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

By Rebecca de Mynn

Editor
Dr Amanda Ravetz

Contents

Acknowledgements

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.

Executive Summary

[1] 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".[1] 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

[2] 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.

[3] For a definition of *values,* see page 24.

[4] 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.

[5] Thelwall. *Size Matters*, p. 6.

[6] 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*.

[7] 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/cmcumeds/464/464i.pdf.

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

[9] 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. V*alue, Measure, Sustainability;* 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.[2] 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.[3] 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. [4] 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.[5]

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.[6] 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".[7] 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".[8] 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.[9] 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-

[10] Thelwall. *Size Matters*.

[11] 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*.

[12] Gordon-Nesbitt. *Value, Measure, Sustainability*.

[13] 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/.

[14] 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*.

[15] 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.[10]

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.[11] 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.[12]

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.[13] 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.[14] 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.[15] 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

[16] 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*.

[17] 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.

[18] 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.[16] 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.[17]

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.[18] 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

[19] 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.

[20] 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.[19] 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*.[20] 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

Nurturing an environment	
Internally	**Externally**
Ad-hoc discussions with visitors	Working as part of institutional networks to promote artist development
Using artist feedback to generate/amend their activities	Staff are active in their roles outside of the gallery environment
Maintaining long-term relationships with artists	Facilitating a harmonised arts ecosystem based on collaboration and communication
Encouraging open knowledge exchanges between themselves, other organisations, and artists	Working as part of institutional networks to enhance artist development opportunities
Ensuring information given to artists is accessible	Using meanwhile spaces to create a dialogue about the necessity of project spaces

In depth: skills and knowledge

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

Formal learning (group)	
External talks and seminars	**CGA monthly meetings**
What is involved in starting and running a pop-up space	How to apply for funding
Where to locate funding during austerity and how to access it	What funding is available
How to initiate and run an artist-led initiative	How other artists have written proposals
How to build a website	How to apply for Launch Pad
How to get criticality for your practice within an artist-led pop-up	How to write about your work
Legislation around pop-up spaces	How to show work at its best advantage
How to publicise DIY events	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

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

Non-formal learning (group)	
Crit groups (delivered through the CGA scheme)	**Other information sessions (e.g. breakout discussions at events)**
How to decide which residencies to apply to	How to generate a successful artist-led project
Information about artists with a similar practice	How to fund an artist-led project
New materials that could complement a style of practice	How to share knowledge and maintain networks
Advice about which organisations might show your work	How to generate audiences
Pricing	The routes and barriers in the regional arts ecosystem
Practical techniques	How to get exposure
Opportunities	
How an audience might respond to an artwork, or aspects within an artwork	

Table 4: Sub-categories and activities offered within non-formal learning (one-to-one) contexts

Non-formal learning (one-to-one)

Ad-hoc one-to-one discussions with staff (at previews, in office, etc.)	Telephone advice
Details of suitable opportunities	How to establish a budget within an exhibition proposal
Bespoke marketing advice on a specific publication	Technical assistance: mounting and printing facilities in Greater Manchester
New materials that could complement a style of practice	Available opportunities to new graduates in Greater Manchester
Theoretical discussions with staff upon visiting the gallery	How to consider scale within an exhibition proposal
Information about artists with a similar practice	How to establish a time-frame within an exhibition proposal
Information about the artists in the show upon visiting the gallery	

Portfolio reviews	Scheduled one-to-one discussions with staff
How to decide which residencies to apply to	How many prints an artist should produce at their career stage
Bespoke website advice	How to improve a specific funding application
Technical advice on materials	How to improve applications to competitions
Advice about how to approach galleries	How to utilise the different networks of artists in a group show
How to decide which Opens to apply to	Advice on what competitions suit an artists practice
Technical advice on how to hang work	Bespoke advice on an artist's website
Advice about the routes into artist-led projects	Help navigating the regional arts ecosystem
Information about artists with a similar practice	

	Video resources
Advice about which organisations might show your work	Specific information conveyed through these was not documented in the context of this study

Table 5: Sub-categories and activities offered within experiential learning contexts

Experiential learning

Volunteering at Castlefield Gallery	Conducting an exhibition at Castlefield Gallery
The expectations of visitors and how to interact with them	How to connect conceptual thinking to an exhibition
How a gallery office is run, and the different roles	How to curate the space at Castlefield Gallery
How to approach a gallery with proposals	How to plan the timeframe of an exhibition
	How to conduct publicity for an exhibition
	The technical side of installing an exhibition
	The process of installing an exhibition

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	Launch Pad	Exhibition programme

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

Emotional	
Encouragement, reassurance, belonging, and confidence	**Other**
Exposure to reviewers	Providing a friendly and welcoming space
Ad-hoc discussions with audiences	Reducing stress by offering affordable spaces to take risks and test work
Opportunities are made accessible	Aiding the fulfilment of personal aspirations
The brokerage of peer-to-peer relationships	Treating artists professionally to imbue a professionalism in them
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	
Gallery-led	**Gallery-facilitated**
Offering spaces to test new work	Brokering practitioners through the vehicle of a group show
Theoretical discussions about exhibitions	Brokering mentor relationships in New Art Spaces
Theoretical discussions about an artist's work	Brokering conversations between more experienced practitioners/art professionals
Offering names of relevant practitioners	Brokering peer-to-peer conversational exchanges
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	
Financial	**Materials**
Payment for additional tech work	Sites for site-specific work
Launch Pad budget	Facilitating the sharing of used materials throughout New Art Spaces
Commissioning work	Helping artists source materials for commissioned pieces
Supporting bursaries to attend events	
Payment to give advice at sessions	
Payment for work in shows	

In depth: showcasing opportunities

Table 10: Sub-categories and activities classed as platforming

Platforming	
Gallery-led	**Gallery-facilitated**
Larger audiences	Exposure to curators
Expanded audiences	Opportunity to tell other artists about current shows
Press coverage	Meeting artists in different cities
The Manchester Contemporary	Peer-to-peer interactions
Directly interacting with practising artists	Meeting venue-representatives in different cities
Increase the profile of artists by association with the gallery	Generating national audiences
Suggest artists for group shows	Exposure to more experienced artists

Table 11: Sub-categories and activities classed as brokerage

Brokerage	
Gallery-led	**Gallery-facilitated**
Suggest artists for group shows	Putting artists in contact
Create mentoring opportunities	Placing artists of varying experiences in the same context
Facilitate relationships between practitioners of varying experience	
Introduce practitioners using group shows as a vehicle	

Table 12: Sub-categories and activities classed as networking

Networking	
Gallery-led	**Gallery-facilitated**
Directly interacting with practising artists	Meeting venue representatives in different cities
	Peer-to-peer discussions
	Exposure to curators
	Meeting artists in different cities
	Exposure to more experienced artists

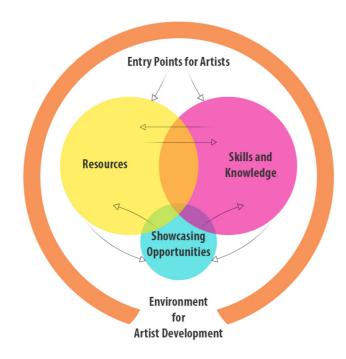**Table 13: Sub-categories and activities classed as hosting**

Hosting	
Gallery-led	**Gallery-facilitated**
Launch Pad	New Art Spaces available to artist-led curatorial groups
The main gallery space	Space hire
	Interim shows for University students

[21] Castlefield Gallery (n.d.c.) *About*. Castlefield Gallery website. [Online] [Accessed 7th August 2014] Available from: http://www.castlefieldgallery.co.uk/about/.

[22] Slater, Ravetz, and Lee. *Analysing Artists' CPD*; Gordon-Nesbitt. *Mapping Artists' Development Programmes in the UK*.

[23] Rushton, E. (2015) Interview with de Mynn, R. 14th September. Personal interview. Manchester: Unpublished source.

[24] 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.[21] 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.[22] 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?[23]

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".[24] Rather than defining

[25] Ibid, p. 6.

[26] Ibid.

[27] 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.

[28] 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".[25] Rather than catering to career-stage, she suggests that engagement with artist development is defined by developmental moments.[26] 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.[27] 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".[28]

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

29 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.[29] 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

30 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*.

31 Louise. *Ladders for Development;* Louise. *Realising the value;*Thelwall, *Size Matters*.

32 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.[30] More recently, these studies have turned to how these decisions have affected small-scale organisations differently to larger ones in the sphere.[31] 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.[32] In the small-scale visual arts

33 Hay, C. 'Constructivist Institutionalism.'

34 Ibid, p. 66.

35 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; Mouffe, C. (2005) *On the Political*. New York: Routledge.

36 Fraser. 'Rethinking the Public Sphere', p. 67.

37 Ibid.

38 Ibid.

39 Mouffe. *Deliberative Democracy or Agonistic Pluralism?*.

40 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.[33] 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".[34] 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.[35] 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.[36]

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.[37] Informally, counterpublics are able to lobby the dominant spheres by nature of their unified presence.[38] 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.[39] 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.[40] 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

41 Cruz, C. (2016) *Practicing Solidarity*. London: Common Practice.

42 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.

43 Ibid.

44 Ibid.

45 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=qJwEks1dFaI.

46 Ibid.

47 Kalleberg, A. L. (2009) 'Precarious Work, Insecure Workers: Employment Relations in Transition.' *American Social Review*, 74, pp. 1-22.

48 Ibid, p. 2.

49 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.[41]

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.[42] 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.[43] 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.[44] 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 5th 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?".[45] Describing an "overwhelmed" workforce beyond capacity, De-Light explained how staff "certainly don't feel like [they are] getting the best support".[46] 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.[47] *Precarious work* is defined as "employment that is uncertain, unpredictable, and risky from the point of view of the worker".[48] 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.[49] 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

[50] Morini. 'The Feminization of Labour in Cognitive Capitalism.'

[51] Ibid.

[52] Kalleberg. 'Precarious Work, Insecure Workers.'

[53] Ibid, p. 6.

[54] Thelwall. *Size Matters.*

[55] Arts Council England (n.d.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.

[56] 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.[50] 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.[51]

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.[52] 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".[53] 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.[54] 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.[55] 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).[56] 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.

References

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.

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.

Arts Council England (n.d.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.

Arts Council England (2013) *Great Art and Culture for Everyone: 10-year Strategic Framework (2010-2020)*. 2nd ed. London: Arts Council England.

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.

Castlefield Gallery (n.d.a.) *About CG Associates*. Castlefield Gallery website. [Online] [Accessed 15th October 2014] Available from: http://www.castlefieldgallery.co.uk/associates/.

Castlefield Gallery (n.d.b.) New Art Spaces. Castlefield Gallery website. [Online] [Accessed 15th October 2014] Available from: http://www.castlefieldgallery.co.uk/newartspaces/.

Castlefield Gallery (n.d.c.) *About*. Castlefield Gallery website. [Online] [Accessed 7th August 2014] Available from: http://www.castlefieldgallery.co.uk/about/.

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/.

Castlefield Gallery and Hughes, N. (2012) *Mapping Artists' CPD in Greater Manchester Report*. Manchester: Castlefield Gallery.

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.

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.

Cruz, C. (2016) *Practicing Solidarity*. London: Common Practice.

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=qJwEks1dFaI.

Fraser, N. (1990) 'Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy.' *Social Text*, 25/26, pp. 56-80.

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.

Gordon-Nesbitt, R. (2012) *Value, Measure, Sustainability: Ideas towards the future of the small-scale visual arts sector*. London: Common Practice.

Gordon-Nesbitt, R. (2015) *Mapping Artists' Development Programmes in the UK: Knowledge and Skills*. London: Chisenhale Gallery.

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.

Kalleberg, A. L. (2009) 'Precarious Work, Insecure Workers: Employment Relations in Transition.' *American Social Review*, 74, pp. 1-22.

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.

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.

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*.

Manchester Cultural Partnership (n.d.) *Talent City*. Manchester Cultural Partnership website. [Online] [Accessed 25th March 2016] Available from: http://www.manchesterculturalpartnership.org/culturalambition/talentcity.

Morini, C. (2007) 'The Feminization of Labour in Cognitive Capitalism.' *Feminist Review*, 87, pp. 40-59.

Mouffe, C. (2000a) *The Democratic Paradox*. London and New York: Verso.

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.

Mouffe, C. (2005) *On the Political*. New York: Routledge.

Mouffe, C. (2013) *Hegemony, Radical Democracy, and the Political*. Oxon and New York: Routledge.

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.

Paying Artists (n.d.) *About the Campaign*. Paying Artists website. [Online] [Accessed 3rd October 2016] Available from: http://www.payingartists.org.uk/context/.

Pick, J. and Anderton, M. (1999) *Building Jerusalem: Art, Industry and the British Millennium*. Amsterdam: Harwood Academic Publishers.

Precarious Workers Brigade (n.d.) *About*. Precarious Workers Brigade website. [Online] [Accessed 3rd October 2016] Available from: http://precariousworkersbrigade.tumblr.com/about.

Rushton, E. (2015) Interview with de Mynn, R. 14th September. Personal interview. Manchester: Unpublished source.

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.

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/cmcumeds/464/464i.pdf.

Thelwall, S. (2011) *Size Matters: Notes towards a Better Understanding of the Value, Operation and Potential of Small Visual Arts Organisations*. London: Common Practice.

Appendix 1: Theoretical Discussion

Excerpt from the draft of the thesis

[1] Hay, C. (2002) *Political Analysis: A Critical Introduction*. Basingstoke: PALGRAVE, p. 94.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Ibid.

[4] Giddens, A. (1984) *The Constitution of Society*. Cambridge: Polity Press; Bourdieu, P. (1977) *Outline of a Theory of Practice*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

[5] Bourdieu. *Outline of a Theory of Practice*.

[6] Giddens. *The Constitution of Society*.

[7] 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".[1] Structural *properties* are exhibited insofar as "political institutions, practices, routines and conventions appear to exhibit some regularity".[2] 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".[3] 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).[4] 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.[5] 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.[6] 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.[7]

[8] Bourdieu. *Outline of a Theory of Practice*; Bourdieu, P. (1990) *The Logic of Practice*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

[9] Elliott, A. (2014) *Contemporary Social Theory: An Introduction*. 2nd ed., Oxon: Routledge, p. 167.

[10] Bourdieu. *Outline of a Theory of Practice*; Bourdieu. *The Logic of Practice*.

[11] Hay. *Political Analysis*.

[12] 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).[8] 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 ae available for individuals to choose from.[9] 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.[10] 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.[11] 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 emphasis 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.[12]

[13] Ibid, p. 128.

[14] Ibid, p. 132.

[15] Hay. *Political Analysis*, p. 132; Giddens. *The Constitution of Society*, p. xxiii.

[16] Hay. *Political Analysis*, p. 132.

[17] Ibid, p. 15.

[18] Ibid, p. 134.

[19] 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.[13] This can be divided into "intuitive, routine or habitual strategies and practices" and "explicitly strategic action".[14] The former is "unarticulated and unchallenged", states Hay, and is likened to "practical consciousness".[15] 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.[16] 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.[17]

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.[18] 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.[19]

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.

[20] Ibid.

[21] Habermas, J. (1998) *Between Facts and Norms*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

[22] 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; Mouffe, C. (2005) *On the Political*. New York: Routledge.

[23] 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".[20] 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.[21] 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.[22] 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".[23] It was in this shift that the nuanced nature of the concept of *the public sphere* found manoeuvrability, theoretically and politically.

24 Ibid.

25 Habermas. *Between Facts and Norms*, p. 248.

26 Fraser. 'Rethinking the Public Sphere', pp. 60-61.

27 Ibid, pp. 62-63.

28 Ibid, p. 67.

29 Ibid.

30 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.[24]

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".[25] 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 remits of liberal democracy he "fails to examine other, nonliberal, non-bourgeois, competing publics".[26] 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".[27] 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".[28] 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.[29]

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.[30]

31 Ibid, p. 60.

32 Ibid, p. 62.

33 Ibid, p. 78.

34 Ibid.

Fraser argues that to be subaltern is to be subordinate, and to be at odds with hegemonic powers.[31] 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".[32] 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.[33]

Fraser acknowledges that the relationships between publics shift over time. While she uses examples taken from womens' 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.[34] 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. Mouffes frames this as a widespread process of negative identity formation;

[35] Mouffe, C. (2013) *Hegemony, Radical Democracy, and the Political*. Oxon and New York: Routledge, p.755.

[36] Mouffe, C. (2000b) *The Democratic Paradox*. London and New York: Verso.

[37] Habermas. *Between Facts and Norms*.

[38] Mouffe. *The Democratic Paradox*, p. 70.

[39] Ibid.

[40] Mouffe. *On the Political*, p. 15.

[41] Ibid.

[42] Mouffe. *Deliberative Democracy or Agonistic Pluralism?*; Mouffe. *On the Political*.

[43] Mouffe. *On the Political*, p. 21.

[44] Ibid, p. 18.

"the creation of an 'us' by the determination of a 'them'".[35] However, where Fraser deploys examples of excluded groups, Mouffe considers Wittgenstein's ontological concerns about consensus as the point of departure.[36]

For Habermas, the deliberative process is wholly underwritten by *rational* discourse; consensus can be achieved through reason.[37] 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.[38] 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*.[39]

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".[40]

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*.[41] *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.[42] The *task* of democratic politics is to encourage and promote a shift from antagonism to "agonistic relations".[43]

> 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.[44]

[45] Mouffe. *Deliberative Democracy or Agonistic Pluralism?*.

[46] 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*.[45] 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".[46]

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.

References

Bourdieu, P. (1977) *Outline of a Theory of Practice*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Bourdieu, P. (1990) *The Logic of Practice*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Elliott, A. (2014) *Contemporary Social Theory: An Introduction*. 2nd ed., Oxon: Routledge.

Fraser, N. (1990) 'Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy.' *Social Text*, 25/26, pp. 56-80.

Giddens, A. (1984) *The Constitution of Society*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Habermas, J. (1998) *Between Facts and Norms*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Hay, C. (2002) *Political Analysis: A Critical Introduction*. Basingstoke: PALGRAVE.

Held, D. and Thompson, J. B. (1989) *Social theory of modern societies: Anthony Giddens and his critics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

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.

Mouffe, C. (2000b) *The Democratic Paradox*. London and New York: Verso.

Mouffe, C. (2005) *On the Political*. New York: Routledge.

Mouffe, C. (2013) *Hegemony, Radical Democracy, and the Political*. Oxon and New York: Routledge.