Book Section:

The "problem" of participation in cultural policy

Introduction

The need to increase recorded rates of cultural participation has become a recurring trope within cultural policy discourse. Internationally governments have commissioned research to measure who takes part in different cultural activities and developed policy initiatives to address perceived failings (see UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2012 for a list of international approaches). Commonly this approach assumes that the cultural offer is beyond reproach, but it is the participant who must change in some way in order to be able to take up the opportunities to participate that are on offer. In other words certain patterns of cultural participation are represented as a problem caused by a deficit amongst individuals and state intervention is needed to build the capacity of individuals to take part in what is represented as mainstream culture (Gilmore, 2012; Jancovich, 2015; Miles and Gibson, 2017). In Denmark for instance, despite government surveys demonstrating high and stable rates of participation in civic and community life, declining rates of engagement in specific art forms such as theatre and classical music are still seen as a problem for cultural policy to solve (Jancovich and Hansen, 2018). However, the aspirations that cultural policy has set out in this regard have broadly failed. In the UK for example, which is the focus of this chapter, despite almost two decades of sustained policy interventions and associated measurement, the headline rates of cultural engagement (in those practices which cultural policy measures) appear to have changed very little (Neelands *et al.*, no date). Yet recent research analysing the

breadth of people's everyday participation has shown the value that people place in their own active participation across a range of other cultural and creative practices (Crossick and Kaszynska, 2016; Miles and Gibson, 2017). This academic activity is mirrored by the growing number of organisations (for example: Voluntary Arts, 64 Million Artists, Fun Palaces) that have begun to campaign for cultural policy to better recognise and support amateur creative expression. They argue that this would better meet the needs of a diverse societal culture, rather than the current narrow focus on the professional arts. Such work challenges the very the notion of 'non-participation' as a 'problem' and instead questions the legitimacy of taste hierarchies on which established cultural policy is founded (Balling and Kann-Christensen, 2013; Stevenson, 2013; Stevenson, Balling and Kann-Rasmussen, 2015; Jancovich, 2017).

But despite this sustained critique and the failure to deliver noteworthy changes in patterns of cultural participation, there is limited evidence of significant changes in how cultural policy is executed in the UK or in the distribution of funding to cultural organisations. For all the rhetoric, what little has been done has arguably remained on the periphery, involving relatively small levels of investment in short term projects. This chapter examines why policies to support cultural participation appear to be so hard to change. It will do so by taking a historical approach, for as Foucault notes, for a problematisation to have formed something prior "must have happened to make it uncertain, to make it lose its familiarity, or to have provoked a certain number of difficulties about it" (2003 [1984], p.24). As such, this chapter aims to identify when practice around cultural participation became problematic and the conditions under which this occurred. Specifically, it will consider whether, rather than being a problem to be solved, the continuing existence of so-called cultural non-participation is in fact

central to maintaining the status quo and affirming taken for granted power relationships within cultural policy.

Understanding the arts as an institution

It is important to remember that although this chapter is analysing the construction of a problem within what is commonly called *cultural* policy, this is a fairly recent description for what would have been understood in many countries, throughout the twentieth century as *arts* policy (Craik, 2007). While there is much debate about participation that focuses on what should be funded, this makes the arts reducible to a fixed list of activities that the label is or is not applied to rather than considering the label as an object in its own right. As such, debate tends to focus on asking what *are* the arts rather than what *is* the arts? However, an Arts Council England study found that some people perceived an ontological difference between 'art' and 'the arts' (Arts Council England, 2008) with many appearing to see 'the arts' as something 'institutional'.

Broadly speaking, institutions can be understood as "conventions that are self-policing" (Phillips *et al*., 2004, p. 638) and which produce "stable, valued and recurring patterns of behaviour" (Huntington, 1965, p. 394). Within this understanding individual organisations can be understood as the materialised expression of an institution, but no organisation by itself is complete or complex enough to be an institution in its own right (Kangas and Vestheim, 2010). As such, the cultural policy bodies such as Arts Council England, local authorities, and delivery organisations such as museums, galleries and theatres may all be considered as component parts of a single institution – the arts –

that in turn is a significant constituent part of the manner in which power is exercised, values are distributed and asymmetric power relationships are maintained in society.

Fairclough presents institutions as a fully conceived order of discourse that is "simultaneously facilitating and constraining the social action of its members: it provides them with a frame for action, without which they could not act, but it thereby constrains them to act within that frame" (1995, p. 38). Specifically in relation to the arts George Dickie argues there are not a narrow group of people intentionally executing explicit institutionalising power, but rather there is a network of people employing the same body of knowledge and system of meaning to imbue certain objects and actions with value (Jelinek, 2013), similar to what Howarth describes as a discursive coalition (2010). As such, the constituent organisations within the arts are simultaneously given their self-justification and constrained by the institution of the arts. However, institutions are not eternal and transcendent, they are the product of a particular time (Phillips, Lawrence and Hardy, 2004). It is necessary therefore to consider the historical emergence of the institutional discourses of the arts, to reflect on how they came into being, and to examine the central role that the 'problem' of cultural participation has had throughout.

The constitution of the arts as an institution

Literature on the establishment of arts policy in the UK commonly focuses on the setting up of the Arts Council of Great Britain in 1946 and the creation of regulations to allow local authorities to subsidise "entertainment" for their constituents in 1948 (Hewison, 1997). However, these policy interventions and the core assumptions upon which they were based should be understood as having a far older discursive pedigree,

one that was created in the late eighteenth century and which was refined and entrenched as part of the civilising fervour of nineteenth century Victorians. As such, the issue of participation has been fundamental to these discourses from the outset.

But as many authors note (Belfiore and Bennett, 2010; Carey, 2005; Shiner, 2001; Murray, 1997), for the largest part of human history there was no notion of the arts as an independent concept as is now understood (Shiner, 2001). Building on the work of Kristeller, Shiner (2001) argues that the category of the arts as it is understood today is a modern European invention established in the eighteenth century when the "cult of art" and the "inflated, quasi-religious rhetoric that goes with it" came into existence (Shiner, 2001). The arts was discursively constructed as "something that exists beyond particular societies and belongs to the subject of, what might be called for want of a better phrase, 'humanity in general'" (Mirza, 2012, pp. 28–29). Yet despite this, the ability to interact with the arts is not something that humanity in general was assumed to naturally possess. Rather, an appreciation of the arts was understood as a learnt sensibility that must be both cultivated and mediated. Furthermore, in the nineteenth century artistic skills were not seen as something that everyone should develop and the arts were accepted as something created by "a leisured class with plenty of time and nothing required of them" but to create and define art for the rest (Upchurch, 2004, p. 206).

This approach was challenged at the time by the likes of William Morris (1882) who espoused universal creative expression, or art in the everyday, where the professional artist (or artisan in his terminology) was not someone from a privileged elite, but a worker. This thinking is also present in the work of Karl Marx and Frederick Engels

who describe an ideal society as one "in which there are no painters but … people who engage in painting [or art]" (Marx and Engels quoted in Bourdieu, 1984, p. 397). Such thinking influenced a long tradition of grassroots participatory practices and workers' education classes that grew up within the Labour movement and gave rise to high levels of and investment in cultural activity in Britain throughout the twentieth century (Keaney, 2006a; Dodd, Graves and Taws, 2008) until the decline of both the nationalised industries and trade unions.

But it was the notion of the aesthetic as a specific type of experience (Belfiore and Bennett, 2010; Shiner, 2001) that became integral to the modern conception of the arts. Associated to this was the conception of the individual who was not having these experiences, and whose life was all the worse for it. This discursive identity has developed over time into that of today's cultural non-participant.

Yet if the discursive logic of the arts requires the existence of the cultural non-participant then their non-participation should not be seen as a 'problem' for the arts. Indeed it is something that is to be expected. As such, it would not be until the arts entered into a policy relationship with the state that the non-participation of non-participants would become a 'problem'. For as the arts became an institution of the state, the non-participant would act as the primary boundary object (Star and Griesemer, 1989) around which different discourses could coalesce and legitimate the presence of the state in the management and regulation of the choices of its citizens.

The arts and the state

It would be more than a century after the establishment of the institution of the arts, as defined above, before a formal relationship with the state would finally be established. Until late in the nineteenth century, the dominant feeling remained that "as long as the market was seen to be meeting the needs of the public [then there was no real need for the state] to become involved with an activity that was perceived to depend upon individual taste and fashion" (Gray, 2000, p. 38). Yet over time, and through the lobbying of influential figures from within the professional arts, there was a significant ideological shift that situated the private lives of the populace within the purview of the state more so than had ever been the case previously (Toleda Silva, 2015). One of the inspirations for this were the public museums built in the nineteenth century and intended to provide access for the public to collections that had hitherto been the preserve of the ruling classes. At a time of mass industrialisation, urbanisation, and social division these museums and galleries not only offered an opportunity for wealthy industrial collectors to show off their acquisitions but would also play a vital role in attempts by the state to define a shared culture (Appleton, 2001). This aim also contributed to the increasing professionalization of cultural practice in which an elite of "academy-trained gentleman artist[s] of the middle or upper classes" (Upchurch, 2005, p. 510), would paternalistically grant access to the arts for wider society, in the hope it would have a civilising effect on all mankind.

By the end of the Second World War the British Government would shift from a strategy of casual patronage to direct intervention, what Minihan (1977) describes as the nationalisation of culture, and which significantly happened alongside the setting up of the welfare state, and its principle of universality (Coates and Lawler, 2000). Operationally, this took the form of the Arts Council of Great Britain (ACGB), formed in 1946 as a successor to two wartime organisations, the Entertainment National

Services Association (ENSA) and the Council for the Encouragement of Music and the Arts (CEMA) (Hewison, 1997). Both had operated independently during the Second World War, but their focuses had been different. ENSA's main activities in wartime had been the entertainment of troops, touring to improve public morale and setting up local arts clubs and associations where people could participate in artistic practice. CEMA, in contrast, had focused on protecting cultural heritage through storing and preserving national treasures and providing work for actors and artists during troubled times. When the Arts Council was formed at the end of the war it absorbed the duties of both organisations, but its direction was shaped by the personal and political influence of John Maynard Keynes, the previous Chair of CEMA, who now chaired the Arts Council. As such its interests were most clearly aligned to the aims of this body and as a result one of their first acts was to stop ENSA's support for touring and amateur arts clubs (Jancovich, 2014). This happened despite protestations from some leading British artists, such as the composer Vaughan Williams, that such action would "lose the vitality in English art which comes from making it creative from the top to the bottom" (Vaughan Williams quoted in Hutchinson, 1982, p. 46).

As a liberal politically, Keynes was distrustful of an overarching state, so as chair of the Arts Council he separated the decision making process from government, arguing instead for an approach, known as the arm's length principle and which has been widely exported internationally (Upchurch, 2011). The arm's length principle has been defined as a "system of separation of powers and of "checks and balances" fundamental to a pluralistic democracy, [where] money voted by parliament is granted to…quasi independent bodies [to] determine their own policies and spending choices" (Landry and Matarasso, 1999, p. 23), or "the combination of two elements…i) an autonomous funding agency and ii) peer assessment decision making processes" (Madden, 2009, p.

12). But far from providing checks and balances to ensure the accountability of decision making, this chapter argues that the arms length model has allowed a professional cultural elite to exert significant power over the implementation of arts policy ever since. From the beginning, many of the Arts Council officers and peer reviewers who were brought in to advise them, sat on the boards of existing arts organisations. This meant that, from the outset, the decision making of the Arts Council was informed far less by politicians or the public than by those within the artistic community itself. As Hutchison notes when reflecting on the history of Arts Council of Great Britain, at best the organisation was riddled with vested interests at its worst outright conflicts of interest were in evidence (Hutchinson, 1982).

This led to an approach that, far from the principles of universalism elsewhere in the welfare state, became known as "few but roses" (Arts Council of Great Britain, 1951, p. 51), whereby arts policy and funding was concentrated on a small number of arts organisations, which were mainly based in London, rather than being distributed more widely both in terms of geography and cultural practices. This was not just a practical response to limited finance; as the Arts Council's 1961-62 annual report says "even if [our] income were larger [we] would still prefer to consolidate…than to dissipate…resources" (Arts Council Great Britain 1961 quoted in Hutchinson, 1982, p. 61). The result was an arts policy that was, and remains, inherently concerned with supporting artistic independence for a professional class of artists, rather than the universal creativity or participation of society in general.

However, as Gray (2000) notes, in a laissez-faire free market economy, when the state does intervene in society it must be seen to be for a purpose and the outcomes they

deliver must also be seen to be legitimate themselves. As such, justification for public subsidy and the legitimacy of a professional cultural elite to make decisions about how that money was spent had to be integrated into the institutional discourses of the arts. Adhering to a strict division between the aesthetic and the corporeal was problematic to sustain if the arts was to be granted public support on the basis of providing a unique and societally useful transformative experience. Therefore, the introduction of explicit state funding for the arts necessitated the adaptation of its founding institutional discourses.

Discursive legitimation

Legitimacy is a social, cultural and performative process and legitimation, it is argued is a necessary part of the work undertaken by publicly funded organisations (Håkon. 2016). This work is shaped by the institutional environment in which the organisation exists (Meyer and Rowan 1977) and according to Taylor and Van Every (1993) the legitimate status of institutions depends on the maintenance and adaptation of the discourses upon which the institution relies for meaning, status, and power. Institutional agents manage this process through the on-going production of symbolic communication that leaves traces (Taylor and Van Every, 1993). These traces act as a signal to others that the actions of the institution are legitimate and through their pervasiveness they act as a barrier to the unmanaged entry into the field of new discourses that present alternative realities or legitimate alternate institutions.

However, as McGuigan notes: "no discourse is ever closed off entirely from other discourses or without internally disruptive elements" (2004, p.35). This means that structural and cultural changes in society can pose a threat to institutions as they can

cause shifting relationships between discourses that may challenge their taken for granted status. In particular, institutions face difficulties where there is a need to secure transference of existing constructions of reality to new communities or generations that have their own system of meanings upon which they could establish new, and ultimately competing, institutions (Phillips, Lawrence and Hardy, 2004). Institutional agents can chose to adapt the behaviour of the institution to such societal pressure for change, and/or execute strategies that defend the established beliefs and patterns of behaviour on which they depend for their existence (Kangas and Vestheim, 2010). This chapter argues that in regards the institution of the arts it is the second option that has most commonly been adopted by its agents. This is particularly evident in relation to the 'problem' of participation within cultural policy, where institutional agents have adapted existing discourses or co-opted new ones in order to construct refreshed "explanations and justifications for the fundamental elements of their collective, institutionalised existence" (Boyce, 1996, p. 5).

As stated, from the outset, in order to be seen as a legitimate site for state intervention, the arts were recognised for "their contribution to national prestige, and their role in civilising the population" (Gray, 2000). As such, and up until the nineteen seventies, state subsidy for the arts was discursively justified in two primary ways. One strand focused on representing access to the arts and the unique experience that this afforded as an inalienable right. State subsidies for the arts were therefore represented as part of an egalitarian process of democratizing mainstream culture (Mulcahy, 2006; Landry and Matarasso, 1999; Evrard, 1997). This approach to the concept of participation shifted the emphasis from that within political science, which defines participation as

being about power and decision making to a more neutered version within the cultural sector that is about taking part in cultural activities.

But this strand gained legitimacy from the wider post-war European discourses of the redistributive welfare state (McGuigan, 2004) where the core assumption is that the wealth (both tangible and intangible) of a society should be evenly distributed amongst its population, rather than the means of production. Those activities, objects, and organisations that had already been discursively written upon by the arts as being of unique aesthetic value were now represented as being part of the intangible wealth of the nation and should not therefore be the preserve of any one group. State intervention could therefore be justified in order to facilitate the equal dispersal of the means of consumption and the cultural non-participant functions as the necessary subject to which such redistribution can occur.

However, the egalitarian sentiment of the democratisation discourse was also bound to a more pragmatic second strand of discursive justification. This strand sought to make clear how the provision of the unique aesthetic experience that the arts claimed to be able to provide would have a useful impact on society. Like the institution of the arts itself, the logics of this discourse can be traced to the nineteenth when Utilitarians such as Francis Hutchison and Jeremy Bentham were asserting that the role of the state was to seek the greatest happiness for the greatest number. However, Bentham's anointed prodigy, John Stuart Mill, proposed that there existed two tiers of pleasure. The pleasure of intellectual and moral actions was of greater value than the supposedly simple pleasures gained through acts that required less cognitive engagement – therefore participation in entertainment is most certainly not equal to participation in the arts.

Rather than happiness, the result of simple pleasure was better understood as contentment and thus ultimately of lesser value (Mill, 2001 [1863]). Mill believed the pursuit of the higher pleasures was not only of greater intrinsic value to the individual, but that those who pursued such pleasure would be of greater value to society. Of course, the converse of this logic is that those who do not pursue these higher pleasures, those who might now be labelled as cultural non-participants, are likely to be of less value to society.

These claims had discursive strength because of the extent to which they made explicit use of the existing dividing practices (Danaher, Schirato and Webb, 2000) that were already used to delineate society. Two existing discursive identities became mutually self-affirming because those most deprived socially were identified as not having been exposed to the arts, their lack of exposure to the arts in turn seen as a contributing factor to their social deprivation. By association, the supposed cultural non-participation of these individuals becomes part of the wider problematisation of their societal disengagement and in so doing gains legitimacy as a site for state intervention. Subsidising the arts can therefore be justified on the basis of providing access to opportunities for these necessary interactions to occur, both in order to help more people transform into effective and productive citizens and to maintain the contributions of those, who by virtue of their existing participation, have already been transformed.

Challenging the dominant discourses

However, by the 1970s the pre-eminence of these discourses was being contested. The growth in the number of universities providing higher education in the 1960s and the

development of cultural studies within universities began to challenge the cultural hegemony created by a predefined great tradition in the context of a society that was itself becoming increasingly heterogeneous (Williams, 1983; Willis, 1990). Academic debate was re-oriented from a focus on appreciation of the artist's intention towards an examination of the way that the public respond to and interpret the work. This shift coincided with broader social and cultural changes taking place at the time. Not least, in the 1970s Britain becoming an increasingly multicultural society meaning that there were many new voices wanting to be heard. Increasingly, therefore, there was talk not of one culture but many cultures. This more relativist definition challenges the institution of the arts by invoking a broader notion of culture than had previously been the case. As such, the notion of a single artistic canon came under sustained critique for the extent to which it, and the institution of the arts, ignore or de-value alternative cultural traditions and those who create them (Khan, 1978).

Alongside this, a new generation of young artists, experimenting with new art forms, and a politically active and articulate community arts movement grew up. This was partly in response to the decline of workplace-based creative activity, which resulted from the privatisation or closure of many traditional industries, such as the coal industry, which, through the National Coal Board, had been significant funders of creative activity among the working classes (Ashworth, 1986). Practitioners working within this context adopted an approach to participation that more closely reflected a need for people's participation in decision-making. They called for arts policy to change its support for the self-interest of the arts and to respond in a similar vein (Braden, 1978). Likewise, in response to criticism of the London bias of the national Arts Council, Regional Arts Associations started to flex their power. By dint of their

accountability to an electorate through their associations with local authority members, many were much more open to a dialogue with local artists and community groups. This created a two-tier approach to cultural policy (Hutchinson, 1982) that often challenged the national arts policy prioritisation of classical art forms by supporting greater cultural pluralism and increased grassroots activity locally. But despite this, little fundamentally altered in regards to the dominant logics of what national cultural policy should be or how it should be executed.

For example, in 2004 Arts Council England reviewed their funding, claiming a priority was to address participation. However after the review there is evidence that 85% of the financial support that they provided continued to be given to the same organisations as before Likewise, in 2010 when policy discourse further emphasised the need to increase participation there is evidence that participatory arts organisations were worst hit in austerity cuts (Jancovich, 2017).

This is not to say that attempts to change have not been made. The New Labour government who were in power 1997-2010 attempted to find a compromise between different approaches in order to 'fix' the 'problem'. They looked beyond the traditional arts agencies, such as the Arts Council, to broader public policy agents, such as its social inclusion unit, for guidance on the development of cultural policy. Local Authorities also continued their interest in this arena, and by the end of this period were investing at least as much if not more than the Arts Council themselves. However, the status quo has continued to be exceptionally resilient to such interventions. Not least because the third way (Giddens, 2000) principles of New Labour meant that rather than challenging a policy model based on hierarchy and expertise, new policies sought an

accommodation between the differing factions. This accommodation was to be achieved through partnership working.

Inherent in the notion of partnership is an attempt to govern by consensus between different interest groups. This requires consultation with a wider range of voices than may be defined by top-down government, or indeed than make up the cultural elite who had been so influential in arts policy since the Second World War. Yet while the government might suggest the need for a wider range of voices to be involved in decision making in the arts, the arm's length principle limits government's capacity to determine in what way this should be implemented. Instead, the way policy would be implemented and spoken about continues to be left to agencies such as the Arts Councils themselves to determine. In turn, this leads to tokenistic consultation masquerading as participation in policy making.

For example, although Arts Council England has conducted research around their decision-making processes, including undertaking deliberative consultation, the purpose of this process was to measure the value stakeholders currently have of the arts (Keaney *et al.*, 2007; ICM Unlimited, 2015). This misses the point that in order to challenge institutionalisation such participatory methods must be allowed to produce learning that may change both the values and indeed the practices of the arts themselves. Instead, the tokenistic approaches employed fail to "explain what [the arts] does to create value or whether [it] might create more or different value if it did things differently" (Keaney, 2006b, p. 40). In this case, there is little evidence that Arts Council England used it to explore how it might change itself. Rather, the primary outcome was that it changed how they communicated both internally and externally

about their activity and devolved the problem of institutional change further down the chain, by asking the organisations it funds to address the problem of its "crisis of legitimacy" (Holden, 2006). This is indicative of the discursive adaptation by which the institution of the arts is able to neutralise criticism while remaining relevant to the dominant discourses of the state at any given time.

The on-going process of discursive legitimation produces new discourses but the creation and adoption of one does not result in the abandonment of another. As Talja (1999a) notes, there are always several more-or-less conflicting discourses existing in a particular field of knowledge or institution and "that is why discourses are internally relatively coherent, but mutually contradictory and alternative" (Talja, 1999b, p. 468). Indeed, as stated previously, an institution can be strengthened by the presence of multiple discourses upon which its agents can draw, in particular if these discourses share commonalities to which each can refer. As such, the discursive strand of the unique transformative experience of the arts and the association of the cultural non-participant with those identities that the state represents as problematic are both still part of the discursive legitimation work being done by the arts today. This has allowed the arts to intertwine its own logics with the dominant discourses of the state very effectively in a process that Gray has described as policy attachment (2004) and Belfiore as defensive instrumentalism (2012).

So, while the state may no longer be faced with the threat of anarchy from the uneducated masses of the industrial revolution (Arnold, 2009) in a neo-liberal meritocracy the responsibility for personal and social happiness has shifted from the state to the individual. Personal growth, self-improvement and well-being are all key

elements of the dominant discourses of social mobility and individual aspiration. Every citizen is expected to increase their social capital through taking part in civic or cultural activities (Putnam, 2000). Failure to do so implies a deficit, not in the service provided but in the individual participant. This dovetails perfectly with the discursive identity of the cultural non-participant and so the arts has positioned itself as being well placed to help those with a cultural 'deficit' (Gilmore, 2013) to overcome the 'barriers' (Stevenson, 2013) they face to 'taking-part' (Jancovich, 2017). In turn, government performance targets were created to assess how well the publicly funded arts organisations were achieving this goal.

Yet it has been shown that the extent to which such interventions have any meaningful long-term effect on social inequity is questionable (Belfiore, 2009) Bourdieu (1984) argues that all forms of capital are in fact by definition finite and kept in short supply under capitalism. He contends that differences in levels of capital are how social divisions are sustained, and the dominant class will continually find ways to maintain distinctions between those who have and those who have not. Increasing participation in the arts, rather than participation in decision-making does not reduce these social divisions, but simply reduces the value placed on the artistic practice that has become more 'inclusive' while those with the greatest privilege adopt a different practice to maintain their distinction. If this is true then it may be argued that the arts as an institution exists to perpetuate inequality. Therefore, cultural policy, when allied to the arts, can never deliver increased participation, let alone the universality implied by the social contract originally conceived in its association with the welfare state.

A discursive knot threatening discursive coherence

In attempting to convince of the naturalness of the institution of the arts continuing position of privilege with the state, cultural participation has increasingly had competing and contradictory meanings. Likewise, the arts has become more vaguely defined as "a mélange of cultural forms […] while still being touted as powerful medicine for whatever ails society" (Jensen 2002, p.148). Both Jensen (Jensen, 2002) and Shiner (Shiner, 2001) see such discursive work as a highly successful act of self-preservation by those who can exert the most power in the field. However, over time this adoption and interweaving of discourses can result in a discursive knot (Wodak, 2007) that becomes increasingly complex and ostensibly contradictory. A complexity that itself starts to risk the discursive coherence of the institution they were employed to defend. Binding the eighteenth century discourses of the arts to modern discourses of social democratic redistribution, neo-liberal service provision, the free market of the creative industries, and the need to provide people and communities more agency in decisions that affect their lives, has left the arts somewhat Janus faced. The arts must be seen as unique but ubiquitous, exclusive but inclusive, not for everyone but for anyone, in need of state aid but a driver of the economy. It must be seen to respect diverse cultural values while simultaneously finding something wrong with the cultural values of certain problematic individuals that needs rectifying and which only the arts can do.

The discourse of democratising culture had been based on the logics of a knowing elite bringing the best to the most. However, diffusing the understanding of what the best is in order to say that the most are being reached means that the "cultural democracy movement led unwittingly to the erosion of the social-democratic project from the

inside" (McGuigan, 2004, p.41). Likewise, if the activities that are legitimate within the discourses of the creative industries and abundant everyday participation are adopted as legitimate modes of cultural participation then they must be accepted as offering the same unique type of experience as that which one could previously only gain through an encounter with the arts. Given the abundance of such activities the subject identity of a cultural non-participant and the need for state sponsored cultural intermediaries to encourage their participation would be increasingly difficult to sustain (Stevenson, 2013). Instead, a new justification for why the state continues to be involved in cultural policy at all would need to be formulated, one which would need to focus on what the state is investing in rather than who is participating.

Yet the idea of the arts as a separate field of human activity, on which only members from within the arts can speak, continues to persist in cultural policy. It has not been assimilated into an anthropological discourse as just another form of social activity and thus simply one manifestation of the multiplicity of cultures that exist within society. Discursive boundaries may change but that does not mean that boundaries no longer exist. Although the range of objects and activities that can be understood as the arts has significantly expanded, it remains the case that they are judged according to the rules and logics of the arts, from which they become considered as an example of just how diverse, and thus inclusive, the arts can be.

Maintaining the existence of the cultural non-participant negates the need to ever definitively explain what these people are doing with their time and what the alternative activities are that they are inevitably already participating in. Instead, discursively affirming the existence of the cultural non-participant in text, speech and practice

implicitly defines cultural participation as a distinct social activity that it is possible not to do. Just as Danto (1964) reached the conclusion that while anything could be art, not everything was, so too it may be argued that while anything can be cultural participation, not everything is. It is this logic that is vital in protecting the institution of the arts from the oblivion of meaninglessness that the ongoing discursive legitimation work of its agents has risked invoking.

For no matter which claims about the impact of state subsidies for the arts are made, they almost all rely on participation. "Art which no-one wants to use is *not* an addition to the nation's wealth" (Pinnock, 2006, p.175, emphasis in original). While there are arguments about the value of public subsidy for the arts that on face value do not depend on use – legacy and bequest, prestige, option value (Holden, 2004, 2006) – in actuality they remain dependent upon a presumption of use by somebody at some point. Something that provides benefits for some rather than all would struggle to legitimately lay claim to public subsidy in a liberal democracy. At a minimum it should be clear that while all might not be making use of it now, they value the option to be able to make use of it later and cannot gain the same benefits elsewhere. The existence of the discursive identity of the cultural non-participant ensures that while some may not participate with any of the physical manifestations of the arts, they have no choice but to participate in the institutional discourses of the arts and the logics that they reproduce. For such individuals are unknowingly taken into the dispositive and are written upon by its discourses. Having become objects in the discourse, they both legitimate the continued financial support of the state for the institution that has co-opted culture for itself, and affirm the privileged position of the cultural professionals whose social status this institution supports.

Conclusions: The right to speak within the field of cultural policy

If cultural participation is less about the specifics of what cultural activity is considered valuable to participate in and more about where the activity is discursively located by those that are legitimated to speak within the field of cultural policy, then it follows that cultural policy needs to refocus its interest in participation from participation in culture, to participation in decision-making processes. The principles of participatory decision making have their roots in the work on deliberative democracy which John Parkinson defines as "public reasoning between citizens" (Parkinson, 2006, p. 1). Mark Bevir and R.A.W Rhodes (2010) argue that such approaches can challenge institutional logics, where the actors involved in decision making are changed and are involved in setting the agenda.

In many senses the arm's length principle common to arts and cultural policy in the UK appears to fit this principle of deliberative decision making working outside state control. However, just like the governments that fund them, arm's length bodies have tended to adopt the principles of Third Way politics in which finding technical solutions through supposed consensus is accepted as the best way to remove politics and allow for rational, evidence based decision to be made (Fairclough, 2000). However, as has been argued throughout this chapter, by its nature the requirements of consensus politics ignore the influence of the specific agents actually involved in interpreting and implementing policy, such as the Arts Council or the cultural leaders of key organisations. When the plurality of interests and power relationships within decision making groups are ignored, it leads to a built-in bias towards maintaining the status quo. But where the approach not only allows, but actively seeks out dissent, rather than

consensus, through the inclusion of other forms of discourse such as argument, rhetoric, humour, emotion, testimony or storytelling, and gossip (Markovits, 2006), it may provide a mechanism for hearing less powerful voices and bringing about institutional change.

Rather than trying to find consensus across an imagined cultural sector, an alternative would therefore be to actively seek out and understand key conceptual and ideological differences within the range of cultural practices that exist. Such an approach may be central to avoid ignoring the 'insidious and often hidden connections between culture and power' (McGuigan, 2004, p. 141). However, to truly achieve such an objective would require organisations to "enable the anti-institutional diversification of value" (Connor, 1992, p. 4) that would undermine their own elevated status and privilege. For all that the majority of those working within the arts may claim progressive intentions, as Gartman notes, in practice they "have no interest in eliminating cultural authority per se, but merely in securing a greater share of it for themselves" (Gartman, no date, p. 439). As such, they opt to continue to conserve and reproduce the values on which their existence relies through their management of the discourses that give their practice meaning. As Connor notes, once established "only an institution can dissolve itself" (Connor, 1992) and this is the paradox at the heart of supposedly liberal arts institutions orientated towards equality.

However, the capacity to engender the change that is required in order to advance a more culturally equitable society is significantly limited because of the difficulties of thinking outside the institutional discourses of the arts and the discursive logics upon which its relationship with the state is based. One cannot truly question the arts from within its discursive logic. It is perhaps therefore time to develop new logics that start

with equity, rather than the arts and which offer support for people to participate in decisions that affect their lives, ensuring resourcing for what they already choose to participate in. The first step would be to abandon the discursive identity of the non-participant, which is an act of micro power that suppresses the capacity of many to speak within the field of cultural policy. Until this happens cultural policy will continue to favour how cultural professionals define what cultural participation should be. This matters, because as Jensen reminds us, "if we live by stories, and seek the best stories by which to live, then we must first figure out what stories we are already telling ourselves, so that we can decide if we like where they are taking us" (2002, p.117). The persistence of a story about cultural non-participants means that as Garnham pointed out in 1983, "one cannot understand the culture of our time or the challenges and opportunities which that dominant culture offers to public policy-makers" (cited in McGuigan, 2004, chap.42). The asymmetric power relationship upon which the arts was established as an institution means for all that the rhetoric of cultural policy is saturated with liberal, egalitarian and even revolutionary ideas, these ideas will all inevitably flounder in "the gap between the "juridical people and the empirical people […] the ideal and the real, the utopian and the present" (Miller and Yudice, 2002, p.25). Cultural policy will remain permanently orientated towards the operation of sedimented values while failing to adequately acknowledge the imperative to value that is a fundamental aspect of life (Connor, 1992) and integral to an individual's freedom.

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