

Policy Paper

Raising our quality of life:
*The importance of investment
in arts and culture*

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Executive summary

There has been much focus in recent years on growing inequalities in living standards, but significantly the majority of discussion has focused on economic measures, failing to recognise the importance of 'quality of life'. This paper considers the contribution of arts and culture to improving our quality of life. By looking at a range of arguments which recognise the relationship between arts, culture and society, it presents the case for public funding for the arts alongside an inclusive, localised and democratic cultural policy.

Cultural policy under the Coalition government has emphasised reducing subsidy and state intervention, in favour of private giving and sponsorship, while continuing previous governments' expectations of ensuring quantifiable 'returns on investment'. The biggest challenge for arts and culture under the Coalition has been the severe funding cuts to local authorities across all service areas. With local authorities increasingly struggling to provide statutory services, funding for arts and culture has become a much lower priority.

Despite ringing huge changes to arts and culture through rolling-back state involvement and public funding, the Coalition has failed to articulate a clear vision for cultural policy which impacts positively on quality of life for all. In contrast, the previous government sought to expand the aspirations of cultural policy through emphasising the potential economic and societal benefits of strategic investment in culture. Arts and culture became a tool for achieving wider policy goals including regeneration, economic development, social inclusion and health. However, this emphasis was explicitly concerned with equating the value of investment with its returns, so that politicians, central and local, could argue their decisions provided value for money in the competition over resources. This 'instrumental' focus has continued to some degree under the Coalition, albeit against the backdrop of stringent cuts.

This paper explores how cultural policy has reached this position of increasingly unguarded 'instrumentalism' whereby policy makers define the value of the arts in terms of their economic value and their contribution to defined policy objectives, rather than their broader value in improving 'quality of life'. Examining the recent history of cultural policy in the UK, this paper argues that despite the intensive quest to measure and quantify the economic and social returns on investment in the arts, which has been

heightened in the context of austerity, a better case can be made by returning to the arguments that emphasise the importance of arts to the quality of everyday life.

A large body of evidence, from a variety of sources and professional perspectives on how arts and culture affects the lives of ordinary people is reviewed. These studies are not only concerned with how to demonstrate value through economic means, but consider how people's quality of life is raised in intimate but potentially scalable ways through their everyday participation in culture. The author argues that a future cultural policy which genuinely responds to the evidence, and which hopes to fulfil the universal entitlement to arts and culture, must be targeted at creating capacity within local areas and communities to work together to develop places and opportunities to participate.

The following recommendations are made for a future arts and cultural policy that aims to raise quality of life:

1. **Respond to local contexts** – cultural policy must work as well, if not better, at the level of the local than the level of the national or international. Funding must be equitably distributed, by means which do not disadvantage by geography or demography.
2. **Ensure access to arts and culture is democratised and publicly planned** – through policies that remove barriers to participation and by developing initiatives to proactively target excluded groups and include them in decision-making.
3. **Provide resources for everyday participation within communities as well as for, and alongside, institutional settings** – policy should not only be about creating access to arts establishments and institutions, but must also provide resources for everyday participation within communities.
4. **Develop methods of connecting and streamlining funding interests** – and ensure a strong and secure role for the public sector in arts investment.

Introduction: Arts, culture and society - creating policy for quality of life

In any civilised community the arts and associated amenities, serious or comic, light or demanding, must occupy a central place. Their enjoyment should not be regarded as something remote from everyday life. The promotion and appreciation of high standards in architecture, in industrial design, in town planning and the preservation of the beauty of the countryside, are all part of it. Beginning in the schools, and reaching out into every corner of the nation's life, in city and village, at home, at work, at play, there is an immense amount that could be done to improve the quality of contemporary life. (Paragraph 14, A Policy for the Arts: the First Steps, 1965)

This paper considers the ongoing debate on how the challenge of declining living standards can be confronted and the contribution of arts and culture to improving our quality of life. The debate on living standards has focused largely on economic policies – on how to address increasing inequalities in standards of living, understood mainly in terms of economic measures, such as household income and employment rates. Until now ‘quality of life’ has been largely absent from this discussion. By looking at a range of arguments recognising the important relationship between arts, culture and society, this paper presents the case for greater public funding for the arts alongside an inclusive, localised and democratic cultural policy.

The quote above from Jennie Lee’s renowned 1965 White Paper, *A Policy for the Arts*, claimed as the first formal policy for arts adopted by a UK government, identifies the need to ‘plan in’ arts and culture to improve quality of life by ensuring that equal standards and principles for arts provision were applied across the nation. The White Paper called for a move from mere subsistence to sustained growth in investment in the arts, and importantly provided policy direction on the capital funding requirements for ‘housing the arts’ country-wide. In effect this meant that each place in Britain should have appropriate venues, galleries and performing arts companies for its population size, subsidised by the state. Funding for housing the arts trebled between 1965 and 1970, and the policy not only changed the fiscal situation for the arts, but also established the principle of funding the arts explicitly for public good (Black 2006).

A Policy for the Arts was of course produced in different times, in the midst of the social and cultural revolution of the 1960s, with the steady expansion of mass media providing access to popular culture and the growth of advertising, design, music and film production - the commercial sector we now understand as the creative industries. Arts and cultural policy became part of Prime Minister Harold Wilson's modernising agenda and his government introduced the first post for a minister dedicated to the arts. Importantly, the White Paper also targeted local authorities in their responsibility to provide the conditions for improved access to the arts (Black 2006: 324). This period was a turning point for arts policy and investment, and saw an unprecedented rise in arts funding. The expenditure of Arts Council Great Britain (Arts Council England's predecessor) increased by nearly 500 per cent in real terms (Gray, 2000: 48).

What is most notable perhaps, is the appeal to quality of life and standards of living which the White Paper and its accompanying research reports made¹. It is important to distinguish between 'living standards' and 'quality of life', as well as the ways in which these terms are applied in cultural policy, then and now.

Living standards are understood mainly in relation to measurable outcomes related to employment, pay, poverty and inequality. To measure changes to standards of living economists look at distribution and changes to earnings, household income, including taxes and benefits, and employment conditions such as hours worked. A recent *Commission on Living Standards*² suggests under current circumstances, higher income households (above middle income) will see their income grow, and hence their standards of living rise. However, all working-age households below middle income in 2020 will be worse off than a decade earlier. These harrowing predictions of increasing income inequality follow a broadening 'hour glass' economy with growth in lower-skilled service-sector and top-level occupational-class jobs and continuing decline in traditional administrative and manufacturing jobs.

Quality of life indicators, by comparison, take into account a much broader set of factors which influence people's lives and represent the impact of social and economic structures in society. They include employment patterns, demographic data on ethnicity and age, mortality rates, housing quality, education and health indicators. However, they also include variables which represent attitudes and perceptions, and access to forms of participation which

might be able to change these perceptions and influence people's life chances, such as participation in local decision making, access to local services, cultural assets and amenities (Audit Commission, 2005)³.

Fast forward nearly fifty years from *A Policy for the Arts* and we can see there are still debates about the case for investing in the arts. Although these are framed in different terms, there are remarkable similarities between the content and the responses to the 1965 White Paper and current concerns about the value of the arts, the impact of local authority funding cuts on access to arts provision, regional disparities and London-centrism⁴. In contrast to the mid-1960s, today's arts funding debates are focused on calls for evidence of the value of arts, and there is greater scrutiny on how this value is measured and on whether it is equal (or greater) to the funds invested. Debates have become about how we attribute the value of culture in substantive and quantifiable terms. They have become arguments of accountability and accounting, rather than imagination and vision for making everyday life better for all.

This paper will explore how we have reached this position of increasingly unguarded 'instrumentalism' whereby policy makers define the value of the arts in terms of their economic value and their contribution to defined policy objectives, rather than their broader value in improving "the quality of contemporary life" – as Jennie Lee put it in 1965. Examining the recent history of cultural policy in the UK, this paper will highlight the current fixation with providing evidence of impact and value in the drive to balance the books of the public purse. It will provide a particular focus on the contribution of arts and culture to regeneration, and explore case studies on how the arts affect people's quality of life.

This paper argues that despite the intensive quest to measure and quantify the economic and social returns on investment in the arts, which has been heightened in the context of austerity, a better case can be made by returning to the arguments which emphasise the centrality of arts to the quality of everyday life.

Chapter 1: Approaches to cultural policy

Cultural policy under New Labour - from subsidy to investment

In the first decade of the 21st Century the UK government under New Labour fundamentally shifted the terms and conditions for investment in arts and culture. The Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) under Chris Smith, expanded the notion of culture when it included sports, creative industries and the media, museums, libraries and archives, arts, heritage and tourism. This move signalled the expansion of the aspirations of cultural policy and culture's utility to a range of policy goals including regeneration, economic development, social inclusion and health.

The rolling back of the state and the free-market economics of the previous Thatcher era which placed emphasis on the economic value of an arts sector that could look after itself, was replaced by explicitly interventionist policies encouraging access, participation, inclusion and celebration of cultural diversity. New forms of partnerships between private, public and quasi-public were promoted through the Cool Britannia of creative industries and through Regional Development Agencies. These brought together different interests in local governance with new cultural policy discussions, emphasising potential economic and societal benefits as outcomes of strategic investment in culture.

Under New Labour not only was there a massive uplift in funding⁵, but there was a systematic reorganisation of cultural policy and delivery agencies. This included the establishment of the DCMS, bringing together a wide range of sectoral activities under one ministry; the development of regional infrastructure, such as the Regional Cultural Consortiums; and the new national Arts Council England (with regional offices) in 2003. This allowed much greater coordination between local, regional and national activities through complementary economic and cultural strategies, although it did not alleviate tensions and conflicts of interest entirely (Stevenson et al, 2010: 162).

The new policy direction generated a huge amount of activity around consultancy advice and expertise in strategy development, evaluation, research and evidence gathering, to support policy making. Cultural policy development now encompassed a wider focus incorporating economic development through creative industries,

tourism, festivals and events, social care, community development and health policy, and the physical and cultural regeneration of areas. Although throughout history the arts have been recognised for the impacts they have on society – positive and negative⁶ – what characterises the New Labour period is how this new view regarding arts and culture as a tool for achieving wider policy goals – instrumentalism – was institutionalised on every level. From individual arts organisations through to Regional Development Agencies, there were great efforts to record and articulate how audience and participants in music, the visual arts, museums, heritage and theatre benefit from their experience, and moreover how these benefits can be translated into broader societal impacts.

Cultural policy under the Coalition - the age of austerity

Cultural policy under the Coalition government has not radically diminished these expectations of ‘returns on investment’, but has changed the emphasis on who should make this investment in an age of austerity.

The Government believes that a vibrant cultural, media and sporting sector is crucial for our well-being and quality of life. We need to promote excellence in these fields, with government funding used where appropriate to encourage philanthropic and corporate investment (Cabinet Office, 2010: 14)

Like the previous Conservative administration, the Coalition government continues to be concerned with reducing subsidy and state intervention, in favour of private sponsorship. Following the election in 2010, the Department for Culture Media and Sport (DCMS) put into place structural reforms which signalled distinct shifts in the role of the state in maximising the value derived from the arts. Initially preoccupied with delivering the 2012 Olympics, the DCMS planned to increase the amount of arts funding from philanthropy and the National Lottery, and to roll back the state’s involvement. The number of arms-length bodies was reduced, including the abolition of the UK Film Council and the Museums Libraries and Archives Council. There was also a general assault on administration costs and the infrastructure for ‘New Public Management’, the market-inspired approach to the delivery of public services favoured by New Labour. This included the removal of the newly developed national indicators for assessing public services, and the reform of the Audit Office.

The Coalition retained free entry to museums and galleries, perhaps New Labour's biggest legacy, but slimmed the group of national museums directly funded by the DCMS, passing some back to local authority control. There was large scale reform to the ways in which music education is delivered, through a new National Plan for Music Education (2011), which announced the creation of music education 'hubs' to supply services to local schools and communities. This model supplies music organisations and individuals to teach the music curriculum according to 'local need', but relies on schools that are increasingly autonomous from local authorities making the decision to commission through the hubs, and on dwindling investment from local authorities themselves as (non-statutory) music services fall lower down the list of priorities (Musicians Union, 2014)⁷. Herein lies the biggest challenge for arts and culture funding under the Coalition – the decentralisation of public services under new localism, combined with the reorganisation of local authorities, passing on severe funding cuts across all service areas.

Since the change of Government in 2010 local authorities have undergone reduced budget settlements described as the “worst in living memory”⁸, with the most recent Spending Review for 2015/16 indicating that the budget for local authorities in England will be reduced by a further 10 per cent along with cuts of up to 15 per cent for core services (Hastings et al, 2013). Funds for arts, culture and leisure have been significantly reduced. From 2012/13 to 2013/14, the budget expenditure in this area decreased by 4.2 per cent (from £2.9 billion to £2.8 billion). This reduction was the highest percentage of any form of expenditure at local government level⁹. These rolling waves of budget cuts continue to impact significantly on project and direct funding for cultural venues, museums and other arts organisations. Local authorities are so hampered by central government funding cuts that many are now struggling to meet their statutory requirements like children's services, thereby placing impossible pressures on discretionary funding for arts and culture. Historically the largest proportion of public investment in the arts, these cuts to local authority spending combine with reduced funding from other public grants and the increasing competition for other sources such as charitable donations, private giving and sponsorship.

As the patterns of investment are increasingly decentralised away from public provision they are also becoming more uneven geographically. Two recent reports published by independent consultants – *Rebalancing Our Cultural Capital* (Stark et al, 2014) and *The PLACE report* (Stark et al, 2013) – identify these patterns of inequality,

with a significant bias to London in every type of investment (including Arts Council England grant-in-aid, Lottery funding for the arts and private giving). They argue these disparities are unfair, not least because they tend to privilege certain places which have received longstanding subsidies for particular arts institutions. The effect of this imbalance is exponential, since sustained long-term investment into cultural infrastructure in an area generally leads to further opportunities to cultivate projects with commercial cultural activities, support systems of training and education, and develop clusters of other related goods and services.

So how might these policy shifts and changes in investment directly affect quality of life in towns, villages and cities in the UK? The next section looks at the arguments and evidence for the 'returns on investment' in the arts, beginning with a particular focus on regeneration and economic development and moving on to explore other ways in which the arts impact on our everyday lives.

Chapter 2: Arts and cultural-led regeneration

The interest in ‘housing the arts’, expressed in the Labour administration of the 1960s, continued into the 21st Century but under the guise of a new instrumentalism which seeks to use arts and culture as a tool for furthering a range of broader economic and social goals. The combination of rising investment in the arts under New Labour and the maturation of the National Lottery, begun in 1994, provided a source for unprecedented building programmes that could experiment with arts and culture as an attractor of capital through flagship developments and visitor attractions. These new shiny buildings provided a huge stimulus for exhibition making and cultural programming, as well as bringing in new arts audiences and visitors to spend money in local areas, and were seen as drivers for local economic development and urban renewal.

New Labour policy measures also focused on widening access and participation by targeting priority groups such as children, minority ethnic groups, the economically deprived and other hard to reach groups. These included some stark targets aimed at increasing participation year on year and were influenced by reports from action research commissions such as the Policy Action Teams. The goal was to broaden the definitions of cultural and creative activities and heavily promote the importance of civic education through cultural learning. There were two internationally significant and influential policies in particular: the ending of museum charges allowing free access to museums and art galleries and the creation of the innovative Creative Partnerships scheme with the Department for Education. Cultural diversity programmes were developed across sectors and new infrastructures of support, lobbying, training and advocacy bodies for every art form and demographic appeared to receive public funding during the early years of the 21st Century.

These developments produced new models for cultural regeneration, and with these, new understanding of the value and impacts associated with particular interventions and investment. A key DCMS report, *Culture at the Heart of Regeneration* (2005) lobbied for the integration of cultural programmes and facilities within regeneration programmes under the Sustainable Communities agenda. The report highlighted the role of iconic buildings and mega-events, such as European Capital of Culture (ECOC), in successful culture-led regeneration, but also the need

to attend to local distinctiveness and to small-scale activities at a community level. It was accompanied by a commissioned evidence review of models and examples of regeneration, and some proposals for how the success of initiatives might be tested (Evans and Shaw, 2004)¹⁰.

The 2005 report provided an introduction into the economic impact assessments of regeneration led by flagship projects for the arts, such as the Tate Modern development in London and the Lowry in Salford Quays, based on the stimulation of new employment and business through public investment into culture-led regeneration. For example, it reported the impacts of these two flagships as:

Tate Modern:

- Estimated economic benefit of around £100 million
- 3,000 new jobs, of which 467 were directly related to the gallery
- 23 per cent increase in local hotels and catering businesses over three years.

The Lowry:

- £300 million of public and private sector investment into Salford Quays since its inception (estimated to 2005)
- A further £250 million of investment agreed between 2005-2010
- 5,700 new jobs created and a further 5,000 new jobs anticipated with developments that were due in 2005 (DCMS, 2005: 13)

In the same period there was also the rise of the culture and sporting mega-event as a regeneration strategy, stimulating tourism economies and animation of cities. *Culture at the Heart of Regeneration* focused on the forthcoming Liverpool European Capital of Culture (ECOC) designation in 2008, predicting a successful outcome providing 1.7 million additional visitors to Liverpool, who were expected to spend £50 million per year. The *Impacts 08* research programme¹¹, demonstrated that there were indeed many impacts on the city levered by the designation and the public investment and media profile it garnered. This research estimated that in fact 9.7 million additional visits to the city were attributable to ECOC, with a total of £753.8 million additional economic impact (Arts Council England, 2014a: 20). The

research also highlighted the change to both self-image and external perceptions of Liverpool. It also conceded that concurrent investment in the retail infrastructure through a new shopping centre, the siting of the new cruise terminal and the expansion of the city's existing tourism assets, including new museums and hotels, were important components.

There is overwhelming evidence for the role of investment in arts and culture in creating competitive cities for attracting tourists, from the so-called Bilbao or Guggenheim effect of flagships, to the three pillars of cultural tourism: cultural heritage, built/physical heritage and contemporary culture (Visit Britain, 2010). However, this use of public funding was not without critics, both at the time and since, as some projects were construed as large and expensive failures (most notably the Millennium Dome in Greenwich) and others as examples of top-down policies that circumnavigated public planning processes and created spaces for visitors which excluded local interests and cultures (Hesmondhalgh et al, 2014).

The work of economist Richard Florida has been highly influential in highlighting how arts and culture motivate and mobilise people and create economic development by attracting a particular segment of the labour force to live, work and spend in local areas.

There is a growing belief that the arts can bring a competitive edge to a city, a region and a country as a source of creativity, a magnet for footloose executives and their businesses and as a means of asserting civic, regional or national identity through the quality of cultural life (Florida, 2002).

Florida argues that the cultural offer of places is instrumental in attracting this 'creative class' of people who work in post-industrial service and knowledge industries such as design, digital media and software development. These are people who have particular lifestyle demands and the disposable incomes and productivity skills to drive local economic development. Making the case that cities should invest to support their own creative class attracting properties and areas, Florida's analysis stimulated many other city governing bodies to adopt the place-making strategies of other creative cities. However, Florida's work has received a sustained critical response from academic commentators (e.g. Peck, 2005; Pratt, 2008; McGuigan, 2009) who argue that his proposals reduce culture merely to economics. In doing this, they argue Florida ignores the wider concerns of cultural policy related to arts and cultural industries, such as the

preservation of heritage, the promotion of wider social access to cultural resources and the improvement of opportunities for those working in the creative and cultural industries.

As one of the fastest growing sectors, the creative industries do offer increasing employment opportunities and can contribute directly to improving the living standards of individuals as well as places. However, the shape of the creative economy tends to mirror the broader economy as an 'hour-glass' with a concentration of a small number of large firms at the top, and at the bottom SMEs and sole traders, with a more precarious existence and multiple barriers to setting up new projects (Flew, 2012: 98). There is also increasing evidence that access to working in the creative industries is not equal to all, with women, ethnic minorities and lower socio-economic groups systematically under-represented in the workforce. Furthermore, artistic and cultural work is precarious and unprotected, as workers are often freelance, or cross-subsidising their artistic work with other income. Public investment into the development and promotion of creative and cultural industries has failed to address these issues (Oakley, 2014). Not only does it fail to address the conditions which exist for cultural workers, it also obscures and reproduces them under a form of globalised 'cool capitalism' which ultimately depends upon low-wage economies and barriers to entry and career progression for certain social groups and in certain areas (McGuigan, 2009; Oakley, 2014; Comunian and Faggian, 2014).

Two further criticisms are levelled at the economic approach to place-based cultural regeneration. Firstly, it has a tendency to separate cultural production from consumption. It separates the spaces and places of creative work, labour and productivity (and its requirements such as studio space, access to supply chains and skills, clusters and networks) from those of audiences, visitors and their expenditure (and their requirements such as quality environments, marketing, transport, museum shops and cafes). These spaces of consumption are privileged and sanitised, and other local forms and traces of cultural production, such as graffiti, skateboarding and fly-posting, are removed (Gilmore, 2004).

Secondly, as areas are changed through regeneration, there are problems with sustainability, gentrification and displacement. Property rental prices rise as areas become more popular and desirable, pricing out not just artists and creatives who

may have helped kick-start regeneration but also established working class and new immigrant populations whose skills may not match those required by incoming service economies (Zukin 1987; Evans, 2009). The effects of regeneration are unevenly felt by local residents whose different capacities to move themselves and their spending around are divided by social class:

The creative middle classes can move where they want; disadvantaged classes are displaced or forced to move to where markets send them. Mobile capital flows but in ways that are decidedly uneven, unstable and unregulated, reinforcing class stability rather than class mobility. Cultural strategies ostensibly designed for the city's growth and liveability risk adversely affecting its liveability, especially for the city's most disadvantaged citizens. (Harvie, 2011: 17)

So while middle classes may make a decision to live in or 'elect to belong' (Savage, Bagnall and Longhurst, 2005) to areas in the process of gentrification with access to high quality amenities, services, schools and cultural offer, disadvantaged groups are dependent on choices outside of their control, for example in the options provided by housing associations or dictated by public transport links¹².

Despite the concerns of the unequal effects of regeneration, there is clear evidence that arts and culture can contribute to local economic development. However this is not the only basis for linking investment in the arts to quality of life.

This paper maintains that people make value out of their relationship to the arts in their everyday life, through the relations and processes that happen at a micro-level, in the context of their networks of families and friends, in communities, at home and other private domains, as well as in publicly funded institutions. The following section will explore how arts and culture impact on the quality of people's lives, and will look at what evidence is required to make the case for further investment.

Chapter 3: Quality of life and evidence of value

The debate about the value of arts to society has grown around moments of change in arts funding and policy making over the last two decades. The debate tends to polarise – around ‘excellence’ versus ‘access’, ‘high’ culture versus ‘low’, ‘popular’ or ‘common’ culture, and around the notion of ‘extrinsic’ and ‘intrinsic’ value. As argued above, contemporary cultural policy is characterised by instrumentalism, explicitly concerned with equating the value of investment with its returns, so that politicians, central and local, can argue their decisions provide value for money in the competition over resources. The methods through which evidence of value can be produced according to common and shared measures has also become important to policy makers and to the arts and cultural sector.

In the last three decades politicians have become increasingly concerned with economic impacts, and with documenting the outcomes of policies through systems of metrics which are predominantly based upon economics. The story goes, the more robust and rigorous the evidence collected, the more likely policy makers will be convinced to make evidence-based decisions. The higher the returns on investment, in quantifiable terms, the more likely these decisions will be positive.

As a result there has been a multitude of evidence-gathering and collating exercises commissioned by the sector to feed the evidence-base requirements of arts policy¹³. Since the Treasury is the ultimate public purse-keeper, with a preference for understanding value in economic terms (measured through ways set out in the Treasury’s Green Book), many of these aim to provide economic valuations, or to present data as a proxy of economic value (O’Brien, 2010). So, for example, the review of evidence, *The Value of Arts and Culture to People and Society* (Arts Council England, 2014a) brings together evidence from recent years attributing particular impacts and effects in relation to the Arts Council’s five strategic goals that were set out in the refreshed *Great Arts and Culture For Everyone* (Arts Council England, 2013). These categorise impacts under four headings: economy, health and wellbeing, society and education. The presented findings signal dominance of quantitative measures, and in particular ones which can assign monetary value to cultural experience:

People value being in the audience to the arts at about £2,000 per person per year and participating at £1,500 per person. The value of participating in sports is about £1,500 per person per year (Arts Council England 2014a).

These figures come from an exercise which equates the value that the arts bring to individuals' 'subjective wellbeing' (expressed through data on how satisfied survey respondents report they are with their life), to amounts of household income compensation needed to bring respondents who do not participate in the arts and sport to the same level of wellbeing. Whilst these expressions of value might make sense to the Treasury, and whilst they also provide a potential method to explore how living standards might be compensated through participation, they rely on complicated statistical methods with large data sets, unavailable and perhaps unintelligible to most individuals, arts organisations or local authorities. They also always privilege the economic over the social.

Furthermore, the ways in which value is measured are not only determined by the context in which they are applied, they also inform and shape the rationales behind decision-making and the policies themselves. So investments in the arts can no longer be about ensuring access to personal, aesthetic, cultural experiences for the values they have to individuals alone. Investment now has to be about the extrinsic, material impacts these experiences might bring, understood as cost saving or income compensation. Public funding is regarded as either a correction to market failure or as a method of protecting the public purse by creative cost-savings through applying culture to other policy areas¹⁴.

This articulation of cultural value is devoid of distinction, taste, inflection, power, feeling, challenge or emotion – all the things associated with our experience as human beings of arts and culture. It also ignores the historical and environmental factors which influence and mediate our experiences – what Raymond Williams (1977) calls 'structures of feeling' – the emerging social forms through which we can relate and make sense of the messiness of lived experience.

Our lived experience of arts and culture is in turn shaped by who we are, how our tastes are developed, the demographic we belong to in terms of class, age, ethnicity locality and so forth – and what we have access to as a result. The economic measures of cultural value for policy making cannot take these factors into account – they fail to include the conditions under which we form, develop and express cultural value.

There are other ways in which value might be understood, as is evidenced in a growing body of work from arts and humanities researchers. Qualitative research methods, using knowledge-exchange and co-production techniques, are revealing forms of value which are more nuanced – based on learning from relationships and dialogue – and which aim to put understanding of cultural participation back into its everyday context. For example, research by Lynn Froggatt (2011) who, working closely with four visual arts organisations, explored how participatory arts have the capacity to engage people and transform their thinking and their behaviour by allowing them to take risks they would not ordinarily contemplate. People United’s work on *Art and Kindness* explores how the arts can create the conditions that may lead to kinder attitudes and behaviours when people take part in the arts. These conditions are influenced by emotions, connections, learning and human values (Broadwood et al, 2012: 14).

There are many other studies based on qualitative data such as interviews and observational techniques. These explore how creativity and engagement in the arts contributes to properties such as active citizenship, resilience, self-esteem, self-control and empathy, which in turn may improve health, wellbeing and social justice outcomes, although not all are necessarily positive impacts (see, for example, Belfiore and Bennett, 2007; Newman et al, 2012; Miles and Clarke, 2006). The recent literature review commissioned by Arts Council England also focuses on personal and intrinsic experiences of individuals, rather than broader societal impacts, although this includes quantitative studies and predominantly focuses on positive outcomes (Arts Council England, 2014b).

There is a growing body of research which uses concepts such as vitality and vibrancy to articulate how arts and culture change the qualities of places, such as the Vitality Index in the United States¹⁵. In Australia, where arts organisations are encouraged to map their artistic vibrancy, this includes measures of artistic excellence, audience stimulation, innovation, development of artists and community relevance (Australia Council for the Arts, 2009).

A growing body of research looks at cultural value across historical, political and community contexts, including a large number of studies funded through recent initiatives such as the Arts and Humanities Research Council’s *Connected Communities* and *Cultural Value* programmes¹⁶. These studies recognise the need to use mixed

methods to explore how people articulate value outside of institutional contexts, from the bottom-up, defining their participation in arts and culture democratically and in their own terms (e.g. Edensor et al, 2010; Jancovich, 2013; Wali, 2002; Miles, 2014).

There is, therefore, a large body of evidence from a variety of sources and professional perspectives on how arts and culture affects the lives of ordinary people. These studies are not only concerned with how to demonstrate value through economic means, but consider how people's quality of life is raised in intimate but potentially scalable ways through their everyday participation in culture. They recognise that the properties of arts, creativity and culture cannot be understood solely as unit costs or itemised returns on investment, but are much more complex, bringing a range of qualities and effects. These might be fleeting, or long-standing, they may form the basis of relationships, or provide the means for isolated contemplation or collective cooperation. The arts can be unsettling, disruptive but also celebratory and communal, assembling communities of people with shared interests, tastes and practices and creating space for activism and resistance, as well as leisure and entertainment.

So how might an arts policy that strives for an improved quality of life be informed by our understandings of previous policy priorities alongside the studies discussed above and the findings they report? The following section will explore this in further detail.

Chapter 4: Arts policy for quality of life

This paper argues that policy makers can learn from research on cultural value and analysis of previous policies for arts and culture in a number of ways. The following recommendations are made for a future arts and cultural policy that aims to raise quality of life. Arts and cultural policy must take into account:

1. Local contexts

The research shows the importance of demography, place and context to the contribution the arts can make – the influence of structural inequalities as well as ‘structures of feeling’ in shaping the interests and tastes people have and the stakes and values they place on arts and cultural activities.

Arts policy which has the potential for enduring effects in improving quality of life must respond to local contexts – and these may have very different demographics, histories and characteristics which shape the infrastructures and possibilities of participation. Policy must be locally sensitive; it must work as well, if not better, at the level of the local than the level of the national or international. This does not mean that all funding should necessarily be locally devolved, but it must be equitably distributed, by means which do not disadvantage by geography or demography.

2. Access to arts and culture

Research suggests that democratising access is important. Many recent successful cultural policy decisions have adhered to these principles of cultural democracy – through removing the barriers to entry to museums, investing in audience development, outreach and cultural diversity programmes, and developing initiatives to proactively target excluded groups and include them in decision making.

The Lottery was the stimulus for many of these initiatives and continues to provide a major source of finance for arts, culture and heritage projects as well as some further capital development. However it is not simply a case of building spaces for housing the arts, but also of ensuring spaces for arts are locally and culturally sensitive, and part of public planning processes. Nor can the Lottery be the only source for funding.

3. Resources for participation within communities as well as for, and alongside, institutions

Arts and culture provide value to people in their everyday lives, in complex ways, which cut across public and private, popular and high, subsidised and commercial, exceptional and mundane ways of creative and cultural expression. It is through everyday cultural participation where social bonds and ties are formed, and where tastes, associations and identities made, for example through amateur theatre, crafts clubs and music societies, cinema going, gardening, knitting groups, and local community festivals. Too great a focus on the extrinsic impacts of the arts – the wider economic effects rather than the routine opportunities for accessing and experiencing arts and culture – is a distraction, and hides the ways that people value the role of these activities in their everyday lives.

Policy should not only be about housing or creating access to arts establishments and institutions, but also in providing resources for everyday participation within communities. This means safeguarding places where communities meet and connect – libraries, parks, community centres, markets, and other public spaces – and supporting communities to have access to the means of cultural production as well as consumption. These forms of cultural production will respond to local agendas, interests and values.

4. Methods of connecting funding interests

Without a strong and secure funding stream from the public sector, either nationally or via local authorities, we will not be able to ensure any of the above recommendations. The infrastructure for arts and cultural provision is already a complex mixture of funding sources and finance, much of which is project-based, temporary and fragile. Recent policy has attempted to incentivise a shift from public to private funding, but many arts organisations rely on multiple partnerships with diverse interests in the value of the arts. Similarly, local authorities are increasingly looking to community groups to fund-raise for their own projects from disparate funding pots available from third sector organisations and foundations.

Policy which hopes to increase the value of the arts to quality of life must find a way to connect up these diverse interests, to bring the altruistic, the philanthropic and the commercial together. This is not only in the interests of fund-raising but also in

creating infrastructure which is inclusive and navigable for arts organisations, audiences and participants. Examples of initiatives which have attempted this include ‘percent for art’ schemes, community chests and Section 106 agreements where planning approval is given conditional upon developer funding, which pool developer funding for community gain, or gift aid and other tax incentives for private giving. Streamlining funding sources, opening up access and ring-fencing proportional funding for the arts is a crucial role of local authorities which must be protected.

A cautionary note follows these policy recommendations concerning the role and capacity of local authorities. In the current climate of continued funding cuts, this role has passed from provider and enabler, to commissioner and estate agent. As a report from the Joseph Rowntree Foundation proposes, there are three categories of action which local authorities can take to mitigate these cuts:

- Efficiency: Actions which aim to reduce costs of council services without changing service levels as far as the public are concerned;
- Investment: Actions which aim to reduce the need for council services or reduce the cost of services in future;
- Retrenchment: Actions which reduce the council’s role in terms of the services it provides and for whom (Hastings et al, 2013: 19).

The arts and cultural sector is susceptible to all three forms of action, but the most challenging in light of these recommendations is the third form, retrenchment. A common strategy is where the management and liability of assets – such as leisure and community centres, parks, and other public spaces – are transferred into community ownership, and are no longer part of the council’s remit or responsibility. These are the places where ordinarily communities access arts and culture, but they are now rapidly becoming co-producers and owners of these places. At the same time as restructuring and core budget slashing is undermining the capacity of local authorities to undertake arts and cultural development in localities, both arts organisations and communities are taking on new roles, delivering services for instrumental aims and learning how to manage assets, a risky strategy even in times of plenty¹⁷.

Of course this coincides with the ideological shift encompassed by the Big Society with an emphasis on increasing volunteering, the role of charities, trusts and foundations,

philanthropy and individual giving through crowdsourcing, espoused by both the Arts Council and DCMS. However, as suggested above, the shift to a philanthropic funding base and volunteer workforce for the arts is slow, uneven and unlikely given the competition from other third sector areas¹⁸.

Although some of the processes generated by a Bigger Society – community budgeting, neighbourhood planning and deregulated planning – propose both opportunity and need for greater participation from local communities and for greater democratic accountability, the entrenched social and structural inequalities within and between places suggest this will be hard to achieve. The bleaker conclusions of the Joseph Rowntree Foundation report that:

[L]ocal authorities with the highest levels of deprivation will be disproportionately affected by austerity...Councils are energetically encouraging ordinary citizens to take on more responsibility for their individual well-being and quality of life in their neighbourhoods. The potential for this strategy to impact unevenly on poor people and places needs to be considered (Hastings et al, 2013: 49-50).

Conversely, the same report finds that in the context of diminishing resources, protecting services specifically for poorer groups can reduce the capacity of councils to provide the range of services to groups across the social spectrum (Hastings et al, 2013: 51). In situations where councils are forced to defend absolute core services, which they often have a statutory obligation to provide, it is hard to see how councils will find capacity to meet the competing requirements on provision of arts and culture that serve broad socio-demographic groups, particularly in areas with high indices of deprivation.

Without secure funding from central government in the future, it will be impossible to ensure any of the above recommendations can be met.

Conclusion

Where then does this leave progressive policy which works with the properties of arts and culture to raise the quality of life in all of Britain's communities? It is worth remembering there is a universal entitlement to arts and culture, enshrined in Article 27 UN Declaration of Human Rights 1948:

Everyone has the right freely to participate in the cultural life of the community and to enjoy the arts

And in Article 31 1989 UN Convention on the Rights of the Child:

Every child has the right to participate freely in cultural life and the arts

As John Holden argued in his text *Democratic Culture: Opening up the Arts for Everyone* (2008) to ensure this entitlement was realised, arts policy would require, alongside commitments to cultural learning and to more arts content in public service broadcasting, that local authority arts provision becomes a statutory obligation, with guaranteed access to, and animation of, cultural infrastructure, events and participation (Holden, 2008: 26).

A policy which genuinely responds to the evidence reviewed above with recognition and trust, and which hopes to fulfil the universal entitlement to arts and culture, must be targeted at creating capacity within local areas and communities to 'plan in' places and opportunities to participate. It will include policies to develop active and creative citizens who can join in and take part, and contribute to a complex mix of private and public resources which support the cultural lives of communities.

In contrast to the ideology of deregulation and local choice and distinctiveness, in order to realise cultural democracy we need standardised policies which harness local skills, energy, authority, and legitimacy, through statutory requirements for arts and culture, alongside dedicated funding streams for local provision. These would draw on the 'standard charge' model of housing for arts, where there is an equitable basis for allocating resources, connecting up infrastructure and

implementing cultural planning to ensure inclusion of local cultural assets and sensitivities, as defined by local people.

In the context of continuing austerity and efficiency savings this seems an impossible dream. But this vision must be achieved if we are to safeguard access for all to participate in arts and culture, however defined and produced, which enriches our quality of life.

Notes and References

Notes

1. The Paper followed the Labour Party 1959 booklet, *Leisure for Living*, which lobbied for greater understanding of the value of the arts to improving living standards in contrast to popular culture, and the 1964 research department paper, *The Quality of Living*, which called for cabinet representation for the Arts and for better distribution of regional funding (Black, op cit).
2. The Commission on Living Standards, led by the Resolution Foundation, found that from a baseline scenario which modelled these measures according to moderate growth in the economy from 2015, living standards for working-age households in 2020 are likely to be substantially lower for those in the bottom half of income distribution than they are now (Brewer et al, 2012: iii-iv).
3. These also include indicators of access to culture and leisure – such as percentages of population within travel time of sports and leisure amenities, and percentages of residents who feel their local cultural facilities have improved or stayed at the same standard. This indicator set was first developed and published by the Audit Commission in 2002 after extensive consultation with local authorities in order to support the new powers granted to local authorities to promote the social, economic and environmental well-being of their community and the duty to produce community strategies, by the Local Government Act in 2000. Since the Coalition government put in place the process to close the Audit Commission and to develop new regimes for auditing local authorities and protecting the public purse by 2015, these indicators are no longer recommended by the government or the Audit Commission, but can be found in government archives.
4. Compare for example the responses concerning the call for regional funding and discussion over transport and standards of arts provision in the region found in Hansard (1965) with the arguments made by Stark et al (2014) in *Rebalancing Our Cultural Capital*, and the response to this criticism by Peter Bazalgette, Chair of Arts Council England <http://www.theguardian.com/culture/2014/jun/14/peter-bazalgette-london-not-threat-regional-arts-funding>
5. The first Spending Review under New Labour in 2001 saw a large increase in public funding for culture and sport, almost doubling sports funding and adding £100 million to arts funding over the 3 year period.
6. See for example the work of Belfiore and Bennett (2005), which traces the social impacts of arts back to Ancient Greece, through a history of the rhetorics of cultural policy.
7. Furthermore, this commissioning model depends on the ability of music education hubs to ‘reach their market’ and engage with schools to deliver the services they are empowered to do. The Musicians Union report, in response to an OFSTED report which found that the hubs were not meeting the expectations of teaching the music curriculum, finds that many schools may be unaware of the hubs services. They also find that this reform has deregulated music services, encouraging the increased use of flexible and zero hour contracts, and leading schools to employ individuals outside of the hubs’ workforce to save money (Musicians Union (2014) *Music Education Hubs – the real picture so far*, Report by Musicians Union, February 2014 available from <http://www.musiciansunion.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/Music-Education-Hubs-the-real-picture-so-far-Feb-2014.pdf>)
8. Councillor Nick Worth, chair of the Local Government Association cited in Cowan, B. (2014) *Council cuts ‘worst in living memory’*, 19 January 2014, *Environmental Health News* available from <http://www.ehn-online.com/news/article.aspx?id=10908>
9. This was despite an increase this year for the overall budget expenditure. See www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/225884/RA_Budget_2013-14_Statistical_Release_-_Final__2_.pdf
10. This was followed by a further review of literature by Evans and Shaw (2006) which included responses to the consultation of ‘Culture at the Heart of Regeneration’ as well as a more critical literature from academic research, which identified issues concerning the sustainability of capital projects and the relationship of local community and cultural identity with processes of cultural globalisation which problematised the regeneration agenda.
11. The Impacts 08 research programme was

- conducted by the University of Liverpool and Liverpool John Moores University and commissioned through the Culture Company.
12. For an extended discussion see Mike Savage's article 'The Politics of Elective Belonging' (2010) which discusses residential mobility and attachment to place in relation to the ways we can understand the symbolic and cultural aspects of people's relationships to homes and places, and the structural inequalities of the 'spatialisation of class' (Savage, 2010: 115). The narratives of choice and lifestyle Savage discusses here in relation to middle class interviewees who reveal their housing and home-making decisions contrast sharply with those informants in Cheetham and Broughton as part of the Understanding Everyday Participation research, who describe their choice of housing association placement in terms of where they didn't want to live (see www.everydayparticipation.org).
 13. Major literature reviews of these exercises include Reeves (2001), Arts Council England (2014a), Arts Council England (2014b) DCMS (2005), DCMS (2010a).
 14. A good example of the latter is the Treasury funding made available under the 'Invest to Save' scheme, which includes a programme of interventions aimed at testing how health service costs could be reduced through arts for health interventions. This initiative explored different ways of understanding the value of these interventions to patients, nurses, doctors and others involved in healthcare or working in health settings. See <http://www.miriad.mmu.ac.uk/investtosave/>.
 15. See <http://creativecities.org/the-vitality-index/>
 16. Connected Communities is a cross-council programme led by the Arts and Humanities Research Council exploring the changing nature of communities in their historical and cultural contexts and the role of communities in sustaining and enhancing our quality of life – see <http://www.ahrc.ac.uk/Funding-Opportunities/Research-funding/Connected-Communities/Pages/Connected-Communities.aspx>. The importance of new research on cultural value is also reflected by the Arts and Humanities Research Council's investment in a large-scale two year research programme, the Cultural Value Project, led by Geoffrey Crossick – see <http://www.ahrc.ac.uk/Funded-Research/Funded-themes-and-programmes/Cultural-Value-Project/Pages/default.aspx> - and Warwick Commission on the Future of Cultural Value, led by Directors of Study Eleanore Belfiore and Jonathan Needlands – see <http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/research/warwickcommission/futureculture/mission/>.
 17. The JRF report suggests that this may change behaviour at local level which means the demand for some services may change or disappear completely – for example, if communities are responsible for their own street cleaning, the thesis goes, littering may cease to be a problem.
 18. The majority of private giving goes to the biggest cultural institutions – with major institutions (turnover of more than £5 million) receiving over 37 times the amount of private investment as small organisations (of less than £100,000 per annum turnover). Community organisations, artists and venues who work in socially engaged practices and programmes are much more likely to be smaller-scale and will find it harder to attract private giving. Those larger institutions which do attract it will also have to make decisions about their own priorities in relation to outreach and participatory practices, and restructuring their organisations around those priorities articulated by the arts funding bodies. Likewise new models of 'crowd-funding' or 'micro-philanthropy' for the arts through websites such as Kickstarter and WeDidThis, but work much more effectively with distributable cultural consumables – films, shows, recordings – than they do with participatory programmes or experiences. Arts organisations offer benefits in return for giving, including backstage visits, artists' talks and other windows on the processes of production. For participatory and community arts, however, it is harder to provide these kinds of benefits.

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