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Intra-urban connectedness, policy mobilities and creative city-making: national conservatism vs. urban (neo)liberalism

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Abstract

This article aims to advance the literature on policy mobility by decentering the primacy of mobility itself and focusing on understanding what cities do in order to ‘arrive at’ localized versions of urban policy in relation to globally circulating ideas around creativity. The paper explores the performance of a particular local ‘creative economy’ in terms of institutional and strategic adjustments, key drivers and individuals and events, and the role of long-term local, national and international influences on ‘creative cityness’. It does this through an analysis of cultural and creativity policy and local stakeholders in the cultural policy scene in Gdańsk, Poland, focusing on the local performative aspects of mobile policies and arguing the need to understand the formation of a ‘common local project’ as a form of *intra-urban connectedness* alongside inter-urban connectedness. The paper extends the range of contexts in which the ‘creative city’ has been analysed to include post-socialist, post-European Union accession Central and Eastern Europe, thus making an original contribution by studying these issues in the context of the complex multi-scalar relations between the city, national government and the supranational European Union and the ideological conflict between national authoritarian neoliberalism and urban and supranational scale (neo-)liberalism.

Keywords

Common local project, creative city, cultural policy, Poland, policy mobilities, urban intra-connectedness

Introduction

As Europe undergoes a period of intense political change, it is timely to analyse the implications of this for the urban and its intersection with different forms of mobile policy. Approaching mobile

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‘creativity policy’ (Lindner, 2018) from the neglected context of post-socialist, post-European Union (EU) accession Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) allows us to explore how these mobilities are shaped by the complex multi-scalar interaction between the urban, the national and the supranational EU in the context of the ideological conflict between national authoritarian neoliberalism and urban (neo-)liberalism (cf. Varró and Bunders, 2019). In this article we therefore analyse the actors, institutions and policies which make up the cultural and creativity policy scene in Gdańsk, Poland. Notions of the ‘creative city’ (an urban policy focus that folds culture and creativity into ‘entrepreneurial governance logics and market-led development imperatives’; Nkula-Wenz, 2018) are a key example of policy mobility which is engaged with throughout the world (Evans, 2009; Prince, 2012, 2014). We therefore focus on this policy area in this context to advance the policy mobilities literature in two main ways. First, we develop recent calls in the literature to decentre the primacy of mobility itself by understanding what cities do in order to ‘arrive at’ (Robinson, 2015) globally circulating ideas around creativity. To achieve this, we focus on the local performative aspects of mobile policies and, in particular, the transformation of the ‘creative economy script’ into a ‘common local project’ (Dzudzek and Lindner, 2015). Second, while the policy mobilities literature emphasizes the increasing intensity of inter-urban connectedness (Peck and Theodore, 2015), we argue that understanding policy mobilities requires a focus on how localities prepare themselves to meet mobile policy and how this relies on the development of urban *intra-connectedness*, while also contributing to calls to bring the national scale back into understandings of policy mobility (Varró and Bunders, 2019).

Following a literature review developing the argument for focusing on the locality and the nature of urban *intra-connectedness*, we draw on Polish secondary literature to analyse how culture and creativity¹ became important in urban policymaking in Poland, and locate Gdańsk in the national context. The analysis is based on the key national, regional and local policy documents relating to culture and

creativity in Gdańsk and 16 semi-structured expert interviews carried out in 2016–2018. This sample includes – as a way to ‘study through’ policy mobilities (McCann and Ward, 2012) – policymakers, representatives of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in the field of urban culture, ‘cultural intermediaries’ who are well embedded in the cultural scene and knowledgeable about the urban, national and inter-national context, and individual cultural producers. All interviews were recorded and transcribed, with interviews in Polish translated into English, and analysed using standard qualitative coding methods.

Policy mobilities, locality and urban intra-connectedness

The policy mobilities literature demonstrates that policy is increasingly internationally mobile and ‘fast’ (Peck and Theodore, 2015), but also subject to contestation, adaptation, purification and mutation as it travels and ‘touches down’ in different contexts (Hirt et al., 2013; McCann, 2008, 2011; McCann and Ward, 2011). Furthermore, a focus on the dialectic between territoriality and extra-local relations and their mutual constitution emphasizes its relational nature (Andersson, 2014; McCann, 2011; Ward, 2018a, 2018b). Policy is, thus, re- and co-constructed as it travels between internationally networked actors and through the learning and initiative of policymakers as a social practice (Cook, 2018; McCann, 2011; McCann and Ward, 2011).

However, in this paper we further develop critiques arguing that there has been too much emphasis on the mobile aspects of policy, while the ‘reception’ of mobile policy in a place is conceptually and empirically understudied (Dzudzek and Lindner, 2015). Mobile policies articulate with local governance regimes in ‘a process of intense mutual engagement’ (Dzudzek and Lindner, 2015: 391), meaning that we need to ‘problematize not only movement itself . . . but also the restructured institutional and social *relations* that such movement necessarily entails’ (Peck and Theodore, 2015: 29) through a focus on ‘the actors and practices through which policy is rendered mobile’ (Temenos and Ward, 2018: 67). Emphasizing the situatedness of

translating (global) ideas into (local) practice (Jakob and van Heur, 2015) also allows for the agency of urban actors in ‘arriving at’ mobile policy (Robinson, 2015; Wood, 2015). The relatively understudied phenomenon of ‘failed policy mobilities’ (Stein et al., 2017) emphasizes this as it demonstrates that mobile policy can be subject to local resistance and ‘barriers’ (McLean and Borén, 2015) because places are not prepared for mobile policy. There is a need for more analyses of the role of local territoriality ‘in the arriving at, and making up of, urban policies’, whilst maintaining a relational view of policy formation (Ward, 2018a: 278).

Thus, it is timely to attend more closely to the role of place and context in understanding policy mobilities (Andersson, 2014; Dzudzek and Lindner, 2015; Nkula-Wenz, 2018; Ortegell, 2017; Temenos and McCann, 2012; Ward, 2018a, 2018b). Places have to be institutionally prepared for policy to ‘land’ there (Temenos and McCann, 2012) and policies from ‘outside’ cannot be adopted in a place unless it is open to them and ideologically and institutionally ready (Temenos and McCann, 2012; cf. Stein et al., 2017). At the same time, recent critiques also point out the need to bring the national scale back into analyses (Varró and Bunders, 2019).

For new policies to work effectively they must be regarded by stakeholders as a ‘common local project’ shared by actors of different kinds (Dzudzek and Lindner, 2015; Storper, 1997). Thinking specifically in terms of the introduction of mobile forms of cultural and creativity policy, Dzudzek and Lindner argue for the importance of the development of a ‘creative-economy script as a common ground and point of reference for new policy practices’ (2015: 389–390). This common ground is not a fixed phenomenon but is ‘the result of an ongoing collective (re-)writing and performing endeavor, to which not only “partners in mind” contribute but also sometimes fierce opponents’ (Dzudzek and Lindner, 2015: 392–393). It is, thus, a kind of local ‘fix’ (Temenos and McCann, 2012) or performance often developed as the result of a prolonged and gradual process of policy learning (Wood, 2015), resulting in long-term transformation of the relations and networks (Ortegell, 2017) between actors, which prepares them to accept new ideas and ways of working

together. As Ortegell (2017: 167) highlights, policy mobilities occur because of more than new institutional arrangements but are assisted or hindered by how ‘different co-existing arrangements of histories, discourses, practices, subjectivities and materialities co-construct different and complex processes of re-embedding creative city policies.’

Therefore, we argue for a shift in the focus of research towards the role of *intra-connectedness* in cities. By this we mean the creation of new institutional arrangements between actors and institutions underpinning the local performance of a creative economy with a further dimension, which is a strong (but not necessarily all-encompassing) adherence to a political cause and particular urban identity. Again, this adherence to a cause can be both territorial (related to the local politics of policy formation) and relational, being formed in the context of multi-scalar relationships between urban, national and supranational influences (in this case, national politics in Poland and the EU respectively – cf. Varró and Bunders (2019)). The analysis which follows explores the intersection of these three elements in the formation of urban cultural and creativity policy in Gdańsk.

Urban cultural and creativity policy in the Polish context

In Poland, culture and ‘creativity’ became increasingly significant in urban policy from the early 21st century, related to the growing demand for creativity as part of economic restructuring and because local self-government saw it as a panacea for cities undergoing post-socialist transformation (Działek and Murzyn-Kupisz, 2014). However, knowledge about creative environments was low (Bachórz and Stachura, 2015), resulting in a lack of policy supporting cultural producers, who, in turn, were adapting to new socio-economic conditions. As a consequence, culture and creativity were the subject of a number of analyses in Polish literature, enabling more access to the knowledge needed to create policy (Kasprzak, 2017; Szultka, 2014). At the same time, local authorities adopted the idea of targeting the so-called ‘creative class’ as an apparently necessary presence with which to signal the image of a globally competitive,

open and creative city (Szmytkowska, 2017). This represents a relatively uncritical reproduction of globally circulating ideas and this sector remains underdeveloped and little understood in Poland (Chapain and Strykiewicz, 2017; Wojnar, 2016).

However, the realignment of policy during the EU-accession process contributed significantly to the growth of culture in strategic urban management. Szulborska-Lukaszewicz (2016) outlines how the National Culture Development Strategy 2004–2013 (extended until 2020) represented a major achievement in Polish cultural policy. Intended to improve cultural management in Polish cities, it contributed to the preparation of the first reliable evaluation of culture in Poland and stimulated debate around its goals, priorities and funding opportunities. It also emphasized the culture-forming role of the largest urban centres as drivers of growth (National Culture Development Strategy 2004–2013, 2004). Access to funding was key, with Poland ranked first among EU members in the use of EU funding for culture (2007–2013), gaining over one-sixth of all funds from the European Regional Development Fund (c.270 million Euro). This supported infrastructure investments and cultural heritage protection, with the intention of bringing Polish cities closer to Europe in terms of access to culture and the quality of cultural spaces.

However, political developments shaped dominant cultural discourses in Poland in a way that runs counter to the EU. Since the right-wing Law and Justice Party (PiS) became increasingly influential from 2005 (particularly after winning national elections in 2015 and 2019), national-level political discourses have become more nationalistic, centralistic and Euro-sceptic, combined with a strong discourse of traditional Polish Catholicism (Applebaum, 2018; Shields, 2007). Reflecting this, Polish cultural discourses are ideologically shaped by the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage (Lewandowska, 2018), which favours programmes and events that have a more traditional, conservative, religious or nationalistic element.

In this context, Gdańsk emerged as a key example of the incorporation of culture and creativity in urban policy in Poland. Gdańsk (population c.460,000) is located in northern Poland by the Wisła River at the coast of the Baltic. Together with Sopot and Gdynia,

it forms the ‘Tri-city’ metropolitan area (population c.1 million), the regional centre of Pomerania. During the Communist period (1945–1989), it was an important economic and academic centre, with a significant shipbuilding industry and several universities including an art academy (established 1945). Until the fall of the state-socialist system in 1989, urban development and cultural policy matters were the preserve of the central state and formed an ideological and politically charged field.

After 1989, Gdańsk was a relatively early Polish adopter of culture and creativity in urban policy, with the first city policy covering culture published in 1999. Several new anchor cultural institutions have been established, notably the award-winning European Solidarity Centre (2014) at the shipyards, and the conflict-ridden WWII museum (2017), alongside a number of smaller cultural institutions like the Łaźnia Contemporary Arts Centre (1990), plus a number of internationally known annual festivals. Gdańsk is noted in Poland for possessing a vibrant, independent, grassroots arts scene and is seen as supportive of cultural activities (Biuro Badań Społecznych, 2016) which form important parts of strategies to restructure the economy encompassing consumption-driven, culture-led urban development.

The common local project and intra-urban connectedness in ‘arriving at’ globally mobile cultural and creativity policy

In this section we analyse how Gdańsk has ‘arrived at’ globally circulating policy mobilities through the development of a ‘common local project’ (Dzudzek and Lindner, 2015) around cultural and creativity policy. There is a danger in imposing a simple narrative on a complex coming together of different actors, institutional and policy developments, but we try to narrate how the performance and intra-connectedness of these different elements has developed in Gdańsk and how this is important part for how policy mobilities work. We demonstrate this empirically from a range of different sources, including strategic documents and the research interviews.

How these different elements have coalesced in a particular local common project has also been shaped by the specifics of Gdańsk's multi-scalar relationships with central government and the EU (cf. Varró and Bunders, 2019). The politics of cultural policy formation in Gdańsk is strongly shaped by the city's political opposition to the national ruling party and the (re-)construction of a local place identity as an open and tolerant city, which runs counter to the dominant national-level discourses. The disjuncture between national-level policy – focusing on cultural programmes pro-moting particular imaginings of 'the nation' more aligned to the central government's vision of what 'Polish culture' is – and the city-level identity and politics of cultural policy formation is striking, and we interweave examples of this into the analysis below.

As discussed above, Gdańsk has long possessed an independent arts scene. Although it is not the only factor, it is important to start with the long-term influence of the late Mayor² of the city, Paweł Adamowicz, on the development of culture and creativity in urban policy. From his election in 1998 to being re-elected for a fifth consecutive time in 2018 the Mayor was central to the common project. He directed policy for more than 20 years, providing the political stability and support required to guide the common local project, and his personal belief in and commitment to making culture and creativity central to urban policy has been a key driver of how the city has 'arrived at' mobile policy. As one interview respondent put it:

he created the special bureau, a special office . . . it is not a department of the municipality, but strongly belongs with the bureau of the Mayor's office. It's just under the Mayor's office. In other cities it would be like the Department of Culture, Department of Sport . . . but here it is the Mayor's Office of Culture.

Throughout the interviews, many respondents noted the importance of the Mayor in placing culture centrally in urban policymaking, and in guiding its practical implementation. As one of his Vice-Mayors put it:

The Mayor at the beginning of his time here . . . was more focused on infrastructure. Today he teaches us that infrastructure is something that comes after the culture. After that you build human capital. After that you build good relations in the society and of course infrastructure is important, but this is only the effect of good co-operation of the people. So the role of the Mayor is not the role of building infrastructure but the role of building society.

When the top political figure in the city exhibits such personal commitment, it is an important part of the institutional 'fix' (Temenos and McCann, 2012) around culture and creativity, and is important in the long-term development of new networks (Ortegel, 2017) supporting intra-connectedness in this policy area.

The prominent inclusion of culture and creativity in strategic urban planning documents illustrates the central role that they play and the territorial-relational nature of policy mobility. Culture is one of the five strategic development areas in the *Gdańsk 2030+ Development Strategy*, which provides a 'vision' for urban development. The strategy emphasizes shaping attitudes and competences that enhance the development of a creative and innovative economy, expanding and increasing accessibility to culture, and stimulating development of creativity and art (Gdańsk City Council, 2014). In part, this reflects the adoption of an economically instrumentalist view of culture, which has been mobile for some time, focusing on city attractiveness, city marketing and the idea that '[c]ulture in Gdańsk has a significant influence on its investment attractiveness and economic development' (Gdańsk City Council, 2014: 25). Inter-urban connectedness is also seen as important, in terms of 'learning from elsewhere':

The metropolis is also strengthened through cooperation with international organisations and twin towns. Exchange of experience is of great importance on account of the international ties established and the knowledge acquired based on examples of efficient solutions applied in other countries and cities. (Gdańsk City Council, 2014: 20)

The Gdańsk Operational Programmes 2023 (Gdańsk City Council, 2015), which lay out how the 'vision' is actually delivered and include 'Culture

and leisure', also demonstrate the continued importance of the national scale for policymaking within the city (Varró and Bunders, 2019), as they directly relate to the National Development Strategy 2020 and the National Culture Development Strategy 2004–2020 and are closely tied to the budget periods of the EU in terms of delivering finance and projects co-financed from EU funds.

However, at the same time, the delivery of the 'vision' is based on a strong support for the development of urban intra-connectedness. The programme notes the need to support cultural producers and acknowledges the benefits they bring to the city and society (Gdańsk City Council, 2015: 115). Although this is still framed through the lens of the economic benefits for the city (jobs, innovation, investment – Gdańsk City Council, 2015: 120–121, 133), the conceptualization of culture and creativity is broader and includes reference to liberal and progressive values (Inglehart and Norris, 2016), which links strongly to the dominant place narrative and opposition to national politics discussed below: '[p]roperly programmed cultural actions develop interpersonal relationships, prevent social exclusion, build OPENNESS and tolerance, and stimulate CO-OPERATION and integration of various groups and environments' (Gdańsk City Council, 2015: 115–116, capitals in original).

What is interesting here is an appeal to culture as something that produces, and is produced by, co-operation within the city. In addition (Gdańsk City Council, 2014: 30–35), there is a great deal of emphasis on the local consultation process that informed the 'vision'. While this could be seen as simply a key piece of policy rhetoric in order to fulfil requirements for consultation, what was striking from the interviews with a range of actors was the degree of support for the actions of the City Council, with the research interviews indicating that this consultation was more than a token gesture. This extended consultation was another means by which the city interacted with the population and stakeholders (Flowerdew, 2004) to create, shape and ground the common local project through intra-urban connectedness.

This larger vision has been an important part of the development of the common local project, and, at the same time, individual initiatives started by the

City Council to raise the profile of the role of arts and creativity have also been important to this, including offering material support in the form of prizes, scholarships, competitions and financial incentives for Gdańsk's residents involved in cultural activities and workspaces for young artists (Muraszko, 2017).

As a further example, in 2018 Mayor Adamowicz signed the *Local Government Card for Culture* (or Self-government Charter for Culture – *Samorządowa Karta dla Kultury*), a set of rules or guidance for co-operation *within* a city between the local authority and a range of local cultural actors (Gdańsk City Council, 2018a). The Charter was developed in 2018 by the Forum of Krakow, the City of Poznań and the Cultural Center ZAMEK, following which local authorities in Poland were invited to participate in this initiative. Thus, the Charter is a further push for intra-urban co-operation and signals a deepening of the urban cultural policy ecosystem in Gdańsk.

Politically, the development of this intra-urban connectedness is underpinned by a shared identity and place narrative that has attracted substantial 'buy-in' from a range of actors within the city. This shared identity and narrative is strongly shaped by political relations between the city and central government (cf. Varró and Bunders, 2019). Gdańsk has developed a strong liberal local identity narrative, which emphasizes a commitment to a 'European' vision of culture in which freedom, solidarity, tolerance and openness are constructed as constituting the most important values in the city. This draws on the city's long history as a port and part of the Hanseatic League, but also its history of anti-Communist resistance and the birthplace of the Solidarity movement. These historical elements are combined with a narrative of Gdańsk as an open city, accepting and tolerant of difference, which is both shaped by and shapes the city's opposition to the politics and cultural values of the right-wing national government. The form of this opposition is clearly expressed in practice, political rhetoric and within strategic documents.

One specific example of practices arising from this opposition is evidenced by Gdańsk becoming a signatory to the *Manifesto of Independent Culture*. The Manifesto is produced by the Independent

Culture Movement, and is an explicit response to national government initiatives that are perceived to be undermining the independence of culture (Gdańsk City Council, 2018b). In a speech at the signing of the Manifesto, Mayor Adamowicz explicitly positioned Gdańsk and its cultural policy in opposition to the values and practices of central government:

I think that it is my civic duty, the duty of the local government . . . Culture is created by all citizens . . . if only it is ultimately not subjected to political manipulation . . . Currently, I am sad to observe how in the [central] government's actions culture becomes the object of political manipulation and the area of exclusion. I think that it is not without reason that the Manifesto appeared on the 'eve of' a great celebration of the memory of the citizens of . . . Poland – the 100th anniversary of independence. (Gdańsk City Council, 2018b)

Here, as central government seeks to align cultural programmes and values directly with imaginings of the nation based around a conservative, nationalistic vision, Gdańsk both in practice and through its values positioned itself in opposition. An understanding of cultural and creativity policy that is widely shared across the city is mobilized explicitly against the dominant discourses of central government, demonstrating that the workings of intra-urban connectedness include but also go beyond networking and formal institutional links to incorporate an imagining of the city which can be shared by many actors.

This imagining of Gdańsk as an open city becomes deeply intertwined with others about creativity and culture and democracy in a way that seeks to differentiate the city from national-scale political discourses, as is illustrated by one strategic plan:

Openness is an important feature influencing creativity and innovativeness, and the readiness to implement new technologies and social and cultural integration. Creativity and readiness to face challenges are indispensable features of enterprising people . . . One of the dimensions of creativity is kindness and sympathy for people around us and those coming to Gdańsk. Openness based on respect and trust is the basis of transparency and directness in democratic societies. (Gdańsk City Council, 2014: 43)

Here, Gdańsk is portrayed as open to difference, creative, tolerant and democratic in an implicit contrast to, and critique of, national-scale political discourses. This discourse finds significant resonance and support throughout the various stakeholders involved and, therefore, this imagining of the city – particularly against the national scale but more in harmony with the EU – is an important part of sustaining intra-connectedness. It is a view expressed in many of the interviews, from members of the urban administration, through cultural intermediaries to independent cultural producers, including this artist who concluded that '[s]o, yes, we do it consciously in Gdańsk, that we stand so hard for our values, and some kind of power comes from this'.

In the context of these strained political relations with the national level, the development of a strong relationship with the EU has been highly significant as an alternative strategy to 'scale jump' and circumvent the national level. Engagement with the EU has more formal and pragmatic impacts, such as shaping strategic plans or attracting non-state sources of funding. However, engagement with the EU has also shaped the cultural institutional infrastructure and intra-connectedness of the city.

One of the most significant acts of Gdańsk's 'arriving at' mobile policy was when, among 11 Polish cities, it entered the European Capital of Culture (ECoC) 2016 competition. The participation of Polish cities in ECoC 2016 was a key moment in which culture became an important area of urban development in Poland (Celiński, 2017; Kubicki et al., 2017), stimulating debate about culture in urban policy. According to Kubicki et al. (2017), ECoC 2016 had a significant impact in the institutional sphere, particularly in developing ways of managing cultural institutions and defining the role of culture in the development of cities. It motivated urban stakeholders and demanded a new element of intra-urban cooperation, which triggered a profound transformation of urban policy. However, while ECoC is, in effect, a mobile policy, it does not simply 'touch-down' in places. Instead, Gdańsk had to actively participate in the competition and make institutional changes, a decision that started with a resolution of the City Council in 2007.

Several of the interview respondents identified this as a key moment, which gave real impetus to the inclusion of culture and the development of intra-urban connectedness in Gdańsk. As one leading municipal cultural officer stated:

I think this was a time where a lot of things began in Gdańsk. And I think this was the moment when people started to think about a culture as a whole. Not just as ‘event, event, event . . .’, but thinking about this strategy of culture . . . yes, it was the moment that it was written down and thought about . . . it was very important.

Though Gdańsk was unsuccessful in the competition, ideas and institutional arrangements arising from taking part became embedded into the city’s organizational structure and policy. The Gdańsk Office 2016, which was responsible for the ECoC application, was retained and transformed into an urban cultural institution – the City Culture Institute (ICC) – which is currently one of the most active entities in shaping the city’s approach to culture. Thus, joining this competition significantly embedded the creativity narrative as a key policy driver.

The competition thus formed a context in which key actors in the city came together, or ‘intra-connected’, and was thus highly significant in forging the performance of the common local project. Indeed, the bid involved co-operation within the entire metropolitan area and involved a diversity of actors including cultural institutions and local and creative communities (Czekanowicz-Drażewska, 2010). The bid document also emphasized developing intercultural dialogue with recent migrants into the city. Again, in terms of practice (i.e. writing the bid document), this further aligned the city with the perception of the EU as an international/modern/tolerant/European entity and placed it in opposition to the values and policymaking of the Law and Justice Party (PiS).

Thus, the ECoC bid was an important process in developing and deepening the already emerging ‘fix’ (Temenos and McCann, 2012) that made it possible for mobile policy ideas to land in the institutional setting of the city and enabled long-term and gradual learning and transformation (Ortegel, 2017; Wood, 2015). These different

processes, activities, influences, plans, strategies and institutions meet each other in partial and sometimes unintended ways on different time-scales. However, throughout them all, the strong commitment in the city to a ‘common local project’ and its underpinning by a complex process of intra-urban connectedness is evident. Furthermore, the preparing of places to ‘arrive at’ mobile policy requires both inter-connectedness with other cities and urban intra-connectedness.

The interaction of Gdańsk’s independent cultural scene, the personal drive and commitment of the Mayor, and engagement with the EU as a means to circumvent the politics of central government create a situation in which the city has strengthened intra-urban connectedness. Local government works closely with a diverse range of actors including cultural producers, cultural intermediaries, NGOs and independent/‘underground’ cultural entrepreneurs. The general expression of support for the activities of the City Council, which was evident across interviews with a range of these actors and institutions, evidences the high degree of intra-urban collaboration. One independent artist illustrated this when he talked about his attitude to working with the City Council:

I think that if we work closely together, they will get what they have to get from me, . . . it’s fair, because with the support of the city money I can do it, otherwise I would not realize it. I don’t perceive it as being used. Because if they give me public money, I have to give something back, so I don’t take it negatively.

Here, the attitude is one of co-operation with the policies of the City Council rather than resistance which is often highlighted in academic analyses.

Gdańsk has a strong artistic environment and the presence of artists is important in the city. Cultural actors can access financial support from the city authorities, although this is short-term help that does not facilitate deeper co-operation and there is a lack of more participatory strategies that would improve integration with the city. However, the local authority is aware of this problem and is working to improve things. One example is involving artists in the regeneration of neglected parts of the city through so-called ‘revitalization through art’. This creates

opportunities for artists and supports them. One example is *100cznia* (a creative way to write ‘shipyard’ in Polish), which is a new cultural space made up of ‘container architecture’ (using ships’ containers). Here, on a privately owned parking lot, an artist couple developed a concept with culture, food, drink and events inside the structure built from the containers. Although initially there were problems explaining the project to decision makers, the necessary permits were obtained relatively quickly (within six months) with the assistance of the landowner, and the city came to view the project positively. Now the city is co-sponsoring some of the events organized there, and giving permission for creative activities, such as street art on a nearby bridge.

Another important group of actors that have emerged which influence, and also directly implement, cultural policy are public-sector cultural intermediaries (e.g. institutions like art spaces, museums and theatres). Their role has changed over the last two decades, particularly in the way that they co-operate with different actors and respond to the needs of the city and the demands of different ‘user groups’. This represents a maturing of the institutional ‘fix’ (Temenos and McCann, 2012) and the development of ‘networks’ (Ortegel, 2017) that support long-term implementation of the common local project.

The role of NGOs working with the local art scene, urban movements and citizens has recently increased significantly. This sector in Polish cities significantly co-creates and enriches the urban cultural offer (Kowalik et al., 2015), due to their increasing numbers and professionalization. In contrast to much of the literature on artist–urban policy interaction (e.g. d’Ovidio and Rodríguez Morató, 2017; Novy and Colomb, 2013), in Gdańsk these groups are generally supportive of the common project rather than critiquing it for neoliberalizing the city and/or instrumentalizing culture. NGOs, urban movements, artists and residents are increasingly involved in shaping the cultural offer of the city and participating in creating urban policy, operating as a bridge, or network (Ortegel, 2017), between the public and private sectors. As Wojnar (2016) emphasizes, they are an alternative to commercially oriented enterprises and, at the same time, operate in

a more flexible way than public institutions, which further strengthens the common local project as the local actors work together rather than against each other (cf. Storper, 1997).

Despite competition for available resources, a characteristic of the Gdańsk scene is the depth of co-operation between these different kinds of institutions, especially in the field of non-material aid. One example is related to the fact that a high degree of bureaucratization often prevents new organizations from bidding for funding, which is why the city authorities and institutions try to help these organizations, as one independent cultural institution revealed:

When I talk to people very often they are not able themselves to read grants. So, they come to us . . . to help them. We offer them co-operation . . . some space, but also we offer help in writing their applications because it’s very bureaucratic. Now . . . this special course organized by the City – and I think it’s a good sign for NGOs – how to write good applications . . .

These kinds of intra-urban co-operation are concrete examples of the creative economy as a common local project, and also demonstrate how relations within the city between different types of actors have been transformed and deepened over time (Dzudzek and Lindner, 2015; Ortegel, 2017). This also means that the local performance of the creative economy script is never complete or finished – it is (re-)written as it is enacted and performed over time. This, and several other points made in this analysis, is well illustrated by the case of the popular *Narracje*-festival (Narrations: Installations and Interventions in Public Space festival). *Narracje* is an annual two-day event which started in 2009. It is co-ordinated by two municipal actors – the ICC and the Gdansk City Gallery – and engages the population and professional curators and artists, both local and international, in an artistic exploration of whichever district of the city it is located in. For many years it has taken place outside of the city centre to engage a different audience with art and in the off-season to spread events over the year. The annual change of venues and participants mean that the festival organizers learn and adapt from year to

year as an example of the continued performance of the creative economy. Districts now want to host the festival and collaborate with actors throughout the city. This, and its longevity, also illustrates what Dzudzek and Lindner (2015) refer to as the ‘grounding’ of the circulating ‘creative economy-script’ as a local common project, and this is emphasized by the fact that the festival also binds different districts and their populations of the city into this common project. *Narracje*, for example, tries to involve local populations who would not normally engage with art, and migrants to integrate them more into the life of the city. Thus, interacting in and with the various districts is making the common local project an example of intra-urban collaboration.

Considering the activities and involvement of this growing range of actors and institutions demonstrates that although the personal drive of the Mayor, formal strategic planning and engagement with the EU and ECoC were important in the development of the common local project, the operation of urban intra-connectedness has now developed well beyond those practices. The formation of a strong local place identity, forged in explicit opposition to the national government, is both another expression of this intra-urban connectedness and underpins its formation.

Conclusion

This paper aimed to develop better understanding of how policy mobilities work by shifting the emphasis towards understanding how cities ‘arrive at’ (Robinson, 2015) mobile policy. Gdańsk has developed a locally contingent form of engaging with and promoting the ‘creative city’ agenda. The analysis illustrates how the formation of ‘creative cityness’ (Nkula-Wenz, 2018) is the outcome of a diverse constellation of different influences – there is the ‘intense coming together’ (Dzudzek and Lindner, 2015) of mobile policy with the locality, but only because the city prepared itself to meet mobile influences. Here, the city demonstrates its agency, reaching out to some mobile policy, but not others, in the context of different relations with the national and the supranational. A key finding is that a focus on what cities do to be active in preparing to ‘meet’

globally mobile policy reveals the significance of actors performing a common local project (Dzudzek and Lindner, 2015), but the analysis extends that point by emphasizing the importance of *urban intra-connectedness* in the sustained development of that project.

Although tensions still arise within the city, the overall outcome of these developments is a significant degree of coherence around networking between actors and institutions, a consistent performance of a particular strategy, but significantly the shaping of these by adherence to a common political cause, one shaped by resistance to national level politics and alignment with the supra-national EU. Thus, this analysis demonstrates that understanding the ‘new policy condition’ of urban interconnectedness and ‘fast policy’ (Peck and Theodore, 2015) requires an appreciation of the role of *urban intra-connectedness*. This is an understudied aspect of the ‘new policy condition’ that relates to the development of tight connections, co-operation and an understanding between actors within a city that significantly contributes to them fulfilling and developing their performance of the script and being prepared to contribute to the common local project in relation to particular political situations.

Studying this intra-urban connectedness in the context of Poland also brings further contributions to the policy mobilities literature. We further emphasize the critique by Prince (2017) that this literature has become overly focused on a ‘global–local binary’. Our analysis thus strongly supports the contention of Varró and Bunders (2019) that ‘attention should be given to how different scales co-constitute the embedding of policy concepts.’ We develop this in two ways in our analysis, demonstrating the importance of the multi-scalar interactions of the urban with the neglected national scale (Varró and Bunders, 2019) and the supra-national.

Gdańsk provides an interesting example of a case where urban politics and strategy around culture and creativity is in tension with – and at times runs explicitly counter to – national scale policy and the central government. There is a pronounced political disjuncture with the national that shapes the performance of the local creative economy, and the existence of the national government as a

‘fierce opponent’ (Dzudzek and Lindner, 2015) is a highly unusual example of how this performance is partial, contested and shaped in opposition to the national.

Unlike most contexts considered in the literature, there is a significant influence of EU policy, programs and funding, with Gdańsk linking more strongly to the EU than to national government. However, while this has an impact on the nature of the local creativity policy ecosystem, sometimes structuring activities to match EU expectations, it is not all powerful. Rather than creativity policy (and cultural policy more generally) being imposed by the EU as a form of ‘soft power’ to spread norms associated with ‘Europeanness’, Gdańsk also ‘arrives at’ this form of policy mobility for its own ends.

Thus, understanding how localities prepare themselves and actively engage with mobile policy is a highly significant part of understanding policy mobilities and how policies are made up in place. At present, the implications of the intersection of neo-liberalized global capitalism with authoritarian neo-liberalism for urban (cultural) policy have received little attention in the literature, but this analysis points to how significant this new political context could be for cities.

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Notes

1. We use the phrase ‘culture and creativity’ throughout the paper to encompass independent, alternative arts scenes and what has traditionally been thought of as ‘high culture’ and broader ideas of ‘creativity’. This is done deliberately to reflect the way that these terms are used synonymously in local policy discourses. This, in part, is a product of the Polish language, which lacked a word for ‘creativity’, previously using ‘twórczość’ (which lacks a

direct equivalent in English but refers to ‘creation’ or ‘artistic output’), whereas ‘kreatywny’ (‘creativity’) is a relatively new invention in response to the language of EU programmes.

2. On 13th January 2019, Paweł Adamowicz was attacked on stage at the Great Orchestra of Christmas Charity by an assailant and died in hospital on the 14th due to the wounds.

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