

AN ENQUIRY INTO ARTIST  
DEVELOPMENT: CHANGING  
POLICY BY PRACTISING  
AGONISM IN THE  
COUNTERPUBLIC

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AN ENQUIRY INTO ARTIST  
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## ABSTRACT

This research is the product of a collaborative doctoral award with partners Castlefield Gallery (CG) and Manchester Metropolitan University. Using CG as my case study, I adopted an ethnographic methodology to investigate practices of artist development (AD), and consider how they were part of the wider relationships between artists, CG, and representatives of the policy paradigm. To do so, I employed various methods including participant observation, semi-structured interviews, Document analysis, and participant feedback.

It takes as research participants artists who were part of CG's membership and exhibition programmes, CG staff, and representatives of the policy paradigm.

It found that, broadly speaking, AD is when an artist requires support for their practice, and when an organisation or individual offers that support. Artists engage with developmental support throughout their career, and at moments of change in their practice, also termed *critical junctures*. Practices of AD are qualitative, context-specific, and their effectiveness is determined by the *values* of those experiencing it.

Offerings of AD at CG are divided into four categories: nurturing an environment, skills and/or knowledge, resources that feed a practical output, and showcasing opportunities. These are broken down into a further 13 sub-categories, including 146 different offerings of AD.

As well as documenting the multiple different offerings of AD, it was used as a lens to understand how policy is produced through the relationships between artists, CG, and representatives of the policy paradigm. In observing a reciprocal relationship from which different actors *learn* about one another, I generated a theory termed *practising agonism in the counterpublic*. In doing so, I add to the fields of policy change and cultural policy, as well as the theoretical traditions of constructivist institutionalism and democratic theory.

Up until now, reports aiming to understand organisational practices of AD have mostly been the product of researchers commissioned by the sector. Much previous research is grounded in how the dominant use of quantitative measures in this setting renders practices of AD invisible. Researchers are generally asked to shed light on areas that quantitative methods are unable to capture, and make recommendations based on what it is they have learnt. Recommendations tend to be targeted at both organisations and policymakers, in the hope that a consensus over measurement may be reached. This thesis provides a much-needed expansion of documented understandings of AD activities, and questions whether consensus is in fact a viable way forward; it is a self-consciously agonistic thought experiment, designed to provoke debate.

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## LIST OF ACRONYMS

ACE	Arts Council England
AD	Artist development
CFCCA	Centre for Contemporary Chinese Art
CG	Castlefield Gallery
CGA	CG Associates
CIT	Creative Industries Trafford
CPD	Continual professional development
CVAM	Contemporary Visual Arts Manchester
CVAN	Contemporary Visual Arts Network
CVAN NW	Contemporary Visual Arts Network North West
HEIs	Higher Education Institutions
GFTA	Grants for the Arts
GM	Greater Manchester
NW	North West
NAS	New Art Spaces
MCC	Manchester City Council
MCP	Manchester Cultural Partnership
NPO	National Portfolio Organisation
RFO	Regularly Funded Organisation
UK	United Kingdom
VAIL	Visual Arts in Liverpool



# 1 Introduction

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This thesis is the result of a PhD studentship initiated in 2013 at the Manchester Institute for Research and Innovation in Art and Design (MIRIAD), based in the Manchester School of Art at Manchester Metropolitan University, in collaboration with Castlefield Gallery (CG), Manchester. The advertised PhD had built on the pilot study, *Analysing Artists' Continual Professional Development (CPD) in GM: towards an integrated approach for talent development* (Slater et al., 2013), and was supported by central university funding and CG. Using qualitative analyses and non-econometric indices, the PhD, as I interpreted it, was to understand artist development (AD) in the context of its reproduction in the everyday conduct of CG on the one hand, and in its construction as a concept taking root in policy discourse, on the other. I did so while paying attention to the brief's requirement that I also look at "deferred value" (2011). "Deferred value" is a term used by Sarah Thelwall (2011, p. 4) to describe how smaller organisations work with artists to develop objects and ideas that, over time, become profitable for larger organisations (see page 12 for a detailed definition, and section 5.3 for my critical analysis of the term "deferred value"). My interrogation of AD and "deferred value" led to aspects of political theory, namely constructivist institutionalism and democratic theory. I focussed on these theories as a way of understanding how change in policy might occur, and considered how CG might influence the structural factors that contribute to and constrain their daily activity.

To achieve this, my objectives were to: contextualise AD within the existing body of literature; investigate and interrogate the discourses of CG staff, artists, and representatives of the policy paradigm; obtain an understanding of how CG

initiated, tracked, and participated in AD; and further consider the concept of “deferred value” (Thelwall, 2011). Here, two phrases require definition: the policy paradigm and “deferred value” (Thelwall, 2011). As well as the phrases *contemporary arts milieu*, and *small-scale and artist-focussed visual arts organisation*, I will define these key terms in section 1.2 below.

The PhD began in September 2013, and for six months I completed a researcher training programme and a preliminary literature review. In March 2014, I began observations in the field, most-frequently with the staff at CG. The initial observations were designed to help me continue to define the scope of the research, as well as to identify additional research groups that I felt were key to my understanding of AD (see section 3.4.1 for the full list of research participants). This first phase of observations lasted for three months, and then from June 2014 until September 2015 I carried out three further phases of field work. These included: the passive observation and familiarisation phase (June 2014 to September 2014); the active observation phase (September 2014 to January 2015, and March 2015 to June 2015); and the saturation phase (June 2015 to September 2015). These phases are explained in depth in section 3.3. I began interviews on the 14<sup>th</sup> November 2014 and finished on the 20<sup>th</sup> September 2015. From September 2015 until April 2017 I analysed my findings and produced this thesis.

I also presented at two conferences. This first was the Political Studies Association conference in March 2014, and the second was the European conference on cultural management, ENCATC, in October 2016. Attending six months into the PhD, at the former I presented my initial thoughts on the theoretical side of this thesis, which is largely included in Chapter 6. At the

latter, which I attended after completion of data collection and analysis, I presented my findings and the advantages I believe prospective mechanisms can offer in the measurement of artist-focussed activity (see section 5.3). Both conferences allowed me to explore ideas related to AD, situated in the wider theoretical contexts of democratic theory and cultural policy. The responses of critical audiences helped me to interrogate my findings and recommendations from different perspectives. During the 18-month write-up period, I also produced an industry report. This was launched at an afternoon symposium for stakeholders, artists, and CG's peer organisations. The presentation of this report brought new issues to the fore which I was able to reflect upon as a useful addition to the research findings. The report is included as Appendix 1, and I detail the nature of the event further in section 3.6.

In this introduction, I first outline CG as the case study for this research by providing its history, the five main areas of its programme that serve to deliver AD, the staffing structure, and what the aim and objectives were at the outset of my research. At this point I offer a broad definition of AD. I do not give a comprehensive definition because providing an empirically-informed definition of AD is a central theme of the thesis throughout, and so the definition unfolds as the thesis progresses. Second, I define the four key terms listed above. Third, I clarify the three main groups and sub-groups of research participants, namely CG staff, artists, and representatives of the policy paradigm. Fourth, I offer the necessary contextual background to the research before, finally, outlining the structure of the thesis document.

## 1.1 Castlefield Gallery

As well as a collaborator, CG was also the case study used in my data collection. Throughout their history, CG has been a contemporary visual arts organisation. Founded in 1984, CG was originally an artist-led space established by former students from Manchester Artists' Studio Association (MASA), and so has a history of focussing on the needs of artists. Originally managed using a committee model of leadership, the team ran their programme in response to what they felt was absent in the North West (NW): more organisations showcasing the work of new graduates alongside artists of a national and international standing. By the time of my research, this was but one part of CG's wider remit of AD.

Broadly, AD is artist-focussed activity that aims to support creative practitioners throughout their career, in the mode of what might also be understood as CPD. AD is not necessarily organisationally-affiliated, but due to my focus on CG it is framed as such in this research. I use the terms artist and practitioner interchangeably, and both refer to individuals who may also be involved with curatorial or written practices, alongside or as part of their contemporary visual arts practice. During this research, from September 2013 until March 2017, CG had five main mechanisms for the delivery of AD. The first was the curated programme which incorporated public exhibitions from the gallery space in the city centre (shown in images 1 and 2), as well as talks and events (Castlefield Gallery, n.d.a). Aimed at presenting new art from "emerging and established

**Image 1:** *Gallery exterior.* Photo: CG (2015).



**Image 2:** *Gallery interior, showing the first and lower-ground floors.* Photo: CG (2015).



artists”, the curated programme often worked in partnership with a diverse range of organisations. Examples included The Koestler Trust, Manchester Art Gallery, and The Priory Clinic.

Second, piloted in 2009 with an Urban Splash building as part of Manchester International Festival, New Art Spaces (NAS) was formally launched as part of CG’s offering to artists in 2012 (CG, n.d.c). Venues included NAS Bolton, Chorlton, Federaton House, and Leigh. Acting as managers in pop-up spaces, CG used NAS to assist artists and “develop their creative practice at very low cost” (CG, n.d.c). NAS were designed to be temporary spaces in which artists could test artwork without certain requirements such as an outcome, plan of delivery, or documentation of the project and/or *impact*.

Third, CG Associates (CGA) was a self-selecting membership scheme for practitioners, including “artists, writers, and independent curators”, who wished to engage with scheduled development activity (CG, n.d.a). These were delivered through one-to-ones, group talks, visits to other cities, workshops, and residencies. Often, this area of the programme targeted artists who had a limited knowledge of the regional contemporary arts milieu and how to navigate it professionally. Therefore, much of the information offered was generally applicable across multiple artists, for example website advice, how to approach galleries, how to write funding proposals, and other practical advice.

Fourth, CG worked with a range of regional and national partners to strengthen its AD offering. Examples of their regional partnerships include Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), as well as the Contemporary Visual Arts Manchester (CVAM), and the Contemporary Visual Arts Network NW (CVAN

NW). For example, they have produced research in collaboration with the University of Manchester and Manchester Metropolitan University, (Hughes & CG, 2012; Slater et al., 2013; Slater, 2014), and drafted the AD strand for a North-West initiative called Art: Audience, Development, Discourse and Skills (Art:ADDS) (Contemporary Visual Arts Network, 2013).

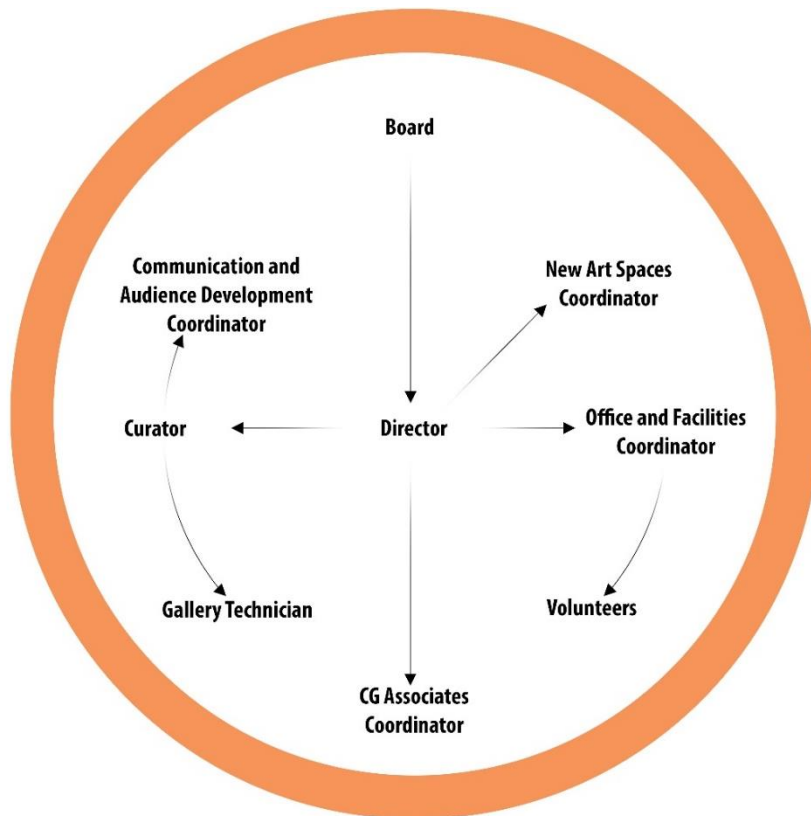
Finally, generating income was a key aspect of CG's core activity. To practice their brand of AD, CG had several expenses. These included adequate staffing, maintaining premises, investing in artist commissions, paying artists for their time, hosting speakers to give talks, and hiring industry-professionals with specific expertise to impart. All of this required a dedication to fundraising, which was mostly undertaken by the gallery director.

CG was originally run by an artist-led committee. When this changed is unclear, but in 2002 CG's archives document the first use of the term *director* in relation to its staffing structure, suggesting that the shift to directorial leadership had occurred between 1984 and 2002 (CG, 2003). At that time, the gallery appointed two co-directors with the titles Gallery Director and Exhibitions Director, supported by two gallery assistants.

During my primary data collection period at CG (between March 2014 and September 2015), there were six permanent staff members: Jennifer Dean, Communications and Audience Development Coordinator; Nicholas James, New Art Spaces (NAS) Coordinator; Jane Lawson, CGA Development Coordinator; Kwong Lee, Director; Matthew Pendergast, Curator; and Adam Renshaw, Technician. (See Figure 1 on page 8 for a diagram of the staff

structure, as it was during my time at the gallery).<sup>1</sup> There was also a team of volunteers who gave support with roles such as meeting and greeting visitors, administrative tasks, and ensuring events such as previews and talks ran smoothly. This summarises the gallery structure. In the following section, I will define four key terms: policy paradigms, “deferred value” (Thelwall, 2011), contemporary arts milieu, and small-scale and artist-focussed contemporary visual arts organisation.

**Figure 1:** CG’s staffing structure between September 2013 and September 2016



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<sup>1</sup> Because of a successful funding bid to ACE, in 2016 CG employed Alexandra Barker, the Office and Facilities Coordinator. Barker was not included in my data collection. In November 2016, Lee also resigned as Director, and the post was taken up by Helen Wewiora in January 2017. Wewiora was originally interviewed for this research as a representative of the policy paradigm, as she was formerly a Relationship Manager for ACE.



## 1.2 Definition of key terms

### Policy paradigms

One of the key groups in my research was representatives of the policy paradigm. To understand their role, it is essential to first outline what I mean by the term *policy paradigm*. In this thesis, I understand the policy sphere as one guided by a *paradigm*. “Paradigms”, states Andrew Sparkes (2012, p. 12), “provide particular sets of lenses for seeing the world and making sense of it in different ways”. For a paradigm to become “competent and accepted”, a process of “socialization” is necessary (Sparkes, 2012, p. 12). In this, individuals learn to “see, think about and act towards the world” (Popkewitz, 2012, p. 3) according to the worldview encouraged from within the paradigm. Using this definition, then, paradigms are characterised by a widespread socialisation of normative value systems.

Relating this to policy, these “interpretative schema [...] are internalised by politicians, state managers, policy experts, and the like” (Hay, 2008, p. 67). As a result, the policy paradigm circumscribes “the realm of the politically feasible, practical, and desirable” (Hay, 2008, p. 66). The “techniques, mechanisms, and instruments” used in this process of circumscription include normalised behaviours that are desired and legitimated within the given paradigm. Normalised behaviours are the internalisation of paradigmatic ideas which then manifest in everyday action. And documents produced from within this sphere are indicative of the ideational frame in which they are produced.

Since the 1980s in the United Kingdom (UK) and at the time of this thesis, the policy paradigm has been termed *neoliberal*. For the purposes of this thesis, *neoliberalism* is broadly defined as

[...] a theory of political economic practices that proposes that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade.

(Harvey, 2007, p. 2)

The normative framework contextualising the development of policy that has implications for the conduct and study of AD is in this sense heavily influenced by the principle that the economy provides a framework to which policy responds, and it is the role of formal policymakers to create an environment in which the market can provide the context for social and political action.

Whether neoliberalism can be defined so concisely is debated (Watkins, 2010). Rather than enter the debate about how to define neoliberalism, I have instead used the advice of Andrew Gamble and applied “the different doctrines and ideas which compose it, and relate them to particular practices and political projects” (Gamble, 2001, p. 134). As summarised by David Hesmondhalgh, Melissa Nisbett, Kate Oakley, and David Lee (2015), McGuigan (2005) identified the ways in which neoliberalism has impacted on cultural spheres. In this, he included:

The increasing corporate sponsorship of culture that might previously have been funded by public subsidy.

An increasing emphasis on running public sector cultural institutions as though they were private businesses.

A shift in the prevailing rationale for cultural policy, away from culture, and towards economic and social goals: “competitiveness and regeneration” and “an implausible palliative to exclusion and poverty”.

(in Hesmondhalgh et al., 2015, p. 99)

Of these, the second and third features that McGuigan (2005) identified were most relevant to the study of AD.<sup>2</sup> Eleanora Belfiore’s (2004) earlier discussion about the New Public Management (NPM) discourse that originated in the 1980s can be used to expand McGuigan’s (2005) second point listed above. As the language of public *subsidy* was replaced by *investment*, the arts, and many other sectors, experienced pressure to demonstrate how they would return on the *investment* economically. With the election of New Labour in 1997, this return was also framed socially (Belfiore, 2004). For example, from analysing a report produced by the Department of Culture, Media and Sport in 1999, Belfiore (2004, p. 3) highlights how the arts were “officially expected to contribute to social inclusion and the neighbourhood renewal agenda”. This, as well as the earlier re-framing of the arts according to its economic contribution, resulted in the third impact that McGuigan (2005) has listed above: the assumption that the *value* of artistic practice is instrumental.

Since 2009, this has been combined with an increased presence of austerity rhetoric (Hinton & Redclift, 2009; MacLeavy, 2011), and the pressure for government funded organisations and authorities to demonstrate *value for money* was again intensified across the arts. Almost exclusively, *justification* for government spending on the arts has taken the form of quantification and an

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<sup>2</sup>For the purposes of this section, I have outlined that there is a paradigm, and how it is defined. The relevancy of this is explored throughout the thesis, but notably in Chapter 5 and 6.

assumed instrumentality. Therefore, because of the neoliberal paradigm, galleries have experienced increased pressure to demonstrate their value using audience figures, diversified income streams, and sales (Thelwall, 2011, p. 9). Throughout the thesis, I unpick precisely how this has impacted AD.

### **“Deferred value”**

With “deferred value” Thelwall’s (2011) central premise is that small-scale contemporary visual art organisations input a huge amount of undervalued and unfunded labour into an “object or idea” that is later quantifiably realised by “larger institutions and the commercial sector” in the long-term. As earlier artworks and ideas transition into audience figures and sales, they go from being unquantified to quantifiable. Because larger organisations are more likely to work with objects or ideas in their quantifiable phase, larger organisations are better equipped to express their wider societal value through numbers, which have the potential to grow year-on-year (Thelwall, 2011). In being more quantitatively-suited, the work of larger organisations better fits with the instrumental and often economically-expressed expectations of the policy paradigm, and so larger organisations are more-equipped to successfully express their *value* in funding applications. As a result, the balance of funding is unevenly tipped towards larger organisations, with the small-scale sector being disproportionately under-valued within the “arts ecosystem” (Thelwall, 2011). In section 5.4, I critically engage with Thelwall’s (2011) concept of “deferred value” in light of the data I collected. For the purposes of the introduction, however, I critique her use of the phrase “arts ecosystem” and instead to opt for the term “contemporary arts milieu”.

## Contemporary arts milieu

Thelwall's (2011) use of the term "arts ecology" was used to describe the component individuals, organisations, institutions, and ideas that symbiotically, and/or exploitatively (Sholette, 2011), exist to create a sphere of artistic activity. Her use of the phrase "arts ecology" was directly critiqued in the work of Reyahn King (2012) and Rebecca Gordon-Nesbitt (2012). King (2012) rethinks the term "arts ecology" and instead considers "ecosystem" a viable alternative to describe how the network of visual arts practitioners, professionals, and organisations interact. Conversely, Gordon-Nesbitt (2012) critiques *all* ecological-based terminology.

Analysing a recording of a symposium held between Common Practice organisations, Gordon-Nesbitt relays the members' problematisation of the terminology.<sup>3</sup> "Ecology" is critiqued "on the basis that it naturalised the existing order [...] suggest[ing] that only organisations able to adapt [...] will survive the austerity measures" (Gordon-Nesbitt, 2012, p. 5). Furthermore, the term *ecology* "implies a linear progression" which connotes a hierarchy wherein dominance through extraction – rather than interaction – is the preferred position. Gordon-Nesbitt (2012, p. 5) prioritises the term "operational milieu" instead, "a flexible structure replete with opportunities" where: "change comes from within, and organisations affect the broader system as much as they are affected by it". Established in this way, the operational milieu makes "consistent, detailed questioning – as well as moves towards radical change – both possible

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<sup>3</sup> Common Practice described themselves as "an advocacy group working for the recognition and fostering of the small-scale contemporary visual arts sector in London" (Common Practice, n.d.a). Common Practice has also commissioned research into the small-scale and contemporary visual arts sector (Thelwall, 2011; Gordon-Nesbitt, 2012; Cruz, 2016), and organised a conference held on the 15<sup>th</sup> February 2015 entitled: "Public Assets: small-scale arts organisations and the production of value" (Common Practice, n.d.b).

and necessary” (Gordon-Nesbitt, 2012, p. 5). Drawing heavily from Gordon-Nesbitt (2012), I opt in this thesis to use the phrase *contemporary arts milieu* to refer to the different structural factors that form the ambit for the arts sphere.

### **Small-scale and artist focussed contemporary visual arts organisations**

CG has been presented as a “smaller” and “small-scale” contemporary visual arts organisation in several reports (Louise, 2011; Thelwall, 2011; Gordon-Nesbitt, 2012; Slater et, al., 2013). I concur with this, but also include artist-focussed in the title that describes them. When I define CG as “small” or “small-scale” I am using the term as outlined by Thelwall (2011). Thelwall defined small organisations as having “a turnover of less than £1m per annum”, who do not “achieve any substantial income from their buildings, archive or collection”, and who lack income from shops or cafés and have very little access to sponsorship and donor income” (Thelwall, 2011, p. 6). The phrase artist-focussed refers to the way that CG worked primarily with artistic process, rather than artworks as outputs and audiences as consumers.

### **1.3 Research participants**

My research participants were divided into three categories: CG staff, artists, and representatives of the policy paradigm. See Table 1 for a further breakdown of the different groups included in the study. I have already detailed who is included as gallery staff in section 1.1. Here, I will clarify who I included as artists and representatives of policy paradigm.

In general, the artists CG worked with at the time of this study were contemporary visual arts practitioners who critically engaged with the society around them, and creatively translated this through permanent or temporal

experiential materiality. This materiality could be embodied such as performance, and/or through the production of objects, such as paintings, sculpture, etc. It could also involve the removal of materiality, for example in the case of creating negative spaces, or creating objects that were not visible from all angles. Throughout the research artists self-defined as such, and in general I did not consider the content of artists' practices unless it directly coincided with my research into AD. I considered the terms artist and practitioner holistically as someone who conducted creative practices alongside the administrative or professional tasks associated with being an artist.

Being an artist is not simply about creating work, and it involves a wide array of simultaneous activity such as: self-promotion (PR, networking at events, websites), funding applications, applications to be part of residencies, exhibitions, projects, events, or workshops, potentially undertaking in additional paid employment in and outside of the arts sector, and self-investment. The majority of artists run a self-sustaining business, and there is a substantial amount of administration and organisation involved in that. I considered being a practitioner to be as much about the administrative side of the profession as creating the artwork.

**Table 1: Research participants**

<b>Participant</b>	<b>Additional information (where required)</b>
<b>Staff</b>	
Gallery staff	The six permanent staff members who were employed by CG.
<b>Artists</b>	
Exhibiting artists 1 (EA1s)	This group consisted of artists who had been part of the exhibition programme from 1986 until 2016.
Exhibiting artists 2 (EA2s)	CG had a public gallery space, and this group included artists who had exhibited either as part of the curated programme or as part of an externally arranged exhibition that had hired the gallery space.
CG Associates (CGA)	CGAs were members of the gallery's associate scheme. As members, they received a wide range of benefits that were exclusively available to them. These included the opportunity to enter proposals for slots in the exhibition programme dedicated to CGAs, as well as access to affordable workspaces provided by the gallery's NAS scheme.
Portfolio review attendees (PRAs)	Portfolio review sessions were run between CG and Creative Industries Trafford (CIT). <sup>4</sup> Portfolio reviews offered artists the opportunity to have their work critically reviewed by an art professional (not necessarily employed at CG, and often a curator or gallery director), and advice based on their artworks or career directions they may want to take. I observed the artists who attended these sessions.
Attendees at external events (AEEs)	During my time at the gallery, CGAs were involved with the Brewery Arts Centre in Kendal to deliver an "Emerging Artist Programme". <sup>5</sup> They delivered three events around the topics of funding, exposure, and self-organisation. This category of participant included the attendees at these events.
Affiliated artists (AAs)	The artists who were showcased by the gallery, but were not a CGA or part of their exhibiting programme.
<b>Representatives of the policy paradigm</b>	
Representatives of Arts Council England	
Representatives of Manchester City Council	
<b>Other</b>	
Attendees at	A preview is a chance to see an exhibition the night before it opens, often accompanied with refreshments, speeches, and artist-talks. At CG, these are public, and are often attended by local artists, arts

<sup>4</sup> CIT were a "non-profit arts development project". They aimed to "help artists build sustainable creative careers [...] through workshops, exhibition, publication and performance opportunities, together with mentoring support and masterclasses" (CIT, n.d., unpag.).

<sup>5</sup> The Brewery Arts Centre is an arts and culture venue that hosts theatre, contemporary art, music, comedy, a cinema, and a range of creative events throughout the year (The Brewery, n.d.).



previews  
(APs)

professionals, collectors, local members of the press, and council. It was also frequented by gallery volunteers and the staff. This group included all those who attended previews in my time observing the gallery.

As stated above, I assert that policy paradigms are “a broader set of ideas that, if understood as ‘public philosophies’ or ‘world views’” can also “transcend policy domains” (Skogstad & Schmidt, 2011, p. 7). Representatives of the policy paradigm were individuals that were institutionally embedded in government-led bodies that codified the policy paradigm. Grace Skogstad and Vivien A. Schmidt (2011, p. 6) write that policy paradigms are “coherent frameworks that consist of beliefs about how the world works and should work in a policy domain”. These ideas infiltrate policymaking by being:

[...] embedded in the very terminology through which policymakers communicate about their work, and it is influential precisely because so much of it is taken for granted and unamenable to scrutiny as a whole.

(Skogstad & Schmidt, 2011, p. 67)

Therefore, policy paradigms are carried by their representatives. In this thesis, these carriers are referred to as representatives of the policy paradigm.

Representatives of the policy paradigm included Helen Wewiora and Maria Percival, Relationship Managers at the Arts Council England (ACE), and Sarah Elderkin, Manchester City Council (MCC) Principal Policy Officer: Policy, Partnerships and Research. I used ACE and MCC as representative of the policy paradigm because they were the two main government bodies that CG were funded by. CG was also part of an organisational network in Greater Manchester (GM) largely funded through these channels, and both institutions

produced strategic documents that detailed their approach to funding and supporting the arts milieu that CG was a part of (ACE, 2010; 2015; MCC, 2010).

## 1.4 Background to the research

ACE's 2011 funding decisions were a critical juncture in the history of CG, and the subsequent discussions influenced the direction of this research greatly. On the 30<sup>th</sup> March 2011, ACE released the details of their new funding initiative for what they described as the “biggest change to arts funding in a generation” (ACE, 2010, unpag.). Previously, ACE had a portfolio of regularly funded organisations (RFOs) who received financial support on an annual basis. In 2011 this changed, and in April 2012 ACE implemented what it called its National Portfolio, and organisations funded as part of this were called National Portfolio Organisations (NPO). Implementation of the National Portfolio meant there were four main changes to ACE's regular funding strategy:

Introduction of an open application process, meaning that any groups or individual artists can apply to be part of the National Portfolio;

National Portfolio grants will mostly be for three years. However, the Arts Council says it is willing to be flexible and may agree two-year deals or anything up to six years;

Organisations will have tailor-made agreements, rather than the rigid system whereby all RFOs have to meet the same criteria;

Some larger members of the National Portfolio will have a 'strategic relationship' with the Arts Council, and will be expected to help smaller organisations.

(Culture, Media and Sport Committee, 2011, p. 16)

On the fourth point, ACE clarified that there would be two types of organisations within the portfolio: “a smaller number of 'strategic' organisations”, responsible for “the development of the arts”, who demonstrate “leadership at a national or

local level”; “and a larger number of 'programme' organisations, who will deliver outstanding artistic work in their field” (ACE, 2010, unpag.). Due to their size, CG were classed as a *programme* organisation, and therefore responsible for delivery within, but not development of nor leadership within, their sector. The suggestion, therefore, being that larger organisations determine the direction of the milieu. I will argue throughout that this is contentious given the potentially contrasting interests of organisations that are of different scales and their programming priorities.

Authors such as Belfiore (2002) and Jo Caust (2003) analysed how the governmental instrumentalisation of artistic practice had detrimentally impacted the arts, and warned it would continue to do so. In 2011, the theoretical arguments made about rhetoric around the *arts industry* and *instrumentalisation* of artistic practice had a tangible effect:

[...] a disproportionate number of artists' membership and development agencies and practice-based organisations [...] lost core funding as a result of the NPO decisions.

(Louise, 2011, unpag.)

The release of ACE's 2011 funding decisions sent shock-waves through the small-scale and artist-focussed contemporary visual arts sphere, and it re-focussed the discussion around instrumentality, which turned to the necessity of articulating and funding organisational practices essential for supporting artists' careers (Louise, 2011; Thelwall, 2011; Gordon-Nesbitt, 2012). When ACE publicised their NPO funding decisions for the three-year period 2012-15, CG was not successful in its application. This meant that CG lost its regular funding streams, exposing it to precarious short-term funding strategies for the

foreseeable future. The reason cited was that CG was too reliant on income from ACE, and needed to diversify income streams (see Table 2).<sup>6</sup>

**Table 2:** CG's total income from 2004/5 until 2015/16, including amount attributable to ACE

Financial year	Total income	Amount input by ACE	% attributable to ACE
2004/5	£156,770	£123,006	78%
2005/6	£155,451	£126,430	81%
2006/7	£132,574	£108,745	82%
2007/8	£129,428	£107,200	83%
2008/9	£146,609	£114,333	78%
2009/10	£134,241	£109,434	82%
2010/11	£130,077	£107,897	83%
2011/12	£177,071	£136,988	77%
2012/13	£236,699	£68,870	29%
2013/14	£196,464	£54,155	28%
2014/15	£232,437	£58,363	25%
2015/16	£350,673	£93,335	27%

When CG was informed that their application to become an NPO had been unsuccessful, there was a fear that the gallery would close (Manchester Evening News, 2011). At the time, Wewiora was a Relationship Manager for ACE. In their final annual review as an ACE RFO, Wewiora described how both ACE and CG were aware that CG's business model required reviewing (Wewiora, 2012, p. 9). At what became a critical juncture for the organisation, CG employed consultancy support to help them review and refine their business model (Wewiora, 2012, p. 9). With support from Sarah Fisher and Kath Russell, it was during this period that CG identified AD as its unique selling point. At this

<sup>6</sup> From 2012/13 onwards, CG successfully diversified their income streams. The most significant additional sources of income from 2012/13 onwards until 2015/15 income included: corporate donations, consultancy work, and membership.

time, CG also realised how their contributions to the contemporary arts milieu were “often hard to measure within the metrics that government and ACE requires”, and so they began their involvement with research that sought to address this (Lee, 2012).

As well as being used as an example (Gordon-Nesbitt, 2015), case study (Louise, 2011, 2012; Thelwall, 2015) and through participation in recorded discussions (Gordon-Nesbitt, 2012), CG has also been a partner in scoping and initiating research on artist-focussed activity (Hughes & CG, 2012; Slater et al., 2013; Slater, 2014). These different research experiences were all attentive to CG’s practices of AD, and committed to establishing a greater understanding of the mechanisms of underrepresentation that surround them. Often, these were anchored on a prior discussion around how the quantitative metrics used by ACE to evaluate artistic practices were unable to capture such activity, and were exercises in exposing terminologies or “intangible” practices which had been rendered invisible by econometrics, and so had not been widely discussed or critically analysed. The studentship from which this thesis is the result was generated against this broad, twofold proposition: that AD was not understood, and that government metrics were unable to understand it.

It is well established that without a base-level of artist-focussed activity, usually offered within the small-scale and artist-focussed contemporary visual arts sphere, the crop of practising artists would be significantly reduced (Louise, 2011). This would have a detrimental impact on the UK’s cultural offering in both the short and long-term, depleting cultural opportunities nationally as well as globally. Why would this be a bad thing? Responses to this question are diverse, and include the notion that “creativity is part of human nature” (Wei

Wei, 2012), that artistic practice is part of state-led, internationally-exerted soft power (Nye, 2004), and to do with the ways in which creativity benefits the economy (Centre for Economics and Business Research Ltd., 2013).

Generally, debates around the value of the arts are divided along the lines of intrinsic and instrumental value. The historical roots of this division are explored in Belfiore and Oliver Bennett's book entitled *The Social Impact of the Arts: An Intellectual History* (2010) where they argue that an intellectual history exploring the array of different perspectives on "the effects of the arts" can help facilitate a more nuanced approach to understanding the value of artistic practice academically, and in policy documents. In this thesis, I critique the UK government's emphasis on instrumentality, but mostly on the basis that this is accompanied by an overt focus on audiences' experience of artworks and not the process of creation involving artists. In this sense my argument is pragmatic, in that it accepts this state of affairs as the current state of play. In doing so, I assert that, irrespective of whether artists' social value lies in their production capacity or in their creative being (or a combination of both), the social value of artists is secured, even if this is in a way that remains contested by one side or other. As described by Belfiore and Bennett (2010, p. 4), the position of the arts in society is secured in the way it "attracts the support of governments", has a legitimated "place in education", and "demands the attention of the media". Cultural production can be found at the heart of all communities, arguably transcending race, class, or gender (Hooks, 1995). And the oppression or censorship of artistic expression will often bring into question the democratic functioning of a given society (Levine, 2007). But the approach I take in this thesis is that whether the value of artistic practice is intrinsic or

instrumental – or whether at some point there will be a less polarizing way to understand the arts – what is of fundamental importance is that it is valued. To ensure its continued presence in our current neoliberal society, I believe that we must support a bedrock of professional artists.

There is also debate as to whether the financial sustenance required for this sphere should befall governments. This thesis falls in line with the notion that if creativity is of benefit to the population (in whatever form), then the government has a duty to support its provision and ensure its accessibility to all people within its jurisdiction. I am aware that this is a point of contention, particularly if the discussion is held along the traditional lines of left and right-wing politics that characterise the British parliamentary system. Traditionally, a more right-wing and conservative perspective believes in a smaller role for the state, and so would argue for minimal state intervention, and a larger proportion of private money funding the sector. The typically left-wing position upholds that state intervention in the arts is essential, to improve access to opportunity where it is unequally distributed and dependent on wealth and income. Here, my argument is unapologetically left-wing in the context of British political attitudes understood through the institutional framework of the parliamentary system. I assume that state intervention through funding mechanisms is positive, if effectively administered. Throughout this thesis, I draw on reports that question the efficacy of funding distributed through governmental bodies, such as ACE and Local Authorities (LAs). In Chapter 6, I also work through a new theory that proposes a conscious rendering of alternative mechanisms by which state-bodies can *learn* from society, so that, in part, their funding distribution can prove more effective.

## 1.5 Structure of the thesis document

To interrogate AD, the thesis unfolds through the following six chapters.

Chapter 2 outlines how AD was understood when I entered the field. First, it presents a review of literature in the field of cultural policy and constructivist institutionalism, and outlines the need to engage with the three different actors in this study: CG staff, artists, and representatives of the policy paradigm.

Subsequently, it summarises ACE and MCC's documentation of talent development, the term they use to describe AD activity, as well as reports and papers produced by non-governmental bodies. In doing so, I demonstrate how research approaches that engage with the perspectives of artists reveal more data about AD, as well as aligning the research to a reading of CG being situated within a *subaltern counterpublic* (Fraser, 1990). Finally, this chapter analyses how CG documented AD activity, and concludes by presenting four different categories of AD: nurturing an environment, resources, skills and/or knowledge, and showcasing opportunities.

Chapter 3 is a comprehensive overview of the methodological approach used to carry out the research. Combining ethnography, a phased and single case research design, and grounded theory, this chapter outlines the in-situ approach I took that encouraged a close engagement with the data, ideal for an undeveloped phenomenon such as AD. In this chapter, I also discuss how the methodology links to democratic theory, notably the concept of *the public sphere* and non-verbal ways of communicating one's preferences.

The fourth and fifth chapters present the data from my fieldwork. Chapter 4 is broken down into five main areas: interviews, guided conversations, and



observations with representatives of the policy paradigm; the categories of AD that emerged from my time with the staff and artists at CG; non-linear careers and critical junctures; the learning that occurs between different actors; and points of difference between CG and the policy sphere. Chapter 5 addresses some of the problematic areas that arise from conducting AD within a neoliberal paradigm, most of which centre on the issues caused by a proliferation of quantitative metrics and the instrumentalisation of practice.

Chapter 6 brings existing theory to bear on the empirical scenario I presented in Chapter 4 and 5. Having introduced constructivist institutionalism and subaltern counterpublics in Chapter 2, this chapter develops the application of these theories and interrogates how they formulate *change*. Unsatisfied with the approaches of constructivist institutionalism and subaltern counterpublics, I turn to Chantal Mouffe's (1999; 2000a; 2000b; 2005a; 2005b) critique of *the public sphere*. Mouffe questions Jürgen Habermas's underlying assumptions about change based on the formation of a consensus between actors, and instead asserts that change can occur through *difference*. However, Mouffe's theory of change takes place through the large-scale replacement of the hegemonic order. Instead, wanting to theorise moments of small-scale change that cumulatively impact policy, I fuse different features from each of the theories to generate a new theoretical approach which I call *practising agonism in the counterpublic*.

I then present the conclusions in Chapter 7. In this chapter, I include an overview of the conclusions that are drawn throughout the thesis. I address each chapter in turn, and generally outline how the thesis (a) offers an expanded understanding of AD and what it means to be an organisation offering

it, and (b) contributes to the theoretical canon by bringing the empirical scenario observed at CG to bear on constructivist institutionalism and democratic theory. Finally, Chapters 8 and 9 are the bibliography and the primary sources, and Chapter 10 is the appendix, in which I include a copy of a report that was produced and disseminated as part of the PhD project. I discuss this further in section 3.6 of the methodology chapter.

## **2 A review of artist development in related documents and existing research**

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### **2.1 Introduction**

This chapter outlines how AD has been defined within the policy paradigm, given the tendency towards instrumentalisation and quantification described in Chapter 1. To do so, in section 2.2 I first outline a review of literature that addresses the development of cultural policy. This helped determine the data sources I used to understand how AD had been documented previously. This informed the decision to review documents produced from within representatives of the policy paradigm alongside documents produced by CG and existing research. To present the different AD offerings documented by the different data sources – ACE and MCC, CG, and existing research – I produced tables that collated the AD offerings that were documented by each group. These are included in sections 2.3, 2.4, and 2.5.

Section 2.3 discusses how AD was incorporated and defined in documents authored and published by ACE and MCC. In section 2.4, I present how CG discussed AD in reports and funding applications authored by themselves. Finally, in section 2.5 I review the existing research produced by researchers. Researchers were often employed by the small-scale and contemporary visual arts sector to expand the evidence-base for the work that is not captured by quantitative metrics, or to critically engage with certain terminologies that are deemed positive or detrimental to the sphere's self-articulation of its practices. I highlight how research that engaged with the experiences of artists and organisations produced the most comprehensive understanding of AD to date. In this section, I also discuss how previous reports framed the small-scale and

artist-focussed visual arts sphere as a counterpublic, subordinate to the hegemonic sphere. In doing so, I convey a comprehensive understanding of how AD was understood prior to my research.<sup>7</sup>

As a term, AD cuts across the diverse range of pre-existing terminologies. These include “bespoke professional practice activities” (Louise, 2011), “intangible assets” (Thelwall, 2011), “professional development” (King, 2012), “continuum of development” (Gordon-Nesbitt, 2012), “continual professional development” (Hughes & CG, 2012; Slater et al., 2013; Gordon-Nesbitt, 2015), and “talent development” (ACE, 2013b; MCP, n.d.e). These terms all tend to represent areas of organisational programming that prioritise artistic process rather than audience experience, and *talent development* was the terminology preferred by ACE and MCC.

The review of existing research in the area of AD, presented in section 2.5, initially suggested that AD offerings could be categorised in three areas. These were drawn out from the work of Dany Louise (2011) and Rebecca Gordon-Nesbitt (2012). The first, **nurturing an environment in which AD can be achieved**, was taken from Louise’s (2011) descriptive account of how organisations can help to foster an environment for AD. The second, **resources and showcasing opportunities**, and third, **skills and/or knowledge**, were adapted from Gordon-Nesbitt (2012). Resources and opportunities were depicted as what artists could use the gallery for, whereas skills and/or knowledge were what the gallery could offer. As my analysis of CG’s

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<sup>7</sup> In sections 2.4, 2.5, and 2.6, the data I present was generated by *systematically coding and categorising* documents produced by representatives of the policy paradigm and CG, as well as the existing research. My approach to coding and categorising is detailed in Chapter 3, section 3.5.

documents progressed, it became clear to me that resources and showcasing opportunities were distinct from one another. Through reviewing the archives at CG, it became clear that artists were offered a combination of skills and/or knowledge and resources as a means to access showcasing opportunities. Resources provided the space, time, materials, and morale for artists to work directly on their practical output, whereas showcasing opportunities were chances showcase their work to curators, commissioners, the public, or other potential audiences. Therefore, the tables I present in sections 2.3, 2.4, and 2.5 organise AD offerings according to these four categories.

## **2.2 The selection of data sources**

A review of literature from the field of cultural policy revealed the need to engage with different data sources in order to understand AD as a cultural phenomenon embedded within the neoliberal policy paradigm. Literature in this area often refers to the way that the policy paradigm implements decisions, and how this affects the everyday context of practitioners. At times, this is determined by how authors understand statehood, either ideologically or as a mechanism of power. As described by Clive Barnett: “ideology versus power/knowledge, consciousness versus practices, Gramsci versus Foucault” (Barnett, 1999, p. 381). According to Barnett, the focus on statehood means authors in this field have tended to analyse policy documents as either blunt instruments of hegemonic state power, or as an exercise in “disciplinary power” through “cultural technologies” (Barnett, 1999).

This, Barnett argues, aligns organisations with “policy statements” and assumes a false linearity between “statements with actions and actions with actual

outcomes” (Barnett, 1999, p. 374). In assuming an un-deterred sequence of policy statements, actions, and outcomes, the field of cultural policy has often overlooked the nuance of decision-making. Furthermore, claims Barnett, it also assumes causality, without a critical analysis of where statements, actions, and outcomes might deviate from one another (Barnett, 1999, p. 374).

Caroline Agnew refers to this as “instrumental rationality”: the idea “that contemporary policy practices actually reflect an entrenched commitment to rational choice methods” (Agnew, 2013, p. 2). In this sense, cultural policy studies have tended to focus on the actions of government officials and refrain from questioning the role that individual citizens might have in shaping the policies that govern them (Barnett, 1999). The resultant field is methodologically attentive to analyses of state-produced policy documents or narratives, and this has led to the adoption of two main methodological approaches. The first tracks policy alongside the different ideological persuasions of successive governments (Trotter, 2002; Hinves, n.d.). The second uses broad theoretical paradigms, and questions what it means to govern culture considering these (Lewis & Miller, 2003). These approaches limit the extent to which individual action is incorporated into the field. As quoted in Barnett, citizens become “a pre-formed self as the necessary target on which the machinery [of government] works” (Barnett, 1999, p. 377; Donald, 1992, p. 93).

This has also influenced the way that cultural leadership is understood. Cultural leadership has been shown to be complex and multi-faceted, and contemporary turns in its study have sought to understand the ways in which artists can become leaders in cultural settings (Price, 2016). *The Artist as Leader Research Report* (Douglas & Freemantle, 2009) is a reference point for many

working in this area (for example: Price, 2016), and it is interesting to note how the potential working relationships between artists, cultural organisations, and the policy sphere has been depicted. *The Artist as Leader Research Report* expresses a

[...] need to encourage and develop methods for both artists and cultural organisations to engage with the policy context and to understand how and why opportunities to work in the public sphere are shaped by policy.

(Douglas & Freemantle, 2009, p. 8)

Here, the suggestion is that policy dictates the opportunities for artists, but not how artists operating in the policy sphere might impact on policy. There is the additional suggestion that artists must secure a *seat at the table* as leaders in their sector as a way of influencing policy (Hewitt, 2005; Douglas & Freemantle, 2009; Price, 2016).

Furthermore, in the report there is an underlying assumption that engagements between artists, cultural leaders, and policymakers (as those producing policy documents), must be focussed on consensus. Anne Douglas and Chris Freemantle (2009, p. 8) identify a need to “share [...] new forms of practice and related evaluation emerging between artists, organisations and public policy”. “These could”, they state, “address the need for artists, organisational leaders and policy makers to work together” (Douglas & Freemantle, 2009, p. 8). This idea of liberal consensus formation as a way of initiating change has been heavily critiqued by writers such as Nancy Fraser (1990) and Mouffe (1999; 2000a; 2000b; 2005a; 2005b) who assert that the liberal agenda of consensus actively results in the suppression of voices that counter the dominant policy paradigm.

To inject a more nuanced understanding of the power relations that surround the practice of cultural policy, Barnett recommends the field is also attentive to the role of individuals.

[...] an adequate understanding of the relationships between culture and government should integrate a concern with the array of everyday strategies through which practices of normalization, disciplinization, and government are deployed and subverted. The 'agency' of subjects is a critical consideration in examining the actual operations of governmental practices.

(Barnett, 1999, p. 15)

From this perspective, Barnett understands cultural policy as a way of manipulating cultural outputs as spaces of governance. Understanding cultural outputs as an exercise in power relations, Barnett attempts to analyse how citizens might also use these cultural spaces to (re)gain power, and so cultural outputs become a site for government and individuals to exercise power in potentially contrasting ways. In this thesis, I agree that cultural policy studies should not overlook the role of the individual. However, I do so from the perspective of constructivist institutionalism.

Within constructivist institutionalism, individuals always hold the potential to re-configure the structural factors that contextualise them. This is due to its basis in the theory of political analysis, constructivism. In the late 1990s, constructivism revisited and rethought the binary of structure and agency that had dominated conceptual explanations for "social and political phenomenon" from 1945 until the early 1990s (Hay, 2002, p. 93). Broadly, *structure*, in this context, referred to the regularity in the "ordered nature of social and political relations", manifest in the "political institutions, practices, routines, and conventions" (Hay, 2002, p. 94). This assumes that "political behaviour tends to



be ordered”, and, generally in theories attentive to the way that society is ordered, “the greater the influence of structure”, states Hay, “the more predictable political behaviour is presumed to be” (2002, p. 94). Agency was defined as “the ability or capacity of an actor to act consciously and [...] attempt to realise his or her intentions” (Hay, 2002, p. 94). This definition tended to be interwoven with other concepts that rested on implied notions of “free will, choice or autonomy”, such as *reflexivity*, *rationality*, and *motivation* (Hay, 2002, pp. 94-95). Often, structure was understood as the prior force that determined the limitations of agency; individuals were passive recipients of the processes that surrounded them. Constructivism challenged the idea that structure and agency were oppositional frameworks for individual and institutionalised power, and re-formulated what the terms meant in the context of individual action.

Instead, structure and agency were theorised as lenses for certain behaviours, either structural or agential, and were proposed as frames of reference to understand the different *factors* at play within context and conduct (Hay, 2002). Structural *factors* were those “beyond the immediate control of the actors directly involved; whereas agential factors emphasise[d] the conduct of the actors directly involved” (Hay, 2002, p. 95). Context is the blending of structural and agential factors that form the environment in which political actors can conduct their behaviour, and individual *conduct* always holds the potential – or power – to re-configure the context.

Agential factors are connected to an individual’s conduct, but are not what constitutes it. Instead, Colin Hay (2002, p. 128) suggests *strategic action* as a more apt phrase to describe conduct. This can be divided into “intuitive, routine or habitual strategies and practices” and “explicitly strategic action” (Hay, 2002,

p. 132). The former is “unarticulated and unchallenged”, states Hay, and is likened to “practical consciousness” in Anthony Giddens (1984).<sup>8</sup> While both rely “upon perceptions of the strategic context and the configuration of constraints and opportunities that it provides”, Hay’s description of *explicitly strategic action* accounts for agential strategies of change, and so the way that policy paradigms can shift. I expand on the conceptual application of *change* in relation to AD in Chapter 6.

On this basis, I decided to use artists, CG, and representatives of the policy sphere as my research participants. In doing so, I hoped to unpick the different layers of conduct and (re)contextualisation that wrapped around AD. In the rest of this chapter, I present how AD was understood by representatives of the policy paradigm, in literature, and by CG. In doing so, I hope to gain an overview of how AD was understood within structural factors. ACE, therefore, *behaved* structurally, in that its direction was *seemingly* beyond CG’s and artists’ control, and CG represented the same for the artists in the study. In Chapter 4, I develop this understanding by incorporating the perspectives of individuals, namely representatives of the policy paradigm, artists, and CG staff.

### **2.3 The Arts Council England and Manchester City Council**

Documents authored by representatives of the policy paradigm provide an insight into the everyday actions of representatives of the policy paradigm who internalise the normative ideals encouraged by the dominant policy paradigm.

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<sup>8</sup> Consciousness is an agent’s “capacity to understand what they do while they do it” (Giddens, 1984, p. xxii), and discursive consciousness is the explicit articulation of this via language. For Giddens, however, “human beings know about their activities and the world in a sense that cannot be readily articulated” (Elliott, 2014), thus he introduces the concept of “practical consciousness”.

This section looks to understand how *talent development* was defined in documents authored by representatives of the policy paradigm. First, I consider where documents produced by representatives of the policy paradigm use the phrase “artist development”. Then, recognising that was their preferred terminology for artist-focussed activity, I discuss an overview of policy documents, and themes that arose from analysing how talent development was characterised (summarised Tables 3 and 4).

ACE is prolific and rigorous when it comes to publishing documentation of their work, and the work that is produced through use of their funding. Through the archive of Grants for the Arts (GFTA) spreadsheets and their role as a partner in a wide range of activities, their documents offer an insight into the many discourses within the contemporary visual arts.<sup>9</sup> “Artist development” used in a way aligned to the process-based and artist-focussed activity of CG was first used by ACE in reference to the origins of a *National Steering Group for Artists’ Development* (McAndrew, 2002, p. viii). This steering group was assembled in response to the “National Framework Plan for individual artists”, which “addressed four key development areas: advocacy, professional development, resources and production” (McAndrew, 2002, p. viii). Subsequently, AD is not a term used directly by ACE, but in publications written by organisations funded by them, or as terminology used by other organisations and adopted by them.

A review of successive documents revealed that the next use of AD was in project titles of bids submitted to ACE that were awarded GFTA funding. In

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<sup>9</sup> GFTA are awards from £1000 to £100,000 for arts activity, offered through an “open access funding programme for individuals, art organisations and other people who use the arts in their work” (ACE, n.d.f).

2003/4, the first grants awarded to AD projects were both music projects located in London (ACE, 2004). In 2010, AD was first used in relation to visual arts practices when GFTA allocated £4,999 for a project entitled “artist development and production solo performance” (ACE, 2010c). Little information can be found on this project, but from its documentation in this context, AD was used as a term to describe a series of opportunities that were reported to have developed the artist through a linear trajectory of career progression (Simic, n.d.).

The first nuanced approach to understanding AD published by ACE was documented in a report about Escalator: an “artist development initiative” taking “talent” from East Anglia up to the Edinburgh Festival Fringe (ACE, 2011b). The aim of Escalator was to combine the quality of East Anglian art and the opportunity of internationality and networking provided by the Edinburgh Festival Fringe:

The Edinburgh Festival, in all its many wonderful forms and formats can offer these artists an opportunity to platform their talents and develop their careers in ways that stretch their ambitions far beyond the artificial barriers of the region [...]. This is about [...] [a] holistic attempt to create conversations, to throw out provocations, to hustle, agitate, advocate and to make connections across venues, producers, artists, cities, regions and countries.

(ACE, 2011b, p. 2)

The chance to work across art forms as well as providing platforms and networking opportunities for artists were central to Escalator’s rationale, and so its understanding of AD.

*Great Art and Culture for Everyone* was ACE’s 10-year vision from 2010-2020 (ACE, 2013b). Within *Great Art and Culture for Everyone*, AD was absent as a

term. Instead, ACE preferred to couch the support of artists in terms of “talent” (ACE, 2013b, p. 26). At its core, there were five strategic goals that demonstrated the essence of what would define this era of arts funding.

- 1) Excellence is thriving and celebrated in the arts, museums and libraries;
- 2) Everyone has the opportunity to experience and to be inspired by the arts, museums and libraries;
- 3) The arts, museums and libraries are resilient and environmentally sustainable;
- 4) The leadership and workforce in the arts, museums and libraries are diverse and appropriately skilled;
- 5) Every child and young person has the opportunity to experience the richness of the arts, museums and libraries.

(ACE, 2013b, p. 39)

These goals: 1) provided the rationale for ACE’s “investment in arts and culture”; 2) informed ACE’s “future, funding decisions”; 3) brought “clarity and focus” to their work; and, 4) outlined ACE’s “aims” and “funding decisions” to those who work with them (ACE, 2013b, p. 41).

In offering specific characteristics to the “development of talent”, the NPO guidance for organisations applying for funding from 2015-18 provided a brief outline of what activities these might include.

[...] we will be asking National Portfolio Organisations to tell us how they will contribute to developing talent of genuine ambition and skill; and how they will provide the space, time and/or resources to develop artistic practice, for instance through commissioning new work, hosting residencies and providing mentoring opportunities.

(ACE, 2013d, p. 15)

The final sentence in the quote above – “commissioning new work, hosting residencies, and providing mentoring opportunities” – is one of the few occasions that ACE gave explicit examples of what might be considered talent development within this strategic document.

In the visual arts appendices for their *Corporate Plan 2015-18* (2015a), ACE specifically outlined their strategy for developing talent. ACE listed five more features of what could be considered talent development as understood by ACE (ACE, 2015, unpag.): 1) working in partnership to optimise talent development offering; 2) supporting small-spaces; 3) supporting critical-writing initiatives; 4) establishing ways to measure the success of talent development initiatives; and 5) enabling practitioners to build international profiles. The document also discussed establishing “an evidence-based method of measuring success”, something also addressed earlier in *Great Art and Culture for Everyone* (ACE, 2013b, p. 60). In these documents, precisely what ACE intended to measure and how remained ambiguous. However, ACE later engaged in two main ways of *measuring* the arts: Audience Finder and Quality Metrics.<sup>10</sup>

Additionally, in ACE documents there was a heavy emphasis on exhibiting and sales of artwork (ACE, n.d.d; Annabel Jackson Associates Ltd, 2011). This suggested that, for representatives of the policy paradigm, *talent development* was inherently linked to the commercial potential of an artist and their works. For example, “subscription”, included as a showcasing opportunity in Table 4 on page 43, is defined as a process “whereby artists showing the most potential are offered further opportunities” by larger institutions (ACE, n.d.d, p. 22). The

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<sup>10</sup> Audience Finder is discussed further in section 4.2, page 112, and Quality Metrics in section 5.2, page 138.

“potential” shown by artists is defined as “artists who have achieved certain levels of legitimisation for their work”, and these artists should be offered the most support to access national and international markets (ACE, n.d.d, p. 22). In ACE’s documents, there was also an emphasis on encouraging “entrepreneurial” artists (ACE, n.d.d, p. 3; Annabel Jackson Associates Ltd, 2011, p. 171). Here, I note the difference between *talent development* and AD. Whilst AD incorporated *talent development*, the latter was, instead, defined as the identification of creative practitioners early-on in their career whose works fits the mould of that which can be positively received in the market or by audiences. Encouragement and support through periods of risk and uncertainty are offered insofar as the artist’s work displays *talent* that is consumable. This was a definition that was upheld by the analysis of MCC documents.

During the time of my research, from March 2014 and September 2015, MCC’s main context for providing financial support to the contemporary visual arts in GM was through the Manchester Cultural Partnership (MCP). Since 2011, MCP had been responsible for delivering the city’s cultural strategy (MCC, 2010). However, around October 2015, the MCP website was removed, and activity on their Twitter account ceased. After that date, MCC’s online presence detailing their work with talent development and the visual arts was conducted through simple listings of the galleries they funded on the MCC website (MCC, n.d.c).

In analysing the documents authored by MCC between March 2011 and the end of my data collection, September 2015, MCC used similar terminologies to ACE. Using the term “talent” when referring to artistic creativity, they adopted the phrase “developing creative talent” as part of their “Talent City” programme publicised in the cultural ambition (MCC, 2010). All five themes of the cultural

ambition tended to focus on the extrinsic benefits of creative practices, as those which can offer the people, communities, and local economies of Manchester a culturally unique selling point that benefits investment, brings a greater sense of local pride and community, and increases access to education and work opportunities. An instrumentalisation of artistic practice alone does not render the support of artistic process invisible, however, and there is a strong sense that the ambition conveys culture as a means of attracting investment – whether that is personal investment in a community or financial investment in an economy. For organisations who prioritise artists rather than audiences and are neither community-focussed nor working as or with young people, there were very limited avenues for funding from MCC. The alternative, then, was for organisations to generate a discourse or amend their programming around organisational practices that framed the work as community-focussed, engaged with young people, and/or contributing to the environment of creativity that attracts investment from outside of the city, or to remain unfunded in this context.

MCC regularly referred to talent development as rooted in younger people's experiences, particularly in schools. In the "Manchester Cultural Model" under the title of "Engaging and Developing Talent", the authors directly link to this when they state:

[...] there should be more 'hub' based offers developed by the cultural sector – so that Schools and other public commissioners would be able to deal with single consortia [...]. Renaissance in the Regions funding has seen museums and galleries [...] demonstrating the effectiveness of cultural organisations working closely together to offer coordinated services for schools and a powerful integrated cultural offer to young people.

(MCC, 2011, p. 8)



The entirety of the section dedicated to “developing talent” is, in fact, targeted at widening access to creativity in schools and young person education programmes.

MCC outlined their cultural strategy on the MCP website which included five priority areas: “culturally distinctive”, “community inspired”, “creative investor”, “talent city”, and “culturally connected” The MCC website included four case studies of what “Talent City” represented. These included: the Arts Award in conjunction with the “local Pupil Referral Unit in Withington Library”; Contact, a “charity based in Manchester” who “work locally, nationally, and internationally” with young people; the Young Artists’ Development Programme, aiming to increase young people’s access to further arts education; and the Manchester Literature Festival (MCP, n.d.e). Three of these projects worked with young people, and the final project – Manchester Literature Festival – was framed as a case study for “Talent City” due to the way it worked to offer industry insights to “emerging talent” and exposure for undiscovered writers (MCP, n.d.e).

On the MCP website, CGA was listed as a case study, but as a “Creative Investor” rather than part of “Talent City” (MCP, n.d.a; n.d.e). While Manchester Literature Festival was conveyed on the website as addressing four of the five strands of the *Cultural Ambition*, and so illustrating that cases did not have to be categorised as just one, CGA was not presented as having any overlap with “Talent City”. Without being entirely clear how CG was a “Creative Investor”, the categorisation of their work as such suggests a disjuncture between what MCC and CG considered to be talent development, given that in funding bids and reporting for the policy sphere CG often framed their offering as “talent development”. In MCC’s policy documents, *talent development* refers to the

encouragement and uncovering of undiscovered practitioners that display “talent”. Section 2.5 interrogates how CG’s understanding of AD differed to ACE and MCC’s use of the term talent development, and this is expanded upon in Chapter 4.

**Table 3:** Nurturing an environment activity documented by ACE and MCC

Nurturing an environment
To nurture an environment for talent development, ACE recognised a need for the following activity:
A sense of healthy competition between public institutions to identify and offer exhibitions to the strongest artists
Artists should be attracted to work in cultural clusters across the country, and feel they can progress in any part of England
Continue to give priority to capital investment for the development of artists’ workspace
Continue to invest in a programme of artists’ development
Enabling practitioners to build international profiles
Ensuring financially stable organisations to encourage excellence to achieve inspirational art
Establishing ways to measure the success of talent development initiatives
Focusing on law, workspace, innovation, financial security and professional standards
Investment in entrepreneurial individuals and organisations in areas which are favourable to presenting new work and growing new markets
Investment in the design of quality metrics
Public acquisition of work from local artists
Rewarding projects through GFTA that strive for artistic quality
Seek new opportunities for Black and minority ethnic and disabled artists who are currently under-represented
Strengthen our partnerships with the higher education sector
Supporting critical writing initiatives
Supporting small-spaces
Taking risks
To find and apply new business models and financial equations, especially those that benefit artists
Working in partnership to optimise talent development offering

**Table 4:** Skills and/or knowledge, resources, and showcasing opportunities documented by ACE and MCC

<b>Skills and/or knowledge</b>
The following areas of skills and/or knowledge were identified in ACE documents:
International working
Sustainable business models
<b>Resources</b>
ACE identified that artists need the following resources:
A professional development service providers' directory
Being taken up and sold through dealers
Commissioning new work
Critical recognition
Exposure to new disciplines, such as new technologies
Funding (bursaries/grants/investments)
Increased access to international markets
Increased market opportunities to enable long-term sustainability of artists
New collectors
Peer endorsement
Residencies
Shared learning resources
Significant purchases of artworks
Studio spaces for networking and skill-sharing
<b>Showcasing opportunities</b>
ACE outlined the following showcasing opportunity needs for artists:
Exhibitions and increased amount of exhibiting opportunities
Inviting collectors to previews and receptions for artists who are not commercially represented
Publications
Solo shows
Subscription processes to track artists

Tables 3 and 4 include the different examples of what constituted talent development activity in documents produced by ACE and MCC. These tables were produced using direct quotes from ACE and MCC documents.<sup>11</sup> In addition to the information in Tables 3 and 4, documents produced by representatives of the policy paradigm included how skills and/or knowledge were offered through a combination of workshops, talks, residencies, research, conferences, and mentoring opportunities. Furthermore, ACE were aware that

<sup>11</sup> To produce this table, I coded and categorised all documents of ACE and MCC that are listed under primary sources in Chapter 9.

organisations used research and development as well as brokering “national and international connections” to “address the knowledge and skills gap of visual artists” (ACE, 2006, p. 33). Showcasing opportunities were delivered through exhibitions, “an artist skills’ directory (listing artists by skills)” (Annabel Jackson Associates Ltd, 2011, p. 30), an “online gallery showcase” (Annabel Jackson Associates Ltd, 2011, p. 30), festivals, art fairs, national and international networks, and, in general, widespread exposure to national and international markets. Who catered for the provision of resources were unclear. The impacts that different AD offerings had on artists’ practice, rather than structural factors such as greater access to markets, were not documented.

## **2.4 Artist development in Castlefield Gallery’s authored outputs**

The following section presents the data, organised according to the four categories of AD listed in the introduction and used in the analysis of ACE and MCC documents above: nurturing an environment; skills and/or knowledge; resources that feed a practical output; and showcasing opportunities. To produce Tables 5, 6, 7, 8, and 9, I used all CG’s authored documents listed in Chapter 9 as primary sources.

As was stated in section 2.1, representatives of the policy paradigm used the language of *talent development*, whereas in this thesis I opted to use AD to describe artist-focussed activity at CG. In 2011, when CG was unsuccessful in their application to become an NPO, they generated a strategic business plan with help from the consultants Fisher and Russell (CG, 2011g). Prior to this date, CG had described their artist-focussed activity, but had not given their brand of AD a coherent title. It 2011, CG first used the language of *talent*

*development*, signalling how they were strategically targeting ACE in the wake of their unsuccessful bid. During this time, many of the documents produced by CG were specifically aimed at demonstrating their value to ACE, and, therefore, I expected to see the impact of the normalisation of quantifiable metrics in their documents.

## Nurturing an environment for AD

**Table 5:** Nurturing an environment activity documented by CG

Nurturing an environment	
Centripetally	Centrifugally
A willingness to take considered risks	Actively taking part in a network of organisations with a similar ethos
Realising the potential financial constraints of being a practising artist, and acting in recognition of this	Active brokerage of artists
Tracking artists throughout their career	Developing “learning” relationships with organisations that exhibit best practice nationally
An ethos of open exchange with artists	Identifying what gaps/overlaps there are in professional development opportunities and striving to address them
Partaking in research	
Working collaboratively with artists	

This section details the categories and sub-categories associated with how CG created a context in which AD could flourish. As stated above, nurturing an environment was the main area of focus for ACE’s authored documents.

*Nurturing an environment* can be defined as: to encourage and/or develop a context in which AD can occur. CG listed several activities that indicated how they encouraged the conditions for AD to occur, but were not the direct implementation of AD offerings. These were broken down further into two sub-categories: activity that was conducted *centripetally*, within the staffing and throughout CG, and *centrifugally*, by engaging with external

organisations/individuals. However, in none of their documents did they detail how this activity impacted on or was experienced by artists.

### **Skills and/or knowledge**

Table 6 details the skills and knowledge initiatives offered by CG. Organised by the various contexts in which skills and knowledge initiatives are delivered. For most of the sub-categories of skills and/or knowledge, no qualitative evidence was offered to capture the effectiveness of the delivery of skills and knowledge. Artists' talks and panel discussions, arts industry engagement, scheduled one-to-one meetings, and practice-based learning were often accompanied by frequency counts, and arts industry engagement usually included participant figures. There was no information relating to artists' experiences of these. This complies with the normalisation of quantitative metrics focussed on the *outputs* of gallery activity.

The following mechanisms for delivery for skills and/or knowledge were outlined, but due to the lack of information could not be categorised. These were: talks for MA or BA students; post-graduate student discussion groups; and arts awards. Other than these titles, no other information was provided as to what skills and/or knowledge they offered.

**Table 6: Skills and/or knowledge documented by CG**

<b>Skills and/or knowledge</b>	
<b>Volunteer training</b>	
Volunteer training offered experientially learnt skills and/or knowledge in the following areas:	
Curation	Gallery administration and management
Event coordination	Marketing and social media
Exhibition installation and art handling	Project management of art projects
Front of house and visitor services	Technician skills
<b>Arts industry engagement</b>	
Provided in the contexts of symposiums, seminars, in conversation events, and workshops these sessions offered “how to” guides in the following areas of managing their practice:	
Copyright work	Market and self-promote
Blog	Obtain and complete public realm commissions
Create opportunities	Present yourself
Develop an organisation	Price work
Find venues	Publish
Fundraise	Run artist-led spaces
Have a web presence	Sell work
Manage insurance	Write a successful application
<b>Artists talks and panel discussions informed by the exhibition programme</b>	
Delivered through symposiums, seminars, in conversation events, and workshops offered artists the following:	
Exploring innovative practice and approaches	
Exploring new contexts for art	
Insights into an artist’s work	
Insights into the artists' references and context in art and society	
Insights into the evolving and interchanging the roles of artists and curators	
<b>Peer learning</b>	
No information was provided on the how peer-learning was delivered, however the following skills and/or knowledge developments were outlined:	
Group crits <sup>12</sup>	
Peer-to-peer critique	
Writing proposals	
<b>Learning about practice: “how to” sessions, directly related to practice</b>	
Disseminated through workshops, CGA Show and Tell sessions, and CGA residencies, CG documented how practice-based learning aimed to develop the following:	
Critique others' practice	Exercise peer-to-peer critique
Develop communication skills for the promotion of work	Improve interpretation
Develop new work	Make the most of an online presence

<sup>12</sup> A “crit” is when an artwork is critically evaluated by either a group or an individual.

## Resources

Resources provided the space, time, materials, and morale for artists to work directly on their practical output, and Table 7 represents all resource activity documented by CG. To generate Table 7, I considered what the resource was, how it was used by artists, whether there were any documented consequences, and if there were any attempts to capture its impact. I found no documentation for the impacts of resources offered by CG.

**Table 7:** Resources documented by CG

Resources	
<b>CG's ability to act as a professional and experienced <i>critical friend</i></b>	
The phrase "critical friend" was used in several of CG's documents. In general, it referred to the staff's ability to use their knowledge about the visual arts to advise artists on the direction of their work. The following activity was documented:	
Challenging artists	
Encouragement	
Channelling and directing artists' creative outputs	
<b>Managed and affordable studio spaces to create work in a project-based time-frame</b>	
By offering studios as part of NAS, CG claimed their activities allowed artists to engage in the following:	
Critique practice	Incubate practice
Develop new work	Progress a project
Improve interpretation	Showcase new art to local communities
<b>Un-categorised</b>	
The following was documented by CG as an offering made to artists, but no further information was provided:	
Invitations to artist previews	

## Showcasing opportunities

Showcasing opportunities were separated from resources because showcasing opportunities were something to achieve, whereas resources were something to be obtained. When generating Tables 8 details the impacts showcasing



opportunities had, and Table 9 lists the mechanisms for delivery of showcasing opportunities.

**Table 8:** The impacts of showcasing opportunities documented by CG

<b>The impacts of showcasing opportunities</b>
<b>Reaching audiences</b>
CG enables artists to reach new audiences by conducting the following:
Expanding points of entry for audiences
Giving artists the opportunity for their work to be seen by other artists, curators, students, arts professionals, city-centre residents, local communities, tourists to Manchester, the public, and web-based communities
Increasing the visibility of an artist's practice
Mixing locally based artists with those from elsewhere
Providing showcasing opportunities to artists whose work is not suited to the gallery space
Providing the prospect of international collaboration
Showcasing new art to local communities
<b>Practice-focussed</b>
CG enables artists to do the following:
Broaden the practice
Open a new dialogue around established practices and in the work
Push the boundaries of contemporary art practice
Show new and existing work
Take creative risks
<b>Career development</b>
CG's showcasing opportunities impacted artists by:
Maximising artists' progression potential (by developing their profile and career)
Raising artists' national reputation by mixing emerging artists with more established ones
Brokering opportunities (sales, exhibitions, residencies) by utilising a national network
<b>Emotional</b>
CG's showcasing opportunities had the following emotional impact on artists:
Inspiring the emerging generations of practitioners and audiences

**Table 9:** Showcasing opportunities documented by CG

<b>Showcasing opportunities</b>	
In their documentation, CG suggested showcasing opportunities were available through the following mechanisms of delivery:	
CGA event: Show and Tell	Joint marketing strategies
CGA event: crit groups	Launch Pad
CGA event: pre-organised and scheduled trips to other galleries in other cities	Maintaining a presence on web-based listings
CGA event: studio trips	Pairing artists sensitively to suggest a dialogue between different works and practices Participating at art fairs
CGA event: ways to meet companies who fund art	Placing together an emerging NW artist and a mid-career/established artist with national/international standing
Cultivation of collectors	Platforming experimental work with live audiences
Developing good public relations and contacts with the media including national press, TV and Radio, and specialist publications	Producing collections of prints
Developing integrated use of new technologies, for example websites and social media	Programmed exhibitions, intelligently curated
Developing more accessible printed publicity to increase and broaden audiences	Programming a thoroughly researched set of artists with a thematic link
Embedding audio and video podcasts on the web site	Programming regional, national, and/or international artists
Engaging critical audiences from a wide and diverse range of communities not, usually associated with the gallery's programme (including archivists, collectors, fashion, cultural theorists, and people with disabilities)	Publishing books and artworks
Exposure to non-art professionals/interdisciplinary professionals who are consulted where relevant	Showing mid-career or established artists making work that challenges traditional art practices
Growing the corporate events audience	

When producing these tables, I considered what the showcasing opportunity offered by CG was, the mechanisms by which CG delivered it, whether the consequences for AD were documented and, if so, what they were, and how it was captured through the use of data. In CG's documents, showcasing

opportunities were the only category accompanied with detailed information regarding the impact on artists. These impacts could be divided into four sub-categories: reaching audiences, practice-focussed, career development, and emotional. Using frequency counts, CG measured attendees at exhibitions, sales of artwork, and the amount of publications produced through CG's publishing house. These were all outcomes from showcasing opportunities.

### **Analysis**

CG's documents depicted an understanding of AD that was influenced by the normalisation of quantitative metrics in the neoliberal policy paradigm, but that drew on their experience of delivering it. Thus, there was a more extensive range of activity documented by CG than there was by ACE and MCC.

However, CG only *measured* and *evidenced* AD offerings that could be captured quantitatively. There was no attempt illustrate categories that could not be captured quantitatively in more depth. As a result, their documents suggested that their AD activity was embedded in their exhibition programme, with fewer resources offered to artists. It was this representation of their AD activity that CG presented in funding applications, and in its reporting to ACE and MCC.

Furthermore, in only applying measures to showcasing opportunities and most-extensively documenting what these opportunities were (compared to the other three categories of AD), CG adhered to the idea that exhibitions are the preferred mechanism through which to offer AD. In general, exhibitions provide galleries and artists with opportunities to sell artworks, attract audiences, and potentially increase ticket and café revenue. Each of these translate easily into the quantitative metrics that are encouraged and recognised within the

neoliberal policy paradigm. In 2012, King argued that stakeholders and funders were committed to the hope that “the opportunities to show work via exhibitions and the occasional residency will enable the artistic success story in this country to continue” (King, 2012, unpag.). However, for galleries who do not have a collection, such as CG, it is unlikely that exhibitions are going to be their only or main programmed activity (King, 2012). During a period focussed on re-obtaining ACE funding (between 2012 and 2015), CG adhered to the neoliberal normalisation of exhibitions as the dominant approach to providing AD, encouraged by the inherent quantifiability of the outcomes of an exhibition. In Chapter 4, I demonstrate how this misrepresents the amount of work undertaken by the staff at CG, and I offer a more nuanced depiction of AD at CG than was suggested in CG’s documentation. Here, I will present how AD was documented by researchers commissioned to interrogate the value and activities of the small-scale and contemporary visual arts sphere.

## **2.5 Review of the existing research**

In this section, I first document my review of the existing research. The review demonstrates how there was an expanded understanding of what AD involves in the literature compared to ACE’s, MCC’s, and CG’s, documentation of AD. Furthermore, I highlight how the literature presents a more developed discussion of the impact AD can have on creative practitioners. I also indicate how in the existing research the small-scale and artist-focussed contemporary visual arts sector was circulating their own discourses and narratives about their practices. Based on my prior knowledge of democratic theory, this suggested to me that the sector was generating its own identity as a *counterpublic*, distinct from the policy sphere.

Fraser's definition of a *subaltern counterpublic* is three-fold: 1) members must be subordinate to the dominant or hegemonic forces of the public sphere; 2) subaltern counterpublics invent and circulate counter discourses; 3) the formation of "oppositional interpretations of their identities" (1990, p. 67). In their facilitation of subaltern discourses, counterpublics can increase democratic participation and functionality. Rather than existing as bubbles of internalised angst, however, counterpublics act as "bases and training grounds for agitational activities directed towards wider publics" (1990, p. 68); they promote the diversification of perspectives towards the possibility of change, and the relationships between publics shift over time. I apply this to an analysis in the literature further in this section.

### **Defining artist development**

As stated in the introduction, Louise (2011) and Gordon-Nesbitt (2015) outlined three categories by which AD could be divided between. However, an analysis of CG's authored documents presented four sub-categories. A systematic analysis of the literature confirmed these four categories, and suggested that they could be broken down into (1) mechanisms for delivery, and (2) the impact on the artist. Impacts were either tangible outputs, such as the production of a catalogue, or the normalisation of certain behaviours deemed appropriate given where in the arts ecosystem an artist was targeting. In the latter, the developmental offering was one of mediation; the organisation taught the artist how to behave in a pre-defined context which had certain expectations, values, and norms. For example, appropriate behaviours for working with a specific community, or learning codes of professionalism. While sub-categories could be identified, no additional categories were added to the main three at this stage.

Tables 10, 11, 12, and 13 on pages 57, 58, and 59 present the different AD activities documented in the existing research.<sup>13</sup> In addition to the information conveyed in Tables 10, 11, 12, and 13, Louise's (2014) report *Associate programmes for artists* divided AD activity between what organisations aim to do, and the benefits they offer. Prior to Louise's report in 2014, organisational aims for offering AD had been mostly absent from the literature. Louise (2014) rendered some of these explicit, and listed the following aims of associate programmes:

- To act as a hub for emerging and established regional practitioners;
- To support practitioners at all career stages and encourage knowledge sharing;
- To enable regional practitioners to develop networks regionally and nationally;
- To develop critical dialogue around contemporary arts practice;
- To give members confidence and skills to develop their careers and practice;
- To retain graduates within a region;
- To attract practitioners to a region;
- To cultivate a professional visual art community in (a particular location) that engages with the gallery programme and might contribute to it;
- To support artists, writers and curators in finding and accessing opportunities for developing and presenting work;
- To further support artists in (location) to communicate regularly and work together more often;
- To raise the profile of visual arts in (location) nationally and internationally.

(Louise, 2014, unpag.)

In the article, Louise also documented 32 *benefits* of associates schemes, funded residencies, and business growth programmes. However, rather than indicating the impact of associate programmes on artists or how they had been received by artists currently in the programme, the *benefits* listed by Louise

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<sup>13</sup> The comprehensive list of sources is as follows: Thelwall, 2010; Louise, 2011; Thelwall, 2011; Louise, 2012; King, 2012; Hughes & CG, 2012; Gordon-Nesbitt, 2012; Slater et al., 2013; Cox, van der Maas, Rodenhurst, & Hallam, n.d.; Harper, 2014; Louise, 2014; Gordon-Nesbitt, 2015.

(2015) were what I have referred to throughout this thesis as mechanisms for delivery.

The report *Paying Artists Research, Phase 2 Findings* (Cox et al., n.d.) started to introduce how artists experienced AD offerings. As with Slater et al. (2013), this report used interviews and included the perspectives of artists talking about what they would like from an exhibition opportunity beyond payment, and how this related to their developmental needs. These included:

Profile raising – the artists benefit from the reputation boost of having their work shown in a significant venue, and from having their work reviewed in the regional, national and specialist art press.

Portfolio benefits – venues often pay for high quality photography of the artists' work for catalogue and/or marketing purposes, and provide images to the artist.

Catalogues – often a number of catalogues were provided to the artist from the initial print run, and this has both a direct monetary value and indirectly supports the artists to showcase their work to others.

Networking – some venues were leading or involved in regional artists' networks which provided artists with development opportunities, training and support.

Mentoring and critique – the extended relationship-building, which tends to happen between artists and curators prior to the decision to go ahead with an exhibition, offers opportunities for emerging artists to access constructive criticism and feedback, and career development advice.

(Cox et al., n.d., p. 27)

Through use of artists' input, Cox et al. (n.d.) incorporated how developmental opportunities might help an artist gain specific experiences and/or resources.

This can also be related to exhibiting. Cox et al. (n.d., pp. 4-5) also highlighted how it was an artist's choice as to whether they exhibit. If artists do exhibit, they can:

[...] gain exposure for their work; gain feedback from a range of places; engage with the public; connect to the wider artworld, including curators and other artists; and [...] have the opportunity and impetus to create work which they would not otherwise create.

(Cox et al., n.d., pp. 4-5)

This quote suggests that the impacts of AD offerings are best understood when the narratives of artists were included. Similarly, although it was not clear how Louise (2014) gathered information, her use of quotations suggested that interviews were included in her methods.

The inclusion of qualitative data that considered the experiences of those involved seemed to be key to the amount of information she could access, regarding what AD opportunities were on offer to artists. Non-governmental reports tended to use a range of different approaches to uncover AD data. While some used quantitative approaches, most selected qualitative methods that produced data that did not focus on whether creative practices had intrinsic or extrinsic benefits.<sup>14</sup> In these reports, it was clear that the inclusion of qualitative data uncovered a wider range of AD offerings compared to the quantitative data sources used to inform documents produced within the policy sphere. This strongly suggested that qualitative approaches were better suited to the phenomenon of AD.

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<sup>14</sup> Of the 12 reports reviewed in this section, one used quantitative methods (Hughes & CG, 2012), six were qualitative (Louise, 2012; King, 2012; Gordon-Nesbitt, 2012; Cox et al., n.d.; Harper, 2014; Gordon-Nesbitt, 2015), three were mixed (Louise, 2011; Thelwall, 2011; Slater et al. 2013), and the methods used by two were unclear (Thelwall, 2010; Louise, 2014).



**Table 10:** Nurturing an environment activity documented in existing research

<b>Nurturing an environment</b>
To nurture an environment for AD, organisations can:
Act as a strong mediating gallery with a sensitive understanding of their relationship to their site and their communities
Act as social brokers of friendships
Broker and manage disused spaces used by multiple artists to provide affordable studio spaces to create work in a project-based time-frame
Build capacity for and giving access to more physical and human resources
Build mutually-supportive informal relationships between organisations and local or regional artists over a sustained period
Collaborate between artists and galleries
Commission work
Develop frameworks and an evidence-base about the nature of continuing artform practice, and how this enables and sustains emerging and mid-career artists
Embrace risk and attempt to do more than the market can do
Enable unique opportunities for members with the local visual art institution
Encourage staff involvement in key discussions
Ensure that collaborations with artists result in dialogue and exchange between artists, their practices, and the organisation
Form an extended community which can offer practical expertise about organisational changes such as relocation
Form an extended community which can offer visible support for artist-led groups
Foster professional standards and expectations amongst artists
Have an awareness of the financial situation of artists
Help generate pioneering forms of practice
Host artists in a tailored programme that allows for a deeper engagement with the host organisation
Maintain a belief in an artist's practice
Maintain up-to-date databases of relevant postal and email contacts to effectively distribute information about the gallery's activity and programme
Make sure there is a minimum amount of funding so that artists can live and work
Offer accessible advice, signposting and a "way in" for early career and mid-career artists on an open access and/or merit basis
Offer reassurance
Offer artist talks which give an insight into the artist's work, their references, and their context in society
Produce and take part in research in the organisation's field
Promote artist-led activity
Providing a range of responsive information distribution methods for new and existing audiences
Provide a sense of reciprocity in working relationships
Provide a welcoming space for informal networking, dialogue and advice for artists at all stages of career
Respond to artist need, on a collective and individual basis
Retain and document good practice
Share knowledge
Strategically render practice visible
Uphold an ethos of openness

**Table 11:** Skills and/or knowledge documented in existing research

<b>Skills and/or knowledge</b>
The following areas of skills and/or knowledge were offered:
Business advice
Business development package
Financial advice
Future planning
Intellectual property rights advice
Making applications
Pension advice
Personalised development planning
Portfolio advice
Post-graduation support
Website building

**Table 12:** Resources documented in the existing research

<b>Resources</b>	
Contemporary art organisations can offer artists the following resources:	
Access to facilities	Negotiating contracts
Advocacy	Networking to develop ideas with other arts professionals, organisations, galleries, etc.
Artist exchanges	Pastoral care
Artist residencies	Physical space
Business support	Portfolio reviews
Critiques (peer and group and one-to-one; and peer and group with a specialist present)	Reducing isolation through developing a sense of group identity
Field trips to high-profile exhibitions and to meet other artists' groups and curators	Regular contact
Financial support (funding, commissions, and bursaries)	Seminars
Formal internships	Someone to talk to about their work
Gallery visits	Spaces for show and tell where members talk about their work to their peers
Having practices <i>branded</i> through organisational affiliation	Studio visits (ideas networking)
Intellectual engagement from the gallery director or curator	Talks/lectures
Library resources such as information sheets, arts magazines, etc.	Workshops
The management of critical responses from journals and magazines	Workspaces (studio: shared or individual, subsidised or affordable)
Mentoring (formal and informal; peer; given to artists with less experience and/or received from artists with more experience)	Workspace (with office resources: used as meeting space with peers and other professionals, Wi-Fi, possibly IT support, and library resources)

**Table 13:** Showcasing opportunities documented in the existing research

<b>Showcasing opportunities</b>
The following could be opportunities for artists to showcase their practice:
Artist residencies
Advocacy
Artist exchanges
Brokerage
Exhibition, screening and public realm opportunities
Field trips to high-profile exhibitions and to meet other artists' groups and curators
Encouragement of critical responses from journals and magazines
Mentoring (formal and informal; peer; given to artists with less experience and/or received from artists with more experience)
Networking to showcase work with other arts professionals/organisations/galleries, etc.
Platforming
Portfolio reviews
Profile for artists on the organisation's website and link to artists' own websites
Publicity platforms
Solo shows
Spaces for show and tell where members talk about their work to their peers
Specific organised opportunities not available elsewhere, for example Launch Pad at Castlefield Gallery
Studio visits (showcasing work)

Existing research also presented the small-scale and contemporary visual arts sphere as distinct and subaltern to the policy sphere. Recent publications have noted how the small-scale and artist-focussed contemporary visual arts sphere is in a subordinate position compared to the dominant sphere. The 2011 publications by Louise and Thelwall were written in the immediate aftermath of the 2011 29.6% reduction in government funding for ACE, and the shift from funding RFOs to NPOs. The three articles produced by these authors focussed on the seemingly disproportionate impact this had on small-scale and artist-focussed contemporary visual arts organisations. Specific terms placed this sphere in a *subaltern* role, such as: "it is no exaggeration to describe the last six months as something of a long dark night of the soul for the Ladders organisations" (Louise, 2012); and "the inherent disadvantage faced by the small-scale sector" (Gordon-Nesbitt, 2012).

In this vein, all authors used to generate Tables 10, 11, 12, and 13 (see footnote 14 on page 56) have explored activities that distinguish the small-scale contemporary visual arts sphere from the more dominant, policy-led one. Louise (2011; 2012), Thelwall (2011) and Gordon-Nesbitt (2012) all allude to a systematic “struggle” experienced by small-scale and artist-focussed contemporary visual arts organisations which could, largely, be attributed to the normalisation of output-focussed metrics of which are reinforced by certain terminologies (Gordon-Nesbitt, 2012). The three main points of disjuncture were: metrics, use of the term *arts ecology*, and linear career paths. I will now discuss how these points of disjuncture can be conceptually linked with Fraser’s (1990) notion of the counterpublic.

### **The small-scale contemporary visual arts sphere as a counterpublic**

In the 1980s, ACE were in a situation that necessitated making an *economic* case for the arts. Margaret Thatcher’s approach to public management created an era defined by *efficiency, effectiveness, and economy* (O’Brien, 2014, p. 46). Because of this, “the arts sector decided to emphasize the economic aspects of its activities and their alleged contribution to the wealth of the nation” (Belfiore, 2002, p. 95). The need for the cultural sector to justify their expenditure in these terms saw ACE frame audiences as “consumers” and public subsidy as “investment” (Belfiore, 2002; O’Brien, 2014; Newsinger & Green, 2015). ACE’s attentiveness to output and audiences has had a widespread and negative impact on the arts in the UK, including government-led requests for quantitative approaches to evaluation (Selwood, 2002; Caust, 2003), and the wider trend of using econometrics to inform strategic planning within arts organisations.

Using Thelwall's (2011) paper *Size Matters* as a starting point, Gordon-Nesbitt (2012) includes a written account of a Common Practice working symposium that aimed to address the points raised. In this, Gordon-Nesbitt documented how organisations from within the sector desired a move away from these kinds of measurement. One of the topics that surfaced from the discussions posited

[...] how organisations might attract and develop funding from private sources and how we might define "artistic value" without resorting to econometric indices.

(Gordon-Nesbitt, 2012, p. 4)

There was, therefore, a desire for small-scale and artist-focussed contemporary visual arts organisations to move away from the use of econometrics to evaluate and interpret their past and future actions.

Econometrics is defined by Damondar N. Gujarati and Dawn C. Porter as twofold:

**Econometrics** may be defined as the social science in which the tools of economic theory, mathematics, and statistical inference are applied to the analysis of economic phenomena.

**Econometrics**, the result of a certain outlook on the role of economics, consists of the application of mathematical statistics to economic data to lend empirical support to the models constructed by mathematical economics and to obtain numerical results.

(Gujarati & Porter, 2010, p. 1)

Firstly, therefore, econometrics is a way of measuring economic phenomena, and so assuming the phenomena is linked economics in some way, Secondly, econometrics are ways of gathering data to support specific strategic actions based on the given economic indicators. To quantify something does not necessarily lead to actions based on that quantification, but to use econometrics

is to use indicators to inform future strategies. This, therefore, also involves a level of interpretation, in the sense that certain indicators are deemed valuable in informing future approaches. In the case of AD, the most widely used indicators were audience figures, ticket sales, café revenue, and sales of artworks (Thelwall, 2011; Gordon-Nesbitt, 2012). What Thelwall (2011) and Gordon-Nesbitt (2012) suggest is that use of these indicators gives a reduced impression of the contribution that small-scale and artist-focussed contemporary visual arts organisations make to the contemporary arts milieu. Furthermore, the assumption that these are the primary indicators by which to assess *values* leads to organisations taking responsive strategic action based on these indicators, and so focussing more time and energy on, for example, how to generate bigger audiences rather than focussing on the needs of artists. This encourages an assumed role for practitioners as well as the practice, a role that is based on a practitioner's ability to translate their work into the aforementioned indices, and the work's capacity to achieve this. In terms of organisations, use of econometrics is more likely to inform a strategic approach focussed on commissioning, showing, and supporting artists whose practice is measurable using the audience figures, and overall sales numbers and using exhibitions as the mechanism for delivery. Yet, as the title to King's article suggests: exhibitions are not always enough. And as Chapters 4 and 5 will illustrate, AD consists of myriad activities that are both not captured through the use of econometrics, nor strategically planned for if econometrics determine the value indicators for small-scale and artist-focussed contemporary visual arts organisations.

Whilst funding decisions are made based on a variety of factors and stated goals, the wider trend of econometrics used across the UK government has arguably influenced the funding decisions of representatives of the policy paradigm, such as ACE and MCC (Thelwall, 2011; Gordon-Nesbitt, 2012). Thelwall (2011, p. 6) argued that such an approach overlooks the “intangible assets” of small-scale organisations, including “individual and organisational expertise and experience, intellectual property, research skills, professional methods and processes”. According to Thelwall, the “certain outlook on the role of economics” recognised by ACE and the UK government prioritises audience footfall and generated financial income, and sits “at odds” with artistic practices (Thelwall, 2011, p. 6). Thus, to use econometrics is to assume an economic and calculable role for the arts through the quantification of value-indicators such as audience footfall, ticket sales, sales of artwork, and café revenue. For small-scale and artist-focussed contemporary visual arts organisations, these indicators simply do not fit with their organisational outputs nor their strategic planning, both of which tend to be more qualitatively-informed.

Certain terminologies used by the policy sphere were also critiqued in reports. While in *Size Matters* Thelwall (2011) opted to use the term *arts ecology*, its use in the policy setting was critiqued in the work of King (2012) and Gordon-Nesbitt (2012). King (2012) considered “ecosystem” as a viable alternative to describe how the network of visual arts practitioners, professionals, and organisations interact. Instead, Gordon-Nesbitt (2012) openly critiques all ecological-based terminology. Recording a symposium held between Common Practice organisations, Gordon-Nesbitt (2012) relayed the members’ problematisation of *arts ecology* as a term to describe the structures and individuals which

constitute their sphere. Ecology, according to Gordon-Nesbitt's relaying of the discussion, was perceived to naturalise "the existing order [...] suggest[ing] that only organisations able to adapt [...] will survive the austerity measures" (2012, p. 5). Assuming survival of the fittest rather than questioning the underlying structures of inequality, the term *ecology* "implies a linear progression" which connotes a hierarchy. On this basis, Gordon-Nesbitt proposed a new discourse by which to refer to the constituting individuals and structures: "operational milieu" – "a flexible structure replete with opportunities" (2012, p. 5).

Reports in the field of AD have also criticised the assumed linearity that permeates dominant language used to describe artists' careers. In *Analysing Artists* (2013), Slater et al. recognised the "contentious" nature of linear career terminology associated with the small-scale and artist-focussed contemporary visual arts. Gordon-Nesbitt (2015) problematised these terms and, as an alternative, she suggested that artists' careers could instead be defined by "formative moments". This was also reflected in the way that Louise (2014) attempted to outline what types of AD models and activities artists might require at different levels of experience. Rather than using early/emerging, mid-career, or established alone, Louise (2014, p. 9) instead preferred to bracket practitioners according to experience with the terms: recent graduate, 2-5 years' experience, 5-10 years' experience, and 10+ years' experience.

To understand how the reports challenged metrics and certain terminologies, I applied theories from democratic theory that considered the possibility of tensions between different and multiple public spheres. Habermas's (1989) conceptualisation of the public sphere was one of the most influential, and Fraser's adaptation of it is relevant to how the literature presented the small-



scale and artist-focussed contemporary visual art sphere. Habermas theorised a third major component in the governing forces of people's lives (Fraser, 1990). Previously, the state and the official-economy of paid employment had dominated theoretical discussions. To these, Habermas added "arenas of public discourse" (Fraser, 1990, p. 57). It was in this shift that more nuanced conceptualisation of the public sphere found manoeuvrability, theoretically and politically.

In *Rethinking the Public Sphere*, Fraser argues that Habermas "idealizes the liberal public sphere", and that in assuming equality of opportunity within the structural reimits of liberal democracy he "fails to examine other, nonliberal, non-bourgeois, competing publics" (1990, pp. 60-61). Her main critiques assert that Habermas assumes: (1) equal access into rational deliberations; (2) the negative impact of multiple publics; (3) an undesirability of "private interests" and "private issues" usurped by the common good; and (4) "that a functioning democratic public sphere requires a sharp separation between civil society and the state". As such, Fraser proposes subaltern counterpublics as a phrase to discuss alternative publics that coexist with the dominant public, but that "emerge in response to exclusions within dominant publics", and "they help expand discursive space" (1990, p. 67). Using historical arguments, Fraser (1990) formulated her theory of subaltern counterpublics on epistemological grounds.

Fraser (1990) argued that to be subaltern is to be subordinate, and to be at odds with hegemonic powers. Hegemonic power and the "official" public sphere are deeply interwoven – if not one and the same – and it is "the prime institutional site for the construction of the consent that defines the new,

hegemonic mode of domination” (1990, p. 62). Subordinate, then, means to be treated as less important – to have your preferences discredited or unheard – in the mainstream public sphere which operates as a hegemony.

Hegemonic consent is when the dominant sphere complicates cultural representation to such a degree that individuals who are disadvantaged by the subordinating structures are still able to recognise themselves in “representations, identities, and feelings” (Fraser, 1990, p. 78). The way in which the “discourses of the public sphere representations of their interests, aspirations, life-problems, and anxieties” resonate with their own understanding and perceptions of themselves leads them to believe they are represented in a sphere that relies on a suppression of their conduct. Ultimately, the “hegemonic socio-political project” is able to secure a hierarchy when the “culturally constructed perspectives” of those individuals who are subaltern within the dominant structure “are taken up and articulated with other culturally constructed perspectives” (Fraser, 1990, p. 78). This process of assimilation cements a social order replete with inequality. To address this, Fraser advocates for the simultaneous existence of multiple publics which counter the dominant public sphere. She terms these *subaltern counterpublics*.

In their critiques of and suggestions for alternatives to quantitative metrics, ecological terminologies to describe the contemporary arts milieu, and allusions to linear artist careers through discourse, the reports strongly indicated that the small-scale and artist-focussed contemporary visual arts were functioning as a subaltern counterpublic. By adopting qualitative metrics, and resisting the bounds of ecological and progressive terms, the reports expanded the documented understanding of AD. This suggested that my methodology should

also be qualitative, and use what I learnt from the way that Louise (2014) and Cox et al. (n.d.) included the experiences of artists and organisations to start to unpick the impact of AD.

## 2.6 Chapter summary

This chapter opened by discussing how theories of cultural policy and constructivist institutionalism helped determine the data sources I used. In particular, I looked at the work of Agnew (2013) and Barnett (1999). Both authors addressed the importance of incorporating individual perspectives to understand the field of cultural policy. On this basis, I applied the theories of constructivist institutionalism to explain *how* individuals were involved in the production of cultural policy. Through (re)contextualisation via the institutional nexus, individuals are empowered to influence the policy agenda, but are also, themselves, contextualised by structural factors. In this chapter, I aimed to identify how AD was predefined within those structural factors. To do so, I reviewed documents produced by ACE, MCC, and CG. In addition, in order to understand how AD had been discussed in the sector, I conducted a review of the existing research in the area of AD, often produced by researchers recruited by the sector to interrogate: how the policy paradigm had impacted the small-scale and contemporary visual arts sphere (Louise, 2011; Thelwall, 2010); what the use of qualitative methods can contribute to an understanding of small-scale contemporary visual art organisations' *values* in the contemporary arts milieu (Slater et al., 2013; Cox et al., n.d.); a critical engagement with concepts, such as "deferred value" (Thelwall, 2011), or terminologies, such as "continual professional development" (Hughes & CG, 2012; Slater et al., 2013) or

“ecology” (Gordon-Nesbitt, 2012); and guidance for practitioners seeking AD activity (Louise, 2014; Gordon-Nesbitt, 2015).

The data from ACE and MCC documents, produced less data on AD compared to than subsequent analyses of CG’s documents and existing research, and tended to be focussed on nurturing an environment and showcasing opportunities, framed by access to markets and exhibiting opportunities.

Analyses of the documents authored by CG staff suggested AD activity could be divided between four main categories: nurturing an environment, skills and/or knowledge, resources, and showcasing opportunities. However, CG’s documents rarely included data collected from artists, nor did they include any behavioural impacts of AD offerings, such as instructing artists on how they can act professionally, or codes of conduct when working with communities. In CG’s documents, 85 different AD offerings were identified. Conducting the same exercise with the existing research, presented in Tables 10, 11, 12, and 13, 91 AD offerings were documented alongside a deeper interrogation of the impacts of AD on artists. Combined with the arguments against quantitative metrics made by researchers interrogating AD (Louise, 2011; Thelwall, 2011; Gordon-Nesbitt, 2012; Slater et al., 2013; Cox et al., n.d.), the higher amount of AD offerings that were revealed through CG’s experience of offering AD qualitative approaches demonstrated the need for similar approaches in my research. In the relevant literature, the impacts of AD offerings could be divided between tangible outputs, such as an artist’s catalogue, or learnt behaviours, such as professionalism or how to conduct oneself within a community. These *behavioural* outputs were identified through the inclusion of artists in the research process (Cox et al., n.d.).

The review of existing research also indicated that the small-scale and artist-focussed contemporary visual arts sphere was functioning as a subaltern counterpublic (Fraser, 1990), alongside the dominant and neoliberal sphere.

The small-scale and contemporary visual arts sector was framed as subaltern to organisations working in the dominant sphere, notably using the 2011 ACE funding cuts that disproportionately impacted smaller organisations.

Furthermore, there was strong evidence to suggest the small-scale and contemporary visual arts sphere was articulating and circulating alternative discourses. Gordon-Nesbitt's (2012) suggestion to replace arts *ecology* with "operational milieu" is an example of how the sector was challenging the discourse of the dominant sphere, and questioning whether language was being used to further obfuscate the practices of small-scale organisations. This related to Fraser's (1990) understanding of how *hegemonic consent* uses representations of subaltern groups in the dominant sphere to maintain a hierarchy, but also how this can be challenged through an active *subaltern counterpublic*. The following chapter outlines my methodology, research design, and approach to data analysis, and pinpoints where my analysis of documents presented in this chapter influenced the approach I took.

### **3 Methodology, research design, approach to data analysis, and dissemination of results**

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#### **3.1 Introduction**

In this chapter, I will outline my methodology, research design, data collection methods and sampling, and approach to data analysis. I used ethnography to inform my methodology and data collection techniques, and grounded theory was used when considering my research design and methods. The following chapter details precisely how and when I used the different approaches, but also the points where they complemented one another and so blended together to guide my approach. In section 3.6 I will also outline how the research was disseminated via a published report at an industry-event at CG. Finally, I link the methodology to aspects of democratic theory, and outline precisely how ethnography and grounded theory connect with the concept of *the public sphere* and the idea of communicative democracy and performative change.

#### **3.2 Ethnography**

In section 2.2 I theoretically accounted for the need to include artists, CG, and representatives of the policy paradigm as research participants. This was supported by the most comprehensive insights into AD activity being produced through approaches that included the qualitative experiences of artists and organisations (Cox et al, n.d.; Louise, 2014). Constructivist institutionalism suggests that any socio-political phenomena is context-specific, forged by those (re)interpreting it, and so can only be understood by interrogating the in-situ *experiences* of the different actors involved. As such, ethnography was selected as the best approach to examine AD. The specific features of ethnography I adopted are outlined in the subsequent paragraphs.

I used three main authors to inform the approach to ethnography I took: Mark P. Whittaker (1996), John D. Brewer (2000), and Clifford Geertz (1973).

Whittaker's discussions on *representation* within ethnography helped me to understand my role in the field, and the nature of the written outcomes I produced. Mike Crang and Ian Cook (2007) argue that the written outcomes of ethnography risk *representing* a homogenised culture through "an apparently detached researcher". Instead, Whittaker (1996) asserts that *representation* is "necessary as a part of ethnographic investigation" (Whittaker, 1996, p. 9). Not something to be avoided, *representation* is rather an "invitation" from the researcher to the reader (Whittaker, 1996, p. 9). For researchers to communicate their findings, they must create a codified representation of what it is they have gleaned from the field. Thus, representation is unavoidable if research is to be communicated beyond the researcher themselves. Rather than framing the written outcomes of ethnography as an attempt to capture and convey a culture, Whittaker (1996, p. 8) suggests that they are viewed as a form of "publically displayed learning".

In understanding the field notes and thesis in this way, I approached the practices at CG as knowledge to be *acquired*, not presupposed. This links to the grounded theory aspect of the research (discussed further in section 3.5). In *Constructing Grounded Theory*, Kathy Charmaz (2014, p. 11) states that "as we learn how our research participants make sense of their experiences, we begin to make analytic sense of their meanings and actions". Thus, the researcher's learnt analyses are key. Rather than attempting to generalise or homogenise the *culture* of small-scale contemporary visual arts organisations, the written account of this ethnographic study is presented as my learnt experiences in the

form of a thesis. Any communication of the research was conducted in the hope that it could and would promote a “lucid interchange through investigative representations” (Whitaker, 1996, pp. 8-9). In other words, I hoped that myself, individuals, and organisations who could relate to the content would continue the process of learning through critical engagements with the data, post-data collection.

I also referenced the work of Brewer (2000, p. 51) who discusses how ethnography can be attentive to “‘generative structures’ through close examination of human agency”. Termed *critical realism*, this approach to ethnography understands practice-like power relations between actors and the contexts in which they exist. Not to be confused with what is generally termed “critical ethnography” (Rossman & Rallis, 2003, p. 96), critical realist ethnography recognises that “while the enablements and constraints imposed by structures influence individual actions, those in turn either maintain or transform social structures” (Porter & Ryan, 2003, p. 413). Reflecting on counterpublics and constructivist institutionalism, this style of research is necessary when seeking to understand how actors relate to one another in (re)forming the context in which they all practice, and how AD is situated within this scenario.

Brewer outlines how critical realist ethnography necessitates a reflexive researcher, and highlights a strong link between critical realist ethnography and Giddens’s theory of structuration (Brewer, 2000, pp. 50-51). Understood as the interplay between structure and agency, and the way “agency reproduces (and occasionally transforms) the structure in which it occurs within” (Brewer, 2000,



p. 50), there are strong ties between critical realism and authors from constructivism in political analysis who have developed Giddens's theory (Hay, 2002). This specifically connects to the theoretical discussion I have in Chapter 6.

Crang and Cook also critique how ethnography is influenced by the researchers own prior knowledge and presence (Crang & Cook, 2007, pp. 7-8). When considering my role and influence in the research process, I found Olesen's (2007) work on *reflexivity* to be informative. *Reflexivity* is a built-in part of ethnography. As argued by Olesen (2007), whilst it may never be a perfect process, *reflexivity* is something to consistently "strive" for (Olesen, 2007, pp. 424-425). While it is a highly-contested term (Mruck & Mey, 2007), to me reflexivity meant a self-imposed interrogation of how "prior knowledge and tacit knowledge" influenced my approach to the field, and whether this lead to me mis-representing the scenario and individuals I was observing (Cutcliffe, 2000). There were several stages where I checked, reflected upon, and critiqued my observations, something only possible with the open-acknowledgment that I was undeniably producing work that was highly subjective.

Ian Dey (1999) and Cathy Urquhart's (2013) focus on the importance of the researcher having an "open mind" (Dey, 2007) when engaging in research also helped me to refine my approach to the field. "We should not confuse an open mind with an empty head", states Dey (2007, p. 176). Keeping an "open mind"

[...] is not to avoid preconceptions, but to ensure that they are well-grounded in arguments and evidence, and always subject to further investigation, revision, and refutation.

(Dey, 2007, p. 176)

An “open mind” is a process of continually assessing the relevancy of that prior knowledge, and to develop or discredit it where necessary as informed by a critical engagement in the field. For me, this helped me to understand how my prior knowledge could come to bear on the phenomenon of AD.

Clifford Geertz’s (1973) described account of ethnography as “thick description” helped guide my approach to data collection. Brewer outlines how critical realist ethnography involves a reflexive researcher who is aware of “‘generative structures’ through close examination of human agency” (Brewer, 2000, p. 51). Geertz’s term “thick description” (Geertz: 2000; 1973) helped to establish how such a “close examination” could take place. While Geertz’s style of execution has been described as “a literary style of ethnography” (Neyland, 2008, p. 17), Geertz’s conceptualisation of “thick description” encourages researchers to “dig-deep” into the nuances their subject matter may present. Ethnography, in this sense, is a process of “explication”; unfolding the many layers and many different forms those layers appear in. The connotations of “thick description” allowed me to consider the need to uncover multiple sources of data in the one setting, which complemented the adoption of a critical realist understanding of ethnography described as “an attempt to explain the relationships of social structure and social action” (Brewer, 2000, p. 50). Having chosen to use an ethnographic methodology, I then needed to produce a research design to ensure I got the most out of my time in the field.

### **3.3 Research design**

Research designs are prepared ahead of collecting data and are intended to ensure that time is spent productively. Urquhart (2013) advises that “one good

idea for a grounded theory study is to allow for more than one phase of data collection” (Urquhart, 2013, p. 8). While Urquhart (2013) is writing from a grounded theory perspective, the advice above was applied to the ethnographic methodology used for this research. The advice from Urquhart is representative of themes running throughout directional texts on qualitative inquiry, and in texts aimed at the budding researcher it is not uncommon for authors to recommend the idea of a *feedback loop* in the research design (for example: Bryman, 2012). A *feedback loop* is incorporated into the data collection so that early phases of data can be used to inform the direction of strategies used later in the process. In the case of my research, breaking from the field to analyse and revisit the data included adequate time for reflection and produced an approach that could unfold in the following phases:

1. The scoping phase (March 2014 to June 2014)
2. The passive observation and familiarisation phase (June 2014 to September 2014)
3. The active phase (September 2014 to June 2015)
4. The saturation phase (June 2015 to September 2014)

Within these phases, I utilised what Danial Neyland (2008) termed “familiarity” and “strangeness”. *Familiarity* is a reciprocal process between researcher and participants, and I found it was linked to the concept of *trust*. The relationship between the researcher and their participants, and the trust that develops, is of the utmost importance when negotiating access throughout. Access, in the context of this research, was understood in line with Martyn Hammersley and Paul Atkinson who state that it is “not simply a matter of physical presence or absence” (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007, p. 43). “Negotiation” is key, and within this several authors relate participant trust and confidence to the researcher’s ability to “build trust” and gain “rapport” (O’reilly, 2009). Karen

O'Reilly (2009) comments that one strategy to help facilitate a “mutually trusting” relationship is to “gradually enter the field, increasing amounts of time there, progressively becoming more active and overt” (O'reilly, 2009, pp. 175-176). O'reilly (2009) suggests that mutual trust between a researcher and participants increases over time. Through use of a phased approach that gradually introduced my presence as a researcher at the gallery, I found this to be true. However, this familiarity can be detrimental to research, and so Neyland (2008) also suggests that the researcher use a phased approach to encourage “strangeness”. Neyland (2008) argues that time spent in organisational settings can lead to a steady increase in familiarity, and potentially researcher complacency (Neyland, 2008, pp. 100-101). To ensure that the researcher does not take anything “for granted”, Neyland suggests that “taking time out of the field may help to make things appear strange once again” (Neyland, 2008, p. 101).

While “familiarity” can lead to complacency, it can also be deployed strategically. By revisiting prior field notes, the researcher can build “typologies” to structure and understand “future observational material”. The phases I designed into the research offered intermittent periods of data analysis which guided subsequent data collection methods. The punctuated and phased research design was beneficial to the data collection, but it was also a time-consuming approach. This was one of several reasons why a single case study approach became ideal; in limiting the amount of cases, I could fully utilise the punctuated design outlined above.

### **3.3.1 Use of a single case study**

Robert K. Yin (2009, p. 9) argues that research questions focussing on the “how” and “why” of a subject are ideally suited to a case study approach. As the research was considering “how” CG practiced AD, a case study design presented itself. Yin (2009) outlines case study design as something that “investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth within its real-life context” (Yin, 2009, p. 18). Its “unique strength”, according to Yin (2009, p. 11), “is its ability to deal with a full variety of evidence – documents, artefacts, interviews, and observations”. Yin’s understanding of case studies as an effective approach for researching contemporary questions of “how” and “why” complemented the less understood and intangible aspects of AD and “deferred value” (Thelwall, 2011).

Christine Benedichte Meyer (2001) argues that a multiple-case design is preferable as it allows for greater generalisability, and that single cases are more exposed to “observer bias” than multiple ones. As a solution, Meyer (2001) argues that by adopting multiple cases and focussing on triangulation, the bias of the observer is limited and generalisability inferred due to the applicability of the analysis to more than one case. However, a better understanding of AD was required to create an overlap rigorous enough for comparability, and one that went deeper than merely highlighting difference. Furthermore, it was likely that access would have been uneven across different sites.

The collaborative foundations of the research between CG and Manchester Metropolitan University allowed for a greater possibility of access at CG than

any other site. If multiple sites had been adopted, access would have been unevenly distributed and hindered comparability. Heavily reliant on “access” to the field, “gatekeepers” are also often cited as a potential barrier to be addressed (Neyland, 2008, pp. 14-15), and were considered throughout the course of research, especially when discussing the amount of cases to use. While access may have been negotiable at varying sites, this would have taken time and have prevented the deeper interrogation of terminology that prevailed in the resultant study.

Rather than risking shallow data that was isolated to its various contexts, this research instead adopted Urquhart’s (2013) suggestion that much can be learnt from a single case, irrespective of Meyer’s (2001) concerns about how the data can be later applied. With the availability of access at CG and the problematic nature of using multiple cases, it was clear a single case offered the “in depth” inquiry this research – and particularly these concepts – required for new knowledge around them to contribute to a more widespread conversation. No claims about generalisation were made beyond the case studied, however it was hoped that other organisations would be able to use the research and consider their own practices in light of it.

### **3.4 Data collection methods and sampling**

This section is organised according to the data collection method used. It details the methods used for which groups and the sampling strategies adopted throughout. The aim and objectives of the research aspired to uncover the multiple voices present within the conversation around practising AD; locating the connects and dis-connects between differing narratives. As such, it was

essential for the research to gather data from and use different forms of communication. To do so, I required knowledge of the different groups I was going to learn from. Because the research was fluid and adaptable, the research methods were many. Several of the data collection methods spanned across different key groups and were replicated for different scenarios. Sampling strategies were selected in an iterative fashion as the research continued to unfold. Janice M. Morse (2007, p. 235) defines four types of sampling, three of which were used in this research: convenience, purposeful, and theoretical. In addition, snowball sampling and simple random sampling were also used. The key groups that I targeted, methods, and sampling strategies used for each are detailed in Table 14 below.

### **3.4.1 Key groupings**

**Table 14:** Key groupings of research participants, sampling strategies, and data collection methods

[TABLE OMMITTED FOR THE PURPOSES OF THIS DOCUMENT]

The research identified several key groupings of AD practitioners who were involved in the process of shaping AD in the context of CG, and applied different sampling and data collection methods to these groupings. Sections 3.41 to 3.45 below detail the different data collections I used. Within these sections, I also define the different sampling strategies.

### **3.4.2 Participant observation**

I began by using participant observation with the gallery staff. Initially CG was the main site for observations, and staff members often determined my access to observations. As such, when they worked at additional sites, so did I. Access to data in the all phases of participant observation was reliant on the trust and confidence I had negotiated with the members of staff at CG.

Russell (2005, p. 197) talks about the impact of the researcher's "autobiography". I found it interesting to watch my background in bar work and catering impact my actions in the field. As stated by Schwartzman (1993, p. 52), "the various roles that researchers assume in settings will partly determine how well they are able to carry out" their research. Rather than a "management consultant" (Schwartzman, 1993, p. 52), "culture broker" (Schwartzman, 1993, p. 52), or "cultural worker" (Price, 2016), I felt my role was always first and foremost a researcher. However, the gallery setting is not one I am familiar with, and so by taking on additional roles helped me to feel more comfortable. The roles I adopted included washing up, helping on the bar at gallery openings, and even running to the shops to purchase extra beers for a preview (and so resulting in my absence from the field temporarily to gain better access long-



term). By fulfilling these roles, I felt more able to be friendly and confident in my approach.

My *autobiography*, in this sense, impacted the roles I adopted throughout my time in the field. As stated by O'Reilly (2009, p. 175), it is "crucial" that relationships are "mutually trusting". I believe my adoption of these roles aided reciprocal exercises between myself and the staff in confidence and rapport building. Meanwhile, those I was observing were given the opportunity to meet *me* quicker. Their introduction to my character early on was key. Ethically, it allowed them to gauge what they were happy to disclose in my presence whilst feeling that they knew me as an observer. It also helped me to present myself as someone willing to help whilst fulfilling a role. The earlier I could enable this, the better.

Several different methods of sampling were used to decide where participant observation was applied. Gallery staff were sampled using convenience sampling only (Morse, 2007; Weiss, 1994). "Convenience sampling" is when participants are "selected on the basis of accessibility" (Morse, 2007, p. 235). Often used at the beginning of a research project, this method of sampling helps to "identify the scope, major components, and trajectory of the overall process" in a research-led environment (Morse, 2007, p. 235). At the outset of this research, CG staff were the group most *accessible* due to the collaborative foundations of the research between the gallery and the university partners. Purposive sampling was used to identify additional groups for observation. These were: EA1, EA2 CGA, PRAs, AEEs, and APs. Purposive sampling is where "participants are selected as indicated by the initial analysis" of the data,

which reveals “how participants partition the emerging phenomena” (Morse, 2007, p. 235). While Morse (2007) cites interviews as the primary method of data collected in the field, this research used Morse’s approach and applied it to the initial field notes. Once the groupings were identified through purposive sampling, convenience sampling was used to select individuals within these categories.

My observations proceeded across the four phases of research design – 1) the scoping phase; 2) the passive phase; 3) the active phase; and 4) the saturation phase – and throughout I kept both observational field notes accompanied by a reflective journal. The style of observation was not static, but changed with each of these phases. Each style of observation balanced multiple purposes with the nature of the relationship between myself and the participants. In phase one at the start of the research, I began learning the ongoing process of how to undertake ethnographic participant observation, as well as introduce myself to the gallery staff as someone who could be trusted. In this sense, I was more focussed on how I presented myself at CG, and found that my written account of observations were minimal, and focussed on scoping the concept of AD. My reflective journals focussed more on my personal experiences of ethnography.

Because of this, the resultant style of note-taking in phase one differed to how Neyland (2008) describes the process. Neyland argues that “nothing should be taken for granted and nothing should be assumed to be uninteresting” (Neyland, 2008, p. 100). It was not that observations were taken for granted in this early phase, but that I was learning a very experiential practice. It was not expressed in written notes, but in: how I learnt to hold myself; where I sat; how I listened;

the facial expressions I pulled as I typed; whether I could ask someone to expand; when I could break eye contact to take notes; whether I should leave the room to take notes; or what level of assertiveness should I use when asking to attend a meeting. My fieldnotes from phase one also documented the sites where participants perceived AD and deferred value to occur, rather than a more *holistic* documentation of these practices and how they manifest.

Reflections on *how* to research, where to research, and interrogations of my thought processes were much more prevalent as I scoped both the research and the ethnographic practice. Neyland's (2008) approach was more descriptive of phases two, three, and four of data collection.

My notes for the passive, active, and saturation phases took a similar form. However, in phase three, the *active* phase, I also documented questions I had asked participants whilst in the field. For example, I would ask staff to relay things to me that I had not accessed in the first instance. This included more in-depth information about phone calls, or conversations that the staff may not have deemed it necessary for me to be present at. In the more *active* role of participant observation, I interrogated my role in the data much more. For example, "why did I ask for more information on that?" and "if I had phrased it differently, could there have been a different outcome?"

My notes in phases two, three, and four resonated with what Wolfinger (2002) terms "comprehensive" note-taking. Notes were used to "systematically and comprehensively describe everything that happened during a particular period of time" (Wolfinger, 2002, p. 90). More akin to Neyland's (2008) notion that nothing should be deemed "uninteresting", this format is contrasted against

another style that Wolfinger (2002) terms “salience hierarchy”. “Salience hierarchy” is where notes are filtered post-observation. Prior to analysis, therefore, notes are reduced to occurrences that stood out to the researcher. As I planned to use grounded theory in my approach to data analysis, I felt any process of filtration could obscure or lose potentially valuable data. Therefore, to paraphrase Wolfinger (2002), my notes started at the beginning, and ended at the end; I documented what I observed as I observed it, and did not filter anything out. By taking notes in a way that attends “to the rhythm of [...] [the] subjects”, Wolfinger argues they have a greater chance of being “more attentive to members’ meanings” (Wolfinger, 2002, p. 91).

### **3.4.3 Interviews, including guided conversations**

Interviewing was a key component to my research approach as it helped me to engage with the different narratives of research participants in a more targeted way. I conducted two types of interview: formal interviews and guided conversations, which I detail below. I used formal interviews with CG staff, EA1s, and representatives of the policy paradigm. Guided conversations were used with the gallery staff, CGAs, EA2s, and representatives of the policy paradigm. Gallery staff were selected using convenience sampling, and CGA, EA2s, and Elderkin were sampled using purposive sampling, and snowball sampling was used to identify ACE candidates. (See section 3.4.2 for a definition of convenience and purposive sampling).

Snowball sampling has been cited as an effective method of sampling “hidden” populations (Atkinson & Flint, 2001). An effective tool for “social researchers” and “policy makers” attempting to find out more about “marginal excluded

groups”, “chain referral” is a key mechanism (Atkinson & Flint, 2001, unpag.). In this sense, sampling moves along a chain of association, and so candidates recommend and facilitate access to subsequent candidates. Initially, I engaged with ACE’s Policy and Research team. After two meetings with the team, the manager, Andrew Mowlah, felt that speaking to two of the Relationship Managers located in GM would be more relevant to the purposes of my study.

EA1s were identified as a grouping using theoretical sampling, and then individuals were selected through use of simple random sampling. Theoretical sampling was used to identify the need to engage with EA1s who had exhibited at CG from 1984 until September 2014. “Theoretical sampling” is, as argued by Morse (2007, p. 235), the selection of participants “according to the descriptive needs of the emerging concepts and theory”. These *needs* direct the approach and desired outcomes of sampling the participants belonging to such a group (Morse, 2007; Charmaz, 2014). Throughout the research the relevance of “deferred value” was repeatedly assessed, and consideration of its definition continually reassessed through analysis of emergent data. Through this process, it became evident that there was a need to engage with artists who had historically exhibited with CG.

CG kept a list of artists who they had worked with since opening in 1986. To select individual EA1s, simple random sampling was used on CG’s list of 1,059 artists. Simple random sampling is often recommended for use in research that is attempting to achieve “a representative sample” of a larger population within a quantitative framework (VanderStoep & Johnston, 2009). I, however, used random sampling to prevent industry bias through the selection of “a fixed

percentage of the total sampling frame” (VanderStoep & Johnston, 2009, p. 28).

Allocating each participant in the total sample a random number using a computer programme, simple random sampling selected candidates according to their randomised numeric ordering and so each person on the list had “an equal chance of being selected” (VanderStoep & Johnston, 2009, p. 27). I did not use simple random sampling to increase statistical generalisability (Weiss, 1994; Firestone, 1993), but instead to help alleviate sample selection bias.

Winship and Mare (1992) describe sample selection bias as arising when

[...] an investigator does not observe a random sample of a population of interest. Specifically, when observations are selected so that they are not independent of the outcome variables in the study, this sample selection leads to biased inferences about social processes.

(Winship & Mare, 1992, p. 328)

The insinuation here is that statistical random sampling is cast against non-random sampling in a bias/non-bias categorisation. A scepticism of binaries comes to mind in this instance, and the oft-held assumption that random sampling is unbiased by casting it against its counterparts fails to engage with the potential directions the dataset is already leading the researcher in. The term “alleviate” is key when this study describes the use of random sampling in association with bias. Indeed, the initial list from which the sample was taken tended towards the industry partner’s preference to retain information on artists who had exhibited. The list did not necessarily include those that had intersected with the programme in alternative capacities – attendance at events, previews, informal talks, phone conversations, for example. That is not to

suggest, at this stage, that the list *should* be otherwise maintained, simply to highlight that the list itself was not without its own prior bias.

The sample was taken in the year of CG's 30th anniversary, and so the list of artists was divided into six five-year categories (1984-1989; 1990-1994; 1995-1999; 2000-2004; 2005-2009; 2010-2014) from which fifty were to be selected. Upon dividing the original list, some of the categories had fewer than fifty individuals. Therefore, instead of a total sample of 300, the final sample size was 233. I then contacted artists via email, asking them the following questions:

1. Do you feel that previous opportunities offered to you by Castlefield Gallery have since had a knock-on effect?
2. Are you willing to speak to me in an interview about your experience of this?

48 artists responded, and two participants from each category were selected for interview: six who suggested they had experienced "deferred value", and six who had not. Unfortunately, two of the respondents were unable to attend their interviews at short notice. As these could not be re-scheduled, the total number of interview candidates for EA1 was ten.

About interviewing, Irving Seidman argues

What are needed are not formulaic approaches to enhancing either validity or trustworthiness but understanding of and respect for the issues that underlie those terms.

(Seidman, 2013, p. 30)

Warning against a *mechanical* approach, Seidman (2013, p. 29) expresses concerns about researchers using interviews for what he deems a secondary function: validity. Committed to following a replicable pattern and, consequently,

structure of responses, a desire for greater “validity” – “the goal of minimizing the effect the interviewer and the interviewing situation have on how the participants reconstruct their experience” (Seidman, 2013, p. 26) – overwhelms the exploratory learning experience that can arise. As such, Seidman advocates a critical awareness of the interviewer’s role in the dual interaction, without overthinking replicable sets of questions and answers. Seidman’s description of the interview process chimed with my approach; using a set of open-ended questions, each interview had its own diversions and offshoots which developed uninterrupted.

The interviews were a balance of questions categorised by Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) as “narrative” and “conceptual”. The first questions I asked CGA, EA1s, and EA2s were intended to elicit a narrative. Respectively, I asked them: “can you tell me about your experience of CG Associates thus far?”; “what was the original event or opportunity that you were involved in earlier on at Castlefield Gallery?”; and “can you tell me about your experience of exhibiting at CG?” In asking these questions, I aimed to encourage respondents to orate the beginning of the story: “a specific episode of course of action significant to the narrator” (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009, p. 155). Rather than looking for “concrete descriptions”, the purpose of this part of the interview was to learn how each respondents’ story with CG began, to guide and inform break-out questions, and to reassure the respondents that their experiences were key.

For all interview candidates, once the initial question had been asked I remained silent, listened attentively, and wrote notes until the respondent gave



me explicit instructions to further my questioning. The second third and fourth questions to EA1s were attentive to AD and “deferred value”, as were all the questions posed to the staff at CG, and the representatives of ACE and MCC. These were *conceptual questions*. For example, the first question I asked the gallery staff and representatives of the policy paradigm was: “what is artist/talent development?” Focussed on charting “the conceptual structure of a subject’s or group of subjects’ conceptions of phenomena”, conceptual interviews can be “in the form of a joint endeavour to uncover the essential nature” – if such a thing is can be wholly uncovered – “of a phenomenon” (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009, pp. 151-153). This form of interviewing emphasises the need to examine respondents’ “taken-for-granted assumption about what is typical” using questions that target specific descriptions, allowing for points of contrast and difference in responses (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009, p. 151).

What I termed *guided conversations* were like what Charmaz (2014) terms “intensive interviewing”, and Fetterman (1998) “informal interviews”. According to Charmaz,

The flexibility of intensive interviewing permits interviewers to discover discourses and to pursue ideas and issues immediately that emerge during the interview.

(Charmaz, 2014, p. 85)

Flexible and open, this style of interviewing can “elicit a range of responses and discourses” (Charmaz, 2014, p. 85). As I aimed to interrogate and investigate artists’, CG’s, and representatives of the policy paradigms’ discourses, guided conversations hoped to encourage a more open dialogue between myself and the interviewee. Guided conversations did not have an “explicit agenda”

(Fetterman, 1998, p. 38). Instead, the guided conversations had what Fetterman (1998, p. 38) termed an “implicit research agenda”; they were exploratory rather than targeted.

Using open questions in a less formal, conversational style, this form of interviewing allowed a freer-flow of information. Charmaz (2014) talks of an interviewer permitted to intervene and to pursue ideas and issues immediately, but my style was less invasive than this perhaps suggests. Generally, any interventions made on my part were of a *chatty* nature, rather than preventing participants from following a train of thought so that I could take the conversation in a set direction. My *interventions* were more frequent in the guided conversations, however, than in the more formal interviews I conducted later in the research process. As a type of open-ended interview, guided conversations suited many of the research groups this study encountered. The term guided conversation was used instead of *open* or *intensive interviews* because I wanted the engaged individual to perceive the interaction in an informal light. The guided conversations were audio recorded and I handwrote notes to prompt any questions to ask that I thought of throughout the conversation, if time permitted. Each time I held a guided conversation, the individual was aware of the remit of my research (in accordance with ethics), and that I wanted to talk to them in relation to that.

Originally, guided conversations were conducted with CG’s staff. However, these proved ill-fitting for this group. Gallery staff, compared to other groupings, had a unique in-depth knowledge of me and research. The guided conversations, therefore, elicited limited additional information to the field notes

that accompanied them. Unlike any of the other data collection methods, the guided conversations conducted with CGA were anonymous. Several artists noted that they would not have taken part if they had not been offered anonymity. These were transcribed verbatim oral, but not sent to the participant for amendments. I did not take demographic information because I found that many of the artists qualified their answers by giving accurate demographic information such as age and/or employment status. Informal openness seemed to work well, and artists who used the conversation with me as a *confessional* space displayed signs of anxiety early on. I felt that pushing for personal information at any stage of the conversation would have been a betrayal of how they perceived the nature of our exchange.

To process the interview transcripts for use in the data analysis, I first had to transcribe them. Practically, when transcribing, Blake D. Poland (2003) identifies four challenges faced by transcribers: 1) the insertion of formal punctuation in what is orally presented as informally punctuated verse; 2) a failure to “indicate when people are paraphrasing or mimicking others, or when respondents quote things they told themselves or others told them”; 3) word-omissions from going backwards and forwards in the recording; 4) mistaking words for similar-sounding ones (Poland, 2003). However, Poland highlights that these four challenges are far more frequent when transcriptions are completed by a third party. I was both researcher and transcriber. Having worked through my transcriptions, being satisfied they appropriately represented the views of the participants, what I found more troublesome was resisting the “impulse to tidy up” (Poland, 2003, p. 272). Therefore, I adopted

the advice that transcriptions could be *tidied* by the researcher, but only after analysis had taken place (Poland, 2003, p. 272).

In the case of guided conversations, respondents did not have access to transcriptions, and so they remained verbatim oral. However, EA1s, CG staff, and representatives from ACE and MCC could suggest amendments to their transcription, and many of these included the alteration of written grammar. In terms of allowing grammar to be altered, I ensured this came after analysis and, therefore, could decipher whether the amended statement would have altered my analysis and what I perceived to be the meaning. In all instances, the requested changes did not alter the essence of what was discussed.

Whether additional emotive indicators, such as laughter, sighs, or pauses should be included in interview transcripts is debated in the field. Raymond Gordon (1980) includes four different types of non-verbal communication in his account of the interview interaction. These, mostly, include the bodily movements or gestures, proximal spacing, and “paralinguistic” communication – pitch, tone, etc. In the transcripts, I chose to include pauses where the respondent was recalling – or attempting to recall – past occurrences. These, and their duration, were retained in each transcription when they were explicitly about a lack of memory. This decision was iteratively informed by my time in the field, wherein it became clear that the time-lapse between the original opportunity and its “deferred value” influenced how an artist relayed the original offering (i.e. with missing information, or when the artist outwardly questioned the accuracy of the information).

#### **3.4.4 Feedback reviews**

Feedback reviews were my version of “respondent validation”. “Respondent validation” is about systematically collecting feedback from research participants about the data garnered. The feedback is then folded back into the research as evidence, feeding into the validity of the account. I documented the feedback reviews, and included them as sources for analysis. I conducted three feedback reviews with the staff at CG, in which the staff were welcomed to ask questions and raise issues with how I was interpreting the data and representing CG. The first explained the methodology, the second updated them on my preliminary findings about AD and deferred value, and the third presented to them the finalised data and the industry report.

#### **3.4.5 Document analysis**

Using the coding and categorising techniques detailed in section 3.5, I analysed documents authored by CG, ACE, and MCC by “systematically identifying specified characteristics of messages” (Fransozi, 2009, p. 549). Pre-existing sources used from CG were: financial reports from 2005 to 2014; the draft and live business plans for the period 2011-15; 86 emails sent from the CGA Development Coordinator to the CGA members from 15.01.2014 until 14.10.2015; 38 CG newsletters from 12.12.2014 until 15.04.2016; 11 grant funding applications made to ACE from 2004 until 2014; 26 application documents submitted to ACE for regular funding (either as a RFO or NPO) from

1999 until 2014; the title pages on CG's website; five MCP webpages and seven MCC documents; and 33 ACE documents and webpages.<sup>15</sup>

### **3.5 Data analysis: coding and categorising**

Grounded theory was the approach to data analysis that I applied to all documents collected or produced throughout the research process. Discussed in more depth below, this was not to generate a comprehensive theory of AD, but to pull together the varying and voluminous forms of data and generate thematic findings. This was done through coding and categorising.

Urquhart (2013) identifies two main purposes for grounded theory. Grounded theory used as a coding technique, or as a theory-building approach. The former refers to using the emergent concepts “for various purposes, such as building questionnaires or question items” (Urquhart, 2013, p. 63); they are an instrumental tool in the development of research methods. The grounded theory method can also be used, according to Urquhart (2013), to build theories by linking categories. Barney Glaser (2007), however, outlined an additional use of grounded theory. He did so by dividing the theory-developing function into two. Theories that are developed can either be “substantive”, using categories in an explanatory and communicative manner rather than rigorously linking and developing them, or “formal”, the systematic linkage of categories into a text that becomes a theory representative of the data. Utilising the features of “substantive grounded theory”, this research used categories from within the

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<sup>15</sup> For the full list of sources, please refer to Chapter 9.

data in a theoretical manner, rather than producing a “formal grounded theory” (Glaser, 2007).

Following the co-authored release of Glaser and Anselm L. Strauss’s prominent text *The Discovery of Grounded Theory* (Glaser & Strauss, *The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitative Research*, 2012), subsequent publications made it clear that each author recommended a different approach to coding and categorising. Loosely mapping onto positivism (Strauss) and postpositivism (Glaser), this research adopted the postpositivist approach advocated by Glaser (1978). Glaser (1978) recommends a three stage approach. As outlined in Urquhart (2013), the coding process consists of the following:

*Open coding*: “going through the data, line by line or paragraph by paragraph, attaching codes to the data and very much staying open, seeing what the data might be telling you”.

*Selective coding*: “the open codes are then grouped into larger categories in the stage of selective coding, on the basis of the key categories that are shaping the theory”.

*Theoretical coding*: “those categories are related to each other and the relationships between them considered”.

(Urquhart, 2013, p. 10)

Generally, I adhered to this process of coding. While theoretical coding occurred within this research, open and selective were utilised for their explanatory and communicative capacities (Dey, 2007) in what Glaser (2007) terms “substantive grounded theory”.

Theory, according to Urquhart (2013), is a collection of concepts and their relationship to one another. To explain theory, Urquhart illustrates that a theory

is: “some constructs [...] and a *relationship* between” them (2013, p. 5: emphasis in original). As such, there are categories drawn from the data that are based on the present concepts, and then there are the interactions between them. As the objectives of the research aimed to consider impactful interactions between actors, using a methodical approach to gain an understanding of the contexts for different concepts, whether they can be triangulated across actors, and how these relationships manifest was conducive to understanding AD.

### **3.6 Dissemination**

The core data detailing the features of AD practices and the nature of CG's relationship with representatives of the policy sphere and artists was published in a report entitled *AD at CG: Policy Change through the Counterpublic?* This report was launched at a symposium on the 8<sup>th</sup> November 2016. The symposium was attended by 43 individuals connected with the contemporary visual arts sphere, including artists, students, representatives from galleries in Edinburgh, Nottingham, Manchester, as well as representatives from ACE and MCC. At the symposium, there was a panel talk about the report involving myself, Kwong Lee, Hilary Jack (a contemporary visual artist based in GM), and Kate Jesson (Curator at Manchester Art Gallery and Board member for CG). Subsequently, attendees were divided into four break-out groups that discussed the content of the report. There were four discussions, and these were thematically organised into: 1) practices of AD; 2) the idea of critical junctures; 3) artist-focussed organisations' needs from data collection; and 4) a discussion about the theoretical arguments. These discussions were recorded, and the



input from participants fed into the data presented in Chapters 4 and 5, and the theoretical discussion in Chapter 6.

### **3.7 Linking the methodology with democratic theory**

As I predicated my entry into the field based on Dey's (1999) notion of an "open mind", it was assumed that this thesis brought to bear my prior theoretical knowledge onto the empirical scenario I observed. The relevancy of this knowledge was continually reassessed as observations unfolded, and theory, in this thesis, is considered and deployed where I perceived there to be a relationship between the theory and the empirical scenario I observed. I do not leave theories uncontested, and Chapter 6 addresses constructivist institutionalism, the field of cultural policy, and democratic theory. Rather, I elaborate "theoretical traditions [...] through their confrontation with external anomalies and internal contradictions" (Burawoy, n.d.).

Democratic theory runs throughout this thesis, and it resonated with the methodological approach I used. The core principles of democracy are that each individual's preferences as part of wider society are considered when it comes to the governing forces in their lives. Whether this is done at arm's length through elections in a representative system, or proceduralised in a discursive forum where the social norms that dictate the lived realities and exclusions are brought into question, the underlying theme is each actor has a preferred way of living. Furthermore, an individual has the right for their preferences, or strategic actions, to be present in all aspects of governance that pervade their lives, including the governing force of normative frameworks, such

as the use of econometrics in the context of the small-scale and artist-focussed contemporary visual arts sphere.

I understood CG to be embedded *the public sphere*. Habermas's (1989) book *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* marked a key shift in thinking about the functioning and operationalisation of spaces embodied by collective and social being. Whilst subsequently rethought by authors such as Fraser (1990) and Mouffe (1999; 2000a; 2000b; 2005a; 2005b), whose critiques are considered and adopted later in Chapter 6, the work of Habermas (1989) remains an "indispensable source" for theorists working with the concept of the public sphere (Fraser, 1990, p. 56). The process of deliberation is the key to democratic change within Habermas's understanding of the public sphere, which is broadly known as *deliberative democracy* or *the deliberative turn* (Habermas, 1989; 1998). Deliberative democracy refers to a process which "creates a public, citizens coming together to talk about collective problems, goals, ideals and actions" (Young, 2002, p. 121). Focussed on a "common good" rather than competition for the "private good" of each participant, citizens enter the deliberative forum freely to present their view on a given issue or situation in the knowledge that their view will contribute to the overall decision made by the group (Young, 2002, p. 121). In addition, citizens have the opportunity to "transform their preferences according to public minded ends" as well as transform others in a guarantee of reciprocation (Young, 2002, p. 121).

When considering Habermasian deliberative democracy, Iris Marion Young and John S. Dryzek take exception to the rational forms of communication that Habermas advocates (Young, 2002; Dryzek, 2002). Discourse theory has

documented the exclusionary tendencies of written and spoken language (Heller, 2003; van Dijk, 1995), and this has been echoed by theorists writing from within the deliberative turn (Young, 2002). Notably, Young (2002) and Dryzek (2002) have aimed to steer democratic theories within the deliberative turn away from a focus on deliberation, and instead towards the notion that individuals can express their preferences within the public sphere *communicatively*. This is due to the way that deliberation is connected to notions of rationality and, therefore, a proceduralised bias towards those better equipped with *rational* ways of speaking due to education, living circumstance, gender, and so forth (Young, 2002).

Recalling the earlier discussion about hegemonic consent in section 2.5, dominant modes of communication have the potential to uphold and maintain subjugating structures. While Dryzek (2002) is taken by “discursive democracy”, Young’s (2002) use of the term “communicative democracy” suggests a move away from traditional bounds of language. The idea that change can occur performatively links with the idea of counter-hegemonic practices as a way of activating an individual’s conduct.

Writing in the late 1970s/early 1980s and before the theoretical developments of constructivism, Pierre Bourdieu (1977; 1992) also rethought the binary between structure and agency. In doing so, Bourdieu injected the concept of *practice*. Practice is the individual enactment of generative forces. In Bourdieu’s theory, this is problematic because he only discusses the generative potential of structure. If practice is considered simply as the output of generative forces, but re-framed according to constructivism and constructivist institutionalism, then

practice is the observable output of both context and conduct. This is an important development when thinking about practice as a form of democratic participation, as well as considering the role of ethnography and grounded theory in this study.

Framing practice as observable agency means that individuals are always potentially re-configuring the context in which they exist, and this can be, in part, captured by observing their everyday actions. In line with Giddens's (1984) idea of practical consciousness and Bourdieu's (1977; 1992) theory of practice, these context-setting practices can be either conscious or unconscious.

Considering AD as a phenomenon intertwined with CG's *practice* is, therefore, acknowledging that it is the physical expression of context-setting action.

As stated above, the policy paradigm is observable in the practices – or *techniques, mechanisms, and instruments* – used by representatives of the policy paradigm, and that these can provide an insight into the normalised and legitimated behaviours deemed appropriate within the paradigm. This idea of a normative framework that is performed can be developed through an understanding of gender performativity in post-structuralist feminism, in particular the work of Judith Butler. Butler (1990) asserts that gender is part of a paradigmatic schema of legitimating behaviour, and that it exists only insofar as it is performed through practices that inculcate the normative framework. In this sense, widespread beliefs about gender construction can be countered insofar as they are *performed* differently. For Butler, key moments of change are created through counter-hegemonic practices of normative structures. In the context of initiating shifts in the policy paradigm, then, counter-hegemonic

practices that perform an alternative understanding to that of the dominant setting are conceivably key to understanding policy change.

Discussing how policy can be influenced by individual and institutional practices, ethnography and grounded theory were key to learning the empirical scenario that wrapped around the concept of AD. Using an ethnography that was attentive to action that possesses the potential to “transform social structures” (Porter & Ryan, 2003, p. 413), and an approach to data analysis that systematically handled all of the data generated through document analysis, participant observation, and interviews, this thesis brought an awareness of direct democracy to the phenomenon of AD. I treated all the sources as holding the potential to convey communicative understandings of the normative framework that contextualised AD. This included those that adhered to the hegemonic paradigm, but also the myriad instances of counter-hegemonic practices, and many that were a mixture of both. In this sense, my prior knowledge and understanding influenced and was supported by the methodological decisions I took. In the following chapter, I provide a rich description of AD activity at CG, uncovered through use of the qualitative techniques I have outlined in Chapter 3.

## 4 Artist development as learnt in the field

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### 4.1 Introduction

Upon processing the data, it was clear to me that my findings of the activities conducted at CG contributed to both empirical and theoretical understandings of that activity, but with possible implications for AD more widely. This chapter and Chapter 5 present my empirical findings on the practicalities of AD, and Chapter 6 brings this to bear on constructivist institutionalism and democratic theory. In this chapter, I outline a significantly expanded understanding of AD.

I first examine the findings generated from interviews with three representatives of the policy paradigm: Wewiora, Percival, and Elderkin. In section 4.2, I interrogate and analyse how individuals representing the policy paradigm spoke about talent development. Second, I detail the specific AD offerings I observed at CG. These were broken down into the same four categories that emerged from coding and categorising the data available in pre-existing documents (see Chapter 2): nurturing an environment, skills and/or knowledge, resources that feed practical outputs, and showcasing opportunities. Subsequently, in section 4.4, I discuss how CG has traditionally framed the application of AD according to one of three career stages artists might be at: emerging/early, mid-career, and established. Informed by concerns voiced during my collection of primary data, I offer an alternative approach to understanding the points at which artists sought organisationally-led AD. Before progressing through the chapter, I will first briefly address the problems of reification, as emerged through the production of the industry report and in subsequent discussion at the event on the 8<sup>th</sup> November 2016.

### 4.1.1 The problems of reification

In the industry report, I presented the different AD offerings that I documented throughout my time at CG in table format (see Appendix 1, pages 261 to 266). Originally, I had planned these as flow-charts, but due to problems encountered during the design and printing phase it was not possible to present them as such. However, the presentation of the data in tables offered interesting additional insights at the launch event. While the table format made the information easier to digest, it also meant that the different categories and sub-categories included in the diagrams were presented as a list. This made it possible to see potential problems around the reification of categories of AD. Rather than representative of complex activity, these tables could be perceived as a checklist of activity for *ticking-off* different AD offerings. Furthermore, the tables appeared conclusive and complete, whereas the diagrams suggested that I had begun documenting AD activities, but what I had produced could continue to grow and evolve. In the tables, areas that were under-researched in this study, such as how volunteering at a gallery can be considered AD, appeared to be finalised where, instead, I recommend that more research is required to fully understand the extent to which volunteering and AD overlap.

For the purposes of this thesis, I attempted to re-think the flow-charts I originally proposed for the industry report. However, the amount of data they included meant diagrammatic representations were confusing, and re-thinking the design did not overcome this. As the diagrams represented the four categories of AD, I considered breaking these down into their sub-categories and connecting them visually. However, this produced a fractured depiction of AD. To overcome this, I believe that the recruitment of an experienced Graphic Designer is necessary,

but this was not an available option for the thesis due to the associated financial costs. While the core data remains presented in table format, I stress that the data is neither a holistic representation of AD, nor a finite list.

## **4.2 Interviews and observations with direct representatives of the policy paradigm**

In this section, I present an analysis of the data I collected through interviews (formal and guided conversations) and observations with Wewiora, Percival, and Elderkin. I conducted two guided conversations with Wewiora and Percival, one guided conversation with Elderkin, a formal interview with Wewiora, and a formal interview with Elderkin. I was also able to observe a roundtable organised and hosted by ACE on 13th February 2015, entitled: “Manchester / Liverpool - Talent development and support for visual artists”. In this section, I will first discuss the interviews with representatives of ACE, before incorporating the findings from my interviews with Elderkin. In this section, I will mostly refer to *talent development* rather than AD, as this was the terminology that representatives of the policy paradigm used. Table 15 is a summary of the AD offerings that emerged from coding and categorising the interviews and observations with representatives of the policy paradigm.

The guided conversations and interviews with Wewiora (2014; 2015a; 2015b) indicated a broader and critical understanding of what talent development was than documents had. Wewiora (2015b) described that talent development was encouraged by ACE to ensure that artists’ careers were “resilient”, and given the opportunity to “evolve”. She explained to me how her role “on the ground” in the GM arts milieu as well as her curatorial work with Wewiora Projects, had



informed her understanding of talent development.<sup>16</sup> Percival (2014; 2014) also noted how her previous role at TATE Liverpool had impacted her understanding of the terms used by ACE, and that this meant she felt the phrase *talent development* was ill-suited to the visual arts sphere. She explained to me how *talent* was a contentious term, and, in the visual arts especially, *talent* flattened a plethora of activity and prioritised exhibitions as a way of measuring organisational and individual success (Percival, 2014; 2015).

In my guided conversations with Wewiora and Percival, they addressed a desire for a greater fluidity between “emerging” and “mid-career” artists in GM, larger arts organisations, and Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) (Wewiora, 2014; 2015a; Percival, 2014; 2015). They suggested that larger organisations were not accessible to “emerging” artists, who had less experience of exhibiting. They explained how opening-up larger organisations and HEIs to a wider range of artists would expand GM’s talent development offering substantially. It would do so by allowing artists to research collections, as well as access to resources such a curatorial expertise. Furthermore, both stressed the importance of live/work space and affordable studio spaces in relation to talent development, suggesting that, without these, talent development in GM was hindered (Wewiora, 2014; 2015a; Percival, 2014; 2015). Both hoped that working with developers might offer scope for talent development as the city changed over time. There was also an awareness of a need to support the “independents”;

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<sup>16</sup> Wewiora Projects was a partnership between Wewiora and her sister, Elizabeth Wewiora. They delivered projects that, as described by them: “put audiences and their engagement at the heart of programming, take art outside of the art environment into nomad spaces, and work with the best of creative contemporary talent, across the North of England and nationally” (Wewiora Projects, n.d.).

curators and writers who work autonomously to state and institutional policies (Wewiora, 2014; 2015a; 2015b; Percival, 2014; 2015).

**Table 15:** Nurturing an environment, skills and/or knowledge, resources, and showcasing opportunities in interviews and observations with ACE

<b>Nurturing an environment</b>
To nurture an environment for talent development, ACE conducts the following activity:
Brokering relationships across different partners, industries, and interested parties
Building intelligence on the gaps in talent development to feed policy direction
Forging cross-organisational partnerships to pool resources and prevent overlap (e.g. ACE and HEIs)
Generating an awareness for the different needs of emerging, mid-career, and established artists
Realising the need for bespoke initiatives to suit personal circumstances
Realising the need for bespoke initiatives to suit personal practices
Retaining long-term relationships with artists and organisations
Working with developers as the city grows to voice the needs of artists throughout the process
<b>Skills and/or knowledge</b>
The following areas of skills and/or knowledge were identified:
Business planning
Fundraising
Grant advice
Income generation
Marketing
Specifically, online concerns (marketing and communications like social media)
Professionalising artistic talent to increase resilience
Advice on what next
<b>Resources</b>
ACE offered artists the following resources:
Contexts for critical thought and analysis
Collaborations across artforms
Connections between artists
Critical feedback in terms of practice
Exhibitions
Income generation
Networking
Peer-to-peer relationships
Critical questions directed at aspects in an artists' practice
<b>Showcasing opportunities</b>
ACE offered the following opportunities for artists to showcase their practice:
ACE conducting studio visits
Strategically-orchestrated exposure to collectors
Strategically-orchestrated exposure to curators
Strategically-orchestrated exposure to patrons

Wewiora (2015b) shared with me how the specialist knowledge that ACE Relationship Managers had learnt from their experience of working in the arts sector – “be that in arts development, curating, programme management, commissioning” – influenced the talent development work they conducted with artists. For example, at times, talent development took the form of “giving advice based on our [Relationship Managers] own past experience” (Wewiora, 2015b). Reflecting on the earlier discussions around constructivist institutionalism, it is plausible to state that this sector-based learning could have involved representatives of the policy paradigm learning from CG.

For Elderkin, representative of MCC, the phrase “talent development” reflected the nurturing of a creative “ability” or “aptitude” (such as leadership) in the cultural sector (Elderkin, 2015). By conducting talent development, better career-outcomes for practitioners were produced (as defined by the practitioner), or employability was increased. In the guided conversation and interview, there was a greater awareness that people might need “interventions” at any time throughout their career than was suggested in MCC documents (Elderkin, 2014;2015). Again, this reflected a disjuncture between linear notions of career progression and talent/artist development.

Elderkin also expressed the need for “informal” developmental opportunities, such as mentoring or peer-to-peer networking. She explained to me that these were not delivered by MCC, but instead by the organisations they partner with financially, or relationships they brokered (Elderkin, 2015). When asked for examples, Elderkin drew from experiences in her role working on the south coast, and relayed to me how that had informed her understanding of talent development (Elderkin, 2015). Again, extending beyond what the documents

authored by MCC suggested, the interview with Elderkin (2015) suggested a nuanced perspective on talent development that was fed by her learnt experiences in the sector.

Coding my notes from the informal roundtable I attended on 13th February 2015, and the guided conversations and interviews (see Table 15), talent development was less market and exhibition-focussed than the documents produced by ACE and MCC. Comparing Wewiora's, Percival's, and Elderkin's interviews to the written documentation of talent development (see section 2.3), it was clear that documents produced by representatives of the policy paradigm were not drawing from the full knowledge of employees interacting with the sector. As was stated earlier, ACE is answerable to DCMS and the UK Treasury. What was suggested from their authored documents was that, in written form, ACE performed the policy paradigm to a greater extent than Relationship Managers did in practice.

ACE was originally considered an *arm's length* organisation, a principle that in theory remains at the time of writing this thesis. However, the way ACE demonstrated the policy paradigm in its documentation, rather than utilising the knowledge of those within its organisation embedded within the sector to generate strategic documents, suggested that the arm's length principle was not fully in action. In relation to governance of the arts, the reasoning behind an arm's length principle are simple: having been funded, the arts can to operate with "relative independence" (Quinn, 1997, p. 128). In theory, this allows an arts council "to order its own affairs unfettered by undue influence/interference from the political front" (Quinn, 1997, p. 128). In turn, governments "encourage the arts without the need for direct intervention on its part" (Ridley, 1987, p. 236),

which intends to reduce “the creation of state-approved art” and “political censorship of the arts” (Beck, 1989, p. 364).

In the arm’s length model, decisions on the arts are made within the body of expertise created to do so, separate from the government. In the UK, there is a widespread concern that government involvement in the arts has become overbearing, to the detriment of the artistic milieu. Most often, this is linked to the UK government’s expectation of a demonstrable social or economic return on their *investment* of public money (Belfiore, 2002). The fundamental undermining of the arm’s length principle through an expected accountability for the investment of public money in consumed goods (i.e. artworks) was, arguably, a major factor resulting in the 2011 funding decisions that disproportionately funded audience-focussed organisations (Thelwall, 2011). The disjuncture between ACE’s authored documentation and the activity relayed to me by Wewiora and Percival was suggestive of an organisation that is attempting to balance two separate needs; the government and the sector. Since the 1980s and at the time of this thesis, the balance was tipped to the former.

In the examples discussed in this section, policy documents codified the policy paradigm, but the day-to-day practices of representatives of the paradigm were also informed by what they experienced “on the ground” (Wewiora, 2015b). Although strategic documents such as *Great Art and Culture for Everyone* and *The Cultural Ambition* shaped structural, funding decisions, there appeared to be an interplay between the structural factors and the individual practices of Wewiora, Percival, and Elderkin. This interplay was informed by learnt needs from the sector.

In the interviews, the data suggested that representatives who worked with the contemporary arts milieu had a better understanding of the gaps that needed filling than was suggested in the documents. These included, for example, live/work spaces for contemporary artists, making larger contemporary arts organisations accessible for artists, and integrating HEIs into the GM contemporary arts milieu. There was, however, an area of overlap between ACE's and MCC's documented understanding of AD and how Wewiora, Percival, and Elderkin perceived it: neither considered audiences to be a part of AD. In section 5.2 I discuss this further, but for the purposes of this section I will present how representatives of the policy paradigm dichotomised artist and audience. For ACE and MCC, the audience and the artist were never presented as meeting, rhetorically or physically. Audiences were often categorically separated from artists, and presented as part of the end-point of a linear chain of consumption, with a focus on what they could gain from an engagement with artworks.

Geoffrey Ingham (2008) outlined two binaries of capitalism that resonate with the way that the policy paradigm dichotomised artist and audience. A key idea within the neoliberalist paradigm is that the market is an independent and regulating force, and governments create policies that facilitate the market's primary role organising society (Harvey, 2007). Since the 1980s in the UK, capitalism has been perceived as the dominant market force, and although the nuances of this may have shifted since, there are certain features of capitalism that have remained stable from the 1980s and throughout the duration of my research. Ingham (2008) identifies four markets present in capitalism, two of which relate to the discussion here. The first is "the money and money-capital

markets by which the supply and demand for finance is coordinated and its price (interest) established” (Ingham, 2008, p. 54). And the second refers to “(i) the market for production goods (means of production); and (ii) the final consumption goods” (Ingham, 2008, p. 54). Here, supply and production are placed earlier on in the process of exchange, while demand and consumption near the endpoint. Furthermore, supply is determined by demand. Mapping this onto artists and audiences, audience demand determines the productive value of artists’ supply.

Supply/demand and production/consumption are both assumed to be linear processes, with a certain trajectory and determinism underlying both. In neoliberalism, if an artist’s role is to supply the demand through production of artworks, an audience’s role is to fulfil a position of demand and consumption. The artwork is what transfers between the two in a linear trajectory, and the artist and audience are never required to meet, unless it is transactional (for example, an artist and audience may meet at an artist talk, if an audience *demand*s it as part of their positive engagement with an artwork). This is further exacerbated by the policy paradigm’s prescribed instrumentality of artistic practice, and preference for quantitative metrics that measure the *value* of cultural outputs. In the documents produced by and interviews conducted with representatives of the policy paradigm, there was no scope for audiences to have a role in AD, and to feed back into the artwork in a circular process production. In theory, at least, this explains why documents and interviews embedded within the policy paradigm rhetorically separate artist from audience.

For example, in the introduction to *Great Art and Culture for Everyone* (2013b), Sir Peter Bazalgette states:

As pressures increase on public funding, arts and cultural organisations need fresh approaches which enthrall audiences and attract new sources of income.

(ACE, 2013b, p. 3)

Here, there is no mention of artists and their needs; the focus is entirely on organisations and audiences. Another example was how, in 2016, the Audience Finder survey, completed via the Audience Agency, became compulsory for all NPOs, irrespective of size or their programming strategy. In accessing the Audience Agency website, no attention is given to audience experience of the artwork (The Audience Agency, n.d.a). There is mention of “audience behaviour”, but upon interrogation of the term this is taken to mean “who they are, where they live, why they attend, how they find out about activities and what they think of the organisation and its programming” (The Audience Agency, n.d.b); there is no discussion of how audiences responded to the artwork. In 2016, the Quality Metrics were also adopted by ACE in an attempt to unpick whether an audience had a positive experience of venues and artworks (ACE, n.d.g). Again, this survey was produced from an end-user perspective, rather than as a mechanism through which artists could understand how their work was being received.

In their documents, MCC was also focussed on audience experience, as the assumed outcome of artistic practice. I was able to locate one exception to this. Of the four stated *ambitions* for their strand of activity called “Talent City”, one focussed on cultural education at the benefit of the individual skills, knowledge, and wellbeing of the participating individual rather than the audience. In this instance, although artistic practice was not about producing artwork for audience consumption, the relationship to the materiality of the artwork was still



instrumental, irrespective of whether the individual was the artist or audience.

There was no discussion of the intrinsic benefits of artistic practice.

Audiences were also defined as a point of consumption in the interviews with Wewiora and Elderkin. For example, Wewiora described how, having identified “clear gaps, needs, and opportunities”, “audience intelligence” data was used to identify “a great opportunity” for expansion of outdoor arts because there were “high levels of [audience] engagement” with this form of practice (Wewiora H. , Interview: Talent Development, 2015b). Irrespective of whether or not practitioners desired the expansion of outdoor arts, the viewpoints of audiences had dictated its growth. Similarly, in the interview with Elderkin, she stated:

[...] talent development is a very subtle but quite a cost-effective part [...] that’s needed to make sure we’re bringing creative practitioners through that can then deliver and make that work that we want audiences to enjoy.

(Elderkin, 2015)

The idea of *delivery* used by Elderkin above assumed that once creative practitioners completed the artwork, it was then distributed to audiences for their consumption.

### **4.3 Categories of artist development at Castlefield Gallery**

In this section, I summarise the different categories, sub-categories, and activities I documented as AD in the following order: 1) nurturing an environment, 2) skills and/or knowledge, 3) resources that feed a practical output, and 4) showcasing opportunities. Lastly, in section 4.3.5 I analyse the relationships between different categories of AD. For a comprehensive overview of the AD offerings I documented at CG, please see Tables 1 to 13 on pages

261 to 266 of Appendix 1, the industry report.<sup>17</sup> Across the four main categories of AD, I identified 121 different AD offerings, many of which did not overlap with the findings generated from documents authored by ACE, MCC, and CG, and existing research. As well as adding to the knowledge of documented AD offerings, this section also details sub-categories of nurturing an environment, skills and/or knowledge, resources, and showcasing opportunities, unpicks the relationships between the categories, and interrogates how artists accessed the different forms of AD.

### **4.3.1 Nurturing an environment**

From an organisational perspective, to *nurture an environment* is to contribute to a context in which AD can be practiced more effectively. In support of the findings presented in section 2.4, I found that CG did so centripetally and centrifugally, and the two sets of activities were symbiotic. The former refers to activities that generated the internal conditions for AD within the gallery's own offerings. The latter described how CG engaged in organisational networks to enhance/promote AD. Their external impact was most often seen regionally, but, through the sharing of information by attending and contributing to national conversations such as those instigated by the Common Practice network, they were engaged on a national level too. Activities that nurtured an environment were always conducive to the subsequent offering of skills and/or knowledge, and/or resources, and their direct impact was that they created the conditions in which the latter categories could flourish.

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<sup>17</sup> Please note that in Table 1 of Appendix 1, the sub-categories of nurturing an environment are entitled "internally" and "externally". I have since amended these to centrifugally and centripetally as these terms better described the approach they took to nurturing an environment.

### 4.3.2 Skills and/or knowledge

Skills and/or knowledge activities were those centred on how the staff communicated information that could be learnt and applied by artists. Activities in this category were arranged according to how they were delivered:

*Formal learning (group)* – this style of delivering AD is always “organised and structured”, and the objective of the learner is to gain specific skills/knowledge that have been advertised ahead of the event (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), n.d.). For example, a seminar on where to apply for funding.

*Non-formal learning (group)* – this is less organised than the above, but can still have learning objectives. The teacher/student relationship is less clear, and can even be entirely removed (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), n.d.). For example, peer-to-peer critiques.

*Non-formal learning (one-to-one)* – again, less organised than formal learning, this style of learning is less organised, and although it can have learning outcomes, these are not explicitly defined at the outset, and can be fed by either the individual that possesses the skill/knowledge, or the attendee. For example, portfolio reviews.

*Experiential* – this style of learning was simply defined as that which was learnt through experience. For example, curating a show or volunteering in the gallery.

At times, several of these strategies were deployed at one single event. For example, an event on funding might start with formal learning, such as a talk about the routes into funding, and then break off into non-formal learning (group) whereby individuals could share their experiences with each other in a more discursive setting.

Whilst coding and categorising skills and/or knowledge, I noted the immediate impact the skill and/or knowledge had on the artist. **Formal (group)** learning was an effective mechanism for delivering skills and/or knowledge to large groups of artists. The advice in this category was generally related to

navigation, such as how to locate funding or how to find suitable residencies, or how to professionally self-represent in proposals or on websites. Often in the form of *how to*, the directional nature suited those having recently (re)entered the contemporary arts milieu (for example, through graduation, following leave of absence, having relocated to a new area).

In the case of **non-formal (group)** learning, advice was usually given in response to an artist's immediate situation. For example: what glue an artist could use to bond two unusual materials; how might an audience respond to the use of rubber in a specific piece; who the artists could approach to get funding for a specific project in the pipeline. Whilst the skills and/or knowledge offerings in **non-formal (one-to-one)** learning were many, advice was often bespoke, and fewer artists had access to this style of delivering skills and/or knowledge because it could only be delivered to one artist at a time. The non-formal one-to-one strategy for imparting skills and/or knowledge tended to be targeted at artists who needed guidance to help navigate the contemporary arts milieu, gain exposure, and those who were familiar with the regional arts infrastructure but wanted to discuss a specific idea or project.

The skills and/or knowledge obtained through **experiential learning** were often used by artists to understand how CG functioned. In interviews and through observations I found that the consequences of experiential skills and/or knowledge I repeatedly documented were: 1) the artist can use their knowledge of how the gallery works to approach other spaces; and 2) the artist can use their experience at CG in an artist-led context. EA1 Jones, EA2a, EA2b, EA2f, EA2h, and CGA5 all discussed a "behind-the-scenes" experience from being involved in exhibitions, and how that helped them to better frame their own

practice. Examples included how they could: understand curatorial practices better, and so craft proposals with a stronger knowledge of what a specific space was looking for; or understand how to manage public relations, and so take this forward when running their own artist-led project.

### 4.3.3 Resources

Resources that feed a practical output included: physical space; direct tangible resources; opening up new avenues in the practice; and emotional resources. These acted as a stock from which artists could draw to produce new work. Alongside emotional resources, the offer of physical spaces was one of the main AD offerings commented on by artists; every group of artists I interviewed commented on the importance of physical space as a resource. This was either in the context of exhibiting in the gallery space, or having use of NAS.

In reference to the **physical space**, some artists used the *ambience* offered by CG, others the architecture, and some needed studio spaces with specific features (such as a dark room, high ceilings, or open plan to interact with other artists). EA1 Clyde Hopkins (2015) stated in his interview that he had begun “to look at some elements that had *just* got into the work” at the time of his exhibition at CG. “There was a slight technical, or physical change in the work”, and “seeing it”, he claimed, gave him “the confidence to push it a bit further” (Hopkins, 2015). Hopkins (2015) described the space as “generous”; a place where he had the confidence to hang work that “looked a bit of a mixture”, and survey it to determine *what next* for his practice. In a slightly different way, EA2c (2014) talked about the “neutrality” of CG, and how the space “was less compromising”: “curating in other contexts is abstracting against the work”

(EA2c, 2014). This allowed the artist to explore ideas that would have been suppressed at other venues.

For Clyde (2015), it was the *ambience* of the space that acted as a resource.

For others, it was the space itself, as was the case for several of the EA2s and CGA. EA2a discussed how the architecture of CG acted as a resource for them to work with:

I really thought about the architecture at Castlefield, and the way the piece worked with the architecture. For instance, there was a piece [...] that kind of activated the space in a particular way; [...] it was a usable object. I'd never really thought about my work in that way before, and a lot of people were interested in that.

(EA2a, 2015)

Here, the artist is discussing the relationship between their work and the physical architecture of CG, and how the architecture added a new direction to her practice. Many of the CGA commented on NAS, particularly Federation House. From being inspired by the vibrancy of the space, using it for site-specific work, to making use of the studio facilities, CGA2, 5, 9, 10 and 11, and 12 specifically address how federation house acted as a resource for producing work. Through “generosity”, “neutrality”, “architecture”, and “vibrancy”, the spaces offered by CG were some of the most significant AD offerings from the perspective of artists.

Analysing **direct tangible resources**, there were two sub-categories: 1) material resources, and 2) financial remuneration. Material resources aided the generation of new or existing work based on material-provision. These included: sites, distributing unwanted used materials, and helping artists to source materials for commissions. The impact of these was straightforward in that they

allowed an artist to generate an artwork in response to or as a result of obtaining material resources. Financial remuneration was more complex, and used however the artist felt. I observed two main impacts that financial remuneration had on the artists. Firstly, several artists discussed re-investing in their practice. Julieta Aranda, Brian Kuan Wood, and Anton Vidokle (2011, unpag.) describe how practitioners often “secretly support” their practice with employed work, acting as their “own sugar daddy and trophy-wife in a single package”. These statements are indicative of a widespread trend within the arts. Jane Lawson remarked in her interview that she knew of an artist who had “re-mortgaged her house” for a piece of work. She qualified the statement by saying “I don’t know the full story”, but concluded with the observation that “budgets for people to make work are not great”, and money is needed to make work of an ambitious nature.

Financial remuneration also gave artists a sense of worth. As stated by Angus Mugford:

Getting paid to deliver your services is an important part of work, not just because you need to pay bills, but more importantly because your services should provide value.

(Mugford, 2017, p. 23)

In a market economy where value is often expressed numerically, to not receive financial remuneration can be akin to not being valued, and therefore not having value. Recalling the discussion earlier about demand determining supply, if artists do not receive financial remuneration, it can be difficult for them to realise the demand for their practice due to the normalisation of these mechanisms for ascribing value.

The deployment of **resources that opened up new avenues in the work** was associated with timeliness for a practitioner, and, if judged incorrectly, could have a detrimental effect going forward. Examples of these included: artists refining a technique based on retrospectively viewing several works together in a show; artists having their work exposed to curatorial practices that uncovered a new narrative to certain pieces; and artists realising their work is not having the impact they intended, based on the discussions audiences are having about it, and so shifting to better communicate with the audience.

My use of the term **emotional resources** refers to the role that CG played in restocking the emotional drain that immaterial labour expects from practitioners (Morini, 2007; Gill & Pratt, 2008). Emotional resources, as a term, is intimately linked with Cristina Morini's (2007) work on "cognitive capitalism". Defining a new era of expectations from workers, Morini (2007) argues that "cognitive capitalism" relies on the "feminization of labour": the way that post-fordist capitalism universally expects the production process of immaterial products to draw on the immaterial sources of the worker, including "emotional aspects" (Morini, 2007, p. 42).

In the case of this research, I observed a clear distinction between emotional resource and emotional support. Both had a presence, but the former was what artists associated with their developmental needs. I observed several forms of emotional resource offered by CG, including encouragement, reassurance, belonging, and confidence. I also noted how, at times, an *absence* of emotional resources was felt. Different artists need different things at different times, and EA2e and EA2f were both experiencing personal difficulties at the time I spoke to them. Both artists discussed at length the lack of emotional resource that was



available, and drew attention to how their respective exhibitions made them feel excluded from it in some way.

Speaking about studio-as-workplace, Derek Pigrum (2010, pp. 2-3), mentions how the artist's workplace is a convergence of two external *environments*: the emotional and the physical. The way that CG offered and artists sought emotional resources from AD offerings at the gallery would suggest that there is an overlap between artists' workplaces and the gallery. If the gallery can be considered as a potential workplace for artists, as I will suggest below, it makes sense how CG took into consideration both the physical and emotional environments that converge to form that space. Literature suggests that the emotional needs of artists can be linked with the instability of their working conditions. Listed by David Hesmondhalgh and Sarah Baker,

[...] artists tend to hold multiple jobs; there is a predominance of self-employed or freelance workers; work is irregular, contracts are shorter-term, and there is little job protection; career prospects are uncertain; earnings are very unequal; artists are younger than other workers; and the workforce appears to be growing.

(Hesmondhalgh & Baker, 2010, p. 4)

They continue to discuss how this impacts on artists' emotional state:

Cultural workers seem torn over the precariousness of their work—bemoaning the mental and emotional states produced, but also resigned to insecurity, and prepared to speak of it as necessary and even desirable. How do they cope? Some spread the risk by working in multiple sites to supplement income

(Hesmondhalgh & Baker, 2010, p. 13)

This multitude of workplaces was something I encountered during the research. Interestingly, the artist's workplace is often presented in the literature as the artist's studio (Pigrum, 2010); singular and stable. Although I framed the gallery

as the workplace of CG staff, I did not rule the possibility that the gallery was also a workplace of the artists who sought AD.

Alongside their non-linear career (defined in section 4.4), the sites of artists' work regularly change. For some, a studio may present a form of stability, but for others this was not necessarily the case. In GM, studio spaces were in high demand due to limited growth, closure, and an increase in the amount of art graduates in the region (Gilmore et al., 2016; Sharrat, 2015; Dickinson, 2016). Artists also face the ongoing challenge of balancing a potentially piecemeal and changeable income with raising living costs. Because of these two factors combined, it could not be assumed that studios were a stable workplace for artists in GM. In my experience, artists tended to assemble workplaces across several different sites, some of which were anchored around showcasing opportunities, and so time-limited, others on regular meetings, such as CGA monthly meetings, and many on a project-by-project basis, for example NAS or residencies. Many artists worked from home, and while some did have a consistent studio space, I did not consider this the norm. While I did not directly ask artists about the emotional drain of their immaterial resources, it was quite clear that they required emotional resources from CG as part of AD, and CG staff were aware that this was something they delivered on a regular basis.

#### **4.3.4 Showcasing opportunities**

Showcasing opportunities were moments engineered so that artists could gain exposure for their practice. These included platforming, hosting, networking, and brokerage, and exposure could be geared towards audiences, curators, collectors, writers, or other artists. For showcasing opportunities, the impacts

were relatively straightforward; they either fed into more showcasing opportunities, resources, or skills and/or knowledge. The most common resources they led to were physical space, and critical discussions around the work (which in turn led to new avenues in the work). The most common skills and/or knowledge were those that were learnt experientially, and so the *behind the scenes* learning about CG as an organisation (examples included: curatorial practices, organisational approaches to problem solving, or marketing strategies). When a showcasing opportunity led to another showcasing opportunity, eventually this chain would break, and the opportunity would instead offer resources or skills and/or knowledge.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> This cycle is not necessarily ongoing or uninterrupted. Some artists did not desire showcasing opportunities at CG, and others had reached a point where the amount of showcasing opportunities had become less-frequent than they once were, or had stopped altogether. In these cases, artists were re-entering AD through skill and/or knowledge, and/or resources.

### 4.3.5 The relationship between the four categories of AD

**Figure 2:** The relationships between different categories of AD

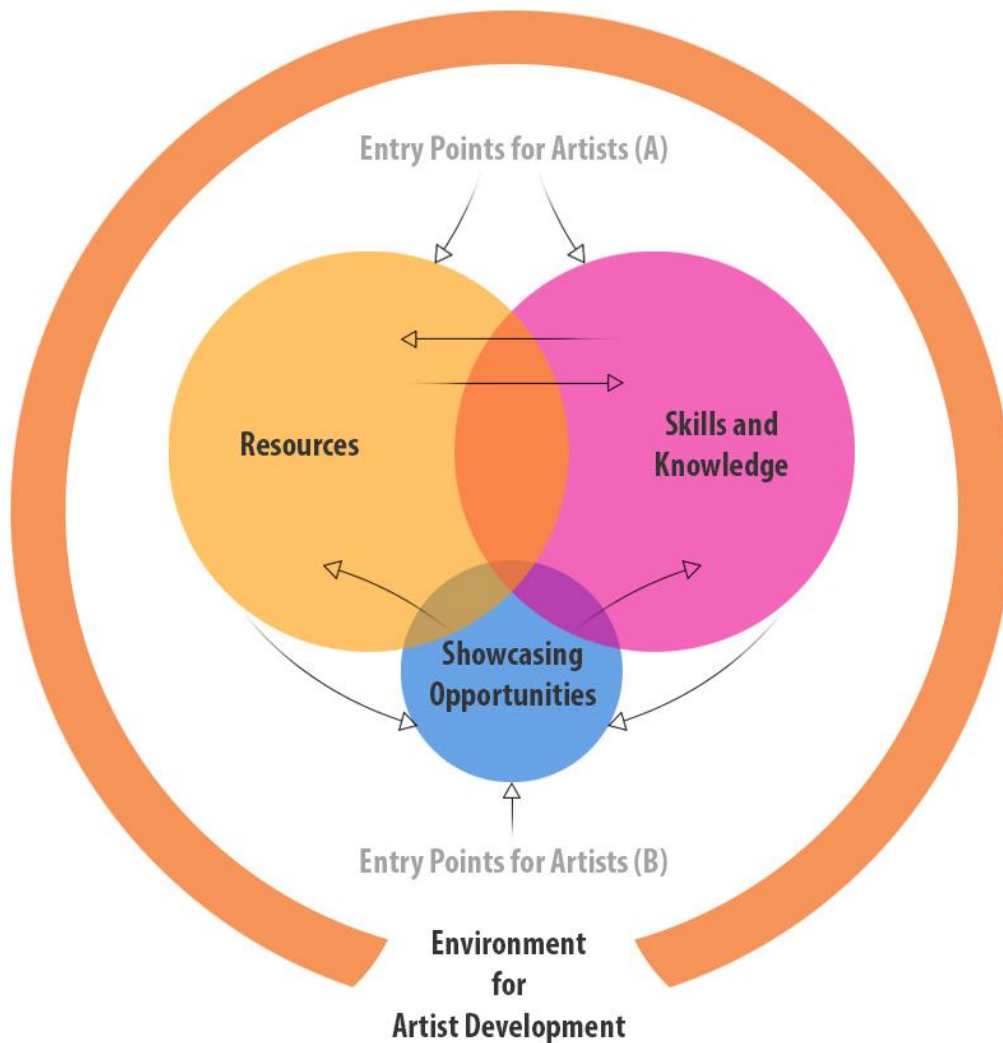


Figure 2 is a surface-level depiction of how the different categories of AD overlapped. Categories almost always fed into another category of AD, but an artist's access to the different categories varied. Artists entered AD either through resources and skills and/or knowledge at entry point A, or directly through showcasing opportunities at entry point B. Artist access to AD was dictated by a combination of factors. These included: ability to attend (based on location, time of activity, the day the activity is on), artists' own perceptions of what they required, the organisation's perception of what an artist might require,

judgements around whether an artist is considered a contemporary visual arts practitioner (i.e. one who is critically engaged), and positive reactions to the artwork. At times, these factors overlapped, particularly the last two.

In my observations, all artists had access to the majority of skills and/or knowledge and resources, irrespective of whether they were deemed to be a contemporary visual artist, or whether the individual reviewing their work had a positive response to it. However, the reviewer's judgements and responses did seem at times to limit whether an artist accessed showcasing opportunities, a further level of emotional resources, and/or the skills and/or knowledge obtained through experiential learning in an exhibition. Furthermore, whether artists accessed AD via entry point B through showcasing opportunities was determined by how the gallery staff perceived artists' work.<sup>19</sup>

For the artists in critical junctures one, two, and three, showcasing opportunities also offered experiential learning about the exhibition – including publicity, curatorial practices, and the technical considerations when hanging work – and/or critical discussions around the work – including curatorial discussions, and discussions with the public at previews. For EA1s, many of whom had been part of a significant number of exhibitions and so had already acquired knowledge of how galleries worked and so no longer required experiential learning, showcasing opportunities usually resulted in financial remuneration. My data demonstrated how this acted as a material resource, as well as an emotional resource (i.e. giving them a sense of value, as per the normative

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<sup>19</sup> Artists who were also volunteers accessed AD differently, and could gain experiential skills and/or knowledge of an exhibition without showing their own work. Further research is required to understand precisely how volunteering and AD overlap, and what AD offerings volunteers gain access to.

structures of ascribing value within a neoliberal policy paradigm). Additionally, there were cases when showcasing opportunities stopped being offered to an artist where they were once frequent. In this instance, the findings suggested that artists usually re-entered AD at entry point A. At CG, artists tended to seek AD at one or more of five critical junctures, which I will describe in section 4.4.

#### **4.4 Non-linear careers & critical junctures**

Classically, the points at which artists seek AD offerings have been defined according to their career stage. In documents and on their website, CG often presented their activity as catering to the needs of “emerging” artists. This frames the points at which artists seek organisational development according to whether an artist is emerging/early, mid-career, or established, and it is common in the sector. However, these terms were considered problematic in the literature (Slater et al., 2013; Louise, 2014; Gordon-Nesbitt, 2015), as well as among the artists interviewed. As stated by Emma Rushton, an artist who exhibited at CG in 2005:

Emerging. I suppose, [...] it's like this idea that you start off here [hand gestures lower down] and you emerge, and then you get bigger and bigger and bigger [hand moves upwards] and then you're kind of up there [hand gesture marks the top of a scale]; it's just not that at all, is it?

(Tyman & Rushton, 2015)

The linearity of these terms assumes a defined start and finish. Within this, graduation often marks the beginning and commercial viability the end, yet “the journey”, states Gordon-Nesbitt, “is by no means linear” (2015, pp. 7-8). As stated in *Supporting Growth in the Arts Economy* (Fleming & Erskine, 2011, p. 16), “artists [...] travel through a career that demands different types of support

at different stages”. Instead of defining the moment when artists seek organisational development activity by a pre-defined milestone in their career development, Gordon-Nesbitt instead argues that “programmes cater to artists at formative moments in their development” (2015, p. 6). Here, Gordon-Nesbitt (2015) is suggesting that an artist’s engagement with AD is propelled by developmental moments, and that these can occur at any point throughout the duration of an artist’s career. Using constructivist institutionalism, this report instead defines these as *critical junctures*; moments of interrupted stability, for both the artist and the institution.

#### **4.4.1 Boundaryless and protean careers**

Several authors have commented on the shifting nature of careers for contemporary art workers. Speaking of a general trend in contemporary employment, Michael Bernard Arthur and Denise M. Rousseau coin the phrase “boundaryless career”; a concept generated in response to a shifting new economy in which “opportunity, insecurity, flexibility, and uncertainty coexist, thereby confusing workers and policymakers alike” (Arthur & Rousseau, 2001, p. 3). Arthur and Rousseau (2001, p. 6) identify six meanings of the term “boundaryless career”, all of which are predicated on the notion that a “boundaryless career” is “the opposite of organizational careers”. Within these six definitions of the “boundaryless career”, one in particular resonated with my experience at CG: “when traditional organizational career boundaries, notably those involving hierarchical reporting and advancement principles, are broken” (Arthur & Rousseau, 2001, p. 6). Thus, those who experience a boundaryless career are not supported by a managerial chain of responsibility and

representation and do not experience career-progression in the same way as those employed within an organisation.

Ruth Bridgstock (2007) applied the concept of boundaryless careers in the context of practitioners. To do so, she uses the term “protean careers” to refer to “an extreme form of the boundaryless career, in conjunction with strong internal career motivations and measures of success” (Bridgstock, 2007, p. 11). Her use of the word “internal” resonates with the changing character of “expertise” as outlined by Amanda Ravetz (2012). Once embedded in social structures, *expertise* is now increasingly defined as being inherent to “reflexive and self-determined individuals” (Ravetz, 2012). In the individualisation of labour, which can also be seen in the neoliberal encouragement of entrepreneurial activity (Marttila, 2013), the social and economic risks of a sector are reconfigured as a load for individuals to carry, rather than being the responsibility of employers. And as Buck (2004, p. 22) writes, this precarity is further exacerbated by the ebb and flow inherent in an artist’s career. Louisa Buck’s (2004) portrayal of artistic careers in flux, wherein few practitioners are exempt from the increasing and decreasing frequency in which opportunities may be obtainable, was supported by data gathered during my interviews.

EA1s Baseman, Tyman, and Rushton all criticised the *linear* terminology, particularly that of *emerging*. CGA8, 9, 10, and 11 expressed dislike for the term “emerging” as a description for artist career stages. And CGA9 and 14 criticised the title “Launch Pad” as a name for one of the AD offerings. Again, associated with linearity – to launch is to send something in an upward trajectory – both were unsure about where Launch Pad was supposed to *launch* them, because careers do not map on to linear paths. CGA8, 9, 10, and 11 also questioned



whether either the entirety of the scheme was for them on the basis that they did not fit the category of “emerging” that CG used to frame its CGA scheme, or whether aspects of the scheme could be better run by escaping this mould. EA2s, however, did not critically engage with the terminology at all, with EA2c and EA2f using the term “emerging” without questioning its validity. As has been stated, within documents produced by representatives of the policy paradigm exhibitions are discussed as the primary mechanisms through which to offer AD. Furthermore, prestigious exhibitions in large organisations are assumed to be the pinnacle of what an artist can strive for (Thelwall, 2011). As EA2s were in the process of exhibiting, perhaps they felt no need to critique the terminology, as they had reached the top of a supposed hierarchy of AD offerings at CG.

Even though they had themselves exhibited at CG, EA1s, artists who had exhibited between 1984 and 2010, had had time to reflect on the process, and so were more critical of career-based assumptions epitomised by the current terminologies than EA2s were. Using the pre-existing terminology, CGA were the group most consistently referred as *emerging*, and so their criticality potentially came from the repeated experience of being homogenously described as such, despite the diversity of artforms and experience within the group. Because existing research (Slater et al., 2013; Louise, 2014; Gordon-Nesbitt, 2015) and the majority of artists I engaged with had critiqued the language of emerging/early, mid-career, and established, I felt a need to rethink the terminology, in the context of how artists’ engagement with AD is framed. To do so, I produced five *critical junctures* to describe the points at which artists sought AD at CG. I adapted this term from its use in constructivist institutionalism.

In constructivist institutionalism, the phrase critical juncture is descriptive of “brief phases of [...] flux” that punctuate “relatively long periods of [...] stability and reproduction”, in which “more dramatic change is possible” (Capoccia & Kelemen, 2007). In the context of this research, I understood critical junctures to be the artist’s choice to (simultaneously) interrupt their own, and potentially CG’s, stable trajectory. Artists did so by engaging with organisationally led AD. In the study, observations revealed that artists tended to seek AD offerings at five different critical junctures in their career which I will detail in section 4.4.2 below.

#### 4.4.2 Critical junctures

The data suggested five different *critical junctures* that represented why artists engaged with CG for AD. These were not always experienced one at a time, and could sometimes overlap. The first critical juncture was **recent exposure to unfamiliar contexts**. Caused by structural factors such as graduation or relocation – whether externally necessitated, internally driven, or a mixture of both – this juncture is representative of an artist navigating new institutional terrains with limited knowledge. The largest portion of artists experiencing this critical juncture observed during the study were recently graduated artists, and CG’s AD programme attracted artists at this critical juncture more than any other. CGA that were no longer experiencing this critical juncture often questioned whether they would continue their engagement with the CGA scheme.

The second was **a shift in form/content of their practice**. Practices ebb and flow naturally, but this juncture refers to a time where there is a *marked* shift.

Artists tended to use two different approaches when processing the shift they were experiencing. The first was to use it as a creative energy in the production of work. The second was to discuss the changes with someone more experienced than themselves in a one-to-one context.

Critical juncture three was **artists already familiar with the contemporary visual arts sphere, continuing or re-establishing momentum for opportunities**, such as exhibitions or residencies. This juncture included artists needing to continue or reinstate momentum for external opportunities suited to their practice, where opportunities were once forthcoming and lucrative in number/scale, or artists looking to continue the momentum of recent successes. Of these two different reasons behind entering this juncture, I only encountered the latter first hand. I became aware of the former from people telling me about people they knew who were once lucrative in their showcasing opportunities but recently entered a lull, or from artists retrospectively talking about their experiences. This was discussed in my interviews with Lawson and EA1 Hyman. In the latter, he recalled to me “a pretty barren period in terms of showing” following his earlier successes of the 1980s and early 1990s. I observed first-hand artists continuing the momentum of recent successes; those who were, so to speak, *on a roll*. Hardeep Pandhal was a good example of this. Pandhal’s show at CG in 2014 was part a GM-wide festival, Asia Triennial Manchester, and seemed to come at a time where opportunities were forthcoming for Pandhal both prior to and after the exhibition (CG, 2014a).

The fourth critical juncture was **artists looking to broaden exposure**. For example, artists who wanted to engage: curators from a different organisation to those they had previously worked with; collectors; commercial representation;

audiences consisting of the public; and more-specific audiences, such as those visiting heritage sites. This critical juncture refers to artists who explicitly engage with AD offerings to achieve this. It can often overlap with the third juncture, but not always. This was often supported by CG through showcasing opportunities.

The final critical juncture was **an exhausted locality**. This moment of engagement featured artists who felt they had exhausted the opportunities available to them within the current geographical region in which they were practising. Artists in this juncture typically desired organisational support to connect them with practitioners or organisations in different locations nationally or internationally, working in their specified area(s) of practice. At times, the last juncture overlapped with the third and fourth, but was specifically focussed on artists seeking the organisational mechanisms to help them expand beyond their immediate region, without having to relocate permanently.

Different AD offerings were more applicable to certain critical junctures, as can be seen in Table 16 on page 133. It was noticeable how the fifth critical juncture – an exhausted locality – was virtually absent from the AD offerings at CG. This corresponded to the findings of the pilot study for this research, wherein Slater et al. (2013) conclude that current opportunities at CG were targeted at artists who had recently graduated. For artists who already knew the regional contemporary arts milieu and had learnt how to professionalise their practice, the support they required tended to be resource-heavy, needing intimate and bespoke learning strategies and showcasing opportunities. Typically, this included non-formal (one-to-one) and experiential learning. There were few aspects of these that could be captured using numeric indices.

When resources and skills and/or knowledge were delivered to large groups, attendance figures could be used to comply with the current norms of evaluation. For larger organisations, compared to audience figures and sales, the figures for bespoke AD offerings would look comparatively low using quantitative approaches. Therefore, organisations do not have an incentive to offer/capture this type of AD. Furthermore, because these artists did not seek AD at CG, in part because they did not have access to the national and international networks artists in critical junctures four and five desired, least is known about the support required for artists in these critical junctures.

**Table 16:** AD offerings and critical junctures

		Critical juncture				
		1	2	3	4	5
Skills and/or knowledge	Non-formal learning (group)	●	●			
	Non-formal learning (one-to-one)	●	●	●	○	○
	Experiential learning	●	●	●	●	
	Formal learning (group)	●				
Resources	Physical space	●	●	●		○
	Direct tangible resources	●	●	●		○
	Emotional	●	●	●	●	○
	Opening up new avenues in the work	●	●	●		○
Showcasing opportunities	Platforming	●	●	●	●	○
	Hosting	●		●	●	
	Networking	●	●	●	●	○
	Brokerage	●	●	●	●	●

Key	
Required by artist, and offered by CG	●
Required by artist, but not offered by CG	○

## 4.5 Chapter summary

In this chapter, I presented the findings generated through interviews and guided conversations. In section 4.2 I detailed how individuals employed within the policy sphere defined talent development, and demonstrated that Wewiora, Percival, and Elderkin each considered it to be less concerned with helping artists to access markets and exhibitions than the documents in section 2.3 suggested. While the documents produced by and interviews conducted with representatives of the policy paradigm can be indicative of how the hegemonic sphere perceived talent development, there was also scope for these to illustrate how the individuals authoring the documents and interviews might reinterpret and challenge the dominant framework.

The guided conversations and interviews with representatives of the policy paradigm suggested an expanded understanding of talent development compared to documents authored by representatives of the policy paradigm. In addition, Wewiora, Percival, and Elderkin all described how they *learnt* from the sector to inform their approach to talent development, and used this learning to incrementally contribute to the formation of strategic documents that informed ACE and MCC's funding decisions, such as *Great Art and Culture for Everyone* (2013b). However, all data gathered from representatives of the policy paradigm dichotomised artist and audience, as well as prioritise the needs of the audience when considering policy agendas, such as outdoor arts in the case of ACE.

In section 4.3 I expanded on the four categories of AD developed from the data available in documents, as described in Chapter 2, and gave a rich description of the fabric of an AD organisation. To render AD visible, the methods used to

collect data on artist-focussed activity should reflect the way I highlighted how AD is a qualitative and context-specific phenomenon. Using my field notes and the guided conversation and interview transcripts, I deciphered that nurturing an environment was conducted centripetally and centrifugally. Furthermore, I documented four sub-categories of skills and/or knowledge according to how it was delivered to artists. These included: formal (group); non-formal (group); non-formal (one-to-one); and experiential. Resources could also be broken down into four sub-categories. These were: physical space; direct tangible resources; opening up new avenues in the practice; and emotional resources. Finally, the following sub-categories of showcasing opportunities were identified: platforming, hosting, networking, and brokerage.

In section 4.4, I critiqued the linear terminology of emerging/early, mid-career, and established, used to define the points at which artists require AD. To do so, I used examples from my primary data, as well as literature on boundaryless and protean career. Subsequently, I presented five critical junctures to understand when artists sought AD at CG. These were: recent exposure to unfamiliar contexts; a shift in form/content of their practice; artists already familiar with the contemporary visual arts sphere, continuing or re-establishing momentum for opportunities; artists looking to broaden exposure; and an exhausted locality.

If, as I will argue in Chapter 6, the small-scale and contemporary visual arts sphere is to operate as counterpublic to effect normative change relating to econometrics and the instrumentalisation of artistic practice, then this expanded understanding of AD is crucial on three fronts. First, it contributes to the literature that demonstrates the value of looking beyond quantitative and end-

user methods of data collection, to incorporate rigorous, qualitative, and artist-focussed approaches to data collection in the small-scale and contemporary visual arts sphere. Second, it highlights the sheer volume of developmental activity that can be attributed to the small-scale and contemporary arts milieu, and so stresses the importance of funding small-scale organisations such as CG. Finally, it offers additional discourses with which the small-scale and artist-focussed contemporary visual arts sphere can choose take ownership of to better articulate its practices.



## 5 Artist development and the neoliberal paradigm

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### 5.1 Introduction

At this point, the thesis has dealt with a rich description of how AD activity was practised at CG. This led to the identification of gaps in existing typologies, previously unreported and uncategorised forms of AD, and re-conceptualisations of AD terminologies and categories. This section moves into the connected but distinct territory of using AD as a lens to understand the relationship of small-scale contemporary visual arts organisations to the policy paradigm.

As was demonstrated in section 1.2, representatives of the neoliberal policy paradigm have tended to focus on the instrumental outputs of artistic practice, rather than recognising the intrinsic value of the creative process. Furthermore, econometrics have often been used to capture these *outputs* and inform strategic planning (Böhm & Land, 2008; Thelwall, 2011; Gordon-Nesbitt, 2012), and so have prioritised indicators of value such as audience footfall, ticket and café revenue, and sales of artworks. The intersection of the neoliberal policy paradigm and AD is often problematic for small-scale and artist-focussed contemporary visual art organisations, and I uncovered four main issues that have arisen from the policy paradigm's instrumentalisation of artistic practice in the context of AD: 1) a prioritisation of the positive reception of artworks; 2) capitalising on "deferred value" (Thelwall, 2011); 3) the deferred *values* of AD; and 4) staff capacity. I will now discuss each of these in turn below.

### 5.2 Prioritising the reception of artworks

The instrumentalisation of artistic practice in the policy sphere has led to an overt focus on the reception of artworks. When I use the phrase *reception of*

*artwork*, I mean the ways that an artwork is received, be it by an audience, through a sale with a collector, in a review, etc. As the main defining context for neoliberal policy paradigms, capitalism's expectation of growth and profit lends itself to binaries that represent the beginning and end in processes of accumulation (Ingham, 2008; Weber, 2003). As such, since the 1980s the neoliberal policy paradigm in the UK has assumed artworks as a singular point of consumption, not as part of a long-term body of work produced by an artist, or potentially producing the artist. These processes orbit the artwork as a product and vehicle for profit (Caust, 2003), and production exists insofar as it is intended for consumption, at which point the greatest possible profit (economic or social) is expected, or at least hoped for (Weber, 2003). In this linear system of accumulation and profit, it is a given that the output is larger than the input, and so the value of arts organisations is to use financial investment to turn artistic practice into demonstrable profit. As the input is framed in numeric terms, the output is assumed to be likewise. Therefore, quantitative methods are applied to capture quantifiable inputs and outputs.

Conducted through use of a short survey, the Quality Metrics were a series of statements presented to artists, curators, and/or the host organisation, "expert peers", and audiences (Bunting & Knell, 2014): artists, curators, and/or the host organisation complete the survey in a process of "self-assessment"; peers, such as artists who are not part of the exhibition, art professionals, academics, and, if deemed appropriate, funders complete the survey as part of "peer assessment"; and audiences (or visitors) provide "public assessment" (Bunting & Knell, 2014, p. 7). The survey used a sliding scale to gauge the extent to which respondents agreed or disagreed with a set of statements (listed on the following page), so

that the host organisation could learn how exhibitions on their premises were received (Bunting & Knell, 2014). The statements were as follows:

Self, peer and public:

- Concept: it was an interesting idea
- Presentation: it was well produced and presented
- Distinctiveness: it was different from things I've experienced before
- Challenge: it was thought-provoking
- Captivation: it was absorbing and held my attention
- Enthusiasm: I would come to something like this again
- Local impact: it is important that it's happening here
- Relevance: it has something to say about the world in which we live
- Rigour: it was well thought through and put together

Self and peer only:

- Originality: it was ground-breaking
- Risk: the artists/curators really challenged themselves
- Excellence: it is one of the best examples of its type that I have seen

(ACE, n.d.g)

Based on a study undertaken in Western Australia, these metrics were, to quote ACE, "sector led" (ACE, n.d.g, p. 1). The organisations involved in the development of these metrics were: Manchester City Galleries, Whitworth Art Gallery; Manchester Literature Festival; Imperial War Museum North; Contact Theatre; Centre for Contemporary Chinese Art (CFCCA); Museum of Science & Industry; Royal Exchange Theatre; Octagon Bolton; Coliseum Oldham; Manchester Jazz Festival; Manchester Museum; Cornerhouse/Library Theatre/HOME; and the Hallé Orchestra. Of these, Manchester City Galleries, Whitworth Art Gallery, CFCCA, and HOME were classed as predominantly visual arts organisations.

These organisations were of a certain size. As described by Thelwall, “small organisations are defined as having an annual turnover of below £1m and operating on a non-profit basis” (Thelwall, 2011, p. 9). Most of these organisations do not fall into this category (due to their turnovers), and none of these organisations primarily define themselves as AD organisations (although several of them include developmental opportunities on their websites). As Louise’s (2011), Thelwall’s (2011), and Gordon-Nesbitt’s (2012) papers show, larger organisations are better able to articulate their value using sales and audience numbers. With a larger audience-base than artist engagement, the organisations involved in the Quality Metrics were more likely to focus qualitative data-collection on audiences, rather than artist experience. As such, the Quality Metrics are well-suited to the organisations that generated them, but not necessarily artist-focussed and process-orientated organisations such as CG.

The Quality Metrics are output-driven, and they exclusively target how the artwork is received. Other than *distinctiveness* and *challenge*, all the statements above are attentive to how the artwork can act as a positive experience for the audience. Furthermore, there is a prescriptiveness about the statements. For example, they give the impression that artworks *should* induce an enthusiasm in the audience, or would be irrelevant if audiences deemed them not to say anything about the world in which we live in. What if it was more important for an artist to disgust an audience, rather than enthuse them? Or for them to make a commentary on form, rather than content? Would the public be able to gauge an enthusiasm and relevance for those two things? Additionally, there is a *process* behind the production of artworks, and what output-driven approaches

like this fail to capture are *artists'* experiences of processes. In not doing so, understanding of the necessity and diversity of the artist-led sector has been stunted, and so, arguably, funding has not always reflected the important work undertaken by organisations operating in this sphere (Louise, 2011; Thelwall, 2011). As stated by Caust (2003, p. 61), "equating the making of the art with the selling of art undermines the process of the doing". The tendency for representatives of the policy paradigm to define artistic practice as a product with profitable and measurable impacts has meant that data-collection is often focussed on audience's positive experiences, as demonstrated through attendance and purchasing power (Thelwall, 2011). As a result, capturing the *process* as part of artistic practice has typically been overlooked, and ACE's release of Quality Metrics in 2016 are a good example of how this has manifest.

Based on the information I gathered from artists, data collection on audiences had limited or no use when fed back into their practice. Often manifest through emotional resources or new avenues in the work, the way an audience responded to an artwork, at times, fed into AD. Eleven of the 35 artists interviewed discussed how audience feedback had a role in what they perceived as their own development. Yet, representatives of the policy paradigm were encouraging organisations such as CG, whose primary concern is AD, to complete surveys like Audience Finder.<sup>20</sup> While the results could be useful to a degree, I certainly questioned whether the prioritisation of audiences

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<sup>20</sup> The Audience Finder survey was originally only mandatory for larger organisations, but there was strong encouragement from ACE for as many NPOs as possible to partake. And in April 2016 this became mandatory for all NPOs (ACE, n.d.e).

in data collection was the most productive use of time in an environment that was attentive to process, not outcome.

The policy paradigm's attentiveness to the reception of the artwork also suggests that the artist is only at the point of *consumption* by audiences if it is a part of the transaction. The data suggested this was an incorrect assumption. Instead, amongst certain artists in the study there was a desire to understand how their work was received (CGAs 2, 5, 9, 11, & 12; EA2a, b, d, f, & h; EA1 Tyman & Rushton). An example of where the audience and artist were conceptually separated was in the way that ACE required NPOs to complete the Audience Agency survey of 31 questions. None of the questions in this survey addressed how the audience engaged with the artwork in a way that was designed to be fed back to the artist; there was no constructive feedback that the artist could use to reconsider aspects of their practice. Instead, all the indicators, ranging from website use to whether visitors are staying overnight as part of their trip, were quantified, transferred into percentages, and compared to other venues in the same geographical region.

### **5.3 Capitalising on “deferred value” (Thelwall, 2011)**

To offer an approach that recognises small visual art organisations' input into the process of capitalised large-scale exhibitions, Thelwall (2011, p. 7) recommends establishing “ways of measuring a wider variety of types of value being delivered by small visual arts organisations”. In this sense, the arts

[...] need[s] approaches that take into consideration the structures in which a substantial proportion of the value created is deferred until later in the life of the work.

(Thelwall, 2011, p. 7)

However, there is a slight misalignment between Thelwall's (2011) definition of deferred value – as an input/output process resulting in large-scale capitalised exhibitions – and the desire for a greater recognition of what small visual arts organisations contribute.

Thelwall (2011) relies on several different dichotomisations in her application of the concept of “deferred value”: input/output, supply/demand, and artist/audience. When Thelwall (2011, p. 11) asks how the value created by these organisations might be more appropriately articulated, recognised and measured, the assumption that underlies this question concerns how the original work that created numerically viable practices can be retrospectively rewarded; she approaches the question from the starting point that assumes output value as one that is quantifiable later. As a result, the quantitative model of “deferred value” renders invisible qualitative values that might be present throughout the artistic process. By retrospectively applying quantitative metrics, Thelwall (2011) historically selects the “values” that demonstrate these metrics in their infancy. In establishing “deferred value” as a linear chain of input and output – where output is expected to achieve a numerically viable profit – other, “intangible values” are potentially lost; values which sit “at odds” (2011, p. 6) with the current use of econometrics. Furthermore, in establishing and applying a linear notion of value through an input/output framework, Thelwall (2011) also upholds the dichotomy between artist and audience that was present in ACEs and MCCs data (see section 4.2). When Thelwall (2011) implies that value is that which begins as numerically viable, she retrospectively denotes the initial *value* as inherently quantifiable; for example, artists, ideas, and artworks that can be judged to attract audiences and sales *given time*. What if an artist's

primary goal is something which will never attract ever-growing audiences or sales? What if an artist's chosen career path does not accumulate value in a numerically profitable way over time?

*Starting from Values* problematised the intangible legacies of community-based projects, and argued that at the very start of a project the project leads should use what they termed a value lens (Starting from Values Project Team, 2015). A value lens begins with all participants articulating the values they associate with the upcoming project/event. These values are then prospectively tracked, and additional values that are added or branch off the original ones are documented. In doing so, a value lens aims to evidence and capture a more holistic representation of the legacy of the original project/event. Taking this into consideration, I used the concept of "deferred value", but reframed it as *deferred values* to incorporate the possibility that there may be multiple different values which can be deferred. Deferred values are, therefore, the short and long-term realised known aspirations and unknown consequences of multiple different stakeholders in any given project. In terms of assessing the deferred values of AD, this cannot be achieved without the views of all those involved, including the artist. These vary from person to person, and are often divergent. Section 5.4 discusses the alternative *values* I observed during my fieldwork.

#### **5.4 The deferred *values* of artist development**

Thelwall's (2011) notion that values become deferred was highly observant, and at the time of my fieldwork CG had a desire to explore it in greater depth due to the way it resonated with much of their experience. As part of AD as I observed it, there were three thematic areas that demonstrated deferred values: non-



exhibiting career paths, the known and unknown aspirations of artists, and organisations that do not wish to expand or grow – “The beauty of being small over large” (De-Light, 2015).

Some areas of artistic practice may never overlap with gallery-led mechanisms of exhibiting and/or sales. As stated by King (2012, unpag.), “exhibition and commission opportunities will only ever enable a few selected artists”. In the article, *Exhibitions are not enough: Publicly funded galleries and artists? professional development*, King (2012) aims to explain the need for more professional development activities. Here, I discuss how the paradigmatic nature of neoliberalism obfuscates career choices and deferred values by prioritising ideas of accumulation and profitability.

The notion that a substantial cohort of artists’ practice does not overlap with exhibitions is well-established (King, 2012), and throughout the interviews, all artists discussed such areas of practice. Often, non-exhibiting aspects of practice were linked to developmental work, but there were also several artists who described their practice as site-specific, and so not necessarily geared towards exhibiting in the curated public gallery. Upon attending the gallery for a one-to-one, CGA13 relayed to me how they were informed of what they could do to become an exhibiting contemporary visual artist. In receipt of that advice, the artist realised they wanted to take their practice in a different direction, and so they re-framed their work and focussed on seeking commissions and residencies in a different sector, but continued to attend CGA as the discussions and crits were still useful in contextualising their practice. CGA10 and 11 explained to me that they had always practiced outside of the gallery context, producing site-specific pieces in alternative spaces. They stated that at

no point did they want to exhibit within the CG's curated space, but still they were part of the cohort of artists CGA worked with. The work that CG conducted with these artists did have deferred values, but it was unlikely that these artists were on a trajectory that would have resulted in exhibitions at larger organisations. Thelwall's (2011) application of "deferred value" failed to capture the different career trajectories of artists who do not wish to exhibit or sell their work through contemporary art galleries.

Through interviewing, participants also revealed to me a range of known and unknown aspirations that unfolded as part of AD, all of which resonated with Thelwall's idea of deferral, but not in the way that she framed value. These were divided between the perceived short-term values, and longer-term values. In relation to the first, EA1s Baseman, Hyman, Jones, and Roxy Walsh, six of the CGA (CGA1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 12), and five of the EA2s (EA2b, c, d, g, and h) directly discussed the short-term topping up of resources.

For example, Jordan Baseman recalled the way CG imbued a professionalism in the artists they worked with. This was both in his students and in himself:

[...] the way that he [Kwong Lee] engaged with us [Jordan and his students] was not patronising in any way. The bar was much higher than they [the students] were used to (which was great, it was really great!); he treated them as professional artists, which was what they needed to feel like and what they were and are aspiring to be [...].

You mentioned just then that they needed to feel like 'professional artists'. Why?

More generally, I guess, how you perceive yourself may be how you are and how you present yourself to the world. This is something I'm trying to continually learn (but don't always get) but it's like how you present yourself is how others understand you to be. But they didn't have the chance to present themselves, it was just a given that they were treated in this manner.

In terms of my own practice, it made me feel like a professional (for once in a while).

(Baseman, 2015)

Baseman also mentioned how one of the selectors for PureScreen, the show he was involved in, went on to invite him to take part in another show, which he did. However, while Baseman remembered both of these instances, he did not recall whether they had a durable impact. Instead, they were simply springboards to *the next step*.

Six of the CGs (CGA7, 9, 10, 11, 14, and 16) recognised the need for these short-term values when they discussed an absence of belonging and/or confidence. Five of these (CGA7, 9, 10, 11, and 16) discussed how their sense of being an outsider limited their access to the benefits of the associates scheme, and so they felt an absence of belonging when they needed it as a short-term emotional resource. Two artists directly addressed a lack of being treated professionally, and two of the EA2s (EA2e and f) noted the absence of these resources in a way that could be directly linked to timeliness; the timing of the show personally or professionally meant they did not access the emotional resources they required, and knew existed because they had experienced them elsewhere through previous showcasing opportunities.

Perceived short-term values were recalled as important by artists, but their significance only lasted in the context of the next opportunity the current one unlocked, rather than repeatedly impacting their career. Because they were short-term, artists required more frequent instances of these values which could, if not refreshed, become exhausted; i.e. the artist would notice their absence, and start to experience issues in their practice. I termed these

*perceived* short-term because although each individual instance only lasted so far as one or two *next steps*, these type of values were still needed throughout an artist's career.

Several of the artists also noted the more *lasting* values that they could carry forward throughout the duration of their career. This was especially evident in the EA1s. These *lasting* values tended to take one of two forms, and I will use examples to elaborate on what these were. The first was a single moment that changed the direction of an artist's practice, and Hopkins was illustrative of someone who experienced this type of lasting values. The second gave artists a resource which they could draw from at multiple points later in their career, and quotes from EA1Walsh is used to illustrate this.

About the former, Hopkins described to me how CG gave him the opportunity to conduct a retrospective that he would not have had the confidence to show at other, much larger venues (which he was also showing at the time).

I think it was quite useful for me having that show at that point because my work (surprise surprise, I'm sure it is the same for everyone) did seem to be at some sort of turning point, some sort of transition anyway. Sometimes work goes on largely in what seems a logical continuation. At other times, it's quite exciting to be making some sort of changes and not quite knowing what's going to come out. Feeling that there is some change under way. That was quite a useful time for me because, I noticed in the work that I selected for it, it seemed to me there was very definitely some work that was in the process of changing, I guess, and there was some work that was older that I kind of felt I knew much more about.

Some of it was quite painterly and loose, at times, and other times I was just beginning to see if there was something interesting that I could do by introducing bits of patter, or dots instead of fields of colour....it encouraged me to continue to think about the changes that were taking place, rather than thinking 'oh my god! What did I go out on that limb for?'. I thought 'this could be something, this sort of mixture of messiness of colour, much more hi-key colour coming out of washy but dark grounds'. Introducing some of these almost pattern or decorative elements.

I was moving away, I suppose, from this much more 'brushy, open, watery, mark-making field of things into something I occasionally thought: 'how far some gormless, fifties pattern can take this?'. Or, 'I could use black, but maybe just black as blobs rather than some beautiful, controlled, flooded area'. Things like this [gestures to catalogue], see I don't know what dates these paintings are [a couple of years after]. One or two bits of the work were like that in Castlefield, but you see I knew I hadn't got there. Seeing it, I think is what I'm trying to say, gave me the confidence to push it a bit further. I think also (it sounds a bit corny this) it was quite a nice feeling that there was a reasonably good response from the students and ex-students.

(Hopkins, 2015)

As part of this, Hopkins could review a select number of works, and consider where to go next. For Hopkins, this exhibition focussed his attention on a style of painting which he took forward and changed his practice throughout his career.

Discussing the second type of longer term values, EA1 Walsh spoke about a connection that acted as a resource she could return to at later points in her career. Walsh noted how the production of a catalogue alongside her exhibition at CG resulted in a long term relationship between her and a writer:

Doing the catalogue allowed me to key into a writer, and allowed her to put together a workshop. She wrote the catalogue. That became an ongoing thing. She wrote again for a catalogue in 2012, and she's won the Booker Prize in between.

(Walsh, 2015)

This relationship then led onto a significant Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) funded project that Walsh later undertook. This, in turn, increased Walsh's employment opportunities going forward:

[...] the collaboration with Anne Enright for *Better after Death* kind of developed an idea; I was becoming interested in relationships between art and literature. Subsequent to that it initiated a really large project for me, which was a curatorial project, which got AHRC funding and major Arts Council funding. It was looking at relationships between fiction and visual arts.

(Walsh, 2015)

In this quote, Walsh clearly outlines how she returns to the relationship she developed with this writer at points later in her career through future collaborations, idea development, and later to successfully apply for AHRC and ACE funding. The work that CG did undoubtedly influenced artists at later stages in their careers. However, this was not always in a way that could be capitalised on by larger organisations. In the research, not all artists strove to exhibit in large-scale organisations, so their practice would never be realised in this setting, and some values would never evolve into that which could be quantified.

Finally, neoliberalism as it is currently implemented through the policy paradigm struggles to account for organisations that do not wish to expand in size, but instead intend to remain small-scale and reject expectations of growth.

Neoliberalism is a model predicated on continual growth; with a market based on the expectation of profit (Ingham, 2008), institutions must build upon prior achievements within a reasonable time-frame and achieve a profitable turnover (Böhm & Land, 2008). Representatives of the policy sphere are acutely aware of the expectation of profit and growth in the current climate. For example, ACE

explicitly stated that they desired to support the arts sector based on its demonstrable growth:

Delivering artistic outcomes is the main reason why the Arts Council invests in the arts sector, but that investment can bring a range of other impacts that can help the sector become more resilient. We know that arts and culture can contribute to local economic growth. They are a key part of the creative industries, a sector that grew by 5.8 per cent between 1997 and 2013, compared to growth of 4.2 per cent in the UK economy as a whole. We know that arts and culture provide opportunities for employment, with a growth of 10.1 per cent in jobs in this sector between 2011 and 2013, compared to a 2.4 per cent increase in jobs in the UK as a whole. We want to support this contribution to local economies because it adds to the value that arts and culture have within local and national life, and because it makes the sector more sustainable by demonstrating that value and in securing a basis for sector growth.

(ACE, n.d.c, p. 6)

Here, ACE is referring to how artistic practice contributes to economic growth and expanded employment. When ACE couches the arts' societal contribution in the terms highlighted above, they signal the type of language and evidence they are looking for from the organisations and individuals they fund. As such, there is a subtle pressure on small-scale and artist-focussed contemporary visual arts organisations to continually grow and expand, and to demonstrate this. As stated by Caroline Woodley from Afterall, at a Common Practice event held in London on the 5<sup>th</sup> January 2015:<sup>21</sup>

There is always pressure to develop, to develop; no wonder we empire-build. And I've certainly spent the last six months un-building the little empire that is Afterall.

(Woodley, 2015)

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<sup>21</sup> Afterall is a research centre at the University of the Arts, London. Their research focus on "contemporary art and its relation to a wider artistic, theoretical and social context" (Afterall, n.d.).

Yet not all organisations can meet these expectations, nor do they want to or feel they should. Dominique De-Light (2015), from Creative Future in Brighton, stressed how there was no desire amongst some small contemporary art organisations to adopt these types of growth and expansion.<sup>22</sup> This up-scaling can even have a detrimental impact on the aims and reach of an intentionally small organisation, for example “marginalised and disabled artists can get lost through the gaps, and can feel intimidated by those larger organisations” (De-Light, 2015). Remaining *small* was important to the remit of Creative Future, and De-Light termed this: “the beauty of being small over large” (De-Light, 2015). This is not to say growth or expansion are inherently un-suited to small organisations. Rather, it is the notion that certain organisations and organisational practices offered in this sector do not fit the conceptions of growth that dominate the sector, or the metrics by which growth is assessed.

### **5.5 Staff capacity: “who is caring for us?” (De-Light, 2015)**

In this section, I focus on the working conditions of the staff as a limitation to AD. Recently in the UK, with campaigns such as Paying Artists (2016) and groups such as the Precarious Workers Brigade (2016), there has been a lot of attention on how precarity leads to voluntary and free labour, expected of arts professionals. Whilst often focussing on the arts-practitioner and not the arts-administrator or gallery worker, the trend is observable as a condition of working in the contemporary job market (Morini, 2007). As a condition of the neoliberal paradigm driving the nature of the workforce experience, “for several decades

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<sup>22</sup> Creative Future provide “training, mentoring and the chance to publish or exhibit to talented people who lack opportunities due to mental health issues, disability, health, identity or other social circumstance” (Creative Future, n.d.).



[...] social, economic, and political forces have aligned to make work more precarious”, states Arne L. Kalleberg (2009, p. 2).

By *precarious work*, Kalleberg (2009, p. 2) explicitly means “employment that is uncertain, unpredictable, and risky from the point of view of the worker”. As part of this, Kalleberg identifies five trends in precarity:

1. Decline in attachment to employers
2. Increase in long-term unemployment
3. Growth in perceived job *security*
4. Growth of nonstandard work arrangements and contingent work
5. Increase in risk – shifting from employers to employees

(Kalleberg, 2009, pp. 6-8)

In relation to working in the small contemporary arts as an art professional, points three, four, and five all presented themselves in the research. At CG, I recognised these same tensions in the working conditions of the gallery staff. In my observations and in the context of AD, the precarity of the workforce had two main implications. Kalleberg’s (2009, pp. 7-8) definition above talks of “nonstandard work arrangements”, “contingent work”, and increased “risk” in areas of employment that are defined by precarity. The first two mentioned refer to patterns in employment such as “contracting and temporary work”. To this, I add unpaid overtime or irregular hours. The first was the way in which the staff at CG were often over-stretched, often doubling up at certain pinch-points of work-overload with more than one staff-member being required to complete the task that should have been completed by just one. This meant that CG’s staff were, at times, less-able to complete tasks allocated to them within their contracted hours. Often, this resulted in the completion of tasks that had been side-lined during unpaid hours of overtime.

At the Common Practice conference on the 5<sup>th</sup> January 2015, De-Light asked a question which resonated with my experience of the working conditions at CG.

She asked, “who is caring for us?”:

I don't know about you, but I always feel completely overwhelmed and beyond our capacity for the work we have to do. We certainly don't feel like we're getting the best support.

(De-Light, 2015)

As part of a wider structural trend, the staff at CG experienced a similar working environment and expressed similar sentiments. On several occasions, I noted how the staff were working outside of their usual hours. Examples from my notes include working late to complete tasks that require more time than the staff are allocated during their hours, working irregularly long hours to prepare for an event, or working at events when their allocated time does not make room. My notes repeatedly mentioned the diligence of staff attending previews at CG, at events associated with CG, or spending social time with affiliated artists, often as part of the gallery's ethos of open-involvement. In each of these cases, the working conditions of the staff clearly resonate with conditions of precarity. I wrote:

I recalled that after the board meeting last night, which the staff left at 8pm, GS6, GS1 and GS2 went into the office. I followed them, expecting them to pack up and go home. All of them sat down and continued working. I asked them if they were late home. GS1 said they left at around 8pm, but I know they didn't; I stayed later than that and they all remained after I left. I asked them what they were doing. They all said they were either “catching up” or “finishing off” work that still needed to be done.

(de Mynn, 2015, p. 16)

GS2 pops in to say hello, takes a lot of calls, and then leaves to go home and “sleep off” the long days they have been working [...]. I asked whether this was time off in lieu. They smiled, and gestured that that was unlikely.

(de Mynn, 2015, p. 3)

GS5 just told me they are working tonight for free. It is out of their office hours, but they need those for other tasks and so are attending [the event] outside of any paid hours. GS5 also told me GS6 had been working for free in the evenings [...].

(de Mynn, 2015, p. 3)

All three of these quotes demonstrate the long and often unpaid hours worked by the gallery staff at CG. Additionally, staff were informally expected to attend social events outside of their contracted hours. Such events were deemed essential to their roles, for example the curator would regularly visit exhibitions and degree shows to see the work of prospective artists, and yet they were not always paid for their time, particularly at evening events.

In an application to Catalyst: Evolve funding through ACE, a report by CG (2016b, p. 4) detailed how the director’s role has expanded beyond what his day-to-day activity is supposed to focus on.<sup>23</sup> “[T]he organisation lacks capacity”, it states (2016b, p. 4), and as such: “the Director has various roles within the organisation including book-keeping, HR and other essential administrative functions”. These roles were not assigned to the Gallery Director, and, in completing them, Lee, CG’s director, was prevented from completing his own duties within the contracted hours. As such, he often worked additional unpaid hours to complete his workload. This limited the gallery in a failure to

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<sup>23</sup> The round of Catalyst: Evolve that CG secured opened in January 2016 and closed in February of the same year. Catalyst: Evolve funding aims to help organisations who can demonstrate capability in fundraising from private sources but are restricted in their ability to take this further. It does so by offering match funding, and investing in “the skills, capacity and culture of organisations to better enable them to raise philanthropic income” (ACE, n.d.j).

“take full advantage of the individual and business relationships recently gained” (2016b, p. 4). While CG’s successful bid shows policy-makers and funders acknowledging the need to invest in organisational resilience, it does not alleviate the three years prior in which funding was inadequately provided so that staff would not be in a system of precarity. Furthermore, such funding fails to offer the staff pension schemes, or additional benefits and security, and organisational resilience is not conceptually linked with non-precarious working conditions of the staff.

Kalleberg’s conclusion that precarity includes “increased risk” can be observed through “the increase in defined contribution pension and health insurance plans [...] and the decline in defined benefit plans” (Kalleberg, 2009, p. 8). In reference to a conversation about staff pensions at a board meeting, at which the gallery staff were present, my notes recorded how several staff members later concluded: “it was a joke [...] they have no idea!” (de Mynn, 2015, p. 16).

They added:

A little while ago, we were asked to stop putting the extra hours we were working down by the Board. We still work all those hours, but get no recognition for it – these are into the evenings, our own time.

(de Mynn, 2015, p. 16)

In small-scale and artist-focussed contemporary visual arts organisations, there is a balancing act between funding, staff resource, and the Gallery’s ambition, often at the cost of stability within the workforce’s employment scenario. For Thelwall (2011, p. 16), this is a trend that can be seen in other smaller organisations who are constantly “maintaining an appropriate balance in programming costs with respect to staff time”. And where much of AD is unseen

when quantitative methods are applied as a way to evaluate the activity in this sphere, the workloads of predominantly AD organisations are overloaded by invisible work that is not accounted for. And instead of prioritising exhibition programmes and sales to the detriment of AD, the employees at small-scale and artist focussed contemporary visual art organisations conduct their work in precarious conditions, because of their “implicit understanding” that what they do is essential to sustain the whole system (Thelwall, 2011, p. 39). However, instead of the cost befalling the organisations with high turnover, the market, or state funding mechanisms that have a vested interest in maintaining the sector, it is being extracted from individuals working in exploitative conditions in the small-scale sector.<sup>24</sup>

## 5.6 Chapter summary

This chapter has demonstrated how neoliberalism has instrumentalised artistic practice and dichotomised artist and audience to the detriment of AD, due to core ideas around production, supply, consumption, and demand. As a result, the role fulfilled by small-scale and artist-focussed contemporary visual arts organisations in the contemporary arts milieu is undervalued, and therefore under-funded. The same models of profit and growth also impacted how Thelwall (2011) conceptualised “deferred value”. By outlining the “deferred value” as that which can be capitalised upon by larger organisations, Thelwall determines that the original value must be quantifiably realisable, but what

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<sup>24</sup> My experience of talking with individuals across the sector suggested this had a gendered impact as well, raising questions around how female employees might secure adequate maternity pay and support with childcare.

about values that are never quantifiable? I therefore shift the terminology to *deferred values* in line with the *Starting from Values* project team's definition.

There were three areas of deferred *values* that I perceived as non-quantifiable: 1) career paths that diverge from exhibitions; 2) the deferred values of AD that could not be quantified; and 3) organisations that do not adhere to the model of growth recognised by a neoliberal policy paradigm. The third overlaps with the limitations of staff capacity that I discussed in section 5.5.

In recent years, there has been a sharp rise in precarious employment, and the small-scale and artist-focussed contemporary visual arts sector is no exception. I demonstrated how limited staff capacity is an issue for practising AD, in that staffing priorities are determined by the policy sphere. As AD does not fit the overarching narrative of the policy paradigm, AD is overlooked as a priority. Organisations such as CG were required to focus on the Audience Finder survey and The Quality Metrics, and as staff believe in the necessity of AD, the workloads associated with demonstrating quantitative growth and profit simply result in over-stretched staff undertaking significant amounts of work outside of their contracted hours. This makes it problematic and difficult to prioritise the non-quantifiable values of AD practices. As a result, there is a systemic bias that discourages staff with limited resources from capturing qualitative data. As a result, AD remains invisible, and this is a cyclical process. For me, this suggested that the sector needed to consider different ways to attempt to break the cycle. In the following chapter, I ask: how?

## 6 Theoretical discussion: change through the counterpublic

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### 6.1 Introduction

To date, researchers have not critically engaged with the extent to which the pursuit of a *consensus* between the small-scale contemporary visual arts sphere and policymakers has driven the ongoing design of metrics used throughout the small-scale and contemporary visual arts sphere. The 2011 reports by Louise (2011) and Thelwall (2011) criticised ACE's decisions about which organisations to fund through the National Portfolio, and Gordon-Nesbitt (2012) built on these to work with Common Practice, circulating alternative discourses and narratives generated from within the field. These reports strove for something different, whether it was a greater recognition of activity in this area (Louise, 2011), attempting a lifecycle model for evaluation (Thelwall, 2011), or challenging hierarchical terminology and generating new discourses such as "operational milieu" (Gordon-Nesbitt, 2012).

Much of the existing research reviewed in section 2.5 suggested a dissatisfaction with the dominant's sphere approach to evaluating the small-scale and contemporary visual arts sphere, and a desire for change driven by the perspectives of small-scale and artist-focussed contemporary visual arts organisations. Here, in Chapter 6, I suggest an approach that is attentive to the productive capacity of agonism between the small-scale contemporary visual arts sphere and representatives of the policy paradigm. Rather than designing metrics that can appease both representatives of the policy sphere and small-scale and contemporary visual arts organisations, I instead consider how change can be a result of practised difference.

In this chapter, I assert that the learning between different actors took place in an impactful way when there was a *difference* between them, rather than through consensus. Liberal consensus formation as a way of initiating change has been heavily critiqued by writers such as Fraser (1990) and Mouffe (1999; 2000a; 2000b; 2005a; 2005b) who assert that the liberal agenda of consensus actively results in the suppression of counter-hegemonic perspectives.

Dominant power structures activate hegemonic consent in such a way that subordinate groups are only able to articulate their perspectives using language that conforms to hegemonic structures of subordination. To change the cyclical nature of hegemonic consent, I argue that artists and CG, at times, used the productive tension that arose from irreconcilable differences to effect small-scale change in the dominant sphere. Artists achieved this through use of CG as an intermediary within the institutional nexus, and CG achieved this by acting as an intermediary and engaging with representatives of the policy paradigm

To formulate this argument, I will first present examples of where CG learnt from artists, and where representatives of the policy paradigm learnt from CG. Second, I turn to constructivist institutionalism, subaltern counterpublics, and Mouffe's theory of agonistic pluralism to theoretically account for the change-through-learning I observed. I respectively demonstrate how these approaches have theorised change, but also how they fail to explain the nuanced scenarios of *difference* I observed as the basis for learning and cumulative, small-scale change at CG. Unsatisfied by how these theories explain my observations at CG, in section 6.5 I formulate a different approach to theorising change, termed *practising agonism in the counterpublic*.



## **6.2 Artist development and learning: the underlying theme of *difference***

This section presents examples of where I observed learning-through-difference between the actors in my research. First, I will examine how CG learnt from artists. Second, I will consider how ACE learnt from the sector. And third, I will demonstrate how the underlying theme of these interactions was *difference*.

In my time at CG, it was clear that they were also constantly learning from artists in a way that informed their delivery of AD. In Louise's (2014) guide to associate schemes, she quotes both Vicky Fear, who at the time of writing was Exhibitions & Project Producer for We The People (are the work) in Plymouth, and Mark Devereux, Director of Mark Devereux Projects, a Manchester-based professional development agency who works with artists to advance their respective practices and careers. Both described how associate programmes should be inherently tailored to artists (Louise, 2014, p. 2). At CG, the process of tailoring was a mixture of the staff using their expertise from having worked in the sector themselves, but also recognising the limitations of their knowledge and learning from the artists they worked with as well.

From having worked extensively in the field, having been a practising artist in the past, or being a practising artist as well as conducting their work at CG, the staff at CG were experts in AD. What they knew had been learnt from experience, and their activity was informed by an understanding of practitioners' roles in the wider contemporary arts milieu, as well as what artists needed to sustain their practice through critical junctures in their career.

I observed the staff at CG wanting to learn and directly learning from the input of artists. Lawson, the CGA coordinator, discussed her desire to ask one of the more experienced members about what they gain from the CGA scheme, as well as how the scheme could be expanded to reach new artists in a similar position:

I'd actually like to take her for a cup of tea and talk to her about CG Associates, because she's one of the more experienced and established artists on the scheme; I'd like to get her perspective on how the scheme can support her in her position.

(Lawson, 2015)

Lawson demonstrated her desire to amend programmed activity using input from artists who she believed would need something *different* from what CG already offered. In a similar vein, Dean, CG's Communications and Audience Development Coordinator, relayed to me how staff had started "briefing" speakers at events to ensure the artists were getting the most out of them (Dean, 2015). This strategy had been adopted because of a talk they did with The Brewery Arts Centre. The team at CG had assumed all artists in attendance had a similar prior understanding of what a commercial gallery was to the staff at CG. However, this was not the case, and so there were several artists who were unable to access the information conveyed in the talk. Having realised that artists required more definitional information about different aspects of the contemporary arts milieu, staff began to "brief the speakers to try and pitch it at the most appropriate level" (Dean, 2015). Again, it was in the realising that an AD offering was not being as effective as it could be; the artists had different understandings to what CG had assumed, and so the staff at CG

applied this learning-through-difference and amended their AD offering in response to that.

Another specific example of where CG changed their approach based on the feedback from artists was the amendment of the timescale for Launchpad exhibitions. On the 23<sup>rd</sup> June, in my notes I documented the following exchange between artists and CGAs and CG staff at a monthly meeting about Launchpad proposals.

An artist asks an artist who had done a Launchpad show before whether the 6-week turnaround is a bit of a mad scramble. They add: 'could it not be done in a 12-week (or longer) cycle?'

[...] An artist who had previously taken part in the process said it could be done so that artists are applying for the next round, not the immediate Launchpad slot.

Another artist responded 12 weeks.

GS4: 'When we first started doing the Launchpad, we wanted it to be quick and ready – we didn't realise that artists wanted time to plan, raise funds etc. We thought artists just wanted a show, but our assumption was clearly wrong.'

Another artist said that if someone is planning a group show, it can be difficult in the current time-frame, 'because people aren't getting back to you', etc.

GS3: 'We can definitely look at the time.'

(de Mynn, 2015)

Around 2 months later, I observed how the Launchpad deadlines had been changed based on this feedback. I wrote:

The next Launchpad is being selected next week. It is being selected much earlier because at the last CGA session I attended, the CGAs asked for more time to prepare for a show after being selected.

(de Mynn, 2015)

This is a clear example of where CG adapted their AD programme based on learning how artists wanted something different from the AD opportunity they were offering; upon a critical dialogue with artists who had had Launchpad exhibitions and those thinking of planning them, the staff at CG realised that their decision to make them “quick and ready” was not necessarily appropriate, and so the programme was updated to better reflect the requirements of the artists.

There was a distinction between the process of learning-through-difference illustrated above and when positive feedback was taken on board, and CG offered more of something they were already doing. As was stated by Pendergast:

I think through doing it, through working with artists, you get an idea of what they might benefit from, so certain events that work well. Also from feedback, from talking to artists and they say: ‘that CG Associates session you did was really good’; or ‘that exhibition you put on, it was good to see that kind of work on in Manchester’; or ‘doing that talk event was a really good opportunity to meet that person and hear them speak’. So, you think: ‘ah well, maybe we should do more of them’.

(Pendergast, 2015)

This quotation described an instance of affirmation and continuation in CG’s AD offering. In this example, CG’s offering of AD is not brought into question, and so they do not experience a critical juncture in the same way as when they discover something has not worked. Other than increase the frequency of something already offered, there is little CG would adapt following feedback such as this.

Representatives of the policy paradigm conveyed a similar process of learning-through-difference, which subsequently influenced changes in their GM strategy. This related to Paul Sabatier's work on policy change. Sabatier describes different belief systems, how they influence changes in the policy paradigm, and how these belief systems relate to the ways that individuals within the policy paradigm can *learn* had implications for my research. Sabatier outlines three belief systems that relate to changes in policy: "deep core beliefs", "policy core beliefs", and "secondary aspects" (in Cairney, 2015). "Deep core beliefs" are ideological stances, such as whether the government should or should not fund the arts. "Policy core beliefs" are "fundamental policy positions". For example, the idea that publicly funded art organisations and individuals must demonstrate a return on the investment of public money. "Secondary aspects" are "the funding, delivery, and implementation of policy goals" (Cairney, 2015, p. 487). "Deep core beliefs", according to Sabatier, are least susceptible to change, and are highly personal depending on the individual that holds them, whereas "policy core beliefs" map onto the idea of a policy paradigm, and are amenable to change. Change is the translation of "policy core beliefs" into "secondary aspects": "when beliefs on the routine delivery of specific policies are refined according to *new* information" (Cairney, 2015, p. 487: emphasis added). This change occurs because individuals in the policy structure learn new information, and then implement this learning through action. This was evident at a roundtable I attended at ACE.

Wewiora relayed to me how ACE had been informed by activity in the spheres between HEIs and cultural organisations. She stated:

The visual arts team clearly were able to spot and identify, over a period of years, some very interesting developments within the sector between arts and cultural organisations, and higher education (that obviously had great benefit to partners on both sides of the fence). They were very dynamic and very innovative in terms of their collaborations (that had benefit directly to the immediate partners but *great* benefit to the wider sector).

[...] That stimulated and directly informed our thinking as a team; that we needed to actually think more strategically about our relationships to HE, and has catalysed a whole body of work across the North. Whilst a policy hasn't emerged nationally, formally – yet – that work in the North is informing that conversation, and actually has informed our executive board to say, at the moment, 'maybe we're not ready to have a full policy that's national and sits across every area and you all have to work to it. Maybe, at the moment, our policy is to say that the areas are doing a good job and they should carry on doing that job in the way that they're doing it, because we recognise there's something that's quite bespoke to place around some of those relationships'.

(Wewiora, 2015b: emphasis in original)

In this quote, Wewiora uses the word “innovative” to describe collaborations between “arts and cultural organisations” and HEIs. Innovative is defined in the Oxford School Dictionary (2012, p. 350) as: “introducing new things, or new methods”. Therefore, this activity was new to Wewiora and her team; it was *different* to anything they had seen before. In this sense, “[T]he sector” states Wewiora, “feeds into the ‘front end’ of ACE, from the Relationship Managers, and that feeds up into the directors who are definitely setting policy” (Wewiora, 2015b):

Practically, it is through the RMs [Relationship Managers] being plugged into task groups and national teams that carry out pieces of work that provide the kinds of intelligence that the directors need to make policy decisions.

(Wewiora, 2015b)

Therefore, Wewiora was identifying new and different activities in the sector, and feeding the *learning* about new strategies into the directors. An example of how Wewiora was “plugged into” the sector was a roundtable held on the 13th February 2015, organised and hosted by ACE. There were around 30 attendees, including organisationally-affiliated and independent representatives from artist-led groups, studio groups, independents, small-scale and artist-focussed organisations, as well as larger organisations in both GM and Liverpool. In this session, there were multiple discussions. These included: how artists could be better served by the local arts infrastructures across both cities; how HEIs could be more accessible during times when the facilities were not being used by students, such as during the summer vacation; and concerns around how, unless they relocated to London, there were limited opportunities for independents wanting to gain more experience with larger organisations, or on large-scale projects.

This information was gathered by Percival and Wewiora who then arranged one-to-one meetings with individual representatives from organisations to discuss their ideas. Using this knowledge, Percival and Wewiora perceived a need to get HEIs, independents, and other organisations from Manchester and Salford around a table to discuss what could be done. On the 27<sup>th</sup> July 2015, CG’s Director, Lee, attended the follow-up meeting which, as he described and was documented in my notes, produced some strong strategic ideas (de Mynn, 2015). While I did not trace specific examples of CG conducting an idea or terminology, and ACE Relationship Managers folding this idea or terminology into the organisation and, over time, the same idea or terminology emerged in policy, Wewiora made me aware that there were mechanisms in place that

meant CG could influence policy by practising in a way that Relationship Managers at ACE could learn from. And as of January 2017, Wewiora was applying her previous knowledge of the contemporary arts milieu accrued from Wewiora Projects and her time as a Relationship Manager at ACE in her appointed role as Director of CG.

CG consistently exposed their AD work centrifugally through GM and the NW. By being an active participant in several different networks, including CVAM, CVAN NW, national conversations such as those initiated by Common Practice, and in constant conversation with ACE and MCC, CG was well-placed to represent a perspective that had been informed by their work with artists. In these different settings, CG shared the knowledge they had learnt from working in an artist-focussed capacity.

An example of this was Lee's involvement with the Art: ADDS programme, coordinated by CVAM, Contemporary Visual Arts Network (CVAN), and Visual Arts in Liverpool (VAIL). Art: ADDS was a two-year project that invested in "a number of development opportunities for artists, organisations and professionals in the region" and combined "three mutually supportive programme strands that reflect CVAN NW's current priorities". Of these, AD was one. In this strand, Art: ADDS aimed to

[...] support and develop North West artists, artist-led activities and workspace provisions to further establish the region as a vital and important place to make and present work.

(Contemporary Visual Arts Network, 2013, unpag.)



Framed as a programme of activity focussed on AD, Lee wrote the initial draft for the proposal, bringing to the fore his knowledge about accessible exhibiting opportunities for practitioners in GM.

CG's engagements with ACE and MCC also allowed them to share their knowledge with representatives of the policy paradigm. CG's communications with ACE included written representations of their work, such as funding applications and reporting cycles as part of the NPO, interactions with ACE at roundtables and meetings addressing regional strategies, or simply by ACE accepting invitations to attend events and previews hosted by CG. For example, ACE Relationship Managers were often present at meeting held with CVAM and CVAN NW, and I regularly encountered Wewiora and Percival attending gallery previews.

And Wewiora described to me the process by which her engagement with artists and organisations was fed into policy;

[...] all that contact and all that work we have with the sector allows us to build intelligence and knowledge that feeds, then, policy development. This is why it's very important for the Arts Council, for the Relationship Managers, to be on the ground and be the face of the organisations and out in the sector and connected, because we do genuinely learn continuously and bring that back into the organisation and feed that back up to the director level where policy is developed, and that policy will ultimately have an impact on agendas like talent development. They can also influence other development agency funders and strategic partners in terms of their policy as well (whether that cuts across creative industries, to local authorities, to trade units, higher education).

(Wewiora, 2015b)

In this statement, Wewiora directly uses the phrase "learn continuously". In the case of AD at CG and their relationship to artists, ACE, and MCC, I believe this

learning is grounded in difference, but, as the examples suggest, is a small-scale and incremental process. This links to work on otherness, identity, and the collective identity of groups (Mouffe, 2005a). Encountering “otherness”, states Jean White, is “capable of jolting [...] assumptions and preconceptions into radical new configurations” (White, 2008, p. 141). Organisational identity refers to “its dominant beliefs and the prevailing logic” that are “fundamental”, “distinctive”, and “enduring”. If individual identity can encounter “otherness” and reconsider the *self* in light of an experience (White, 2008), then it is plausible to suggest that organisational identity can encounter a similar process (Wickert et al., 2016). In this sense, then, both CG and ACE are able to recreate the “self” based on the learnt “otherness” presented to them by individuals or organisations who express a different set of beliefs or “prevailing logic”. Indeed, this is precisely what Mouffe argues, but from the perspective of democratic theory. I will now consider different explanations of change, depicted in this section as the small-scale reconfiguration of the “self” based on the realisation of “otherness”.

### **6.3 Theories of change: constructivist institutionalism, subaltern counterpublics, and agonistic pluralism**

In sections 2.2 and 2.5 I demonstrated how constructivist institutionalism and subaltern counterpublics were relevant theories in the study of AD. In this section, I address how these theories conceptualise *change* by way of assessing their applicability to my observations at CG. Throughout this thesis, I have demonstrated that the policy paradigm has had contextualising influence over the small-scale and artist-focussed contemporary visual arts sphere. I have also asserted that organisations and individuals within subaltern spheres retain

the *potential* to (re)configure the context to better suit their needs as unrepresented in the policy sphere. Due to the normative nature of a paradigm but also the reality of funding allocations, it is assumed here that both ideas and materiality play a role in impacting the behaviour of different actors.

Constructivism and constructivist institutionalism are key theories that incorporate both these factors as contextualising forces, and they have influenced how authors writing about processes of policy formation have considered *change* in this setting. This is exemplified in the work of Daniel Béland (2012) who states: “bringing ideas to the forefront of institutional analysis is absolutely necessary to explain specific cases of policy change”. He continues, “we must pay close attention to the ideas and assumptions of actors who promote them” (Béland, 2012, p. 8). However, paradigms are not simply ideational; they are both “ideationally and materially inscribed” (Skogstad & Schmidt, 2011, p. 10). The contextualisation of AD that CG is a part of is clearly influenced by ideas around value as that which can be quantified, but also the materiality of actual funding allocations. As posited by Grace Skogstad and Vivien A. Schmidt (2011, p. 10), “if policy paradigms are ideationally and materially inscribed, how are their ideas unlocked?”.

Colin Hay (2002; 2008), writing from a constructivist and constructivist institutionalist perspective, argues that change can be seen in small-scale shifts occurring over a significant period of time. Theorising how conduct can be framed as *explicitly strategic action*, in acting strategically, individuals and organisations both tacitly re-enact strategies that are “orientated towards the contexts in which they occur”, and critically assess contexts to “realise intentions and objectives” that may manoeuvre outside the bounds of

contemporary contexts and, as such, reframe the boundaries of what is possible (Hay, 2002, p. 15). In constructivist institutionalism, institutions are a key component in this system of (re)contextualisation. Although “established ideas” become the “cognitive filters” for the individual interpretation of “environmental signals”, constructivist institutionalism also seeks to understand how “cognitive filters and paradigms are contested, challenged, and replaced” (Hay, 2008, p. 65).

Processes of change within a paradigm are related to “institutional innovation, dynamism, and transformation” and can take place “over a significant period of time”, heralded by “significant institutional change” (Hay, 2008, p. 65). The “institutional-nexus” forms a mediatory context; translating the conduct of individual actors and the policy sphere across to one another, creating new contexts through the activation of conduct; an unavoidable and ever-shifting relationship between individuals, institutions, and paradigms. However, beyond theorising how actors relate to one another in a process of (re)contextualisation, neither constructivism or constructivist institutionalism outline the *nature* of the relationship between different actors. This critique can also be applied to authors influenced by constructivism and writing on the subject of policy change.

Like constructivism and constructivist institutionalism, Skogstad and Schmidt (2011) argue that change is evolutionary, a process that is engendered with “seemingly small changes over time”. These do not “have visible or immediate impacts in the basic characteristics and goals of a policy paradigm”, state Skogstad and Schmidt, yet “can nonetheless add up to a change in its basic philosophy” (Skogstad & Schmidt, 2011, p. 12). The authors describe four main

theories to explain change in the policy paradigm according to the evolutionary model. These include *layering*, *conversation*, *reactive sequences*, and *policy drift* (2011, p. 12). These notions of change all tend to start with the paradigm as the primary ordering force which then shifts, or becomes out of date.

*Policy drift* was the most relevant to the process of change-through-learning I observed at CG, as it discusses how changes in social and economic factors influence shifts in the policy paradigm. Furthermore, this change often results from the policy paradigm being out of touch with lived realities that are inadequately addressed by the policies of those in the more dominant sphere (Skogstad & Schmidt, 2011, p. 12). “The hallmark of change of this sort”, states Jacob S. Hacker (2004, p. 246), “is that it occurs largely outside the immediate control of policymakers, thus appearing natural or inadvertent”. While the rhetoric of austerity and the funding cuts has exacerbated the gap between the policy sphere and small-scale and contemporary visual arts organisations, researchers have traced the historically constituted nature of an instrumentalisation of artistic practice to the Thatcherite era of neoliberalism in the 1980s (Belfiore E., 2002; O'Brien, 2014). This has not *appeared* as a quick, “natural”, or “inadvertent process” resultant of representatives of the policy paradigm becoming out of touch, rather one that was created over time through the implementation of a neoliberal policy paradigm.

In theories about change in cultural policy, McGuigan and Agnew turn to concepts such as the public sphere and deliberative democracy to formulate their understanding of how shifts in cultural policy might occur. McGuigan (2004) draws on the Habermasian conceptualisation of the public sphere. He dissects the prevailing arguments around the concept of the public sphere, and

focuses on the public sphere as a site of research that is in discussion with the dominant discourses around state-led policy analysis. McGuigan (2004) also links counter-discourses in the public sphere to communicative action, intersubjectivity, and rethinking democratic participation at the level of the individual, and argues that this should be brought into discussions of cultural policy. Agnew (2013) also draws on the idea of Habermasian deliberative democracy as a way of providing a theoretical framework for her arguments on intertextuality and mimesis. Agnew (2013) frames her work in the wider context of debates around the social importance that is publicly ascribed to the arts. She argues that if the arts have social importance then their representation in policy should be similarly present. Agnew (2013) advocates using intertextuality as a core concept to understand the relationship between art and policy. Intertextuality, for Agnew, is about contextualising artwork and policy documents in relation to each other in the formation of an environment in which they both exist, and are both able to influence the other.

Unlike Barnett's (1999) work, as inspired by Foucault, the works of McGuigan (2004) and Agnew (2013) shift to a re-thinking of the spatiality in which context-forming exchanges occur. Instead of a Foucauldian understanding of discourse as "a critique of the power relationship between the speaking subject and the passive object", Agnew's work interprets "culturally embedded objects and texts" (Agnew, 2013, p. 5). She states: "unlike empirical approaches in policy studies, interpretative approaches aim to understand how an object or text exists within its context" (Agnew, 2013, p. 5). However, despite breaking away from the state-centred Gramscian/Foucauldian analyses that Barnett (1999) argues has dominated the literature on cultural policy and expanding beyond

analyses of documentation, neither McGuigan's (2004) or Agnew's (2013) analyses incorporated the individual in a way that mapped on to how I had observed CG learning from artists.

Agnew's (2013) use of intertextuality, by omission of a deconstruction of the term, creates a problematic emphasis back onto the text, and so onto policy documents as reference points. While she begins to unpick the role of the artist and the arts organisation by inputting them into the process of policy formation, the arguments would perhaps hold better if she instead drew more from the notion of intersubjectivity as a way of returning the emphasis to collective action instead of the text, as is present in *Between Facts and Norms* (Habermas, 1998) and adopted by McGuigan (2004; 1996).

McGuigan (McGuigan, 1996) defines intersubjectivity, in the context of cultural value, as "value judgements" that are

[...] historically and culturally specific, related to particular forms of life; and, in a general sense, dependent upon social agreement, consensus, if they are to have more than eccentric meaning.

(McGuigan, 1996, p. 48)

In essence, then, intersubjectivity in the context of ascribing cultural value rests on shared perspectives generated through collective experience. However, I interrogate whether consensus is an assumed part of intersubjective learning. In my discussions of counterpublics, I have detailed how publics can gel through shared experiences, but how, at times, there are irreconcilable differences between groups or publics that hold a different identity to the "other". I too use Habermas's concept of the public sphere as a starting point, but consider the nature of the interactions between actors as the crux of change. Of course, I

believe there is a process of learning between the actors that links to the idea of intersubjectivity. However, through use of Fraser's (1990) theory of subaltern counterpublics and Mouffe's (1999; 2000a; 2000b; 2015a; 2015b) conceptualisation of agonistic pluralism, I see the nature of the relationship between different groups as the mechanism for change.

In section 2.5, I defined the main features of a subaltern counterpublic. Here, I address whether change was incorporated into Fraser's (1990) theory. In her theory of subaltern counterpublics, Fraser (1990) promotes the idea of multiple publics existing alongside one another and acknowledges that the relationships between publics shift over time. To formulate her argument, Fraser (1990) uses the example of women's liberation movements and demonstrates how, over time, they successfully campaigned to change the hegemonic and patriarchal order to successfully promote and embed women's rights in the dominant sphere. The question I asked in response to reading Fraser's account of change was, theoretically: how? And I found that Fraser's (1990) work on counterpublics was unable to satisfactorily provide an answer.

Fraser's (1990) critique of Habermas is grounded in historical examples that can be used as to highlight oversights in Habermas's work. The epistemological nature of Fraser's arguments prevents her from developing her theory of counterpublics beyond a descriptive account. Mouffe (1999; 2005a; 2005b), on the other hand, takes a more ontological approach to a similar question of how differences in society might interact. Her theories consider the process of change by embracing the creative tensions of difference between different groups (or publics), something that resonated with my experiences at CG.



Grounded in dissatisfaction with the deliberative process advocated by Habermas (1998), Mouffe's (1999; 2005a; 2005b) theorisation lends itself to an interesting reading of how change might occur. Both Fraser and Mouffe concur on the point that contentious relations exist between different groups that are excluded from a dominating public. However, where Fraser (1990) deploys examples of excluded groups, Mouffe frames this as a widespread process of negative identity formation; "the creation of an 'us' by the determination of a 'them'".

For Habermas (1998), the deliberative process is underwritten by the core premise that consensus can be achieved through reason. Explicitly contradicting Habermas, Mouffe instead argues that any form of consensus in the social is "an *Einstimmung* fusion of voices made possible by a common form of life, not an *Einverstand* product of reason" (Mouffe, 1999, p. 749); consensus is built through intersubjective understanding based on shared life experience, not a post-experiential process of reasoning. As such, Mouffe (1999) argues that the consensus associated with deliberative and liberal democracy is unrealistic, because a whole society will never be wholly attuned; differences will always exist. Instead, society must accept agonisms between adversaries and function without trying to override these differences. The "adversary" is a reformulation of the "them" discussed as part of the formation of an "us"/"them" identity, built the predication that social collectives can find consensus only through shared experiences. Instead of crafting the other as "the enemy to be destroyed", they are presented to the "us" as "somebody whose ideas we combat but whose right to defend those ideas we do not put

into question” (Mouffe, 2000a, p. 102). This, according to Mouffe, relates to the construction of identity.

In analysing identity, “every identity is relational” states Mouffe.

The affirmation of a difference is a precondition of the existence of any identity [...] In the field of collective identities, we are always dealing with a creation of a “we” which can only exist only by the demarcation of a “they”.

(Mouffe, 2005a, p. 15)

Here, Mouffe argues that negative identity formation is how the “we” identify with one another; the (perceived) external is used to constitute the internal. Although this is not necessarily a process of hostility, if the “us” and “them” come into direct contact in a way that challenges the nature of the other, antagonism must be seen as a real possibility, and it is this possibility that it is dangerous to suppress, ignore, or intend to eradicate. Identity-based antagonism forms a major aspect of what Mouffe terms “the political” (2005a, p. 15).

“The political” refers to the “the dimension of antagonism that is inherent in human relations, antagonism that can take many forms and emerge in different type of social relations” (Mouffe, 1999, p. 754). Instead, “Politics” is the creation and proceduralisation of a hegemonic set of norms and ideas that set to govern and mould the *political*. *Politics*, for Mouffe, “are always potentially conflictual because they are affected by the dimension of ‘the political’” (Mouffe, 2000a, p. 101). Within this, change is possible, and Mouffe continues to argue that “every hegemonic order is susceptible of being challenged by counter-hegemonic practices” (Mouffe, 2005a, p. 18)

Several questions follow from the application of Mouffe's theoretical developments in the area of AD. How does the presence of *agonism* create change? How does *the political* inform *Politics*? How does/might CG inform change in the policy sphere? In an interview, Jan Verwoert asked Mouffe about the transformation advocated in agonistic pluralism, Mouffe (2005b) made it clear that agonistic pluralism is about "profound hegemonic transformation":

[...] people are interested in politics, but they need to feel that their intervention is going to make a difference and that they have to choose between real alternatives, not between Coca-Cola and Pepsi-Cola.

(Mouffe, 2005b, p. 169)

In the quote above, Mouffe is asserting that change within an agonistic framework is the result of a "real choice"; it must be "profound" (Mouffe, 2005b, p. 169). This choice expressly results in change when counter-hegemonic practices successfully "disarticulate the existing order so as to install another form of hegemony" (Mouffe, 2005a, p. 18). And yet, this does not account for the small-scale changes that can occur over a potentially "significant period of time" (Hay, 2008, p. 65).

Furthermore, Mouffe's theory of agonistic pluralism has been charged with assuming "political equality" (Dryzek, 2002). Political equality is the "presumption that all participants in a process have an equal chance of affecting the outcome" (Dryzek, 2002, p. 172). Mouffe's theories do not resolve or foresee the issues that arise from assuming that all agonising groups of society have equal access to agonise, and are therefore problematic. In assuming that they do, Mouffe is happy to advocate "profound hegemonic transformation" on the basis of agonistic movements (Mouffe, 2005b, p. 169). However, profound

hegemonic change that has overthrown capitalist norms has not occurred, yet Wewiora, Percival, and Elderkin described to me how they learnt from the sector and how activities such as AD and agendas such as outdoor arts have garnered special attention from their superiors. If change is understood as the overthrowing of the dominant hegemonic order and reinstating of another, then how does Mouffe's theory account for the nuanced processes described to me by representatives of the policy paradigm? Here, I propose a new theoretical approach that blends the applicable concepts and ideas from each of the theories I have discussed in this chapter, and formulates a new direction to theorise change: *practising agonism in the counterpublic*.

#### **6.4 Practising agonism in the counterpublic: socially embedded and small-scale change?**

Before I proceed to my analysis, it must be clear that I do not intend to create a binary between consensus and agonism. Rather, I seek to understand and explain the empirical scenario I observed at CG, and consider how the small-scale and contemporary visual arts sphere might embrace processes of change I believe were already happening. Having established the empirical basis for this, it is now possible to begin considering how organisations embedded within a counterpublic might trigger their conduct through alternative practices to initiate shifts in these generative actions. *Practising agonism in the counterpublic* is a blend of practice theory, constructivist institutionalism, subaltern counterpublics, and agonistic pluralism. In the following section, I will explain precisely what I mean by the phrase *practising agonism in the counterpublic*.

Mouffe's attention to ontological matters, rather than epistemological concerns, allows her to develop her ideas towards a theory where change based on difference is explained. However, her grandiose conceptualisation of change does not sit well with the nuanced learning that I observed. Classically, Mouffe has set her theory of agonistic pluralism apart from the deliberative turn (Mouffe, 2000a). She argues that deliberative theories of democracy (Habermas, 1998; Young, 2002; Dryzek, 2002) focus too squarely on an aggregation of preferences and, therefore, assumes that preferences are aggregable. This, according to Mouffe, is inherently connected to a promotion of rationality over "passions' and collective forms of identifications" (Mouffe, 2000b: Abstract); an oversight that results in a fundamental misunderstanding of the field of "the political". Dryzek (2002) disputes that the deliberative turn is focussed on the aggregation of preferences. Instead, he argues for what he calls "workable agreements". Rather than an aggregation of preferences, certain theorists within the deliberative turn argue for a process "in which participants agree on a course of action, but for different reasons" (Dryzek, 2002, p. 170). Yet, both are highly *explicit* in their approaches. The question posited here is: are there not implicit practices that are equally democratic and agonistic in their very being? For example, when Fraser (1990, p. 67) argues that "subordinated social groups invent and circulate counter-discourses", are these not micro-level *practices* within subaltern counterpublics that act agonistically, but in a subtle manner?

My use of the term *practice* refers to the work of Bourdieu and marries it with the concepts of context and conduct in constructivist institutionalism. Drawing from the perspective of constructivist institutionalism, the actors all hold the

capacity to initiate changes in their context(s), and can do so by *practising* their conduct agonistically and collectively within a subaltern counterpublic, based on a shared experience of being mis or unrepresented in the hegemonic sphere.

Practice is the individual and embodied enactment of generative forces (Bourdieu, 1977). In constructivist institutionalism, context and conduct represent the generative forces. Therefore, use of the word practice framed by constructivist institutionalism refers to the simultaneous embodiment and enactment of an individual's strategic action and the environment that contextualises them.

*Agonism* is tied in with the notion of the collective identity. Within *the political*, Mouffe (1999; 2005a) depicts an ever-present antagonism between hegemonic and counter-hegemonic forces within. For Mouffe, the “task” of democratic politics is to encourage and promote a shift from antagonism to “agonistic relations” (Mouffe, 2005a, p. 21). The move from an antagonistic situation to an agonistic one is based on Mouffe's rejection of the assumption that consensus is a possibility within a pluralistic society, tied in with the notion of the “adversary” (Mouffe, 2000a, p. 102). In rethinking what it is to be a citizen – or actor – in this way, and the relationships with which we build our identity, Mouffe asserts that the “true” ideal of democracy is to accept pluralism, but reconstituting the relationship between the hegemonic groups and those who are marginalised so that antagonism is acknowledged and is productive. In this relationship, Mouffe argues that the “us” and “them” are given a common ground, rather than existing as separate and potentially segregated groups. In the moment of injecting common ground, antagonism becomes “agonism” in a

move away from a combative situation between enemies towards a “struggle between adversaries” (Mouffe, 2000a, p. 102).

Therefore, practising agonism refers to how an actor’s “us” engages in the context as determined by “them”, and in doing so enacts and embodies the role of the adversary. In this, Mouffe asserts that change only results from the overthrowing of the dominant hegemonic order. Therefore, the “them” in Mouffe’s formulation is always the dominant order, and the “us” are subordinate groups, forged as a collective through a shared experience of not being dominant.

While I agree with the notion that difference is, at times, irreconcilable and that this can lead to changes in *the political*, I believe that multiple counterpublics can exist with the desire to flourish in difference, alongside the dominant public, whilst seeking recognition for their distinct identity within the dominant public, and removing the mechanisms that result in the counterpublic being subaltern. Moreover, I believe that this is what I observed in the practices of CG. In this reformulation, the “us” becomes the counterpublic, with its own *distinct, fundamental, and enduring* (Wickert et al., 2016) identity forged through otherness, and the “them” is defined as the multiple other publics in existence, including the dominant public.

While Fraser (1990) used the women’s liberation movement as an example, *practising agonism in the counterpublic* does not necessarily require collective, explicit action towards an articulated and shared goal. As a hypothetical example in the case of CG, their independent refusal to carry out the Audience Finder survey (beyond its benefits to their marketing strategy) alongside another

organisation opting to generate their own ways of measuring artist-focussed activity could cumulatively build to form a counterpublic identity that is anchored in shared ideals and values. CG's independent management of NAS:

Federation House was a good example of what *practising agonism in the counterpublic* could look like. NAS: Federation House was frequently raised as a positive AD experience for artists in guided conversations with CGA and throughout my observations. In the research, it was clear how NAS: Federation House was an exemplary model for the delivery of AD, and it included almost all the categories and sub-categories of AD.

NAS: Federation House was an eight-storey former headquarters of Co-Operative food business, well-located for access from the city centre and Manchester Victoria train station. It was always known that NAS: Federation House was a time-limited, brokered opportunity for CG to occupy the building until it was sold by NOMA, a development partnership of The Co-op and Hermes Investment Management. NAS: Federation House was occupied by CG from March 2014 for 18 months. Although it was accessible to passing audiences, the location of NAS: Federation House meant that many of its audiences were heading to it, not simply passing by. Using what they had learned from career-based learning in the contemporary arts milieu, CG planned NAS: Federation House to be a mixture of different spaces which could host a substantial amount of activity. The top (sixth) floor was a project space hosted by TOAST, a contemporary art collective of Manchester-based artists. Floors five and two were open-plan work and project spaces. The fourth floor was an exhibition space that could be hired, and the third floor was occupied by Filmonik, a Manchester-based "filmmaking community" who host events and



screenings (Filmonik, n.d.). The first floor was used by Mark Devereux Projects as their office and project space to develop artists (Mark Devereux Projects, n.d.). The upper ground floor was segregated former offices that had been turned into workspaces and studios, and the lower ground was a black-box type space used for performance and visual art development. CG brokered the relationship between the building-owner and themselves, and so artists were not handling the admin of dealing with the legal side of practising in a pop-up space. Residing artists were asked to demonstrate to CG why they needed the space, but there was not accountability to CG in the sense that they were not expected to show evidence of delivered outcomes or to report on the progress of their project. Spaces were affordable, often charging only overheads, and not rent. All of this made the process for artists easy, and allowed them to focus entirely on the creative aspects of their practice (as opposed to the administrative ones).

As stated, NAS: Federation House incorporated all four categories of AD, and many of the sub-categories as well. Here, I will present several examples accompanied by primary data to highlight how and why NAS: Federation House was so successful in delivering AD. The collective that CG hosted in the top floor of NAS: Federation House was TOAST. Their team included the following artists: James Ackerley, Kamran Ali, Carly Bainbridge, Robin Broadley, Juliet Davis, Marcelle Holt, Amy Lawrence, Alexander Morrison, Helen Newman, and Adam Renshaw. Their aims ahead of taking over the sixth floor artist-led space at NAS: Federation House included: “forging professional partnerships with other organisations around the area”; “welcoming artists and curators outside of Manchester”; “exemplify[ing] the city’s offer of industry and community”;

“invest[ing] time developing ways of increasing opportunities between the cities of Sheffield, Leeds and Liverpool”; “support[ing] the local artists and students with space and time to realise new ideas or discursive events”; “encourage[ing] the resident artists to maintain their online presence during the allotted project timeframe”; and encouraging collaboration by forwarding

[...] incoming proposals from students, artists or people from the local community wishing to use the space [...] onto the corresponding artists in residence, to see whether anything can be developed in collaboration.

(Prater, n.d., unpag.)

TOAST hosted 20 exhibitions, directly working with over 60 artists. Events were also held in the TOAST space, such as a critical writing session for CGA and a networking evening instigated by CG’s Director, Lee.

Through their exhibitions, TOAST nurtured an environment for AD centripetally and centrifugally. Their practices were inherently AD, and they naturally centripetally nurtured an environment for AD. Furthermore, their practice centrifugally demonstrated how AD could be conducted by facilitating the collaborative generation of exhibitions and events; run by an artist-led group, who do not have to deal with contracts and landlords; without formal accountability to the host organisation (such as reporting, or impact-assessments); in a large, architecturally interesting, light, and affordable space. Simply through their presence, TOAST highlighted how GM was not offering spaces like this for artists, but also that it should; TOAST demonstrated that artists could achieve a programme of activity that blended AD and the experiences of audiences. In addition, TOAST offered artists experientially learnt technical and marketing skills for exhibitions, and hosted informal (group)

learning skills and/or knowledge events, such as “how to write about your work”.

Artists who worked with TOAST explained how the combination of them and the space acted as a resource.

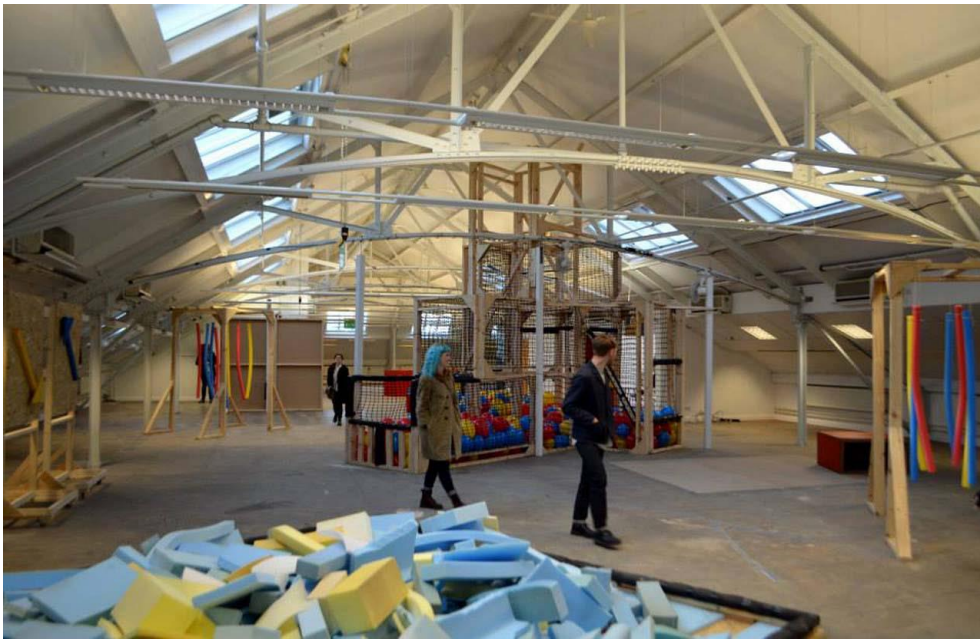
As part of that [Federation House], I had the opportunity to exhibit there as part of TOAST, and that was a really really brilliant opportunity for me as an artist (as opposed to a visitor to the space). It was kind of a big exhibition, things were more possible; there was a high level of possibility and potential with the space, due to the very nature of the space. You can have that quick turnaround, that quick activity, which is less possible with the institutional galleries which tend to have a very long lead in, and so you can respond quickly to things in the space.

(CGA2, 2015)

Here, the artist describes how the unique combination of TOAST and NAS:

Federation House facilitated new avenues in the practice through the architecture and their “quick” style of exhibiting. My documents revealed that TOAST offered artists all sub-categories of resources: emotional, physical space, and new avenues in the artwork, and often these fed into one another. For example: the architecture of the top floor would open new avenues in artists’ works, simply making certain dimensions of work possible; they were artist-focused, but their practice drew in large critically engaged audiences whose interaction with artists sparked reflective thinking about their work, which, in some cases, then took a new direction. In addition, artists who were part of their programming felt a sense of belonging, and gained confidence by being part of a well-received project. And while they themselves were hosted by CG, TOAST provided opportunities for the other three types of showcasing opportunity as part of their activity: platforming, brokerage, and networking.

**Image 3:** *Funhaus* exhibition in the top (sixth) floor of NAS: Federation House.  
Photo: CG (2014). Artists: David Mcleavy with Adam Monty Renshaw and James Ackerley



**Image 4:** *Tea Break* exhibition in the top (sixth) floor of NAS: Federation House.  
Photo: CG (2014). Featuring the following artists: Keith Brown, Andy Holden, Robin Broadley, Matt Birchall, Alexander Morrison



As can be seen in Images 3 and 4, the space TOAST occupied was abundant with natural light and had high ceilings with interesting architecture. The majority of CGAs and artists I encountered through guided conversations and on-site observations perceived the space to be especially conducive to exploratory and productive practice, due to what it rendered a possibility (i.e. an artist would think about bigger work because there was the tangible opportunity to create it). Questions were asked about how TOAST came to occupy the space. NAS was a programme geared towards CGA, and yet the members of TOAST had not signed up to CGA. Furthermore, one of the individuals in the collective was employed by CG. In addition, calls for proposals to use the space were not widely distributed, and this led to some questioning why TOAST, and therefore their networks, had been given access to such a rich AD opportunity. As with the discussion in section 4.3.5, this gave rise to questions about access to AD opportunities.

While TOAST had made a proposal for the top-floor space that clearly outlined their commitment to AD through contemporary practices, participant observation revealed to me that the members of TOAST and their work were personally liked by certain staff members at CG, who supported their ethos and approach. I believe that this, in part, contributed to how they gained a certain level of access to AD opportunities. It was not simply *because they were liked*, and the work they conducted in that space was undoubtedly in line with CG's ethos of AD, but the data suggested that there were additional reasons for TOAST's access to AD alongside the strength of their proposal.

Every floor of NAS: Federation House offered a plethora of AD activity. In the open plan studio spaces, I documented how the community of artists acted as an emotional resource, resulted in multiple collaborations, and offered artists new avenues in the work through critical discussions and the introduction of different media (In particular, CGA5, 10, and 11). Elsewhere in the building, the height of the ceilings allowed artists to work on projects that were of a much larger scale than they had been able to in their own studios or at home (for example, the work that can be seen in Image 4), and the architecture throughout the building inspired several artists to produce site specific works. Artists could arrange their own exhibitions at any point, and so were able to practice marketing techniques and showcase work as often as they deemed necessary. And artists had no reporting commitments to CG, and so projects were not influenced by any level of accountability.

It was not all positive, though. Some artists expressed a disappointment at not feeling like they had access to run projects in the top floor. Others would have liked CG to organise more CGA events and crits at NAS: Federation House. And many artists were sceptical as to whether CG had utilised their own connections with other organisations to provide targeted and bespoke showcasing opportunities with specific professionals to artists in critical junctures three, four, and five. However, these requests were constantly balanced against the limitations of the staff, discussed in section 5.5. For example, to bring the more targeted and bespoke showcasing opportunities to fruition would have required one-to-one conversations with the most nationally networked member of CG's team: the gallery's Director. And yet, the precarity of Lee's employment at CG meant his daily capacity was already above what he

could complete within his contracted hours. This highlights some of the tensions that arose as a result of offering AD, and operating within a small-scale and contemporary visual arts organisation that is under-valued (and so under-funded) in the current systems of evaluation used by representatives of the policy paradigm.

NAS: Federation House was a good example of practising agonism in the counterpublic because it presented an adversary to the dominant sphere. The main policy sphere perpetuates an instrumentalised value for artistic practice that is often captured quantitatively. Furthermore, this instrumentalisation is based on the *audience's* positive experience, not the artists. Federation House was an eight-floor example of how focusing on the benefit for artists can produce a wealth of different values, and none primarily intended to offer audiences an experience. If audiences were engaged, it was on the artists' terms and because the artist could benefit from showcasing their work. CG was aware that supporting these artists was not talent development in the way the policy sphere expected, and yet they practiced agonism based on their distinctive identity as an artist-focussed organisation. They did not form a consensus with representatives of the policy paradigm, and none of the activity was primarily intended for audiences or the instrumental impact of artistic practice. NAS: Federation House was undoubtedly artist-focussed, and so much of the activity CG conducted there was counter-hegemonic in the sense it was not primarily concerned with the instrumental value of artistic practice. And yet, CG offered it as part of their ACE and MCC funded activity, and NAS: Federation House was well-received by audiences, collectors, critical writers, and representatives of the policy paradigm (for examples, see: Clayton,

Postcard from Manchester, 2015; Sumner, n.d.; Clayton, 2015; Leese, 2014).

NAS: Federation House added to the contemporary arts milieu, and in doing so, as a temporary space, it highlighted what the GM arts milieu was missing: managed and affordable AD workspaces, that do not require artists to produce evaluation or impact reports, and can be used by artists to showcase on their own terms.

What has yet to be confirmed is the extent to which the actions of CG were *learnt* and *applied* by representatives of the policy paradigm. I ascertained that there were mechanisms in place for representatives of the policy paradigm to learn-through-difference the values and needs of the small-scale and artist-focussed contemporary visual arts sphere (see section 6.2). The next step to develop the theory of *practising agonism in the counterpublic* would be to trace specific ideas and/or discourses that have been practised agonistically from within the counterpublic, either by organisations or artists, into the policy sphere. This would discern what gets translated into action, which ideas and discourses become codified in documents produced by representatives of the policy paradigm, and further consider *why* certain ideas and discourses become accepted by the dominant public, and consequently to reduce the subaltern position of certain counterpublics.

In *The Intersection of Narrative Policy Analysis and Policy Change Theory* (McBeth et al., 2007), the authors provide a useful breakdown of different theories that have approached policy change from the perspective of social actors or groups, using the framework of constructivism to do so. Furthermore, Mark K. McBeth, Elizabeth A. Shanahan, Ruth J. Arnell, and Paul L. Hathaway (2007) recommend the methodological incorporation of narratives as a way of



understanding how policy change occurs which is not dissimilar to the approach that I took. McBeth et al. (2007) introduce the theory of *policy equilibrium*, and the work of Frank R. Baumgartner and Bryan D. Jones (1993). Baumgartner and Jones (1993, p. 3) ask: “do mass publics influence elite behaviour, or do elites govern with little democratic accountability?” In an interesting discussion about different interest groups in politics, such as environmentalist groups, insurance companies, or Doctors, Baumgartner and Jones (1993, p. 83) contrast the concept of *incrementalism* in the formation of policy change with “rapid change”. *Incrementalism* “utilizes limited analysis to yield limited, practical, and acceptable decisions” within public policy (Anderson, 2015, p. 138). “A sequence of incremental decisions”, states James E. Anderson (2015, p. 138), “may produce a fundamental change in public policy”. This concept of incrementalism maps on to the small-scale decisions representatives of the policy paradigm relayed to me, especially in relation to outdoor arts and the need to instigate strategic conversations between HEIs and arts organisations in GM. However, it places the emphasis and the decision-making power on the representative of the policy paradigm.

Baumgartner and Jones’s (1993) discussion of interest groups suggests that different actors target party politics to achieve their public policy goals, and do so with the explicit intention to do so. Furthermore, the activity of these groups is halted until their public policy goals are achieved. Baumgartner and Jones (1993) do not consider how activity that is not explicitly targeted at representatives of the policy paradigm can be productive in the task of changing public policy. Through NAS: Federation House, CG engaged in AD activity which, as has been shown throughout this thesis, was captured through a

qualitative and context-specific engagement in the field. This was despite knowing that much of this work would be rendered invisible when measured for the purposes of communicating with representatives of the policy paradigm, and therefore that their work would be *undervalued* in that context. They did not do so with the explicit intention of lobbying representatives of the policy paradigm about the need for qualitative metrics. Nor did they halt their activity until representatives of the policy paradigm amended their policies so that NAS: Federation House could be adequately evaluated by the policy sphere.

Instead, CG practised their conduct agonistically, and from within a counterpublic termed the small-scale and artist-focussed contemporary visual arts sphere. This counterpublic did not behave like an interest group in that it was not the contrived formation of a collective that weilds lobbying power with the government. Rather, it consisted of the invention and circulation of alternative discourses that represented a shared identity and sphere of activity that was absent from the discourses of the hegemonic sphere. This did not require coordination, because the common subaltern experience of individuals and organisations was what determined their need to act agonistically as an individual cell. My theories suggests that this means that representatives of the policy sphere will learn from the actions of the subaltern counterpublic, but not necessarily as a result of the coordinated effort to target them.

### **6.5 In summary: embracing the conduct of the small-scale and artist-focussed contemporary visual arts**

In section 6.2, I demonstrated how CG learnt from artists, and how representatives from the policy paradigm learnt from CG. This mapped onto constructivist institutionalism's idea of the institutional nexus, and the potential

for individuals to use institutions as intermediaries to initiate changes in context. Furthermore, I highlighted that, rather than moments where new information resulted in continuity, changes in the preconceptions and assumptions of CG and ACE were the result of being faced by alternative perspectives that *practised* a different set of preconceptions and assumptions that challenged their own. I also demonstrated how, in the case of ACE, this learning contributed to changes in the actions of representatives of the policy paradigm, or changes in the way they documented talent development. These changes were not large-scale, but were instead small-scale shifts that, over time, cumulatively altered the way the dominant sphere related to other spheres.

In section 6.3, I highlighted how neither constructivist institutionalism, subaltern counterpublics, nor agonistic pluralism satisfactorily explained the empirical scenario that the data suggested. While constructivism and constructivist institutionalism theoretically accounted for the relationships between artists, CG, and representatives of the policy paradigm, it did not consider *how* these interactions manifest, and the nature of the relationships (i.e. that it could be agonistic). The concept of subaltern counterpublics connected to the ways in which the small-scale and artist-focussed contemporary visual arts sphere related to the more dominant sphere, but did not account for how the two spheres might interact, or the mechanisms by which change could occur. The nature of creative tensions in agonistic pluralism provided a recognisable framework for the relationship between the small-scale and artist-focussed contemporary visual arts sphere and representatives of the policy paradigm, but did not theorise the cumulative effect of small-scale paradigmatic shifts.

Therefore, in section 6.5, I formulated a theory of socially embedded and small-scale change termed *practising agonism in the counterpublic*.

Rather than focussing on how policy was created in government, this chapter instead considered the ways in which policy can be created through a reciprocal relationship between individuals, institutions, and representatives of the policy paradigm. Influenced by my observations at CG, I began theorising how artists' and CG's practices of AD might feed changes in the policy paradigm. Of course, multiple factors influence policy, many of which are undocumented or unseen (Grafton & Permaloff, 2005). However, I believe that the theory I am suggesting adds to the canon of the different dimensions at play in the process of policy-formation, and if rendered visible could help give artists a more explicit platform through which to knowingly influence policy. In this chapter, I posit whether the small-scale and artist-focussed contemporary visual arts sphere could embrace the creative tensions between themselves and representatives of the policy paradigm, and instead use this difference as a productive force towards changes in policy that reflect their dissatisfaction with the current structural factors in place. Broadly, this chapter asked two main questions. 1) can the learning-through-difference I observed at CG be embraced as a different strategy towards influencing policy? And 2) could the conscious rendering of this process give artists an effective channel into influencing policy? I believe the answer to both is yes, and that *practising agonism in the counterpublic* renders explicit a process that was already occurring between artists, CG, and representatives of the policy sphere.

## 7 Conclusions

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In this chapter, I will first provide an overview of the conclusions produced over the course of my research. I present these in the order in which they are included in the thesis. Second, I document the limitations and recommendations of the research programme. In general, these mostly hinge on expanding beyond a single case study, and what could be interrogated by doing so.

### 7.1 Overview

AD as defined and explained in the thesis is essential for the contemporary arts milieu, but it has not been fully recognised by representatives of the policy paradigm. Because the neoliberal paradigm has bred a rhetoric around *investment* in the arts, representatives of the policy paradigm have responded by instrumentalising artistic practice and investing in the measurement of economic indicators that capture measurable outputs. Often, but not always, these are quantitative, and seen in the forms of audience footfall, ticket sales, sales of artworks, or café/shop revenue. The Quality Metrics (Bunting & Knell, 2014) used the same audience and output-focussed instrumentality to measure cultural value qualitatively. What these approaches were missing, however, was an effective means of capturing what artists need, and their experiences of how well they are supported throughout the contemporary visual arts milieu. Instead, government bodies have perpetuated and encouraged an overt focus on audiences which small-scale and artist-focussed contemporary visual arts organisations feel obliged to comply with due to their reliance on funding from this sector, even though these measures might not be beneficial in several ways. For CG, the benefits of capturing audience data were limited to helping organisations strategically market, expanding into audiences they may not have

been previously attracting. Beyond that, the focus on capturing audience data only served to comply with the requirements of funding bodies, and I have argued that the time spent in this area could have been better utilised to strengthen their CG's offering to artists.

Chapter 2 outlined how AD was characterised by representatives of the policy paradigm; by CG; and in existing research. Documents produced by ACE and MCC began to establish how an environment for AD could be nurtured, but did not provide in-depth information about what the practices of AD could include. Literature produced by non-governmental bodies provided greater detail about what AD activity included, and organised it according to three categories: nurturing an environment, skills and/or knowledge, and resources and showcasing opportunities. The papers that incorporated the perspectives of artists and the experiences of organisations produced the greatest amount of data pertaining to what AD involved and why it was important. As such, it influenced me methodologically, and supported the theoretical assertions made in constructivist institutionalism that stated the relevance of including in this research the different layers of context-setting actors: individuals, institutions/organisations, and representatives of the policy paradigm. In addition, the existing research showed strong support for the notion that CG existed within a subaltern counterpublic (Fraser, 1990). CG's authored documentation revealed that resources and showcasing opportunities were not one single category and warranted separation from each other; resources were used to feed a practical output, whereas showcasing opportunities gave artists the chance to have their work experienced by a range of different audiences, including the public, collectors, curators, and writers.

The methodology chapter outlined the approach I took to data collection and why. This included ethnography, a staged and single-case research design, and grounded theory as an approach to data collection. These three approaches complemented one another, and allowed for an in-depth interrogation of AD as an in-situ phenomenon through a close observation of the “generative structures” (Brewer, 2000), analysed using an “open mind” (Dey, 2007) to code and categorise the data. The methodology worked well, and generated a wealth of data that helped me achieve all my aims and objectives.

Chapter 4 presented the empirical data that was generated using the methodology summarised above. Conducting a close-examination of the data confirmed the four categories of AD that were found in CG’s documentation (presented in section 2.1): nurturing an environment, resources that feed a practical output, skills and/or knowledge, and showcasing opportunities. It also expanded on what AD offerings were in place, and detailed further sub-categories (see Appendix 1, Tables 1 to 13). Analysis of the data also revealed that artists tended to seek AD at CG when experiencing one or more of five critical junctures as part of a non-linear career path: (1) recent exposure to unfamiliar contexts; (2) a shift in form/content of their practice; (3) artists already familiar with the contemporary visual arts sphere, continuing or re-establishing momentum for opportunities; (4) artists looking to broaden exposure; and (5) an exhausted locality. Furthermore, the data demonstrated how there was a process of *learning* between different actors in the study. All three actors, artists, CG, and representatives from the policy sphere, had learnt about how the others practiced when those practices differed from their own.

The offering of AD was often problematic, as has been stated throughout the thesis, and Chapter 5 explicitly outlines the areas of disjuncture between the neoliberal paradigm and AD and CG. First, I outlined how audiences were prioritised by representatives of the policy paradigm, and so the experiences of artists were overlooked. Second, I discussed the proliferation of econometrics, and how this has prevented the small-scale and artist-focussed contemporary visual arts sphere from articulating their contribution to the contemporary arts milieu. Third, I critically assessed Thelwall's (2011) concept of "deferred value". Asserting that the way Thelwall (2011) applies "deferred value" is a product of the prioritisation of how an artwork is received as well as the normalisation of econometrics, I did, however, consider the essence of "deferred value" to be applicable: that the earlier work of small-scale and artist-focussed contemporary visual arts organisations can have a lasting impact. However, I then used the *Starting from Values* (2015) project team's work to reframe this as *deferred values*: the short and long-term realised known aspirations and unknown consequences of multiple different stakeholders in any given project. This theoretically supported the earlier findings produced from the review of the literature, that highlighted how AD is a qualitative phenomenon and can only be fully evaluated by capturing the *values* of all parties involved.

Although AD was essential for artists, it was problematic for organisations offering it, due to the structural factors within which they operated. Therefore, I concluded that, for AD to flourish, artists and small-scale contemporary visual arts organisations needed to continue effecting change. I concluded that the process of learning I had observed, as outlined in section 6.1, was illustrative of small-scale change that could build up over time to result in larger shifts



necessary for the small-scale and contemporary visual arts sector to conduct AD. In Chapter 6, I considered three theories to explain these changes. The first was constructivist institutionalism, which conceptually accounted for a scenario wherein all actors could (re)configure the contexts that determine how they behave, socially and politically, as well as outlining subtler “processes of change over a significant period of time” (Hay, 2008, p. 65). However, this line of theorising did not account for how this change might occur. Similarly, Fraser’s (1990) theory of subaltern counterpublics, the second one I considered, epistemologically demonstrated how a counterpublic might function and that change was possible, but the epistemological grounding of this theory meant it did not explain how change arose through the nature of the relations between subaltern publics and the dominant sphere. Third, I considered Mouffe’s theory of agonistic pluralism which detailed how the creative tensions caused by difference between two groups could be productive in creating a new context in which actors previously in subaltern roles could (re)establish the normative framework. However, in Mouffe’s theory, change was too large-scale, and she only accounted for large-scale overhauls of the dominant hegemonic order. This did not explain the small-scale shifts resulting from learning between the different actors that I had observed. Therefore, I generated a theory that adopted different aspects from previous theories that I termed *practising agonism in the counterpublic*.

*Practising agonism in the counterpublic* draws from a range of different sources. These included: Bourdieu’s theory of practice (1977; 1992); Hay’s concepts of context and conduct (2002); constructivist institutionalism’s idea that change can be a long-term process that takes place over a significant amount of time

(2008); Mouffe's understanding that change can occur not only but by consensus, but by groups learning from the differences between them (1999; 2000a; 2000b; 2005a; 2005b); and Fraser's understanding of subaltern counterpublics that coexist symbiotically within the dominant sphere, but can influence change in the normative structures that determine the bounds of behaviour; an example given was the women's liberation movement achieved (1990). In essence, it consists of micro-level and small-scale moments of agonistically-informed practices within subaltern counterpublics that express a disjuncture between themselves and representatives of the policy paradigm. These representatives then *learn* about the alternative stance of the subaltern counterpublic because of the difference between the two perspectives. Over time, this learning initiates change in the hegemonic sphere which, at times, can be reflected in the codification of policy. The result is a subaltern counterpublic recognised by the dominant sphere without being imposed upon by it. Within this, in the case of the small-scale and artist-focussed contemporary visual arts sphere, artists effectively have a voice in determining the contexts in which they practice due to the inherent osmosis that takes place in organisations such as CG, and organisations that act as intermediaries between artists and the policy sphere.

I concluded that ineffective distribution of funding which overtly supports audience-focussed activity limits the artistic offering to the British population, for both practitioners and audiences. It does so because it fails to support artists during critical junctures. The resultant effect is that fewer people are willing or able to work through potentially problematic periods of change in their practice such as graduation, relocation, or the exploration of new ideas. Part of what is

needed to achieve a contemporary arts milieu that is accessible to the greatest amount of people in the UK is an effective allocation of funding for activities that are attentive to the needs and pressures faced by artists, especially at these critical junctures in their career. The majority, if not all, artists have experienced or will experience “formative moments” in their career (Gordon-Nesbitt, 2015), and the support they receive during these periods will determine whether they can continue as practitioners. In the contemporary visual arts, this support tends to be administered by small-scale and artist-focussed organisations. With less support for this sphere, there will be fewer artists, and with fewer artists, there will be fewer opportunities for art and culture to “enhance every part of our lives” (ACE, n.d.a).

Over time, the scenario of audience-focussed data-collection being harvested from the small-scale and artist-focussed contemporary visual arts sphere by representatives of the policy paradigm to serve their own requirements and discourses can change. It can do so through small-scale and artist-focussed contemporary visual arts organisations acting as agonistic intermediaries between artists and the audience-focussed policy sphere. By practising their conduct in the interests of their own needs as these relate to data collection, the small-scale and artist-focussed contemporary visual arts sphere can generate and conduct metrics that suit their requirements, and the policy sphere can *learn* from their practices. While CG was able to diversify its income streams and so successfully reapply to become an NPO in 2015, they remain having to negotiate the organisational requirements to report on audience-focussed activity that is attentive to the ways that artworks are received, due to the reporting and data collection requirements imposed on them by ACE. The

scenario for CG has resulted in precarious working conditions for the staff which, in turn, limits their ability to conduct AD, and lessens the support available to artists at critical junctures.

## 7.2 Limitations and recommendations

For reasons explained in the methodology chapter, the use of a single case study gave an in-depth analysis of the underdeveloped phenomenon of AD. However, this did mean the data collection and analysis was limited to CG. I did not collect targeted data from HEIs, volunteers, or peer organisations. Although these groups were identified as having a relationship to AD, the scope and timespan of the research meant I was not able to target them with specific data collection methods. In the case of volunteers, from my time at CG I was able to deduce that there was a complex connection between volunteers who were artists and AD. However, the significance of which was revealed to me by EA1 Jones, who could look back on his time at CG and reflect on the ways that volunteering had deferred values in the context of his career. This suggested that research into the AD of volunteers would involve observations of their time at CG, as well as interviews once they had left. This would allow CG to articulate their work with volunteers as experiential training for gallery work, rather than the almost absent inclusion of the AD of volunteers that I found in their documents and interviews.

To continue developing *practising agonism in the counterpublic*, I recommend that research should expand into other cases, including peer organisations and HEIs, and negotiate greater access to representatives of the policy paradigm to trace specific ideas over a period of time. This would benefit from researching

all potential forms of documentation and communication (for example attending all relevant meetings, and having sight of all emails for a given timeframe). This could be undertaken over a time-frame long enough to allow an idea to move from one actor to another and be developed by the latter. I foresee that this could be completed using a fusion of ethnography and a prospective form of process tracing, like that proposed by the *Starting from Values* project team (2015) and not dissimilar to narrative policy analysis (McBeth et al., 2007), except I would also advocate for the incorporation of fieldwork. I would encourage the use of field work because of the difference between how talent development was presented in documents and my analysis of observation notes and interview transcripts with representatives of the policy paradigm, as well as the deep understanding and rich description of AD that resulted from participant observations in the field. Theoretically, this could start to unpick where agonistic behaviour introduces new ideas into the policy paradigm and how.

In addition, the critical junctures documented in section 4.4.2 were generated from an engagement with artists who were: a) organisationally engaged, and b) more likely to fall within critical junctures one, two, and three, due to CG's remit of working with *emerging* artists. I was aware of additional critical junctures that existed, but that were not documented by myself. For example, artists who had been working on an idea for a while might take time away to digest, and perhaps immerse themselves in a different creative activity such as a workshop. This allowed them to develop the idea, without overworking it. However, while I became aware of this, I was unable to develop the enquiry further in this direction because I was infrequently exposed to artists outside of the given

contexts that CG worked in. The same limitations applied to practices of AD. At the industry event, there was a recognition among the collective of organisations that attended that they could contribute their own practices to the discussion, and may be able to develop my findings based on their own offering of AD. Therefore, further research could seek to expand knowledge of AD and critical junctures as practiced and experienced by organisations and artists operating from a different perspective, such as critical junctures four and five, or as a different organisation, possibly in other areas of creative practice such as theatre of music.

Being based in the post-graduate department in a school of art gave me access to a relationship with CG that was developed through a long-term relationship between CG and the HEI. Through this relationship, I gained access to artists in a way that I perceived to be less likely in departments that had not developed the long-term relationships with small-scale and artist focussed contemporary visual arts organisations. While it may have been beneficial for me to complete a visiting placement at another institution that specialised in political theory or cultural policy, the strength in this PhD was in its access to artists and CG, and so time and resources were invested in the department's relationship with CG. In the direction that my intellectual development was taking, my priority was the inclusion of artists and artist-focussed organisations, and this thesis attests to that decision. In future research, there could be scope for further interrogation of how this research is situated in relation to political theory and cultural policy.

In my research, artists that engaged with CG were either self-selecting, or chosen by the institution to be part of the exhibition programme. There is a concern that by advocating for a functioning subaltern counterpublic, I am

ignoring structural factors, such as race, class, or disability, that might prevent all those who would potentially join this counterpublic from doing so, because they are structurally unable to self-select. And this raises the question: if a subaltern counterpublic is exclusive, is condoning policy change based on direct democracy problematic? Does this make assumptions about political equality? In response, I would argue that the role of subaltern counterpublics is to agonistically practice the interests of those it represents in a performatively constitutive way. For the counterpublic in which CG practiced, interests were generated from the common ground shared by practitioners and organisations that exist as or within the small-scale and artist-focussed contemporary visual arts, and the notion that this counterpublic is in some way repressed by the dominant public sphere.

In reference to whether cyberspace has expanded the discursive arena, Catherine Helen Palczewski (2001, p. 161), argues that there are strong indications “that those who most need access to counterpublics tend not to have access”. Fraser herself acknowledged that even counterpublics “with democratic and egalitarian intentions are not always above practicing their own modes of informal exclusion and marginalization” (1994, p. 84). In response to this line of thinking, Fraser (1990; 1994) asserts that counterpublics will continue to spawn in response to exclusionary practices, expanding the discursive space. In this thesis, I adopted Fraser’s (1990; 1994) underlying premise that individual ability to expand discursive spaces in the face of subordination will continually lead to additional subaltern counterpublics. However, I believe this could undergo more in-depth examination in relation to AD, both theoretically and empirically.

Considering the theoretical development outlined in Chapter 6 and summarised in section 7.1 above, it is possible that a conscious rendering of the intermediary role of organisations such as CG can give artists more of a platform through which they can knowingly influence policy in subtle ways. If artists are aware that organisations like CG offer mechanisms of communicating their needs to the policy paradigm, this could be formalised into a more effective rendering of the process. Furthermore, if government bodies reduce the amount of audience data required from organisations and offer small-scale and contemporary visual art organisations the space and resources to utilise methods such as *the value lens*, representatives of the policy paradigm would give themselves the opportunity to *learn* what artists need by understanding the intermediary role of these organisations. This does not mean that governments should not hold artists or organisations accountable for the way they are using public investment, nor negate the need for transparency. Rather, I recommend a shift in the *evidence* (and so type of data and data collection methods) requested by governing bodies, and developing prospective mechanisms may help to achieve this. As a result, they could be better placed to formulate funding strategies that support the contemporary arts milieu holistically, rather than overtly focussing on audience-focussed organisations.

Additionally, I hope that larger organisations may engage with the critical junctures and consider what it is they can offer regarding AD. For example, larger organisations seem ideally placed to support artists in critical junctures four and five. Artists looking to broaden their exposure and those who believe they have exhausted their locality often desired organisational support to connect them with practitioners or organisations in different locations, who also



worked in their specified areas of interest. Larger organisations with strong national and international networks and who have worked with more experienced practitioners have the potential to offer strategic showcasing opportunities, particularly through networking and brokerage. Furthermore, CG does not have a collection, and so I was not able to understand how collections could feature as part of AD. Informally, however, I am aware that there are links between an organisation having a collection and AD, especially in the sense of the collection acting as a resource to open up new channels in an artists' work. Using the way that I have differentiated the different types of resources, it is possible that larger organisations could consider at greater length how to document the impact that working with a collection has on an artist, at which critical juncture – if not a new one – and how to expand this offering more formally.

The dominant assumption of value as that which can be quantitatively captured is a major theme in determining how the neoliberalist paradigm has impacted AD in the gallery setting. However, the *values* of small-scale and artist-focussed organisations are often qualitative, not quantitative. Because AD is a qualitative phenomenon rendered invisible by econometrics, it not only undervalues the provision of AD, but it may also bring into question whether organisations feel incentives to continue offering it, and it is likely that this would deplete the amount of support necessary for artists to work through potentially problematic periods in their career. Without these support mechanisms in place, there may be fewer artists able to sustain their practice (Louise, 2011). In documenting a discussion between small-scale and artist focussed contemporary visual art organisations, Gordon-Nesbitt (2012) recorded how the Directors of 30

organisations posited how they could avoid resorting to “econometric” indicators to evaluate their work with artists. Practising agonism in the counterpublic offers small-scale and artist-focussed contemporary visual arts organisations the mechanisms to self-generate new approaches that document their activity from which representatives of the policy paradigm can learn. In doing so, small-scale and artist-focussed contemporary visual arts organisations can better articulate their *values* in the contemporary arts milieu, receive funding in recognition of their contribution, reduce precarity within the workforce, and support artists through problematic critical junctures that, otherwise, they may not be able to overcome.

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## **10 Appendices**

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### **10.1 Appendix 1: Industry report**

# **Artist Development at Castlefield Gallery:**

# **Policy Change through the Counterpublic?**

**By Rebecca de Mynn**

**Artist Development at Castlefield Gallery: Policy Change through the Counterpublic?**  
An ethnographic report produced as part of a collaborative doctoral award

A partnership between Manchester Metropolitan University (Manchester School of Art) and Castlefield Gallery

Thesis due for submission in 2017

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Thanks also go to all the research participants for taking the time to participate in interviews, conversations, and observations. These include the anonymous artists (who are part of the CG Associates scheme and those who exhibited at Castlefield Gallery during my time there), Helen Wewiora and Maria Percival (Relationship Managers for the Arts Council England), Sarah Elderkin (Principal Policy Officer and formerly the Cultural Economy Team Leader at Manchester City Council), Jordan Baseman, Clyde Hopkins, Timothy Hyman, Chris Jones, Bob Matthews, Annee Olofsson, Shanti Panchal, Emma Rushton, Chris Speed, Derek Tyman, and Roxy Walsh.

## Foreword

Kwong Lee

Director of Castlefield Gallery and Co-chair of Contemporary Visual Art Manchester

I have often described Castlefield Gallery as an artist development organisation. As an industry, we know what that means don't we? Well, not precisely. In many ways, it goes back to the impossibility of defining what art is, and similarly what artists do.

In recent years, Castlefield Gallery, alongside many other small-scale organisations whose core aims include to develop artists, discovered a dilemma: how do we measure our achievements, successes, and impact in order to demonstrate our value to society? While this is not to be asked solely in relation to the public sector and state funding, it is within this context that the question has been most pertinent. We have often raised concerns when rigid performance metrics are used to interpret the impact across a range of diversely purposed arts organisations, e.g. the simplistic ratio of funding compared to audience numbers that would favour audience-focussed organisations and mask the value of artist development ones.

Our rationale is that without new artists and emerging practices coming through, we will have diminished innovation and diversity in the arts. However, the evidence we have so far been able to present has been anecdotal, subjective, and not coherent enough to persuade funders or policy-makers to make changes towards more meaningful ways of measuring the impact of artist development. We needed to get better at producing evidence-based arguments. This was the starting point for partnership research into the subject with The Manchester School of Art and MIRIAD. It was desirable and necessary to get an independent point of view on our sub-sector.

Through the ethnographic methodology that Rebecca de Mynn has employed, we are beginning to think about a more suitable way of capturing and evidencing qualitative impact. Through the processes of this PhD research, we have gained a better understanding of what we do in terms of artist development practices, how we communicate what we do, and how we relate to artists and policy makers. We have also benefited from our peers' research and debates, especially that of Common Practice, the advocacy group of small scale contemporary visual arts organisation in London.

We have learnt several things from our involvement in the PhD. For example, we have learnt that our artist development activities include a level of emotional resource, something that is a new term of reference for us. We also believe that our categorisation of artists into emerging, mid-career, and established was over simplistic. Here, de Mynn offers an alternative conceptualisation of five critical junctures which describe various overlapping artists' engagements with arts organisations.

Using her background in political analysis, de Mynn has brought in thinking from new institutionalism, and introduced elements of democratic theory. This report explains de Mynn's observation of the active players or actors that can be equally influential in the artist development sphere, and it highlights the artist as one of the three actors. Our intention is that by sharing this report with

the sector, we continue to empower all actors to become more engaged and knowledgeable participants. In turn we ourselves will have a more active role to play in informing policy.

By looking into the practices of artist development through different lenses, we hope to be able to demonstrate our impact beyond the current quantitative measures in use, and feed into the knowledge banks of policy-makers such as Arts Council England and local authorities. We hope that other artist development organisations will find similarities and parallels in their own work and research, that artists will find this report useful in better understanding their relationships with organisations and institutions, and moreover that collectively we can be more active players in the creation of cultural policy.

I would like to thank MIRIAD and The Manchester School of Art, Manchester Metropolitan University, and especially de Mynn's Director of Studies Dr Amanda Ravetz, co-supervisors Dr Alison Slater and Dr Steven Gartside, and all of the artists, institutions and Castlefield Gallery staff who have contributed their time to the research.

## Executive Summary

<sup>1</sup>Mouffe, C. (2000a) *The Democratic Paradox*. London and New York: Verso, p. 102.

This report presents the findings of research interrogating artist development activity at Castlefield Gallery.

I sought to understand what artist development practices at Castlefield Gallery consist of, and to use this to generate an understanding of the internal dynamics of the small-scale contemporary visual arts sphere. I did so through interviews, feedback sessions, and conversations with artists, staff, and policymakers, and time spent at Castlefield Gallery and their associated offsite events.

The findings reveal that artist development at Castlefield Gallery has a threefold constitution. First, it is offered *on demand* when artists determine they need it. Second, it is achieved by making multiple channels of possibility available to artists, i.e. through nurturing an environment, skills and knowledge (including professional development), showcasing opportunities, and resources that feed a practical output (such as space, funding, opening up new avenues in the work, or emotional resources), or a combination of all these. Third, artist development activities can be framed as counterpublic practices, and the evaluation of their effectiveness as an act of agonism. To consider this as an act of agonism is to frame policymakers and Castlefield Gallery as *adversaries*; i.e. as “somebody whose ideas we combat but whose right to defend those ideas we do not put into question”.<sup>1</sup> In the context of metrics, the relationship between Castlefield Gallery and policymakers is grounded on essential differences that cannot be overcome; they are each the “us”, and the other the “them”.

The report points to the unsuitability of government-led metrics when applied in the context of small-scale contemporary visual arts organisations. It contends that the policymakers’ aims through data collection are often about achieving accountability for public money. As such, the metrics used by governing bodies can end up instrumentalising artwork, translating it into the general public’s positive experience. Despite unpicking the difficulties around metrics, previous studies have not considered whether focussing on the tensions that surround their use may be a way forward for the sector. I consider whether it would be productive for small-scale contemporary visual arts organisations to embrace and use this difference.

The report concludes by proposing a bold thought experiment: that the small-scale contemporary visual arts sphere work together as a counterpublic. Using the creative tension present in the difference between the data collection ambitions of small-scale contemporary visual arts sphere and those of policymakers, I ask whether this could be used to forge new approaches to data collection more suited to the needs of the sphere. Rather than attempt to form a consensus on value through government-led applications of metrics, the sector could be supported to generate their own, autonomous of governmental bodies. It is proposed that the role of policymakers should be to allow the sector space to do so.

## The Context of the Report

<sup>2</sup>Louise, D. (2011) *Ladders for development: Impact of Arts Council England funding cuts on practice-led organisations*. 31st May. a-n, The Artist Information Company. [Online] [Accessed 12th December 2014] Available from: <https://www.a-n.co.uk/resource/ladders-for-development-impact-of-arts-council-england-funding-cuts-on-practice-led-organisations>; Thelwall, S. (2011) *Size Matters: Notes towards a Better Understanding of the Value, Operation and Potential of Small Visual Arts Organisations*. London: Common Practice, p. 6.

<sup>3</sup>For a definition of values, see page 24.

<sup>4</sup>Thelwall. *Size Matters*; Arts Council England. (n.d.a.) *Supporting visual arts*. Arts Council England website. [Online] [Accessed 7th October 2016] Available from: <http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/supporting-arts-and-culture/supporting-visual-arts>.

<sup>5</sup>Thelwall. *Size Matters*, p. 6.

<sup>6</sup>Caust, J. (2003) 'Putting the "art" back into arts policy making: how arts policy has been "captured" by the economists and the marketers.' *The International Journal of Cultural Policy*, 9(1), pp. 51-63; Louise. *Ladders for development*; Thelwall. *Size Matters*.

<sup>7</sup>The Culture, Media and Sport Committee. (2011) *Funding of the arts and heritage*. London: The Stationery Office Limited, p. 16. [Online] [Accessed on 4th September 2015] Available from: <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmselect/cmcmcmeds/464/464i.pdf>.

<sup>8</sup>Gordon-Nesbitt, R. (2012) *Value, Measure, Sustainability: Ideas towards the future of the small-scale visual arts sector*. London: Common Practice, p. 5.

<sup>9</sup>In order: Louise. *Ladders for development*; Thelwall. *Size Matters*; King, R. (2012) *Exhibitions are not enough: Publicly-funded galleries and artists' professional development*. 4th April. a-n, The Artist Information Company. [Online] [Accessed 8th April 2014] Available from: <https://www.a-n.co.uk/resource/exhibitions-are-not-enough-publicly-funded-galleries-and-artists-professional-development-2>; Gordon-Nesbitt, R. (2015) *Mapping Artists' Development Programmes in the UK: Knowledge and Skills*. London: Chisenhale Gallery; Castlefield Gallery and Hughes, N. (2012) *Mapping Artists' CPD in Greater Manchester Report*. Manchester: Castlefield Gallery; Arts Council England (2013) *Great Art and Culture for Everyone: 10-year Strategic Framework 2010-2020*. 2nd ed. London: Arts Council England; Manchester Cultural Partnership (n.d.) *Talent City*. Manchester Cultural Partnership website. [Online] [Accessed 25th March 2016] Available from: <http://www.manchesterculturalpartnership.org/culturalambition/talentcity>.

This research responds to previous studies suggesting that quantitative government metrics have often flattened or rendered invisible the work of small-scale contemporary visual arts organisations.<sup>2</sup> Although there have been several different attempts to capture the different *values* present within the visual arts, these have tended to centre on responses to the artwork, not the artistic process.<sup>3</sup> Those responses could range from whether individuals purchase the work, to audiences' experiences. Whilst funding decisions are made based on a variety of factors and stated goals, the wider trend of econometrics used across government has arguably influenced the funding decisions of policymakers operating within this context, such as the Arts Council England and Manchester City Council.<sup>4</sup> The difficulties in documenting or capturing "intangible assets" has rendered the small-scale contemporary visual arts sphere especially vulnerable during the climate of cuts in public spending.<sup>5</sup>

In what appears to be an absence of metrics able to successfully bridge the varying wants and needs of data collection in this area, it has been hard to see how policymakers' needs for evidence-based data about their spend can be squared with the kinds of small-scale, fine grained, and varied provision offered by small-scale contemporary visual art organisations. Arts Council England is the major funder of small-scale contemporary visual arts organisations in England. How they make their funding decisions has been the subject of consistent debate.<sup>6</sup> In 2011, the Arts Council England changed their funding strategy, and moved from having Regularly Funded Organisations (RFO) to a National Portfolio of Organisations (NPO). Under the system of RFOs, successful applicants all had to complete the same level of reporting (regardless of size and capacity), and funding was allocated on a rolling basis. Within the new system, funding was typically for three years, organisations had "tailor made agreements", and larger organisations were "expected to help smaller organisations".<sup>7</sup> Upon release of the 2011 funding decisions, two major reports analysed how the Arts Council's use of econometrics had undervalued the role played by the small-scale sphere within the overall "operational milieu".<sup>8</sup> They argued that overt attention to audience figures, ticket sales, and café revenue overlooked certain aspects of the visual arts sphere.

The work that is not captured by the use of quantitative metrics describes a plethora of activity, including what this report has termed *artist development*. As a term, *artist development* cuts across the diverse range of pre-existing terminologies. These include "bespoke professional practice activities", "intangible assets", "professional development", "continuum of development", "continual professional development", and *talent development*.<sup>9</sup> All of these terms tend to represent areas of organisational programming that prioritise artistic process rather than audience experience. Organisations use and interpret these various terminologies based on judgements about the context in which they are deployed, and, often, language is used in this way to create a common ground between arts organisations and policymakers.

To date however, researchers have not critically engaged with the extent to which the pursuit of a *consensus* between the small-scale contemporary visual arts sphere and policymakers has driven the on-going design of metrics inappropriate for the sphere. Existing research does imply, however, that the application of metrics in this area is highly problematic due to the often-



<sup>10</sup> Thelwall. *Size Matters*.

<sup>11</sup> For example, see: Louise. *Ladders for development*; Thelwall. *Size Matters*; King, R. (2012) *Exhibitions are not enough*; Gordon-Nesbitt. *Value, Measure, Sustainability*; Slater, A., Ravetz, A., and Lee, K. (2013) *Analysing Artists' Continual Professional Development (CPD) in Greater Manchester: towards an integrated approach for talent development*. Manchester: Castlefield Gallery Publications; Gordon-Nesbitt, *Mapping Artists' Development Programmes in the UK*.

<sup>12</sup> Gordon-Nesbitt. *Value, Measure, Sustainability*.

<sup>13</sup> CGAs are members of the Castlefield Gallery Associates scheme, a programme of activities which members pay to have access to. These include talks, one-to-ones with Castlefield Gallery staff, and user-generated activities. Castlefield Gallery (n.d.a.) *About CG Associates*. Castlefield Gallery website. [Online] [Accessed 15th October 2014] Available from: <http://www.castlefieldgallery.co.uk/associates/>.

<sup>14</sup> New Art Spaces are temporary spaces for artists to use on a short-term project basis. Castlefield Gallery (n.d.b.) *New Art Spaces*. Castlefield Gallery website. [Online] [Accessed 15th October 2014] Available from: <http://www.castlefieldgallery.co.uk/associates/newartspaces/>; Manchester Cultural Partnership. *Talent City*.

<sup>15</sup> Castlefield Gallery (2015) *Art: Audience, Development, Discourse and Skills initiative*. 8th September. Castlefield Gallery website. [Online] [Accessed on 11th September 2015] Available from: <http://www.castlefieldgallery.co.uk/news/critique-cvan-nw-critical-writing-programme-bursary/>.

informal nature of delivery, and the way that *values*, obtained through such mechanisms, can often be deferred and so realised later on in the career of the artist. As the value is deferred, it often accrues quantitative viability in the large-scale sector. When this is the case, larger organisations are better able to use the normative metrics to articulate their contribution to the arts ecosystem. Their ability to articulate their role in this way gives the impression that value is born and realised in the remit of these organisations.<sup>10</sup>

Up until now reports in this area have been the exclusive product of researchers commissioned by the sector. Whether their aim is to understand the scope and number of opportunities, to conceptualise “deferred value”, or to grasp “how organisations can work within, and adapt, the metrics by which they are currently evaluated”, researchers are generally asked to *shed light* on areas that econometrics are unable to capture, and make recommendations based on what it is they have learnt.<sup>11</sup> Recommendations tend to be targeted at both organisations and policymakers, in the hope that a consensus over measurement may be reached. This report attempts to build on the documented understanding of artist development activities, and to question whether consensus is in fact a viable way forward. In this my research is a self-consciously agonistic thought experiment, designed to provoke debate. Nevertheless, the ideas within it have been arrived at using fine-grained ethnographic study. The core principle, arrived at through sustained observation, rests on the proposition that the metrics currently generated between policymakers and this part of the sector are destructive.<sup>12</sup>

As well as problematising the interaction between organisations and policymakers, in this research I have used constructivist institutionalism to theorise the nature of their relationship. A key part of constructivist institutionalism concerns how institutions are defined by their intermediary role between individuals and policymakers, in a way that can change the policy context. For example, as an artist-focussed organisation, Castlefield Gallery's practices constitute an informed programme documenting the needs of the artist through the Castlefield Gallery Associates (CGA) scheme, as well as extensive interaction and experience working with artists.<sup>13</sup> Castlefield Gallery maintains relationships with different aspects of the arts ecosystem, including policymakers. In the case of the Arts Council England and Manchester City Council, Castlefield Gallery's funding applications and reporting cycles document their extensive knowledge that is generated from input by artists. As part of their Cultural Partnership website in 2016, Manchester City Council used two examples from Castlefield Gallery's programme, CGAs and New Art Spaces, as case studies of good examples of how organisations in Greater Manchester can support their artists.<sup>14</sup> Kwong Lee was also joint chair of Contemporary Visual Arts Manchester (CVAM), the Greater Manchester branch of the Contemporary Visual Arts Network North West (CVAN NW). CVAN NW is the regional board of a national network of contemporary visual arts organisations. The national network retains a “strong relationship” with the Arts Council England, with funding, in part, generated from their Grants for the Arts programme. In this role, Lee, as representative of Castlefield Gallery, has been pivotal in ensuring artist development is a central concern for their programming.<sup>15</sup> The subtle representation of artists' needs in conjunction with policymaker involvement builds up to a widespread process of intermediary action between Castlefield Gallery and the policymaking sphere.

The report asks whether the sector could harness a creative energy produced from acknowledging that it practices differently and sometimes at odds to

the policy sphere. If small-scale contemporary visual arts organisations joined together, could they discard the desire and need to fit in with government-led metrics and create new ones to suit their own particular data collection needs? Could policymakers learn from the sector, and adopt a new approach to evaluating the small-scale contemporary visual arts? Where pre-existing research starts by striving for consensus, this report encourages the embracing of creative difference.

## Methods

<sup>16</sup>For example, see: Louise, *Ladders for development*; Thelwall, *Size Matters*; King, R. (2012) *Exhibitions are not enough*; Gordon-Nesbitt, *Value, Measure, Sustainability*; Slater, Ravetz, and Lee, *Analysing Artists' CPD*; Gordon-Nesbitt, *Mapping Artists' Development Programmes in the UK*.

<sup>17</sup>For the purposes of this report, the major sources used were: Manchester Cultural Partnership, *Talent City*; and Arts Council England, *Great Art and Culture for Everyone*. For the comprehensive list of the sources used in the research, please refer to the thesis when made public in 2017.

<sup>18</sup>One-to-ones are a meeting held between individual artists and another, usually more experienced, artist or arts professional. This is a formal meeting wherein the advising artist or arts professional advises the attending artist on areas relevant to their practice or career juncture.

The research for this report used an ethnographic methodology, employing mixed methods including archival, participant observation, semi-structured interviews, and feedback sessions with the staff. All sources were coded and categorised using grounded theory as an approach.<sup>16</sup> While several studies have sought to document the abundance of activity offered to artists through the small-scale contemporary visual arts sphere, there have been no prior studies to my knowledge that used an ethnographic approach. Research participants were the staff and board members at Castlefield Gallery, artists who were part of their curated programme, artists enrolled in their associates' scheme, affiliated artists (including attendees at events, internal and external), volunteers, peer organisations, two Relationship Managers from Arts Council England, and a Principal Policy Officer and formerly the Cultural Economy Team Leader at Manchester City Council.

Pre-existing sources used were: financial reports from 2005 to 2014; the draft and live business plans for the period 2011-15; 86 emails sent from the CGA Development Coordinator to the CGA members from 15.01.2014 until 14.10.2015; 38 Castlefield Gallery newsletters from 12.12.2014 until 15.04.2016; 11 grant funding applications made to Arts Council England from 2004 until 2014; 26 application documents submitted to Arts Council England for regular funding (either as a RFO or NPO) from 1999 until 2014; the title pages on Castlefield Gallery's website; policy documents and funding outcomes produced by Manchester City Council and Arts Council England.<sup>17</sup>

Sources produced by the researcher were: field notes taken from 38 different occasions of observation in the gallery (including one-to-one meetings held during that time, and off-site meetings with external partners such as Contemporary Visual Arts Manchester); 6 portfolio review sessions; and 4 day-long events held externally to Castlefield Gallery in partnership with other organisations.<sup>18</sup> In addition, 43 interviews were conducted: 2 with policymakers, 6 with Castlefield Gallery staff, 16 with CGAs, 11 with artists who had historically exhibited at Castlefield Gallery over the last 30 years, and 8 with exhibiting artists who were part of the programme while the primary data was being collected (EAs). Informal discussions about *talent development* in Greater Manchester were held with two Relationship Managers from Arts Council England and one Principal Policy Officer and formerly the Cultural Economy Team Leader at Manchester City Council. Also used were notes from a workshop hosted by Arts Council England, which invited arts professionals and practitioners from Greater Manchester to discuss the provision of *talent development* in the region.

## Discussion of Findings

<sup>19</sup> Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) (n.d.) *Recognition of Non-formal and Informal Learning – Home*. OECD website. [Online] [Accessed 3rd October 2016] Available from: <http://www.oecd.org/edu/skills-beyond-school/recognitionofnon-formalandinformallearning-home.htm>.

<sup>20</sup> My use of the term *emotional resource* refers to the role that Castlefield Gallery plays in re-stocking the emotional drain that immaterial labour expects from practitioners. In the case of this research, I observed a clear distinction between this and emotional support. Both had a presence, but the former was what artists associated with their developmental needs. For a discussion of these terms, see: Gill, R. and Pratt, A. (2008) 'In the Social Factory? Immaterial Labour, Precariousness and Cultural Work.' *Theory, Culture and Society*, 25(7-8), pp. 1-30; Morini, C. (2007) 'The Feminization of Labour in Cognitive Capitalism.' *Feminist Review*, 87, pp. 40-59.

There are four main areas of findings. The first two represent the empirical findings around artist development activity offered by Castlefield Gallery. These include the observed activities I classed as artist development, and the points at which artists enter organisational artist development. Subsequently, the report discusses the situational nature of data relating to artist development activity. Finally, based on the rationale that government departments' needs from data collection sit uncomfortably with the small-scale contemporary visual arts sphere, the report describes how artist development was used as a lens to critically assess *change* in this relationship.

### Artist development activities

In general, I found that activities were generated in response to the artists' needs, as well as from the staff's knowledge of what the artist might need. 149 different artist development offerings at Castlefield Gallery were documented. I divided these into four different categories of artist development offerings: nurturing an environment, skills and knowledge, resources that feed practical outputs, and showcasing opportunities. Tables 1 to 13 on pages 9 to 18 present the categories and sub-categories in greater depth.

Activities classed as nurturing an environment were those that Castlefield Gallery used to initiate artist development by contributing to a context in which it could be practiced. These were conducted both internally and externally. Skills and knowledge were opportunities for artists to learn about areas of practice, or the arts ecosystem and their role within that. These were offered through the following formats for learning: non-formal (group), non-formal (one-to-one), experiential, and formal (group). Non-formal learning is structured learning that does not have explicit learning outcomes as the goal, whereas formal learning is learning that takes place with specific outcomes in mind.<sup>19</sup> Resources that feed practical outputs were artist development offerings that practitioners could draw from in order to continue producing practical outputs. These were physical space, direct tangible resources, opening up new avenues in the practice, and *emotional resources*.<sup>20</sup> Showcasing opportunities were moments engineered so that artists could engage with audiences, in the broadest sense of the term. These included platforming, hosting, networking, and brokerage.

Audiences also had a role in artist development. Audiences inputted into artist development when their reception acted as a resource for the artist. Often manifest through emotional resources or new avenues in the work, the way an audience responded to the work and how they thought about it, at times, fed into artists' development. 13 of the 35 artists interviewed discussed how audience feedback had a role in what they perceived as their own development.

Tables 1 to 13 on the following pages detail what subcategories and activities are considered in each category of artist development, as observed at Castlefield Gallery.

## In depth: nurturing an environment

**Table 1: Sub-categories and activities in nurturing an environment**

<b>Nurturing an environment</b>
<b>Internally</b>
Ad-hoc discussions with visitors
Using artist feedback to generate/amend their activities
Maintaining long-term relationships with artists
Encouraging open knowledge exchanges between themselves, other organisations, and artists
Ensuring information given to artists is accessible

## In depth: skills and knowledge

**Table 2: Sub-categories and activities offered within formal learning (group) contexts**

<b>Formal learning (group)</b>
<b>External talks and seminars</b>
What is involved in starting and running a pop-up space
Where to locate funding during austerity and how to access it
How to initiate and run an artist-led initiative
How to build a website
How to get criticality for your practice within an artist-led pop-up
Legislation around pop-up spaces
How to publicise DIY events

**Table 3: Sub-categories and activities offered within non-formal learning (group) contexts**

<b>Non-formal learning (group)</b>
<b>Crit groups (delivered through the CGA scheme)</b>
How to decide which residencies to apply to
Information about artists with a similar practice
New materials that could complement a style of practice
Advice about which organisations might show your work
Pricing
Practical techniques
Opportunities
How an audience might respond to an artwork, or aspects within an artwork

### Externally

- Working as part of institutional networks to promote artist development
- Staff are active in their roles outside of the gallery environment
- Facilitating a harmonised arts ecosystem based on collaboration and communication
- Working as part of institutional networks to enhance artist development opportunities
- Using meanwhile spaces to create a dialogue about the necessity of project spaces

### CGA monthly meetings

- How to apply for funding
- What funding is available
- How other artists have written proposals
- How to apply for Launch Pad
- How to write about your work
- How to show work at its best advantage
- How other artists have applied for Arts Council England funding
- How to produce work in a short time-frame
- How venues in other cities interact with artists
- Writing proposals
- How to promote events
- How other artists have followed certain career paths
- Online marketing
- How successful DIY projects have worked
- How to produce a residency proposal
- How artists can make sure they get paid what they deserve

### Other information sessions (e.g. breakout discussions at events)

- How to generate a successful artist-led project
- How to fund an artist-led project
- How to share knowledge and maintain networks
- How to generate audiences
- The routes and barriers in the regional arts ecosystem
- How to get exposure

## In depth: resources that feed a practical output

**Table 6: Sub-categories and activities classed as offering physical space**

Physical space	
New Art Spaces	Site-specific commissions

**Table 7: Sub-categories and activities classed as offering emotional resources**

Emotional
<b>Encouragement, reassurance, belonging, and confidence</b>
Exposure to reviewers
Ad-hoc discussions with audiences
Opportunities are made accessible
The brokerage of peer-to-peer relationships
Recognising and using the expertise of more experienced CGAs
Making success stories visible
The opportunity to show at transient career points
Brokering mentors
Recommending attainable opportunities
Brokering friendships

**Table 8: Sub-categories and activities classed as offering new avenues in the artwork**

New avenues in the artwork
<b>Gallery-led</b>
Offering spaces to test new work
Theoretical discussions about exhibitions
Theoretical discussions about an artist's work
Offering names of relevant practitioners
Video-recording performance pieces on behalf of the artist
Opportunities to show at transient career points
Posing critical questions about a proposal over the telephone

**Table 9: Sub-categories and activities classed as offering direct tangible resources**

Direct tangible resources
<b>Financial</b>
Payment for additional tech work
Launch Pad budget
Commissioning work
Supporting bursaries to attend events
Payment to give advice at sessions
Payment for work in shows

**Launch Pad**

**Exhibition programme**

**Other**

Providing a friendly and welcoming space

Reducing stress by offering affordable spaces to take risks and test work

Aiding the fulfilment of personal aspirations

Treating artists professionally to imbue a professionalism in them

**Gallery-facilitated**

Brokering practitioners through the vehicle of a group show

Brokering mentor relationships in New Art Spaces

Brokering conversations between more experienced practitioners/art professionals

Brokering peer-to-peer conversational exchanges

**Materials**

Sites for site-specific work

Facilitating the sharing of used materials throughout New Art Spaces

Helping artists source materials for commissioned pieces



## In depth: showcasing opportunities

**Table 10: Sub-categories and activities classed as platforming**

<b>Platforming</b>
<b>Gallery-led</b>
Larger audiences
Expanded audiences
Press coverage
The Manchester Contemporary
Directly interacting with practising artists
Increase the profile of artists by association with the gallery
Suggest artists for group shows

**Table 11: Sub-categories and activities classed as brokerage**

<b>Brokerage</b>
<b>Gallery-led</b>
Suggest artists for group shows
Create mentoring opportunities
Facilitate relationships between practitioners of varying experience
Introduce practitioners using group shows as a vehicle

**Table 12: Sub-categories and activities classed as networking**

<b>Networking</b>
<b>Gallery-led</b>
Directly interacting with practising artists

**Table 13: Sub-categories and activities classed as hosting**

<b>Hosting</b>
<b>Gallery-led</b>
Launch Pad
The main gallery space

**Gallery-facilitated**

- Exposure to curators
- Opportunity to tell other artists about current shows
- Meeting artists in different cities
- Peer-to-peer interactions
- Meeting venue-representatives in different cities
- Generating national audiences
- Exposure to more experienced artists

**Gallery-facilitated**

- Putting artists in contact
- Placing artists of varying experiences in the same context

**Gallery-facilitated**

- Meeting venue representatives in different cities
- Peer-to-peer discussions
- Exposure to curators
- Meeting artists in different cities
- Exposure to more experienced artists

**Gallery-facilitated**

- New Art Spaces available to artist-led curatorial groups
- Space hire
- Interim shows for University students

<sup>21</sup> Castlefield Gallery (n.d.c.) *About*. Castlefield Gallery website. [Online] [Accessed 7th August 2014] Available from: <http://www.castlefieldgallery.co.uk/about/>.

<sup>22</sup> Slater, Ravetz, and Lee. *Analysing Artists' CPD*; Gordon-Nesbitt. *Mapping Artists' Development Programmes in the UK*.

<sup>23</sup> Rushton, E. (2015) Interview with de Mynn, R. 14th September. Personal interview. Manchester: Unpublished source.

<sup>24</sup> Gordon-Nesbitt. *Value, Measure, Sustainability*, p. 7.

## How the different categories interact

Categories were not distinct from one another, but were often overlapping, reciprocal, and interlinked. Their broader relationship to one another is shown in figure 1. Resources, and skills and knowledge fed into each other, or they resulted in the securing of a showcasing opportunity. Showcasing opportunities either led to more showcasing opportunities, and/or offered the artists resources and/or skills and knowledge. Most artists who had experience of showcasing opportunities only discussed them in the interview when they led to resources, and/or skills and knowledge.

**Figure 1: Categories of artist development**



## Critical junctures

Classically, the points at which artists seek artist development offerings have been defined according to their career stage. In documents and on their website, Castlefield Gallery often presented their activity as catering to the needs of “emerging” artists.<sup>21</sup> This frames the points at which artists seek organisational development according to whether an artist is emerging/early, mid-career, or established is common in the sector. However, the linear connotations of these terms has been critiqued by those writing on the subject.<sup>22</sup> It was also considered problematic among the artists interviewed. As stated by Emma Rushton, an artist who exhibited at Castlefield gallery in 2005,

Emerging. I suppose, [...] it's like this idea that you start off here [hand gestures lower down] and you emerge, and then you get bigger and bigger and bigger [hand moves upwards] and then you're kind of up there [hand gesture marks the top of a scale]; it's just not that at all, is it?<sup>23</sup>

This linearity assumes a defined start and finish. Within this, graduation often marks the beginning and commercial viability the end, and “the journey”, states Rebecca Gordon-Nesbitt, “is by no means linear”.<sup>24</sup> Rather than defining

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 6.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>27</sup> Hay, C. (2008) 'Constructivist Institutionalism.' In Rhodes, R. A. W., Binder, S. A. and Rockman, B. A. (eds.) *The Oxford Handbook of Political Institutions*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 56-74.

<sup>28</sup> Capoccia, G. and Kelemen, R. D. (2007) 'The Study of Critical Junctures: Theory, Narrative, and Counterfactuals in Historical Institutionalism.' *World Politics*, 59(3), pp. 341-369.

the moment of artists seeking organisational development activity according to career, Gordon-Nesbitt instead argues that "programmes cater to artists at formative moments in their development".<sup>25</sup> Rather than catering to career-stage, she suggests that engagement with artist development is defined by developmental moments.<sup>26</sup> Using constructivist institutionalism, this report instead defines these times of engagement as *critical junctures*; moments of interrupted stability for both the artist, and the institution. For constructivist institutionalism, institutions are seen as cognitive filters and spaces of transformation.<sup>27</sup> The *institutional nexus* acts as an intermediary between artists and policymakers. The phrase *critical juncture* is descriptive of "brief phases of institutional flux" punctuating "relatively long periods of [...] institutional stability and reproduction", in which "more dramatic change is possible".<sup>28</sup>

Removing the term from an exclusively institutional focus, this research understands *critical junctures* to be the artist's choice to (simultaneously) interrupt both their own and Castlefield Gallery's stable trajectory. Artists do so by engaging with organisationally led artist development – an interruption of assumed linearity. In the study, observations reveal that artists tend to access artist development offerings at five different critical junctures in their career.

The first critical juncture is **recent exposure to unfamiliar contexts**. Caused by structural factors such as graduation or relocation – whether externally necessitated, internally driven, or a mixture of both – this juncture is representative of an artist navigating new institutional terrains with limited knowledge. The largest portion of artists experiencing this critical juncture observed during the study were recently graduated artists, and Castlefield Gallery's artist development programme attracted artists at this critical juncture more than any other. CGAs that were no longer experiencing this critical juncture often questioned whether they would continue their engagement with the CGA scheme.

The second was a **shift in form/content**. Practices ebb and flow naturally, but this juncture refers to a time where there is a marked shift. The artists that were observed tended to use two different approaches to process the shift they were experiencing. The first was to use the shift as a creative energy in the production of work, processing it through practice and observing the changes. For this, artists generally required physical resources to explore the shift. For example, a larger studio in order to scale-up the work. The second was discursive, and artists required Castlefield Gallery to provide them with one-to-one meetings. These meetings would usually be with someone more experienced, either with staff or in portfolio review sessions, and allowed the artist to talk through their thinking.

Critical juncture three was **artists already familiar with the contemporary visual arts sphere, continuing or re-establishing momentum**. This juncture included artists seeking momentum for external opportunities well suited to their practice. The gallery usually offered showcasing opportunities to artists in this juncture.

The fourth critical juncture was **artists looking to broaden exposure**. For example, artists in this juncture wanted to engage curators from a different organisation to those they had previously worked with, collectors, commercial representation, or moving from audiences consisting of the general public to, for example, heritage audiences. This critical juncture refers to artists who explicitly engage with artist development offerings in order to achieve this. It

<sup>29</sup> Slater, Ravetz, and Lee. *Analysing Artists' CPD*, p. 26.

can often overlap with the third juncture, but not always. Like the third, this was supported by Castlefield Gallery through showcasing opportunities.

The final critical juncture was an **exhausted locality**. This moment of engagement featured artists who felt they had exhausted the opportunities available to them within the current geographical region in which they were operating. Artists in this juncture typically desired organisational support to connect them with practitioners or organisations in different locations nationally or internationally, and working in their specified areas of interest. This juncture overlapped with the third and fourth, but was specifically focussed on artists seeking the organisational mechanisms to help them expand beyond their immediate region, without having to relocate permanently. Different artist development offerings were more applicable to certain critical junctures. What was noticeable is how the fifth critical juncture – an exhausted locality – was virtually absent from the artist development offerings at Castlefield Gallery. This corresponded to the findings of the pilot study for this research, wherein Alison Slater, Amanda Ravetz, and Kwong Lee conclude that current opportunities were targeted at artists who had recently graduated.<sup>29</sup> For artists who knew the terrain in which they were practicing, and had already learnt strategies to professionalise their practice, the support they required tended to be resource-heavy, needing intimate and bespoke learning strategies (such as experiential or one-to-one). Typically, the more honed-in form of artist development offering is difficult to capture using numeric indices. When resources, skills, and knowledge are delivered to large groups, attendance figures comply with the current norms of evaluation. On the contrary, if one-to-one or experiential strategies are required, capturing these is extremely difficult, and so they are often rendered invisible.

While *critical junctures* describe the different stages at which artists seek organisational development, access to artist development was directed by a combination of factors. These include ability to attend (based on location, time of activity, the day the activity is on), artist's own perceptions of what they require, the organisations perception of what an artist might require, judgements around whether an artist is considered a contemporary visual arts practitioner (i.e. one who is *critically engaged*), and positive reactions to the artwork. At times, these factors overlap, particularly the last two. In my observations, all artists had access to skills and knowledge, irrespective of whether they were deemed to be a contemporary visual artist or whether the reviewer had a positive response to their artwork. However, the reviewer's judgements and responses did seem at times to limit whether an artist accessed a further level of emotional resources, showcasing opportunities, and the skills and knowledge obtained through experiential learning in an exhibition.

In addition, unspoken judgements and instinctive reactions led to unease between those offering advice and artists. The strained relationship between individuals offering advice, artists, judgements, and reactions often operated on multiple levels. For example, at portfolio reviews, if artists were able to attend and had applied, all artists had access to knowledge about the arts ecosystem tailored according to the critical juncture they were at. However, at times in these situations, the reviewer's judgements and reactions to artworks acted as a barrier to whether an artist accessed a further level of emotional resources. Examples included whether the artists had access to confidence in their practice, reassurance about the relevance of their work, and their ability to pursue other opportunities in the ecosystem (often linked to showcasing

<sup>30</sup> Pick, J. and Anderton, M. (1999) *Building Jerusalem: Art, Industry and the British Millennium*. Amsterdam: Harwood Academic Publishers; Caust. 'Putting the "art" back into arts policy making'; Louise. *Ladders for Development*. Louise, D. (2012) *Realising the value: how practice-based organisations will fare after ACE cuts*. 24th January. a-n, The Artist Information Company. [Online] [Accessed 12th December 2014] Available from: <https://www.a-n.co.uk/resource/realising-the-value-how-practice-based-organisations-will-fare-after-ace-cuts-2>; Thelwall. *Size Matters*.

<sup>31</sup> Louise. *Ladders for Development*; Louise. *Realising the value*; Thelwall, *Size Matters*.

<sup>32</sup> Arts Council England. (n.d.b.) *Engaging Audiences Everywhere*. Arts Council England website. [Online] [Accessed 7th October 2016] Available from: <http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/how-we-make-impact/engaging-audiences-everywhere>; Arts Council England (n.d.c.) *Quality Metrics*. Arts Council England website. [Online] [Accessed 10th October] Available from: <http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/quality-metrics/quality-metrics>.

opportunities such as exhibitions or opens).

## The context-specific nature of artist development

Throughout my time researching at Castlefield Gallery, it was clear that terminologies relating to the area of artist development are fluid, changeable, and highly dependent on the context in which they are used. An analysis of contemporary research into artist development showed that non-immersive research methods had been able to indicate there were "intangible" (or non-econometrically suited) practices being conducted in small contemporary visual arts organisations, without comprehensively outlining what these were. For example, *talent development* (the preferred terminology of policymakers), *continual professional development* (a phrase focussed on institutional help with the more *business-like* aspects of an artist's career), and *artistic activities* (a term used to describe the resources arts organisation can offer to artists) were all used with an ambiguity of detail. The ill-defined nature of these terms contributed to the lack of knowledge around the nuanced and textured activity considered in this research as artist development.

By coding and categorising the interviews and field notes, I uncovered 149 artist development activities across four different categories. In coding and categorising documents authored by Castlefield Gallery, e.g. in funding applications, and business plans, and emails, 42 different activities directly linked to artist development could be identified, and these were spread across the four different categories listed in the previous section. When I conducted the same activity with the results from previous research, 33 artist development offerings were identified across three different categories. In a similar activity conducted using Arts Council England documents, only two categories contained offerings, of which there were just ten documented activities. As policymakers setting the context, this is unsurprising. The comparison between the number of activities uncovered using field notes and interviews to those documented by Castlefield Gallery, research papers, and the Arts Council England illustrates the lack of in-depth understanding about what these practices involve. Furthermore, the relationship between different categories of artist development and the points at which artists seek artist development were previously ambiguous. This ambiguity was clear in policy documents, as well as those produced by Castlefield Gallery, suggesting that artist development has not been fully understood in a comprehensive manner prior to the contextualised and expanded understanding unveiled through the ethnographic approach I took.

## Change through the counterpublic?

In many of the reports and papers produced in recent years, authors have recognised how government-led metrics obfuscate activity generated in the small-scale contemporary visual arts sphere.<sup>30</sup> More recently, these studies have turned to how these decisions have affected small-scale organisations differently to larger ones in the sphere.<sup>31</sup> Due to an accountability to the electorate, the data collection techniques adopted by policymakers are focussed squarely on capturing the more widespread experiences of the audience. This usually hinges on an instrumentalisation of artwork, translated into the general public's positive experience. This is seen in the examples of Audience Finder, and The Quality Metrics.<sup>32</sup> In the small-scale visual arts

<sup>32</sup> Hay, C. 'Constructivist Institutionalism.'

<sup>33</sup> Ibid, p. 66.

<sup>34</sup> Fraser, N. (1990) 'Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy.' *Social Text*, 25/26, pp. 56-80; Mouffe, C. (2000b) *Deliberative Democracy or Agonistic Pluralism?*. Vienna: Institute for Advanced Studies. [Online] [Accessed 2nd December 2011] Available from: [https://www.ihs.ac.at/publications/pol/pw\\_72.pdf](https://www.ihs.ac.at/publications/pol/pw_72.pdf); Mouffe, C. (2005) *On the Political*. New York: Routledge.

<sup>35</sup> Fraser, 'Rethinking the Public Sphere', p. 67.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> Mouffe, *Deliberative Democracy or Agonistic Pluralism?*.

<sup>39</sup> For example, Fraser states: "history records that members of subordinated social groups-women, workers, peoples of color, and gays and lesbians-have repeatedly found it advantageous to constitute alternative publics". Fraser, 'Rethinking the Public Sphere', p. 67.

sector, the balance is weighted differently, and the requirements are not so focussed on artworks, but rather on supporting process. Instead of aiming for a consensus on data collection that compromises the needs of small-scale contemporary visual arts organisations, this report asks whether publicly and openly embracing difference would produce more effective outcomes for all concerned.

As stated above, in a branch of political theory called constructivist institutionalism, institutions are defined as intermediaries between individual conduct and wider structural contexts, one of which is the policymaking sphere.<sup>33</sup> Change occurs in the spaces of interaction between these three different levels of actor, and is a gentle process wherein "ideational change invariably precedes institutional change".<sup>34</sup> Turning to contemporary democratic theory, change based on difference is conceptualised in the theories of Nancy Fraser and Chantal Mouffe, through embracing direct democracy yet rejecting the notion of consensus formation across different social attitudes and groups.<sup>35</sup> Fraser coins the term subaltern counterpublics to describe her understanding of this process. Subaltern counterpublics are

[...] parallel discursive arenas where members of subordinated social groups invent and circulate counter discourses, which in turn permit them to formulate oppositional interpretations of their identities, interests, and needs.<sup>36</sup>

Using an historical analysis, Fraser argues that by forming counterpublics, groups that were typically unrepresented in the narratives of policymakers, such as the United States feminist movement of the late-twentieth century, were able to harness a collective force.<sup>37</sup> Informally, counterpublics are able to lobby the dominant spheres by nature of their unified presence.<sup>38</sup> Mouffe grounds this theory by explaining how the creative tensions between groups of difference can shift institutional mechanisms in a way that benefits different spheres without attempting to conflate them.<sup>39</sup> On the micro-level, this process of change can be termed *practising agonism*. For a discussion around the theoretical background of this line of thinking, please see Appendix 1.

Framing Castlefield Gallery and their peers as intermediaries introduces the idea that data collection could be a mechanism whereby the interests of artists are fed into the policymaking sphere. Represented at the level of a counterpublic, there is historical precedence to suggest policymakers would learn from the collective presence of individual action and participation rendered invisible in the public sphere.<sup>40</sup> In embracing an intermediary role for the small-scale contemporary visual arts sphere, it makes sense for data collection to be used as a strength in multi-stakeholder engagements. A viable option for capturing this aspect of the sphere is the use of a prospective approach to data collection.

### A prospective approach?

The situational nature of the research and the anonymity I offered to participants allowed the artists I encountered and Castlefield Gallery staff to critically engage with existing artist development activity. The feedback has the potential to: (1) be productive for gallery programming by addressing areas that were well-received, those that were not, and what artists felt was missing; (2) capture areas of the programme that artists found useful in an unforeseen way; and (3) expand policymakers' understanding of what artists

<sup>40</sup> Cruz, C. (2016) *Practicing Solidarity*. London: Common Practice.

<sup>41</sup> Connected Communities. (2015) *Starting from Values - Evaluating Intangible Legacies*. 30th April. Connected Communities. [Online] [Accessed 5th May 2015] Available from: [https://www.brighton.ac.uk/\\_pdf/research/lhps-groups/starting-from-values-legacies-booklet-web.pdf](https://www.brighton.ac.uk/_pdf/research/lhps-groups/starting-from-values-legacies-booklet-web.pdf).

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>44</sup> De-Light, D. (2015) *Andrea Phillips, Kodwo Eshun & Charlotte Higgins - Public Assets Conference*. Common Practice. 49mins 27. [Online video] [Accessed on 7th March 2015] Available from: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qJwEks1dFsl>.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>46</sup> Kalleberg, A. L. (2009) 'Precarious Work, Insecure Workers: Employment Relations in Transition.' *American Social Review*, 74, pp. 1-22.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 2.

<sup>48</sup> Paying Artists (n.d.) *About the Campaign*. Paying Artists website. [Online] [Accessed 3rd October 2016] Available from: <http://www.payingartists.org.uk/context/>; Precarious Workers Brigade (n.d.) *About*. Precarious Workers Brigade website. [Online] [Accessed 3rd October 2016] Available from: <http://precariousworkersbrigade.tumblr.com/about>.

needed from the small-scale sector. The second point included areas that could be defined under the adage *you don't know what you don't know*. Sometimes, artists did not know what they needed until they were provided with it; at times, the gallery decided what was useful for artists, whether or not artists had requested it. The research also documented how artists desired a more critical collection of audience responses to the artwork in a way that was centred on the process of production, not the output or commercial viability. In the belief that the small-scale visual arts sector needs to work together and generate their own metrics, (in the same way that Carla Cruz advocated in a research paper commissioned by Common Practice), my research shows that prospective mechanisms could provide a fruitful starting point.<sup>41</sup>

Prospective approaches to data collection capture the different values of all stakeholders of any given project. In the present context, values are defined as the realised known aspirations and unknown consequences of multiple different stakeholders in any given project. These vary from person to person, and are often divergent. Tracked throughout the duration of a project, the *values* are captured at the start, with emergent *values* added in and *values* that dissipate documented along the way. A good example of this is the *Starting from Values* project.<sup>42</sup> By using something termed *the value lens*, the team argued that the outputs and legacies of a given project are diversified from the start according to the different stakeholders involved.<sup>43</sup> They argued that the majority of legacy evaluations start with the evaluator retrospectively asking what they – the project leads – wanted to achieve from the project, and evaluating the project backwards based on that information. Instead, *Starting from Values* argued that at the outset, the project leads should use what they termed *the value lens*. *The value lens* begins with all participants articulating the values they would like to obtain from an upcoming project/event.<sup>44</sup> These values are then prospectively tracked, evaluated, and any additional values that are added or branch off the original ones are documented. In doing so, *the value lens* aims to evidence and capture a more holistic representation of the legacy of the original project/event.

### The limitations of a precarious workforce

One of the main challenges facing whether or not a *value lens* style approach could be adopted in the small-scale contemporary visual arts sphere is that of limited staffing resources in small-scale contemporary visual arts organisations. At the Common Practice conference on the 5<sup>th</sup> January 2015, Dominique De-Light, Co-Director of Creative Future (an organisation that showcases the work of marginalised and disabled writers), asked: "who is caring for us?"<sup>45</sup> Describing an "overwhelmed" workforce beyond capacity, De-Light explained how staff "certainly don't feel like [they are] getting the best support".<sup>46</sup> Could notoriously over-worked and under-resourced staffing structures adopt such an approach?

"For several decades [...] social, economic, and political forces have aligned to make work more precarious", states Arne L. Kalleberg.<sup>47</sup> *Precarious work* is defined as "employment that is uncertain, unpredictable, and risky from the point of view of the worker".<sup>48</sup> Campaigns such as Paying Artists and groups such as the Precarious Workers' Brigade, have garnered a lot of attention on the issue of voluntary and free labour expected of arts professionals.<sup>49</sup> Whilst often focussing on the arts-practitioner and not the arts-administrator or gallery worker, the trend is observable across several professions in post-fordist capitalism. Cristina Morini terms this the "feminization of labour"; the



<sup>50</sup> Morini. 'The Feminization of Labour in Cognitive Capitalism.'

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> Kalleberg. 'Precarious Work, Insecure Workers.'

<sup>53</sup> Ibid, p. 6.

<sup>54</sup> Thelwall. *Size Matters*.

<sup>55</sup> Arts Council England (n.d.) *The four National Portfolio categories*. Arts Council England website. [Online] [Accessed on 16th October 2016] Available from: <http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/four-national-portfolio-categories>.

<sup>56</sup> Arts Council England. *Engaging Audiences Everywhere*.

way that post-fordist capitalism universally expects the production process of immaterial products to draw on the immaterial sources of the worker.<sup>50</sup> This process dissolves the division of work and the worker, conflating the two in a state of permanence, and precarity in cognitive capitalism becomes defined by "inflexible flexibility"; flexibility is the normalised constant, and so is itself rendered inflexible.<sup>51</sup>

The same tensions were evident in the working conditions at Castlefield Gallery, symptomatic of a wider trend in employment. Observations showed how the precarity of the workforce at Castlefield Gallery had two main implications. The first relates directly to Kalleberg's definition of precarity.<sup>52</sup> Talking about "nonstandard work arrangements", "contingent work", and increased "risk" in areas of employment, Kalleberg refers to patterns in employment such as "contracting and temporary work".<sup>53</sup> The research also considered unpaid overtime or irregular hours as a symptom of this. The staff at Castlefield Gallery frequently worked outside of their formal hours, or took part in social events directly linked to work outside of their contracted hours, expected by the current industry standards. Examples from my notes included working late in order to complete tasks that required more time than the staff are allocated during their hours, working irregularly long hours to prepare for an event, or working at events over and above their allocated time, when their allocated time did not provide the required capacity.

For Sarah Thelwall, this is intimately connected to funding scenarios and the blind-spots of econometrics.<sup>54</sup> There is often a balancing act between funding, staff resources, and the gallery's ambition, at the cost of stability within workforce's employment scenario. In relation to prospective mechanisms, staff capacity is a real concern. It is also a consideration, however, when assessing the data collection that small-scale contemporary visual organisations are asked to conduct as part of their agreements with Arts Council England. While NPOs' reporting has been reduced for organisations within the £40,000 – £249,000 threshold, data collection is not considered as reporting.<sup>55</sup> While the Audience Finder survey was only mandatory for larger organisations, there was strong encouragement from the Arts Council England for as many NPOs as possible to partake. (In April 2016 this became mandatory for all NPOs).<sup>56</sup> While the results can be useful to a degree, it is certainly worth asking whether this approach to data collection was the most productive use of time in an environment that is attentive to process, not outcome.

## Conclusions

The research set out to observe and document the range of artist development activity available to artists at Castlefield Gallery, and use it as a lens to understand how organisations in the small-scale contemporary visual arts sphere could change the current cycle of obfuscating metrics imposed by the policymaking sphere. Following the period of data collection in the field, the data was coded and categorised in order to extract the themes presented in this report.

The findings were divided between the particulars of artist development activity, and using artist development as a lens to understand change in the visual arts sphere. The former included an expanded understanding of different artist development activities offered at Castlefield Gallery. Based on observations and interviewing candidates reflecting on their time at Castlefield Gallery, negatively and positively, a comprehensive overview of activity was achieved. Through data analysis the results were placed into the four categories of nurturing an environment, skills and knowledge, resources that feed a practical output, and showcasing opportunities. Within the four main categories, multiple sub-categories also emerged, as can be seen in tables 1 to 13 on pages 9 to 18. The research also engaged with how the different categories interacted and overlapped. In addition, the five different critical junctures offer a viable alternative to career-based terminologies for understanding the points at which artists seek development. The research also uncovered the points at which artists longed for greater audience feedback, and the tensions between artists' seeking development, and the different barriers around this, such as judgements of an artist's relevance to the contemporary visual arts.

In the section *Change through the counterpublic?*, the report questions whether the small-scale contemporary visual arts sector should focus on a productive creativity produced through difference. By acting agonistically as a counterpublic, the small-scale contemporary visual arts sphere could, arguably, distinguish their own requirements for data collection, and strive to find solutions to this themselves. In theory, policymakers could then learn from the small-scale contemporary visual arts sphere, rather than imposing their agenda onto the sector, the effects of which is to render a lot of the activity invisible.

The research suggests prospective mechanisms as an approach for the small-scale contemporary visual arts to take to assessing what they do. Not without problems, especially around staff capacity, ideally this approach would capture the values of all the different stakeholders in any given interaction. This formalises the finding from this research that organisations act as intermediaries between artists and policymakers. In rendering this process explicit to funders, actors in the policy sphere, those working in small-scale contemporary visual arts organisations, and artists, the latter two groups could consciously input into the policymaking process, helping to craft moments of long-term change through an agonistic relationship between the small-scale contemporary visual arts sphere and the policymaking sphere.

## Recommendations for Future Research

The first recommendation stems from an expansion of the critical junctures. When I was at Castlefield Gallery, I was aware through second hand accounts that artists experienced additional critical junctures that did not result in organisational artist development. For example, artists require time away from their practice to digest, but do not necessarily seek the organisational mechanisms to do so. If the support artists require is to be fully understood, ethnographic research that interrogates the situational behaviour of actors is required in order to understand the range of critical junctures present across varying organisations, as well as in an artist's career outside of these structures.

The second recommendation comes from the question what do small-scale contemporary visual arts organisations want from data collection? In order to generate metrics, organisations need to be clear what the priorities are for the sector. The data suggests that organisations in this sphere require honest feedback from artists regarding their programming, as well as ways of capturing the process of creating artworks and showing them. This includes audience feedback that at Castlefield Gallery was found to be beneficial to artists' development.

Building on the second recommendation, greater thought needs to be given to what approaches to data collection would best suit the desires of the sector. While the report has recommended prospective mechanisms, the actual process by which these are implemented and whether they are the most appropriate way forward needs to be tested.

The research also uncovered a tension between the accessibility of some artist development opportunities and individual or team judgements of and reactions to the artwork. Further research could be done into how categorising artists, judgements about their relevance in the context of the contemporary visual arts, and reviewer's instinctive reaction to an artist's practice can impact artists' access to artist development opportunities.

Finally, I am aware that for artists volunteering at Castlefield Gallery, the experience included artist development. However, I was unable to interview the volunteers in order to unpick the nature and extent of this. Additional research could be undertaken in order to more fully understand how volunteering in galleries such as Castlefield Gallery can be considered artist development.

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## Appendix 1: Theoretical Discussion

### Excerpt from the draft of the thesis

<sup>1</sup> Hay, C. (2002) *Political Analysis: A Critical Introduction*. Basingstoke: PALGRAVE, p. 94.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Giddens, A. (1984) *The Constitution of Society*. Cambridge: Polity Press; Bourdieu, P. (1977) *Outline of a Theory of Practice*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

<sup>5</sup> Bourdieu. *Outline of a Theory of Practice*.

<sup>6</sup> Giddens. *The Constitution of Society*.

<sup>7</sup> Held, D. and Thompson, J. B. (1989) *Social theory of modern societies: Anthony Giddens and his critics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

### Theorising the relationship between artists, Castlefield Gallery, and policymakers and funders

In my approach to data collection and analysis I wanted to refrain from prioritising any one of the three main actors in the study, artists, Castlefield Gallery, and policymakers. In order to start from this perspective, constructivist institutionalism was adopted as a frame through which to understand the nature of the relationship between the actors. Derived from the school of constructivism associated with political analysis, constructivist institutionalism is, fundamentally, a theory about the contexts in which individuals and institutions interact, socially and politically. In order to explain constructivist institutionalism, this section must first address how it derived from prior understandings of structure and agency.

#### Structure and agency

According to Colin Hay, the concept of structure can be defined broadly as "the ordered nature of social and political relations"<sup>1</sup>. Structural *properties* are exhibited insofar as "political institutions, practices, routines and conventions appear to exhibit some regularity"<sup>2</sup>. Cast against the concept of structure is agency: "the ability or capacity of an actor to act consciously [...] to attempt to realise his or her intentions"<sup>3</sup>. Structure and agency are two essentially linked concepts that address the extent to which individuals are empowered to define the structures that govern their lives. These structures can be highly explicit, such as the education system, or they can be subtle and normative, such as those addressed in theories about gendered roles in society.

Throughout the twentieth century, structure and agency were seen as a binary in that the two were categorically separate but co-dependent. In their theories of structuration and practice, Anthony Giddens and Pierre Bourdieu began attempts to collapse this binary and assume a more reciprocal relationship between structure and agency (i.e. that individuals cannot be wholly *duped* by the structures that surround them).<sup>4</sup> Addressing the macro and micro levels of politics, Giddens focussed on large-scale issues of institutional frameworks. Instead, Bourdieu was attentive to the everyday internalisation of structures (or habitus), observable in social interactions between individuals. Both subtly prioritised structure over agency.

In attempting to collapse the binary between structure and agency, Giddens formulates the concept of the *knowledgeable* actor.<sup>5</sup> An actor's *knowledge* is based on their consciousness which can be expressed discursively or practically in an articulation of "reflexivity". "Reflexivity" is an actor's ability to consider *why* they act in a particular way. In being able to understand and question "why", individuals are able to initiate change in the structures that define their actions.<sup>6</sup> This is, however, problematic. In Giddens, the knowledge of an individual is pre-determined by the structure in which it is contextualised. Irrespective of their ability to reflect, individuals are preordained according to the structures that subsume them through the very conditions of obtaining knowledge.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Bourdieu. *Outline of a Theory of Practice*; Bourdieu, P. (1990) *The Logic of Practice*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

<sup>9</sup> Elliott, A. (2014) *Contemporary Social Theory: An Introduction*. 2nd ed., Oxon: Routledge, p. 167.

<sup>10</sup> Bourdieu. *Outline of a Theory of Practice*; Bourdieu. *The Logic of Practice*.

<sup>11</sup> Hay. *Political Analysis*.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 95-96.

Bourdieu uses his concepts of *practice*, *habitus*, and the *field* to undermine the contrasting foundations upon which structuralism was grounded – the separation of structure and agency. His conceptualisation of the *field* and *habitus* represent the generative forces present in all structural interaction, and practice is the individual embodied enactment of these generative forces (the latter is addressed separately below).<sup>8</sup> Bourdieu's notions of the *field* and *habitus* sought to explain the process of interlocking structures in the production of an individual who, too, is woven into the social fabric, both producing and reproducing it simultaneously and in an ongoing fashion. In his theory, Bourdieu's definition of *habitus* is what awards an individual the capacity to change the structures in which they exist. *Habitus* is a reality pre-dating human action. Within it, all possible structural options are available for individuals to choose from.<sup>9</sup> Individuals are, then, free to choose which structure to opt for.

The question that lingers is how can it be clear that habitus provides all possible avenues of action, inaction, and reaction? Could it not be, in Bourdieu's formulation, that habitus is an ordering principle that offers a limited range of choices in order to continue reproduction of the exact same system? Or, what happens if this very ordering principle is generally consented to, but now wholly? If habitus is characterised by, for example, Anglo-liberal capitalism, but is such that it has allowed for individuals within to elect for an alternative system of value, can they co-exist? Or does habitus restrict individuals who do not comply with the dominant ordering principle? Bourdieu insists that habitus is an ever evolving force, flexible and amenable to the will of individuals, yet it is not clear *how* this is the case.<sup>10</sup> Habitus is said to pre-date individuals and form them at the very outset; in this process of institutionalised (re)production, what feels absent is the ability for actors to *change* the pre-existing arrangement, due to its widespread enforcement of unconscious, routinised practices.

*Practice* is an observable and powerful way of enacting change through individual action. However, the wider mechanisms Bourdieu wraps around practice do not satisfactorily consider how change can occur. In my research scenario, Bourdieu's theory would, ultimately, prioritise the setting as contextualised by policymakers, with artists and Castlefield Gallery existing within that. Constructivism and constructivist institutionalism sought to revisit these questions and outline a comprehensive theory of reciprocation between structure and agency.

### Context and conduct

Hay rethinks structure and agency. Instead, he introduces the concepts of context and conduct.<sup>11</sup> Rather than structure and agency being the two oppositional settings, in which action and inaction are shaped, structure and agency are lenses for certain behaviours, either structural or agential. They are frames of reference to understanding different *factors* at play in context and conduct:

Structural factors emphasise the context within which political events, outcomes, and effects occur – factors beyond the immediate control of the actors directly involved; whereas agential factors emphasise the conduct of the actors directly involved – implying that it is their behaviour, their conduct, their agency that is responsible for the effects and outcomes we observe.<sup>12</sup>



<sup>13</sup> Ibid, p. 128.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid, p. 132.

<sup>15</sup> Hay, *Political Analysis*, p. 132; Giddens, *The Constitution of Society*, p. xxiii.

<sup>16</sup> Hay, *Political Analysis*, p. 132.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid, p. 15.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid, p. 134.

<sup>19</sup> Hay, C. (2008) 'Constructivist Institutionalism', p. 65.

Context is, therefore, the blending of structural and agential factors that form the environment in which political actors are able to conduct their behaviour. This *conducted behaviour* always holds the potential – or power – to re-configure the context.

As stated above, agential factors are connected to an individual's conduct, but are not what constitutes it. Instead, Hay suggests *strategic action* as a more apt phrase to describe conduct.<sup>13</sup> This can be divided into "intuitive, routine or habitual strategies and practices" and "explicitly strategic action".<sup>14</sup> The former is "unarticulated and unchallenged", states Hay, and is likened to "practical consciousness".<sup>15</sup> While both rely "upon perceptions of the strategic context and the configuration of constraints and opportunities that it provides", Hay's description of *explicitly strategic action* more satisfactorily accounts for agential strategies of change.<sup>16</sup> In acting strategically, *agents* both tacitly re-enact strategies that are "orientated towards the contexts in which they occur", and critically assess contexts in order to "realise intentions and objectives" that may manoeuvre outside the bounds of contemporary contexts and, as such, reframe the boundaries of what is possible.<sup>17</sup>

The manner in which Hay "refuses to privilege either moment (structure or agency)" helped alleviate the privileging of any actor through the data collection and analyses, and so allowed findings to emerge from the data.<sup>18</sup> This reconfiguration of structure and agency allowed the development of an understanding around artists' and Castlefield Gallery's role as one that may feed into a process of change. It also does not prioritise Castlefield Gallery as a contextualising institution, and instead allows for a fluidity of conduct between artists, Castlefield Gallery, and policy-makers and funders.

### Castlefield Gallery's role as an institution

Constructivist institutionalism understands institutions as follows:

Constructivist institutionalism [...] seeks to identify, detail, and interrogate the extent to which—through processes of normalization and institutional-embedding—established ideas become codified, serving as cognitive filters through which actors come to interpret environmental signals. Yet, crucially, they are also concerned with the conditions under which such established cognitive filters and paradigms are contested, challenged, and replaced. Moreover, they see paradigmatic shifts as heralding significant institutional change.

Such a formulation implies a dynamic understanding of the relationship between institutions on the one hand, and the individuals and groups who comprise them (and on whose experience they impinge) on the other. It emphasizes institutional innovation, dynamism, and transformation, as well as the need for a consideration of processes of change over a significant period of time.<sup>19</sup>

In this quote, there are several key developments essential to understanding the roles that individual artists, institutions, and policymakers (informed by paradigmatic environment) can take.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>21</sup> Habermas, J. (1998) *Between Facts and Norms*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

<sup>22</sup> Fraser, N. (1990) 'Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy'. *Social Text*, 25/26, pp. 56-80; Mouffe, C. (2000a) *Deliberative Democracy or Agonistic Pluralism?*. Vienna: Institute for Advanced Studies. [Online] [Accessed 2nd December 2011] Available from: [https://www.ihs.ac.at/publications/pol/pw\\_72.pdf](https://www.ihs.ac.at/publications/pol/pw_72.pdf); Mouffe, C. (2005) *On the Political*. New York: Routledge.

<sup>23</sup> Fraser, 'Rethinking the Public Sphere', p. 57.

In unpicking the different layers at play in a (re)formulation of contextualising forces, Hay identifies how the policymaking sphere is one of paradigmatic forces. In other words, the policymaking sphere is constituted by ideas and perceptions. Within this, change is not something that is necessarily grandiose, but rather observed in paradigmatic *shifts* over "a significant period of time".<sup>20</sup> This change is born from the subtle interactions between individual and the policymaking sphere wherein the "institutional nexus" acts as an intermediary between the two. Change does not have to be produced in the meeting of artists and policymakers (that is not to say it does not also occur in these settings), but instead it can be a slow-burn using institutions as intermediaries; observed over significant periods of time in the way that policymakers codify their shifted perceptions through policy documents. This gentle reconfiguration of paradigmatic forces and dominant ideas can be the goal; an antidote to the fast-paced short-term nature of institutionalised politics in the United Kingdom, perhaps.

Constructivist institutionalism is, therefore, a theory underwritten by the power that individuals have to change the governing forces in their lives, including artists changing cultural policy. As such, it seemed natural for the research to combine this with theories of the public sphere and direct democracy. Using artist development as an observable practice, these theories were reformulated to consider how artists could utilise the institutional nexus as an intermediary between them and policymakers in order to affect long-term change in the paradigms that define the policies which govern.

## Introducing democratic theory

### Introduction

Jürgen Habermas introduced one of the most robust frameworks for understanding the contemporary public sphere as well as deliberative democracy – one of the original theories to discuss *how* individuals can directly engage with democratic mechanisms, and define *how* issues that impact their lives are socially and politically managed.<sup>21</sup> Combined, the works of Habermas helped to understand individual conduct within the socio-political context. However, Habermas in his original form did not fit with the empirical scenario observed at Castlefield Gallery. Two theories critiquing the work of Habermas stood out as being relevant in addressing the role of Castlefield Gallery seen through a frame of constructivist institutionalism. The first was Fraser's theory of subaltern counterpublics, and the second was Mouffe's theory of agonistic pluralism.<sup>22</sup> As both Fraser and Mouffe use Habermas as a point to build on or rally against, so Habermas serves as a useful starting point to consider how artists and Castlefield Gallery are able to influence policymakers and funders.

#### *Habermas*

According to Fraser, Habermas's conceptualisation of the public sphere theorised a third major component in the governing forces of people's lives. Previously, the state and the official-economy of paid employment had dominated theoretical discussions. To these, Habermas added "arenas of public discourse".<sup>23</sup> It was in this shift that the nuanced nature of the concept of *the public sphere* found manoeuvrability, theoretically and politically.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> Habermas, *Between Facts and Norms*, p. 248.

<sup>26</sup> Fraser, 'Rethinking the Public Sphere', pp. 60-61.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid, pp. 62-63.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid, p. 67.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid, p. 68.

#### In the Habermasian sense, then, the public sphere

[...] is the space in which citizens deliberate about their common affairs, hence, an institutional arena of discursive interaction. This arena is conceptually distinct from the state; it is a site for the production and circulation of discourses that can in principle be critical of the state [...]. [It is] also conceptually distinct from the official economy; it is not an arena of market relations but rather one of discursive relations.<sup>24</sup>

There are, therefore, many publics, separate from the state and official paid economy. In Habermas, these publics together form the public sphere, and it is preferable that the multitude of publics find common ground in order to form one single public sphere that encompasses everyone. For Habermas, the public sphere is an opportunity for equal deliberation between participants about the common good, and the public sphere gels together "through a critical publicity brought to life within intraorganizational public spheres".<sup>25</sup> The latter, deliberative democracy, are the mechanisms by which individuals can form a consensus together about how issues that impact their lives are managed by the policy setting.

#### *Subaltern counterpublics*

Fraser takes exception to Habermas's notion of one preferable public sphere. Instead, using historical arguments, she formulates the notion of subaltern counterpublics on epistemological grounds. In *Rethinking the Public Sphere*, Fraser argues that Habermas "idealizes the liberal public sphere", and that in assuming an equality of opportunity for individuals within the structural restraints of liberal democracy he "fails to examine other, nonliberal, non-bourgeois, competing publics".<sup>26</sup> Her main critiques assert that Habermas assumes: (1) equal access into rational deliberations; (2) the negative impact of multiple publics; (3) an undesirability of "private interests" and "private issues" usurped by the common good; and (4) "that a functioning democratic public sphere requires a sharp separation between civil society and the state".<sup>27</sup> As such, Fraser proposes *subaltern counterpublics* as a phrase to discuss alternative publics that coexist with the dominant public, but that "emerge in response to exclusions within dominant publics"; "they help expand the discursive space".<sup>28</sup> More specifically, Fraser outlines subaltern counterpublics as:

[...] parallel discursive arenas where members of subordinated social groups invent and circulate counter discourses, which in turn permit them to formulate oppositional interpretations of their identities, interests, and needs.<sup>29</sup>

In their facilitation of subaltern discourses, counterpublics are able to increase democratic participation and functionality. Subaltern counterpublics are inherently porous, open-ended, and centrifugal. Rather than existing as bubbles of internalised angst, counterpublics act as "bases and training grounds for agitational activities directed towards wider publics"; they promote the diversification of perspectives towards the possibility of change.<sup>30</sup>

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 60.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 62.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 78.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*

Fraser argues that to be subaltern is to be subordinate, and to be at odds with hegemonic powers.<sup>31</sup> Hegemonic power and the "official" public sphere are deeply interwoven – if not one and the same – and it is "the prime institutional site for the construction of the consent that defines the new, hegemonic mode of domination"<sup>32</sup> Subordinate, then, means to be treated as less important – to have your preferences discredited or unheard – in the mainstream public sphere which operates as a hegemony. Hegemonic consent is defined by Fraser in the following manner:

The public sphere produces consent via circulation of discourses that construct the "common sense" of the day and represent the existing order as natural and/or just, but not simply as a ruse that is imposed. Rather, the public sphere in its mature form includes sufficient participation and sufficient representation of multiple interests and perspectives to permit most people most of the time to recognize themselves in its discourses. People who are ultimately disadvantaged by the social construction of consent nonetheless manage to find in the discourses of the public sphere representations of their interests, aspirations, life-problems, and anxieties that are close enough to resonate with their own lived self-representations, identities, and feelings. Their consent to hegemonic rule is secured when their culturally constructed perspectives are taken up and articulated with other culturally constructed perspectives in hegemonic socio-political project.<sup>33</sup>

Fraser acknowledges that the relationships between publics shift over time. While she uses examples taken from women's liberation movements, here we can see that Castlefield Gallery's relationship to the policymaking sphere changed significantly during the course of the research. As stated in the report, in the time the research was conducted at the gallery, Castlefield Gallery went from not being regularly funded to obtaining NPO status. This marked a significant shift in their relationship to the hegemonic sphere. Several factors will undoubtedly have impacted this, but regardless of what might have underwritten this shift, what is important is that change in the nature of the relationship occurred.

The question considered here is how does theory account for this change? Fraser is unable to satisfactorily provide an answer. Fraser's critique of Habermas is grounded in historical examples that can be used to highlight oversights in Habermas's work. The epistemological nature of Fraser's arguments prevents her from developing her theory of counterpublics beyond a descriptive account. Although Fraser is unable to expand on *how* subaltern counterpublics facilitate change, she is clear that the formation of a public sphere that is "mere autonomous opinion formation removed from authoritative decision making" fails to promote the possibility of shifts in policy and wider society.<sup>34</sup> Mouffe, on the other hand, takes a more ontological approach to a similar question of how differences in society might interact. Her theories consider the process of change by embracing the creative tensions of difference between different groups (or publics).

#### *Agonistic pluralism*

Both Fraser and Mouffe concur on the point that contentious relations exist between different groups that are excluded and the dominating public. Mouffe frames this as a widespread process of negative identity formation;

<sup>35</sup> Mouffe, C. (2013) *Hegemony, Radical Democracy, and the Political*. Oxon and New York: Routledge, p.755.

<sup>36</sup> Mouffe, C. (2000b) *The Democratic Paradox*. London and New York: Verso.

<sup>37</sup> Habermas. *Between Facts and Norms*.

<sup>38</sup> Mouffe. *The Democratic Paradox*, p. 70.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>40</sup> Mouffe. *On the Political*, p. 15.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>42</sup> Mouffe. *Deliberative Democracy or Agonistic Pluralism?*; Mouffe. *On the Political*.

<sup>43</sup> Mouffe. *On the Political*, p. 21.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 18.

“the creation of an ‘us’ by the determination of a ‘them’<sup>35</sup> However, where Fraser deploys examples of excluded groups, Mouffe considers Wittgenstein’s ontological concerns about consensus as the point of departure.<sup>36</sup>

For Habermas, the deliberative process is wholly underwritten by *rational* discourse; consensus can be achieved through reason.<sup>37</sup> Explicitly contradicting Habermas, Mouffe instead argues that any form of consensus in the social is not the “product of reason”, but instead a “fusion of voices made possible by a common form of life”; consensus is built through intersubjective understanding based on shared life experience, not a post-experiential process of reasoning.<sup>38</sup> As such, Mouffe argues that the consensus associated with deliberative and liberal democracy is unrealistic. Instead, society must function on the basis of accepting agonisms between *adversaries*.<sup>39</sup>

The *adversary* is a reformulation of the “them” discussed as part of the formation of an “us”/“them” identity, built on Wittgenstein’s predication that social collectives can find consensus only through shared experiences. Instead of crafting the other as “the enemy to be destroyed”, they are presented to the “us” as “somebody whose ideas we combat but whose right to defend those ideas we do not put into question”. This, according to Mouffe, relates to the construction of identity.

In analysing identity, “every identity is relational” states Mouffe.

The affirmation of a difference is a precondition of the existence of any identity [...]. In the field of collective identities, we are always dealing with a creation of a “we” which can only exist only by the demarcation of a “they”.<sup>40</sup>

Here, Mouffe argues that negative identity formation is the means of creating identity – the idea that identity is always built upon what is external in order to constitute the internal. Although this is not necessarily a process of hostility, if the “us” and “them” come into direct contact in a way that challenges the nature of the other, antagonism must be seen as a real possibility. It the possibility of antagonism that it is dangerous to suppress, ignore, or intend to eradicate, as it can worsen or deepen societal tensions or trends of exclusion. This identity-based antagonism forms a major aspect of what Mouffe terms *the political*.<sup>41</sup> *The political* refers to the “the dimension of antagonism that is inherent in human relations, antagonism that can take many forms and emerge in different type of social relations”. *Politics*, instead, is the proceduralisation and creation of a hegemonic set of norms and ideas that set to govern and mould *the political*. *Politics*, for Mouffe, “are always potentially conflictual because they are affected by the dimension of ‘the political’”. *Politics* operates based on hegemony.

Tied in with the notion of the collective identity, Mouffe paints a picture of an ever present antagonism.<sup>42</sup> The task of democratic politics is to encourage and promote a shift from antagonism to “agonistic relations”.<sup>43</sup>

The articulatory practices through which a certain order is established and the meaning of social institutions is fixed are ‘hegemonic practices’. Every hegemonic order is susceptible of being challenged by counter-hegemonic practices, i.e. practices which will attempt to disarticulate the existing order so as to install another form of hegemony.<sup>44</sup>

<sup>45</sup> Mouffe, *Deliberative Democracy or Agonistic Pluralism?*.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 16.

The move from an antagonistic situation to an agonistic one is based on Mouffe's rejection of the assumption that consensus is a possibility within a pluralistic society, tied in with the notion of the *adversary*.<sup>45</sup> In rethinking what it is to be a citizen – or actor – in this way and the relationships with which we build our identity, Mouffe asserts that this is the “true” ideal of democracy – accepting pluralism but reconstituting the relationship between the hegemonic groups and those who are marginalised so that antagonism is acknowledged and is productive. In this relationship, Mouffe argues that the “us” and “them” are given a common ground, rather than existing as dichotomised individuals. In this moment of injecting common ground, antagonism becomes *agonism* in a move away from a combative situation between enemies towards a “struggle between adversaries”.<sup>46</sup>

### **Practising agonism in the counterpublic: gentle change based on difference and creative tension**

When engaging with the data from Castlefield Gallery, neither constructivist institutionalism, subaltern counterpublics, nor agonistic pluralism satisfactorily explained the empirical scenario that had been observed. Constructivist institutionalism established a more even relationship between the actors, but did not consider the nature of such reciprocation (i.e. that it could be agonistic). The concept of subaltern counterpublics connected to the ways in which the small-scale contemporary visual arts sphere related to the more dominant sphere, but did not account for how the two spheres might interact and the mechanisms by which change occurred. The nature of creative tensions in agonistic pluralism provided a recognisable framework for the relationship between two distinct spheres and the three actors, and where they might overlap, but did not theorise small-scale paradigmatic shifts. Therefore, the research formulated a theory termed *practising agonism*; the combination of all three theoretical trends working to create gentle change through difference in the counterpublic. This is how the practices of Castlefield Gallery were considered.

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