political benefits and operational delivery benefits. The potential benefits of localism for local institutional capacity development crystallise around issues of political and policy education, and training in political leadership for local leaders. Political education teaches local populations about the role of political debate, the selection of representatives and the nature of policy-making, planning and budgetary processes. While training in political leadership creates fertile ground for prospective political leaders to develop skills in policy-making, political party operations and budgeting, with the result that the quality of national politicians is enhanced (Stoker, 2011).

Several sources of political and social capital can be derived from localism strategies. Political stability is secured by enhancing public participation in formal politics, through voting, local party activism and deliberative engagements such as citizens, juries and assemblies (Moore, 2019) and direct democratic initiatives such as local referenda or participatory budgeting. Localism strategies can distribute political power more broadly, thus becoming a mechanism that can, in theory at least, meet the needs of the most disadvantaged. Public accountability can also be enhanced because local representatives are more accessible to the public and can thus be held more easily accountable for their actions than distant national leaders. Moreover, the existence of cyclical elections provides local electors with a mechanism for voicing grievances or satisfaction with the performance of local representatives.

In this conception of localism, cultural institutions would be a contracted third party in managerial localism and representative localism and a partner in community localism reflecting different models of democracy at work through elite-driven (central or local) to participatory modes of governance (see Fig. 2.1).

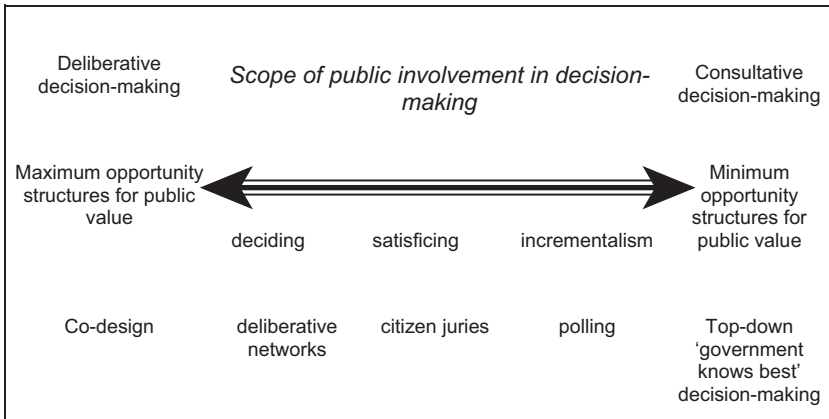


Fig. 2.1 The scope of public involvement in decision-making

## WHAT IS LOCALISM? A HUMAN GEOGRAPHY APPROACH

The human geography approach to localism constitutes a political economy critique of the mainstream public policy approach. Nick Clarke (2013, p. 492) distinguishes three types of political localism to be found in human geography literature, localism describes: ‘natural ways of life—organised to maximise authentic experiences of place ...and to minimise the friction of distance in the case of spatial science’; ‘cultural–political expressions of spatial divisions of labour, including local political cultures...[and] neoliberalisations’; and, ‘struggles to produce locally scaled action, including projects of local autonomy and self-sufficiency directed against the central state’.

Much of the work geographers undertake has constructivist origins and, for constructivists, ‘locality’ or ‘place’ are much more flexible ideas/concepts. As Clarke (2013, p. 492) puts it: ‘Post-structuralist geographers view localities as characteristically open, plural and dynamic’ and thus problematise the tendency in public policy and management approaches to localism to see place and locality as more fixed. For example, the idea of ‘managerial localism’ sees geographically based, local, non-governmental organisations such as cultural institutions as ‘agents’ for delivering services in a defined territory. Representative localism focuses on the role of democratically elected, area-based, representatives, normally councillors, in policy-making and service delivery. Of course, ‘community localism’ is different to the extent that it is concerned with a focus on harnessing the resources of local community networks, but unlike much of the Geography literature on the ‘local’, such communities are viewed as given, with clear geographic boundaries, rather than as imagined, fluid and flexible.

Of course, it is not that these two literatures can’t and don’t engage with one another’s concepts and insights. There are two sources of immediate inspiration that we can look to for guidance. First, the work of Nick Clarke serves as a good example. As we noted above, Clarke identifies a flexible notion of locality, but he emphasises that a key recent trend in debates about ‘the local’ has been a move, he terms it a ‘struggle’, to produce and reproduce local-scale actions that in large part resist over-direction from the state. This is a move which resonates with arguments about community localism and indeed local governance, emphasising how the tensions between managerial and community localism are at the core of contemporary debates about cultural and heritage policy (see: Clarke & Cochrane, 2013; Gentry, 2013).

In short, human geographers particularly, but not exclusively, emphasise that ‘the local’ cannot be simply equated with geographic or administrative boundaries. This is an important insight for those who advocate managerial localism, as it shows why the implementation of this form of localism is not always straightforward. It is also chastening for those who stress any straightforward form of representative localism which can fall prey to elite capture and fail to represent the general will of the community (Waheduzzaman & As-Saber, 2018). However, this is an issue which those who advocate community localism need to address, as, in most cases their focus is on geographical or administrative communities, with little focus on how the ‘local’ or other social issues are ‘imagined’ or understood by citizens.

Despite vocal political criticism, many museums around the world have taken up this challenge. Witness the Smithsonian’s efforts to generate democratic dialogue through the National Museum of American History’s collaboration with the non-profit Zócalo Public Square and Arizona State University to create an online conversation on the thorny issue of what it means to be American (Carnegie Corporation of New York, 2014). Or the development of the ‘Protest Lab’ at the People’s History Museum in Manchester (2021) where an exhibition on the Peterloo Massacre co-created with the celebrated film director Mike Leigh and community curators inspires ideas for community action on various intractable problems from climate change to social inclusion. The ability to partner with Mike Leigh on the Peterloo exhibition has helped not only in producing a high-quality exhibition experience but has also inspired community participation on a national and international scale augmented by digital content (Evans, 2021).

Glasgow Women’s Library (2021) located in the East End of Glasgow has grown from a small grassroots project into the main hub for information by, for and about women in Scotland with 13 paid staff and more than 80 volunteers working for the museum. It offers specialised learning, collections and archives and has grown into a pioneering women’s social enterprise. The strengths of the museum lie in its ability to build community networks in academia (to build robust evidence to underpin its exhibitions and programmes), across communities of practice (to be a centre for place-based service delivery for community wellbeing programmes) and to be an information hub for like-minded grassroots organisations. It is an extremely participatory, open and democratic organisation with its board recruited through open competition.

Glasgow Women's Library also uses a community curator approach to steer annual mobilising themes on social justice issues. It is an authentic participatory museum despite (but probably because) being based in one of the poorest communities in Europe. It is noteworthy that the museum makes no attempt to walk the line and compromise politically. It is unapologetically a campaigning museum on the empowerment of women. This is viewed to be the secret of its success as a trusted, culturally relevant, community-based organisation that imagines women's empowerment from the local to the global. This contrasts with National Museums Scotland (2021a) which has had to walk a very delicate line on the Scottish referendum issue and has been heavily criticised for not providing public education on the case for or against separation. These examples provide living illustrations of cultural institutions providing 'safe spaces' for democratic dialogue on difficult social issues.

A second source of guidance can be found in the geography literature that emerged in response to austerity politics in the UK. This literature has particular significance for understanding the role of cultural institutions in community localism in providing 'spaces' or 'geographies of care' to combat social exclusion, developed in response to deep-seated cuts across health, welfare and social services (see Clayton et al., 2015; Darling, 2011). More recently, the community engagement schemes of cultural institutions have become an additional focus of concern in this literature (see: Morse, 2021; Morse & Munro, 2015). Nuala Morse and Ealasaid Munro, for example, investigate the role of museum engagement workers in shaping these spaces through community networks and their everyday practices. As Morse and Munro (2015, p. 357) observe:

Our purpose has also been to show how these are evolving in response to uneven cut-backs across welfare and social services in the UK. The spaces of care created and maintained within our respective museum services were extended and reinforced via new and renewed partnerships with local organisations and services.

Here we can locate a specific role for cultural institutions in combatting social exclusion through the development of community-based partnerships to actively remove sources of disadvantage (Penny, 2017). National Museums Scotland (NMS), for example, provides a shared services hub for all Scottish museums funded through the Scottish Parliament with the remit of 'engaging the hardest to reach' (2021a, 2021b). NMS works

with community networks and wellbeing organisations to deliver mental health and autism support programmes. It now partly measures its impact through wellbeing indicators. Delivering ‘place based’ community wellbeing programmes provides additional sources of funding for resource-poor museums. NMS also seeks to give voice to marginalised groups. Its Young Demonstrators programme, for example, is a way of ensuring that new exhibitions and programmes are youth friendly and is based on a community curator/co-design model (NMS, 2021b). The museum also has a network of academic partnerships to ensure that their exhibitions remain evidence-based (Evans, 2021).

Museums and libraries are not the only types of cultural organisation engaged in social and political action. See for example, the civic role of arts organisations such as the theatre company Slung Low (Inquiry into the Civic Role of Arts Organisations, 2021) or Artworks for Change (2021). Nonetheless, both of the examples above provide illustrations of cultural institutions generating public value through the provision of ‘safe spaces’ for democratic dialogue on difficult social issues and ‘geographies of care’ to help combat social exclusion and give voice to marginalised groups. Strong clues as to the potential role of cultural institutions in building trust at the local scale.

### COMMON GROUND—PUBLIC VALUE GOVERNANCE AND THE PROTECTIVE POWER OF DEMOCRACY

This chapter began by identifying concerning evidence of the disconnect between government and citizen reflected in low levels of public trust in our key political institutions and erosion of public confidence in the capacity of governments (of whatever colour) to address community concerns. The ‘protective power of democracy’, as Amartya Sen (1999) calls it, has dissipated as the political class has become more disconnected from the citizenry it serves. This encompasses:

...first, the intrinsic importance of political participation and freedom in human life; second, the instrumental importance of political incentives in keeping governments responsible and accountable; and third, the constructive role of democracy in the formation of values and in the understanding of needs, rights, and duties. (Sen, 1999, p. 11)

Most of the problems of localism that we have encountered in this chapter thus far stem from the persistence of inequality of one form or another that the political class has conspicuously failed to counter. In contrast, effective democracy is shown to be most firmly embedded in creating empowering political and socio-economic conditions that make people both capable and willing to engage in democratic practice as critical citizens. There is compelling evidence to suggest that cultural institutions in times of declining public trust can be an alternative source of community authority for creating public value and enhancing the protective power of democracy. What do we mean by public value governance in this context, and how can it be practised by cultural institutions?

Public value governance offers a broad framework in which to understand the public management challenge in an era of citizen-centric governance and aims at improving the performance legitimacy of government. Mark Moore (1995), who developed the concept, basically argues that public services can add value to society in the same way that private for-profit organisations create value for their shareholders and other stakeholders. By implication, public intervention should be circumscribed by the need to achieve positive social and economic outcomes for the citizenry. Crucially what is and what is not public value should be determined collectively through inclusive deliberation involving elected and appointed government officials, key stakeholders and the public. Public value governance thus represents a significant challenge to both traditional forms of public administration and the dominant form of public management used in Western democracies—new public management (see Table 2.2). The public value approach demands a commitment to goals that are more stretching for public managers than those envisaged under previous management methods (see Table 2.2).

Public managers are tasked with steering networks of deliberation and delivery as well as maintaining the overall health of the system. The questions they must ask of themselves in searching for public value are more challenging and demanding than those of new public management. They are asking more than whether procedures have been followed or targets met but whether their actions are bringing a net benefit to society. Public value governance emphasises the role of reflection, lesson-drawing and continuous adaptation to meet the challenges of efficiency, accountability and effectiveness.

Its strengths lie in its redefinition of how to meet the challenges of collective problem-solving in democratic governance and in its ability to

**Table 2.2** Approaches to public management

	<i>Traditional public administration</i>	<i>New public management</i>	<i>Public value governance</i>
Core purpose	Politically provided inputs, services monitored through bureaucratic oversight	Managing inputs and outputs in a way that ensures economy and responsiveness to consumers	The overarching goal is achieving publicly valued outcomes and this in turn involves greater effectiveness in tackling the problems that the public care most about; stretches from policy development to service delivery to system maintenance
Role of managers	To ensure that rules and appropriate procedures are followed	To help define and meet agreed performance targets	To play an active role in steering networks of deliberation and delivery and maintaining the overall capacity of the system
Definition of the public interest	By politicians / experts. Little in the way of public input	Aggregation of individual preferences, in practice captured by senior politicians or managers supported by evidence about customer choice	Individual and public preferences produced through a complex process of interaction which involves deliberative reflection over inputs and opportunity costs
Approach to public service ethos	Public sector has monopoly on service ethos, and all public bodies have it.	Sceptical of public sector ethos (leads to inefficiency and empire building)—favours customer service	No one sector has a monopoly on public service ethos. Maintaining relationships through shared values is seen as essential
Preferred system for service delivery	Hierarchical department or self-regulating profession	Private sector or tightly defined arms-length public agency	Menu of alternatives selected pragmatically and a reflexive approach to intervention mechanisms to achieve outcomes
Contribution to the democratic process	Delivers accountability: competition between elected leaders provides an overarching accountability	Delivers objectives: Limited to setting objectives and checking performance, leaving managers to determine the means	Delivers dialogue which is integral to all that is undertaken, a rolling and continuous process of democratic engagement and exchange between politicians, stakeholders and citizens

point to a motivational force that does not rely on rules or incentives to drive change. People are, it suggests, motivated by their involvement in networks and partnerships, by their relationships with others formed in the context of equal status and mutual learning. The core insight here is that the public realm is different from that of the commercial sector. Governing is not the same as buying and selling goods in a market economy. The distinctiveness of public management comes from advancing valued social, cultural or economic outcomes. The concept of public value is an attempt to create a framework in which judgements about how to achieve valued outcomes can be made as soundly as possible and co-produced with the wider public that is paying for services.

The obstacles to the effective application of public value governance in representative democracies have been well documented elsewhere (Rhodes & Wanna, 2007) and include professional and political resistance, the lack of political will, resource constraints to engage differently and issues of complexity. The notion of public value, so the argument goes, doesn't sit easily with representative democracy as it introduces a concept of public interest that is not determined by the government of the day, but by public servants in consultation with communities and providers. The approach affords public managers with enormous powers that they often do not have the capacity or the legitimacy to wield. These factors, amongst others, have led Francesca Gains and Gerry Stoker (2009, p. 2) to conclude that, 'this new public service contract is likely to be easier to adopt in a local setting'. However, if public value governance is to be successful at the local scale, it needs to be practised as an instrument for enhancing participation in democratic governance (as in the case of community localism) and, with a focus (as human geographers propose), on how the 'local' or other social issues are 'imagined' or understood by local citizens. So how can cultural institutions support public value governance at the local scale?

## THE POTENTIAL ROLE OF CULTURAL INSTITUTIONS IN PUBLIC VALUE PRACTICE

As a trusted intermediary between government and the citizen with access to the resources of strong community networks, cultural institutions are uniquely placed to perform four key roles in local public value governance:

1. building political literacy and fostering critical citizens in their areas of expertise;
2. combating ‘truth decay’ in their areas of expertise;
3. providing safe spaces for establishing participatory governance systems and enabling community participation; and,
4. delivering high quality social inclusion programmes of various kinds to help integrate marginalised groups into the community and give voice to their current needs and aspirations for the future.

Two of these putative roles require further explanation.

How can cultural institutions help combat ‘truth decay’? ‘Truth decay’ is defined by the RAND Corporation as the increasing disagreement about facts and analytical interpretations of facts and data; the blurring of the line between opinion and fact; the burgeoning volume, and resulting influence, of opinion and personal experience over fact; and declining trust in formerly respected sources of factual information (Kavanagh & Rich, 2018, p. 1). Given the high level of trust citizens have for cultural institutions they should be publicly funded to provide independent, evidence-based fact checking services in their areas of expertise. Cultural institutions could also deliver public programmes that build the capacity of citizens to discern and refute misinformation, disinformation and malinformation.

It is also proposed that cultural institutions could provide ideal institutional venues for establishing participatory governance systems and enabling community participation, but what would this mean in practice. An ideal-type participatory governance system in this context would be one where a variety of citizen-centred participatory methods (see Table 2.3) are used to solve a local governance problem and bolster the legitimacy of policy outcomes. Cultural institutions would be responsible (and funded) for enabling the design of ‘fit for purpose’ participatory governance systems that recognise the intrinsic democratic value of public participation, integrate representative and participatory instruments of democracy, match engagement methods to engagement purposes, and reach out and empower disaffected citizens (see Evans & Stoker, 2021).

**Table 2.3** Participatory governance systems

<i>Spectrum of participation</i>	<i>Purpose</i>	<i>Method</i>	<i>Governance domain</i>
Inform	<i>To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives, opportunities and/or solutions</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Digital information platforms</li> <li>• Gamification</li> <li>• Online forums</li> <li>• Parliamentary discussion papers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Policy learning</li> <li>• Program and service design and delivery</li> </ul>
Consult	<i>To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Open space technology</li> <li>• Govhacks</li> <li>• Gamification</li> <li>• Planning cells</li> <li>• Citizen experience panels</li> <li>• User surveys and focus groups</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Policy design</li> <li>• Policy learning</li> <li>• Program and service delivery</li> </ul>
Involve	<i>To work directly with the public throughout the policy process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Appreciative Inquiry</li> <li>• Community power networks</li> <li>• User simulation labs</li> <li>• Citizen experience panels</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Policy, program and service design</li> </ul>
Collaborate	<i>To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Co-design, consensus conferences/dialogues, deliberative mapping</li> <li>• Citizen experience panels</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strategic decision-making</li> <li>• Policy design</li> <li>• Policy learning</li> <li>• Program and service delivery</li> </ul>

*(continued)*

**Table 2.3** (continued)

<i>Spectrum of participation</i>	<i>Purpose</i>	<i>Method</i>	<i>Governance domain</i>
Empower	<i>To directly place decision-making in the hands of the public</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Direct democratic mechanisms such as referenda, the power of recall, community-driven development</li> <li>• Deliberative democratic mechanisms such as mini-publics (citizen assemblies, citizen juries, deliberative polls, participatory appraisal) depending on consequential outcomes</li> <li>• Action learning</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strategic decision-making</li> <li>• Policy design</li> <li>• Policy learning</li> <li>• Program and service delivery</li> </ul>
Self-empowerment	<i>Citizen-led initiatives</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Everyday makers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Civic action</li> </ul>

Source: Adapted from IAP2 at <https://www.iap2.org> [accessed 5 July 2021]

## BARRIERS TO TRUST BUILDING

In my recent study, we also asked our sample of senior administrators—what are the main barriers to cultural institutions performing a trust-building role between government and citizen? Five main barriers were identified: genuine independence, resources for civic action, community authority and support, disciplinary capability in areas of expertise and broad capability in public engagement.

The thorny issue of independence requires further elaboration here. Cultural institutions that are less reliant on government funding and subject to government interference appear better able to speak truth to power and those dispossessed by power and to engage in protest politics on issues linked to their key mission. The former director of the Queens Museum in New York Laura Raicovich in her book *Culture Strike* draws equal attention to problematic museum funders, trustees and boards. She refers to artist Nan Goldin's efforts to hold major museums—the Metropolitan, the Guggenheim, the Tate Modern, the Louvre—accountable for accepting vast amounts of funding from the Sackler family, mega-donors whose pharmaceutical business was a key driver of the opioid crisis.

Although there is limited evidence available to identify what types of cultural institutions are best able to overcome these barriers and effectively perform this trust-building role, we have 50 years of research that tells us when public participation schemes are likely to succeed. Impact is more probable when the public:

- Can engage (*has the resources, skills and knowledge to participate*)
- Likes to engage (*has a sense of attachment to the issue or institution*)
- Enabled to engage (*is incentivised to participate*)
- Asks to engage (*feels valued*)
- Responds to when they do (*are included on an ongoing basis*)

The CLEAR model provides a useful heuristic for guiding civic action (see Lowndes et al., 2006).

## IN CONCLUSION—LESSONS FOR CULTURAL POLICY

Localism has become an important issue in political practice and social scientific interdisciplinary debate with significant implications for the study of cultural policy. This chapter has addressed many of the issues in these debates, but more work is needed, both conceptually and empirically for localism to be considered more than a useful heuristic device. In particular, this requires reconciling differences between the state-centred and spatially rigid public policy and management view of localism with the more fluid understanding of the ‘local’ in human geography. It is argued that a focus on public value creation and participatory governance—provides a fruitful starting point for the development of a reflexive research agenda that seeks to articulate the relationship between localism, governance and the role of cultural institutions in a systematic and meaningful way. Most significantly, this chapter has presented the case for cultural institutions being seen as a site of democratic participation at the local level. However, this will require attention to the barriers highlighted above to ensure that they are expert, inclusive and representative of the communities they serve.

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# Scale, the Local and Cultural Policy's Geographies

*David Bell and Lourdes Orozco*

## INTRODUCTION: CULTURAL POLICY'S GEOGRAPHIES

In this chapter, we want to contribute to the task that Eleonora Redaelli (2019, p. 12) calls 'thinking spatially in cultural policy', which she describes as a project that works to 'highlight elements—such as distance, proximity, agglomeration, location, etc.—in their relational manifestation' (p. 12). In particular, given the emphasis of this book, we are interested in the question of spatial scale, and the scale of the local. Along with a number of other scholars, we share Redaelli's call to think spatially—or, we might prefer, think *geographically*—about cultural policy practice and research (Bell & Oakley, 2015; Gilmore et al., 2019). And, like Redaelli, we understand culture and place to be relational, and see this relationality as layered and dynamic: culture and place are folded together, interleaved, mutually shaped and shaping. This shaping is manifest in cultural practice and in cultural policy. In the chapter, we attend to these issues by first discussing

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debates about key geographical concepts—spatial scale, the local—and then working these through in the context of one of our previous research projects (Bell & Orozco, 2021). Before that, we would like to make a few broader observations about cultural policy’s geographies.

Cultural policy operates in and on space and place; the research base as well as the practical applications of particular policies show us this time and again. As Michael Volkering (2001) observed, policy is territorial, concerned with mapping and with boundaries (this is not to say that policy is purely territorial, it is also relational and mobile; see McCann & Ward, 2011). In terms of research, we can identify a number of key ways in which cultural policy is spatialized. Perhaps the most common geographical approach comes in the form of either single-site or comparative case work: cultural policy studies are grounded, one way or another, in the particularities of place. The practice of cultural mapping is important here, in terms of producing accounts of the culture of place at various scales (Duxbury et al., 2015).

In terms of the broader working-with-geographies in cultural policy research, most obvious here is the scale of the nation (and the role of national government in policymaking), but more recently the urban is arguably overtaking the nation as the most-researched scale, given all the policy and research attention on things like capitals of culture and creative cities (Gilmore et al., 2019). Indeed, Redaelli (2019) takes the city—or rather, particular US cities—as her proving ground, and her reading across her cases, including in her chapter in this volume, exemplifies the comparative approach in cultural policy research, also seen in national scale work, for example, in typologies of national policies such as the facilitator-patron-architect-engineer classification of arts funding approaches (for a discussion, see Bell & Oakley, 2015). National comparisons yielding typologies have been a cornerstone of comparative cultural policy research.

We can find many more examples of comparative research working at national or urban scales, as well as work focused on the regional scale (see Bell & Oakley, 2015 for examples). Of course, comparative work is attuned to the specificities of place—each case must first be assembled so that it can then be compared—but is also interested in relationships or non-relationships, in policy transfer and in distinct policy ecologies and their outworkings. Beyond this kind of approach, for all its value and its limitations, we can see geography being worked with in other ways in cultural policy research, for example, in studies that explore the geographically uneven distribution of cultural resources or unequal access to cultural

activities (Brook et al., 2020; Gilmore, 2013; Mak et al., 2020; O'Brien & Miles, 2010). While we might see this as comparative work, too—this place gets more arts funding than that place, here people can go to art galleries and there they cannot—this kind of research often moves beyond cases to think about the broader gradients, or ‘power-geometries’ between and within places (Massey, 1993). Rather than place-hopping from one study site to the next, here we see a fuller map in the making, one which shows the contours of culture.

So far, we have somewhat casually dropped in words like scale and place into our discussion, taking these as self-evident concepts (and real things) that need no further clarification or complication. However, that is about to change, as we move deeper into the literature and debates that, across the past few decades, have led to contested reimaginings of place and scale in human geography. In the following sections of the chapter, we trace the broad form of these debates, waymarking key moments and key ideas, in order to give greater clarity to the ongoing cultural policy discussions to which this book is a central contributor. If cultural policy is local, how are we to know the local when we see it or think it, how do we conceptualize scales and their relationships, and in what ways does place matter in cultural policy?

### THE QUESTION OF SCALE

We begin our discussion with spatial scale, which has been one of the central and most vexed concepts in human geography in recent decades, subject of, at times, intense debate about its ontology (what is scale?), its epistemology (how do we know scale?) and its methodology (how do we study scale?). While we cannot do full service to every twist and turn in these debates, we here want to provide enough of a sense of what has been argued and what is at stake to offer up something useful for thinking about cultural policy in a scalar way (for fuller detail on the scale debates, see chapter-length and book-length overviews by Herod, 2009, 2011). It should matter to us as cultural policy researchers that we have a working knowledge of this terrain, since we are seeking to navigate it, too—and having some landmarks will help us, while not foreclosing the establishing of new desire lines as we find our own way. So, take what follows in these sections not as *the* map, but as *a* map.

Broadly speaking, the ontology of scale has passed from Kantian idealism (scale is an ordering concept or mental contrivance we impose on

reality) to Marxian materialism (scales are material social products with real outcomes) to social constructionism (moving from the production of scale to the construction of scale) to relationalism (scale as process and interaction) and fragmentation, with one endpoint being calls to delete scale from the geographer's lexicon and instead deploy a 'flat ontology' (Herod, 2009, 2011). Beyond the ontology of scale lie further questions about metaphors of scale and the work that they do, a particular focus on how we understand scalar relationships, and a tackling of two co-implicated scales, the local and the global. If we set the flat ontology argument aside for a moment, there is within the non-flat literature a strong sense of the continued usefulness of scale, notwithstanding considerable disagreements about whether this usefulness relates to the ontological or epistemological register. Scales can help us think about the world, but we must be mindful of the work that scales do in how we think; or as Herod (2011, p. 256) concludes, 'ideas about scale structure the knowledge we create about the scaled nature of the world'.

So far, so abstract. It is now time to bring the focus in, to talk about scales rather than the concept of scale. There are a number of different typologies of scale deployed in the literature, but the one we will discuss here is well-used (see, e.g., with various moments of scale-jumping, Bell & Oakley, 2015; Bell & Valentine, 1997; Herod, 2011; Smith, 1993), and it goes like this: body-home-community-urban-region-nation-global. Neil Smith (1993, p. 102), who introduced this particular typology, describes it as 'inherently incomplete and open-ended. It could hardly be otherwise', he adds, because 'scale is actively produced. At best, this typology provides a framework for organizing a more coherently thought-out analysis of spatial scale'. Smith is a key scale thinker, aligned with the Marxian-materialist approach, adding in social constructionism and various other insights, but having a clear understanding of what goes on at each scale. The body is for Smith the site of personal identity (viewed as socially constructed), the home the site of personal and familial reproduction, the community the site of social reproduction, the urban the daily sphere of the labour market, the region the site of economic production, the nation the site of state power, and the global the site of the circulation of capital. In sum, Smith sees scale as 'the geographical resolution of contradictory processes of competition and co-operation' endemic to capitalism (p. 99).

While this Marxian-materialist mapping has been challenged and complicated by other thinkers, and while we do not think that each scale can or must only be yoked to its role in capitalism, this typology seems to us

to capture the sense of different scales that are nevertheless linked. Yet this typology raises an immediate question: how are we to think about these scales in relation to each other? Smith's list implies a hierarchy, a set of scales each with their proper place, with others 'below' and 'above' them. This is a key issue that Herod (2009, pp. 226–230, 2011, pp. 46–56) explores, diagramming different ways of thinking about scales-in-relation, or what he calls the Gestalt of scale. In the later of these discussions, he proposes six different scale diagrams, in two groups: first, scale as a ladder, as concentric circles, or as Russian dolls. These three models of scale are all hierarchical, suggesting either moving up, from body on the lowest rung through to global on the highest, or outward, from body at the centre to global at the outer edge, or a nested hierarchy in which 'smaller' scales are contained within 'larger' ones. Then Herod proffers three more relational diagrams, showing scale as tree roots, as worm burrows, and as a spider's web. What Herod is trying to get at with these depictions is something non-hierarchical, intertwined, even rhizomatic: all scales are connected but these connections are not neat arrangements where each scale is in its place and this place is fixed, like the rungs on the ladder or the nested Russian dolls. Rather, he suggests that in these non-hierarchical forms, 'it is difficult to determine exactly where one scale ends and another begins' and it is equally difficult to use the language of 'larger' and 'smaller' scales (Herod, 2009, p. 230). As we will return to later, these latter diagrams resonate with more non-linear, networked views of scale and geography.

While this re-viewing of scales and scalar relations takes us a long way from more hierarchical views, for some writers this does not go far enough. Instead, they question the very utility of scale, its very existence, and propose instead a flat ontology, or a human geography without scale (Marston et al., 2005; see also Ash, 2020). Here the project exemplified by Herod's latter triptych is grouped together with other 'attempts to alternatively complicate and unravel the hierarchy located at the heart of scale theorizing' (Marston et al., 2005, p. 417). For Marston et al. this complexifying does little to unsettle the problematic aspects of scale as a concept, such as the slippage between size (small to large) and level (low to high), lingering hierarchizations and dualisms, its 'God's-eye' methodology, and the problem of form preceding content: 'most empirical work is lashed to a relatively small number of levels—body, neighbourhood, urban, regional, national and global. Once these layers are presupposed, it is difficult not to think in terms of social relations and institutional arrangements that somehow fit their contours' (p. 422). We include this latter quote

knowingly, given that this is the scale list we are working with—at least, the statement might make us pause for thought about the impulse to ‘fit’ places to scales. Herod (2011, p. 254) cautions against ‘scalar fetishism’ in a similar way: we should not ascribe particular character to particular scales, notably in formulations such as ‘global=abstract=space=powerful’ versus ‘local=concrete=place=weak’ (see also Gibson-Graham, 2002). Instead of scaled places, Marston et al. (2005) recommend using the language of sites (Ash (2020) offers events as another non-scalar term), and shifting emphasis away from fitting every case into the scaled matrix, instead of looking at each site in its own singularity, without presupposed scale and all its attendant consequences.

Marston et al.’s (2005) intervention caused a moment of pause in the scale debates, generating considerable contention (it is notable that their 2005 paper was accompanied by no less than five critical commentaries, plus the authors’ response). But it is fair to say that not everyone rushed to join the flat ontology turn, and that scale remains analytically useful for a range of intellectual projects. As an aside, cultural policy researchers might be especially interested in a later paper where the flat ontology perspective is applied in the context of the Nollywood film industry in Lagos, Nigeria (Marston et al., 2007). Here, Marston et al are particularly interested in *not* reading Nollywood through a local-global (Nollywood-Hollywood) frame, so as to resist what they call the ‘ordering impulses’ (p. 53) that would wrap Nollywood in a story of globalization and see it only as a localized bad copy or bastardized version of global Hollywood. Nollywood is, rather, ‘uniquely *in itself* by virtue of its specific, situated conditions of production and consumption’, they write (p. 57, emphasis in original). This in some ways returns us to the single-site case study (site or event) as a method, which we noted in the introduction to this chapter has been prominent in geographized cultural policy studies.

If you have been following things closely so far, you may have noticed something: the flat ontology critique (and others besides) focuses explicitly on one scalar relationship: that between the local and the global. And this question has been at the heart of many of the rethinkings of scale in the past few decades, as globalization has itself become a core concern of geographers and others. In fact, the bulk of Herod’s (2009) chapter-length overview of spatial scale is taken up with this question. Yet the scale typology from Neil Smith that we highlighted earlier does not have the local as one of its scales. Put bluntly, where is local in this version of scale? Once we might have argued that the local is anything below the national

scale (apologies for reinstating hierarchy); now we might say that anything that is not global is local, so body-home-community-urban-region-nation are all forms of local, and only the global stands alone. As we go on to explore in the next section, this question of how we define the local (other than by what it is not) goes to the heart of how we think about scale.

### WHERE IS LOCAL?

Given the title of this book, this question seems rather pressing. What does it mean to say that cultural policy is local? Similarly, what are we to make of related calls to situate the local in global cultural policy (Gilmore et al., 2019)? What is at work in this pairing is a question that geographers (and others) have been wrestling with for some time. Certainly, globalization has given us cause to rethink space and scale, and one prominent but problematic strand of this thinking has been to counter-pose the local and the global as antinomies, as mutually exclusive, each defined by not being the other. Manuel Castells (1996), for example, framed the global as the space of flows and the local as the space of places—though he soon complicated this formulation (Castells, 1999). Likewise, Ulf Hannerz (1990) talked of cosmopolitans and locals, the former footloose and jet-setting ‘globals’, the latter rooted and frozen in place. Such rigid binary thinking has however now largely been jettisoned in favour of more mixed-up, messy and entangled views.

Herod (2009) usefully splits his discussion of this issue into ontologies and discourses of the global and the local in order to show how globalization resurfaced the question of the local, before the two terms were brought into a more productive conversation with each other, not held apart on either side of a binary, as opposite ends of the scale. Summarizing a key intervention by J.K. Gibson-Graham (2002)—an intervention we have already alluded to—Herod writes that taking a more networked, worm burrow or spider’s web view of this relationship helps to deconstruct the local-global or local/global, and to see, among other things, that ‘the local *is* global’ and ‘the global *is* local’, and that

the global and the local are not locations but processes. Put another way, globalization and localization produce all spaces as hybrids, as ‘glocal’ sites of both differentiation and integration. ... Thus, the local and the global are not fixed entities but are always in the process of being remade. (Herod, 2009, p. 224)

In this way, rethinking the local-global aligns with broader trajectories in critical human geography towards a view of the world in terms of flows, networks and assemblages. While Ash Amin (2002) deployed this language to write about the ‘spatialities of globalisation’, we should add that this applies equally to what we might call the spatialities of localization: hence the coining of the terms ‘glocal’ and glocalization to suggest the always-coexisting local-global and localization-globalization (Swyngedouw, 1997).

We are drafting this chapter in the run-up to local elections here in the United Kingdom (UK), and so it is worth pausing for thought and noting how the language of the local can sometimes seem self-evident, as it does in the polling booth. Local elections for local government are so called because they are not national, and in this kind of politics the local scale (of local councils, local authorities and so on) is relatively stable (although subject to boundary changes and other reshapings and rescalings—we are being asked to vote for an elected mayor too this year, whose constituency outsizes that of our local councillor). Katya Johanson et al. (2014) take this approach in their discussion of how local government organizes cultural policy, and to us as cultural policy researchers this makes pragmatic sense. When in the UK in the early 2000s a series of local cultural strategies was produced, these were largely unbothered by the question of where and who they were local to—they were local in the sense of being produced by and for local government and local communities (Gilmore, 2004). Of course, these strategies were also enmeshed in larger debates and issues, such as how to define culture, how to fund it, and so on, just as the local elections are wrapped up in bigger debates, whether being seen as a comment on national politics, or in terms of connecting to global issues such as the pandemic and climate change. And the idea of local cultural strategies reaches beyond the local—the requirement to produce them came from national government, and there is a broader global trend towards this kind of policymaking, too.

As Johanson et al. (2014) write, in the Australian context which they focus on local government has become especially closely linked with cultural planning and provision, given that local council officers are on the ground, embedded in the locality—and given the requirement to meet the needs of local people (not least in hope of being re-elected). And so here we can see a connection between the local (or locality) and the idea of localism. Nigel Clarke (2013) provides a useful discussion of this relationship in the UK context, wherein localism has come to be a political hot

topic in recent years (to both New Labour and Conservative/coalition governments), in the context of local government reform, decentralization and devolution (including elected mayors), privatization and concerns about 'Big Government'. Clarke sits this 'new' localism alongside the debates about the local that we have already sketched. As he writes:

localism makes room for geographical understandings about scale and place, alongside political understandings about decentralisation participation and community, alongside managerialist understandings about efficiency and forms of market delivery—which he short-hands as 'spatial liberalism'. (Clarke, 2013, p. 502)

A key critique of this version of localism, Clarke notes, is that 'it imagines natural localities in which needs can be agreed' and in so doing 'fails to recognise the translocal geographies of many lives, which continually move across borders' as well as 'the radical plurality of many localities' (p. 503). In addition, he writes, localism has 'exhibited a problem of spatial ontology' in not recognizing that 'society cannot be reduced to local communities' and that 'localities are increasingly linked' (p. 503)—he calls these two lines of critique 'the world in the city' and 'the city in the world'.

Here we want to pick up Clarke's brief nod to translocal geographies, since this concept has been useful in rewriting the local. Drawing on the literature on transnationalism, translocalism has focused on connections between localities (and mobilities), connections often embodied in the lives of their residents (Greiner & Sakdalporak, 2013). It emphasizes multi-scalar and multi-local linkages, both material and imagined, that give rise to translocal subjectivities, practices and imaginings. Hall and Datta (2010) make productive use of the concept in their analysis of Walworth Road in the London Borough of Southwark, reading shop signs and window displays for the countless connections outwards and inwards that bring people, goods and practices together, mapping both the street in the world and the world in the street, to paraphrase Clarke. Like glocal, the idea of translocal requires us in the form of the word to see this intermingling, but unlike glocal, in the translocal are other scales than the glocal and local. As Greiner and Sakdalporak (2013) write, translocality is

not restricted to transnational migration but also includes various forms of internal migration as well as commuting and everyday movements both within cities and between rural and urban areas. (p. 376)

It is also ‘those segments of the population that are considered immobile, as they form a crucial dimension of connectedness’ (p. 376), for example, through memories or imaginings. This means that ‘translocal spaces are constantly co-produced by mobile and immobile populations’.

So, to go back to our question: where is local? Taking this translocal approach suggests a more dispersed, networked view of the local, not as the global’s other, but instead as a multi-scalar site where flows come in to land (or not), networks have their nodes (or not), assemblages are assembled (or not), enduringly or ephemerally. The translocal can perhaps be thought of through Doreen Massey’s notions of a progressive or global sense of place (Massey, 1993) and the ‘throwntogetherness’ of place (Massey, 2005). Indeed, Massey’s work on place as ‘a particular constellation of relations, articulated together at a particular locus’ (1993, p. 66) is often evoked in discussions of scale and of the local, while her famous walk along Kilburn High Road in London resonates with Hall and Datta’s work on the translocal street. There’s also a different view of localism at work in her discussions of place, a progressive localism (see also Featherstone et al., 2012).

To wrap up this discussion, we have traced a path through debates about spatial scale, having previously noted cultural policy’s geographies. Scale has been hotly debated at the level of ontology, epistemology and methodology, and what should be clear is that we cannot take it for granted in our discussions, even when dealing pragmatically with something like local government. We have shown how the ontology of spatial scale, and its discourses, metaphors and imaginings, has been considered from different perspectives, and that—notwithstanding calls to expel scale from geography—there is an analytical usefulness in thinking with scale, if handled with care. And as we went on to explore, one particular vexed formulation of scaling is the local-global pairing. Instead of seeing this pairing as a hierarchy or dualism, we can instead see them as mixed and merged through neologisms such as glocal or translocal. Here, scale is not erased, but it is certainly unsettled. In the remainder of this chapter, we want to use some of these ideas to re-encounter a previous research project that was very much concerned with these questions.

### SCALING THE DONUT PILOT PROJECT

In this last section of the chapter, our intention is to use the discussion above to think through a research project we were involved in, called the Donut Pilot Project, which we have previously written about (Bell &

Orozco, 2021). Our intention is not to repeat the detail of that project or its findings here, but rather to revisit what we learnt through the research and reinterpret it in light of the focus on spatial scale. In short, the Donut Pilot Project worked with three small arts venues who are part of the Donut Group, a network of venues situated in the 'outer inner city' of Leeds, UK. The pilot project aimed to explore how these venues 'sit' within their immediate localities, and how audiences feel about visiting them. The project involved 16 interviews with venue staff, 139 interviews with audience members at events, and street interviews with 120 people in the venues' immediate neighbourhoods. We gathered data on cultural engagement across and beyond the city through these interviews, mapping the cultural activity spaces centred on each venue. Part of the context for the project was the Leeds bid to be European Capital of Culture (ECoC) in 2023, and the research fed into the bid book and into discussions about levels and geographies of cultural engagement and arts participation across the city.

The question of scale hangs over the Donut Pilot Project and over our findings: we were equally interested in the scales of the city, the neighbourhood and the individual venue. We were exploring the uneven geographies of cultural provision and participation, and we assessed these in the context of neighbourhood characteristics derived from the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD—a set of statistical measures of deprivation based on national data) and Experian's Mosaic classification of neighbourhoods (one of a number of widely used classificatory systems that works at the neighbourhood scale). In common with a number of other projects, using the IMD and working at the lower-layer super output area (LSOA—a standardized areal statistical unit used by the UK's Office for National Statistics) helped us to correlate patterns of deprivation with those of cultural activity (Brook et al., 2020; Mak et al., 2020). What this showed us, when read alongside our qualitative data, was something more to do with scale. While it is true in one sense that 'the story of cultural consumption is a story of inequality' and that the power-geometry of this inequality is at least in part geographical (Brook et al., 2020, p. 108), it is clear that there are 'neighbourhood effects' that also come into play, as we discuss below. Here, rescaling our analysis changes the resolution through which to explore the geographies of cultural engagement and participation.

In terms of the urban scale, we wanted to insert the Donut Group into discourses and debates about culture in Leeds in the 2023 ECoC bidding process (and that bid and competition of course also bring other scales

into play, notably the national and regional). There was an ongoing concern among the city's arts community that the bid would over-focus on large, city centre venues and activities, and that those on the margins would be further marginalized. This was confirmed through box office data collected in support of the bid, which highlighted a 'donut of low engagement' sitting between the city centre and the affluent suburbs. So here we see a scalar distinction between core (big) and periphery (small), centre and margins, and between the city as a whole and smaller scales through which it might be analysed. Our research contested this notion of low engagement by mapping the cultural activities of the pilot venues' audiences and those living around the venues to show an entirely different map of cultural activity. Of course, this is in part a methodological issue: not every venue has box office data, and in this regard, our point is that methods need to be fit for the scale of enquiry. But it is more than a methods question, it is about ways of looking. Looking at the city scale shows us one thing; looking at a more micro-local scale, in this case the scale of the neighbourhood, tells us something different. We are, as we said at the time, looking here at "‘other geographies’ *within* the city' (Bell & Orozco, 2021, p. 90).

When we move to the neighbourhood scale, moreover, we can begin to develop a picture not of static places, but of translocal connections. This means really zooming in on people's everyday lives. As Chapple and Jackson (2010, p. 483) put it:

When the neighborhood is our unit of analysis, rather than the audience, we have a way of understanding what art means in daily lived experience, rather than as a special event occurring in a designated place... This approach unsettles our current methods of calculating and mapping impact from the venue out, rather than the audience in.

The cultural activity spaces that we uncovered for audiences and local residents showed how they move between and across different parts of the city—to the city centre, of course, but also to many different places. For us, this chimes with the version of the translocal that is interested in daily mobilities such as commuting, or in this case going to a cultural venue or event. The neighbourhood scale—or what Smith (1993) calls the scale of community—is the site of social reproduction, and the scale of daily life (though he makes the city the scale of the labour market). Attending to this scale seems to us to be particularly important in terms of rescaling

cultural policy away from the currently dominant urban, national and global scales. As we concluded, “‘close reading’ of context ... is essential if we are to fully understand arts spaces in place, and this matters for cultural policy as well as for the lives of those who live around these venues, whether they use them or not’ (Bell & Orozco, 2021, p. 96).

In terms of those ‘neighbourhood effects’ that we alluded to earlier, these resonate with work in health geographies about the balance between contextual (place-based) and compositional (population-based) factors in shaping outcomes—in this case, outcomes around cultural activity. As Mak et al. (2020) show, again using IMD data alongside a classification of neighbourhood types, while deprivation does correlate to participation rates, neighbourhood characteristics render this correlation more variable, and at the individual level there are local residents who buck the trend, for example, by moving across the city to seek out cultural activities elsewhere. This is making a simple but important point: while local venues serve local populations, those populations are also on the move; they are translocal. And Mak et al. (2020) make another key observation about scale, when they compare data from regional-level correlations with those at the LSOA (neighbourhood) level: while the former shows us broad patterns, the latter presents a more nuanced picture. The neighbourhood, it seems, is a particularly important scale when it comes to exploring cultural policy’s geographies.

As noted, the Donut Pilot Project also worked at the individual level, since it relied on qualitative interview data, and we mapped cultural activity at that scale, too, to show who is doing what and where. While these individual stories aggregated up to patterns, enabling us to reach general conclusions, it was in the rich detail of the participants’ accounts that we could really explore these questions, and by listening carefully to what was said, develop a fuller understanding of the landscape we were engaging with. When we presented our findings to stakeholders, we made use of stand-out quotes in order to move beyond the aggregate, and this was a powerful tool for generating discussion. Again, this is in part a point about methods, but it is not only that. And sometimes the way participants spoke revealed scalar thinking at work, for example, when someone said that a particular venue had made the city bigger, meaning that it rescaled the city to include a neighbourhood that would not previously have been considered part of the city’s arts ecology (which for this participant equated to the city centre).

At the individual scale, we did not limit ourselves to people, but also looked at individual venues, building on important work at this scale which seeks to understand the arts ecology of places through close attention to individual venues, viewed relationally (e.g. Grodach, 2010, 2011). We thought about the venues as buildings, and how they sat in their locale, resonating with research on how cultural institutions from libraries to arts centres and museums work (or not) in their urban setting—again, largely read at the neighbourhood scale, looking at the specificities of site and the immediate environment (Delrieu & Gibson, 2017; Glow & Johanson, 2019; Paül & Augustí, 2014). And we thought about venues as symbols, as sedimented histories, as nodes in networks that reach way beyond the local. By talking to venue workers and audiences as well as those who lived around each venue, we got different perspectives on what these venues mean locally, how they are understood, and how they are used. We also heard about neighbourhood reputation and how this influences activity patterns (and how the venues contribute to that reputation). Of course, by isolating each venue for analysis, we were mindful to also look for connections and to build a bigger picture. To repeat Chapple and Jackson (2010), working from the venue outwards helps us grapple with scalar connections rooted in the particularity of place. It should be added here that in looking at the individual person/venue scale, we are not here advocating a flat ontology, but rather keeping site singularity in play as part of the whole (but here, importantly, the parts and the whole carry equal weight, which is in itself a kind of flatness).

This brings us to a final point. Readers may have spotted the term arts ecology being used in this discussion, but without being defined. That is because we wanted to zoom out again here, and to look more at connections than individual cases (see also Redaelli in this volume). In looking for a phrase that seemed to capture this, we opted for both ecology and ecosystem (which seem appropriately organic metaphors after all those tree roots, worm burrows and spider's webs earlier). This was also in part because we had been captured by a description of visiting one of our pilot venues that resonated with the idea of the edgelands, unloved scraps of land on the city's fringes which are, nevertheless, teeming with life (Massie-Blomfield, 2018). But more than this, the idea of an arts ecology also seems to us to work well with the relational view of scale that was certainly in the backs of our minds during the Donut Pilot Project, and which we are here bringing more to the front. It is intended not only to show a web of connections between venues, audiences and neighbourhoods, but also

to think about scalar connections, from the city to the neighbourhood to the individual (and of course, other scales that we have not touched on here but that are nonetheless also drawn into the ecology).

Our aim in revisiting the Donut Pilot Project, then, has been to more directly draw on discussions and debates about spatial scale as a way to show that while cultural policy *is* local (or, maybe we should say translocal), we need to think about what that really means for research and practice in cultural policy. The relational view of scale, and the focus on the interconnections that make up the ecology—while not subsuming other scales to this one—seems to us to be a productive way to work with scale and to use terms like local to say something meaningful about cultural policy's geographies, rather than merely a counter to the global.

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## Scaling Heritage: Situated Policy in an Expanded Ontology

*Helen Graham*

Think of the way we use ‘policy,’ as something like thinking for others, both because you think others can’t think and also because you somehow think that you can think, which is the other part of thinking that there’s something wrong with someone else—thinking that you’ve fixed yourself somehow, and therefore that gives you the right to say someone else needs fixing. (Harney & Moten, 2013, p. 112)

One way of thinking about ‘policy’ is that it is an argument for particular forms of legitimacy, scaling and ontology which holds the seeds of its own failure. As policy seeks to advance its argument, its very stridency means it always meets other legitimacies, other scaling and other ontologies that stop it short. Cultural policy has been argued to exist in everyday lives—it is in our living rooms when we watch TV, as David Bell and Kate Oakley put it (2015, p. 10). Yet we might still find analytical purchase, following Stefano Harney and Fred Moten, in thinking of policy as a

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particular political ontology and therefore different from the political ontology, to build on Bell and Oakley's example, of the everyday practice of TV watching itself. We might usefully think of 'policy' as a specific political mode (one that is different from, say, protest, direct participation or everyday practices), one which seeks to think on behalf of others, for their benefit, in normative terms and to direct their subsequent action.

Clearly you can enact the political ontology of 'policy' in the scale of space known as the local. Any city, any town, any village can, and does, produce a form of politics that is 'policy', that asserts a direction in advance for others to follow. Yet the 'local'—when added to 'policy'—is not only an 'abstract' geographic designation (Gilmore et al., 2019, p. 265). 'Local' can also be used ontologically to smuggle in other modes of being, other modes of knowing and other ideas of time and causality. Local can also mean not universal, not widely applicable, not replicable, not lasting or persisting. Local can also mean idiosyncratic, singular, particular and partial. Part of thinking policy locally is then to also think something that is not-policy, something that is different from the political ontology of 'on behalf of' and the distanced direction of activity. In the spirit of this volume, which takes both 'policy' and 'local' as its focus, possibilities are clearly opened up by occupying 'policy' and infusing it with 'local' and therefore identifying what can be gained through their combination.

This chapter will contribute towards this volume's conjuncture of 'policy' and 'local' by exploring heritage policy through taking two different tacks. The first is offered by Bruno Latour and Michel Callon and allows for a consideration of how scale—of the types expressed in the concepts of 'national heritage' and 'heritage significance'—is achieved through enrolment of many different people, things and ideas into what they call 'black boxes'. 'Black boxes', which hide their own construction, are always leaky and never finally secure the scale they set out to achieve (Callon & Latour, 1981). The second tack will follow Donna Haraway's concept of 'situated knowledges', an intervention aimed at cultivating a modified meaning of objectivity precisely through its partiality, its contingency, its modesty and its accountability (1988, pp. 594–5).

De-black boxing allows for seeing heritage and how it is made up and constructed as being a process which is, in Latour's terms, 'local at all points' (1993, p. 117)—the 'national' being also produced somewhere specific through particular local means (via policy documents; the law; in specific offices; by specific people). Situated knowledges enable attention to be paid to how we might build shared understandings of the world that work modestly with particularity. In this way we will explore if 'situated policy' might offer a useful means of supporting the wider turn

represented in this volume of thinking of policy less as document and more as method (Bell & Oakley, 2015; Gilmore et al., 2019). How might a concept like ‘situated policy’ support in challenging ‘the traditional binary distinctions between top down and bottom up governance and instead draw [...] attention to the importance of viewing policy-making as a horizontal, dynamic and relational process involving multiple agents, with different perspectives, areas of skill, knowledge and interests’ (Gilmore, et al., 2019, p. 266)? ‘Situated policy’ might indicate a way of building shared ideas and action in ways that nevertheless do not deny the political ontology of policy (on behalf of, in advance, to direct others’ actions). Rather ‘situated policy’ might work to foreground the ways in which the visions of policy are made up and constructed from a particular standpoint, through particular practices that are endlessly leaky and which are themselves also local and will always meet other ‘locals’ that are working with different political ontologies as policy seeks to become lived, enacted and practised.

#### HERITAGE: SCALES OF WORLD, NATIONAL AND LOCAL HERITAGE

Heritage designation is a process by which an object, building, site or practice is listed or scheduled as being of significance. There is therefore no question that heritage designation is a political form that reflects Harney and Moten’s definition of policy. Heritage policy seeks to tell us what matters and to constrain future actions by governing how the heritage in question can change. A major intervention in heritage policy and practice from Critical Heritage Studies has been to reveal how attempts to see heritage as consensual and aesthetic are ‘authorized’ through professional discourse. ‘Authorized heritage discourse’ has been diagnosed as privileging ‘monumentality and grand scale, innate artefact/site significance tied to time depth, scientific/aesthetic expert judgement, social consensus and nation building’ (Smith, 2006, p. 11). It has also been widely noted that these ideas of significance and importance are articulated through the policy designation of geographic scales—such as ‘national heritage’ and ‘world heritage’ (Macdonald, 2003, p. 2; Mason, 2013, p. 46; Dausbjerg & Fibiger, 2011).

Tensions between world and national designations and local life are very well documented. In the research literature there are rich accounts of

nationally designated heritage or UNESCO World Heritage sites misrecognising heritage as aesthetic or as a primarily material form rather than recognising practices and ways of life (Hertzfeld, 1991, 2016). Accounts also show the ways in which, rather than nourishing the local culture that produced the heritage so designated, the effects of heritage designation can constrain and, in the more egregious examples, displace local people, leading to contestations of various kinds (Hertzfeld, 2016; Meskell, 2010, 2018). In terms of UK heritage—our focus here—there are many examples of complex ownership and governance arrangements where national heritage is owned and managed nationally, yet is still bound up in local planning considerations and where the reasons something might be seen as nationally significant are not the same as the reasons something might be valued locally (Smith & Waterton, 2009).

It is these tensions that I will follow out in this article, de-black boxing national heritage designation, showing the particular ways in which ‘heritage’ is ‘local at all points’ (Latour, 1993, p. 117) and suggesting a situated approach to heritage policy and, beyond that, to policy more generally. Part of what I will do here is link the growing interest in expanding ontologies for heritage—that have been mobilised in order to challenge nature-culture binaries (Harrison, 2015, 2018), to reimagine preservation as curating decay or loss (DeSilvey, 2017) or to cultivate alternative temporalities and materialities of heritage (Harrison & Sterling, 2020)—to the question of the kinds of politics heritage needs. I will explore whether a term such as ‘situated policy’ might offer a way of approaching the connections between the ‘policy political ontology’ of national and world designations of heritage and the myriad political ontologies that are at work in everyday life.

### A MOTTE IN ENGLAND

To experiment with the analytical potential offered by situated policy, I will work with a motte, once part of a castle, known as Clifford’s Tower.<sup>1</sup>

Clifford’s Tower is in York, in the north of England. What Clifford’s Tower ‘is’ has long been, and remains, contested. Seen through different eyes Clifford’s Tower is ‘all that remains of York Castle built by William the Conqueror’, has ‘stunning panoramic views over Old York’ (English Heritage, ‘Clifford’s Tower Revealed’), is a site remembered through a kinah, a lamentation recited at Tisha B’va to remember the massacre of York Jewish community 1190 (Rosenfeld, 1965), is an aesthetic symbol of

the city as produced through the brush of L.S. Lowry (Lowry, 1952), a place to watch the sunrise on new year's day or is adjacent to where you park your car.

Clifford's Tower is managed by English Heritage. English Heritage had emerged from government in 1983 as an arm's-length body which combined management of the properties and sites with statutory roles relating to designation (scheduling of ancient monuments and listing of buildings) and planning advice (Thurley, 2013, pp. 25, 251). In 2013 the then Culture Secretary Maria Miller set out a new direction for English Heritage which split the different functions and instituted an English Heritage charity which would look after the National Heritage Collection properties and sites, with the statutory functions being assigned to a new organisation called Historic England. The English Heritage charity was to be supported on its way with £85 million public money for funding 'vital conservation work at our most vulnerable sites across the country and much needed improvements to our visitor facilities' (English Heritage, 'English Heritage has Changed; DCMS/Miller, 6th December 2013). A stated goal was to ensure English Heritage is 'financially independent by 2022/23' (English Heritage, Our Priorities').

An early response to this policy direction was to do 'much needed improvements to [...] visitor facilities' at Clifford's Tower and specifically to site a visitor centre in the Tower's motte. The visitor centre, to be paid for out of Miller's £85 million initiative, would include 'visitor facilities, i.e. interpretation, WCs, staff facilities, storage, membership and ticketing' (CYC Planning Committee, 2016, 4.16). The plans for the visitor centre were passed by the City of York Council Planning Committee on 27 October 2016.

What then followed was a significant uproar. The main objections related to the impact the visitor centre would have on the appearance of the motte. The formation of the Not in the Motte Campaign Group led to a Judicial Review and supported by a petition signed by 3748 and crowdfunding which raised £27322 (Not in the Motte Campaign, 2016, 2017). The Judicial Review ruled in favour of English Heritage (Hayes v City of York Council [2017] EWHC 1374) but nevertheless English Heritage withdrew their plans for the visitor centre (Laycock, 2018) due to the local opposition and has since shaped alternative approaches to the internal and external conservation of the tower and to welcoming visitors.

This brief sketch indicates a wide variety of policy and governance mechanisms at play, from national government policy, national law related

to scheduling and listing, national planning law in the form of National Planning Policy Framework (2012), local authority executive decision making and Planning Committees and the national mechanism of Judicial Review. It also indicates the politics of contest, of activism and of crowd-funding. At the very minimum it indicates the difficulty of setting a direction in abstract and expecting it to hold when it meets the ground.

‘LOCAL AT ALL POINTS’ (LATOUR, 1993, p. 117)

In the case of Clifford’s Tower there were a variety of ‘nationals’ at work, from the national organisation English Heritage that was being formed in 2013 to the funding being made available for this transition and to the legislative frameworks that designated the site as a scheduled monument.

Bruno Latour has made a series of interventions over the years to shift the assumptions around scale, including challenging the idea that the national is necessarily bigger than the local, in order to argue that everything is ‘local at all points’ (1993, p. 117). Speaking of Actor-Network-Theory (ANT), Latour argues for the localisation of the global, to make it specific, to trace how it is made up and to locate where it happens (2005, pp. 173–4):

...whenever anyone speaks of a ‘system’, a ‘global feature’, a ‘structure’, a ‘society’, an ‘empire’, a world ‘economy’, an ‘organization’, the first ANT reflex should be to ask: ‘In which building? In which bureau? Through which corridor is it accessible? Which colleagues has it been read to? How has it been complied?’ (2005, p. 183)

Writing with Michel Callon, Latour argues that no entity is *in advance* bigger or smaller than any other. What makes an entity such as English Heritage bigger than a community heritage group is its ability—always uncertain—to enrol and contain other people, ideas, feelings, buildings and money:

A difference in relative size is obtained when a micro-actor can, in addition to enlisting bodies, also enlist the greatest number of durable materials. He or she thus creates greatness and longevity making others small and provincial in comparison. (Callon & Latour, 1981, p. 284)

As an entity changes in size these enlisted materials are then put, Callon and Latour argue, in ‘black boxes’ with the hope that the connections no longer need to be examined: ‘The more elements one can place in black boxes—modes of thought, habits, forces and objects—the broader the constructions that can be raised’ (Callon & Latour, 1981, p. 285). The aim is that these macro actors standing on their black boxes ‘do not have to negotiate with equal intensity everything’ (Callon & Latour, 1981, p. 285). They can take things for granted, using the abstractions they have built, and move on to other matters.

Yet these boxes are always ‘leaky’. The national is always being produced somewhere local, a national-local which acts *as if it isn’t local*. Until, that is, the leaky boxes of the ‘national’ can no longer be shut. This includes the inability to sustain into practice a policy vision produced elsewhere, as happened with English Heritage and the plans for Clifford’s Tower Visitor Centre.

### LEGITIMACY AND SCALE

The dispute of 2016–2017 was unfortunate because it was clear from their published priorities that English Heritage saw new relationships with people as necessary in achieving the goal of becoming financially independent. Alongside ‘inspiration’, ‘conservation’ and ‘financial sustainability’, English Heritage stated ‘involvement’ as a key priority area: ‘We’ll find new ways to involve more people in our work. Our heritage is for everyone and people are keen to participate in protecting and illuminating it’ (English Heritage 2016 ‘Our Priorities’). If looked at from a distance everyone involved—English Heritage, the councillors on the planning committee and the activists—shared a fundamental desire: to involve people in the sustainability of Clifford’s Tower. Yet how people and sustainability might be combined was imagined in diverse ways. These differences reveal quite different mobilisations of legitimacy, scale and abstraction and contrasting political ontologies. There was little agreement on what Clifford’s Tower was, where it was, what the ‘public’ is, what ‘harm’ might be or what might make any decision legitimate.

In 1915 Clifford’s Tower was incorporated into the then still emerging idea of national heritage when it was ‘taken into state guardianship’ to be then managed via the Office of Works and Public Buildings (Thurley, 2013). Since 1954 it has been registered in the National List for England as ‘Grade I’ and as a ‘scheduled monument’ (Historic England, ‘Clifford’s

Tower’). There are very strict restrictions on developing Grade I listed building and scheduled monuments (NPPF, 132, p. 31) and it is advised that ‘substantial harm [...] should be wholly exceptional’ (NPPF, 132, p. 31). While it is a central concept in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), ‘harm’ is contingent on ‘significance’. Significance is defined as ‘the value of a heritage asset to this and future generations because of its heritage interest’ (NPPF, Glossary, p. 56). The first task for English Heritage in securing planning permission was to prove that there was no substantial harm. The National Planning Policy Framework states that if there is harm to significance then it can potentially be justified, but only in terms of a second contingent term, that of ‘public benefit’ (NPPF 133, p. 31).

Oddly, given its crucial contingent importance in the NPPF, ‘public benefit’ does not appear in the glossary and no other definitional help is given elsewhere in the framework. On their website Historic England, as the statutory advice body, do offer some additional interpretive work on ‘public benefit’ stating: ‘Public benefits in this sense will most likely be the fulfilment of one or more of the objectives of sustainable development as set out in the NPPF, provided the benefits will ensure for the wider community and not just for private individuals or corporations’ (Historic England online, ‘NPPF’). Yet what is clear is that ‘public benefit’ relies on the classic formulation of ‘on behalf of’ a wider common good and relies on local planning authorities to interpret what ‘public benefit’ might be.

As such at stake in the contest over Clifford Tower—via the nebulous ideas of ‘public benefit’—was a question of *who it was for*. In the case being made by English Heritage and in the arguments put forward by protestors, different constituencies were produced and enrolled: visitors, ‘local residents’, those who see it from the street, publics who might benefit and future generations. English Heritage advanced their case for the visitors’ centre, through a very specific reading of ‘public benefit’. The English Heritage chain of logic runs that more people paying to visit and more people becoming members of English Heritage for repeat visits will ultimately secure the sustainability of Clifford’s Tower and other properties for future generations. This economic logic worked to politically justify both the short-term public investment of the £85 million promised by Maria Miller but also, in effect, the overarching plans for disinvestment and reduction in public funding. The English Heritage argument sought to lock down the meaning of ‘public benefit’ as that secured via people *as paying visitors* (and effectively as consumers) in order to sustain Clifford’s

Tower for future generations and, through this, the new charity of English Heritage as the legitimate producers of ‘public benefit’. From there it is not much of a leap to simply see ‘public benefit’ as being delivered through the visitors’ centre and, in the terms of planning policy, as justifying any perceived harm.

Yet ‘public benefit’ had a different set of meanings in the variety of speeches and statements from protestors. The protesters asserted various forms of ownership over Clifford’s Tower. For York’s Member of Parliament Racheal Maskell, Clifford’s Tower ‘belong[s] to the people of York’, going on to say ‘nobody has a jurisdiction over what is yours, yours to maintain for future generations’. In this statement to the Not in the Motte rally, Maskell combined both rights over and responsibilities for, a combination of ownership and custodianship. This sense of a right and responsibility was echoed by the local Councillor who initiated the campaign:

I am passionate that we have to try and come up with the best answer, that this building suggested is the wrong building in the wrong place. We need to get the right building in the right place and that should be our objective. We have a focus on the Judicial Review, focus on winning it, looking beyond that we need to be ambitious and come up with an ambitious plan for our very beautiful Eye of York area. (Not in the Motte rally, 10th March 2017)

‘We’, ‘your’, ‘people of York’ were convened by the protestors as the key *constituencies for* and *actors within* the political system of decision making of Clifford’s Tower. Yet how this constituency was connected to change—the desired outcome—was even more variously imagined. In different speeches at the rally quite different intensities of agency were imagined, for some participation was in the mode of ‘have your say’ and ‘get your voice heard’ where it was the politicians/the council/English Heritage who were positioned as the ones who need ‘to act on the will of the people’ or ‘do your bidding’. For others there was a clearer sense of community-led agency, ‘*we* need to be ambitious and come up with an ambitious plan’. Though not explicitly engaged with the contingent idea of ‘public benefit’ in the NPPF, the different speeches at the Not in the Motte rally provided alternative claims to what this term might mean.

Yet in the different political loops that interpreted harm and public benefit differently, something else was at stake. The language of Historic England designation asserts ideas of ‘national significance’, just as

UNESCO has an international role to designate ‘world heritage’ (UNESCO). As noted above, in heritage designation there is a conceptual conflation between scales of value and geographic scale: heritage that is more important is seen as ‘world’ or ‘national’ and less important heritage is seen as ‘local’. This scaling up also underpins constituencies. ‘Humanity’, ‘public’, ‘everyone’ are imaginaries associated with world or national heritage in contrast to ‘community’ which is associated with local heritage. In the political loop traced by English Heritage the nationally significance heritage is ‘for the nation’ sustained via the public specifically *as visitors* who will economically support Clifford’s Tower for ‘future generations’. As Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett has noted scaled-up claims of significance, geography and constituency tend to concentrate power in professional hands (2006, p. 20). The claim to significance, nation and ‘the public’ in this case is meant to secure the ability for English Heritage to act, to become a charity, to build a visitor centre in the motte and to justify both their role and implicitly justify the government disinvestment.

While the formation of a ‘people of York’ constituency was not voiced in one way but many by the protesters, this idea of constituency did not simply contest the visitor centre. By challenging the political work done by the abstraction of the idea of ‘public’, protesters were also contesting the idea of the abstraction of ‘national heritage’. In other words, the campaign prompted a sense that what matters about Clifford’s Tower was not that it was of national significance but that it was here, in this place and that the ‘public’ need not be an abstract concept or manifested only as ‘visitors’ but as particular people, present now and invested long-term in the future of the area.

### HARAWAY AND ‘SITUATEDNESS’

The view from ‘the national’ is a version of what Donna Haraway called the ‘god trick’, ‘a from nowhere[...] of seeing everything from nowhere’ (1988, p. 581). As part of her ‘argument against various forms of unlocatable, and so irresponsible, knowledge claims’, Haraway argues for ‘situated and embodied knowledges’ (1988, p. 589). In thinking about the richer meaning of the local—not only as geography—but as a certain kind of epistemological and political commitment to particularity, Haraway offers us this: ‘Situated knowledges are about communities, not about isolated individuals. The only way to find a larger vision is to be somewhere in particular’ (1988, p. 590). Part of what being ‘somewhere in

particular’ offers for Haraway is accountability, ‘one cannot relocate in any possible vantage point without being accountable for that movement. Vision is always a question of the power to see-and perhaps of the violence implicit in our visualizing practices. With whose blood were my eyes crafted?’ (1988, p. 585).

It is not hard to see a version of Haraway’s ‘god trick’ at work in the political ontology of policy and in particular the government policy to create English Heritage, to invest public money to seek long-term economic sustainability through greater numbers of fee-paying visitors. As this policy vision met NPPF and planning law, it replied upon a number of enrolments—not least its definition of ‘public benefit’—being safely stored in the black boxes of abstraction. When these black boxes started to leak—as they did in contact with the protesters—there was initially no modest or locally accountable way of the policy vision adjusting to recognise its own situatedness.

Haraway develops the idea of accountability in terms which sees the local-global not as ‘dichotomy’ but as ‘resonance’ in a kind of force field of power and difference, drawing attention to ‘nodes in fields, inflections in orientations, and responsibility for difference in material-semiotic fields of meaning’ (1988, p. 588). For English Heritage what was initially a top-down policy directive became horizontally caught in a contested field of motivation and meaning. What this ultimately meant was that as English Heritage ‘relocated vantage point’ from national policy to implementation they had to ‘become accountable for that movement’ and deal in particular ways with the different ‘nodes’, ‘inflections in orientations’ and differences ‘in material-semiotic fields of meaning’ that were active at Clifford’s Tower.

### MULTIPLE CLIFFORD'S TOWERS

To return to Clifford’s Tower in 2016, everyone involved agreed Clifford’s Tower was ‘significant’, yet it became clear that they did not agree over the nature of Clifford’s Tower significance or, really, the nature of ‘significance’. More fundamentally, they did not agree on the kind of entity that Clifford’s Tower was. While the key events that made up its timeline on the English Heritage website were not contested and often reinforced by protesters, there were quite different ‘Clifford’s Towers’ at play in the dispute. These different realities, these different Clifford’s Towers, enabled the divergent mobilisations of ‘significance’, ‘harm’ and ‘public benefit’

and therefore underpinned the different mobilisations of legitimacy and of scale introduced above.

In the City of York Council Planning Committee discussion on 27 October 2016 it became very clear that people who live in York only very rarely visit Clifford's Tower. They pass it all the time. They catch glimpses of it. They use it to orientate themselves. They park next to it. They get drunk and scramble up the sides of the motte. But they rarely go inside it. As a local website *York Stories* noted, 'Most of us appreciate the building from street level, down below, looking up [...] I've been trying to recall if I've ever been inside. If I have, it was many years ago and I don't remember it' (*York Stories*, 2016). At the planning committee, Councillor after Councillor—in slightly confessional tones—admitted they'd either never been up or only once or twice or not since they were a child. When the 'Not in the Motte' rally on the 10th March 2017 was held on the grassy roundabout which marks the Eye of York, the speakers addressing the crowd with the part of the motte slated for development for the visitor centre clearly visible behind them. The motte *from the outside* was the point.

Annemarie Mol has argued that 'reality is multiple' (Mol, 2002, p. 77). Not just that there are different perspectives or standpoints but different realities, as multiple 'ontologies'. In recognition of the multiple nature of realities, Annemarie Mol calls for an 'ontological politics', using 'political' to indicate that realities are 'open and contested' and that this requires different metaphors, not 'perspective and construction, but rather those of intervention and performance', which, she argues, 'suggest a reality that is done and enacted rather than observed' (2002, p. 77). As this suggests, the elaboration of multiple ontologies emphasises the active and productive role of anyone 'describing' in the realities being enacted.

Throughout the dispute, a number of images became part of enacting these different Clifford's Towers. A key image for the protestors was a painting by L.S. Lowry which had been commissioned by York Art Gallery's curator Hans Hess in 1952 (Lowry, 1952; Fig. 4.1). It depicts Clifford's Tower as it was in the 1950s and roughly as it still looked in 2016 and 2017. As the Councillor who initiated and has led the campaign against the visitors' centre put it: '[L.S.] Lowry—and a whole series of artists—describe this beautiful asset of our city. [...] Clifford's Tower and the mound are truly iconic' (CYC Planning Committee, 2016, 4.16). Often in reference to this Lowry image, the visitors' centre in the motte was described by protestors variously as 'in the wrong place', 'an act of



**Fig. 4.1** Clifford's Tower, York. L.S. Lowry, 1952. Copyright: The Estate of L.S. Lowry. All Rights Reserved, DACS 2022

vandalism', 'a bad joke', 'an act of sacrilege' and, viscerally, as 'gouging' (Not in the Motte rally, 10th March 2017).

Yet a series of other images were published on the English Heritage website (English Heritage Online 'Clifford's Tower Revealed') and other images also starting to circulate on websites and social media (Fig. 4.2). These drawings, paintings and photographs showed just how often the motte had been changed over the last 300 years including a spiral path up the motte in the mid-eighteenth century and as a wooded gothic site for picnics in 1820s (York Stories, 2016). Most powerfully two photographs were enrolled, both showing Clifford's Tower as it was between 1835 and 1934 (Fig. 4.1 City of York Council / Explore York Libraries and Archives Mutual Ltd (c1930) Asset ID: 1003529 and Asset ID: 1003483). During this period, there was a large wall around the bottom of the motte to aid movement around what was then a large prison area, itself encased with large walls. The motte as it looked in 2016 and 2017 and as it broadly looked in the Lowry painting was constructed after 1934.



**Fig. 4.2** Clifford's Tower in the 1870s. This was one of many similar images that circulated indicating that Clifford's Tower had not always looked the way it looks in the L.S. Lowry painting of 1952. Copyright: York Explore Libraries and Archives

The photographs of Clifford's Tower with a wall around the base of the motte were significant in the English Heritage visitor centre design. The visitor centre was to come to a third of the height of the motte. This was seen as having benefits in terms of wayfinding and increasing access by staging the ascent up the stairs. But it also mirrored the height of the 1835–1934 wall:

As the picture shows, the section of the mound where our new visitor centre will nestle is a relatively recent addition, dating from 1935. We will not be harming any archaeology by installing the visitor centre. Instead, we will be revealing the 19th century wall from the tower's time as the County Gaol. (English Heritage, 'Clifford's Tower Revealed')

As is usual before a planning committee meeting, there had been a site visit for the Councillors to view the plans in situ. Many of the councillors who went on the site visit mentioned how important this was to their decision making. They had been shown the images. They understood that 'Clifford's Tower' was not fixed and unchanging. Additionally, through being there they had been interpellated, not in their usual guise as passers-by, but *as visitors to the inside*. They had been taken up and shown the view over York. They had been shown the lack of space for visitor facilities inside the tower itself. The councillors made the initial planning decision, having become inducted into a longer view, and they had experienced being a visitor rather than a passer-by. The councillors of the City of York Council Planning Committee made the planning decision based on a different Clifford's Tower to that of the protestors.

If there was an ontological dispute over whether Clifford's Tower was the inside or the outside and whether constant change of a site over time was a legitimate basis for further change, there was also an equally significant dispute about *where* Clifford's Tower was. Clifford's Tower is often described as a Norman motte-and-bailey castle first built by William the Conqueror. The term bailey describes a large walled area, enclosed by a water filled moat. Along with rebuilding of a wooden tower burnt down during the riots that led to the 1190 massacre of York's Jewish community, in 1312 towers and more earth works were added to reinforce the bailey. The areas of the bailey became roughly the area of the Prison between 1835.

The question of the bailey was used by protestors to expand where Clifford's Tower is and might be as a way of suggesting that the visitor centre need not be in the motte itself but could potentially be sited elsewhere. For example, the then Chair of York Archaeology and History Association suggested it could be sited in the now car park where the gatehouse of the bailey used to be (Not in the Motte rally, 10th March 2017). While the issue of land ownership was argued to prohibit any alternative siting of the visitor centre, the question of an alternative siting was regularly raised by a number of councillors and protestors. This was in large part because not long after the October Planning meeting the

development of the whole Castle Gateway area was announced by the Council with the aim of transforming the carpark into public realm of some kind. The potential for a larger spatial scope—seeing Clifford’s Tower as a motte in the context of the bailey—was also supported by different senses of time. For the protesters the visitor centre was ‘premature’, ‘let’s wait and do it properly’, said another (Not in the Motte, 10 March 2017).

The time sense of the protesters was in stark contrast to the way the idea of the time-limited government investment had created a path dependency in the Council planning committee meeting: ‘we can’t expect English Heritage to wait until we get our act together’, ‘things move slowly in York’, ‘let’s get on with it’ and the ‘time factor is against us’ (CYC Planning Committee 27th October 2016). The location of significance on the inside of Clifford’s Tower and looking out from Clifford’s Tower had the effect of securing a property threshold and securing an easily managed point of sale. When read in the political loop generated by English Heritage, for ‘public benefit’ to be ‘public benefit’ it needed to pass over the threshold of the visitor centre door. It was crucially this question of timing—the idea that with Miller’s disinvestment came a time-bound investment opportunity—which required English Heritage to enact a number of ontological moves. For them to act *immediately*, Clifford’s Tower needed to be *contained to the motte*, had to be *changing over time*, and be *from the inside* and about *views over the city*. The protestors ‘Clifford’s Tower’ was a different thing all together.

### SITUATED POLICY IN AN EXPANDED ONTOLOGY

National policy—as we have seen—works through a series of abstractions and assumptions about cause and effect. It makes a claim that it is bigger, more significant, more important and seeks to secure *this* abstraction through the *other* abstractions such as the ‘public’ and ‘public benefit’. Yet in the case of Clifford’s Tower when these abstractions of ‘national’ and ‘public’ met the local—even when they were ontologically embedded in realities of government funding, of ‘inside’, of threshold and of urgency—they failed to hold.

Latour and Haraway read alongside each other offer a series of conceptual resources for thinking policy as ‘local policy’ and more specifically as ‘situated policy’. The first being that all policies—regardless of what it might claimiarelocal in the sense that it is being produced in a certain place and from a particular set of contingencies. National agencies seek to

be national through building themselves up, making enrolments of people, buildings and ideas so they can stand on black boxes. But, of course, these black boxes leak when confronted with local circumstances where the abstractions crafted cannot be sustained. The Clifford's Tower example shows how, in seeking to secure national agency for the new English Heritage organisation, the local and the particular needed to be enacted. The materiality of the inside, the boundary of entry and point of sale and a temporality of urgency were all need to support the abstract claims to 'public benefit'.

Yet what was not successfully local was the initial inability of English Heritage or the councillors from the planning committee to also deal with alternative political ontologies. The alternative Clifford's Towers of the protesters included the outside of Clifford's Tower, it was focused on what Clifford's Tower looks like to a passer-by, it was concerned with the whole of Castle and Eye of York area and it was shaped by the desire to take time to make the right decision. During the dispute there were both different Clifford's Towers and different approaches to time and expediency at stake.

The dispute over the Clifford's Tower visitor centre in 2016–2017 indicates the ways in which 'situated policy' might guide a fuller recognition of the material and social particularity of any national initiative. A situated policy might be one that still carries with it connotations of policy in the sense of Harney and Moten, the desire to guide others action elsewhere—such as is inevitably contained within national or world designation of heritage. However, what might make policy *situated* is the recognition that any policy desire will always be and become explicitly localised. A policy that is conducted as 'situated policy' would understand that it has been produced in a 'local' of national organisations and legislative organs and that, to become legitimate, it will need to be reworked and given meaning and life in the multiple locals of place and communities of interest and care. In this way policy that is situated would know its own particularity (that it has been produced somewhere) and knows that it will always need to navigate many heterogenous and multiple views to have effect. Situated policy would know it needs to de-Black Box itself as it becomes implemented. Accountability and legitimacy in situated policy—to return to Haraway's terms—would, therefore, come from this local work of building resonance between the different locals of national agencies and their operational abstractions (such as significance) and what is happening on the ground. In these ways, thinking of policy as 'situated policy' retains the political desire to set a direction in advance, all the while actively creating the conditions for something else to emerge.

## NOTE

1. This article is based on the dispute about the Clifford's Tower Visitor Centre in 2016 and 2017. In 2018, English Heritage dropped their plans for the Visitor Centre (Laycock, 2018) and they became involved as a key stakeholder in the City of York Council's Castle Gateway project. My interest in this moment of 2016 and 2017 is, in part, because I subsequently, with Phil Bixby, facilitated an experimental public engagement process for the Castle Gateway project called My Castle Gateway. As part of this wider public engagement process in 2018 we worked with the team managing Clifford's Tower to run a series of sessions with the Not in the Motte Campaign to develop a brief that guided their development work (My Castle Gateway, 2018).

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PART II

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## Managing the Local



# The Goals of American Cultural Plans

*Eleonora Redaelli*

## INTRODUCTION

In the United States, cultural policy is characterized by a system of multi-level governance connecting different levels of government in matters of arts and culture (Redaelli, 2018). This means that there is not a centralized agency that supervises the country's cultural policy, but rather a chain of institutions at national, state, and local level. They are loosely connected resulting in cultural federalism (Mulcahy, 2002). At national level, the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) "supports exemplary arts projects in communities nationwide through grantmaking, initiatives, partnerships, and events" (NEA, 2021). However, this independent agency does not have a centralizing role in terms of mandates or major source of funding mechanisms. At state level, each state and U.S. jurisdiction has a State Art Agency (SAA) (Mulcahy, 2002). SAA's involvement with communities and funding are more relevant than the NEA even though the federal agency is often more well-known and in the mediatic spotlight (Redaelli, 2018). At local level, local arts agencies (LAAs) serve

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cities or towns, as well as multiple cities, towns, and counties. They also operate in many forms, such as city or county government agencies, non-profit organizations, for-profit organizations, and hybrid nonprofit/for-profit organizations.

To understand the American context, cultural policy studies have focused mainly on the national and state levels (Lowell, 2008; Rushton, 2003; Schuster, 2002; Strom & Cook, 2004). Local perspectives have been explored looking at LAAs (Hager & Sung, 2012; Skaggs, 2020) and a growing literature has been analyzing the role of the arts in the city (Redaelli & Stevenson, 2021). However, overall little attention has been given to understanding local cultural policy beyond specific case studies. In line with the main argument of this volume, I believe that the practices of culture are always situated in a specific context (Gilmore, 2013). Therefore, it is crucial for cultural policy studies to direct efforts and attention to local cultural policy. In particular, it is important to better understand how cultural policy is positioned in the urban policy discourse, in the context of community development (Redaelli, 2019c). Cultural planning offers a rich entry point for this topic, as it is a powerful policy tool for local cultural policy, and it provides insights on the values and priorities of local communities and the way they see the arts interact with their places.

In this chapter, I study five cultural plans. I highlight the goals articulated in the cultural plans as documents resulting from cultural planning processes. This focus on text is not meant to undermine the importance of understanding either the planning process per-se or the actions implementing the plan. It is rather intended to pay attention to the deliberate reflection (Hoch, 2012). In other words, this analysis aims to highlight the collective voice that emerges from the planning process and the priorities articulated by the community. For this analysis, I chose the first five largest cities among the American cities that in 2018 had a cultural plan (Redaelli, 2019c): Chicago, Denver, Dallas, New York, and San José. These five cities are also representative of different geographical areas of the country providing a rich overview. I looked at their cultural plans using an inductive method and capturing the main goals as they emerge through close readings (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

The overall argument of this chapter is that the goals of the five plans focus strongly on the arts sector and the desire to support it. Moreover, this attention is articulated with an awareness of the complex connection between the arts sector and its community. These multifaceted goals of the cultural plans can be summarized and understood through the lens of

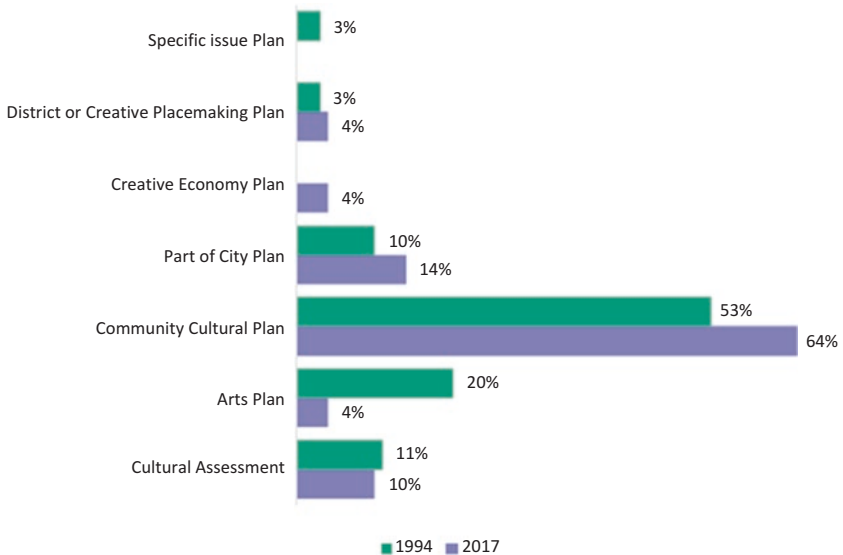
third space: “Looking at how the arts connect with the city through the lens of third space means to move away from the search of a one-dimensional explanation and unveils their relational, layered, and dynamic links” (Redaelli, 2019a, p. 12). Among the five plans, three main goals emerged: creating a healthy art ecosystem; integrating the arts within the city; and promoting diversity, equity, and inclusion. In the following analysis, I aim to untangle how the five cities tackle these themes as actionable initiatives. An analysis of five cultural plans emphasizes that cities in different parts of the country are engaged in policy design efforts, bringing at the forefront the need for cultural policy studies to focus on this level of government to better understand cultural policy in the United States. I am not interested in a comparison per se, but rather in understanding how each city gives meaning to these three themes in their own context. Using a thematic approach, I aim to contribute to the local cultural policy discourse going beyond a case-study perspective.

### AMERICAN CULTURAL PLANNING: WHAT GOALS?

Cultural planning in the United States dates back to the late 1970s, and over the years it has evolved in many of its aspects, including the overall goals (Redaelli, 2019a). The most current definition is given by Americans for the Arts (AFTA)—the national arts advocacy organization. AFTA states, “Cultural planning is a community-inclusive process of assessing the cultural needs of the community and mapping an implementation plan” (AFTA, 2020, p. 35). AFTA’s definition focuses on process and highlights engagement with the community, which is a pillar aspect of the cultural planning process in the United States (Redaelli, 2019c). Every year, AFTA has been conducting a survey to track the budgets and programs of 4500 LAAs. The 2019 survey revealed that 34% of LAAs have completed or updated a cultural plan (AFTA, 2020).

A first study of cultural planning, highlighting its goals, was conducted in 1993 (Jones, 1993). For this study, Bernie Jones surveyed 54 communities around the US and claimed that cultural plans addressed a range of goals and issues broader than “the arts” but “not as broad as the most anthropologically oriented definitions of culture that some plans claim to address” (p. 91). Goals were the only feature common to all the plans analyzed, whereas futures such as action steps, list of participants, or background of the project were presented only in some documents. In 1994, another study conducted by Craig Dreeszen created a typology of plans

based on their major goals. In a 2018 survey, Tom Borrup asked 200 LAAs to characterize their plan using the typology created by Dreeszen. This comparison provided insights on how the overall process and goals of cultural planning have changed in more than 20 years (Borrup, 2018), showing a shift toward “broader community needs rather than only internal sector needs” (p. 2). In a later study, Borrup (2019) described this shift of goals as the community turn of the arts well illustrated by a diagram that compares the typologies of the plans, which is determined by their major goal (see Fig. 5.1). The plans characterized as “community cultural plans” were the most numerous in the 2017 study; moreover, there is a notable shift away from the typology that focused mainly on planning for the arts. This shift raises questions about the overall purpose of the arts, but also about the goal of cultural planning processes. Borrup (2017) stated “As practitioners of cultural planning, we need to debate whether the practice is planning by and for the institutional arts or whether it is a process to address ways of living in communities and the cultural



**Fig. 5.1** Plan types 1994–2017 (From *Cultural Planning at 40—A Look at the Practice and its Progress*, by T. Borrup, 2018, p. 5. Copyright by Tom Borrup. Reprinted with permission)

dimensions of policy options across a spectrum of municipal concerns” (section “[Healthy Art Ecosystem](#)”).

Scholars and practitioners claim that so far cultural planning has failed for three main reasons. First, it is considered as simply one other topic to add to the list of topical plans carried out by city administrations, instead of being considered a crucial ingredient for the overall well-being of the city. “It is seen as the icing on the cake rather than the yeast, without which the cake fails to rise to its full potential” (Mills, 2003). Second, critiques claim that cultural planning maintains the cultural status quo privileging Western European art forms (Borrup, 2017). In so doing, cultural planning denies other potentials and is engrained in social biases. Third, there is no arena for debating what cultural tradition should be included, considering that commissioners for cultural plans are usually local arts organizations that are in the service of arts institutions (Borrup, 2020).

Other studies provide a more positive assessment, pointing to some achievements of cultural planning. Kovacs (2011) demonstrated that cultural planning in mid-size cities in Ontario, Canada, was not limited to an arts-focused agenda, including natural heritage, transportation, and urban design. The 2019 AFTA’s survey, mentioned earlier, points toward interesting findings, which include the positive impact of cultural plans. They observed that cultural plans have a positive impact on LAAs budgets. In fact, their findings revealed that the LAAs who worked on a cultural plan in the last 5 years had increased at greater rates than the ones who had no cultural plan. This impact was observed since the 1990s in financial surveys.

My analysis contributes to the cultural planning debate highlighting the goals of five plans (see Fig. 5.2). I selected San José, Denver, Dallas, Chicago, and New York, as they were the five largest cities among the ones with a cultural plan in 2018 (Redaelli, 2019c). I also chose them because they provide an overview of the situation in the United States, as each of them is representative of a very different geographical area. These plans were published between 2011 and 2018 and use a variety of terms for their goals. The terms used include goals, objectives, strategies, visions, recommendations, priorities, and needs. Sometimes, these terms were used interchangeably and sometimes highlighted different aspects of the process.

San José is the oldest one and was released in 2011: “Cultural Connection: City of San José cultural plan for 2011–2020” (City of San



Fig. 5.2 Cultural plans: Cities, plans, and terminology (by Infographics Lab, University of Oregon)

José, 2011) lists ten goals. Chicago and Denver released their plans in 2012: “City of Chicago Cultural Plan 2012” (City of Chicago, 2012) highlighting recommendations and initiatives and “Imagine 2020. Denver’s Cultural Plan” (City of Denver, 2012) detailing seven vision elements. New York released “Create NYC: A Cultural Plan for All New Yorkers” (NYC Cultural Affairs, 2013) in 2017, articulating different strategies for the future. Dallas released its plans in 2018: “Dallas Cultural Plan 2018” (City of Dallas, 2018), which explains needs, priorities, and strategies. For this analysis, I use the term goal as the umbrella term subsiding all the other different terms used in the plans, even though San José is the only plan using this exact term.

## HEALTHY ART ECOSYSTEM

In Borrup's survey only 4% of cultural plans were categorized as arts plan (see Fig. 5.1). However, my in-depth analysis of five cultural plans released between 2011 and 2018 revealed that the goal of planning for a stronger art scene was highly relevant in these documents. What should be noticed is that attention to the arts sector is framed as ecosystem. The term ecosystem originated in the natural sciences, but it has been increasingly used in the social sciences to describe the complexity of different sectors. In cultural policy, it has been used also as a framework supporting inclusive industrial development (Barker, 2019) and in the context of a discourse that discusses culture as an ecology (Holden, 2015). In the plans analyzed, this idea includes not only a comprehensive view of the arts sector, but also a layered interconnection with place and its community. For instance, Dallas described the idea of cultural ecosystems as places "where people go to create, experience, and learn about arts and culture" (p. 23). The plan reports the findings of a cultural ecosystem captured using an interactive map created through an online platform and in-person events. This exercise revealed a map with activities throughout the city, even though a specific area, the Bishop Arts District, still stands out.

The pursuit of a healthy art ecosystem is spelled out as support for individual artists, investment in arts infrastructure, and development of arts education. The support for individual artists is a common goal in all plans, but it is articulated differently in each city. This variety of strategies displays a diverse range of artistic engagement with the city encouraged by the literature (Borén & Young, 2017). Some initiatives aim at attracting artists and creative professionals—according to the renowned Florida's theory—and pursue logic of spatial clustering that can be supported by urban policies (Andersson et al., 2014; Florida, 2002). Other initiatives consider the benefits of the longstanding American tradition of artist housing (Ryberg et al., 2012; Strom, 2010). Chicago is focused on attracting and retaining artists and creative professionals. They want to broaden creative networks through different forms of media and grow diverse sources and methods of support. For instance, they want to pursue low-cost health insurance programs for self-employed artists and grow support structures for self-funded arts projects. San José also emphasizes the need for support for creative entrepreneurs through web-based resources, a creative business forum, and training and professional development programs. New York is committed to supporting employment opportunities

for local artists. However, among the strategies listed to achieve this goal, they mention grants, determination of fair compensation levels, and development of financial management training—all activities that look preliminary to the creation of job opportunities. Dallas aims at a variety of strategies, such as discount housing in exchange for neighborhood involvement, a group health plan, establishing a registration system for reservation of workspaces, and promoting the value of artists serving on several city boards and commissions. Denver puts a lot of emphasis on the need to nurture local talent envisioning initiatives such as professional development programs, the creation of a directory with resources for artists, increased availability of local spaces, and the launch of campaigns encouraging local buying.

Investments in arts infrastructure are also a priority. The literature has questioned the effectiveness of investing in infrastructure for culture as venues (Bingham-Hall & Kaasa, 2011). However, it has also celebrated the value of infrastructure in terms of network and associations (Wyszomirski & Cherbo, 2003) and as a place for the intersection of social and cultural capital (Stevenson & Magee, 2017). San José emphasizes the need to support the availability of diverse cultural spaces through the community, in addition to making downtown the Creative and Cultural Center of the Silicon Valley. Furthermore, they explain that strengthening the cultural community infrastructure means advocating for the arts and developing interest in individual donations that are only 14% compared to the 31% national average. Overall, they aim to increase funding for wider cultural development. Dallas envisions the support of an arts ecosystem as a broader goal toward which all other priorities are channeled, giving priority to use a variety of spaces around the city. Through an extensive cultural ecosystem mapping process, they realized that arts infrastructure is concentrated only in certain areas and provides opportunities for specific experiences. The intent of the plan is to maximize underestimated spaces and maximize the offer for formal and informal activities. New York aims at city-wide coordination, pointing out how the support for arts and culture is disseminated throughout different city departments. However, there is less emphasis on the idea of developing an ecosystem for the arts.

Besides the support for individual artists and art infrastructure, the goal toward a healthy art ecosystem is pursued by promoting art education. The literature has analyzed several issues of art education, such as accounting for multiple narratives of place (Powell, 2015), developing transformative educational experiences for adults (Lawton & La Porte, 2015), and

studying programs developed by cultural organizations as models for communities (Sandell & Zimmerman, 2017; Soren, 1993). These elements resonate in all five plans analyzed in this chapter. Their overall goals for arts education aim at developing culturally resonant programming and extension of art learning opportunities to all residents. San José highlights that arts education is not only for children in schools, but it is also more inclusive, serving adults of any age. They use the term “arts and culture learning” (p. 23) to emphasize this broader audience and also to include not only formal instructions but also numerous other forms of experience. Chicago underscores the need for high-quality art education and programs that promote the idea of becoming a lifelong learner. For instance, they aim to train teens to be “cultural ambassadors” and to share artistic content in classrooms with young kids.

In Denver, a survey showed that 85% of residents value arts education in school; however, fewer than 20% found that the current offering of arts education for children was good. The city aims to launch a program for the recruitment and ongoing professional development of arts educators and also to develop better communication of existing learning opportunities offered by arts organizations beyond schools. Interestingly, New York pairs arts education with science education, creating programs for all ages that integrate the two areas. This introduces into the community an effort to bridge the “great divide” in education in the twenty-first century (Braund & Reiss, 2019). Dallas connects art education with communication. In particular, they see education about public art as part of the development of access and engagement in the arts: an idea that connects with community-based art education as programs that promote contextual learning through the local arts (Ulbricht, 2015).

### INTEGRATION OF THE ARTS IN THE CITY

The literature has interrogated the complex relationship between making art in open urban spaces and the debates about the future of the city, claiming that there is often a disconnect (Miles, 1997). My analysis found that the cities under examination have overcome this disconnect, and they pursue a public art that is significantly integrated with city debates at different levels: urban design and development, community participation, and equitable distribution of art in different neighborhoods. Denver and Chicago highlight the goal of integrating the arts into the city by bringing the arts into people’s daily lives. Denver’s vision for an integration of arts

and culture in people's daily lives aim at offering art to residents and visitors "everywhere they turn" (p. 10), informing every aspect of city planning transportation, architecture, housing, public space, etcetera. By contrast, Chicago articulates this goal of integrating arts and culture with the city through the engagement of the arts across the various sectors: government, private, and nonprofit. Moreover, Chicago—similarly to San José and NY—aims at integrating public art and urban design. For instance, since the 1990s, San José has created a large public art collection. However, in 2007, the need for better coordination with urban design and economic development led to the creation of a public art masterplan, titled "Public Art NEXT!". Afterwards, the cultural plan incorporated the main goals of the public art master plan recommending the prioritization of key areas of city development, incorporating public art in high traffic corridors, and supporting public art projects in community-gathering places.

In particular, New York and Chicago well represent what the literature calls the spatial turn in the arts, which emphasizes the reciprocal influence between the arts and the city (Ardenne, 2002). This spatial turn implies a co-production between arts and urban worlds linking arts practices with broader social issues, bringing together different publics and transforming everyday city life (Molina & Guinard, 2017; Zebracki & Palmer, 2018). For instance, New York City's portfolio for art in public spaces is quite rich and diverse. The plan emphasizes how, through sculpture, outdoor performances, community classes, and lines of poetry engraved in the pavement, the city sends the message that "all belong here" (p. 125). The goal of the plan to animate and activate public commons continues the efforts of the art commission, established in 1898 to approve public art, and the City's Percent Art Program signed in 1982 and requiring that 1% of city constructions be allocated for public art works. Moreover, MTA Arts & Design, a branch of the city transit organization, has been commissioning public art in the subway, buses, and rail lines since 1985. The plan calls for more community-engaged participatory art beyond site-specific installation and for access to public spaces through the city for more equitable art distribution. To this end, they developed strategies to help artists navigate the bureaucratic challenges of working in public space and support diverse programming in plazas, community gardens, and parks, with specific emphasis on public space for unrepresented communities.

Chicago has also developed a wide range of initiatives, from involving communities in each different neighborhood in the selection of public art to streamline zoning for street vendors and performers. These goals clearly

exemplify the fluidity of the process that shapes the mutual relationship between the arts and the city (Zebracki & Palmer, 2018). It provides very practical directions, such as zoning or place designation, which operationalize the conceptualization of the spatial turn of the arts by overcoming bureaucratic barriers to the public space of the city. Other notable recommendations are the need for collaboration with the Chamber of Commerce to integrate art in commercial districts and the integration of neighborhood history into the design of neighborhood transportation. These goals show a vision of public art as connected with the urban context, functioning as a mediator between history and the contemporary everyday (Ten Eyck & Dona-Reveco, 2016). Indeed, however, further investigation should look into what aspects of Chicago's history are made visible and legible through the arts, as well as the ones that are obscured.

These goals toward the integration of public art in the city general public debate bring attention to what public art is and illustrate inspiring programs embedding artists in the city administration. New York states, "Public art is indeed murals and statues, but it is also artists working in public agencies" (p. 127). An example of this kind of initiative is the pioneering work of Mierle Laderman Ukeles with the Department of Sanitation in the late 1970s. She would create performances taking on the tasks of cleaners or maintenance workers to draw attention to their role (Kennedy, 2016). She also recently collaborated with the city to celebrate the work of service workers during the Covid-19 pandemic, partnering with the Queens Museum. In 2015, the city launched a Public Artists in Residence (PAIR) program, which embeds artists in city departments to suggest creative solutions to civic challenges. A similar idea of residency, called the "Artist micro residencies," occurred in Dallas as a week-long pilot program. For instance, photographer Kael Alford worked with the Office on Welcoming Communities and Immigrant Affairs and investigated how sharing images could make immigrants and refugees more visible and welcome to the residents of Dallas.

Through these programs, New York and Dallas aimed at what the literature defines as "creative sociabilities" (Borén & Young, 2013, p. 1810) that are ways to bring together artists and public servants to reshape social futures. Moreover, Chicago and Denver illustrate a commitment toward "creative sociabilities" with different types of initiatives. Chicago developed recommendations to integrate artists in all sectors, including the private sector. Two initiatives designed for the private sector include the following: "Creativity Work," a roundtable of cultural leaders and artists

addressing issues such as staff development, motivation, and problem-solving; and “Artist-for-a Day,” a corporate, cultural awareness program, providing opportunity to shadow an artist for a day. Denver’s emphasis on collaboration with the city administration is crafted around leadership. In particular, the plan calls for collective leadership across business, government, philanthropic, and civic sectors. This takes different shapes: an alliance among organizations, convenings of arts-supporting leaders and elected officials, inspiring funders, and promoting the next generation of leaders.

Attention to neighborhood is a common goal among all the five plans. Dallas developed a neighborhood typology for arts and culture development that includes four models: urban core arts destinations, mixed urbanism arts to explore, residential opportunities for arts, and opportunities for arts in non-traditional spaces. Each of the models is supported by trends in the literature: investment in the arts to revitalize downtown (Campo & Ryan, 2008; Strom, 2002), mixed-use area with the arts as main attraction (Frost-Kumpf, 1998; Redaelli, 2019b), residential opportunities for artist in the form of artist housing (Ryberg et al., 2012; Strom, 2010; Trask, 2015), and the use of non-traditional spaces for arts purposes (Borrupt, 2011; Colomb, 2016). This typology emerged from an analysis that emphasizes how Dallas’s community encompasses 400 unique neighborhoods. The creation of a typology for arts and culture is useful: it helps to conceive an engagement of the arts with all the neighborhoods, to support a differentiation of the offerings as more place sensitive and to avoid a blanket standardization of the city.

Denver frames the attention to neighborhood within the goal of accessibility. They want to identify and inventory of all the resources in every neighborhood and at the same time make sure that each neighborhood is infused with arts and culture. Therefore, their major concern is to identify strategies for cultural mapping (Duxbury et al., 2015). Chicago, San José, and New York City are focused on enhancing and coordinating neighborhood cultural life (Rosenstein, 2011). Chicago aims to celebrate every neighborhood’s heritage and foster neighborhood connections and exchanges, and San José is dedicated to developing a comprehensive neighborhood-based initiative to enhance cultural resources at the grass-root level. Finally, New York City is invested in preserving the neighborhood character in all city boroughs through marketing, mapping, and building community capacity programs.

Integrating the arts into the city is not only a goal that aims to benefit the residents, but it is also a strategy for making each city a destination. Unsurprisingly, this aspect is not considered an area of need for NY. The other four cities emphasize two goals that have emerged in the literature: the need to develop cultural tourism to attract visitors (Hargrove, 2014) and the need to develop better communication about the current offerings, resulting in a global branding (Okano & Samson, 2010). However, none of the plans mentioned an aspect highlighted by the literature that values cultural planning as a form of organizational learning for the arts and the city aiming at creating a “destination marketing alliance formation” (Hager & Sung, 2012, p. 402). Even though it already has quite an international reputation, Chicago sees the need to invest in strengthening its branding as a global destination and in promoting cultural tourism. San José reiterates the goals spelled out in the “Economic Strategy 2010” consisting of developing a set of arts, entertainment, and sport events to make the city a tourist destination. In fact, they talk about fostering “destination quality” (p. 25) events designed according to high standards of programming and, in particular, aiming to generate visitor spending. Dallas strives to make the city a local, national, and international cultural destination through better communication. In fact, among their four priorities, they highlight the need for general better communication of Dallas’ cultural offerings. The wording chosen by Denver for this purpose of making the city a destination is unusual, but powerful. They state their goal is amplification, which highlights how much is already there that needs to be magnified to residents and the world, positioning Denver as the “Creative Capital of the Rocky Mountain West” (p. 36).

### DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION IN THE ARTS

In recent years, several initiatives have been focusing on enhancing diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) in the arts sector. For instance, the Los Angeles County Arts Commission (2017) engaged in an 18-month planning process dedicated exclusively to issues of equity and inclusion in the cultural sector and the way the county has distributed its investments. Another example of how the arts sector is committing to DEI comes from Seattle. Since 2015, the Seattle Office of Arts & Culture has made a formal commitment to racial equity that includes capacity building, space, and grant programs in alignment with the city’s Race and Social Justice Initiative (City of Seattle, 2021). Moreover, a study that analyzed the

mission statement of 55 LAAs revealed that 26 of them included attention to DEI issues, showing a gradual commitment to cultural equity in the framing of their programming (Skaggs, 2020). This idea is based on AFTA's definition stating that, "Cultural equity includes, but it is not limited to, those who have been historically underrepresented based on race/ethnicity, age, disability, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity, socio-economic status, geography, citizenship status, or religion—are represented in the development of arts policy" (AFTA, 2016).

The broader planning sector is also developing attention and commitment to DEI issues, while cultural planning has only recently begun to tackle these issues. The American Planning Association provides guidelines for the creation of comprehensive and topical plans through an inclusive process and for addressing the needs of under-represented members of the community (American Planning Association, 2019). These guidelines make DEI issues central to the planning discourse. However, these issues are still working their way within city plans. As far as specifically cultural plans, DEI issues have only been included in the last few years. Borrup's (2018) survey showed that "allocating more resources for under-represented community ranked the lowest of all outcomes of cultural planning in 2017" (p. 22). Only 30% reported some progress, and only 4% allocated much more funding for under-represented communities. This evidence suggests that cultural planning has not yet been instrumental for creating equitable cities (Borrup, 2017).

A 2021 study of DEI perspectives in 64 cultural plans over the last 20 years (Ashley et al., 2021) found that these practices have been unevenly applied. The authors included plans focusing on a comprehensive view of arts and culture, selected from a database compiled by AFTA. As mentioned in section "American Cultural Planning: What Goals?", AFTA offers the most updated database available, compiled through a survey of LAAs. One of the findings revealed that of the 64 plans, 54% did not include any city-wide demographic information. Among the five plans analyzed in this chapter, only Dallas's plan provides data about the overall demographics of the city, focusing on age, ethnicity, and race. This information was instrumental to ensure that during the recruitment for participation, the diversity and composition of the city would be adequately represented. Overall, Ashley et al. (2021) claimed that in the planning process of the 64 cultural plans, a white-majority perspective is evident. Fewer than ten planning processes targeted marginalized groups. The language often utilized inclusive terms, but they were rarely defined. For

instance, the word diversity often referred to diverse arts offerings rather than people's backgrounds. Only in plans completed in the last 4 years is equity elevated to a primary goal.

The plans that stood out in Ashley et al.'s (2021) study for bringing DEI topics to the forefront were two of the plans analyzed in this chapter: Dallas's and New York City's plans. "In Dallas, we envision a city of people whose success and well-being are not pre-determined by their race, age, disability, sexual orientation, gender, social status, zip code, or citizen status" (p. 57). Dallas elevates both equity and diversity as the main goals of their plan. Equity is the first priority of the plan. To this end, they aim to support art forms and artists not limited to the European canon. Diversity is the second priority, and it is articulated as the need to better represent and serve their multifaceted community through diversity of programming, staff, and organizational leadership. Equity and inclusion are the top goals of New York City, and they were the highest priorities expressed by the community engagement. "In this context, 'equity' means broadly that assets are distributed fairly and justly for the benefit of the public" (p. 71). New York City's bold statement aims to foster equity through a redistribution of the funding resources. As for inclusion, they highlight the need to give individuals with different backgrounds the opportunity to fully participate in the system. They observe that diversity does not necessarily mean inclusion and that greater effort for participation should be implemented in the entire sector. Mayor de Blasio emphasized how the plan aims to financially support cultural organizations' efforts to diversify their staff and leadership, to create a cultural sector that looks like the city's residents. However, it is relevant to point out that the plan is only a roadmap, and the directions suggested need to be supported by the city budget (Pogrebin, 2017).

Chicago and Denver's plans were both released in 2012 but handled DEI issues quite differently. Chicago mentions the diversity of residents involved while describing the planning process, adhering to what the literature considers a fundamental aspect of citizen participation (Redaelli, 2012). However, they did not present DEI as one of their goals. They did not even mention the terms equity and inclusion in the plan. On the other hand, Denver wrote into its goals the development of an arts sector inclusive of all. They want to address issues of social equity and barriers to participation: "Arts, culture and creativity serve as both a social equalizer and a model for authentic expression" (p. 10). This goal highlights both the individual and intrinsic benefits of the arts toward personal well-being

and their ability to promote social change (Belfiore & Bennett, 2008). The inclusion efforts in preparing the plan are testified by their use of a bilingual tool to collect community's priorities and by the development of a survey comparing cultural commonalities and differences between African Americans and Hispanics.

San José highlights the diverse identity of the city several times in the plan. "Diversity is the most frequently mentioned element of San José's culture, both as a demographic fact and as a long-held civic commitment" (p. 3). However, diversity is not listed among the plan's goals but rather as the result of arts and cultural activities and one goal is to create availability for cultural spaces throughout the community. The plans states five guiding principles to that grounds the overall goals. Among the five guiding principles of the plan, the idea of cultural pluralism is key to bringing arts and culture to the forefront to represent the diversity of people and their traditions and values. This principle is based on Maria Rosario Jackson's work, claiming that an effective way to build diverse communities is through arts and culture (Rosario Jackson, 2009). Jackson claims that in order to diversify community is crucial to use arts and culture to create bridges among different groups and recommends the creation of spaces for specific arts groups and the communities they serve. In San José DEI does not emerge as a goal per se, but rather as the underlying assumptions determining the need and value of investing in infrastructure for arts and culture.

## CONCLUSIONS

This chapter highlighted how the goals of American cultural plans include creating a healthy arts ecosystem, integrating the arts with the city, and promoting DEI. These goals revealed how attention to the arts sector is intertwined with its community and more broadly with its place, overcoming the disconnect between the arts and the city or the idea that cultural plans should focus exclusively on communities' needs. This awareness of how the arts are interconnected with their cities means understanding that the arts thrive if they are integrated into the community, and a place is vibrant thanks to a thriving art scene. Moreover, this analysis showed how the local discourse resonated with the most prominent scholarly literature.

The three main goals highlighted are articulated through a variety of initiatives. For instance, programs to support individual artists and art education are spelled out next to initiatives for investments in arts

infrastructure, public art, and neighborhoods. Several activities aim to reshape the social future through “creative sociabilities” that bring together public servants and artists. The arts also represent the city’s diverse communities and make it a destination. A growing dedication to addressing DEI issues are manifested through efforts to reach a wider community in the planning process, and they include art forms not limited to the European canon and that represent the multifaceted community, offering individuals with different backgrounds opportunities to participate in the system and redistribute funding resources.

Studying five cities located in very different parts of the country demonstrated that, even though in the United States there is not a central authority dictating the priorities to local governments, a common national discourse unifies the aims of different local communities. However, it has also become clear that each city gives meaning to the three common goals accordingly to their own specific context. Most importantly, each city emphasizes the connections between the arts and the local communities in terms of both addressing its needs and nurturing its strengths. This shows how common goals have a specific local articulation, supporting the claim of the volume that cultural policy is local and understanding cultural policy is a situated practice.

Further research is needed to better understand the overall planning process, with specific attention to the strategies for community engagement. Given the central focus on community participation and the growing interest in inclusiveness, it would be informative to tease out the strategies used by different cultural plans to involve their communities. This kind of analysis would provide a critical perspective on community engagement and would create the opportunity to share the different strategies so cities could learn from each other. Moreover, an investigation of the connection between cultural plans and the comprehensive planning process could bring insights on the role of cultural planning in the overall urban policy agenda.

Overall, this analysis offered important insights on American local cultural policy. Quite often in national and international academic circles, a widespread opinion is that the United States does not have a cultural policy or that its government does not support the arts. On the contrary, this analysis of five cultural plans of cities across the country has demonstrated how American local cultural policy is lively, connects the arts with place, and is animated by multiple, creative efforts. However, so much more needs to be unpacked and clarified to better understand the full picture

and the dynamics of the cultural policy process. Hopefully, this chapter will spark interest in further continuing the investigation for a more informed understanding of American local cultural policy.

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# Community Management of Local Cultural Assets: Implications for Inequality and Publicness

*Bethany Rex*

## INTRODUCTION

In 2019, a report on public buildings in England was published which showed that at least 6325 previously state-owned assets were estimated as being transferred from local authority to community control (Power to Change, 2019a, p. 21). In many parts of England, community organisations are now operating a range of facilities including swimming pools, community centres, parks, libraries, youth centres, arts centres and museums. In policy terms, this process—known as community asset transfer (CAT)—has been heralded as a means towards ensuring spaces ‘are more community-responsive and more closely related to local needs’ (DCLG, 2007, p. 16). However, the implementation of the policy, particularly during an extended period of austerity, provokes questions about the kinds of

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futures asset transfer promises for public spaces. This chapter draws on research into the implementation of CAT in three places in England (Bristol, Leicester and Grimsby) in order to examine key questions raised by this approach to operating cultural infrastructure. These are, firstly: to what extent has the implementation of CAT policy in a context of austerity addressed or exacerbated existing inequalities between communities? Secondly, how conducive are the business models of community management organisations to securing the publicness of these spaces?

I begin by giving an overview of academic debates on ‘localism’, a key idea mobilised by the Conservative-Liberal Democrat coalition government (2010–2015) as part of their aim to devolve power and responsibility downwards to communities and further involve voluntary and community organisations in the delivery of public services. Next, after identifying CAT policy as one of the main mechanisms designed to enable this shift in power, I draw out important differences between the policy aims of the Labour governments (1997–2010) and the subsequent Conservative-Liberal Democrat (2010–2015) and Conservative administrations (2015–present). Although the trend for transferring public services to community and voluntary organisations is not specific to England, CAT policy is a devolved matter, meaning governments in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland have each developed different approaches. My analysis focuses on England; however, the questions it poses about the relationship of policy and its implementation at a local level have international relevance, as I will show after outlining my methodology, when I move onto the empirical material.

In this chapter, I show tensions between the policy’s stated aims and its implementation in a period of profound change in the public sector and argue that this embeds inequality between groups who are able to operate a space and those who are excluded from this process. Second, I argue that the funding model of many of these spaces presents a challenge to their ‘publicness’, as interpreted by participants. The chapter concludes with the policy implications of the community management model, which might have wider relevance than in the UK context.

## THE UK POLICY CONTEXT: LOCALISM AND COMMUNITY ASSET TRANSFER

As Simin Davoudi and Ali Madanipour write in *Reconsidering Localism* ‘localism...means different things in different domains’ (2015, p. 1). During the coalition government, the concept was used to endorse the devolution of central government powers to civil society, local government and the market. The overarching policy to distil this push for ‘communities to come together to address local issues’ (Conservative Party, 2010, p. 1) was the Localism Act (MHCLG, 2011). Amongst other measures, this provided various ‘rights’ to community groups, but despite the rhetoric of community power accompanying this legislation, the power to make decisions and set outcomes remained with the state (Jancovich, 2017, p. 292).

Academic debates either frame localism as a cover for a neoliberal ideology which supports replacing state functions with competitive markets or seek to uncover ‘progressive possibilities for creating new ethical and political spaces in amongst the neoliberal canvas’ (Williams et al., 2014, p. 2798) by focusing on practices ‘occurring *in the meantime*, in amongst the local activities of local governance and third-sector agencies’ (ibid., p. 2799, emphasis in original). This chapter makes a particular contribution in its empirical description of how these tensions play out in practice, as community and voluntary organisations attempt to implement the ‘localist’ policy of CAT in a context of neoliberal austerity.

An important feature of localism rhetoric in the UK since 2010 is its positioning of the state and society as mutually exclusive, meaning the former needed to contract in order for the latter to flourish. In political speeches and other statements, a loosely defined ‘local’ was positioned in opposition to the state, with ‘localism’ framed as more responsive than state provision (Levitas, 2012), a key assumption of neoliberal ideology. Rhetorically, the former was associated with flexibility, openness and adaptability whereas the latter was constructed as rigid, paternalistic and averse to change (see Newman, 2012, p. 165). This positioning of the ‘local’ as the preferred level at which services ought to be delivered served the political goals of the then coalition and subsequent Conservative governments to reshape local government, drive down public-sector spending via austerity, and open up the public sector to private and third-sector providers. CAT policy and the organisations who feature in this chapter are prime examples of this shift from direct state involvement in the

provision and management of public space, towards a mixed model where the community/voluntary and private sectors have a larger role.

Community asset transfer (CAT) is the ‘transfer of management and/or ownership of public land and/or buildings from its owner (usually a local authority in a UK context) to a community organisation for less than market value to achieve a local social, economic or environmental benefit’ (Locality, 2020, n.p.). Theoretically, the freehold for a building can be transferred as a result of a CAT, meaning CAT is sometimes referred to as resulting in ‘community ownership’ (Locality, 2018b). However, in the decade I have researched this process I am yet to come across an example of a CAT involving a genuine transfer of ownership in England. Rather, CAT tends to involve long leases of at least 25 years on a variety of terms (Coates et al., 2021, pp. 15–16). It is a voluntary process entered into proactively by public bodies, such as local authorities who decide which assets to make available to transfer and who to transfer them to. This dynamic reflects a lack of clarity in policy documents published as part of the drive towards ‘localism’ by the coalition government. Although asset transfer is claimed to be ‘a policy instrument for empowering communities’ (DCLG, 2007, p. 4), the absence of specificity in policy documents published during this period means we have little sense of who is to be empowered by CAT and similar initiatives, or what the risks of such an approach might be.

While it is important to contextualise CAT as part of a longer-term push for the private, voluntary and community sectors to play a greater role in the provision of public services and management of public space in the UK, the process is different from outsourcing, defined here as ‘the private or voluntary sector delivering services to the government or the public after a process of competitive tendering’ (Institute for Government, 2019, p. 5). Although there are examples of CAT where operators of transferred assets have been part of competitive tendering processes, and where following the transfer they have service delivery obligations to the council, they rarely receive a fee for providing these services. In practice, the CAT mechanism means that many cultural amenities are no longer operated by local councils but rather by charities and social enterprises. As it is rare for there to be a worthwhile profit involved in operating these facilities, the private sector has shown minimal interest in running cultural spaces in England (Findlay-King et al., 2018a).

While legislation enabling asset transfer can be traced back several decades to the 1970s (see Rex, 2020a, p. 81), in policy terms the initial

impetus for these transfers was the publication of *Making Assets Work* (DCLG, 2007)—known as the Quirk Review—under the New Labour administrations (1997–2010). The report was commissioned as part of the Local Government White Paper *Strong and Prosperous Communities* (DCLG, 2006), which pushed for the devolution of power to the local level and the empowerment of local communities as part of a drive to foster ‘community cohesion’ and address ‘over-centralisation of government and lack of accountability’ (Labour Party, 1997, n.p.). Reading the introductory statement by the Chair of the report, Barry Quirk, a local government chief executive as well as advisor to central government on ‘efficiency’ during the mid-2000s, is instructive insofar as his vision of 2020 is revealing of the striking difference between how the role of local authorities was envisaged then, and what has transpired since:

‘Imagine this! It is 2020 and communities across England have been revitalised from within. Local councils have been central to this economic and social renewal, working alongside each and every community in the country... After twenty years of *sustained investment* in community infrastructure, local economies are strong, particularly in those areas where poverty has persisted for generations. A new civic spirit sweeps through urban, suburban and rural communities alike—galvanising communities to harness their energies for the wider public good’. (DCLG, 2007, p. 3, my emphasis)

As these opening remarks make clear, the Quirk Review was underpinned by an understanding of ‘the need for investment at all points of the community management and ownership spectrum’ (2007, p. 30). However, almost 2000 of the 6326 assets to have moved from local authority to community control did so over the period 2009–2019, largely after a change in government in the UK and in altogether different financial circumstances, known as austerity. Local government, the layer of government with responsibility for much of the UK’s publicly funded cultural infrastructure, faced particularly severe funding reductions during the austerity period. Analysis by the National Audit Office found an average of 49.1% real-terms reductions in grants from central to local government over the period 2010–2018, with their real spending power falling by close to 30% over the same period (NAO, 2018, p. 15). Central to the ‘localism’ promoted by the coalition government was the stated aim to increase ‘local authorities’ freedom to manage their budgets’ (Cmnd-7942, 2010, p. 8), whilst at the same time drastically reducing these budgets.

This is why many scholars talk about austerity as ‘scalar dumping’ (Peck, 2012), whereby national governments retain the power to impose spending cuts yet make local governments responsible for their implementation under the guise of greater freedom to innovate (see Lowndes & Pratchett, 2012).

As I discuss in the empirical parts of this chapter, the austerity programme and the politics underpinning it have had major implications on how ‘localism’ has materialised and on how asset transfer policies have been implemented. Importantly, the policy aims of the Labour governments of the period 1997–2010 and the coalition and Conservative governments from 2010 were different, leading to opposing implementation approaches and funding models. Nick Bailey and Madeleine Pill identify these differences as a question of state involvement. Community involvement in public services under the Labour administration was ‘state-led’, materialising largely in the form of consultations and representation on existing management boards but the role of a functioning local state to support community-led endeavour was also recognised, as evidenced by the emphasis on partnership and capacity-building support in the Quirk Review. Coalition policy, however, has been ‘state-enabling’, involving new legislation but minimal funding to support its implementation, which is heavily dependent on ‘self-help’ and volunteer labour (Bailey & Pill, 2015, p. 295). As such, the increase in local authorities transferring assets and liabilities to the community and voluntary sectors since 2010 reflects the coalition government’s stated policy aims of ‘supporting communities, citizens and volunteers to play a bigger role in shaping and providing services’ (Cmnd-7942, 2010, p. 8) as part of a broader agenda to reduce state investment (Jancovich, 2017, p. 292). This chapter analyses a range of case studies of CAT, identifying the consequences of this shift away from a model of CAT where investment from the state was seen as necessary, towards the current approach where state support, in both funding and capacity, is limited.

As Robin Hambleton argues, extolling ‘localism’ in parallel to implementing spending cuts which threaten the infrastructure needed to enable it produces a Jekyll and Hyde effect (2011), with ‘localism’ sounding good yet belying disguised intentions and regressive material implications. In order to save money, many local authorities, particularly in less affluent parts of England, have reduced their workforce drastically, meaning officers who would have advised, supported and worked with groups to develop their capacity to undertake transfer are no longer employed. Ruth

Levitas outlines the issue here, ‘put simply, localities vary greatly in the economic and cultural resources of the people who live in them, as well as their material character, and thus in the available resources for absorbing the additional labour’ implied for ‘localism’ and CAT (Levitas, 2012, p. 331). As such, whereas funding for CAT was directed towards councils in areas of deprivation by the Labour governments, under the coalition funding has been minimal (see Rex, 2020a, p. 86), meaning CAT is ‘unevenly distributed across England, with the highest numbers in less deprived, rural local authorities’ (Power to Change, 2019a, p. 3).

The shift away from a traditional model where the majority of cultural facilities are operated and managed directly by local governments to a landscape where public spaces are being run by community entities, in a model dependent on local initiative, resources and capacities, which are not evenly distributed, raises questions for UK cultural policy, as I highlight in the Conclusion.

## METHOD

The research drawn on in this chapter was conducted in 2020 with Dr Katrina Foxton and funded by a grant from the Power to Change Research Institute. Power to Change was founded in 2015 with an endowment from the Big Lottery Fund with charitable objectives to support and provide grants to the community business sector in England. One of the charity’s key assumptions is that businesses that are ‘locally rooted’, meaning ‘run by local people for the benefit of the local community’, ‘create more resilient places that are better to live and work in for everyone’ (Power to Change, 2021, n.p.). With this in mind, the original research set out to explore whether the term ‘locally rooted’ resonated with community businesses, specifically those operating from a transferred asset, and more broadly what they understood by ‘local’. It also aimed to develop an understanding of what being ‘locally rooted’ meant in practice, and to identify the challenges and barriers organisations attempting to be ‘locally rooted’ experienced in their everyday work. The results of the research are reported in full in Rex and Foxton (2020).

Practically, the research involved interviews and group workshops with employees of organisations operating from transferred assets in three locations in England. While the Grimsby/Cleethorpes workshop was conducted in-person (March 2020), the remaining two workshops and follow-up interviews were all facilitated online due to Covid-19 lockdown

restrictions. A total of 21 people representing 17 organisations attended the workshops and 16 semi-structured follow-up interviews were conducted plus one email exchange with an individual who was unable to attend the workshop. Although it was not explicitly required, our choice of locations was informed by Power to Change's list of 'Priority Places' where their work was focused (2019b, p. 11). From nine places, two cities, Bristol and Leicester and two towns, Grimsby and Cleethorpes, were chosen as locations for the research. Cleethorpes, the neighbouring town to Grimsby, was effectively added to the research, as there were fewer transfer organisations operating in Grimsby given its small population relative to Bristol and Leicester.

These locations were chosen due to differences in local politics, as we were interested in whether this would have a bearing on how CAT policy was implemented. It was also important to examine organisations operating in different economic and social contexts, particularly as we were interested in the extent to which spending cuts within the respective local authority might impact on their CAT policies, as well as the outcomes of transfer from the perspective of the transferees. Organisations were chosen if they were in the process of an asset transfer or had already completed one. With their being no central register of transferred assets, we compiled lists of such organisations in each place. One of the distinctive characteristics of CAT is that the transferee can be an established charity or social enterprise, or an organisation formed specifically for the purpose of completing the transfer. We purposively invited a mix of established and newly formed organisations to participate in the study, as one of our aims for the original research was to allow people operating in a similar context to meet to share lessons and build connections. As such, participants are a mix of those who have made their career in the voluntary sector and those with other professional backgrounds who were motivated to establish organisations as a way of averting the closure of assets they perceived to be of value. Table 6.1 provides brief background on each location), the data gathered and lists participating organisations by type. Full details of the workshops, interview topics and sampling approach can be found in Rex and Foxton (2020, pp. 78–83).

For this chapter, I have re-analysed this data set with a particular focus on key issues identified in the literature in relation to CAT, and the broader emergence of alternative forms of public space provision. My discussion first focuses on questions of whether asset transfer increases community power or embeds inequality more deeply, and then moves on to consider

**Table 6.1** Background to research locations and details of participating organisations

<i>Location</i>	<i>Brief profile</i>	<i>Participating organisations</i>	<i>Indicative list of cultural activities being run from buildings<sup>a</sup></i>
Bristol, South-West England	<b>Population:</b> 428,100 <b>Political representation</b> on Bristol City Council (unitary authority): Conservative (14), Green (24), Labour (24), Liberal Democrat (8) <b>Demographics:</b> 84% White British, 16% BAME	Arts centre; youth centre (3); community centre; city farm	Community garden, arts residencies and workshops, local history projects, youth music and dance programmes, live music, creative workshops, yoga
Leicester, East Midlands of England	<b>Population:</b> 329,000 <b>Political representation</b> on Leicester City Council (unitary authority): Conservative (1), Labour (52), Liberal Democrat (1) <b>Demographics:</b> 50% White British, 37% Asian, 6% BAME	Community centre/hub (3), training centre and community hub (1)	Performing arts, music/recording studios, creative arts workshops, arts activities for over 50s, local carnivals and parades, dance studio, knitting group
Grimsby & Cleethorpes, North-East Lincolnshire	<b>Population:</b> Grimsby 88,200, Cleethorpes 39,500 <b>Political representation</b> on North-East Lincolnshire Council (unitary authority): Conservative (31), Labour (8), Liberal Democrat (3) <b>Demographics:</b> 97% White British	Armed forces community centre; community growing space; boxing gym; capacity-building organisation; community hub; park café	Library services, sewing club, afterschool arts clubs, dance workshops, gardening and growing, local drama group, art therapy

<sup>a</sup>Many of these organisations provide a much broader range of services, such as food banks, befriending schemes and housing advice but I have focused on the cultural given the aims of the volume

the stakes for public space and the ‘publicness’ of transferred facilities under asset transfer models. Mainly, I analyse the data with reference to existing scholarship on asset transfer and ‘localism’ but where relevant I also consider fundraising and social enterprises literatures as these are becoming increasingly applicable to understand the dynamics of how cultural organisations function due to funding changes. While the findings are specific to these cases, the analysis explores some of the challenges that may be characteristic of this approach to managing cultural facilities more generally. Scaling back government subsidies for public spaces and services is not limited to England and has been shown to be prevalent in both high- and low-income countries since 2010 (Ortiz et al., 2015). While further research would be needed to assess the implications of austerity for how public cultural organisations function beyond England, this chapter identifies some key concerns with this approach.

### ASSET TRANSFER AND INEQUALITY

One of the key academic debates surrounding localism, and community asset transfers more specifically, is whether these processes ‘advantage more affluent communities, where activism [is] already strong’, meaning that ‘devolving power therefore may in fact reinforce power in the hands of a few, rather than share power more evenly’ (Jancovich, 2017, p. 303, see also Reid, 2018; Hobson et al., 2019). Research by Power to Change finds these concerns to be justified, identifying ‘assets [to be] unevenly distributed across England, with the highest numbers in less deprived, rural local authorities [with] the most deprived 30 per cent of neighbourhoods contain[ing] just 18 per cent of assets in community ownership’ (2019a, p. 3). Similarly, in a Scottish context, Tom Black found ‘the vast majority of community-owned assets are to be found in areas that do not experience marked levels of deprivation’ (2012, p. ii). Although sociological approaches could make inequality in asset transfer more visible, existing research demonstrates that transfer is most viable where social capital is high (Findlay-King et al., 2018b).

Yet this only partly explains why transfer is concentrated in affluent parts of England. Regional inequalities in England are also part of the picture here. Local authorities with high levels of deprivation experience greater demand for services from their population and have less ability to raise revenues through local taxes, an issue which has intensified since reforms to local government finance saw severe cuts to core grant funding

(see Gilbert, 2016; Studdert, 2021). As such, these local authorities may be less inclined to explore CAT, given the potential to sell their assets on the open market for a financial return, thus alleviating some pressure on their budgets. But while existing scholarship shows that transfer embeds inequality *between* places in England there is less research about inequalities *within* places. This chapter contributes to scholarship in its consideration of which groups are included/excluded from such processes. As socio-demographic data was not gathered as part of this research, the findings relate to who is included and excluded from these processes rather than the specifics of their social status or identity.

There were clear issues of asset transfer embedding inequality *within* places in the three locations of Bristol, Leicester and Grimsby. Although each of these locations have different socio-economic circumstances and local politics, when participants were asked about how the transfer process had worked in their case, the majority described a closed process where their involvement in discussions with the local authority was dependent on self-nomination, with local authorities deciding who to involve based on who was willing and able to put themselves forward.

At the start of the austerity period, Bristol City Council developed a CAT policy in support of the process: ‘community management and ownership of assets directly supports the council’s new, devolved decision making process. It empowers local communities, put local organisations in control, encourages pride of place and generates wealth in Bristol’s communities’ (Bristol City Council, 2010, p. 3). However, participants commented that the process lacked transparency, particularly in terms of the way the process of expressing an interest in taking over an asset worked. Speaking of the policy’s emphasis on community empowerment, one interviewee felt that ‘it [the policy] never really had any teeth because it’s never really been given any resource to run it in a way that is effective’ (arts centre interviewee). As a result of being a self-selecting process, the interviewee felt ‘it’s just kind of left up to whoever’s got the most money and resource and ear of somebody to kind of make something happen. And I don’t know, it just doesn’t feel right to me’ (arts centre interviewee). There was also concern that, although the CAT process had since changed to more of an open call for prospective transferees, the buildings designated for transfer were so problematic ‘that it precludes any sort of grass-roots community group from...being in a position to run those assets’ (arts centre interviewee). As an interviewee managing multiple assets as part of a youth work charity commented:

‘in the end, money usually trumps community and therefore the buildings that have been put up for asset transfer are either, huge liabilities because of capital needs, investment needs, they are buildings that are really awkward. You know they’re listed or they’re in a really bad place, or just because they’re listed you can’t really rent them out because the spaces aren’t right. You can’t adapt, to make them accessible and I think that’s why what is a good idea [asset transfer], often ends up failing’ (youth centre interviewee).

The contradictions between the council’s CAT policy which aims to empower local communities in a context of austerity are explicit within the document itself, which contains statements such as: ‘we will proactively investigate potential opportunities for CAT to local communities and social enterprises, but minimising financial liability for the council in the future’ (Bristol City Council, 2010, p. 2). In relation to the transparency issue, the table outlining the stages of the CAT process starts from a formal expression of interest (*ibid.*, p. 6), indicating uncertainty regarding how transfer opportunities are advertised and to whom.

Similar dynamics were identified by participants in Grimsby and Cleethorpes, although there was no written policy. Here, an interview with a resident in the latter stages of agreeing a transfer was particularly revealing of how the process relies on existing social capital or connections within a community. In the absence of capacity and resource to build local capacity for transfer, councils struggle to take a proactive approach, instead reacting to requests from individuals or existing organisations. After finding the toilets closed in the local park, the interviewee ‘thought, that place needs opening’, describing then speaking to ‘someone within the council who I know, who knows people within the council’, after which they outlined their ideas ‘on a voice message’ (park café interviewee) which resulted in the transfer.

North-East Lincolnshire Council’s CAT policy contains similar objectives to Bristol City Council’s, emphasising its support for ‘a business case led approach to enabling voluntary and community groups to run services and take on ownership of assets’ (2016, p. 3) but without any explicit links made between CAT and broadening local capacity or increasing power. In common with the other policy documents reviewed for this study it favours broad statements and leans heavily on the fluid construct of the ‘community’. For example, ‘communities take greater ownership of actions’ is listed in the ‘benefits to communities’ (*ibid.*, p. 5) section. Yet without a clear and consistent definition of ‘communities’ it is difficult to discern

whether the council's commitment to CAT is intended to broaden the range of people within the community who have 'ownership over actions' or not.

In 2015, Leicester City Council reviewed its CAT policy to reflect the emphasis on self-management in the Localism Act (MHCLG, 2011) and 'reducing funding' (2015, p. 1). Again, the stated aims of CAT are, amongst other things, to offer 'additional opportunities to secure resources within a local area and to empower local citizens and communities' (ibid., p. 2). In common with the interviews in Bristol and Grimsby/Cleethorpes, an interviewee managing a transferred community hub described being 'virtually offered the keys for the building' with a 'very, very good relationship with them [the head of service]' bolstering their confidence that '[they] wouldn't let it go to anybody else without coming back to me...[they] were giving me first refusal each time' (community hub interviewee).

Significantly, the majority of interviewees had not become operators of these spaces through an open tendering process. Instead, there was a mix of self-selection, based on existing social networks, and invited participation, where an established organisation was identified by the council as a viable transferee. This suggests significant inequalities in local cultural infrastructure operation, due to the transfer process itself being marked by inequality, due to the role of social capital in establishing the conditions for the plans of an individual or organisation to be given consideration, as well as the personal resources needed to undertake the labour of transfer itself.

In keeping with other recent studies (Moore & McKee, 2013; Jancovich, 2017; Findlay-King et al., 2018a; Rex, 2020a, 2020b), this research identifies the implications of expanding the use of a community management model during a period of austerity. Without the staff to support groups to develop their capacity, transfers can only be made to those with existing capacity. However, these findings do not indicate a gap between local policy aims and implementation. Within the CAT policies of the three respective municipalities there is evidence of moderate or even a lack of ambition as to whether CAT increases local capacity and broadens the range of people involved in operating local cultural infrastructure. Although reference is made to vague notions of community empowerment in these documents, the influence of the financial context is explicit. Although they were not interviewed for this specific research, local authority officers interviewed as part of other studies on CAT have

acknowledged that budget cuts are the key driver for CAT rather than, say a community engagement strategy (Rex, 2018, see also Jancovich, 2017, p. 299; Coates et al., 2021, pp. 44–46). Recalling that legislation enabling CAT was developed under the Labour governments (1997–2010) yet with the majority of transfers undertaken under the Coalition government, it is clear that the recent trend for CAT is a consequence of financial imperatives rather than forming part of local development ambitions. The association of community management with community power in national policy is thus challenged by the conditions of its implementation. The next section moves from a discussion of the processes leading to a transfer to the period afterwards, as groups attempt to maintain characteristics of the spaces they deem important at the same time as negotiating financial pressures.

### TRANSFERRED ASSETS AS PUBLIC SPACE?

A common theme in both workshops and interviews conducted for this research was that groups managing transferred assets share a commitment to involve the public in decision-making processes and to ensure that these spaces continue to be accessible and available for use by a broad public. In what follows, I examine the challenge and costs of fulfilling these ambitions. My key interest here is to reflect on the ‘publicness’ of community managed cultural facilities, and the stakes for public space when public subsidy is withdrawn. With ‘publicness’ and ‘public’ space both contested terms, and in the absence of space to explore these formulations in full, this analysis draws on Ali Madanipour’s definition of ‘publicness’ in *Public and Private Spaces of the City*. Writing on urban public spaces, Madanipour identifies them as ‘places outside the boundaries of individual or small group control...multi-purpose accessible spaces distinguishable from, and mediating between, demarcated exclusive territories of households and individuals’ (2003, p. 204).

When I asked interviewees about their ambitions for the asset, they often incorporated similar ideas into their answers. A member of the team of a community centre talked in terms of the building being ‘for the community...we don’t see it as our own building to make use of’ (community centre interviewee). An engagement worker at an arts centre stated that ‘having an asset which feels open is vital to a community where access to spaces to play, to create, to develop, may be rare’, highlighting how ‘public spaces’ in the city were ‘diminishing’ (arts centre interviewee). Similarly,

others underlined the danger of becoming ‘a closed social club or network and not really a local asset that is shared’ (arts centre interviewee). We see here, then, how interviewees conceive of these buildings as both functionally public, open for use by a range of people and groups, but also in a symbolic sense—not exclusive, shared and embodying a feeling of openness. Despite the concern in the literature regarding the representative or exclusive nature of these groups, then, all those who participated in this research spoke of opposite intentions. While participants in Leicester did identify one group who had ‘taken other buildings and almost turned it into their own...and not made it useable for groups’ (community centre interviewee), the data suggests that for the majority, being inclusive and retaining the publicness of the space was a key concern.

In the workshop we asked participants about how they translated these commitments into practices and the challenges involved. A key issue was the need to orient the use of the asset towards generating revenue, which some interviewees identified as meaning they were unable to undertake some of their social aims. In both workshops and the interviews, it was suggested that a key motivation for transfer was to prevent the loss of services and/or a space felt to be of social value to the public. However, the public subsidy that supported the provision of these services or the operation of the space has been removed as part of local government budget cuts. As identified in the previous section, local councils have pursued transfer as a way of offloading financial liabilities where a building is expensive to maintain and presents little prospect for income generation to cover those costs (Rex, 2020a, 2020b; Locality, 2016). As one interviewee put it, ‘they are really only seeing value...on a spreadsheet as opposed to what the value is for a community’ (arts centre interviewee). In terms of the financial model, CAT hinges on the assumption that organisations will be able to replace the public subsidy that supported the provision of services. Business models for community and voluntary organisations managing CATs vary but tend to involve multiple income streams, usually a mix of project funding, public contracts and traded income from products and services. The data demonstrates the potential for this business model to foreclose the possibility of publicness, a challenge which, in some cases, can be worked through by practitioners negotiating their own approaches within the environment in which they work. This is particularly the case where an organisation does not pursue commercial revenue due to local socio-economic factors and is dependent on external funders.

During the workshop in Grimsby and Cleethorpes the conversation turned to the challenges of avoiding mission drift in a context of relying on project funding. As Minkoff and Powell clarify, 'pressures towards conformity are especially strong for nonprofits that are highly dependent on external sources for both legitimacy and support' (2006, p. 592). In this context, mission drift, 'the process through which organizational goals can be deflected or sacrificed in the interests of organizational survival' (ibid.) is a concern. The director of a community growing space commented: 'it does become mission creep, but whatever their [the funder's] main aims are at the time and whatever the priority is, that is what you focus your project on...at the end of the day you have overheads that have to be met and the only way you can meet those overheads is to get money in which is mission creep which is not right'. This comment highlights key questions for organisations operating facilities that used to be part of the public sector: what aspects of their mission are not aligned with the objectives of their supporters, and how do practitioners negotiate this?

A community growing space interviewee struggled with divergence between the targeted work required and supported by external funders, and an internal commitment to providing 'companionship in a safe environment' (Green Futures website, no date) which is 'there for everybody' for free at the point of use (community growing space workshop contribution) regardless of whether a potential user meets the criteria of current funding initiatives.

A similar challenge was raised by another interviewee who spoke about the facility being 'something for everyone...rather than one specific group of people' (park café interviewee), underscoring a motivation for transferred spaces to be open to all who wish to use them which can be difficult to sustain when funders require initiatives to be targeted towards identifiable groups. As the community growing space interviewee explained, 'collectively they're not anybody apart from lots of people who like to come and garden' whereas 'funders want you to be for a specific group of people, or a specific age, or a specific health concern'. The interviewee opposed this approach to funding services, but in order to gain access to important resources went ahead with the funding applications and related evaluation practices, explaining a technique of putting users who did not fit current funding priorities 'in every single box that I possibly can' (community growing space workshop contribution), enabling the organisation to advance its social objectives while creating the impression of operating in line with external supporters' aims.

On first reading, this approach could be analysed as an example of the manipulation of funding programmes in order to satisfy professional and/or personal commitments. However, even as practitioners successfully align their work with funder and government objectives, this is not without cost. During the workshop, the participant emphasised how the imperative to provide case studies or complete questionnaires as part of demonstrating how funding had been used was an unwelcome intrusion for people using the space. Funding comes with its own binding demands which must be satisfied. Describing the results of an internal consultation, the interviewee highlighted a comment from a user of the garden: it was precisely due to *not* being treated as someone with a health condition which was valued. However, part of accessing funding is adhering to its requirements, and the ramifications of this may well be detrimental both to the mission of an organisation and the attributes of a space which are valued by its users.

This data highlights the extent to which current funding programmes limit the ability of practitioners to fulfil their professional and/or personal commitments to maintaining what I have termed the ‘publicness’ of the spaces they manage. As previous research into the motivations of such groups illustrates, organisations operating formerly public facilities have largely non-financial objectives (Power to Change, 2019a; Aiken et al., 2011), and aim to provide services or make space available to anyone who wishes to access them within their particular locality. Attempting to fulfil these ambitions in the absence of public subsidy presents a challenge to CAT organisations, and even when practitioners are able to take advantage of the flexibility of the evaluation practices of some funders, this is by no means without negative effects on how people experience such spaces.

## CONCLUSION

In this chapter I have examined community asset transfer, an approach which involves local cultural facilities moving from local authority to community control. I argued that this approach has been largely driven by the austerity policies of central government in the UK (2010–present), with implications for how CAT has been implemented locally. I examined CAT policy and approaches in three different locations in England, finding that in spite of differing geographies, politics and socio-economic contexts, CAT policy has been implemented in remarkably similar ways, with local CAT policies being limited in their ambitions to develop local capacity.

There is limited capacity within local authorities themselves to support the CAT process. As such, it can be argued that, under current economic and political conditions, CAT and attempts to devolve power to neighbourhoods and communities disadvantage communities without the capacity, capital and resources to operate an asset. Relatedly, with local authorities in England under pressure to reduce their costs and obligations, buildings selected for transfer are often those which come with high maintenance costs and limited options for income generation, with implications for the business models of CAT organisations. Without the guarantee of public subsidy, organisations operating cultural facilities following a transfer must contend with the difficulties of balancing fidelity to a mission with financial sustainability. As I hope to have demonstrated, the stakes for publicness of local cultural spaces are high with current funding models providing little support for organisations who wish to make cultural spaces and opportunities open and accessible to a broad range of people and communities.

Public funding and policy choices should reflect the shift of local cultural infrastructure from local authority to community management. However, cultural policy and public policy more broadly is yet to be developed to address the challenges experienced by local authorities and CAT organisations alike. For example, despite campaigning by organisations such as Locality and Power to Change, the recent £150 m Community Ownership Fund announced by the UK Chancellor in the 2021 Spring Budget is focused on capital funding. As this chapter identified, the lack of funding to support the asset transfer process, both prior to and following transfer, is part of why the process as it is currently calibrated roots rather than challenges inequalities as well as limiting the possibilities for these spaces to be orientated towards broad public use. As such, grants made available to CAT organisations need to be flexible such that they can be used to cover overhead costs, or for capacity-building and idea development. Further, the current Community Ownership Fund will provide match funding only. The equality implications of this are plain, as an organisation's ability to leverage funding varies hugely according to socio-economic characteristics of the area.

Cultural policymakers within local authorities could do much more to encourage and support community management models which, if properly funded, could result in more locally responsive organisations with closer links to people and groups who wish to use them. However, local government has seen its spending power diminish over the past decade.

Fulfilling the potential of community management models would therefore require a political shift away from reducing the role of the state, with higher taxes or more government borrowing allowing local authorities to lend financial and developmental support to these services and spaces locally (see Ipsos MORI Political Monitor, 2021, which indicates around half of Britons would support this). While this chapter focused on facilities successfully transferred to community management, there is also the issue of the uneven distribution of asset transfer itself. If policymakers want to address inequalities in cultural opportunities and rebalance cultural engagement across England then they will also need to focus on those places where multiple local facilities have closed, to incentivise the creation of initiatives to replace lost public provision.

Funders of culture should be aware that it is in these spaces—community halls, hireable spaces in cafes, community growing spaces and youth centres—where many people’s regular cultural activity happens. As such, cultural facilities managed by organisations with a focus on local communities should be recognised as a key site through which national cultural policy might achieve its goals. Addressing the potential of local cultural infrastructure will require a fuller engagement from national bodies with the local level, and the development of future policies directed towards supporting the ambitions of community management groups to continue to create opportunities for cultural engagement which are informed by an understanding of, and interaction with, local contexts.

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# Devolved Responsibility: English Regional Creative Industries Policy and Local Industrial Strategies

*Zoe Hope Bulaitis and Abigail Gilmore*

## INTRODUCTION

This chapter explores the social relations between cultural and creative industries (CCI) strategies, regional governance structures, and national policy agendas concerning place. Building upon previous creative industries research that frames cultural policy in the English regions within a broader socio-historical context (Banks & O'Connor, 2017; Hesmondhalgh et al., 2015; Jayne, 2005; Lutz, 2006), it examines an initiative to pilot Local Industrial Strategies (LIS) in two such regions, Greater Manchester and West Midlands. The chapter examines these

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strategies for their properties as boundary objects (Spee & Jarzabkowski, 2009) that provide means for social actors to practice policy and place. Using discourse analysis we explore how the national and the local intersect within the policy documents, and identify the rhetoric of creativity, and its use within city-regional strategy. Within a context of city-regional devolution, we consider how these distinct “second-city” spaces might shape place-based approaches to creative industries policymaking, and in doing so, following Paasi (2020), produce and reproduce regional boundaries.

The structure of the chapter is as follows. First, we set out the characteristics of regional creative industries strategy through literature review, to identify key issues with specific relevance to the regional policy context, the geographies of the creative economy, and the imperatives for place-based working in the context of English city-regional devolution. Second, we introduce the methods used within analysis, which combines historical analysis of placemaking with discourse analysis of recent policy literatures. We then introduce the cases of the Greater Manchester and the West Midlands combined authorities, tracing the policy stories of their devolution ahead of presenting discourse analysis on their respective LISs. We conclude with a brief discussion on the boundary work of LIS, regional governance and identity.

### LITERATURE REVIEW: MAPPING CULTURE AND ECONOMY IN REGIONAL CREATIVE INDUSTRIES STRATEGY

UK cultural policy actors have articulated their desire to understand the role of the creative industries within regional areas for over twenty years. The formation of the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) under the New Labour government in 1997 and the publication of Creative Industries Mapping Documents (DCMS, 1998) combined with a renewed interest in regional government (Hesmondhalgh et al., 2015). As early as 1999, the DCMS had established a Regional Issues Working Group (RIWG) to account for inequalities in economic and social opportunities across the country. The first RIWG report identified a “lack of strategic thinking by local, regional and national agencies and a subsequent lack of integration between creative industries and other related strategies” (DCMS, 2000, p. 5). Similarly, in a study of regional strategy within the West Midlands, Jayne (2005) emphasised the absence

of strategic alignment of, and inherent conflicts between different policy geographies, recommending a more “fit for purpose” policy infrastructure at a regional level (Jayne, 2005).

This sense of disconnect arose despite the efforts of the national government to put such infrastructure in place at a regional level. As Lee et al. observe, “‘regionalism’ was central to New Labour thinking in general, and a commitment to regional devolution in England was a stated political goal” (Lee et al., 2014, p. 217). Most significantly, the formation of Regional Development Agencies (RDAs) in 1998 was a national attempt for policymakers to redefine the economic and policy geographies of regions. The RDAs were non-departmental public bodies charged with advancing regional economic development and applying government policy at a local level. Their approach to creative industries strategy was dominated by an interest in identifying clusters of creative enterprises, a result of the governmental responsibility for RDAs lying with the then Department for Trade and Industry (Greenhalgh & Shaw, 2003). They were complemented by Regional Cultural Consortia (RCCs), another New Labour invention established in 1999. RCCs were charged with leading on regional cultural strategies and moulded to the same “holistic definition” of culture promulgated by the DCMS at both national and local levels (Lutz, 2006, p. 25). Together, they sought methodologies for sector mapping research that highlighted sector strengths and values within the English regions. A Regional Cultural Data Framework proposed standardised data collection for mapping cultural production chains locally, whilst national statistical instruments were also developed for the DCMS Evidence Toolkit, resulting in tensions between data requirements and definitions used across this range of policy geographies (Lutz, 2006).

During the early 2000s, widespread support developed for creative cluster policy models (Swords, 2013), drawing on Porter’s argument that the most globally successful clusters of firms in similar industries are “strikingly common around the world” (Porter, 1990, p. 120). Most English regions highlighted their creative industries clusters within regional strategy documents: for example, film and glass making clusters in the North East, film, TV and digital clusters in the South West, particularly around Bristol, web design and Internet services in Yorkshire and Humberside, and a variety of creative industries production clusters within the North West (Jayne, 2005). The identification of these clusters was highly dependent on the mapping capacity and approach taken within each region.

Whilst a national data framework existed, the lack of consensus over standard industrial classifications for mapping CCIs has proliferated methodologies that were at best highly contestable and at worst primitive (Jayne, 2005); even the seminal Creative Industries Mapping Document (DCMS, 1998) has been found in hindsight to be under-researched and ill-informed (Gross, 2020). This was improved following a review of the national statistics on creative industries in 2013 that brought in data on creative occupations in non-creative industrial sectors (DCMS, 2016). The quest to map the economic geography of the CCIs continues unabated with varying approaches (e.g. Gong & Hassink, 2017; Mateos-Garcia & Bakhshi, 2016; Siepel et al., 2020) which aim to identify creative clusters, their agglomeration, spillover and multiplier effects on localities (Gutierrez-Posada et al., 2021; *PEC*, 2021). However, debates on the inadequacies of evidencing regional creative industries persist, not only in terms of standardisation and data availability, but also in the social and political agency of measures that are grappling simultaneously with economic and cultural values (Bunting et al., 2019; Campbell et al., 2017).

This relationship between culture and economy is a “wicked problem” (Rittel & Webber, 1973) for creative industries policy, which actively harness the economic value of cultural production through a variety of discursive strategies, repositioning key terms and definitions from arts to cultural industries to creative economy (Garnham, 2005). There are multiple models which deploy econometrics to locate creativity as a generator of value within wider industrial and occupational fields (DCMS, 2008; Nesta, 2012, 2013), or rippling out from the heart of concentric circles of arts, culture and creativity to other sectors (Throsby, 2008). There are also those who wish to unshackle CCI strategies from cultural policy, instead arguing that the economic value which the creative industries propose to these policy fields are defined discretely as either “cultural” or “economic” (e.g. Bakhshi & Cunningham, 2016). Recognising a political expediency to the assumed relationship between the “dynamic” value of creative industries and the rest of the economy, Potts and Cunningham (2008) aim to reconstruct the rationale for policy interventions through economic theory. They derive four logic models: welfare subsidy, competition, economic growth and innovation, the latter two of which they find supported by empirical evidence, and each requiring different policy approaches. They locate creative industries as central to economies through their role in the transfer of knowledge and innovation:

According to model 4, the creative industries do not drive economic growth directly, as might a boom in the primary resource sector or the housing market for example, but rather facilitate the conditions of *change in the economic order*...Culture is indeed a public good, but for dynamic not static reasons. Unlike the value of museums or classical arts, which seek cultural value through the maintenance of past knowledge, creative industries value lies in the development and adoption of new knowledge. (p. 239, italics added)

Using the rhetoric of creativity, rather than culture, the “state-economic” (Banks & O’Connor, 2017, p. 645) parenthesis of the creative industries welds digital technology and hard infrastructure to knowledge economies and soft power. Situated within economic geography, creative industries policies tend to be oddly non-place specific: they are not interested in the singular site (as discussed by Bell & Orozco, this volume). Rather, they prioritise national and standardisable frames over locally-nuanced and discursive properties that might complicate a comparative analysis or trouble the efficiencies of methodologies promoted central government through the Treasury’s Green Book (O’Brien, 2010). As such, they can be understood as political ontologies, acting “on behalf” of their interests (Graham, this volume). It is when creative economy approaches leave the abstract domains of the supra-regional and economic, to become situated within the local policy contexts, that they become troubled by issues of culture and power, of cultural policy and politics, whether through the subjugation of a creative precariat under the guise of the rising “creative class” (Florida, 2002; McGuigan, 2009; Banks, 2017; Brook et al., 2020) or the uneven outcomes for people and places of culture-led regeneration policy transfer (Evans, 2010; Peck, 2005):

There is a danger that an increasingly formulaic imported “creative-city” agenda will be imposed on places in a damaging and/or unrealistic manner, ignoring local needs, and missing opportunities to galvanize already existing or vernacular cultural expressions. (UNESCO & UNDP, 2013, p. 85)

The problems of irrelevant or inappropriate policy transfer and the imposition of “top down” policies on places are familiar within critical cultural policy studies. Where this chapter differs is in its object of focus that is not on the subjects (the beneficiaries or victims) of policy transfer. Rather we pay attention here to the mediation and translation of national/

supra-regional policies for creative industries as they encounter local interests and regional identities. We consider how Local Industrial Strategies provide the means to do “boundary work” (Lamont & Molnár, 2002) between central and regional policy domains through the discourses of creative industries and the creative economy, which in turn provide symbolic boundaries for the Greater Manchester and West Midlands city-regions. In the next section, we explore the contexts for this boundary work within the politics and new policy infrastructures of the English regionalism.

### REGIONALISING INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY

A decade after the foundation of the RDAs, the emergency Coalition budget of 2010 sought to remove centralised funding for regional growth and establish Local Enterprise Partnerships to encourage a new localism which offered a central role for local business partners and leaders, and which aimed to redraw the boundaries for economic strategy. Regional policy infrastructures including RDAs and regional Government Offices were dismantled through large-scale disinvestment entitled the “Bonfire of the Quangos” (O’Leary, 2015). In a joint letter defining these sub-national reforms, Business Secretary Vince Cable and Communities Secretary Eric Pickles wrote (Cable & Pickles, 2010):

We have been concerned that some local and regional boundaries do not reflect functional economic areas. We wish to enable partnerships to better reflect the natural economic geography of the areas they serve and hence to cover real functional economic and travel to work areas. To be sufficiently strategic, we would expect that partnerships would include groups of upper tier authorities. If it is clearly the wish of business and civic leaders to establish a local enterprise partnership for a functional economic area that matches existing regional boundaries, we will not object. (p. 2)

This statement effectively removed central accountability (and funding) for regional economic development, whilst acknowledging that sub-national local scales remain a facet of industrial strategy. The matter of regional development is not easily divorced from national policy, nor politics, and remains in a contingent and binding relationship even as regional infrastructure is disassembled (Rossiter & Price, 2013). Indeed, despite the lack of central guidance on how the newly formed LEPs should behave

and be constituted, these policy changes have been described as representing “a significant increase in the level of centralisation of industrial policy” (Peck et al., 2013, p. 838) adding further to the evidence of the UK as the most centralised nation in the developed world (O’Farrell, 2019).

A programme of city-regional devolution has followed these structural reforms, beginning with the devolution deal with Greater Manchester in 2014. The contractual nature of city-regional devolution in England has done little to buck the political tradition of Westminster control, rather as Sandford (2017) argues they are more akin to service level agreements delivered through locally sourced delivery:

[D]evolution deals are best understood not as developments in territorial governance, but as a series of contract-style agreements between central government and local public bodies, to pursue agreed outcomes in discrete policy areas where a common interest can be identified. (p. 64)

Like the devolution deals, the LIS join a roll call of national-regional policy instruments in England from “Towards an Urban Renaissance” (Department for Communities and Local Government, 2000) and the “State of the English Cities” (Parkinson et al., 2006) under New Labour, to the Tory-led Growing Places Fund (2011–2015), Towns Fund (2019) and Levelling up Fund (2020). Shaped by objectives established centrally, they identify common policy areas between national and the local, providing resources over which places compete. They act, we argue here, as boundary objects to promote interaction between the policy actors of local/regional and national government. As they do so, they both reveal and define boundaries and hierarchies, as well as common interests, practices and discourses (Spee & Jarzabkowski, 2009). They provide translation of policy discourse across symbolic boundaries, which Lamont & Molnár describe as “conceptual distinctions made by social actors to categorise objects, people, practices, and even time and space” (2002, p. 168) that are historical, cultural and often related to place. By promoting symbolic repertoires, boundary objects have the potential to align different political interests through a common language, although this may not necessarily indicate shared meanings. Furthermore, they can be used politically “as powerful players to shape the outcomes that can be designated to particular tools in order to legitimate their own interests” (Spee & Jarzabkowski, 2009, p. 225).

A concern here is that whether regional and place-based interests are realised through this boundary work. Peck et al. (2013) suggest that “spatially-blind” policies may not be in themselves “space-neutral”, the danger being that:

place is viewed as relevant to industrial policy only when addressing the effects of actions rather than their specification; Regions and localities have therefore been reduced to containers within which a-spatial policies are delivered rather than sites of socio-economic interaction that can be vital for knowledge production and exchange. (p. 836)

By contrast, place-based models for regional economic development share the principles of collaborative governance, context specificity and “understandings of place that are sociospatial historical products and processes” (Pugalis & Bentley, 2014, p. 563).

It is in this context that we examine LIS: as potential boundary objects with which to agree, disagree, and practice national-regional policy discourses that shape creative industries strategies at a city-regional level. Whilst we are not able to evaluate the outcomes of the LIS on regional CCIS and their efficacy in driving economic growth, their analysis presents an opportunity to consider how places are represented within these agendas and to assess whether they are more than vessels for national policy agendas. The following section briefly sets out our research methodology, ahead of analysing the LIS case studies of Greater Manchester and the West Midlands.

## METHODOLOGY

Firstly, we relate the recent histories and processes of English regional devolution and policy making that led to the two LIS pilots, and identify the key protagonists involved at regional and national levels. We do so in order to establish the contexts for the production of these policy instruments and consider their influence on the social practices and discourses at play. The background story of the Industrial Strategy (BEIS, 2017) and how it came to include CCIs as economic drivers is recalled. This is followed by a critical discourse analysis approach (Fairclough, 2003) which is applied to three sets of policy documents: the national Industrial Strategy (BEIS, 2017) and its associated Independent Review of Creative Industries Sector (Bazalgette, 2017) and the two LIS (GMCA, 2019; WMCA, 2019).

We have identified critical discourse analysis as an appropriate approach to identify the syntactic, semantic and pragmatic boundaries and symbolic repertoires within the field of strategy work that is LIS. Following Fairclough (2003) we identify orders of discourse that allow us to consider the social practices embedded in these texts by genres and styles. Genres, or ways of acting, provide structure to social interaction, and are distinct from styles, which comprise ways of being, in that they can be adapted and adopted by those who use them (Collin, 2012). We also look for key absences of discourses within the LIS and identify them as social events. To perform the analysis, all documents were manually coded and auto-coded in Nvivo to identify and compare key phrases and themes as nodes and to identify and interrogate their semantic context and positioning. Keywords were also searched as text queries to establish frequency of use: we searched for key phrases and terms established with the Independent Review of Creative Industries Sector (Bazalgette, 2017) that alluded to specific forms of CCI policy rationales, drawing on the literature review of CCI strategy research. Codebooks were prepared to isolate text and to analyse and track the particular genres and styles of policy discourse when referring to CCIs were represented within the strategy tools.

## HISTORIES OF DEVOLUTION: A TALE OF TWO SECOND-CITY REGIONS

As discussed in the introduction, the adoption of devolved responsibility for local economic productivity is not a novel idea and the LIS build upon existing structures such as RDAs, Local Enterprise Partnerships (2011–), Mayoral Combined Authorities (2011–) and City Deals (2012–). In this longer history, LIS are the most recent experiment by the UK government with the hope that devolved local authority offers an effective means to pursue national economic ambitions. This section delves into the regional contexts of Manchester and Birmingham and considers how specific histories and political landscapes of two city-regions shaped LIS pilot development.

*Greater Manchester: Devolution and the ‘Manchester Model’:* In November 2014, Greater Manchester became the first devolved city-regional combined authority in England, following a Devolution Agreement between the Treasury and Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA) (LGA, 2019). This agreement handed over local

responsibility for transport, housing and planning as well as other additional powers to the GMCS in exchange for the creation of the city-region mayoral office; Greater Manchester voters elected Andy Burnham into this role in May 2017. Greater Manchester is a large conurbation in the North West of England encompassing two cities (Salford and Manchester), 10 district authorities, and 30 towns and large villages. Two hours from London by train, but culturally very distant and traditionally a Labour party stronghold, it might be surprising that Greater Manchester was selected as a pilot area for LIS were it not for combination of historical inter-regional collaboration and contemporary political expediency.

During the period of Coalition government, lobbying for the devolution of skills provision, employment and economic productivity strategy was spear-headed by local spokespeople and politicians (Westwood, 2015). Reaching agreement involved a small number of powerful men—the then Chancellor of Exchequer, George Osborne, City Council CEO Sir Howard Bernstein, Council leader, Richard Leese, and Treasury officials Mike Emmerich and Jim O’Neill—and was highly predicated on cross-party interpersonal connections. Osborne, an MP in neighbouring Cheshire and the first Chair of the Northern Powerhouse (Westwood, 2015) provided Manchester with the requisite visibility in Whitehall, a gambit for his own political legacy:

There was no white paper or consultative document, let alone a debate in parliament. Manchester’s deal with Osborne was reached by sleight of hand, by one man [Bernstein] with a political problem to solve and another who saw this as an opportunity. (Jenkins, 2015, n.p.)

Manchester has long been an expert in boosterism, with a reputation for strong leadership, place-based working and advocacy at a city-region level long before the 2014 devolution deal (Localis, 2009). The city was familiar with the politics and discourse of creative industries and creative clusters, and the technocracy of their extrinsic powers, having come top of Richard Florida’s Creative Class Boho Index exercise in 2003, which ranked UK cities by their propensity to host the “creative class” (Carter, 2003). The move of the BBC to MediaCityUK in 2011 and ring-fenced £78m investment in a new flagship arts building, The Factory, a new home for Manchester International Festival, as part of the devolution deal (Jenkins, 2015) gave further weight to national acknowledgement of Manchester’s creative city status. In the specific context of the LIS, the

2009 Manchester Independent Economic Review (MIER) was “a path-breaker” for the 2019 Independent Prosperity Review that provided evidence for economic development strategy. The project also benefitted from the longer history of the Northern Powerhouse (Shaw & Tewdwr-Jones, 2017):

There had been an earlier attempt to encourage a pan-regional approach via the Northern Way initiative between 2004 and 2011. While lacking resources and strategic powers, the initiative did encourage a culture of collaborative working, created a robust database covering a wider spatial level and created a momentum that cities such as Manchester, Sheffield and Liverpool could harness when promoting the city region approach. (p. 219)

The Prosperity Review and the Northern Powerhouse made visible the practical local networks and a spatial economic identity required to survive the path to devolution, if not make it a poster child. Speaking in Manchester, Osborne stated how with subsequent local devolution deals, “I will not impose this [Manchester’s] model on anyone: but neither will I settle for less” (2015). The case of “Devo Manc” has been described as “a broadly accepted narrative [that] local leaders in Manchester put aside their parochial and political differences with each other and with central government, and were granted extra powers in return” (Haughton et al., 2016, p. 356). This solidarity is noteworthy: Manchester is unusual in having only one local enterprise partnership (LEP) involved in its Local Industrial Strategy. The combined authority, the first in the country in 2011, had already brought the 10 district authorities together (Bailey, 2014). The other two LIS pilot locales—Cambridge-Milton Keynes-Oxford Corridor and the West Midlands—differ in the scale and cohesion of local governing bodies in regional governance, the former complicated by its topology across four sub-regional areas, and the latter through its different spatial and regional identity (BEIS/HCLG, 2019). The following section explores how these differences combined with the practices and dynamics of the individual actors involved in the West Midlands.

*The West Midlands Engine:* The differences between Manchester and the Midlands are noticeable in the policy-granted nomenclature of their surrounding areas: the “Northern Powerhouse” and the “Midlands Engine” (UK Parliament, 2016): A powerhouse is a singular institution, monolithic and static with lines of production leading into and out of a designated space. Conversely, an engine is a complex interaction of parts, and usually used to get somewhere else. This suggests that both in terms

of practical governance and regional identity, if Greater Manchester is conceived as a “place” with a solid sense of grounding, the West Midlands social identity is constructed through connections made within and reaching out to many (other) places. The region’s largest city Birmingham is similarly associated with pluralism, referred to as “the city of a thousand trades” since the nineteenth-century (Brown et al., 2007).

Despite these allusions to mobility and engineering prowess, Birmingham’s city-regional ambitions have been characterised as a “mournful Cinderella unable to hitch a ride to the devolution ball” (Bailey, 2014). In the early 2010s, there was a lack of coherence to regional policy infrastructure as well as local opposition to importing a “Manchester model” of devolution. Unlike the “under-bounded” city of Manchester, which has a dependency on the surrounding local authority districts it cuts across, not least since they contain many of Manchester’s suburbs (Blond & Morrin, 2014), the city of Birmingham has a much larger geographic footprint and a more complex association with near-but-not-connected cities of Coventry and Wolverhampton. Unlike Greater Manchester’s orientation of a singular conurbation surrounding the city of Manchester (and the less often mentioned conjoined city of Salford), the West Midlands according to its LIS document is formed of three distinct areas: Greater Birmingham & Solihull, Coventry & Warwickshire and the Black Country, which also correspond to its LEPs. Regional integrity is more diffuse and trickier to operationalise, challenging external perceptions to the point where Jeffrey observes “there is no [...] ‘West Midland’ social identity” (2006, p. 65).

In spite of this, devolution for the region became semantically shackled to the Midlands Engine, a phrase that also confusingly includes the East Midlands, first used by George Osborne during a visit to an engineering firm in Derby on 1 June 2015 (Osborne, 2015). The devolution deal was brokered with the newly formed West Midlands Combined Authority, bringing together three LEPs, and featuring Enterprise Zone bids, the controversial High Speed Two railway expansion, and a City Devolution Bill of £36.5 million. The requirement of an elected Mayor was met with trepidation, coming just three years after Birmingham voters rejected the idea of a mayor in a citywide referendum. Concerns about this “centrally-orchestrated localism” (Pike et al., 2016, p. 10) compounded with competition locally for leadership between the different parts of the newly bounded region. For example, the creation of a Regional Chamber laid the path for domination by Birmingham as largest local chamber, leading to “fractious divisions...centred on questions concerning the policy

process and personnel rather than the substance of policy or political decision making.” (Wood et al., 2005, p. 308). However, it was the nexus of relationships between central government and the regions that was to prove pivotal in securing the West Midlands deal.

As with Greater Manchester, a charismatic political cast was once more responsible for shaping the agenda. Sir Albert Bore, twice leader of Birmingham City Council and long-term champion of the city’s regeneration, pushed ahead the combined authority agenda to create the necessary legal framework (Shaw & Tewdwr-Jones, 2017). He was joined by Westminster allies, Greg Clark as Local Government Secretary and Lord Heseltine, the formidable figure behind decades of local regeneration initiatives and architect of combined authorities (Brown, 2015). A known supporter of devolution, Clarke was crucial to its defence from those less in favour amidst the turmoil of central government reshuffling and leadership elections following the EU referendum (Pidd, 2016). Critically, Andy Street, the former Managing Director for John Lewis department stores and Chair of the Greater Birmingham and Solihull Local Enterprise Partnership, became the Conservative hope for the West Midlands deal as Mayoral candidate in October 2016, shifting the direction away from Osborne’s Manchester model. Osborne’s removal to the backbenches by Theresa May in the previous July had created a new configuration for central-local negotiations, and the means for the West Midlands to cement its place alongside Greater Manchester in the devolution race (Harrison, 2016).

On 4 May 2017, Andy Street became metro mayor for the West Midlands and Andy Burnham, his Labour counterpart, the Mayor of Greater Manchester. Their election symbolised the culmination of a “disorganised devolution” which in principle allows for “the closer integration of administrative and functional economic boundaries and also encourages collaboration across a much wider metropolitan territory” (Shaw & Tewdwr-Jones, 2017: p. 218). It also represented continued negotiation between the national and the local, legitimisation of implementation plans for newly devolved powers, and competition for resources.

For both regions, the introduction of the LIS pilots a year later provided an opportunity to develop a locally produced, place-based framework to identify strategic priorities and boost economic development, productivity and prosperity. They also, as we argue below, acted as boundary objects, legitimising CCI policy at a regional level. The following section outlines the development of the Industrial Strategy and details how creativity found its way into the LIS.

## THE NATIONAL STORY OF “CREATIVITY” WITHIN LOCAL INDUSTRIAL STRATEGIES

The *Industrial Strategy: Building a Britain Fit for the Future* (BEIS, 2017) was devised following the EU referendum. The strategy targeted national economic productivity, promising to build a post-Brexit Britain fit for the future through the “five foundations of productivity: ideas, people, infrastructure, business environment and places” (BEIS, 2017, p. 6). The idea of LIS emerge from the last of these foundations, to “allow places to make the most of their distinctive strengths” (BEIS, 2018, p. 4). Despite their national umbrella, individual regions are the authors of their own LIS. Beyond the five categories, and like the LEPs, there is little substantive information about what they should contain (Clayton, 2018). Instead, there is only guidance on *how* to produce LIS: they should be the “product of extensive consultation with businesses, [...] public partners and the civil society sector” and that they should be “long-term, based on clear evidence and aligned to the national Industrial Strategy” (BEIS, 2018, p. 220–221). The responsibility of which industrial sectors, and who or what determines them, lies with the local.

There is no compulsion, therefore, to refer to CCIs, and there is no mention of them within the *Local Industrial Strategy Prospectus* (2018). Indeed, when the national Industrial Strategy was published, it was critiqued for being excessively STEM-oriented (Creative Industries Federation, 2017; Cultural Learning Alliance, 2017; Dawood, 2017a, 2017b). It had identified four Grand Challenges that it aimed to address through investment in technology and science, and sector deals were initially established in four areas: Life Sciences, Construction, Artificial Intelligence, and the Automotive Industry. The absence of any substantive discussion of the CCIs and their role within economic growth, despite over 20 references to “creative industries” within the document, concerned sector advocates such as the Creative Industries Federation (2017), who responded that:

[whilst] the White Paper is a step in the right direction including a number of important levers for the creative industries and wider economy we are deeply concerned that these positive moves will be undermined by a lack of ambition from government in terms of skills policy. (n.p.)

There swiftly followed the government-commissioned Independent Review of the Creative Industries (September 2017, Bazalgette review

henceforth) led by Sir Peter Bazalgette, then Chair of ITV and recent Chair of Arts Council England, who had consistently championed the contribution of arts to the creative economy and the need for government, business, and the arts to work more closely to achieve this (Bazalgette, 2016). His review predicted the significance of CCIs for future economic success and productivity in the UK, forecasting Gross Value Added to the UK economy of £128.4 billion by 2025 based on a 3.9% year-on-year increase (Bazalgette, 2017, p. 4). Setting out recommendations to support places with the most propensity to host “Key creative clusters” (2017, p. 6), it argues that through agglomeration and a focus on existing clusters, the similarity of properties of the creative industries to those other sectors might support knowledge transfer *within* local economies. It argued for a “bottom-up process which allows localities, which often have a firmer grasp of their growth potential and needs than central government, to direct policy development” (Bazalgette, 2017, p. 6). The policy rationale is that this addresses “informational asymmetry” by providing more efficient business support to micro-enterprises typical of CCIs and technology sectors, since the co-location of firms provides efficiencies of scale but also because they foster a “fusion of skills [...] alongside economic and social spillovers” (Bazalgette, 2017, p. 15). Other recommendations include the need for consolidated access to finance for CCIS including a Creative Industries Ladder of Growth with a regional focus.

The Bazalgette review managed therefore to combine three out of the four policy logics, welfare subsidy, economic growth and innovation, identified by Potts and Cunningham (2008) and discussed above. The recommendations of the review are largely place-shaping (rather than place-based) constructs, however, working through rather than with places as localised policy intermediaries, and positioning CCIs rhetorically as agents of change. For example, the utility of cultural and heritage offer, according to the Review, is to enhance “the attractiveness of locations to live and work and acting as an accelerator for regeneration” (Bazalgette, 2017, p. 16). In this configuration place is a locale for culture and creativity to present their welfare utility:

[g]iven that there is research showing a positive correlation between wellbeing and productivity, a place-based focus on the cultural and creative sectors should be a key element in the government’s overall approach. (p. 16)

The issue of unequal creative industries' geographies and their uneven growth also informs the Creative Cluster fund recommendations. The Review is concerned by the large concentration of creative sector jobs in London and the South East, off-set by a number of core cities such as Manchester, Bristol and Glasgow but is optimistic that through suitable strategic intervention "middle-ranking clusters" can achieve "world-class status" (Bazalgette, 2017):

The challenge is for local partnerships of councils, LEPs, higher education and business to develop long-term strategies which merit and receive tailored support from government and national agencies. (p. 16)

The "local" here is responsible for competing for resources and developing methods to tackle the "known barriers to productivity, not least because having a focus on regional clusters will tackle regional inequalities and seek to address the barriers that prevent small businesses accessing business support and investment to grow" (2017, p. 13). Whilst this opens up the possibility for place-based working, in that these strategies are defined locally, the suggestion that creative clusters strategies will tackle regional inequalities seems misaligned: by their definition, clusters depend on sector activities being in some places and not others. The promulgation of creative clusters, whilst rationalised through the economic logic chains of agglomeration, spillovers and multiplier effects, seems counter-intuitive to the principle of combating geographic and intra-regional inequalities also expressed within the Bazalgette review and more broadly in academic discourse (e.g. Tether, 2019).

The following section analyses the LIS documents to consider how CCI policy discourses are represented. We conclude this chapter with discussion of how these boundary objects mediate "the local" and are instrumental in paroling regional borders, following Paasi (2020), as complex social practices and discourses in the institutionalisation of these city-regions.

### LOCATING CCIs WITHIN LIS

The passage opening the main body of the Greater Manchester (GM) LIS (GMCA, 2019) provides a typically bombastic sense of city-regional self, which combines the narrative of Manchester's industrial might with one of political, cultural and geographical distinction:

Greater Manchester is known globally for its heritage and its pioneering and progressive culture, which reflects the distinctive personality of the city-region, its towns, rural communities and its people. A rich history, including the establishment of the modern cooperative movement, and strong cultural and sporting assets give Greater Manchester a globally recognised brand that speaks of innovation, creativity and social progress. Its scientific and industrial inventions, social movements, art and design, music and sport continue to create impact throughout the world. (p. 18)

By comparison, the West Midlands (WM) LIS opens with a narrative of recent growth that can be further extended, linked to the region's role as central transport hub, its industrial heritage in car manufacture and promised investment in connectivity and green technologies:

The West Midlands is in renaissance: output is up 27 per cent over the past five years. Productivity increased last year at twice the rate of the UK average. High Speed 2 will further strengthen the region's connectivity with national markets—90 per cent of which are already within a four-hour drive. The West Midlands, working with partners in the Midlands Engine, is also a growing international force: foreign direct investment projects have trebled since 2011. Carbon emissions have reduced by 18 per cent over the last five years. (WMCA, 2019, p. 7)

Although there are actually fewer references to the phrase “creative” within the GM LIS than in the WM LIS, the terms through which they are discussed—or to use Fairclough's phrasing, the genres which represent them within broader policy discourse—places CCIs as a discrete and important industrial sector whose existence can be (and has been) used strategically for local benefit. The GM LIS strategy identifies “Digital, Creative and Media” as one of four key sectors for driving productivity and achieving national and local strategic goals (see Fig. 7.1).

Coupled consciously with digital economies, CCIs are framed spatially by the acknowledgement of their supra-regional standing (GMCA, 2019):

Greater Manchester has the largest digital and creative sectors outside the south east, with the potential to create internationally significant clusters in broadcasting, content creation and media. (p. 12)

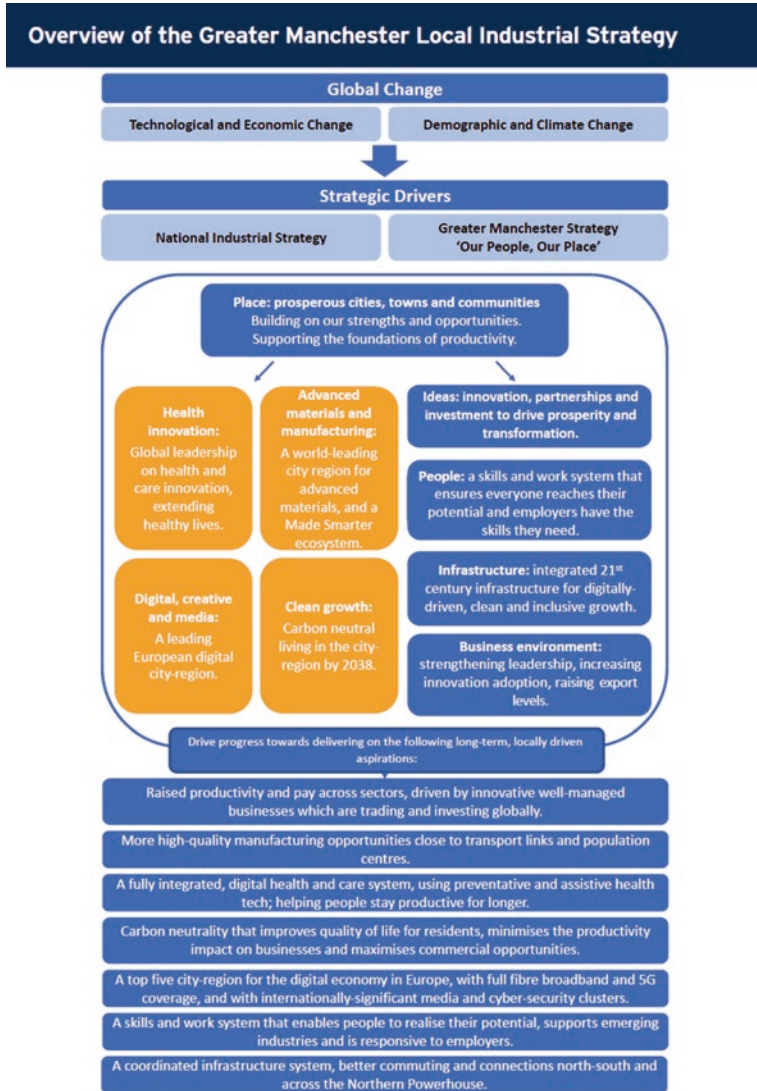


Fig. 7.1 Overview diagram of the Greater Manchester Local Industrial Strategy (GMCA, 2019, p. 10)

Within the report (GMCA, 2019), the CCI cluster, MediaCityUK, which hosts the relocated BBC and ITV production studios co-located with the Lowry Arts Centre in Salford, is identified as an asset:

Greater Manchester has many place-based strengths: from the dynamic city centre, to the creative cluster around the Quays and the concentration of research excellence on the Oxford Road Corridor, to the industrial hubs in Trafford Park, Rochdale, Wigan, and Bolton. (p. 17)

In contrast, explicit references to the CCIs in the WM LIS are peripheral to the main discussion of place-based sector strengths, and there is little discussion of creative clusters. Indeed, CCIs are not identified as a growth sector in their own right. Instead, the genre employed within the WM LIS places them under the heading of “Creative content, techniques and technologies” (WMCA, 2019, p.35), emphasising the affordances of design and creativity and their value to innovation and manufacturing through diffusion rather than agglomeration:

Creative skills and techniques are driving innovation in all industries. Factories of the future will be constructed by designers, data analysts and visualisation specialists, powered by 5G connectivity and involve the rapid design, build and deployment of virtual and physical components. These approaches, such as a ‘distributed factory’, will be developed and adopted in the West Midlands, as our manufacturing and transport supply chains evolve for the future. (WMCA, 2019, p. 35)

Therefore, rather than mapping and locating CCI clusters spatially, the WM LIS emphasises the fluid properties of technologies and techniques that ripple out across other sectors, through creative occupations within other industrial sectors. A further example of this discursive framing can be seen when the fields of virtual reality and augmented reality are described (WMCA, 2019):

[D]esign-led thinking originating in the gaming industry is combined with virtual reality (VR) and augmented reality (AR) to develop, prototype and test new vehicles across automotive, aerospace, rail and last mile logistics as well as the wider digital manufacturing sector...VR and superfast connectivity are being used to train the next generation of paramedics, engineers and surgeons. (p. 36)

Cultural events and designations (such as the forthcoming Coventry City of Culture and the 2022 Commonwealth Games) are viewed as test-beds for digital products and innovation; theatre performance and live music are positioned as responding to population growth and increasing demand for “creative experiences which are stimulating the market for the region’s cultural offer” (WMCA, 2019, p. 36).

This reiterates the rationale of the WM Strategic Economic Plan (WMCA, 2016a) which defines the “cultural economy including sport” as an “enabling sector”, alongside retail and public sector (WMCA, 2016b, p. 4). This plan set ambitious targets for tripling the productivity of regional CCIs through infrastructure investment to create “transferable approaches—for example the contribution of gaming to innovation in manufacturing, transferable skills, including the attractions of creative industries as a pathway into manufacturing [and] digital as a driver of public service reform” (WMCA, 2016a, p. 41).

By contrast, the GM LIS presents a spatialised narrative of creative clusters, describing several different locales where creativity and the broader digital and creative industries are present, not just at Salford Quays or Manchester city centre. Care is taken to mention the ten district authorities and specific sites within them where CCIs may have extrinsic benefits and spillover effects (GMCA, 2019):

From the creative cluster in Ramsbottom to the emerging digital sector springing up around Ashton Old Baths, from Wigan Old Court’s innovative approach to the repurposing of old buildings in the town centre and the increasingly diverse offer in Oldham’s creative and independent quarter, it is clear that the digital and creative industries can be a driving force in revitalising local towns and high streets. (p. 50)

The responsibility for diffusion and spillover into other sectors lies primarily in the “vibrancy and coverage of the networks of the city region’s digital industries, which have created intersections with Greater Manchester’s traditional sector strengths” (GMCA, 2019, p. 48). Within the Manchester LIS, creativity is also associated with a broad welfare based definition of culture:

Innovation and creativity are synonymous with culture and a Greater Manchester Culture Strategy is being developed to create the conditions for creativity to flourish in every part of the city-region, enriching the lives of all

residents and protecting, diversifying and growing Greater Manchester's unique culture, heritage strengths, assets and ecology. (p. 48)

Like the WM LIS, creative content is discussed but overwhelming in relation to specific locales of production and incubation, including MediaCityUK and the Sharp Project in North Manchester, but also the Factory, which is visualised within the LIS as (GMCA, 2019):

a world-class cultural space being developed at the border of Manchester and Salford [which] will create new opportunities to bring the world's most exciting artists and creatives to the city-region and embed further interactions with content creators, digital companies and audiences. (p. 49)

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Critical discourse analysis of the LIS pilots for Greater Manchester and the West Midlands reveals how these documents mediate the discursive practices of the national Industrial Strategy and its associated CCI sector review and promotes interaction between national and local policy actors. The genres of CCI strategies adopted and adapted by the distinct LIS for each city-region provide the means for the local actors to interact and to “coordinate their utterances with the utterances of other actors” (Collin, 2012, p. 85). The styles, or ways of being, of these discourses represent these actors' interests and reveal their differences; they constitute discursive boundaries for these city-regions through the expectations of utility placed on CCI policy in relation to place. The development of these policy instruments, established locally by local actors, mix the rhetoric of creativity with local symbolic resources drawn from their cultural, historical and socio-political contexts. In tracing the national socio-political landscapes and analysing the place-based LIS strategic documents in tandem, this chapter offers novel methods in negotiating the “location” and potential local-ness of creative industries policy.

Both the Greater Manchester and the West Midlands LIS documents take up the recommendations of Bazalgette and signal how CCIs might produce extrinsic effects within broader economies and sectors. Interestingly, if somewhat crudely, they seem to select policy logics from the symbolic repertoire of the Review that meet with their public regional identities and different political ontologies. For example, the Midlands Engine emphasises the logic of innovation through complex interactions

within creative economies unconfined by single sectors, transferring values and effect across diffuse networks and geographies, and drawing heavily on the symbolism and shared place memories of manufacturing and automotive production. The Northern Powerhouse of Greater Manchester meanwhile combines welfare utility with the more traditional agglomeration effects of creative clusters, reflecting its self confidence in the singular sites of production and the city-region's track record in the discourses and practices of creative class capital. The centrality of Manchester (the city) within the Manchester Model relates the city's claim as birthplace to industrial revolution to city-regional identity, and actively bounds and locates creative clusters, linking creative, digital and media sectors together with cultures of place.

These are active and reproductive selections, which draw on and contribute to the social identity of the two city-regions. Paasi (2020) argues that regional boundaries and narratives of identity are not fixed, and rather the topologies of contemporary regions are stretched in space, containing varied social relations that network and fluctuate:

Regions acquire their borders in complex social practices and discourses as part of the institutionalization of region. Borders are hence important as social institutions and symbols, not merely as physical lines [... they are] not bounding the practices and discourses in some abstract way, rather it is the practices and discourses that produce and reproduce such borders. (p. 26)

Viewing LIS pilot documents as boundary objects allows scholars and policymakers alike to unpick the symbolic repertoires and messy interactions within national-regional CCI policy discourses and understand the agency of the local, and the place of culture and creativity, within the ongoing border making of regions.

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PART III

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Practising the Local



## CHAPTER 8

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# Reclaiming Place: Cultural Initiatives in Cretan Villages as Enablers of Citizen Involvement, Local Development and Repopulation

*Olga Kolokytha*

### INTRODUCTION

Globalisation and the transnational flows of people and ideas have turned place into a site of negotiation, with mainstream notions of place and space to be contested (Amin, 2004). Established concepts of borders are challenged and replaced by flows and networks, in which spaces are multiple, de-territorialised and non-fixed (Sassatelli, 2010). In an era of transnational mobility, cities and regions are still viewed as territorial entities; the local is associated with the near and familiar, as opposed to the global which is linked with the abstract, the afar and the hegemonic (Amin, 2004). Travel and mobility reinforce association with place, and place

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identity contributes to a rediscovery of place rather than a distance from it (Lewicka, 2005). Despite globalisation, mobility and the socio-political changes of the past 40 years, place is still an object of attachments and people still show strong sentiments for and attachment to the local (Lewicka, 2011).

This chapter is focused on the *local* and *rural* level; it discusses how local cultural initiatives in rural areas can serve as instruments to reclaim place, contribute to the development of the local area and function as enablers of repopulation. It explores the case study of Giortes Rokkas (Giortes Rokkas, 2022), translated as Rokkas Festivities, an initiative developed in the inland of the western part of the island of Crete in Greece, aimed at encouraging citizen involvement and repopulation. This initiative showcases a model of grassroots rural cultural policy where culture and creativity can thrive despite a lack of systematic state cultural policy support.

The chapter expands the remit of cultural policy discourse with evidence that contributes to our understanding of the role of culture as a means of supporting the repopulation of rural areas. It stresses a de-commodified use of culture in cultural policy that is aimed at creating social connections and social fabric rather than at financial profit. It demonstrates that cultural policy can flourish also in areas that are under-served from cultural policy, showing how the local community can simultaneously take the role of policy-maker, producer and audience and that cultural policy can also emerge by non-experts. The chapter also contributes to the scholarship on Greek cultural policy, a largely neglected and under-researched area in the wider context of cultural policy research.

The empirical data is based on research conducted in late 2018 and early 2019. In-depth, semi structured interviews were conducted with members of the Rokka team, as well as informal interviews with members of the audience that helped to “set the scene” and provided preliminary material that was explored further through the in-depth interviews with members of Giortes Rokkas. Additional hard copy material was also analysed including programmes, audience numbers and regional policy documents.

## PLACE IN CULTURAL POLICY AND THE MOVE BEYOND THE CITY AGENDA

Place as physical space has not lost its significance. According to Derrett (2003), the sense of place can be different for different people in different times, as well as for inhabitants and visitors. For a place to be distinct and visited, it has to be created; this is why event organisers put so much emphasis on the venues selected and the experiences offered in an attempt to connect people to places (Derrett, 2003). However, as a result of the neo-liberal entrepreneurial discourse that became increasingly dominant from the 1980s onwards, the attention of cultural policy makers increasingly turned to economic priorities, overlooking the social value of arts and culture (Belfiore, 2002; García, 2004a; Sachs Olsen, 2013; Smidt-Jensen, 2007). This shift resulted in a number of flagship cultural policies across many countries that concentrated on bolstering the positive images of cities combined with a strong focus on urban regeneration, using culture as a tool (Andres & Grésillon, 2013; Belfiore, 2002; Northall, 2008; Smidt-Jensen, 2007). This, in turn, led to a focus on large-scale initiatives such as the European Cities of Culture, international festivals and mega events, all of which were argued to have measurable impacts that supported the instrumentalised use of cultural policy for regeneration (Amin, 2004; Sachs Olsen, 2013).

As a result of the focus on cities as centres of activity, a lot of scholarship on creativity and culture concentrates on urban centres (Bianchini & Parkinson, 1993; Borén & Young, 2013; García, 2004b; Vickery, 2007) but this does not mean that peripheral and rural areas do not have cultural assets of their own or are culturally stagnant. As cultural policies have gradually shifted beyond providing tools for heritage, preservation and creating a sense of identity to become parts of strategies to achieve spatial, economic and social development and enhance the profile of certain areas (Pierantoni, 2015), the periphery and rural areas started getting more attention.

Both villages of the case study that is the focus of this chapter are situated in the periphery, in rural Crete. Periphery as they are away from both the capital of the country and the city of Chania, which is the metropolitan centre of the geographical region; and rural as they are outside cities, in the countryside, and have a very small population. Peripheral, remote, rural areas, such as the one discussed here, can be characterised by accessibility problems, low populations or depopulation and a weak influence in

governance (Petridou & Ioannides, 2012). Local rural development became an important policy in the EU with the reform of the Structural Funds in 1988 to target particularly disadvantaged areas and the introduction of socio-economic development programmes (Ray, 1997, 2000). Local rural development is characterised by a bottom-up, participatory approach with three main elements, namely a territorial rather than a sectorial orientation, emphasis on a smaller than country scale, and a focus on local resources that are used to maximise benefits within the territory (Ray, 1997). It is also based on the needs and perspectives of local people using local participation processes that have a community, cultural or environmental character (*ibid.*).

Although firmly rooted at the local level, this case study places emphasis on the extralocal whose mobilisation is paramount to achieve a dynamic dialectic between internal and external actors, and as such is an example of neo-endogenous development. In order to understand neo-endogenous development, however, it is important to refer to endogenous development first; the LEADER programme is a European Union funded example of a local rural development strategy sharing some common characteristics with the case study. LEADER was introduced to promote rural development in areas with a population of less than 100,000, mainly through small-scale actions, and is an example of endogenous socio-economic development as proposed actions were bottom-up, based on local resources, and involved the participation of the local community, the business and the voluntary sectors (Ray, 2000). LEADER assumes that local areas have more control of the development process as they are mobilising their own local resources and set up mechanisms to sustain local development, but also sees endogenous development as a mechanism of effective intervention that involves extralocal actors (Ray, 2000). The dialectic of local development is manifested through the local engaging the extralocal, whether it is individuals or organisations; territorial identity is shaped using characteristics of the population, but also of the “other”—external or extralocal agents that are used to mobilise the local identity (Ray, 1997).

Stemming from endogenous development, the term neo-endogenous development was introduced to describe “endogenous-based development in which extra-local factors are recognised and regarded as essential but which retains a belief in the potential of local areas to shape their future” (Ray, 2001, p. 4). The development of local areas in neo-endogenous development theory is animated from a combination of actors

a. from within the area, b. from above, such as national governments, and c. from an intermediary level such as non-governmental associations, and neo-endogenous development theory can serve as a strategy to raise awareness of local resources for territorial purposes (Ray, 2001). Although locally rooted, this approach is marked by the interactions between local environments and outside factors (Gkartzios & Lowe, 2019). For Ray, “local collectivity/solidarity is a necessary basis for neo-endogenous development to succeed within the wider context of globalisation” (Ray, 2001, p. 24). Networking between rural regions also plays a paramount role in neo-endogenous development as a means to access non-locally available resources and infrastructure (Chatzichristos et al., 2021).

### RURAL COMMUNITIES AND THE IMPORTANCE OF FESTIVALS

In rural communities, the arts can impact economic and social sustainability in a range of ways (Mahon & Hyyryläinen, 2019), offering a sense of belonging and connection to local population, enhancing opportunities to both connect and socialise and to construct and share individual and collective identities (Anwar-McHenry et al., 2018; Derrett, 2003). It is important for local communities to have their own platforms, rather than using top-down policies, as means to reinforce the sense of local as both space and identity (García, 2004b). The arts can provide such a platform, as they can contribute to strengthening people’s sense of place and community, enhance civic participation and provide opportunities for interaction and engagement with local activities in local communities and rural areas, as well as encourage understanding between different groups of people (Anwar-McHenry, 2011; Mahon & Hyyryläinen, 2019). Culture brings added value to a territory and provides a platform for the generation of social and economic value that contributes to new forms of active citizenship, new definitions of well-being and soft innovation processes (Sacco et al., 2014, p. 2816).

Petridou and Ioannides (2012) examine how small-scale creative industries contribute to inclusivity, sustainability and quality of life in peripheral areas, highlighting the contribution of grassroots initiatives to territorial cohesion in the periphery. Crawshaw and Gkartzios (2016) research the role of artistic practice in rural community development with reference to its non-economic effects, focusing on the effects of art experience in community relationships, and argue it plays a paramount role in participatory

rural development as a central factor to understand community relationships and their micro-dynamics.

Public celebrations and festivals are particularly important for rural communities as they enhance a collective sense of identity and place and contribute to empowerment, sustainability and revitalisation (Anwar-McHenry, 2011). They have become instruments of regional and local revitalisation with plenty of benefits for rural communities such as enhancing social cohesion, encouraging short-term employment and helping residents to develop skills that will support them finding work in the future. In addition, they also act as mechanisms to reinvent places and their images and “can place or keep towns on the map” (Brennan-Horley, Connell, & Gibson, 2007, p. 72).

Festivals as sites of belonging, participation, connections, information and energy exchange have the ability to offer complex relationships and a sense of community, with communities establishing festivals to highlight feelings of ownership and belonging for resident participants (Derrett, 2003). Mahon and Hyyryläinen (2019) writing about the contribution of festivals to rural change and development, discuss how the arts impact on local development processes, activities and agendas and showcase the level of resilience of the local population in using culture as a means of adapting to change.

Forms of culture not normally associated with rural areas can also contribute to regional transformation and the accumulation of cultural capital; they can trigger inter-regional linkages and transitions in a rural setting, as well as contributing to shifting and reshaping regional identities from ones associated with traditional activities such as fishing and harvesting to more alternative ones connected with gourmet agriculture, retailing, tourism, and entertainment (Gibson, 2002). They can contribute to the economy and the profile of an area, enriching it through creating identities and constructed, rather than only inherent, tradition (Brennan-Horley et al., 2007).

### THE CASE STUDY CONTEXT: SOME NOTES ON GREEK CULTURAL POLICY

National Greek cultural policy has had a longstanding orientation towards a treatment of culture that is focused largely on three categories: cultural heritage and international audiences, the return of the Parthenon marbles

and synergies between culture and tourism (Kouri, 2012). These categories do not appear to have changed through time. As Kouri (2012) argues, the policy trajectory does not seem to move towards the association of culture with access, diversity, participation or the intrinsic benefits of culture, but rather remains focused on the instrumental, and primarily economic impacts of culture. Moreover, Greek cultural policy seems disconnected from the periphery and from regional/local development policy, since it places emphasis on the metropolitan centres, and does not promote, through policy and relevant actions, interconnections of culture with rural development or regeneration.

Cultural policy has become gradually more decentralised since the 1980s when there was a transfer of administration and funding responsibilities to the municipalities, and it is since then that local authorities have become more active in the cultural life of their areas creating cultural infrastructure, institutions and events, supported financially by the state (Konsola & Karachalis, 2010). However, the two metropolises, Athens and Thessaloniki, still dominate the cultural life of the country through the concentration of infrastructure, cultural institutions, creative industries and major events (Konsola & Karachalis, 2010). In contrast to the national level, cultural strategies of medium and small cities tend to focus on social objectives and are mostly aiming at their local community rather than international visitors, but do offer some possibilities for creativity and the promotion of the image of their areas (Konsola & Karachalis, 2010).

The flourishing of festivals and grassroots cultural activity in regional and rural Greece observed in the past few years is a result of the financial crisis and has taken place for mainly two reasons: one is the traditional relation of culture with tourism and to that extent local festivals have been seen as instruments to attract visitors and boost local income; the second one is the need of the population to find spaces of cultural expression, means of participation in the social life of the community and common points of reference in times of uncertainty. Volunteers play a major role in these festivals, underlining the relationship with and the embeddedness of these events in the local communities (Levidou, 2017).

## GIORTES ROKKAS: THE CASE STUDY AND FINDINGS

The neighbouring villages of Rokka and Kera, with approximately 60 inhabitants in total (Seventh Health Region of Crete, 2015), are situated in a hill area in the inland of the Municipality of Kissamos, on the

north-west end of Crete. Kissamos is one of the least touristically developed areas of the wider region and has a low GDP in comparison to other municipalities (Vrentzou-Skordalaki, 2011). Although its range of natural landscapes such as beaches, gorges, olive tree groves and NATURA 2000 areas<sup>1</sup> make it attractive to tourists, the tourism sector is not as developed as in other parts of the region of Chania, resulting in lower numbers of visitors.

Both villages are typical of Cretan hill/semi-mountainous villages: they have few inhabitants<sup>2</sup> who work in agriculture and livestock, and are in danger of complete depopulation as the young generation leaves for academic studies and never returns. Agriculture and livestock are extremely arduous and in the minds of the people they are associated with lack of education, as in the past they were exercised by those unable to finish school or those who did not have the opportunity to study at university. It has therefore been a firm belief and goal of most Cretan families in villages and rural areas that the young generation should leave, that young people should seek a better future in urban centres, where there are more opportunities for jobs that are not as hard.

Giortes Rokkas started as a thought of the Chairman of the Organising Committee who grew up in the village of Rokka. As the area has been declared an archaeological site by the Ministry of Culture in 2011,<sup>3</sup> the Chairman took advantage of the Ministry of Culture programme of the August full moon, aiming to make the site accessible to the wider public and bring life to a semi-abandoned area. The August full moon initiative of the Greek Ministry of Culture links cultural heritage with tourism through allowing the organisation of cultural events the evening of the August full moon date every year in hundreds of archaeological sites, museums and monuments across Greece. These become freely accessible to the public on that day and some open particularly for that purpose.

It took time to convince the Division of Archaeology of the Ministry but eventually the site at Rokka was included in the list for the August Full Moon events in 2013. It took an equally long time to convince the inhabitants of the potential of such an event and longer to clear the area, which was a pasture until then, to make it suitable for the public to visit. From the first event in 2013 until 2016 inclusive, Giortes Rokkas was a single event on the day of the August full moon. In 2017, the neighbouring (within walking distance) village of Kera, whose inhabitants also wanted to participate in this initiative, joined Giortes Rokkas which expanded, both geographically and in duration, to two weeks. The organising committee

also grew from 7 all male members at the beginning to 15 female, male and young people from both villages.

Although it is actually a festival, *Giortes Rokkas* is consciously not described as such. This was an attempt to distance it from the label of “festival” that seemed intimidating for the inhabitants. As the artistic content of the initiative, and particularly the strong focus on classical music, was not familiar to them, it was important to create a proximity and close relation with the new initiative, connecting it with their everyday lives. *Giortes* (Festivities) was introduced when one of the inhabitants mentioned that the event felt like a feast they would have in their homes, describing *Giortes Rokkas* very accurately given that all events and activities, except the main event, take place in the gardens, yards and fields of the inhabitants.

Since its inception *Giortes Rokkas* has set very high standards for their main event, which takes place on the day of the August full moon, hosting orchestras that have not performed in Chania and the wider area either at all or in their full composition. In this sense there is nothing comparable in the area. Both villages are not easily accessible, so the aim of the Chairman and the artistic co-ordinator was to bring in events for the programme that would not be easy to find elsewhere in the region, hence the choice of classical music as the genre for the main event in all the subsequent programmes after its inception in 2013.

*Giortes Rokkas* comprises of an artistic team responsible for proposing the artistic and cultural programme, which consists of people who do not necessarily live in the villages, and an organising/production team which consists of all the inhabitants of both villages. The artistic programming is based on a participatory process and a dialogue-based relationship between the organising committee and the 60 inhabitants of the two villages. All issues and programming proposals are discussed in common meetings and no decision is made without hearing the opinion of everyone. The approval of the final programme is done by all inhabitants and there are plenty of meetings taking place before the programme for every season is agreed and announced. This process creates a dynamic of dialogue and exchange between the inhabitants and non-inhabitants involved in the organisation of *Giortes Rokkas*.

All inhabitants of both villages act as cultural managers and producers without any such prior knowledge or expertise. They actively participate in all tasks, whether it is crowdfunding, cleaning and preparing the spaces, stage managing, ushering, looking after the parking facilities, catering,

crowd management, hosting of artists, or helping to carry instruments such as grand pianos, harps, timpani or a double bass up the mountain since the stage is only accessible on foot. The relationship between the artistic team and the organising committee is, according to the artistic coordinator, an interesting element of the administrative and organisational structure of Giortes Rokkas because of the difference in experience and understanding between the two teams; the artistic team had to build bridges between them and the inhabitants to create a shared understanding that ensured a balance of the artistic with the administrative part of Giortes Rokkas.

The Region of Crete, the sub-Region of Chania, the neighbouring Municipalities of Kissamos, Chania and Platanias, the Ephorate of Antiquities of Chania as well as the cultural associations of Rokka and Kera and, for the 2018 season, Google Tourism Online, act as Giortes Rokkas' supporters. Giortes Rokkas' funding comes from three main sources: from public authorities—the Region, Municipality and more recently the Ministry; from financial or in kind contributions from local institutions, organisations and businesses; and from a unique version of crowdfunding from all those with a direct or indirect relation to the initiative. Giortes Rokkas is also supported financially by local, small-scale businesses who pay for stands to promote their products during Giortes Rokkas season. The rationale for choosing the sponsors of Giortes Rokkas is that local businesses are a priority—if there is competition, it is always the local company that is preferred in an attempt to assist and strengthen the local economy. Additional income comes from programme sales, and from ticket sales for the theatre performances. All local and regional media in the area offer media support.

Crowdfunding is a means to raise funding for the initiative but here it has a unique dimension. A few months before the start of Giortes Rokkas, a team literally walks around both villages and the neighbouring areas with the programme of that year's events and asks people on the spot for support. This money is used to cover direct expenses, as funding from organisations and institutions takes more time to process because of the bureaucracy involved. This version of crowdfunding is particularly popular among the elderly inhabitants, who are unable to offer manual assistance in the productions, and works as a means for them to acknowledge the collective effort of this initiative, as well as offering them a sense of belonging and participation to the community.

What Giortes Rokkas achieved, is to associate classical music with the area, although there is absolutely no tradition or previous connection or relation of it with the area. As the Chairman of the Organising Committee says, quality and identity are the two poles of the distinctiveness of Giortes Rokkas which contributed to this association. Quality with reference to the level of musicians performing and not the music genre itself—suggesting that classical music is not inherently of a better quality—and identity in the sense of relating a cultural event to the local community through their involvement in its creation.

There is minimum intervention in the natural landscape with regards to the infrastructure and facilities for the main event as there is a stage but no chairs for the audience who sit on the ground during the concert. In that sense there is a striking contradiction between the mountainous landscape where Giortes Rokkas is held and western classical music, usually performed in highly formal settings, which adds positively to the experience of both the audience and the inhabitants through creating a unique atmosphere that is not found in a traditional concert hall. All other events take place literally in the villages—in houses, yards, gardens, squares and surrounding open spaces.

One of the main aims of the artistic team is to make the inhabitants feel they are not alone in something that could easily feel beyond their means. Supporting the inhabitants in the production is made possible in two ways. First, by gathering a team of 15 volunteers from outside the two villages, who are hosted by the inhabitants and in return assist them in the organisation and management of the events. These volunteers also have access to rehearsals and can actively participate in the various events. Second, by initiating a Friends of Rokka list expanding the circle of people associated with Giortes Rokkas, without, however, depending on them for in situ help. Friends of Rokka may not provide help during the events as volunteers do, but participate at the various events, enjoy benefits such as open discussions, rehearsals or excursions organised by Giortes Rokkas.

Volunteering plays a crucial role not only in helping to keep costs low but most importantly as a means of multi-level connection among the local community itself, and among the inhabitants and the outsider volunteers. The model of volunteering adopted here is based on a different motivation, which is not only to offer assistance in the various production tasks but also to provide support, encouragement and empowerment to the inhabitants to respond to production tasks with which they are totally unfamiliar.

The gradual expansion of Giortes Rokkas led to the introduction of education programmes and workshops, with an aim for the initiative to have a strong long-term impact through education. Education programmes include lantern and mosaic making and are a meeting point for the children of the region. Workshop topics have included stone carving and jewellery-making. All education programmes and workshops are free, as well as admission to the main event as part of the Ministry policy with regards to the August full moon initiative. The educational programmes aim to make participating children experience the village through art and culture offering them a different perspective than that of just visiting their relatives, usually grandparents, in the summer.

Educational programmes and workshops such as, for example, stone carving and jewellery-making were selected because of their relation to the area and history: stone carving was a traditional local activity and jewellery-making used an ancient local technique. The latter was also targeted particularly at the women of the area, with an aim to assist them in practising it professionally and thus encourage female entrepreneurship in the area.

The growth in the number of visitors from the first season in 2013 can be found in Table 8.1 below (Giortes Rokkas did not take place in 2020 because of the COVID-19 pandemic restrictions). As the table demonstrates, the number of audiences has been continuously increasing since the first year of Giortes Rokkas. Although the main event on the day of the August full moon generates the largest attendance, there is participation in all of the events, for example, in 2018, 400 participants took part in the classical mandolin and mixed-strings seminar and 25% of audiences in the theatre events were children.

**Table 8.1** Giortes Rokkas  
visitorship

<i>Year</i>	<i>No of visitors</i>
2013	1.600
2014	2.500
2015	3.700
2016	4.500
2017	7.000
2018	8.000
2019	10.500

Data provided by Giortes Rokkas by electronic communication, April 27, 2021

In 2018, Giortes Rokkas attracted the attention of Google through Google Grow Tourism Online, a programme spreading the use of digital competence in tourism and entrepreneurship including NGOs and cultural organisations. In an attempt to support the initiative and develop it into a model for similar cases in Greece, Google visited the villages, sent a team that observed the complete preparations for the season and created a short video (Grow with Google, 2018), provided livestreaming for the main event and organised a seminar as part of the programme for that season. Later that year Giortes Rokkas were recommended by Google as an example of the repopulation and development of rural areas through culture.

The creation of a common language of communication between people with different experiences and know-how is among the most important characteristics of Giortes Rokkas. The inhabitants are involved with an artistic genre that is foreign to them, one they would not choose to attend or may even reject as audiences, and have no knowledge of cultural policy and management. Western classical music is far from their everyday lives, tradition and education and they never had the opportunity to attend a classical music concert either live or online before Giortes Rokkas was launched. The artistic team managed to convince them that focusing on classical music for the main event would have positive effects for the area, which they then have experienced themselves as both villages have become a point of reference at a local, regional and national level through providing high-quality cultural events. This has benefited both villages as it has drawn local and national audiences and has re-ignited an interest in them and in the wider area. Giortes Rokkas is now an established initiative not only locally but also nationally, with a loyal audience that attends the main event and participates in the activities organised every year.

The impact of Giortes Rokkas is already strong, with children of the villages starting violin lessons after attending their first symphony orchestra performance there. The impact of education and the interaction through culture is also visible with one of the students of the first year practising stone carving in a semi-professional way and returning as a teacher in 2018.

The rationale of Giortes Rokkas is summarised in one of the interviewee's words "here there is a future for everyone, young and old". Giortes Rokkas enabled the permanent residents of both villages to become more involved with their place, it provided incentives for the young people to return in the summer and open their homes and it also

boosted visitors to both villages, making them a pole of attraction for tourism throughout the year. It also enabled the inhabitants to re-establish affection, love and pride for their region; instead of a constant alienation, which was the case in the past, they have developed an endearment and attachment to their villages and the area with already tangible results: they stopped selling their properties and leave the village, many houses were renovated, a new coffee shop opened and there are around 15 rooms available to rent as people return and spend time in the area. The village also entered a regeneration programme that improved its infrastructure—roads, street lighting, pavements and underground wires.

### CONCLUSIONS

Ebrey (2016) claims that cultural policy neglects everyday life in four ways: it is the territory of cultural experts rather than based on everyday experiences; it has been instrumentalised to serve economic life; it does not examine the interconnection of the micro and the macro; and is very much focused on individual choices, overlooking communal practices. Giortes Rokkas is a case that contradicts all four.

Giortes Rokkas is an example that challenges established notions of expert programming and cultural expertise, as well as the role of the state in cultural policy. Originally stimulated by national cultural policy, it has grown organically based on collective participation and input from all the inhabitants of both villages. It is a model based on local actors, self-management and a construction of a communicative space, physical and virtual, through culture-making and culture-managing and involves a highly localised approach to artistic programming, crowdfunding, education programmes, production and volunteering. In this model the local community is actively involved in all stages and assumes the role of policy-maker, producer and audience at the same time. It emerged in a framework that is inadequately catered for by state cultural policy and came out of a vision to provide high-quality cultural events and re-ignite interest in the area. In this sense, it makes up for the absence of state provided systematic cultural policy support and also showcases how cultural policy can emerge by non-experts.

The flourishing of cultural policy here is connected with the situatedness and particularities of the villages, as well as with the engagement of all inhabitants, particularly because of their small number. Rural areas with small populations are not usually a priority for state or regional cultural

policy, which most of the times caters for areas with a larger population or areas of touristic interest, and even when it does focus on rural areas it concentrates on inherent cultural genres such as folk culture and tradition. Additionally to that, inhabitants of rural Crete are characterised by an intense connection and sense of ownership to their villages, especially in semi-mountainous or mountainous villages with small populations and few external interactions. A top-down approach would therefore not be viable for the inhabitants as there would be fear of control of the process and violation of their land by outsiders. In that sense, there is great power in the collective approach adopted here: it not only safeguards viability of the undertaking, but also reinforces the association of inhabitants with place, strengthens cohesion and the sense of community; it also enables the inhabitants to develop a relationship and a sense of ownership of Giortes Rokkas, particularly important given that it evolved around art genres unfamiliar to them.

The uniqueness of the Giortes Rokkas model lies in the fact that it is based on the use of non-innate, “outside”, culture as a tool for building a distinctive local identity. An example of neo-endogenous rural development, Giortes Rokkas uses a combination of local and extralocal resources for the benefit of the area but is also based on internal and external networks, the mobilisation of which is aimed at the development of the villages and the area. The vision of Giortes Rokkas, as stated in the relevant part of their website, of a “restoration of a viable framework for inland communities through the practices of cultural management” (Giortes Rokkas, 2022) aimed to bring life to the villages which, with only 60 inhabitants in total, were in danger of being abandoned within the next decade. Giortes Rokkas, as one of the interviewees says, managed to put the two villages in the minds of the visitors and back on the map of the region, giving life to the area through culture. It provides incentives for those who have left to return and revitalise the area, connects the local community, provides a continuation for the next generations and creates opportunities for young people to choose a career path related to the area.

The main problem in depopulated and isolated areas is how to attract people and repopulate them; as the Chairman argues, “nobody will have children in a village where they won’t have other children to play with”. Greek villages have nowadays more income than they had 50 years ago, but that does not make them attractive. What they are lacking is a vibrant human network, a social fabric strengthened by common experiences, and opportunities for communication and cultural exchange that are

strengthened through the communication between internal and external actors. Cases such as Giortes Rokkas can help rural areas rethink and reposition themselves as places and can provide tools to bring life back to depopulated areas.

## NOTES

1. The network of protected areas of Europe's valuable or threatened species and natural habitats (European Environment Agency, 2021).
2. According to the Greek census of 2011, there are Cretan villages with as few as three inhabitants (Seventh Health Region of Crete, 2015).
3. Declaration of a site as archaeological site took place for reasons of protection, research and promotion of important antiquities which include remains of an ancient city and a cemetery of the Hellenistic period (323-30 BC) (Permanent list of declared archaeological sites and monuments in Greece, 2012).

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# The Public Administration of ‘place’: Labels and Meaning in Local Government Arts Development in the Irish Urban-Fringe

*Victoria Durrer*

Nowhere in particular on the way from A to Z. Or say for verisimilitude the Ballyogan Road. That dear old back road. Somewhere on the Ballyogan Road in lieu of nowhere in particular. [...] Somewhere on the Ballyogan road on the way from A to Z. (Beckett, 2009, p. 14)

Despite the fact that places are “numerous, fluid, and intersubjective” (Durrer et al., 2019, p. 326), they are politically and administratively defined and acted upon (Ginesta & San Eugenio, 2021; Barnes, 2001; Peterson, 2005; Lefebvre, 1991). In Ireland as elsewhere in Europe and the United Kingdom (UK), locale-specific classifications and descriptions are key political and administrative practices determining national (and international) distribution of resources at local level. These resources are harnessed to ‘make’ or promote senses of place that may support national,

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regional and local “tourism, economic development and rural and urban regeneration” (Ashworth & Graham, 2005, p. 7); foster potential for greater cultural democracy and social justice (Williams, 1984; Upchurch, 2016) or further exacerbate disparity. Statistical data, geography and built environments intermingle with cultural forms and traditions, affording “generalisation and the location of ideas of belonging within political and social contexts” that change over time for different purposes and from different perspectives (Ashworth & Graham, 2005, p. 3). Cities are Capitals of Culture. Urban neighbourhoods and rural towns are World Heritage Sites (on Ireland, see McCarthy, 1998; Collins, 2020a).

How interpretations of local places are administratively constructed, operationalised and negotiated in cultural policymaking, and here specifically in relation to the arts, is the focus of this chapter. The quote above, taken from the 1980 novella, *Company* (1980) by twentieth-century Irish writer Samuel Beckett is useful for setting out these concerns, with which this chapter grapples, in two ways. For one, it refers to the Ballyogan Road located on the fringe of Dublin city, Ireland in Dún Laoghaire Rathdown County. Along this road is where the residential area of Ballyogan—the so-called ‘hard to reach’ locality that is the focus of this chapter’s case study—is located. Secondly and following the analysis of Nugent-Folan (2013, pp. 71–72), it indicates how places may be simultaneously characterised as both unspecific and specific localities that provoke structures of feeling (Williams, 1977). Put another way, the quote illustrates how localities, as places, are open to multiple interpretations not only by individuals living and working in and through them—or even those simply passing by—but also by national and local state and civil society actors (Ashworth & Graham, 2005; Paasi, 1991). Meaning or senses of place are made and enacted through these different encounters and technocracies (Lefebvre, 1991).

The chapter argues that study of public (arts) administrative practice provides insight into how place-meaning and value is endowed in cultural policy (Tuan, 1977). By means of a single case study, it considers how senses of place are constructed through situated conventional bureaucratic practices aimed at taking more place-sensitive approaches to public and arts service delivery. The case focuses on the public administrative practices of an individual team in a specific local authority: the arts office in Dún Laoghaire Rathdown County Council (*dlr*), one of four authorities in the Dublin region. The chapter reflects on the learning gained by arts office staff from their work in Ballyogan through Exit 15, a local arts

development programme funded and supported by dlr County Council, Arts Council Ireland, and partnership with Voluntary Arts Ireland (VAI, now Creative Lives) from 2017 to 2020. Ballyogan is a residential area about 12 km from Dublin city centre that was established initially in the 1970s and 80s as a result of planning policies favouring suburban sprawl at the time (Corcoran et al., 2010). Characterised in both national and local public policy and administrative practice as a ‘disadvantaged’ and ‘hard to reach’ place, Ballyogan was identified by the arts office as requiring targeted, place-specific access to participation in the professional, publicly subsidised arts.

In this analysis of place-meaning construction as an administrative practice, the chapter recognises the ordinary practices of one agency—local public (arts) administration—as an important contribution to the relational complexity of place-based cultural policymaking (Comunian, 2011). In doing so, the chapter contributes to a growing body of literature in cultural policy studies that seeks to bring attention to place-based policy in areas beyond the confines of the urban landscape (Gilmore et al., 2019; Miles & Ebrey, 2017; Bell & Orozco, this volume) and where local governments are acknowledged as key actors in cultural policymaking (e.g. Collins, 2020a; Durrer, 2017; Gray, 2002; Johanson et al., 2014; O’Brien & Miles, 2010). Rather than focus on the types of participation that happen in Ballyogan, or that might have resulted because of Exit 15, the chapter examines the use of public sector methods as cultural policy *in practice* (Jancovich, 2017).

The chapter begins by contextualising the characterisation and targeting of Ballyogan as a disadvantaged and ‘hard-to-reach’ locality in need of access to the arts. Links between arts and culture with ‘place identity’ (Pollock & Paddison, 2014) within broader public and arts policy and administration at national and local level are explored against work in literary studies, geography, public administration and cultural policy. After a brief description of the broader programme and research methods, the chapter more specifically examines how the arts office staff, who were directly engaged in Exit 15, accept, employ and doubt this characterisation of Ballyogan in their initiation and management of that programme. The “experiences, analysis and social interactions” (Dunlop & Radaelli, 2020, p. 257) that result from their encounter with Ballyogan through Exit 15 highlight for those individuals the important role that meaning-construction as an administrative practice plays in place-based arts policy and provision.

Alignment is found in how national and local public and arts administrative practices label localities. This mutuality indicates the use-potential of labelling for locale-specific arts resourcing. Even if perpetuating zero-sum technocracies of place (Durrer et al., 2019; see also Stevenson, 2019), this usefulness has also prompted awareness for staff of how place-labels limit the understanding of the cultural life of particular localities. Such learning has the capacity to impact the perception of, and public service provision with and for, localities by the arts office and across the local authority more broadly (Dunlop & Radaelli, 2020). Yet, this potential for prompting broader systems-change for place-sensitive cultural strategies will require critical reflexivity that reaches beyond a specific team (Cunliffe & Jun, 2005).

### BACKGROUND RESEARCH: IRELAND'S PUBLIC POLICY AND ADMINISTRATION CONTEXT

The relationship of art and culture as a “signifier and maker” of place has held a privileged position in Irish identity (Cronin, 2018, p. 83), even if slower to take within explicit cultural policy at both national and local level in comparison with the rest of Europe (Bayliss, 2004). It has been recognised as fostering economic and social development and to alleviate “the impact of peripherality” by raising the appeal of different localities for living, working and establishing businesses (Bayliss, 2004, p. 822). Though, the west of Ireland has held an important position in the ideology of place as ‘Irish’, particularly for tourism (Graham, 1997), the development of Temple Bar in Dublin from dereliction to a centre of cultural and tourist consumption, and Dublin and Cork’s rise to European City of Culture in 1991 and 2005, respectively (Bayliss, 2004; McCarthy, 1998; Montgomery, 1995), are probably the most recognised studies of their kind in Irish cultural policy outside of the country. More recently, Collins (2020a, 2020b) has critiqued the ‘making’ of Galway as a creative city with Kitchin et al. (2014), drawing on study of Smithfield and Wolfe Tone Square, to question the on-the-ground benefits of Dublin City Council’s efforts to establish itself as a ‘European city’ through public realm design and architecture.

The ways in which its localities are perceived and acted upon politically and administratively and in relation to art and culture is particularly evident in public policy in Ireland surrounding the global economic crash. Some discussion here provides the temporal context and political climate

in which *dlr* arts officers initiated Exit 15. It also situates the public administrative repertoire available to Irish arts officers for locating their work in specific places. The Irish economic boom of the 1990s and 2000s, fuelled by reliance on foreign direct investment and a “neoliberal policy agenda of promoting the free market, minimizing regulation, privatizing public goods and retreating from state services” (Kitchin et al., 2014, p. 1070 in Collins, 2020b, p. 71) saw “the uncontrolled growth of Dublin into surrounding counties”. This situation exacerbated the “scattershot” and “haphazard” suburban sprawl established during Ireland’s developer-privileged planning system of the 1960s–1980s, when Ballyogan was initially being established as a residential area (Corcoran et al., 2010, p. 32).

The 2008 crash and the burst of the property market revealed a stark “spatial and social divide” left in the wake of this type of development,

economically as measured by unemployment...; socially in terms of access to housing and emigration...; and physically in terms of abandoned unfinished developments and quality of life. (Moore-Cherry, 2019, p. 52)

Culture has come to signify some of this division as well as ‘place potential’. Within this shifting context, rural Ireland has typically been idealised as the “stronghold of ... Irish cultural, sporting and language identity” (MacFeely, 2016, p. 395). While urban areas may be associated with loss of traditional culture (Nordin & Llana, 2012), they have also become associated with creativity and innovation in order to foster economic development and foreign direct investment, even if policy in this regard is fragmented (Collins, 2020a; Kayanan et al., 2018; Lawton et al., 2010). Though sociological studies on Irish suburbia and the urban fringe by Corcoran et al. (2010) demonstrate otherwise, those localities are often viewed as “sub-creative” (Bain, 2013, p. 4), “non-places” that lack local attachments or structures of feeling (Corcoran et al., 2010, p. xxi; see also Phelps, 2012).

Most recently, Ireland’s National Planning Framework (NPF) has paid particular attention to the role of the arts at local level as signifying correctives to spatial and social inequity at both national and local level (ACI, 2016a; Coveney, 2017; EMRA, 2019; GoI, 2018).<sup>1</sup> As colleagues and I have argued elsewhere, place often politically signifies either that which is to be celebrated or corrected (Durrer et al., 2019). Speaking at Arts Council Ireland’s inaugural ‘Places Matter’ conference in January 2017, in the year the NPF was being launched, then Minister of Planning,

Community and Local Government, Simon Coveney (2017) indicates this type of role, one where artists and arts engagement can construct ‘liveable’ “place-identities” (Pollock & Paddison, 2014, p. 86; see also Forest & Johnson, 2002), at local and hyper-local level:

So whether it’s listening to a seanchaí [storyteller] on Oileán Clare [Clare Island] or the buzz of Temple Bar or whether it is new movie studios in Limerick, we need to ensure that we are creating difference through imagination, talent and that we are promoting that type of thinking as a uniquely Irish trait that actually attracts more investment, more people, more talent into that career ... or just simply enjoying and enhancing quality of life in the places that people live. (Coveney, 2017, n.p.)

It’s also about “attract[ing] visits ... residents ... [and] people to want to stay in their own localities” (Coveney, 2017, n.p.). To realise this ambition, Coveney (2017) notes the importance of aligning national and local level policies and initiatives:

It’s about what we can do ... as policy makers through local government and national government to actually put the tools in place and the resources in place to create vibrant, different places in different parts of the country.

Alignment with national government policy is important for local-based development. Ireland is “one of the most centralised states in Europe, [thus possessing a] political infrastructure ... [deemed] unsuitable for the devolution of any real power [at local level]” (Collins, 2020a, p. 73). This situation exists despite some recent reforms that have seen a push for more citizen-engaged community and economic planning at local level and the initiation of Public Participation Networks. The importance of alignment with the national for supporting “people and places as central to policy and provision in the arts” is recognised in arts policy (ACI, 2016a, p. 6). Arts Council Ireland (ACI) has stressed this relationship as part of the vision to see the arts as central to Ireland’s “local and national identity” (ACI, 2016a, p. 12). In addition to sitting on the expert panel for the NPF, the Arts Council has more formally concentrated activity on local areas and spatial demographics and analysis to address what are perceived to be problems of access and participation in the professional, publicly subsidised arts.

Within the time frame of Exit 15, this work has included a number of new Arts Council actions aligning the national and local with a focus on place. 2014 saw the launch of a mapping tool developed in partnership with University of Maynooth’s All-Island Research Observatory for venues to profile audiences within a 30-minute drive of their facility (ACI, 2014a). Recognising the higher spend that local government often provides for the arts (for instance, 5.2 million vs 6.5 million funding for venues in 2016 (ACI 2016d, p. 4)) and the role of arts officers, the Arts Council has also included more formal signalling of local government as a ‘partner’ in national arts development. In 2016 Arts Council Ireland initiated a formal and explicit partnership agreement with the County and City Management Association (2016) that extended the historical and existing annual funding relationships between the entities, especially since the evolving establishment of local authority arts officers across the country from the 1980s. This agreement included the initiation of a joint biennial conference series drawing attention to place: the ‘Places Matter’ conference in 2017 and the revision and introduction of new funding streams dedicated to resourcing local government arts policy development, including the one under which Exit 15 was funded (ACI & CCMA, 2016). Most recently and part of this longer term working, ACI has launched a dedicated spatial policy (ACI, 2022).

Indicating the importance of the public sector context to such developments, it is notable that this particular shift in thinking about spatial planning and the role of local government for promoting place-specific access to the arts emerged after a strategic (ACI, 2014b) and a value for money review (O’Hagan, 2015) were conducted. These reviews were carried out as part of a wider government programme of public administration and policy reviews resulting post 2008, when, in order to rebalance Ireland’s debt, “virtually all public sector infrastructure [was] curtailed or suspended” (Russell & Williams, 2021, p. 60, 69; see Leahy & Hilliard, 2021 for final unwinding of these measures).

How the above public sector working context and the associated national and local level public policy discourse interact with people, places and art frames how Irish local authority arts officers operate (Durrer, 2018). While aligning with national policy is important at local government level, so is local authority-led initiative. Collins (2020a) notes that the “lack of resources and power [remaining] at the local level in Ireland” has fostered a situation in local authority planning where

competing on local assets like cultural depth are an obvious, if not enforced, choice for local authorities. ...[as] the centralised nature of the Irish State has left local authorities short on money and power to affect development. (p. 644)

Competition for resources is important in relation to cultural (arts) development in the Irish context where local government engagement in arts development is discretionary (Indecon, 2019; Arts Act 2003, sect 6, 2). Although it is a requirement to develop plans for the arts, the nature and amount of dedicated local authority spending to deliver on those plans remains open to political and institutional interpretation, interests and values. The political will of local councillors and the interest of higher level management, including the authority's Chief Executive Officer matter here. Whilst elected officials vote on budgets, it is the public administrators that devise them. In fact, "what power there is [in Irish local government] remains largely concentrated [amongst its public administrators, especially] in the executive" rather than with its elected representatives (McInerney & Kitchin, 2014, p. 108). Local corporate planning as developed by the local authority executive is significant, yet alignment between national and local policy for leveraging resources must be negotiated, even with some greater fiscal autonomy at local government level of late (Turley & McNena, 2019).

What can result in such circumstances is place-based cultural initiatives that may be more focused on ways to "gain access, influence, and control over ... resources" rather than on uncovering or nurturing the "creative and cultural practices that the people of those places wish to pursue" (Durrer et al., 2019, p. 327). This is a context where policy rhetoric regarding place-meaning (and thus value) emphasises 'place potential', correction or idealisation as the policy problem for place-identity and development (Cairney, 2012; Bacchi, 2000). How places come to be identified as such are part of the administrative process for how those resources are leveraged (or not).

Much UK and European cultural policy research critiques this model of place-based work as determining senses of place by 'correcting' what it is perceived that particular localities lack. Such approaches often rely on statistical data that (1) labels individuals who are not engaging in professional, publicly subsidised forms of culture as 'hard to reach' (Jancovich & Bianchini, 2013; Stevenson, 2019) and (2) fails to recognise situated, vernacular culture (Durrer et al., 2019; Gilmore, 2013) and the atmosphere,

“texture, feel, [and] lived experience” of local places (Ferguson, 2010 quoted in Hicks, 2020, p. 464; see also Jones et al., 2013). This practice is not particular to the publicly subsidised arts, but also common to the repertoire of local government service provision within Ireland (as well as the UK) as a whole (Brackertz, 2007; Boag-Munroe & Evangelou, 2012). Like cultural policy research, this practice is critiqued for its tendency to characterise people and groups as ‘problems’ based on their restricted engagement with public services. Lack of service engagement is typically seen to reside with the individual or group themselves, rather than the systems that produce these services (Brackertz, 2007, p. 3; Boag-Munroe & Evangelou, 2012).

Some cultural policy studies indicate that place-targeted resourcing has potential to support the vernacular culture of a place in addition to sponsoring the publicly-subsidised professional arts. In recognising difference and potential complementarity, the structures of feeling that particular places hold may be nurtured (Stevenson & Blanche, 2015). There is also resonance here with research in public administration and local government studies. On the classification of people as ‘hard to reach’ in local government practice, Brackertz (2007) explains,

An alternative way to view the ‘disinterest’ or ‘lack of motivation to contribute or become involved’ often associated with hard to reach groups is by emphasising differences rather than deficits. The difference thesis suggests that when people are motivated to acquire information and that information is functional in their lives, they will make use of this. (p. 3)

Understanding motivation is dependent upon engaging directly with people in localities. Interrogating the potential of this ‘difference thesis’ requires a stronger grasp of the everyday, bureaucratic processes by which constructions of place are permitted, held and perhaps questioned.

Close study of the work of local authority arts officers can provide new insight. In Ireland as elsewhere, arts officers negotiate national and local plans with local realities, operating in a relational policymaking space that make and administer places (Kenny & Flynn, 2009; Lefebvre, 1991; McInerney & Kitchin, 2014). They are recognised as members of multiple specialist groups: the arts sector; the public service; government; and of a particular locality (Clancy, 1994). Amongst this range of actors, they play “important brokering roles ... between, [across and within] government ...community, [civil society,] and the professional and

non-professional arts”, especially in how local places come to be understood and acted upon and with, in relation to the arts (Durrer, 2017, p. 19; see also McInerney & Kitchin, 2014).

Operating in a centralised state and the hierarchical system of local government work (Coakley & Gallagher, 2018), theirs is a context where local government administration remains a key aspect of the “machinery underpinning the functioning of government and governance” and policymaking as a core area of public service work (McInerney & Kitchin, 2014, p. 2). According to McInerney & Kitchin (2014, p. 184),

while [Irish] local public administration has little if any control or influence on how national policy decisions are made, [agency lies in its] considerable scope to influence and shape how those policies are delivered.

Irish arts officers negotiate “funding and policy directions” from multiple departments related to local government, arts and culture (Kenny & Flynn, 2009, p. xi), children and young people, and social exclusion. They thus hold no “standard or consistent role” within local authorities across the country as a whole (Kenny & Flynn, 2009, p. xiii). Focus and activity of work varies by the nature of the institutional, local and social / professional context, which means that individual arts officers’—their perceptions and practices in, with and for places matter in local and national arts development (ACI & CCMA, 2016). It also means that single case studies are useful for developing insights into how senses of place are administratively constructed. As a result, programmes of work, like Exit 15, are meeting places of state and local policy and art and public administration (as signifying) practice, in which arts officers are involved in constructing place-meaning in Irish cultural policy.

## EXIT 15

Established in 1994, and prior to the 2022 Census results, *dlr* arts office serves a population of approximately 206,000, 10.3% of the Dublin region’s population of 2 million (*dlr*, 2016a), living “between the outer suburbs of Dublin City and the Dublin/Wicklow Mountains on the East Coast of Ireland” (*dlr*, 2016a, p. 11). Dún Laoghaire–Rathdown County is understood as “unusual” in comparison to the rest of Ireland, as it is made up of “two pockets of urban”, the former towns of Dún Laoghaire and Dundrum, each with their own centre and where some of the

wealthiest and most educated people in the county live. There are also a number of other suburban areas that border “a very rural part of the county” (AO2, 2019, p. 2), of which Ballyogan is one.

The remit of the Arts Office is to support the “sustainable development of the arts within the County” (*dlr*, 2016c, p. 5). During the timeframe of Exit 15, the County arts plan noted goals associated with place potential, correction and idealisation, specifically “enhance[ing] ... quality of life, promot[ing] and support[ing] a sense of local identity and pride of place, and support[ing] the local economy” (*dlr*, 2016c, p. 17). Such work is carried out through a wide range of activities including the initiation and management of programmes and venues, and funding distribution to a range of community and voluntary groups, school activity, venues, artists and more.

Exit 15 stemmed from two attempts to receive funding from ACI’s Invitation to Collaboration fund. When the first attempt failed in 2016, *dlr* arts office and VAI shared the financial and human resourcing of a dedicated arts researcher / coordinator to be based in Ballyogan 1 day per week. The eventual finances provided by ACI afforded what is known as Exit 15, a multi-year long artistic programme, consisting of two phases: Phase 1 in 2017–18 commissioned three artist residencies as arts participation ‘tasters’ for people living and working in Ballyogan. Socially-engaged artists Michael Fortune (working in film), Michael McLoughlin (in sound, visual and performance art) and Mark Storor (in visual and installation arts) separately connected with people in Ballyogan and the surrounding area for varying periods of time and intensity. The residencies were instrumental in recruiting five local residents who were paid to serve on a panel with *dlr* arts office and VAI to select an artist from a shortlist for a longer-term residency in Phase 2, 2018–20: Coiscéim Broadreach, the public engagement programme for Coiscéim Dance Theatre. Funding from ACI particularly afforded what the arts officers were perceived to be highly-skilled, “high quality” socially-engaged artists (*dlr*, 2016b, p. 3) in addition to materials to support the engagement of an academic researcher to facilitate in-action reflection, which McInerney and Kitchin (2014, p. 184) argue is of limited opportunity in Irish local government as compared to the UK. The programme’s aims and objectives are further discussed below, as important to the analysis of place-meaning construction and the valuation of a particular place as ‘hard to reach’.

This chapter draws particular attention to the experiences gathered from and with two key members of the arts office team who managed Exit

15. Engagement with these two staff involved interviews, facilitation of monthly reflective meetings, observation of project meetings and adaption of the ‘Most Significant Change’ (MSC) process, employed here as a tool for self- and departmental reflection (Dart & Davies, 2003), which informed reflection meetings and close of project interviews with the researcher. As part of that reflective process, data also includes observations from meetings facilitated between *dlr* arts office staff with a staff member from a local authority cultural office engaging in similar work in Northern Ireland. Analysis presented here is also informed by data captured in the broader ethnographic study of Exit 15, which included walking tours, arts-based methods, interviews with artists as well as people living and working in the area, focus groups and observation of art activity (see Durrer et al., 2021).

## DISCUSSION

Research on Exit 15 indicates that an intermixing of administrative “filters” label places for the identification of service provision and leveraging of resources for place-specific local arts service provision. In the case of Ballyogan, it was identified as a ‘hard to reach’ and ‘disadvantaged’ locale in need of correction. The following discussion will focus on how these labels have been accepted and employed by *dlr* arts officers before moving on to how the arts activity these resources made possible facilitated their questioning of this approach. Note that even though the structure of this chapter might indicate a linear process of acceptance, use and doubting, the realities of public-sector practice are non-linear (See Sitas, [this volume](#)).

### *Filtering Places and Accepting Place-Labels*

The acceptance and use of Balloygan as a ‘hard to reach’ locality is based, in part, on how localities are broken down into data units and what place-meanings are evoked as a result. As one of the arts officers explains: “the filter I would have been looking at Ballyogan at initially would have been the kind of filtering of a particular area” (AO2, 2019, pp. 1–2). Identified with one of the highest levels of local authority housing in the County with high occurrences of anti-social behaviour, Ballyogan is a ‘Small Area’, targeted for addressing social inclusion locally within a national action plan (*dlr*, 2016a). As the smallest scale of analysis available to planners, ‘Small Areas’ comprise coherent townlands or neighbourhoods of between

80 and 120 dwellings, rather than wildly varying population sizes of the larger Electoral Divisions. They are thus argued to be a more useful unit of measurement and analysis for determining funding and action goals in service provision (Brunsdon et al., 2018, p. 186).

Classifications are by their very nature relative. In the case of Balloygan, its classification is determined “relative to the rest of the county” (AO2 2019, p. 2), but also the nation (*dlr*, 2016a). This juxtaposition is indicated in *dlr* County Council’s Local Economic Community Plan (LECP), 2016–2021 (*dlr*, 2016a) at the time, which states,

While Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown local authority area is among the most affluent local authority areas nationally, thirty-seven Small Areas within the County [such as Balloygan] have been identified as being ‘very disadvantaged’ or ‘disadvantaged’ ...[and] compris[ing] a population of over 11,000 or 5% of the county. (p. 11)

Statements like these indicate that Balloygan and the remaining 36 Small Areas are lacking in some way in comparison to the rest of the County. They are also anomalies, particularly in the context of the County’s other wealthier Small Areas, some of which also contain the highest percentage of professional, managerial and technical workers in the Gross Domestic Average “by some margin” (*dlr*, 2016a, p. 13). However, including “over 11,000” people, these anomalous 37 Small Areas require corrective attention.

The discussion above demonstrates how such ‘filters’, are the “features [from which] ... strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats facing the County” are identified and addressed in policy design and delivery (*dlr*, 2016a, p. 11). As one arts officer explains this “information [on Balloygan] ...would have indicated that terminology, ‘hard to reach’” (AO2 2019, p. 2). These data units and the characterisations that result are utilised to assess what people in localities engage with various public services and how. Their ‘reachness’ is also assessed; that is, whether they are in need of being ‘reached’ (or not) by particular developments, supports, services or targeted intervention (Brackertz, 2007).

Place-specific units of measurement also allow for area-based auditing of service provision, such as funding distribution and infrastructure. They additionally afford assessments of areas based on institutional knowledge and the politics of space—both geographic and socio-economic. In relation to arts funding distribution, AO1 (9 Mar 2018) explains:

we don't have a tradition of providing a service there. There are very few amateur community or professional arts organisations or individuals based there as per the data we see in terms of arts grant applications ... we were working under assumptions that there wasn't a lot happening there, ... we weren't seeing a lot of enquiries and activity coming in our direction from there. (p. 6)

Review of their own grant application database through place-specific analysis indicated a lack of reach, or “representativeness”, within their arts service. This lack not only had implications for the “democratic legitimacy” of the arts office (Brackertz, 2007, p. 3; also noted in AO2, 2018), but also the perception that Ballyogan was a place in cultural deficit (AO1, 2018).

With regards to infrastructure, the relationship of landscape and road and transportation links to the spatial access of arts venues was noted as contributing to the arts officers' acceptance of the ‘hard to reach’ characterisation. AO1 (2018) explains how this infrastructure was perceived to create barriers to Ballyogan residents' access to arts venues supported within their remit:

Geographically it [Ballyogan] is hard to reach, especially ...in terms of public transport. Let me get my geography right. There's a north-south access, where from Bray, M11, M50, it pulls everything into Dublin city. There's very little east-west. There's no history or pattern of people traveling from the mountains to Dún Laoghaire [town] or seeing Dún Laoghaire as the capital of the county, no matter who you are or where you come from. People that live in Dublin 14 [postcode] look to the [nearby] Mill Theatre and then they look to the cultural offering in the city centre. They might even go to the Mermaid [Arts Centre], but they'd never go to the Pavilion Theatre [in Dún Laoghaire]. There's no pattern of east to west. ... It is the farther you go or the nearer you go to the mountains, the harder it is for us to reach communities. (p. 6)

Geographical and spatial relationships of transport to cultural infrastructure indicate that people in Ballyogan may not have mainstream arts services available to them.

Yet this physicality of space is also political. Institutional (political and administrative) knowledge is thus another form of analysis that constructs place-meaning. Broadly speaking, institutional (political and administrative) attention was being paid to Balloygan, not only due to its status as

“disadvantaged” but also because of its ‘place potential’. Arts officers noted Ballyogan as “developing very fast” and being “primed for development” (AO2, 2018, p. 8). The local authority had recently opened the new Samuel Beckett Civic Centre, housing the local Family Resource Centre, childcare services and facilities for hire in addition to a County Council Leisure centre with sports pitches and Barnados Youth Prevention Programme and Employment Service. There have also been local authority plans to develop new housing in the area over the years 2016–2022 and beyond (dlr County Development plan, 2016–2022; McCárthaigh, 2021).

Institutional knowledge facilitated arts officers’ awareness of the challenges to developing this ‘place potential’, which their colleagues within the broader institution perceived existed. This knowledge also prompted an identification of Ballyogan as ‘hard to reach’. Arts officers referred to opposition that fellow colleagues in other departments had described when meeting local residents and attempting to engage services in the area. They noted awareness of tensions in the relationship of the local authority to people living in Ballyogan as historically grounded, stemming back to the lack of amenities and services provided to people living in Ballyogan when it was first initiated—part of a wider shortcoming within national development plans at the time (Corcoran et al., 2010). The arts officers, as well as local residents themselves, also noted more recent strains between residents and the local authority, resulting from many residents’ frustration over the Civic Centre development. Many local people had not been utilising the building prior to Exit 15, describing it as a poor replacement for what many felt was the local authority’s lack of delivery on a promise of a library and a swimming pool. To many residents the building and the unresolved tensions signified disregard by elected officials and local authority staff. For the local authority, it indicated local resident’s resistance to services, even if due to perceptions of mistrust (Brackertz, 2007, p. 1).

These different forms of place-meaning construction, the auditing of funding distribution and infrastructure, as well as the politics of space and institutional knowledge, are technocracies of government derived from everyday bureaucratic practices. They contribute to a ‘place identity’ for Ballyogan as ‘hard to reach’ and thus how the arts officers initially come to sense the cultural life of Ballyogan:

there's a particular narrative that, for various different reasons, like it's not a bad thing, that a council would look at, would be in terms of housing needs. You know, statistical information from the census around who's living in a particular area. The demographics of that particular area. The social make-up of that area. All of those kind of things. (AO2, 2019, pp. 1–2)

While “not a bad thing” per se, such practices do reveal values that privilege socio-economically derived interpretations of place as priority in even place-specific *cultural* policy.

### *Employing Place-Labels*

These interpretations of Ballyogan as geographically isolated, socio-economically deprived, anti-social and lacking cultural engagement, but nonetheless with ‘potential’, aligned with national public and arts policy rhetoric in ways that facilitated the leveraging of financial resources (ACI, 2016a; GoI, 2018; dlr 2016a). Both arts officers indicated the importance of “the LECP, the corporate plan, the concerns and needs of the ... council members, [the] county development plan, [and] most importantly our own [arts] plan” over “external” bodies, “the exception being where there are considerable external funding resources available, [like]... [ACI’s] Invitation for Collaboration” (AO1, 2018, p. 6). The objectives of ACI’s Invitation to Collaboration fund aligned with the objectives of *dlr*’s Arts Plan (*dlr*, 2016c) to have arts service provision “everywhere” (Durrer, 2016, p. 1) and in serving the public pay particular attention to “connecting with [and delivering a service to]... people who are traditionally overlooked” (AO2, 2018, p. 17). The investment afforded by the first and successful second attempt at the Invitation to Collaboration Fund, including the partnership with VAI allowed for the financial and human resourcing of activity that would not have otherwise occurred.

Located on the urban periphery, as a residential area, a ‘non-place’, it is Ballyogan’s ‘disadvantaged’ status that affords it the opportunity to receive these financial resources. *dlr* arts office made use of this status by referring to Balloygan as a ‘hard to reach’ community in the funding application. Emphasising engagement with “hard to access communities” (ACI, 2016c, p. 2), Arts Council Ireland defines ‘access’ in two ways: as a practice: “working to overcome physical, social and cultural barriers to engagement with the arts, so that the arts are available to as many as possible” and as an outcome: “a reasonable spread of different art forms available to

the general public throughout the country” (ACI, 2016b, p. 3). Taken together, these top-down, Arts Council and local authority based spatial approaches to understanding people’s engagement with arts and culture, were accepted and employed in order to resource the kinds of engagement it was perceived the locality of Ballyogan was not able to ‘reach’.

*dlr* arts officers imposed descriptors of Ballyogan’s sense of place based on the socio-economic, geographic, cultural and institutional deficits that had featured in the place-identity of Ballyogan within the local authority. These constructions were employed in public calls for a Programme Coordinator at the initiation of their work in Ballyogan, after their first unsuccessful attempt at securing Invitation to Collaboration and later in the call for artists for Phase 1 of Exit 15:

“We [*dlr* arts office] propose to concentrate on the Ballyogan area that has one of the highest percentages of local authority housing, travellers and hosts a young population, bucking the trends of most parts of the County. ... Currently we have identified this area as being hard to access and one that requires a concentrated period of engagement and support of an arts worker on site”. (*dlr*, 2016d, p. 1)

Despite the language employed and the place-meaning it indicates, *dlr* arts office was not intending to further label Ballyogan as ‘hard to reach’, but to explore how to change the reach-ness in order to create dialogue. Through the programme they sought “to build relationships between people living and working in Ballyogan and arts office, “to ask people ... in Ballyogan about what types of creative and artistic activities in which they are interested” and to “support and expand those interests” (Durrer, 2016, p. 1). Core to the objectives of the Arts Council funded Exit 15 programme was also

“to learn more about processes for working with local communities on determining and developing local arts provision and policy [and] ... to reflect on [that process in practice]”. (*dlr*, 2016b, p. 3)

There is no doubt that the arts office sought to increase participation in the arts, but this goal was just as much about their core remit as public sector workers in a local authority: to expand engagement with the service (AO2, 2019). Further, of note is the “‘ready to learn’ state” (Dunlop & Redaelli, 2020, p. 259), in which these arts officers approached working

in Ballyogan. This ‘ready to learn’ state meant that reflection was embedded into the initiation and management of Exit 15, further discussed below.

### *Challenging Assumptions, Doubting Characterisations and Changing Practice*

While the classifications constructed a sense of Ballyogan as a place in deficit that facilitated the leveraging of funds, this interpretation was questioned once the arts office began initiating contact. As one explains, “through working on the different phases of Exit 15, it’s kind of fair to say that ... I would question the wording on hard to reach, now...” (AO2, 2019, p. 2). Doubt on the deficit-based approach to place-specific work was raised for the arts officers. They began to reflect on and critically question their own use of normative language that problematised people over systems (Cunliffe & Jun, 2005) in two areas.

First, is the role of classification and language in place-meaning construction. It was the dedicated coordinator and the artistic processes that allowed the arts officers to “get to know” Ballyogan and “endow” it with a value that was not about perceptions of deficiency (Tuan, 1977, p. 8). The second area of doubt raised for the arts officers is the over-emphasis on access to the arts at the expense of engaging with the everyday culture of a particular locality. AO1 (2018, p. 6) explains that the language of the programme moved from “arts to culture, because we began to see ... that there was culture there, but it wasn’t the traditional arts culture”.

The public sector methods that informed initial understanding of Ballyogan as ‘hard to reach’ were particularly seen to be challenged by those practices more directly associated with the arts. Financial investment and external partnerships afforded different opportunities and thus methods for engagement and experimentation. Arts Council funding afforded enough finances for residencies with artists of international repute and recognition for unique skills in socially-engaged practice. While taking different methodological approaches to socially-engaged practice (Durrer et al., 2021), the artists’ work with people in Ballyogan and its surrounds illuminated folkloric tradition, people’s memories and the everyday experiences of living and working in the area.

Partnership with VAI, with its then remit to support voluntary (rather than professional) arts and creativity, afforded opportunity to resource more vernacular and locally initiated interests and activities. VAI led a participatory budgeting process for local-resident-led projects, a practice

new to *dlr* arts office. The partnership also afforded shared resourcing of a dedicated Programme Coordinator that facilitated ‘hanging out’ with local people (Durrer et al., 2021), something arts officers felt had previously existed in the service, but had been lost due to austerity measures. The work of the Programme Coordinator, meeting and speaking with people over cups of tea, facilitated a dialogic process for learning about cultural engagement. Taken together, these practices exposed *dlr* arts office to senses of place not accounted for in existing forms of analysis. It also changed their impression of what happens, culturally, on the urban periphery where the relationship of “memories and stories to physical location” is just as important as in any other landscape (see Stevenson & Blanche, 2015, p. 182; see also Jones et al., 2013).

This activity “corrected an understanding” (AO1, 2019, p. 3) for *dlr* arts officers who now see the place-label of ‘hard to reach’ as an “assumption” rather than a reality (AO2, 2018, p. 2). The arts officers have come to be more embracing of the “difference thesis” to which Brackertz (2007, p. 3) refers. This perceived correction and efforts to embrace difference is evidenced in practice, where the language in the call for the artists for Phase 2 was altered. Instead of a written socio-economic descriptor, the arts office produced a video call. The short film depicts people from the locality providing their own descriptions of Balloygan as well as what type of artist with which they wanted to work (Exit 15 Creative Space, 2018).

All told, this reflection on place-labelling afforded by the initiation and management of Exit 15 has prompted arts officers to question if it is the offer of the service that is the ‘problem’, rather than the people or the place (Jancovich & Bianchini, 2013). The arts officers see possible “impact [on arts office-specific] policy moving forward” (AO1, 2019, p. 3) through making changes to their own working methods. Targeting localities, with dedicated time in one locality, will continue as an important element of the arts office’s repertoire. The difficulty to “justify” spending time getting to know people that had resulted due to post-2008 austerity measures is now felt to be less of an issue due to learning gained from the time spent in Ballyogan (AO2, 2019, p. 19). One arts officer explains, as result of Exit 15 it is felt that “if I blocked off now a day, a week to do this type of work in different contexts, I don’t think I would have an issue now” (AO2, 2019, p. 19). The support that may be garnered for this may also be linked to the alignment that place-specific work has with national policy’s interest in place-based work.

Still, undoing long-standing administrative procedures is not a straightforward process.

AO2 (2019) explains,

But I'm not going to be able to change that terminology, so you have to work within the boundaries of it to get what you want, as well. It's just, I suppose, I'm questioning it more. (p. 3)

Further, such terminology, while limiting, affords opportunities that might not otherwise exist, particularly the leveraging of resources. Highlighting institutional benefit of programmes like Exit 15 is crucial. With regard to Exit 15, the programme raised the local authority's national profile through securing Arts Council funding. It fostered new local authority presence in Ballyogan and has worked to communicate this presence through presentation of work to Councillors at Council Special Policy Committees and discussions with colleagues in other departments that are working in Ballyogan. While this has resulted in conversations in the local authority about Ballyogan that are "positive", rather than negative (AO1, 2019, p. 2, 16), they are still being defined against a deficit-based construction of place. Difference, after all, is still relative.

While the agency of public administrators does matter, the commonality of the language and approach as an administrative practice makes questionable the level of potential for changing its use. The particularly hierarchical nature of both local government work as well as the centralisation of state power in Ireland makes this challenging. Playing to the deficit can be the most "useful" or effective way to establish targets and leverage funds for policy service provision (AO2, 2018, p. 7). Nevertheless, in surfacing these assumptions and practices, engagement with Exit 15 has provided the arts officers "a means for thinking more critically about the impact" of deficit-based practices and their role in that practice (Cunliffe & Jun, 2005, p. 227). Systems-change seemingly requires working within the system to change it. Opportunity for new action and changes to administrative practices that support approaches to place-based work that may be more open to their ephemerality (Cunliffe & Jun, 2005) may be within closer grasp, but as Belfiore (2021, p. 8) points out any "significant policy change...will be gradual."

## CONCLUSION

Through examination of a place-specific arts participation programme, Exit 15 by Dún Laoghaire Rathdown County Council arts office, this chapter has explored how multiple interpretations of local places are administratively constructed in cultural policymaking in relation to the 'reach-ness' of potential arts participants. Taking the Irish context specifically, the chapter indicates the importance of understanding place-specific work in relation to broader socio-cultural and political imaginaries and policies on place that often seek to correct or celebrate them. Understandings of place are typically driven by data that limits our understanding of the interaction of people with people as well as socio-economics, geography, built environment, culture and institutions. Arts practice and the endeavours of arts administration practice may provide new methods that have the potential to prompt more situated and place-sensitive, targeted work in localities across different landscapes. While systems change for a more place-sensitive strategy in cultural policymaking may be limited by public administration, meaning-making can be a critically reflexive practice where a change in the system may occur. In considering place-meaning construction as an administrative practice, the chapter demonstrates the role of local public (arts) administration as place-based cultural policymaking in practice (Jancovich, 2017). It is thus a snapshot on the contribution study of public (arts) administrative practice can provide our understanding of how place-meaning and value is endowed in cultural policy (Tuan, 1977).

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## NOTE

1. While established prior to Covid, the goals of the plan remain largely intact, though now supplemented by additional policies post-Covid, such as *Town Centre First* as well as *Our Rural Future: Rural Development Policy, 2021–2025*.

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## CHAPTER 10

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# From Streets to Silos: Urban Art Forms in Local Rural Government and the Challenge of Regional Development

*Emily Potter and Katya Johanson*

### INTRODUCTION

The tiny rural Australian town of Brim (pop. 171) in the Shire of Yarriambiack, north-west Victoria, is the beginning point for what became a major tourist destination and model of intergovernmental rural cultural development policy in Australia. The Silo Art Trail is a series of large painted wheat silos spanning a cross-regional route of more than 200 kilometres. It was driven by a strategy to attract regional, national and international tourism. While the realisation of the Silo Art Trail was a co-production between three tiers of government—local, state, and

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federal—as well as corporate investment, its origins lie in a rural local government initiative. Moreover, as the Trail has grown from the first silo art work in Brim in 2015 to now encompass 11 silos and their towns, local government continues to be a driving and shaping force in building capacity and profile for the Silo Art Trail.

Yarriambiack's prominent role in establishing the Silo Art Trail reflects the growing importance of local government contributions to overall cultural development in Australia (Flew & Kirkwood, 2021; Wisdom & Marks, 2016). Local governments are significant agents in cultural policy because their closeness to communities is valued by higher levels of government for its contribution to achieving significant impact (MacKay et al., 2021, p. 2). At the same time, the Silo Art Trail is an example of the potentially problematic nature of a project driven by local government but with a profile and influence that reach well beyond its local confines and that necessitates the involvement of other government and corporate agencies with different priorities.

This chapter has two goals. After describing the Wimmera-Mallee region that is home to the Silo Art Trail, the chapter discusses the ways in which silo art reflects the values of changing rural economies and communities and its apparent alignment with public cultural policy objectives. Following this discussion, the second part of the chapter throws a spotlight onto the distinctions, and sometimes dissonance, between local rural government agendas and those of other agencies involved in cultural policy development and implementation. It examines how certain policy behaviours contribute both to the power that rural local government holds in a co-productive arrangement of agencies operating in a cultural policy area, and also to the tensions within such arrangements.

Scholars have identified that local government is often 'maligned and overlooked' (Stevenson, 2020, p. 121) because of its apparent low level of resources and narrow reach in comparison to its federal and state level counterparts. However, cultural policy scholars increasingly recognise the significant impact that local government cultural policies can have on their communities (e.g. Flew & Kirkwood, 2021; Wisdom & Marks, 2016), particularly in contexts in which policy-making and public funding from higher levels of government are politically compromised or in decline. Robinson, for example, describes a shift in the balance of funding from Australia's federal and state governments to local governments for museums, identifying this trend as the 'municipalisation' of culture (Robinson, 2018). However, much of this existing work on local cultural policy has

been dominated by studies of urban local government or that of large regional towns (e.g. Glow et al., 2014; Johanson et al., 2014; Stevenson, 2020).

Scholarship on rural cultural policy is needed because, as MacKay et al. have observed, cultural policy administered by urban centres (at either a state or Federal level) continues to be heavily shaped by urban perspectives and structures (2021, p. 7) without appropriate consideration for how local perspectives might inform objectives or measures of success (Badham et al., 2015; Mahon et al., 2018). As this chapter demonstrates, local government occupies an increasingly important place in cultural policy because higher levels of government and private corporations have reason to depend on it to help achieve their own policy objectives. This is particularly the case in relation to rural local governments and cultural policy priorities.

These insights were generated through our study of the establishment of the Silo Art Trail on behalf of its initial state funding agency, Creative Victoria, and based on interviews conducted with 11 representatives from local, state and corporate funding agencies, as well as observation of mainstream and social media's significant engagement with the Silo Art Trail. Media engagement exponentially grew alongside the Trail's development from one small community's efforts to put itself on the map to become a national tourist phenomenon, and a key aspect of regional development strategy in the state of Victoria.

## BACKGROUND TO THE SILO ART TRAIL

### *Yarriambiack Shire and the Wimmera-Mallee*

The Silo Art Trail was initiated by Yarriambiack Shire Council. Australian governmental authority is organised in three tiers—federal, state and local. Each tier holds particular responsibilities and powers, with the relationship between the first two—federal and state—outlined in the nation's Constitution (1901). Between them, these two tiers oversee responsibilities such as immigration and defence (federal), health care and education (state), while the third tier is responsible for administering infrastructure and community services at a local level, such as local amenities, local road maintenance and waste management. In Australia, this tier is usually referred to as a city council in an urban context, and a shire council in a regional or rural one. The terms 'regional' and 'rural' are often used

interchangeably in Australia simply to refer to geographic areas outside the major cities (e.g. Creative Victoria, 2019). However, in this chapter, the term ‘rural’ is used to identify a region in which agriculture is the dominant industry.

Yarriambiack Shire Council oversees an area comprising 14 towns and a population of just over 6880 constituents across 7326 square kilometres, an almost four-hour drive from the state’s capital city, Melbourne (ABS, 2016). Its tiny and dispersed population represents less than one person per square kilometre. It straddles the Wimmera-Mallee region, an agricultural heartland of Victoria and a significant producer of wheat and other grains. The traditional owners of the land that Yarriambiack incorporates are the Wotjabuluk/Wudjubuluk people, who have inhabited this region for at least 40,000 years. The arrival of colonisers in the early nineteenth century devastated First Nations communities, many of which were displaced onto church-run missions until these were disbanded in the early twentieth century. Colonisation established agricultural communities around small family-run farms which transformed the landscape, deforesting native bush and draining a complex ecology of ephemeral wetlands that made this already semi-arid region vulnerable to drought and soil erosion (Broome et al., 2020).

In the late twentieth century, massified corporate agricultural holdings began to replace family-run farms across rural Australia, introducing machine-based technologies and reducing the need for labour. This trend informed the decline of population numbers from rural towns. Between 2008 and 2018, for example, Yarriambiack’s constituency dropped by over 700 individuals, or 10 per cent (ABS, 2019). As communities have shrunk, so too have job opportunities and the amenities and resources previously needed to sustain them. Consequently, there is significant social disadvantage amongst Yarriambiack communities along with an ageing population and ageing infrastructure. Over half the current employment in the Shire is provided by agricultural industries and health care/social service provision (Yarriambiack, 2020). Yarriambiack’s experience mirrors other agricultural communities across Australia and globally, where the consequences of economic decline and related social transition in rural areas are visible in lower than average incomes, low levels of school completion, the loss of youth to urban centres, poorer health outcomes for residents, a lack of quality available housing, and poor internet connectivity, coupled with the innate vulnerability of a drought-prone environment (Duxbury & Campbell, 2011; Farrugia et al., 2019; Cunningham et al.,

2020; Yarriambiack Council Plan, 2021–2025). Adding to these disadvantages, several of Yarriambiack’s towns are classified as ‘remote’ according to the Accessibility/Remoteness Index of Australia, indicating an extremely small population (under 50, and Yarriambiack holds several towns under 15) and as a consequence, ‘very restricted accessibility of goods, services and opportunities for social interaction’ (Queensland Government, 2021).

Research from the United Kingdom has shown that national governments tend to consider lower socio-economic communities as less capable creative producers in their own right than wealthier communities, and instead to see them as ‘the recipients of a prescribed set of cultural or creative activities produced by others’ (Symons & Hurley, 2018, in Mackay p. 10). This tendency is also prevalent in the historical relationship between cultural policy and rural Australia, in which Federal and state government strategies for rural areas have predominantly involved touring urban artworks to those areas. However, given the pattern of declining rural populations and job opportunities and the consequent impact on local wellbeing in rural areas, all three levels of government now look to a range of strategies to arrest such decline by funding cultural interventions for specific communities. Amongst the three levels of government, there is a growing emphasis on cultural initiatives that are co-commissioned or developed within the local community rather than simply toured, because they are seen to generate economic activity by attracting tourism and building livability in rural towns that helps retain or grow their population (Anwar McHenry, 2011).

### *Grain Silos and Arts Trails*

The Silo Art Trail comprises a regional driving tour that features painted wheat silos situated in 11 agricultural towns across Yarriambiack Shire and the adjacent Buloke Shire. Silos are tall cylindrical forms for the storage of bulk grains, most commonly wheat. These were established as a communal infrastructure to service the farms in a local area, and held social as well as industrial function as loci of meetings at harvest time. Private agricultural company GrainCorp, established in 1916, constructed and still owns most of the silos in the Wimmera-Mallee region. At its height in the mid-twentieth century, GrainCorp had 650 active silos across Australian wheat belts in five states (GrainCorp Community Foundation, 2021).

Silos are visually iconic throughout Australian grain-growing districts, usually flanking the entrance to a township, and always positioned along the railway lines that were once the lifeblood of rural communities. The rise of road transport saw railways decline as the primary means of market access, and state government economic rationalisation meant the end of many passenger services that connected these towns. As family farms gave way to large-scale agribusiness and technologies for self-storage improved, producers established new silos in key locations with a much greater holding capacity. As a result, there are many hundred decommissioned silos across Australia, including in the Wimmera-Mallee, falling into disrepair (Interview 2).

The prominence and iconic status of the wheat silo in rural communities, coupled with their enormous blank surfaces, means they attract creative repurposing. Creative interventions with silos in Australia include movie screenings (Quambatook, Victoria) and light projections (Natimuk, Victoria), but by far the most common mode of creative engagement is the permanent silo mural. Unlike touring art works, these silos represent permanent installations in place. At last count, there are 49 painted silos in Australia's eight states and territories, with 21 in Victoria alone (Australian Silo Art Trail, 2021). Silo art is large-scale muralism, undertaken in aerosol paint materials and usually featuring bright colours and striking imagery, mostly of local human and animal residents. While the themes are developed within communities with the aim of representing those communities, they are frequently painted by well-known street artists, some internationally renowned. The 11 current works in the Silo Art Trail are therefore not unique: the first silo art work in Australia was in Northam, Western Australia, and completed ahead of the silo in Brim, while there are other branded silo art trails across Australia, including the FORM Public Art Trail in Western Australia and North East Victoria Silo Art Trail.

Public muralism attracts the interest of public cultural policy agencies because it appeals to a range of common policy objectives. By beautifying abandoned or under-maintained buildings and providing local communities with a visual expression of their collective identity, public murals hold the promise of regenerating public spaces, raising community pride and increasing liveability and the wellbeing of the communities that live around them (Gunn, 2020; Martinez-Carazo et al., 2021; Morris & Cant, 2004; Robinson, 2018; Thompson & Day, 2020). These artistic interventions in place, or acts of 'creative placemaking' (Forte & De Paola, 2019, p. 1; Markusen & Gadwa, 2010, p. 3), are broadly positioned as regenerative

strategies which positively contribute to the built environment and a community's public space, particularly in physically degraded and socially disadvantaged areas (Forte & De Paola, 2019).

Moreover, mural art offers cultural policy agencies an opportunity to help shake off the common reputation such agencies have for funding the art form tastes of wealthier audiences and thereby contributing to cultural elitism (e.g. Morris, 2019). Mural art tends to be both physically and conceptually accessible. With no public charge involved, for example, silo art represents a free outdoor gallery that can be meaningfully experienced with different degrees of audience investment. As Gunn writes of the Silo Art Trail, 'even being in the car and just driving past the sites can be enough to understand the significance of the works' (Gunn, 2020, p. 28). The perceived accessibility of silo art, in addition to its physical situation in the open air, and lack of engagement restrictions beyond the ability to move between sites, is connected to the aesthetics of the art itself. The spectacular nature of silo art can 'bridge the gap of incomprehension between the arts establishment and the majority of the public' (Morris & Cant, 2004, p. 2).

Ultimately, silo art is a form of street art. While street art was originally a subversive, counter-cultural practice associated with 'delinquent, anti-system' behaviour and 'usually carried out without permission' (Crespi-Vallbona & Mascarilla-Miro, 2020, p. 5), it has been transformed by a public embrace of murals and other forms of site-specific art that adorn public walls and infrastructures. This has resulted in tourist industries based upon the counter-cultural cache of street art, which have paradoxically institutionalised the practice. While initially responding to visitors wanting to engage with a dynamic and organic art form in pre-gentrified urban zones, the popularity and endorsement of street art as a 'fully developed art movement' (Andron, 2018, p. 1040) has also made it central to strategies for place branding and tourism, particularly in cities and towns transitioning from the economic impacts of industrial decline (Markusen & Gadwa, 2010).

The rise of tourism around silo art in rural areas therefore sits in an international history of mural-based tourism growing since the 1980s (Forte & De Paola, 2019; Jażdżewska, 2017; Koster & Randall, 2005), and represents a particular evolution of street art from its origins as a political expression of marginalised and disenfranchised urban communities to an enabler of rural, cultural and economic renewal. Policy interest in silo art acknowledges that rural communities, like their urban

counterparts, experience industrial change and its economic and social consequences, that they too are saddled with the decaying infrastructure of earlier industry, and that cultural policies have a role to play in positively intervening in these trends. It also showcases the movement of mural-based tourism from its origins as a ‘window’ into ephemeral and unpredictable subcultural production, to a designed experience predicated upon commissioned and highly structured works intended. In the case of silo art, this experience is designed to give outsiders insight into the culture, history and values of the regions they pass through, providing an eye-catching tourist drawcard.

### ESTABLISHING THE SILO ART TRAIL

The Silo Art Trail began on the initiative of Melbourne-based street art agent Juddy Roller (aka Shaun Hossack), who contacted GrainCorp seeking to facilitate a landmark silo art work in the Wimmera-Mallee region. GrainCorp put Hossack in contact with Yarriambiack Council and in turn the Brim Active Community Group, which then worked through Juddy Roller to commission Brisbane street artist Guido Van Helten to create ‘Farmer Quartet’, a rendering of four local farmers across an imposing six columned silo. Van Helten’s large-scale photorealist style features affective close ups of bodies, particularly faces or hands, which highlight the lines and creases of hard working people and suggest the investment of labour and life in those places by everyday individuals (see Fig. 10.1).

The Brim silo was intended as a one-off work that would become a tourist focal point for the town; however its success in capturing media and tourist attention was a surprise for Yarriambiack Council: ‘We didn’t know what was going to happen... it was during a really tough season for the farmers and we just thought, let’s do it. Its popularity caught everyone off guard ... The police were involved because of traffic management. We had to create a carpark on the fly...’ (Interview 1). Juddy Roller then suggested that Yarriambiack Council initiate a signature Silo Art Trail that would brand the region, making it identifiable and attractive to the tourism industry. Hossack continued to be involved throughout the Trail’s construction, overseeing the appointment of six subsequent artists.

The administrative origins of the Silo Art Trail set the path for a complex mix of investments that could establish a trail of silos beyond Brim. Yarriambiack Council drove a collaboration with three state government policy/funding agencies, a Federal government policy agency and private



**Fig. 10.1** Brim Silo, with Guido van Helten’s 2016 mural ‘Farmer Quartet’, depicting four multigenerational farmers. (Source: Emily Potter)

company GrainCorp. Yarriambiack approached the state Minister for Creative Industries to seek financial support for a state-based Silo Art Trail and was ultimately granted co-matched federal and state monies. While there were three state government agencies (Creative Victoria, Regional Development Victoria and Pick My Projects) involved, in the interests of brevity, only the largest of these funding commitments—Creative Victoria—is discussed here. Private agricultural company GrainCorp provided the silos and additional production monies. The next section of the chapter explains the apparent promise of the Trail in relation to each funder’s policy narrative and objectives, as well as what their decision to fund the Trail indicates about the scope of their policy area and its relation to cultural policy in the context of creative placemaking.

By early 2021, 11 silos across 11 Wimmera-Mallee towns were painted to feature local community lives. Van Helten’s portraits of farmers set a theme for much of the imagery that followed. Many siloes feature single,

romantic portraits of local people dressed in agricultural work clothing. This is in keeping with Yarriambiack's aim that it should celebrate local communities and history. It also reflects Yarriambiack's policy that the artists determine the content. The history celebrated is the region's agricultural history, which is a white settler and colonial history. Despite a long and significant pre-colonisation history in the region (see Broome et al., 2020) and continued Indigenous residents, only one silo work (Sheep Hills) in the original commissioned works represented First Nations people and cultures, and none of the silos were painted by First Nations artists. The trail thereby provides an example of how creative placemaking prioritises some histories over others.

The towns that host these silos are all distinctly small communities, ranging from Rosebery (population 5) to Kaniva (803). It is therefore particularly notable that the region experienced a 400 per cent increase in visitors between the beginning of the Trail's construction in 2016 and end 2019 (Interview 4). The photogenic properties of the Trail attracted significant international media coverage, including in the Singapore Airlines inflight magazine, the Lonely Planet website, Mazda advertising and Australia Post postage stamps, which contributed to tourism. Increased tourism also attracted 20-odd new, often family-owned hospitality, tour and accommodation businesses, suggesting a revival of small businesses in the region (Interview 4). On this basis, Morgan, Edwards and Crow proclaimed that: 'We no longer frame regional Victoria as a place in decline. We now understand the towns of the region as potential sites for civic creative practice' (Morgan et al., 2020, p. 21).

### *'Switching on value': Collaboration Between Policy Agencies*

All three levels of government—local, state and Federal—saw opportunities in the Silo Art Trail to achieve economic and social ends. Their collaboration meant that as a local government initiative, the Silo Art Trail became 'attached' to other policy areas across different levels of government, as well as the corporate sector. Gray has argued that local government cultural policy is particularly susceptible to policy attachment, or the practice in which initiatives in one policy area are driven by their capacity to fulfil the objectives of a second policy area (Gray, 2002, 2017). Policy actors attach cultural policy to social and economic policy areas, for example, when they identify ways in which the arts and culture may deliver on social and economic objectives, often because investing in the arts is

‘relatively cheap’ and because the arts appear to ‘fill in the gaps caused by (neoliberal) policy’ (Dewinter et al., 2020, p. 99).

The arrangement of policy agencies around the Silo Art Trail’s establishment indicates policy attachment, but also a blurring of policy areas. Nicodemus argues that creative placemaking has ‘expanded the concept of cultural policy and diversified stakeholders’ (2013, p. 214). Whereas the emphasis of past cultural policy has been on subsidising the non-profit arts sector, and thereby reinforcing divisions between that sector and its commercial counterparts, creative placemaking’s emphasis on vibrancy, livability and tourism emphasises cultural policy’s shared values with other, non-arts government stakeholders. Often this effort relies on ‘fuzzy’ policy concepts, which allow political organisers to ‘pull strange bedfellows together’ (Markusen, 2003 quoted in Nicodemus, 2013) but which also run the risk of obscuring critical attention to unintended and potentially negative policy consequences.

The different government and corporate agencies were able to attach the Silo Art Trail initiative to their own policy agendas, partly because Yarriambiack Council lacked an explicit cultural policy with which to frame it (Ahearne, 2009). Such absence is not necessarily a hindrance to achieving policy objectives. Ahearne (2009) argues that the implicit cultural policies of both governments and multinational corporations in fact often have greater influence over their citizens’ cultural lives than do explicit public policies. Wisdom and Marks suggest that ‘local councils—in collaboration with communities and artists—are just as successful [as higher levels of government] at capacity building and value in the arts, despite non-existent or minimal cultural policy frameworks, because of their ability to foster participation and social cohesion’ (Wisdom & Marks, 2016, p. 189).

On the other hand, Gray (2002) argues that a lack of explicit definition contributes to making the arts and culture a ‘weak’ local government policy area which gives cultural policy the ‘characteristic of relative policy promiscuity’ as a policy field that is easily attached to others (p. 81). The fact that Yarriambiack Council information about the Silo Art Trail is available only on its tourism website suggests this policy attachment, as the website explains that the silos ‘have been strategically selected for maximum visual impact and to ensure that visitors have the opportunity to engage with multiple communities and outback tourism destinations’ (Yarriambiack Council). Interviews with Yarriambiack Shire Council confirmed that their motivation for initiating the Silo Art Trail was to achieve

local transformation from a diminishing agricultural region to a vibrant tourist destination with a high national and international profile. However, they also sought to foster a sense of community identity. Yarriambiack aimed to create a drawcard for visitors that would generate economic opportunity *and* rejuvenate local identity after years of challenge and hardship. Critical to the Council's motivation was the opportunity to attract internationally renowned street artists to showcase their work in the area: 'We wanted to make sure that it was an actual gallery ... that the artist would choose what they wanted to create' (Interview 1).

The private company GrainCorp too came to the project seeking specific outcomes. Its goal was to raise its profile amongst its communities and increase community engagement. Like Yarriambiack Council, GrainCorp was new to the business of funding arts and cultural initiatives on any significant scale. As a private agricultural company, it too lacked an explicit cultural policy.

The Federal Government's involvement in the Trail's development, on Yarriambiack's invitation, reveals interesting dynamics both between the Federal and local government agencies and within a single policy area (agriculture). At first glance, the Federal Government's involvement appears a clear and perhaps incongruous form of policy attachment. Rather than providing funding through the Office for the Arts, the Federal Government provided funding through the Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment (hereafter the Department of Agriculture), and specifically through its Drought Resilience Fund, which aims to 'enhance the public good by building drought resilience'. A stated criterion for receiving allocations from the Fund is that the benefits generated should be shared by many people, towns and/or businesses in drought-affected regions, rather than serving the commercial interests of a few companies, and that the beneficiaries of funding should create significant 'spillover benefits for society and the economy', beyond those achieved for private interests (DAWE, 2020).

As a key strategy of the Department of Agriculture, the Fund represents a blurring of policy boundaries. Whereas historically agricultural policies in Australia and elsewhere focused on providing direct funding or regulatory frameworks to assist or protect the nation's agricultural industries (Micoo & Vinodrai, 2010), the rise of neoliberalism has seen governments scale back these supports. When then presented with faltering economies such as those in Yarriambiack, governments have redirected funding to initiatives that support the communities that in turn support agricultural

production, rather than supporting the production itself. As a result, policy agencies with responsibility for rural development increasingly favour initiatives with ‘public good’ outcomes that are broader than those of the agricultural industries themselves. This policy emphasis is designed to retain workers by attending to the wellbeing of workers and their families, rather than simply to guarantee the availability of their employment. This shift in policy emphasis sees agricultural policy agencies seeking initiatives in other policy areas which are suited to achieving such outcomes, and creative placemaking provides an attractive opportunity.

As well as making cultural policy attractive to an industry policy agency, this emphasis on social and cultural development also makes local government attractive as a collaborator for such projects, because local government has a proximity to and understanding of rural communities that promises to increase the effectiveness of Federal policy decisions. The appropriateness of the Silo Art Trail, with its imagery of local residents painted against the living backdrop of drought-stricken wheat fields, is related to the fact that in Australia ‘drought’ is considered ‘a cultural concept whose primary connotations are less related to rainfall than to an overarching mythic narrative of endurance’ (Anderson, 2010, p. 156). The Silo Art Trail’s presentation of works like ‘Farmer Quartet’—born out of a consultation process with the Brim Active Community Group—celebrates the role of farming communities in this narrative of endurance and in so doing is seen to provide a ‘public good’ (Fig. 10.1). Drought resilience is presented in the framework of drought’s negative impact on colonial farming practice and the endurance of the farming community, again noting the omission of First Nations peoples and culture in this representation.

The Department also recognised the potential ‘spillover benefit’ of the Silo Art Trail in that it could attract tourism and hence facilitate the development of associated businesses, such as hospitality. As such, paradoxically the Department’s funding commitment reflected its recognition that industrialised agriculture in Australia’s wheat belt is not sufficient to generate sustainable economic growth, and its interest in diversifying the region’s economy beyond its own titular responsibility. Its involvement is evidence not just of policy attachment of the arts and culture to agricultural policy, but of a blurring of policy areas within a single agency: a traditional industry policy area (agriculture) adopted what traditionally would be a cultural policy initiative (the Trail) as an instrument to achieve

a traditional social policy outcome (community resilience) and economic policy end (sustainability of Wimmera-Mallee towns).

Yarriambiack's proposal for the Silo Art Trail also came at a time of state cultural policy's growing attention to rural and regional parts of the state. Creative Victoria was the only funder involved that explicitly has an established remit for cultural policy. At the time of Yarriambiack's request, Creative Victoria was in the process of establishing a major funding scheme called Landmark Works to realise its policy objective of developing creative production that was sufficiently 'large-scale, original and authentic' to 'generate a lasting legacy for their creators and the general public, along with benefits to the communities in which they exist' (Creative Victoria, 2019, p. 1). A common criticism of state and federal cultural policy in Australia is that it is historically focused almost wholly on the capital cities (Mackay et al., 2021). As a result, non-urban objectives are now written explicitly into state government policy. Creative Victoria (2019) identified that the Landmark Works programme would fund at least one project in regional Victoria. Yarriambiack's invitation to become involved allowed Creative Victoria to share the weight of this goal with a local partner. Because of the regional and rural emphasis in contemporary state government cultural policy and state agencies' stretched resources, rural local governments have become important collaborators for state governments to achieve their policy objectives.

As with the Federal Department of Agriculture, the collaboration between Creative Victoria and Yarriambiack also represents a widening of scope for a cultural policy agency. Creative Victoria's major responsibility has traditionally been to support the innovation and economic development of Victoria's creative sector. However, it now reaches into economic development more broadly and into tourism, reflecting a blurring of its own policy areas with others. The Landmark Works programme sought not just creative sector development but 'transformative' economic impacts on communities (Creative Victoria, 2019), such as through tourism and increased employment beyond the cultural sector.

It is evident from this discussion that there were several consistent and ostensibly complementary policy aims across the funding agencies. Yarriambiack's community pride objective and GrainCorp's community engagement objectives were consistent with the Federal Department of Agriculture's 'public good' aim, for example. Tourism and economic development drove Yarriambiack and Creative Victoria's investment alike. Such complementarity demonstrates how key policy concepts can be used

across different agencies and government levels to bring together different agencies. It also indicates a trend across government agencies, even at different levels, to adopt an ostensibly single set of objectives—usually associated with economic sustainability or growth, employment and community resilience—regardless of their stated portfolio.

However, tensions between policy agencies involved in the Silo Art Trail indicate that what was meant by these concepts varied according to the objectives of each agency. In one such case, this tension appears irreconcilable. Yarriambiack's interest in attracting tourism rested on the uniqueness of the Trail to the Wimmera-Mallee; any similar initiative beyond its region simply represented unwanted competition. 'We've started this movement that we wish we could have contained to the ... Mallee region' (Interview 1). As an agricultural production company with investments across the nation, GrainCorp subsequently wanted to reproduce the silo art trail model in other municipalities—a desire shared by state funder Regional Development Victoria. In the words of the GrainCorp's Corporate Affairs Manager, the phrase 'Silo Art Trail' 'has become synonymous with this movement to bring tourists out to regional Australia' (Jess Simons quoted in Fuller, 2021). In 2017, Yarriambiack applied to trademark the phrase 'Silo Art Trail', seeking control over the driving tour concept and resisting the pressure of the more economically powerful funders to share it. The following year, GrainCorp lodged a successful legal argument to oppose the trademark on the grounds that the Trail is 'clearly inspiring to many local communities, many of which have been affected by drought' (Simons quoted in Vince, 2021).

This dispute indicates the tensions involved in bringing together multiple policy agencies around ostensibly common goals, particularly where their scope of responsibility differs. For a small local government, it demonstrates the risk of collaborating with partners that have a broader remit in which to realise such goals, as both GrainCorp and the Federal Department of Agriculture did. Local government cultural policy initiatives are intended to tell the unique stories of their communities in response to globalisation and economic rationalisation, which threaten to erode local communities in the way that agricultural industrialisation has eroded the towns in Yarriambiack (Robinson, 2018, p. 724). In principle, this is also the goal of the state and federal agencies that collaborate with local governments, and which rely on them to elicit those local priorities and stories. However, several factors act together to complicate this collaboration: the larger agencies' remit for communities across the state or

nation; the similarities between towns confronting the same predicament with the same kind of resources—in this case the industrialisation of agriculture and the decommissioned siloes; and—most significantly—the focus on tourism as an economic lifeline for faltering rural economies. Together, these factors encourage the larger agencies to seek to replicate successful initiatives elsewhere, which in turn threatens both the commercial and cultural uniqueness of the original, local initiative. So too does the fact that larger agencies, at least governmental agencies, are required to demonstrate that they make evidence-based policy decisions. Once an initiative is clearly a success, it becomes evidence on which to base future initiatives, with little incentive for them to vary the model.

This is a problem that local governments initiating creative placemaking will need to address. The earlier cultural policy tendency to prioritise the touring of artwork to regional and rural towns did not generate profile and income for those towns in the way that creative placemaking initiatives such as the Silo Art Trail do, but nor did it require them to demonstrate and uphold their local uniqueness. In addition, Gadwa Nicodemus (2013) describes creative placemaking as involving a practice in which proponents seek to expand the sources of arts funding by developing cross-sector partnerships founded on values that they share with non-arts stakeholders, such as local businesses. This description fits Yarriambiack's development of the Silo Art Trail well. But one of the inherent risks of this practice is that while the cultures of local communities may differ, the conditions they work within remain the same. Agriculture has both declined and industrialised across the nation. The same kind of industrial infrastructure is decommissioned and decaying across the nation. Sources of alternative revenue for rural towns are limited in the same way, making tourism the most promising of scant opportunities. While these conditions describe the circumstances of the small rural towns in Australia's wheat belt, a similar sameness is likely to apply to larger towns relying on, for example, a food and wine culture.

## CONCLUSION

The Silo Art Trail is now a significant tourist attraction that has created notable impact in and beyond its region. It has drawn tourist and media attention, and injected money into the local economy that has allowed new businesses to flourish. According to the media, in some locations it 'really changed the fabric of the town', bringing people together in new

ways (Humphreys, 2017). It is cited as a driver of regional development through the creative repurposing of agricultural infrastructure elsewhere (Green, 2021). It is also a model for how a range of agencies across different levels of government with various interests and agendas enabled a single painted silo to grow into an enterprise of significant scale. It demonstrates that policy influence does not always trickle down from the highest level of government to the lowest but can also move from local level upward, and works against the tendency to impose urban-centric models on all government tiers of practice. Yarriambiack's desire to retain control—expressed through its lodgement of a trademark claim—reflects its resistance to the tendency for urban-developed policy to work against, or at the very least, marginalise local perspectives, knowledge and interest.

The Silo Art Trail is of additional interest for the attention it draws to how policy attachment can work across different levels of government, and to the blurring of policy areas across the different levels and portfolios of government as some goals—particularly economic development and community resilience—increasingly transcend individual agencies to become ubiquitous concepts across all areas. In this context, the Trail showcases the unique investment of a local council leading and driving a large-scale regional arts and economic development project, determined to maintain its power and influence as the Trail grows in size and attention. However, it also reveals the tensions between local and higher agency priorities. Conceived in the absence of an explicit local government policy framework, the Silo Art Trail became a forum for different agencies to play out competing objectives. In an effort to create an artwork sufficiently impressive to attract large-scale tourism, the council imported an urban art form to celebrate a story of a settler society, reproducing traditional patterns of cultural hegemony and affirming Deb Anderson's view that rural communities have 'a future only as part of a romantic past' (2010, p. 153).

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## CHAPTER 11

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# ‘Policies Aren’t Pieces of Paper’: Tussles and Tactics in Action-Oriented and Agile Cultural Policy Research

*Rike Sitas*

### INTRODUCTION

The Knowledge Transfer Programme was established in 2012 between the City of Cape Town and the African Centre for Cities, based at the University of Cape Town, as a platform for long-term scholar-official collaboration and coproduction to address the urgencies of the present moment, with a critical and practical eye towards the future. The objectives of the collaboration were linked to shared interests in resilience, the green economy, climate change, culture, heritage and the Sustainable Development Goals, pairing city officials with scholars around mutual interests and concerns. From 2016, researchers from the African Centre for Cities worked closely with the City of Cape Town’s Arts & Culture Branch, and in this chapter, I reflect on the 18-month programme to

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consider how knowledge was created and embedded through these pairings, through a process of thinking tactically about how to assert, insert, and sneak cultural objectives into the activities of the City.<sup>1</sup>

In one of our reflection discussions a municipal official collaborator said, 'Policies are not pieces of paper; policy is not something you read, it is something you do'. As argued by other scholars (see Bell & Oakley, 2015), and in this volume (Bell & Orozco, [this volume](#); Durrer, et al., [this volume](#)) too often policies are thought of as decrees, immovable objects, binding forces, and something that is delivered and received rather than made and negotiated on an ongoing basis. In reality, policy is something that is done, and therefore is embodied by the people doing the doing. Policies are thereby situated in places and shaped by people; they are processes of enactment as opposed to words on a page, and ultimately, only exist in their implementation.

The idea of policies being mobile, mutating and assembling on site and in local situations is not new (McCann & Ward, 2012a, b; Prince, 2017; Robinson, 2015), but the intricacies of what this means in relation to cultural and urban policy coalitions and conversations at a local scale is less evident in the empirical record. This chapter reflects on making and doing policy locally, on an everyday basis, in the context of fiscal restraints, and shifting politics and urban priorities. It draws on the experience of embedded research and policy coproduction and draws on the collective reflections of the research team that included researchers from the African Centre for Cities, the City's Arts & Culture Branch and cultural practitioners connected to the project. Of particular interest is how the City of Cape Town's Arts & Culture Branch's cultural mapping and planning project has been one avenue of manoeuvring, mobilizing, and mainstreaming culture in the City.

The chapter starts by introducing four interconnected ways in which to approach cultural and urban policy-making through collaborative policy research. These are as follows: *emplaced*, located in the specificity of place; *embodied*, or lived and practised through the practical and political knowledge of those who deliver cultural policy mandates, *enacted* or implemented in practice; and *embedded*, institutionally in agile and action-oriented ways, where embedding is both a process and an outcome. It argues that thinking about policy and practice through these four concepts reveals how cultural policy can interact with people, places, and politics in tactical ways.

Second, it locates Cape Town as a city of contradictions, a creative city that is often at odds with its own creative identity. As a Creative City of Design, Cape Town has recognized the potential for culture, arguably in niche and often elite ways, favouring the market over the lived reality of the urban majority. This section shows that while cultural policy exists, there is a mismatch between these ambitions and the fiscal reality. Despite this, there are municipal champions within the governance arrangement of the City who are working to leverage policy for more inclusive and emplaced aims.

Third, as the chapter emerges out of a long-term engaged process of collaborative research, this section turns to consider the Knowledge Transfer Programme and scholar-municipal collaborations in action-oriented policy research. It pays particular attention to two protagonists working with an embodied practice of cultural mapping and planning as an antidote to elite-centric urban cultural objectives. By doing so, it examines the tensions, tussles, and tactics of municipal-scholar collaborations in cultural mapping and planning. This section situates the chapter within the research findings, teasing out the thresholds of potential concern and mutual interest, and introduces two activities related to cultural mapping and planning that aim to counteract the challenges in transversal ways. Finally, the chapter returns to what this means for local action-oriented cultural policy research, arguing for how emplaced and embodied policy knowledge and practice can be enacted in situated and embedded ways.

### CULTURAL POLICY EMBLACEMENT, EMBODIMENT, ENACTMENT, AND EMBEDDEDNESS

The notion that *cultural policy is emplaced*, is inextricably entwined with urban objectives as they are conceived, situated and localized, is not new. The practices and politics of policy flows have been of growing interest to policy scholars, particularly in political science and geography for the last ten years. Although there have been numerous critiques about policy transfer (Benson & Jordan, 2011; Sassen, 2001), and elsewhere I have cautioned about how cultural policy may land in unintentional ways (Sitas, 2020a), there have also been more nuanced approaches to understanding policy mobilities. For example, simplistic notions of policy mobilities have been challenged, with a reminder that policy development is relational and emplaced (Cochrane & Ward, 2012; Prince, 2017). Policy mobilities are

not only one directional and transactional from the global North as best practices to be adopted wholesale in the global South. They move and mutate and are as much a product of interaction between and within global organizations and nation states (McCann & Ward, 2012a), what Peck and Theodore (2010, p. 170) express as ‘a three-dimensional mosaic of increasingly reflexive forms of governance, shaped by multi-directional forms of cross-scalar and interlocal policy mobility’.

McCann and Ward (2012a) point out that there are benefits to understanding ‘policy-making as both a local and, simultaneously, a global socio-spatial and political process’ given the ‘multi-disciplinary perspectives on how, why, where and with what effects policies are mobilised, circulated, learned, reformulated and reassembled’. This chapter is interested less in the ways in which the global-local relationship functions in relation to specific policy objects, and more in what this practically means in local contexts, and particularly within urban agendas. Whereas Robinson (2015, p. 831) is interested in ‘how policymakers compose their ideas amidst myriad influences from elsewhere’, I am interested in what policy makers and scholars do with this tacit knowledge in tactical and emplaced ways within contexts riddled with conflicting rationalities (Watson, 2003). This notion of policy emplacement as socio-spatial is useful to understand how a policy appears in a particular place, in this case, in the arrangements of urban governance in Cape Town.

*Cultural policy is embodied:* it is lived and practised through the practical and political knowledge of those who deliver cultural policy mandates. Embodiment has been theorized by a number of disciplines, and refers to the bodily being of people, and the psychological, social, and cultural conditions within which they live—the physicality of the body dialectically related to consciousness and situatedness. In other words, the knowledge that is used to underpin action is not only externally sourced—it is intellectual, experienced, already known, generational and sensorial (Hawkins, 2019; McKenzie, 2017). As Freeman and Sturdy (2014, p. 9) put it ‘this is practical and gestural knowledge, deeply embedded in bodily experience and incapable of expression in verbal form... as well as “embodied knowledge”... that can be thought of as “know how”’. An implicit knowledge of knowing how to do something, for example, instinctually knowing how to navigate complex politics within institutions like municipalities. It is an attunement, and sense of intuition that comes from both experience and a sensitivity to the effective and affective realms of working in complex contexts. Embodiment is useful to understand how policy is experienced and

deployed by particular people, and within a set of specific power dynamics that are fundamentally emplaced.

*Cultural policy is enacted*: it is something that is done, shaped largely by the ways in which it is emplaced and embodied. Of interest to this chapter is how cultural policy is emplaced, embodied, and enacted through cultural mapping and planning. Much research focuses on numerical accounting of cultural policy in the city, of the economic impact of particular sectors, trends within cultural industries, and surface level monitoring and evaluation impact analysis data. Cultural mapping refers to socio-spatial methods of surfacing local information about culture at a very local scale. Cultural planning involves making decisions about how to integrate this information into the planning of cities (see Redaelli, this volume). Cultural mapping has been particularly successful at identifying ways to make intangible and intangible aspects of culture visible (Longley & Duxbury, 2016; Radović, 2016). It is also seen as useful in participatory storytelling and community identity formation (Cauchi-Santoro, 2016; Jeannotte, 2016) and as a development tool (Freitas, 2016).

Although these processes are well documented in Canada, in Australia and in much of Europe, less is known about cultural mapping in the global South. Given that the basis for colonialism and apartheid in South Africa was essentially a socio-cultural project, it is logical that cultural acts can contribute to undoing the socio-spatial legacy of segregation. Recognizing the value of local knowledge and practice is essential for valuing diversity, plurality, and just placemaking, and it is this ethos of enactment of cultural policy that drives the Arts & Culture Branch's endeavours to assert the importance of culture in the City and for the city at large.

*Cultural policy is embedded* within institutions and inter-institutional collaborations; embedding can be a tactic for action-oriented policy research. Embeddedness here refers to the interconnected ways in which emplacement, embodiment, and enactment coalesce in the context of policy in situated action: to be embedded is therefore to be firmly located in place, people, and practice. This chapter is interested in how collaboration and coproduction shape the ways in which policy is lived and leveraged on a daily basis, and the role of coproduced and embedded research in embedding cultural policy.

It has been increasingly recognized that coproduction is useful for relevant and responsive research (Culwick et al., 2019; Simon et al., 2020). As Perry et al. (2018, p. 189) assert, 'the value of this approach lies in its context-sensitivity and iterative flexibility to articulate between

internationally shared challenges and distinctive local practices'. In addressing 'wicked urban problems', and within global policy flows, embedded research can mitigate against the risk of lifting international best practice and implementing potentially unsuitable solutions elsewhere, as can be a common trend within municipalities. Pivoting from 'best' to 'good' practice allows examples to be used as inspiration as opposed to wholesale adoption (Patel et al., 2015). States in the global South are unlikely to have the fiscal capabilities to address urban polycrises (A. Simone & Pieterse, 2017), and therefore shared resources and responsibilities are crucial for embedding emplaced and embodied knowledge within public institutions and civil society (Patel et al., 2015) This chapter looks at what this embedding means in the context of cultural mapping and planning as a collaborative act of asserting the role of culture in meeting objectives of urban justice (Fainstein, 2010; Sitas & Smit, 2017).

### CAPE TOWN: CULTURAL GOVERNANCE ARRANGEMENTS IN A CITY OF CONTRADICTIONS

Cape Town is a city of complexities and contradictions. It is both beautiful and brutal and everything in between. Although the region has been populated for 15,000 years, as a city, its built form, spatial design, social dynamics, and cultural flair has been fundamentally shaped by its more recent colonial apartheid pasts, and post-independence trajectories. Situated on the southernmost tip of the African continent, Cape Town is well known for its iconic Table Mountain looming large over the affluent central business district. Less evident in the global imagination are the stubborn divides, the spatial scars of forced removals, and the dysfunctional urban sprawl that curtails many residents' access to the city.

Cape Town is a secondary city in South Africa, with a population of around four million people. Around 42% of Capetonians are Black, 40% Coloured,<sup>2</sup> 16% White, and 2% Asian. Wealth in the city remains largely controlled by White elites, and unemployment (particularly amongst the youth) has jumped to over 30% since the Covid-19 pandemic, largely impacting on Black and Coloured residents (Statistics South Africa, 2021). Women and young people are least likely to have access to the formal labour market, and 33% of the economy is classified as informal.<sup>3</sup> Around 20% of residents live in informal dwellings (7% in backyard dwellings and 13% in informal settlements),<sup>4</sup> lower than many other African cities, but

this figure still accounts for a sizeable chunk of the population. The crime rate in Cape Town is the highest in South Africa, and one of the top ten most dangerous cities in the world.<sup>5</sup> This disproportionately affects poor neighbourhoods and is exacerbated by gangsterism. The Group Areas Act (1950) carved up the city spatially according to race and estimates of over 60,000 people were forcibly removed between the 1960s and 1980s from neighbourhoods classified as White under the apartheid regime. These racialized divisions have yet to be dismantled. The Covid-19 pandemic has compounded existing inequalities, deepening food insecurity, job loss, and limiting access to essential services, as well as putting major fiscal restraints on the City.<sup>6</sup>

Despite the divisions, Cape Town is by no means the sum of its statistics or only defined by its despair. It is a diverse and effervescent city, with a well-developed and multi-faceted cultural sector including state galleries and museums, independent and market related galleries, residency spaces, collectives, consultancies, as well as an active film industry and many public and private educational institutions dedicated to the cultural sector. The Visual Arts Network South Africa (VANSA) has produced an artmap<sup>7</sup> inventory of the formal institutions, yet many more exist that are less visible. Alongside this, there is also a plethora of less formal spaces for cultural action: artist collectives are actively re-defining what vibrancy means outside of the centre; backyard music studios abound; and young people are tech-savvy and connected in ways previously unimaginable.

Cape Town has embraced an identity of a creative city, and in particular, has joined the UNESCO Creative Cities Network as a Creative City of Design. As a Design City, 'Cape Town is committed to democratizing design, strengthening the local and international design-ecosystem, embedding design-led innovation into the city administration, and using design as a problem-solving tool for urban challenges to improve the lives of its inhabitants'.<sup>8</sup> In 2014 Cape Town was awarded the (relatively hollow title) of World Design Capital. The wholesale adoption of global titles has been critiqued for being inadequate in addressing the structural urgencies linked to growing inequality, yet the role of creative city worlding has found traction (Nkula-Wenz, 2019). The critique of creative cities has been well documented by scholars across the globe (Pratt, 2008, 2011; Sitas, 2020b), with cautions about Florida's (2002) elite-centric planning, and other forms of culture-led development (Evans, 2005; Miles, 2005; Zukin, 2010).

Despite these critiques, which city officials are well aware of, the language of creativity, and the role of arts, culture and heritage, are all tactically instrumental to the identity of the city. The role of creative and cultural industries, as well as heritage tourism, are well versed and on the tip of official tongues. It is estimated that the cultural and creative industries contributed R62 billion or 1.7% of the total GDP in 2017. In 2018, a South African Cultural Observatory mapping study showed that the greater cultural economy employs 6.94% of the national workforce. It generates one million jobs (Lutshaba et al., 2020). According to the previous Mayor Patricia de Lille in the Arts & Culture Branch brochure, ‘Cape Town, known as “the creative city” for many years, has an energy and vibrance that will fast become a successful economic driver’. Like elsewhere, there has been a tendency to focus on the formal art and design market and economy, on dominant simplistic notions of cultural expression, and on tangible tourist-centric types of heritage.

The cultural governance arrangement in Cape Town is an assemblage of moving parts that shift at different times and tempos. And even culture has many legislative lives that operate in different ways in different tiers of government. On a national level, culture falls within the mandate of the Department of Sports, Arts & Culture, as initiated by the 1996 White Paper on Arts, Culture and Heritage. Policies are also under construction and in conversation locally on an ongoing basis. So much so that this White Paper has itself been under revision ever since it was created, and even at its last draft in 2017, has been unable to transition from a draft to notarized completion. As the latest guiding document, its overarching mission is to: ‘Accelerate the transformation of the arts, culture and heritage sectors and related institutions to effectively contribute to building an inclusive, creative, caring and prosperous society in which the diverse creative and cultural practices, heritage and knowledge traditions and rights of all in South Africa may flourish and prosper’ (Revision of the Department of Arts and Culture 1996 White Paper, 2017, p. 8).

Cape Town is one of the few cities on the African continent that has a city-level cultural policy. Co-developed through an engaged process which included multiple stakeholder meetings, public workshops, policy reading groups, and expert input, the Arts, Culture and Creative Industries Policy (2014) ‘was conceived as an iterative one, to be evaluated annually with new data, through engagement with the sector and adjusted through the legal processes that governed policy development’ (Minty, 2018). An ambitious policy, it aims to address a number of urban challenges in its

10-page problem statement, including the socio-cultural legacy of colonialism and apartheid, inadequate and misaligned investments, increasing economic inequalities, and the non-existence of a shared story of and for the future of Cape Town. In 2021, having received criticism for being under-costed and un-implementable despite its best intentions, a policy review process was set in motion to address the urgencies of the present milieu.

While the City of Cape Town embraces the notion of creativity, the dominant conceptions are often at odds with the reality—what enters the official narrative of creativity is not always synchronous with what is happening on the ground. There are champions within the City, particularly in the Arts & Culture Branch, that are finding ways of leveraging the narrative of creative cities for other ends. These narratives are closer to Landry's (2007) notion of creative cities as about creative infrastructure and governance, and in the interest of Simone's cityness, where the city can only be understood in relation to its hustle on the periphery, and the affects and effects of local living and collective life in the majority city (Simone, 2010; A. M. Simone, 2016). In other words, to nurture a creative city is to pay attention to what is happening in the margins, which in Cape Town should reflect the interest of the majority. It was this shared threshold of interest that provided the foundation for the collaboration discussed below.

## CULTURAL POLICY AND MUNICIPAL-SCHOLAR COLLABORATION

This common commitment to ensuring a more inclusive approach to the role of culture in Cape Town could be mobilized through a longer-term research relationship between the African Centre for Cities and the Arts & Culture Branch. This section explains how this collaboration came about. In 2012, the Knowledge Transfer Programme was launched and involved embedding researchers between the City and the academy, focusing on the coproduction of policy knowledge and implementation. According to Patel et al. (2015), 'co-production is a creative response to contemporary urban challenges, especially in contexts where capacity is limited and where conventional technical and analytical expertise is lacking or inappropriate'. The Knowledge Transfer Programme sought to establish a platform for scholar-official collaboration and coproduction in order to

address the urgencies of the present moment, with a critical and practice eye towards the future.

The Knowledge Transfer Programme (2020) is underpinned by a Memorandum of Agreement, monitored by a steering committee, and involves a careful navigation of interests and expertise. It was funded by the Mistra Urban Futures project, a collaborative, coproductive, and comparative research network working in Cape Town (South Africa), Kisumu (Kenya), Sheffield/Manchester (UK) and Gothenburg (Sweden). The purpose of the project was to explore the role of coproduction in and between secondary cities (Simon et al., 2020). Although Mistra Urban Futures funding ended in 2019, due to the perceived success, the collaboration continues. In 2017, building on pre-existing relationships between myself and the Arts & Culture Branch as a consultant and sounding board, the African Centre for Cities started working formally with the Branch with an explicit focus on finding tactical ways to strengthen the cultural mapping and planning work and insert cultural objectives across different departments in the City.

Although there were other activities and actors in the collaboration, such as me as the research lead on the collaboration, other colleagues within the Branch, and a wide range of cultural practitioners in civil society, this chapter focuses on the two main protagonists involved in cultural mapping and planning as a way to illustrate the embodiment of policy-related action. In both cases, the politics and priorities of those involved shaped the way in which cultural mapping and planning was used as a tactic for asserting the importance of culture beyond the mandate of the Arts & Culture Branch. Researcher and arts practitioner Vaughn Sadie was appointed to join as an embedded researcher to work with Shamila Rahim who had been a project officer in the branch for some time, and who had spearheaded cultural mapping and planning in the City. As a member of the steering committee, and research lead, sounding board, and critical friend to the collaboration between Rahim and Sadie, I paid close attention to and was involved in shaping the reflective and reflexive processes as ongoing dimensions to the project. This chapter comes out of my long-term observations within the collaboration, our collective reflections that were built into the research process of the Knowledge Transfer Programme, informal conversations, as well as exit interviews with Rahim and Sadie at the end of the formal relationship.<sup>9</sup>

Rahim comes from a museums background, having worked for a long time with District 6 Museum before joining the City and returning to her

civic home in 2022. Her history as a cultural activist meant she was bringing a civil society network and a very particular kind of politics to her position. Having grown up in the violence and volatility of apartheid, Rahim carries with her an astute engagement with race, class, and gender, not only intellectually, but as experienced as being a Black woman in a racist and misogynist city and municipality. Crucial to Rahim, therefore, was to explore ways in which the City could use history, memory, and cultural vibrancy to enrich life in the city. Her concern was that despite the best intentions of the post-apartheid state, inequality persists, and culture needs to play an important role in its undoing. Rahim expressed unease at the flows of cultural resources to already well-positioned institutions and championed the push to use cultural mapping to surface and support what happens at a local neighbourhood scale in Cape Town.

Vaugh Sadie is an arts practitioner and has been a project manager for publicly engaged arts programmes deeply embedded in local contexts, such as in the neighbourhood of Cosmo City in Johannesburg; Dundee, a small town in rural KwaZulu-Natal (KZN); and Oudtshoorn in the Western Cape. Sadie has been committed to finding creative and participatory ways to tap into existing networks and practices in neighbourhoods to ensure relevant and responsive work. Reflecting on this practice, Sadie had been working on his doctoral thesis on community-driven public art and the implications for a nodal-based approach to cultural governance. This research resonated well with Rahim's cultural mapping and planning work and brought both practitioner and academic experience into the collaboration. Although Sadie had a markedly different upbringing from Rahim as a white man, his politics aligned with those of the project, and he shared a commitment to find ways to leverage local knowledge in the interest of a more culturally just Cape Town. Sadie supported refining instruments such as the Cultural Planning Toolkit Framework, ran workshops to identify blockages and opportunities, and given his relative autonomy from City hierarchies, was able to leverage the connection to the African Centre for Cities tactically to move within and around the City in ways officials embedded in a department may not be able to do, especially those in a very marginal department in the greater organizational structure of the municipality. Importantly, both Sadie and Rahim are not ordinary civil servants or scholars—their straddling of state, civic and scholar settings meant that they already embodied an intertwined set of politics and priorities.

It is also important to note that Rahim and Sadie were not working under stable conditions. Critiques of the state too easily assume a monolithic homogenous entity with coherent ideas and streamlined strategies, but the reality is that municipalities can be as inconsistent as the cities they are mandated to govern. The notion that the state is static couldn't be further from reality when looking at the Arts & Culture Branch, a small entity with many an unfunded mandate. In the last ten years, the Branch has been moved three times. For a while it was a Unit under Social Development, then moved into Tourism, which was under Economic Development, only to be demoted to a Branch under Social Development again. In the last five years, the City has undergone three massive overhauls—configuring and reconfiguring priorities dependent on who is at the helm (Cirolia & Robins, 2021).<sup>10</sup>

Despite this constant movement, two key priorities of the Arts, Culture and Creative Industries Policy have remained consistent: building an evidence base to inform decisions and focusing on cultural infrastructure. In response to these, in 2015 the Arts & Culture Branch focused attention and resources<sup>11</sup> into two interconnected projects: cultural mapping and planning; and creative spaces. Since 2015, the Arts & Culture Branch has conducted cultural mapping and planning processes in 52 wards with considerably limited budgets. It was around the Cultural Planning Toolkit Framework that African Centre for Cities and Arts & Culture Branch first started working together in 2016.

In an attempt to tackle often elite-interest-led perspectives, the Arts & Culture Branch, through Rahim, initiated an emplaced approach to surfacing cultural activities and resources ordinarily out of the view of the City. The Branch has been experimenting with cultural mapping and planning as a grounded research method to make sense of the fine-grain neighbourhood-level cultural fabric with an eye to finding locally responsive and relevant programming for connecting the city through cultural activity. According to the Cultural Planning Toolkit Framework (City of Cape Town, 2017):

Cultural planning sits at the intersection of people, places and policies. It provides a framework for addressing the needs and objectives of a city's cultural sector and cultural life including arts, culture and heritage groups and practitioners that shape a city's cultural ecosystem. (p. 9)

In Cape Town, Rahim was convinced that cultural mapping and planning is able to surface the kinds of emplaced information that can work to address the inconsistencies and tussles over culture in a local context and do justice to the notion of a creative city for the majority. Employing her experience as a museum practitioner with extensive experience in oral histories, Rahim rather than centralizing value frameworks within the City, deployed researchers, equipped with oral history skills with the intention of surfacing knowledge, values, and practices in the neighbourhoods being mapped. In this way, she argued, cultural mapping and planning can de-centre the power of cultural decision-making, building civil society as opposed to centralizing decisions in a state that is so fiscally and politically constrained.

Rahim and Sadie bring a very particular set of politicized agendas to their enactment of cultural policy in Cape Town, and this shaped the way in which community researchers were deployed and the ways in which the data was gathered and processed. For example, Rahim favoured conducting oral histories as a form of socio-cultural inventorying and employing local youth instead of consultants, which is the norm for these kinds of municipal procurement processes. As such, the embodied knowledge of residents became visible as part of the process. Therefore, the way cultural policy is enacted through the cultural mapping, and planning processes are not the delivery of an end product—it is not only about a map but also about a set of relationships that are made visible from and also those that emerge through the mapping process. In doing this, cultural mapping and planning de-centres the power of cultural decision-making, building civil society as opposed to centralizing decisions in a state that is so fiscally constrained. This does not come without challenges.

### TENSIONS, TRADE-OFFS, TUSSELS, AND TACTICS OF ACTION-ORIENTED POLICY AND GOVERNANCE INTERVENTIONS

The chapter now turns to critically reflect on the collaboration, observing first its tensions, trade-offs, and tussles, before turning to some of the tactics that were developed through the Knowledge Transfer Programme. These tussles are often underpinned by wildly different expectations on the purpose and location of arts and culture in the City. Although the mandate for arts and culture sits within the Arts & Culture Branch, there

are slippages in how culture appears in urban agendas in other spaces within the City. Culture can be elastic, porous, and sticky and is easily attached to other things in problematic ways. Interviews with various officials showed that the definitions of culture are varied and attached to a myriad of values that are not always compatible. In the context of enacting cultural policy in the City, there are five interrelated challenges that emerge out of the incoherence of the expectations of culture in the City.

First, there are discursive disjunctures at different scales. As mentioned earlier, there are different mandates for culture at different tiers of government. Whilst a national government may be interested in nationalist identities linked to reconciliation and social cohesion that emerge out of the 1994 moment of democracy; local government may be interested in the specificities that make a place identity unique. These are due in part to policies, but also the people who are responsible for enacting them and the political will at the time. While collaborations such as these may not be able to untangle these differences, they can recognize where opportunities lie to align.

Second, it has become clear that the argument for the importance of culture has not yet been adequately won. Although there is a wide recognition that culture is important, what this means for what the City actually does on a daily basis, and mandates as priorities beyond the Branch is less evident, especially in the face of complex and interconnected crises. Crucial to connecting culture to urban development priorities is building a coherent narrative asserting the strategic aims of institutionalizing cultural objectives across different spheres of local government.

Third, the inability to assert a coherent narrative has a lot to do with the diverse values associated with culture and some values are more tangible than others. The National Department of Sports Arts and Culture recognizes a wide array of values.<sup>12</sup> Common in many cultural policies, the values are all encompassing, but they can also have incompatible logics. For example, economic value may not be compatible with social value. This means it is easy for a municipality to pick and choose which value matches with the urban priority of the time at the expense of other values, and in the case of the Arts & Culture Branch, has depended on where it is situated within a particular dispensation. Decisions that impact on the cultural life of the city are rarely those taken by the Arts & Culture Branch whose mandate is very narrow and marginal to the development objectives of the City.

Fourth, action in local government is not always straightforward, and institutional limitations and inertia can create blockages, stumbling blocks, and a reluctance to commit or rock the proverbial boat. Municipalities are hierarchical and procedural, separated out and siloed, and at a system level are complicated to manoeuvre within without an astute recognition of, and aptitude to work around, power dynamics. It was quickly recognized that researchers can hold an intermediary and agile position, transcending the power dynamics and procedures that municipal officials have to adhere to. In other words, researchers can say the things municipal officials may not be allowed or able to say. Researchers can be ambitious and provocative in what is being proposed. A researcher can meet with the Director of the Directorate, while a project officer at Branch level cannot, or would not bring the same weight.

Finally, there are incompatible logics and logistics at a local scale and in localities. One of the challenges is that arts and culture are managed under one directorate (social development) and heritage under another (spatial planning)—the former focusing on the intangible dimensions to cultural life in cities, and the latter the material forms of culture in the built environment. This has resulted in scuffles over tangible and intangible heritage in specific neighbourhoods, where the social, spatial, and cultural priorities don't align. Both Branches are marginal to municipal decision-making and development objectives will often trump any attempt to assert the importance of socio-cultural life.

These are complex tensions and there can be a lot at stake, and although it may not be possible for the Knowledge Transfer Programme to solve these in entirety, there are collaborative in-roads that were initiated in the process that can set the groundwork for change. In addition to the everyday encroachments of culture into the development agenda of the City through Rahim and Sadie's persistent attempts to render culture visible, there are two processes that emerged out of the collaboration that are worth mentioning: the first is the SA-EU Dialogue Exchange and the second the coproduction of a policy positioning note.

The SA-EU Dialogue Facility<sup>13</sup> funds policy dialogues between Europe and South Africa. Through this collaboration, in 2019 and 2020, a dialogue entitled *Cultural Mapping, Planning and Impact Assessment for Sustainable and Just Cities* was funded. Driven by the National Department of Arts and Culture and the African Centre for Cities, the dialogue was designed as a collaboration with the Arts & Culture Branch, the Urban Futures Centre (Durban University of Technology), the Wits City Institute

(University of Witwatersrand in Johannesburg), the Cities Lab Katedra (University of Deusto in Bilbao), Urban Development Unit (Gothenburg Cultural Affairs Administration), School of Art history and Cultural Policy (University College Dublin), and the UNESCO Creative Cities Network (through the Catalytic Sectors Office at the City of Cape Town).

The purpose of the exchange was to review local policy to identify ways to strengthen urban policy implementation through culture; identify good practice cases as examples of strengthening policy discourse and practice; and provide a platform for building a network of cultural policy partners. This involved a study tour to Gothenburg and Bilbao; a conference hosted in Cape Town; and the production of a report looking at policy and good practice as Patel et al. (2015) imagined. The report was coproduced with local expert, Molemo Moiloa, and cultural mapping and planning expert, Nancy Duxbury, adding weight and relevance to the content. With additional of funds from Mistra Urban Futures, the report was translated into four toolkits.<sup>14</sup> These have been widely circulated in the City and well-received, and viewed as strategically helpful for Arts & Culture Branch project officers to leverage interest in other parts of the City. Although there were tangible material outputs in the form of these reports and toolkits, it was the intangible and relational outcomes that are perhaps more interesting. The conference in Cape Town invited strategic participants within the City from other departments to be in conversation with their counterparts in European cities, linked engaged scholars, and through this, made the Arts & Culture Branch visible in ways that it had not been before. It strengthened the relationships that had been made in the lead up to the events through negotiating partnerships at different scales of government. In addition to the ongoing building of a relationship between scholars and officials around issues of arts, culture and heritage, it galvanized a research partnership committed and contributing to collaborative research between municipalities and scholars across the world.

The second activity was aimed at consolidating the embedded research relationship and took the form of a coproduced policy note entitled *Culture, Sustainability and Urban Innovation: Towards Culture as a Strategic Objective for Urban Development in the City of Cape Town* (2021). The City has been in the process of institutionalizing the Sustainable Development Goals, particularly through its Resilience Strategy, and therefore the note situates culture at the heart of sustainability and justice through framing culture in relation to environmental sustainability; social sustainability and wellbeing; livelihoods and innovation; and underpinned

by creative and cross-cutting governance. The framing was responsive to emerging priorities in the City, making sure that the note was legible to audiences across different departments, and resonated with the strategic direction of the City. It connects culture to urban development objectives and the localizing of the Sustainable Development Goals through providing examples of innovative work the City is already doing in relation to the following: people and participation; processes and programmes; places and planet; policies and partnerships; and politics and political will. In particular, this note has been useful in the process of reviewing the Arts, Culture and Creative Industries Policy (2014).

With both activities, the process of putting them together was arguably as important as the outputs themselves. In order to ensure relevance of the content, the report and note were produced through collaborations within and beyond the Arts & Culture Branch, involving municipal officials in other departments, members of civil society from arts and culture organizations, and scholars from different disciplines. Coproduction was used as a tactic not only for developing relevant and responsive content, but also to strengthen networks with different actors in the urban and cultural governance arrangement in Cape Town.

### CONCLUSION: EMLACING, EMBODYING, ENACTING, AND EMBEDDING CULTURAL POLICY THROUGH ACTION-ORIENTED KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE

Although there are multiple entanglements between the global and local, the global in local, cultural policy largely sits in situations and situatedness. The Knowledge Transfer Programme has shown that policy in action is inevitably and necessarily emplaced in contexts that are incoherent and conflicted as much as they are creative and cool. This chapter concludes by drawing together four reflections on knowledge exchange in action.

First, for cultural policy to be responsibly and responsively emplaced, situated knowledge is vital in the processes of implementation. This includes taking seriously spatial, social, cultural, and historical knowledge. The collaborating partners in this exchange brought contextual and institutional experience, data, and methods into the collaboration. Whereas cultural consultants are often requisitioned to deliver on specific outcomes over a finite time period, the African Centre for Cities comes with a wealth of existing research and networks that spans beyond the cultural sector.

This coupled with the Arts & Culture Branch long, albeit shifting with the political times, commitment to culture, brought a particular set of sensibilities and sensitivities to the cultural mapping and planning process that were ground-up, identifying already existing practices, and creating platforms for creative practitioners to interact with the City in novel ways. While with fiscal restraints and limited state budgets for culture, there may be some way to go in resourcing culture in the majority city, cultural mapping and planning provides an evidence base that at least secures a seat at the proverbial table. This voice and visibility enhances the City's ability to plan and develop appropriately, and civil society's capabilities to hold authorities accountable.

While the SA-EU Dialogue engaged with cultural mapping and planning policies and practices from elsewhere, the objective was not to implement them wholesale from elsewhere. Engaging in these kinds of activities is not only about the substantive work of producing novel evidence bases of Patel et al.'s (2015) good practice, but also as a form of rendering cultural objectives visible beyond the narrow mandate of a municipal unit. The collaborations did not only include cultural policy practitioners. Inviting spatial development planners and urban researchers into the fray meant that applicability could be distributed to other departments and disciplines. Although this was not always smooth, especially when conflicting logics and priorities collided, incremental in-roads were made into manoeuvring cultural objectives beyond the mandate of the Arts & Culture Branch. This has been met with some measure of success, with the Branch being invited into development processes in neighbourhoods such as Delft and District Six.<sup>15</sup>

Second, just as cultural policy is situated in place, it is embodied in the literal bodies and in the various forms of tacit, tactical, and technical knowledge of municipal officials and scholars in the collaborative research arrangement. Collaborations between institutions always require careful negotiation, interpersonal aptitudes, and a great deal of trust to build action-oriented relationships of exchange. The work within the Knowledge Transfer Programme is not only technical; a large part of it is building and maintaining relationships. There could be someone technically excellent and prolific at producing policy notes, but this is less important than being attuned to politics and power dynamics in order to circumvent conflict and find tactical ways to tackle the tussles.

This involved an ethic of commitment and care—not only for each other, but for the projects themselves. Crucial to understanding

embodiment in these emplaced situations, is that it is not individual—it is collective and political. Developing the note involved emplaced and embodied knowledge and relied on strong relationships with those across the City. Both the dialogue and the production of the policy note involved careful negotiation and tacit and tactical decision-making and are examples that demonstrate the action-oriented potential of research alliances. This has led to discussions for cultural mapping and planning to form the backbone of the new arts and culture policy.

Third, building relationships is the foundation of collaborative work, and essential for embedding and institutionalizing culture within the fabric of the functioning of municipalities. The embedded nature of the research allowed for reach beyond the Branch's immediate orbit, drawing on other networks within the City that had been established through the long-term collaboration—such as those developing the Resilience Strategy. Of particular use was the connection to the Knowledge Transfer Programme Steering Committee. Whereas culture had been seen as tangential, the project made visible the work of the Arts & Culture Branch and the potential to institutionalize culture beyond the Branch became a priority on the agenda. Whereas the Arts & Culture Branch and the Heritage Branch had not historically worked together at all, the SA-EU Dialogue Facility created a space where the two departments could intersect, interact, and start building a relationship for future action. Relationships are fundamentally embodied and rely on the interpersonal skills of those engaging with each other. Although mistrust can be worryingly prevalent within municipal institutions, embedded research collaborations can create spaces where ordinarily fractious encounters can be alleviated. For Holderness, another of the City-embedded research champions, 'the gains have certainly been tangible, long-term and mutually beneficial' (2020), demonstrating how the momentum of these processes is not lost after the embedded encounters.

Ultimately, being embedded in an institution and immersed in the daily activities of the City allows for reflexive, responsive, and relevant cultural policy work as situated and situational, and above all nimble—which is not a quality ordinarily attributed to policy. Municipal officials and scholars within such an arrangement learn how to work in adaptable and agile ways that move between different kinds of knowledge and institutional contexts. There is also mutual benefit—where city officials gain access to evidence bases, and scholars gain access to data and institutional insights at a deeply engrained institutional level not usually afforded to academics. It

means that action-oriented research is not formulaic and can be multi-faceted and involved being there and being aware.

Finally, as one of the few cities on the continent with a cultural policy at the city scale, the City of Cape Town has demonstrated a commitment to the cultural and creative sector. The City has been successful at landing design as an urban imperative which has tended to favour the interests of cultural elites. In surfacing other forms of cultural and creative practice at a neighbourhood scale across the majority city, cultural mapping and planning allows Cape Town as a creative city to encounter itself in a less elite-centric, and a more inclusive way. This evidence base has implications for how resources flow and how civil society can actively engage authorities through alternative in-roads to the faltering political processes of South Africa's participatory democracy (Sitas & Pieterse, 2013). This involves recognizing that the status quo of inequality requires new and multiple tactics to enable a creative city no longer at odds with its own place identity.

## NOTES

1. I use 'the City' with a capital 'C' to refer to the City of Cape Town as a municipal entity. The city with a lower case 'c' refers to the city at large.
2. The term 'Coloured' has a different meaning in South Africa than elsewhere. Here 'Coloured' refers to a distinct racial classification named under the apartheid regime which refers to those with a mixed Khoisan, Black, European, and Asian ancestry, dating back from the 1600s.
3. The informal economy includes activities that fall outside of the formal economy. These are usually paid in cash, are short-term, and are precarious forms of income.
4. This data comes from the City of Cape Town (<https://www.capetown.gov.za/Family%20and%20home/Residential-property-and-houses/Informal-housing/About-informal-housing>) but it is difficult to account accurately.
5. Institute for Security Studies.
6. National and municipal budgets have been radically cut and diverted to alleviate stress on the health, social services, education, and economic systems. The effects are being measured and monitored by state institutions such as National Treasury, as well as numerous non-governmental entities and universities.
7. <http://www.artmap.co.za/city/1/cape+town/>.
8. <https://en.unesco.org/creative-cities/cape-town>.
9. While the embedded research project has ended, our relationships and collaboration continue in less formal, and more ad hoc terms.

10. The African Centre for Cities has been tracking these shifts as part of the long-term engagement with the City of Cape Town, and the research collaborations have been shaped by, and morphed, in relation to how the urban priorities emerge within shifting urban mandates.
11. Although resources were allocated to cultural mapping and planning, these were comparably very limited and much of the work was undertaken by Rahim over and above her key performance areas.
12. The following values are recognized: 'Inherent Value: Intrinsic value in their own right in the context of aesthetic needs of society and individuals. Creative Value: Innovation and problem-solving capacities. Social Value: Bringing about societal transformation and in being instrumental in socially good ends. Economic Value: By generating wealth, contributing to direct and indirect economic growth and creating sustainable employment. Educational Value: Cognitive, conceptual, spatial, design and cooperation skills development. Recreational Value: Entertainment and relaxation function. Therapeutic Value: Mental and physical therapeutic applications. Environmental Value: The application of natural and of recycled materials' (Revision of the Department of Arts and Culture 1996 White Paper, 2017).
13. <https://www.dialoguefacility.org/>.
14. The following toolkits were developed: cultural mapping, planning, and impact assessment for sustainable and just urban development; strengthening urban policy to address cultural diversity: good practice case studies from Europe and Africa; incorporating cultural mapping, planning, and impact assessment into policy development; and holding government accountable.
15. Delft is a rapidly densifying and economically marginalized neighbourhood in Cape Town that has seen the relevance of cultural infrastructure in the development process. District Six is neighbourhood in the central city that was a heart of cultural life before forced removals during apartheid. The repopulation of the area by those who were dispossessed is being developed with the support of cultural mapping and planning and the Arts & Culture Branch.

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