‘These Things Don’t Happen by Magic’

Charismatic autonomy in festival production in the English East Midlands

Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of De Montfort University for the degree of Doctor in Philosophy

by

Jennie Jordan

Submitted August 2019
Acknowledgements

Working on this thesis has been a labour of love, hate, frustration and despair. It would not have happened at all without Jem and George, who have put up with me throughout, supplied endless cups of tea/glasses of wine as required, mopped up my tears and made me laugh. It would also not have happened without my colleagues Jacqui, who inspired me to start; Chris M and Franco whose research into festivals gave me my topic; Chris N who kept me writing; and Heather, my personal cheerleader.

I’m incredibly grateful to all the interviewees who gave me their time and expertise so generously. Jim McGuigan helped me shape my approach and pointed me towards Max Weber. Sue and Krista struggled through endless drafts, asked me questions about what I was doing and helped clarify my writing. Tim O’Sullivan drew my attention to time – both in keeping my research on track, and the centrality of rhythms within festival production. And, last but by no means least, my supervisor Alastair Gordon, who has put up with my digressions and rewrites and inability to see the wood for the trees and gently, but persistently, directed me back to the path with always pertinent questions and reading suggestions.

Thank you.
Abstract

Festivals are special times in social life. They interrupt everyday life for periods of celebration. But festivals don’t happen by magic; they are the result of on-going, hidden work by festival producers. Urban arts festivals are multifaceted social phenomena reliant on complex place-based and cultural interest networks. They navigate values and norms with varied identity, place, economic and social meanings. This thesis questions how this largely invisible work shapes urban life, who undertakes this labour, what motivates them, who else is involved and how producers’ underlying value systems influence their effects in regional urban areas in England.

In order to address the complexity of festivals as sites and artefacts, research for this thesis was multi-method. Ethnographic methods, cultural production and institutional concepts were synthesised with policy analysis and crystallised into a tripartite Weberian ideal type framework. The typology distinguished between festival’s primary purposes linked to their hetero-regulatory interest groups: arts curation based on aesthetic judgement; commercial priorities within creative industry sectors; and civic outcomes linked to public policies. Three case-studies, one of each type, were researched using thick description techniques to identify themes.

The thesis is split into a theoretical section followed by ethnographic research to develop three case-studies: Buxton International Festival, Leicester Comedy Festival and Derby Festé. It asks if festivals are hetero-regulated institutions or autonomous, charismatic actors within their localities and concludes the case-studies were strongly influenced by their founders’ professional habitus within their artistic fields. Although responsive to structural heteronomy in their respective cities, they all resisted pressures to commercialise or lower artistic standards.

The thesis concludes festivals are sites where values are negotiated throughout the production cycle and historically as festivals develop and align with wider interests.
Policy discourses used to justify public subsidy mask influential players’ power within localities. Professional expertise from founders’ cultural habitus was found to give them intrinsic and instrumental charismatic power. In viewing festivals as cyclical events produced by enduring organisations, this thesis contributes to the field by illuminating festival producers’ charismatic autonomy within the context of hetero-regulatory authorising environments shaped by neoliberal cultural and urban policies.
## Contents

### Table of Contents

Acknowledgements .................................................................................. 2
Abstract .................................................................................................... 3
Contents .................................................................................................... 5
Tables and Figures .................................................................................... 9
Glossary .................................................................................................... 10

**Chapter 1: Introduction** ...................................................................... 12
Context .................................................................................................... 17
Festival discourses .................................................................................. 20
Festivals as institutions .......................................................................... 23
Regional Urban Arts Festival Typology .................................................. 27
Aesthetic festivals ................................................................................... 28
Commercial sector festivals .................................................................... 28
Civic festivals .......................................................................................... 29
Research methodology .......................................................................... 30
Thesis structure ...................................................................................... 31
Introduction summary ............................................................................ 31

**Chapter 2. Understanding festivals** .................................................... 33
Introduction ............................................................................................ 33
Defining festivals .................................................................................... 34
Festivity, intensification and liminality ................................................... 36
Communitas, social structure and the carnivalesque ............................. 37
Authenticity, heteronomy and commodification ................................... 39
Festivals as alternative spaces .............................................................. 41
Festival production ............................................................................... 45
Leadership, management and events studies ......................................... 50
Understanding Festivals Summary ......................................................... 51

**Chapter 3. Festivals, Cultural and Urban Policy** .............................. 53
Cultural policy ......................................................................................... 55
Cultural policy in the UK .......................................................................... 56
Thatcherism and the Arts Council .......................................................... 59
The Department of National Heritage and the National Lottery .......... 63
Culture and social exclusion .................................................................. 65
Cool culture, festivalisation and city branding ...................................... 68
Austerity and the Big Society ................................................................. 70
Placemaking ............................................................................................ 72
Summary ................................................................................................... 74
Historical context: comedy industry ................................................. 160
Historical context: Leicester ......................................................... 160
Festival development ................................................................. 162
Professionalisation ................................................................. 165
Growth .................................................................................... 170
Leadership .............................................................................. 172
Leicester’s Festivals Strategy .................................................... 174
DLCF and Leicester’s place identity ........................................... 176
Sponsorship, identity and credibility ........................................ 178
Reflections ............................................................................. 180

Chapter 8. Derby Festé Case-study .............................................. 185
Introduction ............................................................................. 185
Description ............................................................................ 186
History ................................................................................... 188
Historical context ................................................................. 191
Working practices and legal structures .................................... 193
Economic revitalisation ......................................................... 198
Talent development ............................................................... 199
Social cohesion ..................................................................... 202
Festival purpose ..................................................................... 207
Cultural leadership ............................................................... 210
Reflections ............................................................................. 213

Chapter 9. Hetero-regulation and regional urban arts festivals .... 217
Introduction ............................................................................. 217
The Arts Council (ACE) .......................................................... 218
Arts Council’s influence summary ........................................ 224
Local Authorities ..................................................................... 225
Economic rationales ............................................................... 226
Placemaking: space imaginaries ............................................. 229
Local networks and placemaking ........................................... 231
Summary local authority influences ...................................... 233
Universities’ influence ............................................................ 234
University influences summary ............................................. 238
Sectoral influences ............................................................... 238
Summary sectoral influences ................................................ 241
Summary hetero-regulatory environment .............................. 243

Chapter 10. Autonomy, brokerage and imagined futures .......... 246
Introduction ............................................................................. 246
Primary values ....................................................................... 248
What are you proud of? ....................................................... 248
Brokerage ............................................................................. 251
Legitimacy and cultural capital ........................................... 253
Tracing values in festival’s structures .................................. 254
Tables and Figures

Table 2.1 Ideal festival types criteria............................................................. 104
Table 2.2 Analysis of Buxton International Festival as an aesthetic festival type................................................................. 109
Table 2.3 Analysis of LCF as a commercial sector festival type.............................. 112
Table 2.4 Analysis of Derby Festé as a civic festival type.................................. 115
Figure 7.1: Suggested development areas from the Leicester Comedy Festival Business Plan 2002 (Leicester Comedy Festival Ltd. 2001: 36)................................. 168
Figure 10.1 Locating brokerage and intermediation within festival production..... 262
Table A2.1 Festivals considered during case-study selection............................. iv
### Glossary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ABSA</td>
<td>Association for Business Sponsorship of the Arts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACGB</td>
<td>Arts Council of Great Britain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACE</td>
<td>Arts Council England (ACE)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Autonomy</td>
<td>The ability to resist pressure from hetero-regulatory forces to adapt cultural forms to be more marketable.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culture</td>
<td>‘the independent and abstract noun which describes the works and practices of intellectual and especially artistic activity […]. Culture is music, literature, painting and sculpture, theatre and film’ (Williams 2013 [1976: 80).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BID</td>
<td>Business Improvement District</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DCC</td>
<td>Derby City Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dèda</td>
<td>Derby’s contemporary dance centre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Derby LIVE</td>
<td>Derby City Council’s events team</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DMU</td>
<td>De Montfort University, Leicester</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ecology</td>
<td>‘complex interdependencies that shape the demand for and production of arts and cultural offerings” (Markusen et al, 2011: 8).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Field</td>
<td>Bourdieu (1984 [1979]) conceived of fields as structured social spaces in which individuals competed for status and power in the form of control over economic, social, symbolic or cultural capitals within the field. Fields can overlap and may have similar structures, but they all exist within an overarching field, the field of power, where an elite class competes for domination over subordinate classes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G4A/Grants for the Arts</td>
<td>ACE’s project funding stream</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hetero-regulation</td>
<td>An inherently complex system whose workings are ‘beyond the comprehension of the individuals within them’ (Gorz 2008: 32) by which capitalism increases efficiency through specialisation and control via rules, regulations and organisational oversight.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LAF</td>
<td>Leicester Arts Festivals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LCC</td>
<td>Leicester City Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LCF</td>
<td>Leicester Comedy Festival</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Networks</td>
<td>The complex of social relations required in cultural production which grow and develop within fields and in places, centred on particular cultural centres or art schools, and strengthened at annual gatherings such as festivals. Networks are one element in fields and ecologies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NPM</td>
<td>New Public Management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acronym</td>
<td>Definition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NPO</td>
<td>National Portfolio Organisation, an organisation in receipt of four-year funding from the Arts Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policy Attachment</td>
<td>Requiring arts or cultural organisations to contribute to policy objectives in other policy sectors as a condition for public funding.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Value</td>
<td>The agreed rules-in-action and shared value systems which provide legitimacy for public services which cannot easily prove their worth through simple metrics such as profits.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QUAD</td>
<td>Derby's film and media centre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RFO</td>
<td>Regularly Funded Organisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RNCM</td>
<td>Royal Northern College of Music</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Without Walls</td>
<td>A network of urban street performance and outdoor arts festivals in the UK funded to commission and tour new work and to support audience development</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter 1: Introduction

Festivals are special times in social life. They interrupt everyday life for brief periods of celebration and rest. But festivals don’t happen by magic. They are the result of hard work, usually by a small team, throughout the year. Festival producers create coalitions and networks in the cities and towns they work in. Networks refer to the complex of social relations required in cultural production. These networks grow and develop within cultural fields and in places, centred on particular cultural centres or art schools, and strengthened at annual gatherings such as festivals. Holden (2015) argued networks were one element of place ecologies and cultural fields which can be ‘considered individually, but they are inter-related. For example, emergence is the precursor to growth; growth takes place within the context of complex interdependencies that develop through networks; and the evolution of the overall system is a function of the development of its parts’ (ibid: 18). In other words, the term networks describes the pattern of social ties between organisations and individuals within a field or place whether or not these interactions are instrumentalised. According to Latour (1996) a network ‘has no a priori order relation; it is not tied to the axiological myth of a top and of a bottom of society’ (ibid: 371). Networks for Latour encourage a focus on how an individual is connected to others. It is used in this thesis to describe interpersonal connections. By contrast, the term ecology refers to synergistic relations within production in which organisations and individuals co-operate to design, produce, exchange and consume complementary goods and services (Moore 1993). It is hierarchical and instrumental. It is used here when considering the festivals’ production environments.

Festivals can act as magnets for networks of artists, agents and producers, creating intense temporary milieu which may or may not become ecologies. Away from the festive period festivals can work with artists to situate their cultural ecologies by
uncovering place histories, creating new imaginaries and memories of communal experiences, or to strengthen relationships with their global cultural field(s). This thesis is about those people and how their work, largely and deliberately invisible to festival-goers, shapes urban life. Questions of who undertakes this on-going hidden labour, what they do and why, their relationships and influence within contemporary everyday city life, and what the rationales are for public subsidy of festivals have been neglected in cultural policy studies. These are the questions this thesis sets out to examine.

This introduction starts with an explanation of the study’s rationale and gives a summary of the historical, cultural policy and political economy contexts within which regional urban arts festivals, intense, short-duration programmes of music, theatre, comedy or other art forms, are produced. It identifies the main academic debates around festivals and sets out the approach used to select and study three case-studies. Since festivals are complex social phenomena, Weber’s (2003 [1920]) ideal type concept was chosen as a method for classifying crucial differentiating features to enable comparative analysis.

My interest in this topic results from my experiences as a festival producer and cultural manager before I moved into academia. Festivals, ‘themed, public celebrations’ (Getz 2005: 21), became a serious topic for academic study in the early part of the 20th century as part of the ‘cultural turn’ (Wilks-Heeg and North 2004: 305) in urban studies. Culture is, according to Raymond Williams ‘one of the two or three most complicated words in the English language’ (2013 [1976]: 76). The term culture is, for the most part, used here as a synonym for the arts, ‘the independent and abstract noun which describes the works and practices of intellectual and especially artistic activity […]. Culture is music, literature, painting and sculpture, theatre and film’ (ibid: 80). As this is an institutional enquiry, it is also used in the context of organisational culture to mean agreed norms of behaviour, the often unconscious and unwritten rules which guide actions and decision-making within a social group,
community or organisation (Lowndes 2005). Within urban policy, the dominant rhetorics related to arts festivals which were viewed as temporary events within culture-led regeneration and city marketing. I became aware the on-going work of festival producers was missing from the discourse and, therefore, failed to reflect my lived experience of working on and with festivals. These festivals were not temporary events; they were enduring features of urban life operating on annual cycles. As soon as one festival ended, producers started work on the next. I wondered if this work was overlooked as a result of a tendency amongst researchers to focus on high profile festivals in major cities or one-off mega-events, whereas my work had been with publicly-funded arts festival situated in regional towns and cities in England. The production of long-running arts festivals in such places is the focus of this study. Questions of time, of annual cycles of events and their historical development, and place, of festivals’ entanglements in local histories and places’ imaginaries, the meanings attributed to them and performed by festivals, and their roles within their places’ institutional ecologies, the ‘complex interdependencies that shape the demand for and production of arts and cultural offerings’ (Markusen et al, 2011: 8), are central to this enquiry.

The first festival I worked on was the Nottingham Arts Festival in May 1990. A small team of five Nottingham City Council staff in the Arts and Events Section ran the festival. The festival was designed to boost the city’s tourism appeal. Based around a theme chosen by the festival director, who was also head of the Arts Section and my boss, it lasted ten days and incorporated events in the city’s major subsidised arts venues such as the Royal Centre and Nottingham Playhouse, and directly programmed events on a stage in the Old Market Square and College Street arts in education space. My official job was press and publicity, but as I soon found out, everyone was expected to pitch in. As well as liaising with artists about press interviews, I designed leaflets, sold tickets, coordinated a team of volunteers, liaised with the police about road closures and access, and lugged sound equipment into and out of venues. I learned, although the aim was to make the festival appear
effortless for audiences, behind the scenes it demanded hard work and a great deal of expertise. The academic literature, focused on external effects missed this ongoing hidden labour.

Over the years I worked on many festivals in the East Midlands, some of them with a tourist focus, others with the local community in mind, such as Nottingham’s annual Riverside Festival. The Heineken Music Big Top and the Barclay’s New Stages Festival had commercial motives driven by their sponsors, while the Now and New Works festivals in Nottingham and Leicester grew out of courses at local universities and aimed to promote contemporary performance and live art with a strongly aesthetic purpose.

There were times when these festivals had national and international ambitions, commissioned new works or flew artists in from overseas. Two festivals I worked on hired very high profile London media agents, but even then rarely managed more than a paragraph or two on the arts pages of the national press. When there were visitors from outside the cities, they tended to be visiting family or friends or were connected in some way to the artists performing. So, when I started lecturing about festival management and cultural policy some fifteen years after my first experience, I was uneasy about the narratives highlighting festivalisation and festivals’ roles in tourism marketing. It seemed apparent regional festivals, even those with brand sponsors, did not actually attract interest outside their localities, and this must have been evident to those making decisions about programming and funding them. The dominant economic impact discourse was based on hallmark festivals such as Edinburgh, or mega-events such as the European Capitals of Culture. These seemed insufficient in explaining why public authorities in regional towns and cities really continued to subsidise festivals. Did festivalisation, which I have previously defined as selective employment of dimensions which mark festive times as distinctive to achieve instrumental market or political objectives (Jordan 2016b), mark a conjunctural shift towards the marketisation of urban policy? Or was this true only for some types of
festivals whilst others fulfilled different agendas? If the latter, what social or political purposes do local festivals really accomplish in return for public subsidy? Do festival producers consider the concerns of residents and local audiences before those of aesthetic or commercial value? Are the festival’s priorities similar to those of other public services in the area?

In order to understand the paradigms and institutional frameworks underpinning festivalisation in UK regional cities, three case-studies are explored in this study. Each epitomised a set of values discussed in the festival studies literature: the centrality of taste; commercial return on investment; or social value and placemaking. The cases are local rather than national as it is the very ubiquity of festivals that marks festivalisation out as an important social phenomenon influencing public policy locally, nationally and globally. Since policy changes over time, the cases are viewed historically from their genesis at conjunctural shifts (Hall 1996) in UK cultural policy: 1979, the year in which Thatcherite monetarism was introduced; 1994, the launch of the National Lottery; and 2007, just before the global banking crisis and subsequent austerity measures in the UK. Analysis focused on festivals in global cities and their external effects does not adequately explain my lived experience of producers’ attempts to interpret and apply such policies in regional towns and cities in England.

This thesis begins with four aims: to investigate the role of festivals as enduring local institutions; to examine the significance of festival producers as actors within urban public policy; to contribute to the understanding of regional and local cultural policies in England; and to add to the understanding of culture as an agent in social life. In other words, it examines festivals as autonomous agents within complex hetero-regulated production ecologies. Understanding festivals’ relative autonomy, therefore, requires an understanding of the institutional contexts in which they operate.
Context

Public funding for culture in the UK has, since the 1980s, been subject to neoliberal logics of marketisation, entrepreneurialism and deregulation and new public management-influenced quantitative quality management systems (Harvey 2005, Belfiore 2004). Funding from Arts Council England (ACE) and local authorities was reduced during periods of austerity in the 1980s, 1990s and from 2010. Non-cultural outcomes including economic development, city marketing, education and social cohesion replaced intrinsic artistic judgements as rationales for cultural subsidy (Gray 2004). Arts organisations were asked to prove their resilience by diversifying income streams. Festival production has not been immune from these pressures and has developed two core narratives to buttress applications for public subsidy. First, festivals are argued to be an attractive part of place marketing initiatives and economic development, a narrative reinforced by economic impact studies commissioned by local authorities or festivals themselves (e.g. Richards and Palmer 2010, Quinn 2010, Frost 2016). However, evidence to support local claims relating to festivals as drivers of economic development is limited and patchy: Maughan and Bianchini’s (2004a) survey of eleven festivals in the East Midlands of England found only one, Buxton International Festival, could legitimately claim its audiences were primarily visitors to the area.

The second discourse is of festivals as sources of social and cultural cohesion in diverse cities. This is ‘a paradoxical thing; festival events function as a form of social integration and cohesion, while simultaneously they are sites of subversion, protest or exclusions and alienation’ (Duffy and Waitt 2011: 55). Festivals aimed at tourists may alienate residents; those for one cultural group will exclude other cultures. Festivals are inherently political with complex, hidden relations within production influencing subsidy decisions, festival design and outcomes. Identifying and understanding ongoing institutional relations within regional cities, how producers influence local policy-making, shape place identity and ensure their own survival are the questions at
the heart of this research. Are they integrative, or exclusive? Socially orientated or commercial? For local residents, or tourists? To what extent are local festivals’ purposes and effects integrated with urban policies in their towns and cities (Sachs Olsen 2013)?

Despite an increase in academic research into arts and cultural festivals since the mid-1990s, festivals’ social impacts remain under-theorised, leaving many questions about their roles in contemporary society open (Wilks and Quinn 2016). There have been some recent attempts to theorise festivals within an emerging interdisciplinary festival studies field. Giorgi et al.’s Festivals and the Cultural Public Sphere developed a case for festivals as sites of communicative action and political debate. Wilks and Quinn (2017) applied Foucault’s concept of heterotopias to rural folk festivals, which they found to be contested liminal sites during which different communities came together enabling reflection on society in a less overtly political way than public sphere analysis. In her doctoral thesis Wilks (2009) explored the connection between festivals and Bourdieu’s notion of social and cultural capitals at music festivals in the UK from a consumption perspective. She found cultural capital was a necessary condition for entry into festive worlds and was enhanced by attendance. Work within the wider creative industries has developed a line of thought showing how cultural and social capital act to exclude working class and minority groups from work as actors and producers in the arts and media, as acquiring tacit knowledge and building networks relies on unpaid internships or other forms of voluntary work (Brook et al. 2018), but there is scope for further research in relation to festival production.

There are examples of festivals’ policy purposes being discussed, such as Fabiani’s (2011) discussion of participation in the Avignon Theatre Festival as a form of citizenship. These mainly focus on questions of national identity. Quinn and Wilks (2016, 2017) highlighted the potential for festivals to enhance other collective identities in relation to communities of interest, in their case folk music. Both national and interest groups can be considered ‘imagined communities’ (Anderson 1991),
connected through symbolic relations. Yet, festivals are often attached to place-specific and local agendas - city marketing, or intercultural social cohesion not addressed by these texts (Quinn 2010, Richards and Wilson 2004, Bloomfield and Bianchini 2004).

Waterman (1998) identified the contested nature of festivals as an important factor in festival production. He argued support for the arts is part of a process by which elites establish and maintain distance and power. The legitimation of particular art forms and festivals in particular places at a particular time illuminated symbolic and functional relationships within social orders. Festivalisation, ‘the instrumental use of techniques found in the production dimensions of festivals to achieve cultural and non-cultural outcomes within social, economic and policy fields’ (Jordan 2016b: 15), suggests neoliberal policies within UK governmental funding systems shifted power from artistic directors to commercial and political interests (Alexander 2017). In an era in which Western populations are highly mobile, culture is the site in which values, identities and power structures are contested. For Stanley (2005) this was culture as creativity, as an agent of change, rather than culture as heritage or tradition.

As temporary but repeated events, festivals act as a snapshot of these hidden structures. They illuminate the changing nature of relationships, just as a strobe light crystallises the movement of a dancer. This thesis makes a contribution by identifying the interest groups within the production ecologies of three local festivals within the East Midlands of England and exploring contextual shifts in their organisational power relations. It concludes policy discourses used to justify public subsidy for festivals mask the power of highly influential players within localities. Yet, while successful festival founders make accommodations to ensure support, they were able, through charismatic authority, to negotiate autonomous spaces in which to implement their original visions.
Festival discourses

Research arising from the European Festival Research Project (2004-2012) highlighted an increase in the number of events labelled as arts and music festivals across the cultural sector in Europe (Klaic 2007, 2014). Yet there remains little agreement about what a festival is, a problem made all the more complex as the variety of events branded as festivals has expanded significantly. Interest groups such as festival producers (in the public, voluntary and private sectors), policy makers, analysts and audiences all use the term in distinct ways, as do academics from different fields. For Falassi they were ‘a sacred or profane time of celebration’ (1987: 2). Events management scholar Getz (2005) highlighted festivals’ role in public life. He argued ‘[n]umerous forms and themes of festival are possible, and the term festival is often misapplied and commercialised’ (Getz 2010: 2). He found the most frequent discourses within festival studies were socio-cultural, events and tourism and, less commonly, management studies. Socio-cultural discourses included symbolic, mythic and ritual dimensions of festivals; festivity; shared communal identity; and discussions of commodification versus authenticity. Festival types were differentiated by social or political purpose, such as official ceremonial or rebellion; by festive structure such as carnival, pilgrimage, spectacle or communal event; by place; or by art form or genre (Getz 2010).

Bourdieu’s (1984 [1979]) analysis of taste as socially constructed has been highly influential within cultural sociology. Genre is a symbolic indicator of social affiliation. As demonstrated in relation to classical music, artistic genres are underpinned by powerful formal and informal structures that act to include and exclude, making the choice of art form for a festival a political act (Bull 2016, 2015). Whilst there are discussions of the political aspects of festivity in relation to access to spaces (St John 2015, Martin 2014), symbolic reversals (Bakhtin 1994 [1965]), the embodiment of communal festivity (Ehrenreich 2007, O’Grady 2015) or changes of status (see, for
example, Turner 1967), the processes by which status and power are established and played out through festival design and production has seen less interest.

Management studies’ interest in festivals is as a sub-field within events management. The topics covered are those traditionally found in management studies, such as strategic planning, human resources and logistics, with a particular focus on marketing and risk factors (e.g. Goldblatt 1990). Stakeholder mapping and management is also discussed as a technique to understand power relations (e.g. Andersson and Getz 2008). In the context of this study, it illuminates the importance of considering hetero-regulation, the inherently complex system whose workings are ‘beyond the comprehension of the individuals within them’ (Gorz 2008: 32) by which capitalism increases efficiency through specialisation. This heteronomous system is controlled by rules and laws and through institutions such as the Arts Council and local authorities’ ability to offer subsidies subject to conditions. It can be contrasted with self-regulation or autonomy based on social norms and values systems. Because of its inherent complexity in which different actors follow their own institutional logics, hetero-regulation results in unplanned and unanticipated outcomes as actions build upon earlier actions. One example of a hetero-regulated system is Bourdieu’s (1996 [1992]) notion of a cultural field, ‘a structured space of positions in which the positions and their interrelations are determined by the distribution of different kinds of resources’ (Thompson 1991: 14). Resources included cultural and social capitals as well as economic capital. The concept of field acts as a basis for understanding interconnections and power relations within a particular social space and between different social spaces. Unlike the related idea of place-based ecologies discussed above, fields are determined by shared norms and values. It is used throughout this thesis to explore interrelationships within sub-fields of cultural production, and to shape understanding of their relative autonomy from other fields. Autonomy here refers to art forms ability to resist pressure from hetero-regulatory forces to adapt cultural forms to be more marketable. In focusing on festivals, this leads to the question to what extent do such interests interpenetrate festival production, or do
cultural norms or artistic excellence from the field predominate? While the focus of most stakeholder analysis has been local interest groups and policy actors, there is scope to study the influence of sectoral structures and norms. Artists, for example, are categorised as suppliers, albeit occasionally powerful ones. This misses the structuring effects of professional habitus within cultural sectors, as Toynbee (2016) identified in his research into the music industry, an effect amplified by the disorganised nature of cultural production. Without large companies to create organisation cultures, the norms and values developed during professional training are essential elements in enabling actors to bond quickly to produce shows and festivals (DiMaggio and Powell 1991). This is an example of rational professional closure in which members of a social group exclude non-members, in this case through exclusive knowledge, but in which the ‘allocation of opportunities monopolised are left to free competition amongst members’ (Weber 2004 [1922]: 347-8). The relative openness or closed nature of festival production is, therefore, an indicator of relative power within its stakeholders.

Research in tourism studies has focused on consumer behaviour and audience motivation (e.g. Bowen and Daniels 2005, Mohr et al. 1993); place marketing and branding (e.g. Jiwa et al. 2009); and the role of festivals in catalysing other developments (Wood 2006). The core concepts are instrumental, relating to festivals’ potential to support economic development and city branding or marketing. Where culture is discussed, the opportunity to experience authentic cultural events is seen to be a desirable tourist commodity. But, problematically, only within limits. Most visitors do not want to view ‘negative’ elements of local life such as poverty, or sickness (Zhou et al. 2018). Festivals are commodified to provide an idealised experience which visitors evaluate as authentic because of its difference from their everyday lives (Richards 2007).

Festivals’ ability to interrupt everyday life is also promulgated as a reason why festivals, particularly mega-events, are politically useful in instigating change. Richards
(2015a) typified festivals as catalytic ‘pulsar’ events able to attract inward investment by rebranding post-industrial cities, or ‘iterative’ local festivals that reinforce communal bonds. Despite the narrative of the former being widely used to justify public subsidy for the latter, from what little works has been done, iterative festivals have received little interest in tourism studies.

This diversity of discourses means any attempt to understand how festivals operate within regional cities needs to consider how festivals are perceived within their localities and professional fields, and how these relate to local, national and global cultural policies and the market. These factors include genre/industry structures; place policies and structures; festival design and purpose; the extent to which festival production is autonomous or hetero-regulated, authentic or inauthentic; and how these factors change historically and rhythmically. These factors informed the creation of a tripartite typology of local arts festivals detailed further below.

**Festivals as institutions**

In understanding festivals as enduring phenomena in urban social and political life, this study is a form of institutional enquiry. Lowndes and Wilson (2001) argued research into civic governance at the local level had paid too little attention to agency factors within the design of institutions and social capital. How civic institutions were structured (designed) demonstrated the tacit ‘rules of the game’ (Lowndes 2005: 292) within a locality. What were the priorities, and who decided? Were they local, national or global? Social, economic or artistic? These questions illuminate festivals’ purposes, local synergies and tensions.

The clearest distinction between festival types is art form. Is it a music, theatre, book, visual art or opera festival? Within genres there are subsidiary questions. A music festival can be classical or rock, dance or contemporary. Does the choice of cultural form throw light on the relationship between the festival and its interest
groups? Bourdieu’s (1984 [1979]) cultural capital thesis claimed it is possible to distinguish between social classes by their aesthetic choices – rooted in the habitus - which are reinforced in everyday life by shared cultural practices such as attendance at certain events. The tastes of dominant powerful social groups were considered superior so were more likely to be subsidised and incorporated into publicly sanctioned festivals. The preference for certain kinds of food, music or drama is matched by a strong emotional dislike of the tastes of other social groups, which he describes as ‘disgust’ (1984 [1979] p.56). The function of such distinction is to ensure elite domination and reproduction of existing social structures. Bull (2015) demonstrated how classical music’s international examination system disseminated middle class norms. Support for her thesis can be found in research demonstrating the greater participation of higher socio-economic groups in the arts compared to those from lower classes (Department for Culture Media and Sport 2011 p.26, p.70). There are also significant geographical differences in cultural participation between English regions, suggesting the importance of place dimensions in shaping festival production (Leguina and Miles 2017).

Understanding how communities of place and interest perceive different art forms provides a useful indication of the level to which a festival might share values with the resident communities. An opera festival in a deprived city is unlikely to have large numbers of locals amongst its audiences, denoting other purposes for this event, such as tourism development, regeneration, or to promote the form. As festivals are heterogeneous affairs, it is likely each has a number of purposes depending on the interest groups involved. For some, an art form closely associated with traditional elites will be read as ‘not for the likes of us’ regardless of how hard the producers try to engage with and involve them. The distinctions between art forms, and genres within art forms, and their symbolic capital is, therefore, central to how festivals are viewed, and who is likely to attend and participate.
Moore (1995) coined the concept ‘public value’ in response to the neoliberal ideas that reshaped public services in the USA and UK in the 1980s and 1990s. Neoliberalism is a political economy philosophy which holds

[human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets and free trade. The role of the state is to create and preserve an institutional framework appropriate to such practices [...]. But beyond that the state should not venture (Harvey 2005: 2).

Free markets were, consequently, introduced into areas previously considered the domain of the state through privatisation or, where that was not politically feasible, the creation of market mechanisms such as contracting out services previously delivered directly by local authorities to the private or voluntary sectors. It was believed ‘contract culture’ (Belfiore 2004: 191) would introduce market rigour, making services more efficient, innovative and, through performance indicators, more transparent. Moore (1995) argued, however, public service work could not be measured solely by cost savings or economic impact, making it difficult to demonstrate worth or value as there is no objective standard, such as profits by which public services such as education or youth work could be measured. He, therefore, emphasised the importance of context, or ‘authorizing environment’ (ibid: 48). By this he meant it was essential to have the support of citizens or their political representatives, support which was reliant on a shared understanding of social priorities and what an acceptable solution looked like between the public who supply the resources and the managers responsible for delivering services. Hewison’s (2006) institutional value thesis applied this idea to the cultural sector, arguing publicly subsidised arts organisations are custodians of place imaginaries, so have a particular need to be legitimised by public support. Such legitimacy can only be gained if there are agreed rules-in-action governing the behaviour of cultural workers, production
systems and their hetero-regulatory democratic ‘authorising environment’ (Holden 2006). These have a profound effect on how festivals perceive their roles and purposes, shape decision-making processes and levels of participation.

For example, in UK company law festival organisations could be registered as commercial or non-profit companies and these legal forms signify distinct value systems within the legislation. For-profit companies have a duty to maximise shareholder value, whilst registered charities have social objectives, such as ‘the advancement of the arts, culture, heritage or science’ (Charity Commission 2013). A festival with the charitable purpose of ‘the advancement of citizenship or [particular] community development’ (ibid) should work with local communities, whilst one seeking ‘to advance the arts’ (ibid) may have more aesthetically orientated values. The choice of legal form for producing organisations is a clear sign of its motivating values.

Other festivals are run by non-festival organisations. Local authorities produce festivals as part of annual events programmes. Leicester City Council, for example, runs the city’s annual Diwali celebrations and the City Festival (Leicester City Council 2013). These form part of a calendar of traditional community events and those aimed at changing perceptions of the city and increasing visitor numbers (Visit Leicester 2013, Brown 2013).

Similarly, cultural venues such as theatres run festivals to promote work outside the scope of their normal programmes, or to use the disruptive nature of festival to turn non-arts spaces into temporary theatres. Nottingham Playhouse produced the Nottingham European Arts and Theatre Festival in 2012, 2014 and 2016 as it gave them the opportunity to work with a different range of artists (Bhagat 2011). Educational bodies also produce festivals as platforms for students to perform or see professional productions. Dance4, a national dance development agency based in Nottingham, runs a contemporary dance festival to promote a cultural form usually
perceived as exclusive. Within its programme, NottDance provides masterclasses, talks and workshops for students undertaking professional courses (Dance4 2013).

Institutional logic leads to an expectation a comedy festival would be run by a commercial company and a contemporary dance festival by a charity or community interest company. Exploring the relationship between formal legal status and the rules in action illuminates festivals’ real value systems. A disconnect between legal structure and the values enacted might indicate a festival’s purposes have changed over its lifetime, the context within which it is working has altered and it has yet to catch up, or the festival is out of step with other elements in its environment (Jones and Warren 2016, Lefebvre 2004). Since there is no agreed framework for explaining the role(s) festival production plays in regional civic life to guide the selection of case-studies for this thesis, a typology was devised for this study based on five institutional factors as defining principles for distinguishing cases: stated purpose; legal structure of the producing organisation; organisational structures; income streams; and contextual factors, such as professional norms, industry structures or local political economy interests.

**Regional Urban Arts Festival Typology**

Within democracies, cultural value is legitimised through the processes of institutional design as much as the final structures of cultural organisations (Hewison 2006). Who is involved and how? Who is excluded and why? For that reason, the core cultural purpose of each festival was taken as the starting point for this tripartite typology of festival production. The three types developed are the aesthetic, the commercial and the civic. Local arts festivals can be typified as conforming to two instrumental types, civic and commercial sector festivals, and a type that values artistic form and cultural tradition. These titles were chosen as they relate to key paradigms within cultural policy: intrinsic policies which promote arts for art’s sake based on questions of value and beauty agreed by those operating within the cultural form; or instrumental
policies, which justify cultural policies on social or economic grounds (civic); and market forces, which intervene in cultural spheres when the market is seen to have failed (commercial sectors) (e.g. Mulcahy 2006, McGuigan 2004). Of course, there are blurred lines and no festival will conform exactly to one ideal type, but this distinction illuminates the principal structural values that drive the behaviour of different festival organisations. These types are developed and discussed further in chapter five.

**Aesthetic festivals**

Aesthetic festivals place artistic quality, heritage and development at the centre of their work and appeal. The Arts Council is likely to be a major funder giving subsidised protection from market pressures in the name of judgements of artistic quality. The centrality of art forms within the festival sector is evident from the fact they are often discussed and marketed by their art form or genre. For example, as a classical music festival or a silent film festival. Their relationship to the professional art form sector whose work they produce is also critical. Aesthetic festivals prioritise artistic programming and quality, relationships with artists, and professional development for artists.

**Commercial sector festivals**

Commercial sector festivals are usually found within unsubsidised cultural sectors such as film, gaming, publishing or commercial music. These sectors must establish exchange values for symbolic goods. Such festivals provide a rare opportunity for different interests within the industry’s production system to discuss and negotiate the ‘worth’ of particular artefacts and forms in the marketplace. As cultural goods the aesthetic choices made at these events sway decision about distribution and price. Commercial festivals often host competitions and prizes, ‘tournaments of value’, to ascertain public or specialist opinion, and establish their brand’s ability to pick future winners (Moeran and Strandgaard Pedersen 2011). Commercial festivals prioritise
profit, either through programming popular artists to maximise sales, or exclusivity and high prices.

Civic festivals

Civic festivals operate in a complex environment and must gain and retain the confidence of their place and interest communities, as well as their artistic fields and local residents to justify public sector funding and wider support (Hewison 2006). Cultural organisations are the institutions society expects to create shared symbols that express societal values, identity, or collective joy or sadness. They play a politically important role in civic pride. The fact their town has a festival that others have heard of, or that they could go to if they wanted, is something residents value (Bahkshi et al. 2009).

For Lowndes and Wilson (2001) process was as important as content in institutional design, so civic festival organisations’ use of municipal spaces is key. It means they are places where residents’ everyday lives are interrupted, breaking down social norms. This is believed to encourage experimentation; an appealing feature for urban authorities keen to reposition themselves as creative, vibrant places or to encourage people to visit neglected areas. Overall civic festivals’ priorities are their localities’ and residents’ economic, social and cultural wellbeing.

Viewing festivals as highly situated and influential institutions within their localities drew attention to questions of how their core value systems are expressed in structures and behaviours. Key dimensions identified for this study included the producers’ purposes and relations with interest groups within their sectors, political economy and locality. These dimensions are discussed in more detail in the methodology in chapter five.
Research methodology

The lack of any widely agreed definition or typology of festivals or festivalisation (Getz 2010) or critical theoretical analysis (Wilks and Quinn 2016, Quinn and Wilks 2017) led to the decision to use Weber’s (2003 [1920]) ideal type methodology. Ideal types are a tool for abstracting and systematising features within complex social phenomena. In this case, ideal types of festivals illuminate similarities and differences to guide and structure comparative research by drawing attention to underlying causal factors of social behaviours rather than the surface features or details of specific cases. The primary research focused on three case-studies, identified as exemplars of the types above. The types were developed from an initial literature search and twenty-five years of personal experience working within the cultural sector as a venue and festival producer, and academic. This experience meant festival producers across the East Midlands of England were willing to speak to me. The dilemmas of this ethnographic approach are discussed in chapter five.

The multi-method approach for this research included reviewing academic literature on festivals to identify underpinning theoretical perspectives. As themes emerged from the primary research additional literature was reviewed. The case-studies were researched through grey literature such as funding documents, annual reports and marketing documents, and in-depth, semi-structured interviews with festival producers and representatives of the interest groups they each identified as important, such as funding bodies, sponsors, artists, or volunteers. Initially chief executives were approached, and other interviewees identified through snowball sampling. The semi-structured interviews focused on questions of value, purpose, meaning and the festival’s relationship with its communities of interest and place. Festival founders’ values and determination were found to be significant across the three case-study examples supporting the argument that agency and purpose are important in shaping local festivals’ influence.
Thesis structure

The interdisciplinary nature of the research questions led to a review of three academic areas’ literature: festival studies (chapter two), cultural policy in the UK between 1979 and 2016 (chapter three), and cultural theory (chapter four). The thesis continues with an explanation of the research methodology that informed the research design, and reflection on the research implementation (chapter five). This chapter is followed by the three case-studies, Buxton Festival (chapter six), Leicester Comedy Festival (chapter seven) and Derby Festé (chapter eight). There are two discussion chapters. Chapter nine explores the festivals as hetero-regulated institutions. Chapter ten considers them as autonomous agents within their localities. Chapter eleven concludes all the case-studies were strongly influenced by their founders’ aesthetic values. Although responsive to structural heteronomy in their respective cities, they all resisted pressure applied through resource dependency to commercialise or lower artistic standards even at the risk of financial failure.

Introduction summary

This study grew out of my personal experience as a festival producer. Festivalisation is a multifaceted social phenomenon that speaks to identity, values, place, economic and public value. This complexity has encouraged research from a range of academic perspectives, but the emergent festival studies field remains largely empirical, with case-studies focusing on contemporary experiences, and most of these have focused on hallmark and mega-events which had the resources to commission impact research. Consequently, the narratives around festivals’ political impacts have related to tourism, economic regeneration or social cohesion in diverse cities. This was at odds with my observations of the local festivals I knew in the East Midlands which drew homogenous audiences from the locality. The central rationale for this research was to understand and provide a theoretical explanation for festivals’ continuing and changing status in their localities as a contribution to the festival studies field.
As gatherings of social groups, sometimes homogenous and sometimes hybrid, festivals are sites at which values are reaffirmed, negotiated or challenged. This happens throughout the production cycle and during the festival itself and changes over time as festival organisations develop and align with a wider range of interest groups. The policy discourses used to justify public subsidy for festivals mask the power of influential players within localities such as the Arts Council and educational institutions which prioritise non-economic outcomes. Yet, while successful festival founders make accommodations with these elites in order to ensure support, they also work to maintain their original visions. Festivals are complex and dynamic events that provide sites for exploring how social and cultural values are negotiated within relatively unspectacular, unnoticed regional cities and towns in the English Midlands. In viewing festivals as cyclical events that develop over time, produced by enduring organisations, this thesis contributes to the festival studies field by illuminating how festival producers have retained relative autonomy within the context of heteronomous authorising environments shaped by neoliberal cultural and urban policies. The following three chapters explore the literature related to three fields within which it was felt insights and related theoretical models could be found; festival studies (chapter two), urban cultural policy in the period 1979-2016 in England (chapter three), and cultural theory (chapter four).
“The only true voyage of discovery [...] would be, not to visit strange lands, but to possess other eyes, to behold the universe through the eyes of another” (Proust 2003 [1925]: 164)

“The greatness of a culture can be found in its festivals” (Siddharth Katragadda 2002: 73)

Chapter 2. Understanding festivals

Introduction

Festival studies is complex and interdisciplinary, a field rather than a subject. It is a new field which draws concepts from anthropology, sociology, cultural studies, cultural sociology, religious, tourism, management and leisure studies, and cultural policy. For that reason, the traditional thesis literature review has been divided into three separate themes. This first explores the literature related to the phenomenon of festivals themselves. What are they, what are their specific roles in society? Chapter three contextualises festivals as one part of UK cultural policy in the late 20th and early 21st centuries. Chapter four introduces theoretical perspectives related to cultural production in modernity and considers how these perspectives inform a critical understanding of festivals within the political economies of regional cities.

This chapter begins with an attempt to define festivals. It then explores the core discourses in classical festival studies from the 19th and early 20th centuries. These studies regarded festivals as intensifications of everyday life and explored their relationship to everyday life and communal meaning-making, as times of bonding and ritual renewal. Key themes were found to include festivity, liminality, communitas,
identity and the carnivalesque. Following a period in which little interest was shown in festivals as a social phenomenon, festivalisation caused an upsurge in academic interest during the 1990s and early 2000s, this time from events, leisure and management perspectives, rather than cultural studies or anthropology. The key themes were planning, marketing and audience motivation and cultural regeneration through mega-events and city branding. The important theoretical ideas developed in the classical era were sidelined, leaving gaps in understanding of festival’s role as ‘interstitial frames’ (Piette 1992: 41) for reflecting upon highly situated contemporary social systems.

**Defining festivals**

Although festivals are ubiquitous features of social life historically, when considering the literature on local and urban festivals the first point is there is very little agreement about definitions in the relevant literature, although there are recurring features including time, both temporary and cyclical, leisure and celebration and performance.

For Klaic (2014) festivals originated in ancient ritual celebrations, often including feasting. Punctuating ‘the flow of ordinary time’ (ibid: 3), festivals symbolically and ritually affirmed communal continuity. They reinforced social hierarchies and value systems, bolstering an individual’s sense of self within a community. The extent to which festivals constitute normal, or abnormal social behaviour is bound up in questions of ‘ordinary time’. Thus, raising the question: are festivals distinctive time away from everyday life, or representations of it performed to a different rhythm? This representational and performative function (Lefebvre 2004) has led to nation states’ and city governments’ interest in festivals, a point developed in chapter three.

Falassi (1987) called festivals
periodically recurrent, social occasion[s] in which, through a multiplicity of forms and a series of coordinated events, participate, directly or indirectly and to various degrees, all members of a community, united by ethnic, linguistic, religious, historical bonds, and sharing a worldview’ (ibid: 2).

Participation and the performance of community are central to this definition. According to McMillan and Chavis’ (1986) four criteria for community - membership, influence, reinforcement and shared emotional connection - are all evident. What is missing is a sense of festival communities’ worldviews as partial, as existing within a wider society comprising alternative worldviews and value systems. For Falassi the festival world is homogenous because participation itself defines the festival-goer as a community member. For local arts festivals with resident communities who may not participate directly, it leaves the question, who is excluded? What are the roles and meanings of festivals for those who do not attend? Interestingly, although music festivals have been discussed as transgressive sites (e.g. in McKay 2015), traditional anthropological texts and contemporary work on arts festivals have more normally viewed them as reinforcing hierarchies (Turner 1982, Waterman 1998). There are exceptions. Gaber (2016) reasoned street performances in authoritarian states are intrinsically transgressive. Vignolo (2016) maintained the Iberoamerican Theatre Festival in Bogotá was a performance of resistance against terrorism. More common themes, though, are ritual and symbolism, ceremonial, spectacle and celebration, liminality and communitas, and the carnivalesque, with more recent work focused on social impact (Getz, 2010). These themes draw attention to festivals as distinctive periods of time within social life. They are examples of cyclical rather than linear time, times where historical and communal resonances are reinforced through festive rituals, confirming shared identity and bonding communities. This places festivals as political agencies with an interest in influencing social identity. These relations are explored further in chapters three and four.
**Festivity, intensification and liminality**

For Pieper (1999 [1963]) there was a direct link between festivity, religion, repetitive rituals and bonding.

There are worldly, but there are no purely profane, festivals […]. A festival without gods is a non-concept, is inconceivable […]. The pallor of merely “legal” holidays is evident from the fact that there is much discussion of how they really could be “celebrated” […]. Festivals are, it would seem, traditional in a very special sense, a *tradtium* in the strictest meaning of that concept: received from a superhuman source, to be handed on undiminished, received and handed on again (ibid: 26).

The essence of festivity is the distinction between holy days and workdays. Without work as a contrast, there cannot be leisure; without the everyday, human, world there cannot be the festive, sacred, world. Rojek (1995) discussed a ‘vacillation between tension and release that accompanies leisure activity’ (ibid: 87). He maintained liminal zones seem to be authentic spaces apparently beyond the control of the authorities’ and constricting modernity but are actually ‘controlled and legitimated breaks from routines of everyday, proper behaviour’ (ibid: 88). So, festivals are, as in Bakhtin (1994 [1965]) carnivalesque, a release valve to maintain social equilibrium. After the temporary break, power structures return to normal and everyone goes back to work.

For Turner, however, festivals were interstitial rites of passage. Liminality was a temporary state when individuals were stripped of their existing social status, but not yet given a new role. During this hiatus individual’s social relationships were ambiguous. This was unsettling for both the individual and society, as normal status symbols were stripped away and having ‘no status, insignia, secular clothing, rank,
kinship position, nothing to demarcate them structurally from their fellows’ (Turner 1967: 98), groups of liminal individuals were perceived as equals.

Each of these authors points to key features of festivity: its distinction from everyday life; its temporary nature; its celebratory or ritual functions; and authenticity, personal or group autonomy, and belonging. Turner called the latter communitas.

Communitas, social structure and the carnivalesque

Liminality for Turner is an aspect of ‘communitas’, one of the two types of human interrelatedness he defined. The first, ‘social structure’, described a differentiated society with hierarchies, and political, economic and legal systems that separated people by role, wealth and power. Communitas, by contrast, was an ‘unstructured or rudimentarily structured and relatively undifferentiated communitas, community, or even communion of equal individuals who submit together to the general authority of the ritual elders’ (Turner 1969:19). These social groups and individuals are considered to be on the edges of structured society, a visible threat, but also performing alternative structures and futures. A key insight here is of festivals relatedness to and influence on the everyday, an insight not as evident in the concept of heterotopia, in which different social structures are seen as contrasting but isolated ‘other spaces’ (Foucault and Miskowiec 1986). The changes that happen during liminal times can have powerful effects in everyday social structures. As will be discussed further in chapter three, this belief underlies much of the festivalisation of policy in the 21st century, as cities and nations attempt to use festival’s perceived capacity to stimulate change as the basis of regeneration initiatives. Understanding

---

1 Turner’s concept of communitas was developed in pre-modern societies. The concept of relatively undifferentiated structures can also be seen in Toynbee’s (2016) discussion of music industry ‘scenes’ within capitalism. These are discussed in chapter four. As here, scenes are difficult for hetero-regulatory forces to incorporate, making them sites of potential change and threats.
whether this is indeed the case, and if it is, the processes by which this happens is a central concern of this research.

For Lefebvre (1991a), rather than being separate times, festive moments were instead intensifications of everyday experience; a time when ‘all that was energetic, pleasurable and possible from nature, food, social life and his own body and mind’ (ibid: 202) was employed to take individuals ‘beyond themselves’ and deepen bonds within rural communities. Ehrenreich (2007) also noted the importance of altered mental states. She traced the origins of communal festivities, linking embodied practices such as dance to ecstatic religious rites and seasonal cycles, underlining their universality and their cultural specificity. She said ecstatic communal dance functioned to release social tensions and to deepen bonds. Despite this, festival audiences do have a larger appetite for risk and discovery than in other cultural settings (Webster and Mckay 2017, Morgan 2007). Quinn and Wilks (2016) argued such experimentation was a function of cultural capital. Essentially, audiences took more risks when they felt fully part of the festival community; confident the festival’s artistic choices reflected their own tastes. This confidence in shared values was described as a form of authentic participation, despite the control exerted by those involved in curating and resourcing and scheduling events.

One issue with these perspectives is they refer to festivals within pre-modern societies in which rituals are religious and society collective. This raises a number of interesting questions for festivals within individualistic, largely secular and culturally diverse modern societies. There is the issue of social order within the festival itself. Rituals have a social logic. They bond participants who understand that logic and are generally co-ordinated by individuals or groups considered elites within the festival frame, whether or not they do so outside of that. Where do these elites garner their authority from, if not religion or tradition? Weber (2004 [1920]) identified charisma as the third form of authority. Charismatic authority is associated with change and authenticity. It is based on the persuasive ability of individuals. Carlton-Ford (1992)
found ritual and charisma each had positive transformational effects on individual’s self-esteem and their interpersonal relationships. Is festivalisation, therefore, a sign contemporary society is at a conjunctural shift, a break in philosophical and ideological understanding in which charismatic leaders are framing new visions of society (Hall and Jacques 1989)? Or is it a signal of traditional or rational-legal authorities incorporating festivals into their technologies of power (Cohn and Dirks 1988)?

**Authenticity, heteronomy and commodification**

As discussed above, festivals have been studied as authentic expressions of a discrete community’s traditions and values (Durkheim 1995 [1912], Turner 1982, Falassi 1987). Distinctions have been drawn between whether festivals are religious or profane, and rural or urban. In both cases the former is considered the more genuine expression of communal values. Rural festivals ‘are supposedly older, agrarian, centred on fertility rites and cosmology myths, while the more recent, urban festivals celebrate prosperity in less archaic forms’ (Falassi 1987: 3). Authenticity is vested in longevity and celebration of fundamental human needs. By contrast, urban festivals were a recent development celebrating economic success and excess; an invented, inauthentic tradition suitable for a disenchanted, bureaucratic world (Weber 1978 [1922]). Debord (1983) contrasted festival with spectacle, ‘forms of social practice mediated by images’ (ibid: 4). Spectacles were managed by cultural intermediaries for commercial rather than community reasons, with the locus of control sitting with distant interests. This sense of festivals as effective place marketing vehicles is common in cultural policies linking festivals to urban regeneration and tourism.

Robinson (2016) distinguished ‘staged’ festivals at which audiences watch programmes curated by festival producers, from ‘participatory’ festivals produced by all in attendance. Staged festivals were a ceremonial performance of power. All the festivals studied in this thesis are, according to these perspectives, inauthentic
recently invented staged traditions. Does this mean, therefore, their socio-cultural effects are less embedded in democratic or communal social structures, or are the power structures within participatory festivals simply better hidden?

Building on Goffman’s (1974) notion of frames as situations ‘built up in accordance with principles of organization which govern events – at least social ones’ (ibid: 10-11), it is difficult to understand festivals as binary events, as sacred or profane, festive or spectacular. Festivals are ‘a mobile and ambivalent world of shifting realities which present contrary and conflicting aspects’ (Piette 1992: 37). This accounts for festivity’s ability to be universal and culturally specific, celebratory and ceremonial, playful and serious, transgressive and valedictory, sacred and profane.

There are examples of other authors questioning the authentic/commodified dichotomy. Quinn’s (2010) study found most urban arts festivals grow organically as a result of initiatives undertaken by a small group of highly committed local actors, a finding replicated in this thesis. Gotham (2005) theorised urban spectacles may be designed for commercial purposes but be understood as something other by participants. Spectacle, ‘tamasha’, had the effect of intensifying bonding in Kaushal and Newbold’s (2015) study of mela in the UK, for example.

More common are studies such as Greenwood’s (1989) study of a Basque festival which started as an authentic celebration but had become a facsimile of itself as a result of tourism. Commodification of the festival experience is complemented by discussion of the increasing commodification and homogeneity of their cultural content (Fainstein, Judd 1999, Richards and Wilson 2006). Finkel’s (2009) survey of combined arts festivals in the UK provided some evidence the increasing number of festivals had not been matched by an increase in the diversity of their content. Many she researched had very similar programmes selected from a limited supply of appropriately ‘festive’ content. Nordgård’s (2016) identified increased competition between music festivals left those with smaller capacities or lower status struggling to
book big names. Some festivals have responded by increasing their use of participatory, immersive and spectacular techniques (Robinson 2016, Jordan 2016a).

The lack of agreement regarding authenticity or commodification is a result of the complexity of festivals as social phenomena. The on-going interest in the distinction points towards concern about the underlying value systems reproduced in festivals; are they true expressions of communal interests, or invented traditions being manipulated in the interests of vested interests. The structuring effect of global professional networks is noted in relation to commercial sectors such as film (e.g. Iordanova 2013b) and music (Négrier 2015, Nordgård 2016). Moeran and Strandgaard (2011) argued festivals develop shared professional and market values in creative industries. The extent to which heteronomous interests and value systems influence festival production itself, or whether producers retain autonomy and authenticity in the face of cultural policy and political economy pressures is one that is explored throughout this study.

Festivals as alternative spaces

For Quinn and Wilks (2016, 2017), Foucault’s (1986) concept of heterotopia provided a useful framework for examining contested influences within festivals. Heterotopia are a ‘kind of effectively enacted utopia in which the site, all the other real sites that can be found within the culture, are simultaneously represented, contested and inverted’ (ibid: 24). They were defined by six principles: all cultures constitute heterotopias, although in varied forms; their function can change over time; they juxta- pose several incompatible sites within a single place; they break or disrupt traditional concepts of time; they may require certain acts, performances for rituals to gain entry to them; they exist only in relation to all other sites and spaces (Foucault and Miskowiec 1986).
Foucault referenced festival directly in relation to ritual performance. Participation depended on individual’s knowledge of the rites, and repetition led to bonds being deepened. Hetherington (2002) referred to this as performing an alternative social order, which echoes Durkheim and Bakhtin. However, Quinn and Wilks (2017) identified a number of the principles in their studies of rural folk festivals as heterotopic sites, particularly the juxtaposition of several incompatible sites, the requirement to perform certain acts in order to gain full entry and the relatedness of festival sites to non-festival sites, that point to something less oppositional and closer to Piette’s (1992) view of festivals as ambivalent social frames. Festival spaces jostled up against each other, not necessarily in opposition, nor as ceremonial validation of homogenous social values, but reflecting upon each other to varying degrees. So, festival-goers travelled to rural locations to temporarily experience ‘authentic’ life as part of a ‘folk’ community. The town’s residents who provided services such as accommodation and restaurants, or ran venues were largely overlooked in this perspective. Where they were discussed, residents had an equally heterotopic view of festival participants as performers or fans who briefly appeared and then left, often to return a year later, providing an annual connection between the two spheres, one everyday life in a rural town, the other an intense cyclical interruption from outside.

Heterotopia serve, by offering alternative worldviews, to illuminate the hidden norms and hegemonic structures of everyday life. Festivals are complex endeavours demanding co-operation between numerous actors. In exploring the production processes of urban festivals, this thesis deepens understanding of festival as ‘interstitial frames’ (Piette 1992: 41) that reflect upon, collide and merge with heterogeneous place-based and global social systems.

For Fabiani festivals were inherently situated, dependent on and responsive to their place’s unique essence. They aimed to ‘magnify the genius loci, to bring about some effervescence, in the Durkheimian sense, and to transform rather mundane settings into unique places […] to preserve the genuine atmosphere of original and
somewhat unlike encounters’ (2011: 92). By contrast Falassi (1987) felt decorating and valorising festival sites created distinctiveness from everyday uses. These temporary transformations have been seen by some as an opportunity to change expectations more permanently. Dooghe (2015, 2008), a municipal planner in Rotterdam used festivals for testing potential social and infrastructural interventions to embolden communities to use the city in new ways. Festival processions encouraged visits to areas groups would otherwise rarely go to, for example. Physical changes were also made, when public art works have been deployed temporarily as part of a festival, before being permanently installed. On the negative side, Smith’s (2014) work on the use of parks for urban festivals drew attention to social tensions caused by temporary closures of public spaces. These experiences, whether positive or negative, resonate within local communities, shaping relations and expectations.

Placemaking in relation to city branding and tourism, where festivals were tools for experimentation, transformational change and rebranding (Picard and Robinson 2006, Richards and Palmer 2010), was a significant theme in contemporary festival studies. Richards (2015a) suggested urban festivals should be seen as actors within social networks, some operating within global ecologies and others locally. He distinguished between iterative events that recur and one-off mega-events aimed at catalysing regeneration. He argued both types had structural impacts. Repetition of ritual behaviours at iterative events generated a sense of belonging, so had a ‘maintenance function – bringing people together on a regular basis to cement strong ties’ (ibid: 557). By contrast, pulsar events were ‘potential moments of change that can lead to the development of new structures, links, and opportunities, generating bridging social capital’ (ibid: 557). Pulsar festivals, hallmark or mega-events, such as the European Capitals of Culture, brought networks together in new configurations, creating opportunities for different actors to make an impact or existing groups to act in new ways. Festivals on this scale aimed to influence host cities’ political economies, attract business, talent and tourists, rejuvenate rundown areas and raise or change a place’s image. Whilst Richards recognised iterative events may end up changing
structures on an evolutionary basis, he believed transformational change was restricted to pulsar events, an argument reminiscent of Weber’s (2004 [1920]) concept of charismatic leaders as disruptive forces.

Van Aalst and van Melik’s (2012) study of the relocation of the North Sea Jazz Festival and Wynn’s (2015) research into the relationship between music festivals and urban regeneration in three US cities (2015) each explored the fundamental ‘situatedness of the festival’ (Chalcraft et al. 2014: 112) in geographical, social and historical space. Wynn’s work especially considered the centrality of suitable venues to the success of festivals he studied, as well as support from powerful local interest groups. The complexity of place relationships is also noted by Richards (2015b) who pointed out urban festivals are part of annual programmes, but the limited research into the significance of place has not explored how relations shift iteratively over time. This is a topic that is explored in the three case-studies in chapters six, seven and eight.

What is evident throughout all these approaches is the tendency to focus on the festive period itself. There was little empirical research into the preparations or aftermath. Contemporary research has sought to fill that gap through impact studies that explore economic and social effects on localities (e.g. Langen and Garcia 2009, Maughan and Bianchini 2004a, McKay and Webster 2016, Snowball 2016). Whilst they provide evidence the effects of temporary events might not themselves be temporary, most of these studies do not yet have longitudinal data. Similarly impact studies do not consider the preparatory period. How and why are urban arts festival produced? This study’s historical approach contributes to the field by demonstrating enduring norms and values and tracing changes in each festival’s production ecologies, policies and structures.
Festival production

Contemporary academic interest in festivals is a result of a perceived growth in festivals as a social phenomenon (e.g. Klaic 2007, Getz 2010, McKay and Webster 2016). Festivalisation can be defined as

the process by which cultural activity, previously presented in a regular, on-going pattern or season, is reconfigured to form a ‘new’ event, e.g. a regular series of jazz concerts is reconfigured as a jazz festival (Négrier 2015: 15).

Négrier’s definition highlights structural reconfiguration in cultural consumption. He identified two causes. The first saw cultural production move to concentrated and themed events over a weekend or a few days in response to digital disruption, firstly in the music industry (e.g. Nordgård 2016). The second is the growth of democratic regimes in Southern and Eastern Europe and consequent decentralisation of cultural production. To this can be added the festivalisation of cities’ marketing strategies (Richards and Wilson 2004, Quinn 2010, Jordan 2016a). There are intersections in the second two themes with policy discussions that will be followed up in chapter three. The focus in this section is on festival production and, where relevant, event management studies.

Festivalisation has caused an increased interest in festivals in business and management studies. However,

the classical [anthropological and sociological] approach to viewing festivals in society and culture is seldom mentioned in the event management literature. Instead, event and festival management is dominated by generic management concepts and methods (covering
the full range of management functions, but especially marketing) 
(Getz 2010: 6).

Management issues were raised in Newbold et al’s (2016, 2015) collections. 
Themes included artistic and financial leadership, volunteer teams (Elkanova and 
Puchkova 2016, Autissier 2015), and, significantly for this study, consideration of 
gentrification (Silvanto 2015). Others drew attention to the ways in which 
international, commercial and sectoral interests were co-ordinated (Argano 2015, 
Martin and Papastergiadis 2011, Comunian 2015). Where festival management work 
is most relevant is consideration of festivals as permanent institutions within global 
markets through sponsorship (Anderton 2015), as part of the commercial creative 
industries (Moeran and Strandgaard Pedersen 2011, Iordanova 2013a, Tyszka and 
Ostrowska 2009), or marketing of obscure places (Guglielmini 2016).

Festivals and tourism were dominant themes (Richards and Wilson 2004, Evans 
2001, Evans and Shaw 2004). Driven by deindustrialisation in many European cities 
and the need for regeneration, festivals have become part of urban development 
practice. To this end they were created or co-opted for ‘their undoubted potential in 
animating communities, celebrating diversity and improving quality of life’ (Quinn 
2005: 927). Most of the literature on this point is dominated by discussion of mega 
and hallmark festivals (e.g. Garcia 2005, Langen and Garcia 2009, e.g. de Brito and 
Richards 2017, Richards 2015a). What is relevant to note here is, on the back of the 
perceived success of European Capital of Culture years in Liverpool 2008 and 
Glasgow 1990, and the UK City of Culture in Hull 2017, festivals’ effectiveness in city 
marketing and regeneration was accepted as common-sense in urban policy circles 
(Bell and Oakley 2015).

Waterman (1998) was one of the first academics to address urban arts festival 
production as a socio-political phenomenon. His case-study of Salzburg Festival, a 
‘high art’ hallmark event, identified festival production as
a means whereby groups may attempt to maintain themselves culturally, while presenting opportunities to others to join that group. Festival is also an occasion for outsiders (sponsors, subsidizers) to endeavour to force or lead the groups towards an acceptable course for the continuity of its culture (ibid: 55).

He illuminated tensions within production ecologies. Festivals had in classical anthropology typically been viewed as sites where collective identity was performed. Here festivals were contested places, where forces from other sectors, particularly groups with financial capital, could challenge cultural elites. Festival production was a political act in which cultural institutions were developed to establish social distance between a ‘cultivated’ dominant class and the populace (Bourdieu 1984 [1979], 1993a). But Waterman noted the ways commercial interests penetrated festival production, subverting its purpose from one of celebrating an artistic tradition or local culture, to that of advertising (sponsorship) or political purposes (state subsidy). Surprisingly little research into arts festival production followed from Waterman’s study.

Getz et al. identified nine groups within festival production: management in the form of the festival organisation; the relevant production sector; the municipality in which the festival takes place; sponsors; the media which promotes events and use them as stories; allied festivals that shared programming; audiences; stall holders; suppliers; and local residents. In addition to these groups Glow and Caust (2010) highlighted artists as a main interest groups of festivals and noted five areas in which participation is considered by artists to be beneficial to them. These categories included entrepreneurialism, the business of making a living as an artist or arts organisation; branding, increasing artists’ profile and creditability; practising their craft; acting as a launching pad for artists to pilot work; taking part in a diverse programme of work to raise their profile amongst a wider audience; and seeing
others’ work as part of their own professional development. Comunian (2015) showed
festivals were intermediary institutions that supported artists’ development by
commissioning work and helping emerging artists to make a name for themselves.
The perception of festivals as places for experimentation was reinforced by the
production of new work and support for unknown acts. In influencing talent
development, and selecting acts to be valorised, local arts festivals were also
influential within their sectors and localities. Moeran and Strandgaard Pedersen
(2011) highlighted this in relation to commercial festivals and fairs in the film and
music sectors. Structural relations between arts festivals and their industry sectors are
rarely discussed and this is an area in which this study makes a contribution.

Commercial brands are influential music festival stakeholders (Anderton 2011,
2015, Martin 2016). At greenfield music festivals brands try to become part of the
festivity by hosting stages or creating their own experiences on the festival site. This
is linked to marketing concepts of the experience economy (Pine and Gilmore 1999)
and brand activation. Whilst it is evident sponsors are influential in shaping the
festival experience, there is scope for further critical examination in light of festivals’
public sphere roles. Does festival sponsorship give commercial interests political
influence (McGuigan 2011)? In order to understand these complex relations, Larson
(2009) developed the idea of an event as a political market square, an imaginary
space in which actors cultivate and promote their interests by establishing networks
and relationships with other actors.

As events often take place in real public spaces and engage significant numbers of
people, other authors have developed similar concepts. Giorgi et al. considered
festivals as examples of the cultural public sphere. Habermas’ (1989 [1962]) concept
of the public sphere is as a realm within democratic social life in which public opinion
is rationally formed and debated. Rationality is central to this sphere, and Habermas
distinguished between this from the literary public sphere in which ideas and debates
are shared in implicit, affective ways. Whilst Habermas acknowledged the
interdependence of the two spheres, the literary public sphere was largely overlooked until McGuigan (2005b) expanded the concept. He identified three aspects of the cultural public sphere: uncritical populism, consumer capitalism’s cultural form, appealed to emotions not rational discourse. Radical subversion rooted in 1960’s American counterculture was associated with authenticity. Critical intervention was a combination of the best of existing, populist cultural fields with radical subversion, to create popular and politically engaged culture. The cultural public sphere, then, is the expression of politics through cultural communication and cultural practices.

As public meeting places, producers and distributors of cultural goods and, often, recipients of public subsidy, festivals are argued to be part of the cultural public sphere. Some campaign groups support festivals explicitly to influence debates, as in Cummings et al.‘s (2011) research into the relationship between festivals and attitudes to green politics amongst young people. Others are influenced more surreptitiously by sponsors and governmental bodies (McGuigan 2011). The heteronomous influence of these groups demonstrated, for McGuigan, the growth of commercial interests in cultural life as a result of neoliberal politics. This is a different, more political, perspective on the festive period than the sacred focus central to classical festival studies. It draws attention to festivals as institutions with enduring political, economic and cultural relations and effects beyond the temporary. This is an emerging area that currently lacks the depth and quantity of research found in, for example, media studies regarding public service broadcasting, but offers interesting lines of enquiry given the on-going festivalisation of cultural provision. Whilst the insight into the relative lack of autonomy in festival production is valuable, much of the work itself is either quite dated, relates to high art and hallmark festivals, or music festivals or does not include the voices of producers themselves. This thesis aims to redress this by considering local arts festival production over the last half century in relation to the changing landscape of cultural and urban policies in England.
Leadership, management and events studies

Given the centrality of production systems in understanding festivalisation as a phenomenon, it was expected management and event studies would have addressed issues of ownership and investment. Getz’s (2002) study *Why Festivals Fail* attempted to raise awareness of selected managerial issues within the festivals sector. He argued festivals were vulnerable because their not-for-profit status made them over reliant on one source of income, often public funding or sponsorship. Inadequate planning and marketing supplemented this weakness, an example of neoliberal construction of consent to marketisation as ‘freedom, and liberty […] as opposed to the stifling bureaucratic ineptitude of the state apparatus’ (Harvey 2005: 56-57).

Entrepreneurship and professionalisation implemented through new public management were proposed as the solution (Belfiore 2004). In this discourse, where subsidy was required it was because of market failure, and market failure meant it was badly managed. The consequences of this can be seen in the growth of cultural leadership programmes supported by Arts Council England. The effect was to shift responsibility to individual agents rather than state or market structures.

For Hewison and Holden (2011, 2006) arts organisations within the publicly funded cultural sector were complex and required an unusual set of leadership skills. In addition to pragmatic aspects traditionally explored within stakeholder management, they said public subsidy created the additional need for legitimation by a democratic ‘authorising environment’. The potential of individual leaders to shape attitudes to public institutions and garner support emerged in their work. Nisbett and Walmsley (2016) noted the absence of charismatic leadership within cultural management literature as recently at 2016. What is missing from the management literature is any discussion of the underpinning ideology connecting ‘festival as enterprise’ to neoliberal policies. These demand festival producers find entrepreneurial means to reduce their reliance on state subsidy, whilst also proving their public service role through economic and social impact studies. Festival producers are required to be
both apolitical in performing public service functions and charismatic entrepreneurs who act as cultural intermediaries within the public sphere. These tensions are a central concern of this research.

Understanding Festivals Summary

This chapter has identified two main schools in festival studies with little overlap between the different discourses. Classical studies saw festivals as symbolic practices and liminal sites for communitas, primarily as ‘time out of time’ (Falassi 1987), with little consideration of their management or consequences beyond a sense that rituals were intensifications of social norms that reinforced social bonds within homogenous communities. Festivals were liminal times and heterotopia, places and times that, by ‘shifting realities’ (Piette 1992: 37) enabled a different, more ambivalent perspective on everyday life, before the world returned to normal.

Contemporary studies have approached festivals from managerial and policy perspectives. Yet, despite an awareness festive worlds are shaped by heteronomous influences, and commercial pressures, the festival itself is considered a distinct period and the shaping of that period is an area that has not been theorised to the same extent. These works do not look beyond those celebratory moments to what Waterman called ‘festival as enterprise’ (1998: 67), to interrogate the powerful institutions and social structures that form those festive times.

Waterman’s research marked a new phase in festival studies. Professionalisation of cultural activity demanded resources causing festivals to be formalised into organisations. These organisations required financial and public support to hire venues and pay artists and, unless they are wealthy benefactors, their professional producers. The underlying assumption of the socio-cultural literature was that commercialisation created a democratic deficit on the culture produced. Yet in the management literature, this was unproblematic. In taking a critical approach, this
study draws from management studies to ask how producers balance the tensions between artistic, community and commercial priorities.

In considering ‘enterprise factors’ the management literature drew attention to festival organisations’ agency in co-ordinating interest groups, but not their public service functions. This contradiction is faced daily by festival producers who sit at a nexus between public service provider and social or commercial enterprise. Understanding this uncomfortable balancing act is at the heart of this research project. It explores festivals as enterprising and enduring public or social institutions within their localities, rather than temporary and ephemeral events. As such festivals respond to and influence public policy and this literature review will now move on to consider the policy contexts within which the case-study festivals were founded and operated.
Chapter 3. Festivals, Cultural and Urban Policy

So far, this thesis has explored literature that views festivals as socio-cultural phenomena and also from managerial perspectives. These discussions pointed to festivals as enterprises with powerful connections to questions of local identity and belonging within regional towns and cities. Marx (1845) famously argued ruling elites act to regulate the production and distribution of ideas in every era. As complex interstitial frames in which interests and power are played out, festivals are political acts. So, here the thesis turns to the literature related to relevant public policy contexts in operation from 1979 to 2016, the periods during which the three case-studies have been in operation, asking what were the policy ideas regulating their production?

Public policy is how governments bureaucratise and implement decisions. It is ‘a course of action rather than a solitary decision. It is a programme involving a series of decisions and thus, is designed to affect larger sections within society and to cover greater areas than a single decision could’ (Quinn 1998: 13). For Rose (1989: 293) policies are ‘statements of intent’ that are implemented through ecologies of new or existing institutions, services and organisations. For policy aims to be successful across such an array, Foucault (1991) argued governments control networks through value systems incorporated into social systems. He called this governmentality, a ‘technology of power’ that ensured individuals and groups self-police. In relation to the argument in this thesis, governmentality includes using symbolic representation to shape values and social practices, validating some behaviours and repressing others. These values are institutionalised and normalised.
Rhodes (1990) drew attention to a tendency for researchers to map inter-organisational connections within policy networks without grounding these with an analysis of the structure of power, values and interests. Cultural policy ‘involves complex relations between cultural policy itself and other areas of policy (and society) – including education, welfare, health and even foreign affairs’ (Hesmondhalgh et al. 2015: 3), each sector having its own professional value sets. This complexity is at the heart of this thesis which takes a multidisciplinary view of the interrelations between ‘the role of ideas, institutions and the way in which groups pursue their interests, [that] achieves a balance between the messiness and contingency of policy making and its links to power and ideology’ (ibid: 2) and to culture.

The connection between cultural values and city policy was identified by the cultural planning school who related policy to urban planning. Bianchini defined it as ‘thinking culturally [and artistically] about public policy: a culturally sensitive approach to urban and regional planning and to environmental, social and economic policy-making’ (2014: slide 7). Cultural planning positions culture and cultural resources instrumentally as central to urban and community development (Mercer 2006). Cultural resources include: tangible and intangible arts and media; diverse cultures such as youth, minorities and ‘communities of interest’, including festivals; heritage, such as food cultures, local history, language, traditions and rituals; images of the locality; the natural and built environment, including parks, squares and other spaces often used for public events; social spaces, such as markets, bars, cafes and restaurants; local creative milieu and institutions, including universities, creative quarters and research centres in the private sector; and the historical and contemporary range of local products and skills (Bloomfield 2006). These elements create a palimpsest of tangible and intangible resources that, over time, fashion a unique sense of place. As Jacobs (2011 [1961]) pointed out, cities are complex, living ecosystems with diverse communities and contested needs, meaning that there will always be winners and losers in policymaking, however sensitive to local cultures. Sachs Olsen’s (2013) study concerning festivals’ cultural alignment to their city’s
development strategies is a rare example of academic research into festivals’ symbolic integration into local urban policies. There is scope for more work to explore how festivals’ cultural and artistic values are situated vis a vis the heteronomous control of elites within their localities as well as their sectors (Gorz 1989, Bourdieu 1993a).

The ideological context within which policy is made and implemented structures the choices open to festival producers. This thesis situates festivals within the context of cultural and urban policies in England. As the case-studies cover the period 1979-2016, the key policies in place at those points are identified and their relevance to the festival cases elucidated. The underlying philosophy of UK policy since 1979 has been neoliberalism, albeit New Labour (1979-2010) offered a version modified by social democratic ideas. This section will explore how the Arts Council, the Department for Culture Media and Sport and local government policies have expressed this in relation to festival production. Festivals are part of intrinsic cultural policies as they curate and develop cultural forms. They are also part of instrumental policies as they have been mobilised in other policy agendas nationally and locally. The three festivals studied were launched in 1979, 1994 and 2007, three periods that marked conjunctural shifts in cultural policy in England: Thatcherite marketisation, the launch of the National Lottery, and the creative cities agenda. These will now be discussed and their implications for local festival production analysed.

Cultural policy

Historically state involvement in culture involved five core areas of activity: national branding and promotion; collecting and protecting historical artefacts and intangible culture; supporting cultural production; distributing culture and enabling access to legitimate culture; and censorship and regulation (Hesmondhalgh et al. 2015). The extent to which each area is prioritised is a function of political ideology. The next
section will examine the development of cultural policy in the UK since the Second World War in relation to the dominant ideologies of the time.

**Cultural policy in the UK**

Cultural policy emerged as a distinct area of state policy in the UK when the Arts Council of Great Britain was set up as part of the welfare state in the aftermath of the Second World War (see Upchurch 2004). This was a political attempt to ameliorate the excesses of the free-market liberalism considered to have led to fascism and, simultaneously, a bulwark against the rise of communism. Funded through general taxation yet operating semi-independently, the Arts Council launched in 1947. It aimed to provide ‘modest support’ for groups to present professionally produced drama, music and painting to the public. Professionalisation of cultural production was institutionalised in the Arts Council from its beginnings. Upchurch (2004) maintained liberal economist John Maynard Keynes, a key player in the development of the UK’s welfare state and the Arts Council’s chief architect, was ‘consciously shaping a new organisation that could respond with awareness and flexibility to the country’s professional artistic community’ (ibid: 204). However, Keynes was concerned replacing plutocratic patronage, which he considered constrained creative freedom, with state patronage could equally end in artists being forced to create ‘official’ propaganda. He, therefore, argued for an ‘arm’s length’ body as a buffer between politicians, government and artists, focusing on intrinsic areas of cultural policy such as artistic excellence, cultural heritage, and support for cultural production and distribution (Hewison 1995).

The philosophical aim was democratisation of elite culture. Funding went to the Royal Opera House (Bereson 2002) and other London-based arts organisations considered nationally significant, so all citizens had access to the best arts Britain could offer. Centralisation of the UK’s arts elites in London was to be countered by fourteen regional offices so every part of England could be ‘merry in its own way’
Following Keynes’ death, his successors saw less value in this geographical representation and by 1956 all the regional offices were closed. Such domination appears to confirm Sawers’ (1993) claim placing cultural policy in the hands of one government funded body will inevitably impose some degree of standardisation on the character of the subsidised works. The result is liable to be success for the accepted styles, and obstacles for the novel (ibid: 40).

However, the result of the closures was actually regional self-organisation. A group of South West councils approached the Arts Council asking it to match their investment in a Regional Arts Association (RAA). Other regions took note of their success and by 1965 twelve RAAs had been set up. Since then ‘the relationship between the centre (Arts Council in London) and the regions has been vexed, fraught and often poisonously reductive’ (Dorney and Merkin 2010: 5). Local government’s interest in the arts tends to be instrumental, intent on building civic pride, cultural cohesion or educating residents rather than artistic excellence. These tensions have led to the Arts Council gradually taking back control of regional arts. First the RAAs became Regional Arts Boards (RABs) following a report that found significant variance in the running and efficiency of the RAAs (Wilding 1989). The RABs received most of their funding from the Arts Council, with local authorities now ‘important partners’ rather than the main instigators (Arts Council England a). In 2002 the Arts Council and the ten Regional Arts Boards in England merged in a move it was claimed would save up to £10 million in costs. Gerry Robinson, the Arts Council chairman said for ‘the regions it will mean more power and a greater say in national policy’ (The Guardian 2001) as regional representatives would sit on the main Council. In 2012 the regional offices were reduced to five in a further cost saving measure resulting from the 2010-2015 Coalition Government’s austerity measures (UK Parliament 2011) leaving responsibility for local arts funding back with local authorities. This review of Arts Council’s history illuminates tensions between national cultural policies and local
actors in the regions raising questions about whether this is a question of power relations, or philosophical differences between the Arts Council’s intrinsic cultural focus and local government’s instrumental approach?

Although there is no statutory duty on local councils to fund the arts, many do so. Indeed in 2016 Sir Peter Balalgette, then Arts Council England chair, stated

> From Jennie Lee’s Arts White Paper in 1965 to the new DCMS White Paper this year, the vital role of local authorities in investing in our arts and culture has been a constant. Underpinning the role of local government has been the partnership with national agencies - the Arts Council, who invest around £700 million each year and our National Museums with their annual £450 million. But still the most significant are the local authorities. Collectively they invest £1.1 billion in museums, theatres, libraries – more than the others combined (Harvey 2016).

The significance of local authorities as cultural policy institutions should not be overlooked. Despite cuts to local authority spending during the 1980s and since 2010, councils have continued to support arts and culture. Mansfield (2014) found the top three rationales councils gave for funding the arts were instrumental: economic regeneration, health and wellbeing and for social reasons including placemaking, civic pride and social cohesion.

The elision of culture and economic development became a core part of thinking about urban regeneration as a result of publications such as Bianchini and Parkinson’s (1993) collection of essays on cultural planning and culture-led regeneration, Landry’s (1995, 2000) *The Creative City* and, most influentially, Florida’s (2002, 2005) *The Rise of the Creative Class* which became doctrine for urban developers in deindustrialised Western cities. It argued some cities were successful because they had vibrant and
diverse creative milieu so attracted and retained well-educated young entrepreneurs who founded businesses and grew the local economy. Festivals were a part of these milieu along with cultural and creative quarters, cafes and co-working spaces.\(^2\)

Other reasons are less strategic. Arts and festivals were funded because of a ‘combination of resident demand and the leadership and interest of members and officers’ (Mansfield 2014: 18). This indicated both that council support is fragile and liable to be cut when pressure for further austerity measures arise, and that cultural policy leadership is an area ripe for exploration. These conjunctural moments will now be considered in more detail.

**Thatcherism and the Arts Council**

Hall and Back (2009) identified a conjunctural shift in UK society in the 1980s, which he attributed to Thatcherite reshaping of economic and political philosophy. The Thatcher government (1979-1990) aimed to reduce the state’s responsibilities for many social services developed during the post-war welfare state. Privatisation of services meant taxes could be reduced fulfilling a neoliberal small government, pro-market agenda. The arts, although not high on that agenda because of their relatively small budgets, were non-statutory services so vulnerable to cuts. A 1977 report by conservative think tank the Bow Group argued for a campaign to convince people government cannot, and should not, be expected to do everything unaided, can only help to encourage a pluralistic attitude towards financing the arts and the greatest diversity of assistance must be

---

\(^2\) A critique of Florida’s creative class concept is beyond the scope of this thesis. McGuigan’s (2009) *Doing a Florida Thing* and Florida’s (2017) own *The New Urban Crisis* provide good foundations for understanding the issues. However, it is worth noting the misconceptions surrounding the creative class are similar to those surrounding the social effects of festivals. They might make people feel good, but their contribution to economic growth is at best questionable and, where it does work, partial and exclusive.
encouraged by whatever means is politically and socially acceptable. The move away from the bureaucratic and monolithic state or regional patrons should also help to develop an independence of style in artists, curators, directors and authors (Brough 1977: 2).

Conservative policy after 1979 implemented mixed financing models within the cultural sector. Private sector patronage was encouraged by three policies: tax breaks for commercial sponsors; expansion of the Association for Business Sponsorship of the Arts (ABSA, later to become Arts and Business), a sort of sponsorship dating agency; and an incentive scheme to match business donations with public money (Quinn 1998). The stick involved funding cuts of some £5 million from the Arts Council’s £63 million 1979-80 budget (Wu 2003).

The aim of these schemes was to shift the range of interest groups involved in the arts. Which raises the question of heteronomous control within cultural funding. How do sponsors’ influences differ from states’? Sponsors were eligible for tax concessions to recognised arts organisations, those legitimised by being in receipt of Arts Council or local authority funding. This provided a recognisable seal of approval to reassure sponsors of the ‘quality’ they were associating their brand with (Shaw 1987). Where the Arts Council had valorised professional artistic excellence, the new policy valued commercial acumen and enterprise. Business donations were eligible for tax relief on up to three per cent of their annual dividends ‘so long as they were made for purposes of trade and not philanthropy’ (Quinn 1998: 169). This emphasis on trade not philanthropy marked a distinction between monetarist policies and earlier liberal free market ideas. As well as reducing the role of, and cost to, the state the aim was, at least in part, to broker relationships between arts organisations and commercial businesses so the arts world could be taught professional business practices, one of the key aims of neoliberalism (Harvey 2005). Sponsorship was seen by most businesses as a transaction, an inexpensive marketing cost to efficiently target affluent market segments who attend the arts (Shaw 1990). Arts organisations would,
through these collaborations, learn commercial marketing and branding practices to make them more entrepreneurial and, consequently, less reliant on state subsidy. Luke Rittner’s rapid promotion from founding director of ABSA to secretary general of the Arts Council in 1983 was a clear signal government policy was being implemented through the QUANGO. In 1987 Rittner created a marketing department, ostensibly to help its funded clients improve their own marketing skills. Ironically, it started to develop sponsorships for its own projects, putting it in direct competition with its clients. This was so successful by 1989 a sponsorship unit had been instituted to ‘develop fruitful long-term relationships between the Arts Council and businessmen’ (Wu 2003: 67).

One of the less discussed effects of privatisation is the shift in power from democratic institutions, however flawed or ‘arm’s length’, to individual donors and companies. As Wu noted ‘tax foregone is hidden from any public scrutiny and is beyond government control, since it goes to whichever body the donor nominates and endorses’ (2003: 59). Indeed, through its Business Sponsorship Incentive Scheme, the UK didn’t just forego tax, by match-funding arts sponsorship, it effectively subsidised commercial marketing costs and sold state validated legitimacy to arts audiences.

There are several consequences of this relevant to the cases studied here. First is sponsors’ reliance on Arts Council valorisation to guide decisions on who to support. Privatisation appears to diversify funding sources, yet state validation is a prerequisite for achieving match funding, making the Arts Council a powerful intermediary. Any festival without Arts Council funding also lacked the prestige necessary to reassure funders, narrowing the scope of culture that might benefit from a genuinely ‘free’ sponsorship ‘market’. A second factor is shifting patronage from a democratic, albeit arm’s length body, to unaccountable corporations. Commercial sponsorship decisions are strategically aligned with marketing priorities, not social or cultural policy. If a festival takes place in a city, or for a community the company does not perceive as
lucrative, it will not sponsor it. Meanwhile, a festival with Arts Council funding, also as commercially attractive then has its sponsorship donation doubled through a public-financed match-funding scheme.

Such imbalances are compounded as larger arts companies can pay professional marketing and fundraising staff, placing them at an advantage in relation to smaller organisations. Many festivals, even well-established ones, have small core teams and fundraising is a task undertaken by the chief executive or artistic director alongside their other tasks. Finally, Quinn (1998) expressed concern whereby an ‘emphasis on the business aspects […] has meant they are evolving into clones of the businesses which sponsor them. The idiosyncratic nature of the traditional business dimension of theatre is now being eroded’ (ibid: 117). In other words, professionalisation was undermining arts organisations’ traditional concentration on aesthetic concerns.

Meanwhile, the Thatcher era had seen local authority involvement in the arts boom. Between 1980 and 1985 councils’ cultural spending, led by large left-wing urban governments, doubled to over £100 million.

Foremost amongst local authorities supporting the arts was the Labour-run, Greater London Council, which in its five years of office (1981-1986) raised the profile of arts subsidy so that at arts events throughout London the slogan “GLC FUNDED” became almost ubiquitous (Peacock 1999: 39).

Free, council-funded city festivals were a regular feature of urban life in London, Liverpool and Sheffield amongst others throughout the early 1980s. These were underpinned by policies that shifted funding from ‘the financial needs of the art form or institution’ (Mulgan and Worpole 1988: 75) to communities of place and interest traditionally excluded from funding as a result the Arts Council’s definition of culture as professional, covering a narrow range of art forms and requiring excellent artistic
‘products’ rather than wide participation in artistic processes. Hall (1988: 236) felt the GLC had successfully harnessed the arts to popularise radical socialist politics. When Thatcher’s government subsequently abolished the GLC along with six other metropolitan authorities, the cultural sector was recompensed for the loss of this funding through a £25 million increase in the Arts Council’s 1986-87 grant, nearly 30 per cent against an inflation rate of 3.4 per cent. But as the Arts Council’s objectives were different to those of the GLC, the free festivals were amongst the 60 GLC-funded organisations which lost their subsidy. The consequence was that some, primarily community arts projects, turned to funding pots such as regeneration, skills and education funding, and European Union structural funds, the start of policy attachment, a situation where ‘the arts have tended to attract support not because they have been seen to have worth in their own artistic or cultural terms (a version of ‘arts for art’s sake’), but because they have a contribution to make to the attainment of policy objectives in other policy sectors’ (Gray 2004: 42).

By 1990, the end of Thatcher’s years in office, the Arts Council and cultural policy had radically changed from state patronage as part of a welfare state model, to one of neoliberal enterprise culture. Direct state funding had been radically reduced and sponsorship encouraged in an explicit policy to reduce the size and extent of state intervention to increase the influence of the market. Local authorities’ direct promotional role had been reduced, but a connection to other policy areas was established and would grow throughout the 1990s and into the 2000s. The neoliberal direction of policy was continued by Thatcher’s Conservative successor but with two significant institutional changes: the creation of the Department of National Heritage and the National Lottery.

The Department of National Heritage and the National Lottery

1992 saw the creation of the UK’s first culture ministry with a seat at the cabinet table. Prior to this arts ministers had been junior posts within other departments.
Described as an ‘enabling ministry’, the Department of National Heritage (DNH) had little direct control of policy instruments, but was able to influence its heterogeneous networks through four power resources: ministerial politicking and lobbying; policy reviews and guidance documents; systematic reviews of its various non-departmental public bodies; and allocation of financial resources (Taylor 1997).

The Secretary of State, David Mellor realised he had inherited a cultural sector in need of investment after over a decade of monetarist policies. His relatively small department had little influence with a Treasury concerned with the economic shock of being forced out of the European Exchange Rate Mechanism. The solution was a National Lottery with a proportion of its funds going to ‘good causes’, including the arts.

There were two major concerns expressed about using a lottery to subsidise culture. The first claimed it would be a regressive policy. Sawers (1993) pointed out data on gambling showed the poorest half of tax paying families, economic groups C2, D and E paid a disproportionate proportion of betting taxes yet have half the average participation in the arts, while the higher groups (A, B, and C1) have twice the average participation in the arts. [...] The Government's plans for the lottery would therefore tax the relatively poor to pay for activities in which richer people indulge.

This prediction has proven to be true (Stark et al. 2014) resulting in significant political pressure being exerted during the New Labour government of 1997-2010 to increase participation amongst ‘excluded groups’.

The second concern was Lottery money would be used to replace grant-in-aid from the Treasury (Skene 2017). The result was a policy that Lottery money could only be spent on capital projects. This was a disadvantage for festival organisations as few
owned buildings, and the requirement for match funding for large capital builds reduced funds from other sources; flagship projects such as the Royal Opera House attracted the major sponsors. In the first year over 80 per cent of Arts Council distributed Lottery monies went to projects of over £1 million. Only one per cent were smaller than £30,000 (Joseph Rowntree Foundation 1996). A further problem for regional festivals was that London ‘received a far larger share than any other part of the country for arts, heritage and sports money. Per head of population London obtained £26.07 compared with just £3.21 for the East Midlands’ (Joseph Rowntree Foundation 1996: 2). The East Midlands has continued to be amongst the lowest recipients of Lottery and Arts Council money (Stark et al. 2014, 2013), which supports the choice of case-studies from the region.

A third unforeseen consequence of the Lottery was gambling company Vernon’s Pools halving its donations to the Foundation for Sports and Arts (FSA), a trust set up by the then Chancellor John Major in 1991 to channel football pools profits to local cultural and sports causes (Bennetto 1995). The FSA’s remit was not restricted to capital, so its grants could be more flexible than the Lottery’s. It also had deep links in the regions through pools company Littlewoods, which had its headquarters in Liverpool, helping to counter the metropolitan bias of the Lottery.

The cumulative effect of the Lottery was to shift cultural policy from the commercialisation agenda propagated under Thatcher’s regime towards concerns about social and geographical exclusion. These themes became even more prominent during the New Labour years.

Culture and social exclusion

After eighteen years of Conservative government the arts world greeted the Labour government’s election in May 1997 with relief, believing it would see a reversal of fortunes for the sector. In fact, New Labour stuck to Conservative spending plans for
its first two years in office. It did break with its predecessor in renaming the Department of National Heritage the Department of Culture, Media and Sport, a move Chris Smith its Secretary of State claimed was because we wanted something more forward-looking, a name that captured more accurately the new spirit of modern Britain, that signalled the involvement of all. We wanted a name that, for the first time ever in a British administration, was not afraid to use the title of ‘culture’: something the rest of the world had woken up to decades ago. [...] And a name that helped to take us away from the notion that this is simply the ‘Ministry of Fun’ to an understanding of the scale of the serious economic value of the work sponsored by the Department (Smith 1998: 2).

Culture, Smith indicated, would be globally connected and economically significant. Economics were, in fact, central to New Labour’s cultural, or rather creative, policies. It is beyond the scope of this thesis to discuss these in detail. There are, however, key strands that are relevant to festivals: instrumentalism, access and participation, and creative cities.

Instrumentalism, or the use of the arts as an instrument to achieve non-cultural outcomes, emerged as a policy that combined arts organisations’ increased reliance on non-cultural funding sources such as European Regional Development Fund or urban regeneration pots with Labour’s social inclusion agenda. The Social Exclusion Unit established in its first term set up inter-departmental Policy Action Teams (PATs) to tackle complex social problems. PAT10 brought together a coalition to consider how the arts could be used ‘to engage people in poor neighbourhoods, particularly those who may feel most excluded, such as disaffected young people and people from ethnic minorities’ (Department of Culture, Media and Sport 1999: 5). This shifted the focus from intrinsic cultural concerns to the needs of specific communities; a form
of identity politics. Festivals, along with other arts organisations and local authorities, were tasked with finding new ways to develop social capital in communities excluded because of their identities as much as their economic or educational disadvantage. Although this implied some understanding of implicitly cultural causes, there was no formal acknowledgement of this, and little evidence the policy influenced the range of cultural forms subsidised by the Arts Council as a result. Instead pressure was put on producers to ensure they could prove, not that they were artistically excellent, but that they could attract audiences reflecting the demographic make-up of the population in a given area (Hesmondhalgh et al. 2015, Bell and Oakley 2015, 2004). Festivals are an attractive vehicle for policy makers wanting to appeal to the residents and voters in their cities across a range of social and community development areas as they can operate more flexibly than building based organisations (Hitters and Richards 2002, Hitters 2000).

However, a further consequence of instrumentalism was what Belfiore (2004) called ‘auditing culture’, added bureaucratic pressures small arts organisations, including festival producers, found difficult to manage. New public management placed an emphasis on ‘evidence-based policy’. All government departments, non-departmental public bodies and local authorities were expected to report against Public Service Agreements with quantifiable objectives related to the heterogeneous requirements of the various funding pots supporting a given programme (Gray 2004, 2007, Hesmondhalgh et al. 2015). One outcome of this was Taking Part, a quantitative quarterly survey launched by the DCMS, Arts Council and other agencies in 2005 to measure participation in the arts, heritage and sports. Although criticised for only considering publicly funded activities (Miles and Sullivan 2012), Taking Part’s findings point to significant issues for policymakers as attendance and participation have been shown to be stratified along class and ethnicity lines (Keaney 2008, Bunting et al. 2008) and geographically (Gilmore 2013). Notwithstanding years of audience development work, the subsidised arts in England remain primarily the
preserve of educated, white, older women from affluent postcodes, often in the South East.

Despite evidence of social anxiety about unfamiliar art forms even among regular arts attenders (Keaney 2008), the widening participation agenda has not addressed questions of whether the Arts Council should broaden the genres it supports or its focus on professional production. As discussed earlier, festivals have an image as being places where status is abolished, where artists and audiences mix on seemingly equal terms (Debord 1983, Fabiani 2011). This makes them appear more accessible to communities identified as not participating in the Taking Part surveys, an indicator councils in particular have been keen to exploit. Producers are required to collect and report data covering questions of ethnicity, disability, class and economic impact (e.g. Snowball 2016, van Niekerk 2016, 2017). The identity of participants is, therefore, often frequently studied. Notwithstanding research into the centrality of genre in production to commercial festivals (De Valck 2007, Moeran 2011, Wynn 2015), the question of whether a festival’s artistic genre is significant in shaping its social and policy networks and effects remains open.

Cool culture, festivalisation and city branding

Where the state did widen its definition of culture was the creation of a ‘creative industries’ policy (e.g. McGuigan 2005a). This was primarily aimed at supporting commercial copyright businesses but became elided with urban regeneration under the heading creative cities (Landry and Bianchini 1995, Landry 2000, Florida 2002, 2005). Following the success of various European and American cities, culture in the form of vibrant urban city centres came to be seen as the catalyst for economic success (Myerscough 1988). Pratt (2009), for instance, referred to the lack of analysis of local context as a ‘Xerox‘ policy making. The recipe for successful creative cities was to build a statement cultural building, a la Bilbao, or bid for global events such as

Festivalisation became identified as a growing feature of urban tourism and economic development policies (Roth and Frank 2000, Prentice and Andersen 2003, Pejovic 2009, Quinn 2010). There are three major strands to the literature on the policy surrounding festivals and economic regeneration: place marketing and tourism; economic impact; and the integration of festivals into urban policies. As with other forms of cultural activity, festivals can be considered as commodities in the marketing of cities. Mega-event festivals such as the European and UK Capitals of Culture are good examples of this (Garcia 2004, Lee and Taylor 2005, Getz 2007). The relevance here is the unsubstantiated connection made between mega-events and other festivals, which fails to distinguish between the global and local (Richards 2015a). The conflation of culture and tourism is not new; McGuigan quoted Raymond Williams as saying in 'arguments about public funding of the arts people mentioned tourism rather early' (McGuigan 2004: 62). Tourism is often cited as a rationale for launching or promoting festivals, yet there is little evidence to be found that annual festivals rather than mega-events are particularly effective at this (Klaic 2009). Maughan and Bianchini’s (2004a) evaluation of the economic impact of festivals in the East Midlands was a significant stimulus for this thesis. Of the eleven festivals studied, only one, Buxton International Festival, was found to attract audiences from outside the local area. A drive to understand how the dichotomy emerged between that finding, academic research into mega-events and hallmark festivals, and urban policies in England underpins the central question of why festivals are produced and who for.

Bell and Oakley (2015) noted the double penalty paid by working class residents not in the creative class. The loss of manufacturing work was the impetus for regeneration, but the cultural offer in most festivals is not one they are likely to be attracted to. Waterman (1998) found place marketing influences led to a tendency to programme ‘safe’ art forms that appeal to dominant social groups. De Valck (2007)
drew on Actor Network Theory to argue international film festivals become nodes in networks that link global production networks to municipal marketing strategies. The social implications of festivals within cities are likely to be intensified if the policy purpose is to attract affluent global audiences as part of a creative city strategy that leads to gentrification (Zukin 2012) and conflict over public spaces, a phenomenon Smith (2014) found had been growing since local authorities came under pressure to reduce costs. This latter point is particularly relevant to festival production, which often takes place, at least partially, in public spaces such as parks and squares.

**Austerity and the Big Society**

The austerity measures imposed on councils in the UK since 2010 have increased pressure to reduce expenditure on non-statutory services such as culture (Harvey 2016). At the same time, Prime Minister David Cameron promoted a policy of civic engagement he called the ‘Big Society’, an alternative route to small government through the voluntary sector.

One response was a Cabinet Office Green Paper titled ‘Giving’, which proposed a strategy for encouraging charitable donations. Culture Secretary Jeremy Hunt (2010) gave a speech extolling the benefits of personal giving to the arts. He proposed that the sector should look to the American model of philanthropy to increase revenues. This model is different to the commercial sponsorship promoted by Thatcher’s government, with the case being made for donations based on either personal satisfaction or social capital rather than as a direct marketing cost. The American model has, however, developed over a long period and become professionalised (Silber 1998). In the UK, although cultural organisations have developed professional marketing and sponsorship departments since the 1980s, individual giving has remained a small proportion. The Arts Council launched its £70 million Catalyst scheme to match fund charitable donations between 2012-15, to help build professional fundraising capacity in the sector. However, research by the Charities Aid
Foundation (2018) found that the arts received only two per cent of charitable donations in 2017. There was also a £12 million underspend and the scheme was significantly scaled back in 2015, with only £26 million budgets for 2015-18 (Richens 2015). As with sponsorship, festival production has the benefit of being high-profile, so those organisations with the right connections or fundraising capacity can attract donors who wish to have their name in lights. But small organisations lack the capacity to run a year-round fundraising department, or work in areas (geographical, social or cultural) not of interest to high net worth individual donors. Switching funding from democratic bodies to individuals leaves the cultural sector vulnerable to the hidden hand of personal tastes rather than public policy priorities. The role of individual agency in shaping festival production is one that will be considered in the case-studies in chapters six, seven & eight.

Given philanthropy would not be a viable income source for many cultural bodies, the Royal Society for the Arts (RSA) undertook research in 2011 to explore rationales for continued public funding in the context of the Coalition Government’s economic and social policies. It argued for the arts to ‘develop coherent (and challenging) accounts of the role art does, can and could play in helping us imagine and create more fulfilling lives in a better society’ (Knell and Taylor 2011: 28), including instrumental rationales based on culture’s intrinsic abilities to develop trust, caring and co-operation. They found the most successful social interventions were participatory cultural processes that built social capital, rather than consumption.

Based on this analysis they argued the Arts Council’s strategy should be to place less emphasis on artistic excellence and more on supporting participation. ‘All arts organisations need to think of themselves as community institutions, where people connect socially as well as culturally, with arts spaces being used as public spaces as much as possible’ (ibid: 31). In his book The Arts Dividend (2016), General Secretary of the Arts Council Darren Henley claimed seven ‘dividends’ from investing in culture: creativity, learning, innovation, enterprise, reputation, wellbeing, and place-shaping.
As has been shown in earlier sections of this chapter, festivals have been associated with each of these elements, but particularly civic reputation. Arts organisations and cultural policy organisations, including festivals sought, as they had in the 1980s and 1990s, to attach themselves to local and national agendas. For festivals, because of their nodal positions within production networks, placemaking became the most significant.

**Placemaking**

Massey (1994) reasoned places are best conceptualised as processes rather than geographical entities to be defined by their boundaries. Places are the sum of the social interactions that tie them together, they contain multiple perspectives and internal conflicts making each unique and differentiated from other places. As social spaces full of symbolic meaning, festivals can be conceived of as places in their own right, and as disruptors of residents’ everyday lives. The potential of festivals to engage communities in new ways, to reimage spaces and create new symbols is an area emerging within the events and tourism literature. It is an argument used for city competitions for mega-events such as the European Capital of Culture programme (Griffiths 2006). Many of the themes reflect those found in the cultural planning literature discussed above, and point to the centrality of cultural situatedness, production processes and the influence of intermediaries.

Evidence of geographical inequalities in cultural funding (Stark et al. 2013, 2014, 2016, Gilmore 2013) caused political pressure for the DCMS and Arts Council to address the London bias in the way core subsidies were allocated. Henley (2016) acknowledged the problem, referring to inequalities in arts infrastructure and suggesting, as the RSA did, arts organisations receiving subsidies should take a lead in their areas, and highlighting the potential of other civic bodies, such as libraries and particularly universities in local cultural strategies as did the *Culture White Paper* (Department for Culture, Media and Sport March 2016).
Ager (2016) made the case for a fundamental link between universities and cultural production. Universities were established to have a civilising role, and as important civic and cultural institutions in their localities. She found commercialisation had informed university practices, increasing engagement outside the academy. In particular, the Research Excellence Framework (REF), a periodic review of academic research that influences funding from Research Councils, had increased pressure for research to have ‘impact’ outside the academy. As a result, universities had not only set up their own festivals, but became engaged with cultural institutions in a range of formal and informal ways, becoming key players in local cultural ecologies (Comunian et al. 2014).

Research into creative industries highlighted the centrality of place in knowledge transfer in the creative industries. Gertler contended formal and informal institutions ‘exert an influence on the character and evolutionary trajectory of regional economies that is often subtle, sometimes dominant, but undeniably pervasive’ (2010: 2). He argued attention should be drawn to individual and organisational agency, the evolution of organisations and institutions and interscalar influences. These concerns raised several questions relevant to this thesis’ focus on festival production within regional cities and towns.

What influence does corporate strategy, practice and culture have on the success of firms and the economic vitality of the regions in which they have invested? How do the individual and collective actions of employees alter employers’ choices concerning investment, technology implementation, workplace organization, or the extent of their collaboration with other firms? How do university policies, practices, and distinctive histories shape and define the way they interact with the economy and society around them? How do multi-stakeholder governance organizations help shape development trajectories at the local and regional level? (ibid: 6).
Places, and institutions within places such as festivals are, according to this perspective shaped by and act to shape local histories. This section has explored the history of government policies that provide a wider context for understanding festival production in English regional cities.

Summary

This chapter has outlined conjunctural shifts in cultural policy between 1979 and 2016 and posed some questions about their consequences for local festival production. The prevailing policies since 1979 have been neoliberal, an ideology introduced by Thatcher’s government who introduced market forces through policies to promote business sponsorship of the arts. Although promoted as a democratising force, sponsorship has been shown to narrow the range of art forms and organisations supported as a result of match-funding policies and intermediation. This supports the decision to explore festival production as a frame for understanding the interrelations between interest groups, power and ideology in regional cities. To what extent is decision-making locally situated and, therefore, distinctive, and has this changed over the period covered by the cases?

The introduction of the National Lottery marked a shift in policy towards questions of participation and exclusion that were intensified and bureaucratised throughout the New Labour period. This participation agenda raised questions of which social groups benefitted from publicly funded culture. At national level responsibility for widening participation was delegated by the Arts Council and, where they received funding, festivals were tasked with addressing social exclusion along with other cultural bodies. Locally, policy attachment had similar effects as festivals sought funding as part of projects with social objectives. During this time other national and local cultural policies were in relative harmony: culture-led regeneration was seen as
joining-up government departments, decentralising power to the regions and encouraging local economic growth.

The 2007/8 financial crisis led to a period of austerity politics under the subsequent Coalition Government. Once again cultural policy sought to diversify its support networks. This time, philanthropy was prioritised. The consequences of this to date are like those experienced during the promotion of sponsorship: large metropolitan organisations have benefitted, and smaller organisations less so. There was also a retreat to the centre by Arts Council England, which closed most of its regional offices.

Cultural organisations became civic partners, expected to achieve instrumental benefits in their localities related to regeneration, health and wellbeing, and civic pride. The placemaking agenda is a development of creative cities that links economic and social revitalisation. Like cultural planning approaches it attempts to understand and build on local cultural assets. Whether it is as deeply situated and sensitive to local distinctiveness as theoreticians advocate is open to question and will be explored further in this study.

Taking a temporal view of cultural policy has illuminated its cyclical nature as it fluctuates between intrinsic and instrumental policies, quality of production or widening participation, state or market support. As cyclical events themselves, one area of interest in this thesis will be to explore the interplay between these policy rhythms and those of the festivals.

Taking a spatial view, cultural policy is differentiated at national and local levels. Nationally the Art Council’s dominant intermediary role is clear. Despite other policy drivers, it has implemented policies in line with its founding values of professionalism and narrow view of culture, with a tendency to retreat to its London head office when
under financial pressure. The consequences of this will be explored through the case-studies in chapters six, seven and eight.

Locally, power ostensibly lies with councils. However, national governments have repeatedly reduced support for local authorities, meaning their ability to financially support non-statutory services, including festivals, is limited. Nonetheless, it is clear some councils remain highly supportive of cultural activities. A question to be considered in the case-studies in chapters six, seven and eight is to what extent individual leadership, local networks, or the absence of one dominant cultural institution meant there was space for individuals and groups to take meaningful social action. Indeed, are festivals themselves institutional intermediating structures in their localities? Are they insiders with direct access to power, or outsiders operating in the public sphere to wield influence?

Throughout this chapter questions have arisen relating to structure and agency, space and time within cultural production. These concepts will now be explored and their potential to provide insights on relations between festival producers and localities’ power structures considered.
“The reality of freedom actually begins only where labour which is determined by necessity and mundane considerations ceases” (Marx 1971)

Chapter 4. Perspectives on festival production

The previous chapter proposed key policy institutions in the UK such as the Arts Council and local authorities have operated to shape and constrain festival production by supporting a relatively narrow range of art forms and through a process of policy attachment. It argued these institutions have been interpenetrated by neoliberal ideology since 1979. Yet there remain key absences in the literature addressed so far which are of concern in this thesis, namely the interplay between political economy, cultural production structures and individual autonomy, as experienced by festival producers. This chapter will therefore review the literature on institutional theory and cultural production, asking to what extent festivals are subject to hetero-regulation, or whether, as ‘times out of time’ which breach everyday rhythms, festivals are able to create and maintain autonomy.

Institutional theory

Institutional theory asserts hard structures such as buildings and technologies and soft structures such as norms, routines and values have profound effects on organisations’ operations within particular sectors and places and at different times. Building on Weber’s concept of capitalistic demand for economic acquisition as an ‘iron cage’ (2004 [1905]: 33), DiMaggio and Powell (1991) reasoned similar processes prevented innovation and agency in cultural sectors. Market efficiency in the production process discouraged innovation, which is risky and expensive as new systems and processes cannot rely on tacit know-how within the production cycle (Gertler 2004). Organisations, therefore, became increasingly homogenous as successful norms and
techniques in institutional environments were first valorised, then copied and, finally, regulated by laws, market structures or professional associations, creating unquestionable ‘institutional logics’ (DiMaggio 1977). Similarity between organisations increases when there is a high degree of dependency within the environment (such as touring circuits in the live music industry), when norms are encoded within professional qualifications and when goals are uncertain or ambiguous. Each of these can be seen to be true within the arts festival environment, yet in the typology elaborated in the methodology, it is clear each is differently structured, leading to questions of regulatory institutions’ relative power.

One explanation for these differences could be as demonstrating festival producers’ autonomy. ‘Agency’ can be found within institutional theory. DiMaggio (1988) drew attention to the capacity for individuals to ‘make a difference’ within a setting whilst Scott (1995, 2000) recognised institutions might be built from the bottom-up rather than the top-down. Rifkin (2000) felt this was particularly true in knowledge economies of the late 20th century where economic value lay in ‘brand image’ where value was symbolic, relational and experiential rather than material, consequently resistant to commodification and homogenisation. In his later writing Gorz (1999) identified flatter organisational structures and flexible working practices as having encouraged a similar move in management practices. Just as consumers were persuaded to identify with brands, so workers were induced to internalise corporate values, to identify their own motivations with that of their employer rather than their peers. Internalisation of work identities is a concept of considerable relevance within the cultural sectors, where creativity is often not considered alienated labour, but a form of selfhood (McRobbie 2018). When combined with the tacit nature of the work, and complexity in agreeing exchange values (Moeran and Strandgaard Pedersen 2011), this led to economic and social structures where artists

---

3 Bull’s (2015) detailed exploration of the global impact of the music grading system shows how professional regulation can be used to valorise certain behaviours even when they have little relationship to local social norms.
worked and lived in social-economic groups variously called networks, clusters or milieu (Larson 2009, Van Heur 2014). These are local and global, temporary and persistent, autonomous and controlled. How do these fuzzy boundaries between work and leisure within the cultural sector shape festival production? Grant (1989) classified interest groups in the policy process as insiders with direct access to decision-making and outsiders who operated through public sphere strategies such as public relations and political campaigning. One central rationale for this research was to provide a theoretical explanation for local festivals’ distinctiveness, despite the normative policy discourses used to justify public subsidy. A second was to use festivals as settings to study how social and cultural values are negotiated within unnoticed regional cities and towns in the English Midlands. Are these festivals distinctive because of their outsider status or because they perform local cultural identities? This chapter will explore these concepts in more detail as questions of hetero-regulation and autonomy.

Two additional concepts emerged as relevant in chapter two. These are festival as time out of time and as liminal spaces. Lefebvre (1991b, 2004) considered time and space as socially constructed and regulated institutions. Society was constructed of multiple, dynamic, heterogeneous rhythms regulating and shaping everyday life. He conceived of festivals as cyclical intensifications of everyday life, recurrent moments in social space acting as markers to draw communities together or as responses to conjunctural shifts (Hall and Jacques 1989) in society’s ‘structures of feeling’ (Williams 2001 [1961]: 63).

Festivals are defined by time. They seem to be temporary events, but their meaning is often linked to recurring cycles, such as seasons or an urban events programme. They create a pause, a break in the rhythms of work. Smith (2012) linked urban events’ effects to longer-run temporal cycles, connecting the past to the present through ritual and commemoration, and to imagined futures. The symbolic potential of high-profile events was energising for a range of interest groups and
created an immovable deadline to structure their varied rhythms (Richards 2015a, Leeds 2008). Roche (2003) considered mega-events as ‘national and international time-keepers and history markers’ (2003: 119). The dichotomy between past and future orientation this illuminates resonates with the cultural policy discussions in the previous chapter.

Mels (2016) argued time should not be conceived of as disconnected from space. Places are created by dynamic processes, shaped by use and experienced differently at different times. A city square at night is very different to the same square during the day. For Lefebvre (1991) cities were socially constructed primarily to organise relations of production. He conceived of space as a triad: spatial practices, representations of space and representational spaces. Spatial practices referred to how everyday work and leisure shape places. Representations of space were maps and architectural drawings, plans that systematise and codify spatial relations. Representational spaces were imagined places, spaces outside formal social life. They existed as symbols and disruptive modes of spatial production, much as festivals are argued to be ritual and symbolic liminal spaces.

Festivals are affective spaces; experiential, demanding physical and sensual presence. Their meaning is tacit rather than explicit, symbolic, performative and ritualistic rather than discursive or deliberative. They are third spaces, sites that are perceived, conceived and lived (Lefebvre 1991b, Soja 1996), or countersites where lived reality is re-perceived and reconceived (Foucault and Miskowiec 1986), with the potential to catalyse change. The appropriation of spaces during festive periods reshapes social interaction, reformulating how it is presented and conceived (Zukin 1995: 24). Festive spaces are often seen as disruptive, places resembling ‘dense, disorderly, overwhelming cities’ (Sennett 1992 [1970]: xvi), where people can escape.

If, as Amin maintained, there is a ‘strong relationship between urban public space, civic culture and political formation’ (2008: 5), festive interventions on the streets or
which (temporarily) reshape the built environment are political acts. Tonkiss called these ‘critical spatial practices’ (2013: 107), a process of embodied reflection that, by performing new group affiliations, or temporarily encouraging different communities to experience the space, have the potential to alter a place’s image bank and sense of possibilities (Zukin 1995: 20). Festivals might, therefore, be employed tactically to rupture existing social structures and practices (De Certeau 1984).

Festivals are representational spaces, and ‘time out of time’. What is of principal relevance for this thesis are the constraining and enabling effects of time and space on festival production in the everyday world, and of festival production on time and space. Chapter three demonstrated how shifts in government in relation to ideologies resulted in reconfigurations of festivals’ regulating environments nationally and locally. Scott maintained, ‘students of institutions must perforce attend not just to consensus and conformity but to conflict and change in social structures’ (Scott 2005: 460). The relevance of Lefebvre’s concepts in drawing attention to spatial and rhythmic consensus and conflict will be considered later in this chapter. First questions of autonomy and domination are discussed.

**Autonomous and heteronomous cultural fields**

The regulating effect of social norms were evident in Weber’s (2004 [1905]) argument that capitalism’s demand for efficiency, combined with Calvinist tenets, led to hard work and productivity being valorised and institutionalised as an ideology, the ‘spirit of capitalism’. Bureaucratised organisations specified the roles actors played, the power they had and decisions they could take. In capitalism these rationalised systems were primarily oriented to pursue economic not social or domestic goals. Unlike domestic labour, work undertaken for wages was alienated from everyday social life. Non-work time was differentiated as ‘leisure’ and became a symbol of affluence to be aspired to (Gorz 1999, Lefebvre 1991a, Veblen 1994 [1899]). In order to be recompensed for their time, alienated workers were paid so they could afford
labour saving devices or services to do the work in the ‘realm of necessity’ they no longer had time for.

All work in the realm of necessity is instrumental as it is undertaken to satisfy basic human desires. Beyond this ‘begins that development of human energy which is an end in itself, the true realm of freedom, which however, can blossom forth only with this realm of necessity as its basis’ (Marx 1971: 820). Truly autonomous activity, that which is an end itself, is intrinsically pleasurable. Here the concept draws attention to how, in capitalism, labour became differentiated from domestic and social spheres; something undertaken at the behest of others, for economic gain. This illuminates a distinction between festivals as places where festival-goers temporarily experience a form of freedom and the labour undertaken by producers to create that realm.

The logic of capitalism is accumulation of capital to invest in increasingly efficient production processes. Efficiency leads to division of labour, coded specialisation and differentiation in the workplace and between firms. Capital investment demands stable, law-abiding civic environments, so capitalism is rooted in culture: it requires established economic, political and judicial systems with their attendant administrative and regulatory bureaucracies (Gorz 1989). Capitalism is, therefore, an inherently complex system whose workings are ‘beyond the comprehension of the individuals within them’ (ibid: 32). Individual agents are given specialised tasks regulated by functions rather than norms. Specialists do not have an overview of organisational or systemic goals, which are in fact simply following the rationality of the underlying ideology, be it economic or political. The ‘nature and content of tasks, as well as their relations to each other, are hetero-determined in such a way as to make individuals and organisations - which are themselves complex - function like the cogs of a huge machine’ (ibid: 32). This heteronomous system is controlled by rules rather than norms and values and, because of complexity, results in unplanned and unanticipated outcomes as actions build upon earlier actions. For example, it was never intended the Arts Council should compete for sponsorship income with the
organisations it funded, the systemic logic led it in that direction as individuals within it worked towards their specialist goals.

Hetero-regulation can be typified as spontaneous or programmed (Gorz 1989). Spontaneous hetero-regulation such as traffic flows is systemic. Agents adapt individually to external forces. It has no meaning to those individuals and any coherence is coincidental rather than purposeful. Programmed hetero-regulation describes systems controlled by institutionalised norms and structures, such as The Highway Code. Communicational self-organisation is where teams agree work organisation amongst themselves at a functional rather than systemic level. Festival producers, operating in small teams, are experts at communicational self-organisation, and consequently appear both to themselves and others to be autonomous. However, economic rationality confers increasing importance upon sub-systems functioning by programmed hetero-regulation: that is to say, upon administrative and industrial machineries in which individuals are induced to \textit{function} in a complementary manner, like the parts of a machine, towards ends that are often unknown to them and \textit{different from those offered to them as personal goals} (Gorz 1989: 35. Emphasis in the original).

So, an individual actor’s objective might be to produce a local community festival and, therefore, appear to be spontaneous and autonomous, but from the perspective of a local authority this festival is one part of an annual events programme aimed at civic boosterism or social cohesion.

Whilst Gorz saw hetero-regulation as a function of capitalism’s drive for efficiency, it is relevant to not-for-profit festival production because of neoliberal interpenetration of the cultural sector in the UK and the ideological functions
Bourdieu (1984 [1979], 1995) ascribed to culture. For Bourdieu (1984 [1979]), society comprised fields in which individuals competed for status and power in the form of control over economic, social, symbolic or cultural capitals within the field. Fields can overlap and may have similar structures, but they all exist within an overarching field, the field of power, where an elite class competes for domination over subordinate classes. ‘High’ arts were consecrated by virtue of being the forms elites patronised. So the cultural world became complicit in affirming the superiority of elites in order to exchange cultural capital for economic capital. Bourdieu contrasted commercially interpenetrated arts fields with autonomous fields. He argued the latter constituted ‘fields of restricted production’, art for art’s sake arenas where the economic world was reversed (Bourdieu 1993b: 115). As the ideal audience for such autonomous works is other producers rather than consumers, status was gained through achieving peer approval according to criteria understood by group members rather than through financial success. Indeed, financial success might well be considered ‘selling out’ in some communities as it opens up the field to anyone with enough money to participate. This is a romanticised view of the artist and, problematically, depends on artists being economically secure enough not to concern themselves with commerce, further reinforcing their exclusivity, a point demonstrated by research into class divisions within the UK cultural sector (Brook et al. 2018). Autonomy, it could be concluded, is only available to the already powerful.

However, as Toynbee (2016) maintained in the music industry, because of over-production and disorganisation,

there is a field of production which remains unassimilable to the firm and its regularized discipline of accumulation. Instead of being subsumed under corporate control, the development of new forms [...] takes place in a series of ‘proto-markets’ which are poorly connected to the capital intensive sectors of packaging, distribution and the exploitation of rights (ibid: 27).
Proto-markets are ‘scenes’ with ambiguous boundaries between social life and commerce rather than fully commodified markets. Buying and selling does happen, but so does music-making for the love of it, for social esteem, or to break into the music industry as a career. Such complex, ambivalent and inconsistent attitudes to marketisation were also evident in the festival studies literature where festivals are sometimes communal spaces, and sometimes ‘fields of large-scape cultural production, specifically organized with a view to the production of cultural goods destined for non-producers of cultural goods’ (Bourdieu 1993b: 15. Emphasis in the original). Both Bourdieu and Toynbee pointed to tension in cultural production between its social reproduction role and its commercial potential. Whilst the logic of capital is greater efficiency, regularity and stability, the logic of cultural reproduction includes novelty and creativity, as well as tradition. And creativity is notoriously difficult to regulate (Hesmondhalgh and Baker 2011, Henry 2006, Bilton 2006).

This social, cultural or market dilemma was central to the typology devised for this thesis. It distinguished between commercial festivals and those that exist to reproduce an art form or a community. This will be explored further in the case-studies in chapters six, seven and eight. Here it raises questions about the extent to which festival production is regulated, or whether lack of market penetration means it is relatively autonomous?

For Gorz (1999) workers in knowledge economies were relatively autonomous because the embodied nature of knowledge made it difficult for companies to appropriate. Within the creative industries this is intensified by two factors. Firstly, creative work is intrinsically motivated (Henry 2006). Secondly, the evaluation of quality is a social process involving a complex system of creation, selection, validation and evaluation (Csikszentmihalyi 2014), so is difficult to control. Toynbee (2016) found music corporations were forced to outsource relations with musicians to brokers to
mitigate the risky nature of talent spotting and development, focusing instead on marketing and distribution. He maintained the spaces between institutions gave musicians a higher degree of autonomy than was the norm in more highly integrated markets. The role of brokers will be discussed further below, first it is important to acknowledge the role of government as an interested party.

For Alexander (2017) neoliberal penetration of the public sphere in the UK radically changed relations between government and the cultural sector. Previously part of the welfare state, she reasoned not-for-profit cultural organisations have been coerced or incentivised through resource dependency to take on board business practices tied to the market. Ironically, the Arts Council, envisioned by Keynes in 1946 as autonomously interested in artistic excellence as a result of its arms-length structure, became the very institution through which the state attempt to enact control.

Questions of structure versus agency, social versus market was evident throughout the festival studies literature discussed in chapter two. Understanding festival production as part of hetero-regulated ecologies drew attention to how festival producers navigated power structures in their environments. The tacit nature of cultural production shapes the sector, highlighting individual agency as more important than in other areas. This will now be explored further.

**Cultural intermediaries, brokerage and entrepreneurship**

The complexity of cultural scenes combined with suspicion of commercial exploitation makes corporate regulation of cultural producers within sectors without a clear production/consumption divide such as festivals difficult. The perception festivals’ artists and audiences share values creates a sense of authenticity. That is not to say that audiences are antipathetic to commercialisation. Sponsors are welcomed at many music festivals as they pay for additional stages and offer ‘experiences’ on site, so
long as there is an observable synergy between the festival’s and the brand’s values (Anderton 2011, Martin 2016). The issue is a question of cultural competency rather than market exploitation. Corporations are ill fitted to assess the market potential of new cultural forms as their focus is on stability. They have, instead, to rely on brokers, cultural entrepreneurs who identify talent and can persuade marketing departments to back them (Toynbee 2016). This concept can equally be applied to the urban setting in which the festivals studied operate. Festival producers act as brokers between their cultural fields, public authorities and audiences. Do they, as Toynbee found, use their expertise to create autonomous spaces between the various interests in their cities? And if so, what is the nature of that expertise?

A concept allied to brokerage is Bourdieu’s model of cultural intermediation, comprising ‘all of the occupations involving presentation and representation’ (1984 [1979]: 359). Part of the then new petite bourgeoisie, intermediaries operated on the margins of fields using cultural capital to influence value systems in a struggle for legitimacy.

They include ‘the cultural intermediaries’ of advertising, journalism, marketing, public relations and the modern – or rather, postmodern – media and culture generally. Their numbers have increased dramatically since the Second World War and these people are, in Bourdieu’s terms, engaged in a struggle for distinction. Their strategy tends to blur the boundaries between and diminish the hierarchical structure of, on the one hand, the arts and high culture and, on the other hand, commerce and mass-popular culture (McGuigan 2009: 293).

Cultural intermediaries were market actors operating in hetero-regulated fields rather than autonomous fields of limited production. They are the occupations created to shape and sell ‘creative products’ to consumers, efficiently. Bourdieu
argued fields such as publishing lost their autonomy in the latter half of the twentieth century as powerful commercial interests constrained writers and critics working for newspapers, leading to a valorisation of popular culture at the expense of the literary culture previously legitimised and bolstered by establishment elites. Whilst there are commercial interests with the festival sector in the UK, these remain disorganised with low barriers to entry ensuring over supply. As Toynbee (2016) showed in the music industry, these conditions militate against domination by corporations such as that in publishing. However, it serves as a reminder of the distinction inherent in late 20th century discourse between mass (commercial) culture and ‘the arts’, a discourse evident in the Arts Council’s narrow view of what it should fund. As Alexander (2017) contended, heteronomous interpenetration might take a number of forms, including colonisation of public policy.

Matthews and Smith Maguire (2012) took a broader view of cultural intermediaries, who they described as people ‘defined by their claims to professional expertise in taste and value within specific cultural fields. And they are differentiated by their locations within commodity chains’ (ibid: 2). Rather than gatekeepers who selected and shaped the symbols of mass culture for consumers, intermediaries were proposed as professionals working in various roles within cultural production from talent spotting through to marketing. This is closer to Toynbee’s (2016) notion of cultural entrepreneurship. For example, cultural entrepreneurs acted at the boundaries where artists met commerce. They might be called artist managers, producers or own small record labels. In the festival sector they might be a producer, artistic director, or venue manager. There are no defined career paths or qualifications; rather intermediaries have a set of complex skills. They must, first, be an ‘adept trader, able to buy low – by recruiting artists before their potential is recognized elsewhere, and then sell high’ (ibid: 28). Entrepreneurs have to cultivate an understanding of the proto-market they are prospecting in, to develop an ear for what is considered good. Second a cultural entrepreneur must be able to achieve this by either selling directly or be able to convince a marketing department of the
commercial potential and immanent value of an intangible experience. Bourdieu’s intermediaries did not identify the raw material, they acted at one remove to communicate the value of a product to customers. Finally, a crucial skill for a cultural entrepreneur is to retain the trust of artists, the creatives who embody the product, by protecting them from over exploitation, taking the role a step further than either Bourdieu or Matthews and Smith Maguire.

It is important to note all these concepts see brokers as somehow different to other actors within creative fields. They are concurrently insiders and outsiders (Rhodes 2006, Grant 1989). Bourdieu (1984 [1979], 1996 [1992]) introduced the concept of the intermediary as a result of his rejection of essentialist subjectivism that saw artists as Weberian charismatic creators and of objectivist structuralism that erased individual agency. His concepts of charismatic ideology, habitus and field attempted to explain the generative capacity of individuals, within objective social relations by asking ‘who creates the creator?’ (Bourdieu 1993c: 76). By focusing on and valorising artists, he argued, the power relations within the cultural production systems in which they were trained and within which they worked were obscured. He called the socialisation process through which questions of taste were learned habitus and defined this as

Durable, transposable dispositions, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures, that is, as principles which generate and organize practices and representations that can be objectively adapted to their outcomes without presupposing a conscious aiming at ends or an express mastery of the operations necessary in order to attain them. Objectively “regulated” and “regular” without in any way being the product of obedience to rules, they can be collectively orchestrated without being the product of an organising action of a conductor (ibid: 53).
Habitus acted to synchronise behaviour subconsciously without a coordinator, a form of social closure (Weber 2004 [1922]. It worked best within social groups so there is a need for translation between groups. Negus (2002), for example, illustrated the difficulty A&R talent-spotters had in convincing record labels to share their belief in particular artists. Their language was emotive, full of references to hunches and intuition. But labels needed to be convinced of the commercial potential in order to invest in building an artistic ‘brand’. Brokers were at the heart of this negotiation, their personal reputation and career on the line, but dependant on artists to deliver. These individuals had to be able to generate trusting relationships, bonds, with artists to support their creative processes, and bridge to the market, which had to be convinced to back their instincts.

**Bridging and bonding**

What is distinctive about festivals is they act in multiple ways. They are structures in which cultural values are negotiated between professionals (Moeran and Strandgaard Pedersen 2011), between professionals and audiences (Fabiani 2011) and between professionals and the state (Longkummer 2016). They are also produced by individuals and teams whose personal values, distinctive skills and knowledge are seen to embody each festival’s defining ethos. They have, therefore, to be able to bridge and bond (Wilks 2011) without necessarily having formal status.

Weber (2004 [1920], 1968) differentiated between three forms of authority. Rational-legal or bureaucratic leaders gained authority and power from societal or organisational rules. Traditional authority was validated by convention; for example, the son of a current monarch will become the next monarch. Charismatic individuals were embodiments of disruptive forces in society. Charismatic leaders had no external status for their authority so could challenge both traditional authority and rational-legal structures. Movements coalescing around charismatic individuals could create social revolution, or be born from it, reinventing social order in their wake.
(Weber 1978 [1920]). The language used to describe festivals is resonant of the language used to describe charismatic individuals. Nisbett and Walmsley (2016) noted arts audiences spoke about leaders of cultural organisations they felt an affinity with as charismatic. Festival founders are also spoken about in this way in the interviews for this thesis in chapters six, seven and eight.

Management studies analysis distinguished between social charismatics and ideological charismatics (House et al. 1991, Conger and Kanungo 1987, Yukl 1999). The central assumption these writers hold in common is charismatic leaders’ effectiveness lying in an ability to communicate attractive and seemingly attainable visions to their followers to effect change. Visions defined shared purpose and integrated group identity around ‘an imagined future’. (Conger et al. 2000, Shamir et al. 1993). Strange and Mumford (2005) conceived of visions as mental models used as guides to what is normal and acceptable behaviour. These models included conceptions of cause and effect in an integrated framework that logically explained the world. Visionary leaders managed to make a leap from the world as it is (descriptive) to a future state by extending the logic of the mental model or identifying weaknesses the new model (vision) resolved. They concluded vision involved ‘a set of beliefs about how people should act, and interact, to make manifest some idealized future state’ (Strange and Mumford 2002: 344). As with critical spatial practices, sociable charismatic leadership can have long lasting effects on institutional or place imaginaries. Festivals can reflect an existing framework to reinforce norms or show potentially different futures.

Within the concept of visionary leaders Strange and Mumford (2002) distinguished between ideological leaders, who espoused strong personal value-systems as standards to be maintained, and charismatic leaders who emphasised interpersonal and social needs. Both leadership styles were posited as effective at integrating followers’ mental models but led to different outcomes and were effective in different contexts. Socially orientated visionary leaders created a sense of unity by
communicating a need for change leading to a better future, while for ideological leaders, belonging was related to shared ethical frameworks. Social charismatics were found to be much more likely to have achieved positive societal outcomes such as institution building. The authors concluded the social or personal orientation of the vision is of more import than styles, pointing to the need to focus on festival producers’ orientation in the case-studies. Nisbett and Walmsley (2016) noted even followers who had not met the artistic leader, ‘distant followers’, sought to create a sense of relationship with charismatic leaders. They hypothesised the arts context encourages charismatic leadership because the outcomes are uncertain and, in times of change, people seek reassurance from a credible vision from a trusted visionary. This romantic notion of leadership is based on affective connection close to Weberian ideas of charisma as a commitment to a God-given vision embodied by the leader and echoes the language associated with festivity.

The risky and intense activity involved in producing annual festivals is a bonding experience. This is particularly true in a festival’s early years, when, as one interviewee said, ‘until it happens no one is going to believe it’s possible’. Founders act as charismatic cultural brokers who are trusted because they communicate confidence in an imagined future (social) or through ‘structures of feeling’ (Williams 2001 [1961]: 63), intangible but communal ways of seeing the world through shared reference points. Because they are produced in a cyclical rhythm, festivals create shared cultural memories, stable symbols linking past to present (Assmann 1995). The underlying rhythm itself inspires confidence in the future beyond the everyday linear rhythm of days and weeks.

**Festivals in place and time**

Lefebvre (1991b, 2004) maintained time and space were socially produced structures in which power is instantiated. The working day and week constrained leisure to evenings and weekends. The rhythms of everyday life were generally experienced
unreflexively, but time is dynamic, multiple and heterogeneous, leading to arrhythmias when one community’s normative rhythms butt up against another’s. Such moments, and others such as crises and long durée rhythms (Williams 2001 [1961]) operating cyclically, or conjunctural shifts between eras (Hall, Jacques 1989) spotlight normalised assumptions expressed in time.

Unlike weekly seasons of events, festive cycles are experienced as annual or biannual rhythms, interrupting everyday life, disrupting daily norms, calling back across time to previous editions, creating a link with earlier times. Shared narratives, reference points and symbols are at the heart of communal identity. For Assman (1995) this commonality derived from collective memory. He distinguished between communicative memory and cultural memory. Communicative memories derived from living individuals’ interpretation of experience shared through informal means such as conversation.

Limited temporal horizons are communicative memory’s most important characteristic.

[T]his horizon does not extend more than eighty to (at the very most) one hundred years into the past [...]. This horizon shifts in direct relation to the passing of time. The communicative memory offers no fixed point which would bind it to the ever expanding past (1995: 127).

Memories become objectified, unifying, normative symbols that can move beyond contemporary and local relevance to become cultural memory through tangible fixed points such as monuments, images or texts or intangible institutionalised practices such as rituals. Cultural objects and practices such as festivals can interrupt the everyday to connect contemporary societies to meanings embodied in objects, images or experiences when they were first made, creating confidence in the
authenticity of its current interpretation – and, from there, to an imagined future. Cultural memories can operate at a larger scale than communicative memory, a useful normative tool for politics and brand marketing. In contrast to communicative memory, cultural memory is not temporally limited. This makes it possible for communities in different eras to imbue the same symbols, or places with meaning. Each era reconstructs the meaning of cultural memory in reaction to its contemporary context, but the sense of cultural significance gives the new interpretation a sense of authenticity. The Glastonbury festival in the UK, for example, benefits from the myths associated with its site. Cultural memories underpin festivals’ social meaning and political effects. First, festivals are themselves meaningful symbols that can be transmitted historically in a stable form; second, they institutionalise symbolic practices into rituals; and, thirdly, they fulfil a social need for apparently authentic shared identity.

Cultural planning makes this link between places, memories and the institutionalised systems that shape them political. It argues for a ‘culturally sensitive approach to […] place promotion and marketing’ (Bianchini and Ghilardi 2007: 281) based on mapping cultural resources, an area’s built and natural environments, local practices, products and skills, and its mindscape, the perceptions of and ways of thinking about a place. Yet, whilst it is more attuned to underlying place distinctiveness, underpinning the cultural planning approach remains an assumption decision-making power lies with planners who have consulted residents in drawing up plans, rather than residents themselves. According to Landry (2000) cultural planning requires policy makers to be creative, pointing to the need to ask how open planning systems are to different perspectives. Are the representations planners’ use limited to maps and charts, or do they incorporate spatial practices and imaginaries? Echoing Lefebvre, Mels (2016) felt time and space were indivisible aspects of the same phenomenon. ‘Past and present arrhythmic conflicts and polyrhythmic dialogues are equally children of their historical time and place’ (ibid: 3-4). Buttimer (1976) argued to consider time without space, or space without time was to omit the element of
experience from lifeworld analyses, and to ‘record facets of experience as emanating from a past, but shed little light on direction or meaning’ (ibid: 278).

In his typology of festivals Falassi (1987) discussed the dressing of festival sites in order to change their meaning for the duration of the event. Following Williams (2001 [1961]), this is part of a signifying system communicating and reproducing a social system. Falassi considered it as temporary. But festivals are also repetitive, setting up dynamic, cyclical rhythms. Lefebvre (2004) argued such repetitions were never the same twice. The existence of a previous event created a trace, a rhythm, so the second and third contain a memory of those that have gone before. Bloomfield (2006) considered such urban imaginaries as essential in retaining place identities. Place imaginaries involve spatial practices at different temporal and physical scales; daily, monthly, annually and ‘once in a lifetime’, historical and mythical, as well as neighbourhood, citywide, national and global. Such a scope is beyond this study, but it does indicate the significance of time on place, and place on time, as analytical frameworks through which to scrutinise hetero-regulation and autonomy within festival production in regional cities. As their production operates cyclically, festivals illuminate rhythmic discords and tensions between the hetero-regulatory institutions in their places. As enduring organisations themselves they are neither temporary nor ephemeral. Rather they are overlooked urban institutions working in and shaping the regulatory spaces in their places.

**Summary**

This chapter has reviewed theoretical literature, considering the implications of concepts of institutional norms and structures, autonomy and hetero-regulation, cultural intermediaries, bridging and bonding, placemaking and rhythmic structures for analysing festival production within regional cities. It identified festivals as complex hetero-regulated institutions in their own right, operating on the margins between social, political and economic interests. Festivals are dependent on funders
and sponsors, but the specific nature of cultural knowledge and festival’s distinctive cyclical rhythms means they are outsiders, operating in the public sphere through mastery of symbolic meaning and, therefore, potentially disruptive and difficult to control.

As cultural brokers, festival producers operate more-or-less autonomously within proto-markets and across institutional boundaries. Successful brokerage is dependent on producers’ ability to develop trust in conditions of ambiguity, to embody visions of the future which artists, funders and audiences find attractive and want to support. This was found to be like behaviours identified as charismatic in the management literature. Festivals and charisma were both, in different situations, associated with disruptive change, or with communicating strong values systems. Because of their cyclical and visionary nature, concepts of cultural memory and cultural planning pointed to festivals as highly situated and Janus-like institutions looking both backwards and forwards, linking place histories, rituals and imaginaries with future-orientated placemaking. The chapter drew attention to these time-space rhythms as a perspective through which ‘the dynamic wholeness of lifeworld experience’ (Buttimer 1976: 279) could be researched. Building on these reviews of the literature, the next chapter addresses key questions of methodology, provides a critical discussion of the research design and implementation and details the choice of cases.
“That’s what the festival is for. It’s for fulfilling this place” (interviewee, Buxton Festival)

Chapter 5. Research Methodology

This chapter explains this study’s research methodology. This thesis aims of investigating the role of festivals and festival producers as institutions and agents within urban life and public policy in the English regions, necessitated an understanding of festivals as sites, events and institutions within highly situated policy and production networks. The fieldwork approach and its guiding interdisciplinary principles are detailed first. The chapter then evaluates the research design and implementation, including a reflexive discussion of my personal standing as a festival producer and academic within the field. The ideal type model underpinning the choice of cases studied is elaborated before the chapter concludes with a discussion of the research process and its ethical considerations.

Methodological overview

In order to address the complexity of festivals as sites and artefacts, research for this thesis was multi-method. Ethnographic methods and theoretical models were synthesised with policy analysis and crystallised into a theoretical ideal type framework.

Case-studies were considered the best method for understanding festival production’s multi-layered roles within regional cities because of the situated and qualitative nature of the topics being investigated. In-depth interviews were undertaken with forty-three individuals involved in producing and supporting three festivals, and management documents, policy papers and newspaper articles examined. A list of interviewees is included in appendix one. Anonymous ‘vox-pop’ style interviews were also undertaken with local residents and business owners in the
three sites to gain a sense of how each festival was perceived locally by those without an apparent vested interest. Conversations were noted contemporaneously, but anonymously.

The setting for the research was urban arts festivals in the East Midlands of England. These cases were selected as exemplars of ideal festival types developed in the first iteration of the research. In addition to the three ideal types introduced in chapter one and explored and elaborated further below, other types were considered. These included religious festivals and community festivals and those emerging in relation to new technologies such as gaming and light festivals. Appendix two contains a list of the festival types and festivals considered and summarises the reasons for not choosing each. One thing that became apparent during this stage was that many, if not most, festivals do not survive very long. That makes the three cases chosen exceptional, as they have been successfully produced over extended periods.

The three types were chosen because they have typically been incorporated into urban policies related to place identity and city marketing. Aesthetic festivals are produced to maintain, promote and develop an art form, but also to attract cultural tourists; commercial sector festivals are produced within creative industries, focused principally on profit and position themselves as events for those who work in the sector as much as the public; and civic festivals are produced for instrumental urban public policy purposes including local pride and belonging. The East Midlands was chosen as a region of England as it has a number of averagely sized towns and cities, and has consistently been at the bottom of cultural funding tables in the UK (Stark et al. 2013, 2014, 2016), meaning policy outcomes were unlikely to be skewed by the presence of a major cultural attraction such at the Royal Shakespeare Company in Stratford-upon-Avon. As this was ethnographic research my experience of working professionally in and with festivals in the region meant I had some insider knowledge and contacts, which aided access and understanding.
The thesis’ aims necessitated understanding each festival’s perceived purposes amongst their producers, and as sites of struggle between interest groups by examining festivals’ ‘external claims and internal realities, public rhetoric and private thought, ideology and practice’ (Born 1995: 7) by probing competing interests.

Methodological influences

Born’s (1995, 2011) ethnographic research conceived of cultural institutions IRCAM (the Institut de Recherche et de Coordination Acoustique/Musique) in Paris and the BBC as ‘systems of knowledge’ which ‘intervene influentially in the history of the fields that they inhabit, having often inertial effects on their reproduction, and yet also acting as the site of emergence, expression and magnification of crises or transformations within those fields’ (ibid: 190). This conception was influential. Born also argued cultural institutions’ complexity demanded an ethnographic analysis of organisational conditions, social relations of production, creative practices and authorial subjectivities. This involved setting the analysis in ‘the wider fields of cultural production in which it operates’ (ibid: 188), in this case festival studies; combining history and ethnography to explore ‘how historical dynamics are mediated by the institution and its charismatic leaders, and how in turn the resulting institutional conditions influence what is made’ (ibid: 189). Finally, she argued for critical interpretation of cultural objects produced by the institution. Whilst this latter element is beyond the scope of this thesis, an understanding of cultural taste as socially constructed and therefore its influence on cultural fields (Bourdieu 1984 [1979], 1993a) underpins the conception of festivals as contested sites and points to fields of production as governance technologies.

The role of the researcher has also to be considered. Buttimer (1976) identified three conceptual stances in relation to lifeworld: body subject, intersubjectivity and time-space rhythms.
The idea of body subject focuses on the direct relationships between the human body and its world. The idea of intersubjectivity endeavors to construe the dialogue between person and milieu in terms of sociocultural heritage and the social roles assumed in the everyday lifeworld. The idea of time-space rhythms is proposed as one perspective which could yield insight into the dynamic wholeness of lifeworld experience (ibid: 279).

In other words, phenomenological enquiry asks how do time, space and sociocultural practices influence people's personal and social life experiences and their interpretation of those experiences at a particular time and place? It identifies individuals as active in the process of places ‘becoming’ and argues signifying systems can have different meanings for the groups experiencing it, and a further set of meanings for the researcher. As indicated in chapter one, I have substantial personal experience as a festival producer in the region. This, and my status as an academic, facilitated my access to festival producers and their networks. However, it also meant I had to overcome my own inculcation within professionalised norms in order to identify and analyse underlying ideologies. While there undoubtedly remain cultural assumptions of which I am unaware within the lines I chose to follow in my questioning and the analysis, I found the use of cultural theory (reviewed in chapter five) helped me to distance myself from the specific cases and sensitised me to questions and issues which fell outside the theories. One example was the insight that, despite definitions of festivals as temporary events, both festival production and festivals themselves are enduring; their superficial temporariness is a function of them operating on annual rather than daily or weekly cycles. I was also aware my future professional relations with festival producers and funders might have influenced my analysis. Depersonalising the analysis through the typological development and thematic analysis processes enabled me to consider individuals and events as exemplars of specific phenomena, providing vital critical distance.
Research design

By focusing on particular instances of a phenomenon, case-studies provide in-depth accounts of processes, relations and events in order to uncover insights with wider implications. Denscombe (2014) saw attention to detail as case-study analysis’ unique advantage. In concentrating on a small number of instances, the researcher is able to view phenomena holistically not as isolated factors. The strength of case-studies is in considering why particular outcomes have transpired rather than simply identifying outcomes. Bryman (2015) identified case-study’s potential in situations where the object to be studied is complex and itself the focus of examination, not just a setting. In this instance, festival production processes, and relations between producers and their communities of place and interest are the focus of as well as the setting for the research, making case-studies a suitable research design.

One criticism of case-studies is they are not reliable data sources because they cannot be replicated. Yin (2009) argued replicability was only one source of reliability, providing five case-study types which could provide insights: the critical case, the revelatory case, the longitudinal case, the extreme case, and the representative or typical case. Although elements of some of the other categories can be found in the cases in this research, the latter is the best description of the type used in this thesis. Here the ‘objective is to capture the circumstances and conditions of an everyday or commonplace situation’ (ibid: 48). While a festival is, by definition, not an everyday situation, the cases studied have been chosen as they are considered to epitomise types of shared features within festival production as the basis for theory building and subsequent generalisability. They are, therefore, ‘ideal’ types.

Ideal Types

Weber’s (1978 [1920]) ideal type is a conceptual device for abstracting and identifying the essential and distinctive features of social phenomena. These features are an analytical distillation of key defining principles and provide the basis for empirical
research. The ideal types model (Table 2.1 below) analysed cultural festivals based on their characteristic hetero-regulatory and internal structures. These distinctive features were institutionalised into norms and practices that provided an understanding of the motivations, consequences and meanings of observed actions within the case-study festivals and as a theoretical basis for understanding others of that type. For example, the extent to which artistic quality is valued is a distinguishing feature between aesthetic festivals and other types and can be seen to influence the status of workers involved in selecting the arts programme. There is no expectation ideal festival types actually exist, rather there are fundamental elements that identify cultural events as festivals rather than seasons or distinguish between varieties of festivals and point to their underlying meanings within their societies. The particular shape of a feature provides a trace of decisions taken so points to underlying institutionalised value systems.

The purpose of developing a typology for this research was to abstract the notions and dimensions of ‘festival’ so that specific details or contexts of particular cases could be understood in accordance with underlying logics.

The same historical phenomenon may be in one aspect feudal, in another patrimonial, in another bureaucratic, and in still another charismatic. In order to give a precise meaning to these terms, it is necessary for the sociologist to formulate pure ideal types of the corresponding forms of action which in each case involve the highest possible degree of logical integration. [...] But precisely because this is true, it is probably seldom if ever [the case] that a real phenomenon can be found which corresponds exactly to one of these ideally constructed pure types (Weber 1978 [1920]: 19-20).

Due to their complexity and ubiquity, there is no one agreed definition of the term festival. It is widely used to describe a range of cultural, social and commercial
activities of diverse scales. For that reason festival researchers have often
differentiated by type. Durkheim (1995 [1912]), for example, argued festivals were
either sacred or profane; Mair (2009) classified festivals by size as mega-events,
hallmark events, major or local events. Van der Wagen and White (2010) presented a
typology based on similarities in festival programming, such as sports versus arts.
Getz (2007) distinguished between professional and amateur, competitive versus non-
competitive, single or mixed genre or art form, and paid or free. None of these
typologies was felt to adequately explain the urban arts festival phenomenon, so the
first stage in the research design was to develop a typology of ideal types of local arts
festivals. This model identified distinguishing features between urban arts festival that
enabled case-studies to be chosen as exemplars.

Thick description

As identified in the introduction, research into the contemporary form of festivals has
tended to a pragmatic focus on economic and social impacts rather than taking the
form of theoretically informed studies. There are notable exceptions (e.g. Quinn and
Wilks 2017, Wilks 2011, Giorgi et al. 2011) most of which focus on consumption
rather than production. The decision was, therefore, taken to view the cases through
‘thick description’ (Geertz 2003 [1973]). Thick description asks the researcher to consider

the structures of signification [...] their social ground and import [...] [this] is like trying to read (in the sense of “construct a reading of”) a
manuscript - foreign, faded, full of ellipses, incoherencies, suspicious
emendations, and tendentious commentaries, but written not in
conventionalized graphs of sound but in transient examples of shaped
behavior’ (Geertz 2003 [1973]: 9).
This form of analysis attempts to understand meanings, examining actions within their cultural, political, spatial and temporal settings. Thick description pays attention to cultural cues leading to actions being interpreted in particular ways by different social groups. Using this approach within a locality illuminates the variety of meanings that might be associated with a festival. So, participants present a view of their and the festival’s culture and values rather than as a singular ‘truth’ during interviews (Atkinson et al. 2002). The first step was the production of a typology of local urban arts festival’s institutional purposes based on my professional understanding of the field as a basis for selecting the cases to be studied.

**Ideal festival types framework**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
<th>Interest groups</th>
<th>Norms from</th>
<th>Company type</th>
<th>Production processes</th>
<th>Participation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Table 2.1 Ideal festival types criteria
The typological framework was devised from an understanding of regional and national arts festivals produced in regional cities drawn from experience of working within festivals over fifteen years in two East Midland’s cities, Nottingham and Leicester, from 1990 to 2005, including Nottingham Arts Festival, the Now Festival of Live Art, the Riverside Festival, Barclay’s New Stages Festival, NottDance, Shots in the Dark Film Festival and Leicester Comedy Festival. Further research was undertaken to produce a case-study relating to Buxton International Festival’s lifecycle as part of an Arts Council England funded research project into festival production (Jordan 2013). While some of the interviews for this have been reanalysed for this study, additional interviews were undertaken to update the material and ensure each case study was asked the same questions (see appendix one for lists of interviewees). These experiences, combined with a detailed critical review of literature relating to festivals led to a conceptual framework of three festival ideal types: the aesthetic, the commercial sector and the civic, based on their distinctive value systems, consequent design choices and production networks. See Table 2.1 above.

The sample identified for this research was urban arts festivals in the English regions, professional festivals which can be identified as having an arts programme as a central feature. As the research rationale identified public policy as an area for consideration, the population was narrowed to those that received public subsidy, either from Arts Council England or from their local authority. In considering the research question further, it was important to choose festivals that were unexceptional. The sample, therefore, was restricted to festivals in towns and cities without a high national or international profile. A second factor was to identify festivals with an established track record of longer than five years in order to trace their historical development. As noted above, since so many festivals fail after an edition or two, this must be considered a limitation of the study, as these cases are in that respect not typical. For that reason, the analysis chapters ask what the factors are that enabled these festivals to survive. Finally, since conjunctural shifts in cultural policy were considered significant, festivals were chosen as examples of those
successfully founded in three noteworthy periods: the start of Thatcherite marketisation (1979), the National Lottery launch (1994), and the 2007-8 banking crisis.

The final selection also contained an element of convenience sampling. Convenience sampling involves picking a population or subject that happens to be available to the researcher. As urban arts festivals are ubiquitous, it was convenient to sample festivals located close enough to my home to be easily visited. As I live and have contacts working in festival production in the East Midlands of England, an area without a dominant city, it was possible to fulfil the purposive criteria and convenience criterion within the region and minimise wider contextual differences. Table 2.1 summarises the typology used to choose the sample.

Since it was not possible for reasons of time and access to research more than three cases, I focused on identifying suitable cases for each of the overarching types. The main criteria for selection were related to the thesis questions: were the festivals publicly funded? If so, since a main impetus for the research was a perceived disconnect between policy narratives and festival outcomes, was the funding predicated on economic policy or tourism outcomes? Seventeen festivals were considered. Starting with the eleven festivals researched in Maughan and Bianchini’s (2004a: 17) impact report⁴. Of these, three were considered open studios rather than urban arts festivals, four were no longer running, two were community-focused events (carnival and mela⁵), and one was a traditional festival (Tideswell well dressing). This left Buxton Opera Festival, Buxton Fringe Festival and Leicester Comedy Festival. I had previously researched Buxton Opera Festival for an Arts Council funded project.

---

⁴ Maughan and Bianchini’s case were Art on the Map Open Studios, Buxton Festival, Buxton Fringe Festival, Derby Caribbean Carnival, Leicester Belgrave Mela, Leicester Comedy Festival, Newark on Water Festival, Northampton Open Studios, NOW, Tideswell Well Dressing and Wirksworth Art and Architecture Trail.

⁵ Mela is a Hindi word for a fair or festival. As Newbold and Kaushal (2015) showed as with carnival, the form has travelled with diasporic communities from the Asian subcontinent.
aimed at developing case-studies for teaching purposes (Jordan 2013), so had contacts and interview material which could be repurposed. Buxton Opera Festival also appeared to fulfil the criteria of an aesthetic type. I also had contacts with Leicester Comedy Festival (LCF), having worked with the producers since 1995, firstly as a manager of a venue and secondly as an academic teaching festival production. LCF appeared to fulfil the criteria of a commercial sector festival type. Since Buxton Fringe Festival started the year after Buxton Opera Festival and would also have been a commercial sector type, a third option was sought. As two different places had already been selected it was felt the third case should take place in another city in the East Midlands so Derby, Lincoln, and Nottingham’s festival calendars were explored, focusing on those with a profile outside their cities. Appendix two (page v) lists the festivals identified as potential cases and the reasons they were not chosen for this study, although there is scope for further research with these or similar events. The case chosen as a civic festival was Derby Festé, which launched in 2007, so also fulfilled the date criterion as well as the demonstrating features associated with the civic festival type. Although I had not worked with Festé, one of the producers had given guest lectures at De Montfort University (DMU), so I was able to make contact easily. The ideal festival types are detailed next.

**Aesthetic festivals**

**Purpose**

Aesthetically driven festivals place artistic quality, art form development and mobilising art appreciation at the centre of their work. They may or may not produce or present the traditional ‘high arts’, but the programme will require audiences to have developed significant cultural capital in order to fully participate in the artistic milieu (Wilks 2011, Négrier 2015).
Production processes

Aesthetically driven festivals generally have a closed curation processes so give authority to specialists within the art form who are considered experts and to networks of artists and arts professionals within the field. Such festivals have a senior member of staff, often called the artistic director, with responsibility for artistic quality.

Interest groups and norms

Aesthetic festivals prioritise relations with artists, leading them to value professional development for artists. Links to educational institutions are evident and provide support for emerging artists, a source of cheap talent and engagement with new developments. Specialist cultural funding bodies such as the Arts Council, touring arts organisations, artists and relevant media organisations will all have an interest. Where festivals work with established artists and so attract critics and agents, emerging artists are given opportunities to develop their networks and potentially to be spotted by an agent or director (Comunian 2015, 2014).

Depending on the festival, local interest groups will include venues that rely on the annual rent; leisure economy service providers such as restaurants and hotels; and the local authority, which will provide services such as licensing and may also use the festival in their marketing materials. Trustees, donors and sponsors may also have interests related either to their sense of identity as supporters of the festival, or for brand building and marketing. Whether or not the festival produces its own productions, the programme will be curated to reflect an artistic vision, rather than market or political pressures.
Organisational legal structure

Aesthetic festivals tend to be either independent not-for-profit organisations, charities or associated with a charitable arts venue that uses the festival as an opportunity to work in other places, with alternative audiences or genres.

Participation

Aesthetic festivals tend to be ‘staged’ as they are selected by an artistic director. Participation is primarily by professional artists, or as audience members. Dedicated supporters can gain some extra access by becoming donors, but this is limited to special events rather than executive decision-making. Although trustees have governance responsibilities, unless they have artistic expertise, this rarely includes opportunities to feed into the artistic programme.

Aesthetic festival case-study selection: Buxton Festival

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
<th>Interest groups</th>
<th>Norms from</th>
<th>Company type</th>
<th>Production processes</th>
<th>Participation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Table 2.2 Analysis of Buxton International Festival as an aesthetic festival type

Having started in 1979, this festival has maintained one vision; the production of rarely seen operas. This vision is known and repeated by staff, board members,
donors and audience members. When the festival’s survival was at risk in the mid 1990s, the board chose to follow the riskier path of independence and continued in-house production rather than to become incorporated into Opera North (Kennedy 2004) and lose control of the artistic programme. As such, the festival’s core values appear to be those identified in the typology. Table 2.2 above compares the festival against the features identified for aesthetic festival ideal types in the typology. In addition to its core artistic purpose, it is a registered charity and funded by Arts Council England, and sponsored by related interests, as well as local firms. It therefore appears to be a suitable exemplar of the aesthetic ideal type (see chapter six for a full discussion).

**Commercial Sector Festival Type**

**Purpose**

Commercial sector festivals are found within the unsubsidised creative industries such as comedy, film and TV, gaming, book publishing or commercial music. These festivals are part of sectors dependent on establishing economic exchange values for symbolic goods. Consider, for example, book festivals. What a reader is willing to pay for a book rests on the quality of the writing not the value of the binding. Book festivals bring together editors, publishers, booksellers and the trade press and so provide a rare opportunity for different parts of the sector to negotiate the market ‘worth’ of a book. They influence artistic decisions made subsequently, as these taste-makers’ decisions sway choices in the wider field (Moeran and Strandgaard Pedersen 2011). The purpose of a commercial sector festival is therefore either to make a profit, or to facilitate and promote sector growth.

**Production processes**

Commercial sector festivals may or may not have a role titled festival director, but this position tends to be administrative and, if open to the public, marketing focused rather than curatorial. On the one hand, open, fringe-style festivals allow anyone to
book a venue and pay to be part of the festival’s marketing. Artistic quality is the responsibility of the individual event producers, while the festival is a market intermediary packaging the whole festival as a brand. On the other hand, closed festivals are like aesthetic festivals with an individual or team responsible for curating a staged programme. The difference here is that choices are likely to be based on judgements related to market popularity rather than artistic quality.

**Interest groups and norms**

In addition to shareholders, interest groups for this type are drawn from its industrial field. This includes artists, and various intermediaries or brokers such as promoters, agents and distributors operating at various points in the supply chain. Umbrella groups and development agencies also have an interest. For example, BAFTA (The British Academy of Film and Television Arts), a charity that supports, develops and promotes the British moving image arts sector and the BFI (British Film Institute), a charity founded by Royal Charter that distributes Lottery funding to film producers, distributors and educators in the field, are both involved in the Edinburgh International Film Festival. Other interests include commercial sponsors wanting to promote their brands through association with a festival’s image, and media outlets looking for content.

Norms for commercial sector festivals are also drawn from these production structures as festivals must fit in with touring cycles, and bands and technicians operate to professional industry standards that ensure compatibility between touring companies, venues and festival sites.

**Organisational legal structure**

Commercial sector festivals operate as private limited companies operated for profit, or, where festivals are run by industry bodies, as either separate charities or with the festival being a project it runs in order to achieve its developmental aims.
Participation

Participation in commercial genre festivals can be either open, as in Edinburgh Fringe Festival, where the festival is an intermediary organisation which charges a fee for its marketing and co-ordination services, but participating artists or producers book venues and organise their own events. Other commercial genre festivals are closed, for example Glastonbury or the Hay Book Festival, with an artistic director or team choosing the programme, just as in aesthetic festivals. The public can participate in the same way as in aesthetic festivals, as audience members. While some festivals might combine open and closed elements, the purpose of an ideal type is to distinguish the main logics driving behaviours. The extent to which festival producers open up decision-making, and to whom, is an indicator or underlying power structures within an industry or location. Where it is mixed, it is likely the festival is subject to hetero-regulatory forces.

Commercial sector festival case-study selection: Leicester Comedy Festival

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
<th>Interest groups</th>
<th>Norms from</th>
<th>Company type</th>
<th>Production processes</th>
<th>Participation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Leicester Comedy Festival</td>
<td>To support new &amp; emerging talent, celebrate British comedy and support comedians, promoters and venues to put on the best shows and events.</td>
<td>Leicester City Council. Trustees. Festival Friends. Trusts and foundations. Corporate sponsors (mainly local companies, or media companies operating in comedy sector e.g. Union Jack Radio and Dave TV).</td>
<td>Senior staff members are professionals recruited mainly from not-for-profit arts sectors. Norms from the comedy touring circuit highly influential as festival has to fit in.</td>
<td>A project run by the Big Difference Company, a registered charity.</td>
<td>Open (fringe style): artists and promoters arrange venues and pay a fee to participate in the festival's marketing.</td>
<td>Professional and non-professional comedians. Professional comedy promoters. Specialist and non-specialist venues including hotels, bars and restaurants. Trustees. Volunteers, including students on specialist festival management courses and Comedian of the Year judges. Audiences.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2.3 Analysis of LCF as a commercial sector festival type

Leicester Comedy Festival operates in the highly commercial comedy field, making it a seemingly clear example of a commercial sector festival. However, it is run by a registered charity and receives funding from Leicester City Council, which raises
questions about whether it was a suitable case. Further analysis, however, indicated public funding is insufficient to ensure the festival’s survival and is predicated on the festival generating footfall to the city’s hotels and leisure economy. In this sense the festival was considered similar to those operated by industry bodies to promote a genre or not-for-profit festivals such as Glastonbury within the commercial music industry.

The festival’s combination of ‘fringe’ style open programming and curated elements such competitions and special events, the increasingly commercial nature of the comedy field and the five year partnership with TV company Dave, which was in place when the case was selected and throughout the fieldwork, meant LCF was considered an appropriate case for exploring this ideal type.

Civic Festival Types

Whether they are produced in-house by local authorities, or by independent organisations with a community agenda, there is an imperative to integrate the festival’s values with that of the local community and with the associated municipal authorities’ aims. These agendas might be driven by economic development departments, or by concerns over social cohesion, or by a need to develop a sense of community value and civic pride.

Purpose

Civic festivals attempt to address and mobilise public policy agendas in their localities. The policy narrative most commonly used in civic festivals is positive economic impact; that it brings in tourists or increases footfall to a neglected part of town. But civic festivals can be connected to any area of public life. They are the festival type most strongly connected to the concept of the cultural public sphere (McGuigan 2005b) as the producers are likely to be active in civil society as
community or campaigning groups or local authorities and share values with an authorising community or body (Hewison 2006).

Production processes

Given the need for authorisation, civic festival’s process of creation is less open than a commercial sector festival, but not as closed as an aesthetic festival. A community festival encourages civil society groups to participate in creating parades or shows that local family and friends then attend. The participative nature of the production of civic festivals is one of their key features; the role of the festival producer is to co-ordinate rather than curate.

Interest groups and norms

Festivals operate in complex environments requiring them to address the needs of a variety of interest groups; those that receive public sector funding must gain and retain the confidence of their communities. Civic festivals value this complexity, using the production process as an engagement device, as different sectors of the community are given space to participate. In order to engage the communities which are the focus of much urban policy, such as migrant groups or young people excluded from education, festival producers engage with a variety of voluntary sector bodies and public authorities working in those areas, so norms for civic festivals derive from community development practices or themes or local government standards as much as their art forms.

Organisational legal structure

Because the focus is on community outcomes, civic festivals tend to operate as charities, or community non-profits. In some instances they might also be directly delivered by public authorities.
Participation

Civic festivals aim to create and cement good social relationships in an area, to create, sustain or develop a sense of community. Communities are groups where people feel that they are members, that they have influence over the group, that their needs will be fulfilled through the group and that they have a shared emotional connection (McMillan and Chavis 1986: 9). Civic festivals encourage active participation in creation so are less likely to be entirely ‘staged’ in the way aesthetic and commercial sector festivals are. Residents may be involved as performers, programmers, in governance or volunteers.

Civic festival case-study selection: Derby Festé

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
<th>Interest groups</th>
<th>Norms from</th>
<th>Company type</th>
<th>Production processes</th>
<th>Participation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Derby Festé</td>
<td>To draw Derby residents from across the city, including communities who rarely visit, to the Cathedral Quarter. For non-arts attenders to experience the Cathedral Quarter’s arts venues and programmes.</td>
<td>Derby City Council. Arts Council NPOs in the city. Cathedral Quarter businesses. Artists.</td>
<td>Decision-making is led by senior members of staff at the city’s Arts Council-funded cultural organisations and Derby City Council’s events team. Norms from the contemporary dance, outdoor arts and circus arts fields.</td>
<td>No formal legal status - run in collaboration by Derby City Council’s events department and the city’s Arts Council National Portfolio organisations.</td>
<td>Semi-open: a co-ordinating committee of local interest groups selects the programme for some stages. Closed: artistic director curates the main programme.</td>
<td>Professional outdoor artists. Community groups from across the city chosen to perform. Venues and businesses in the Cathedral Quarter. Derby City Council’s events and planning teams. Audiences.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2.4 Analysis of Derby Festé as a civic festival type

The complexity of the public policy agendas attached to arts and cultural festivals in regional cities is reflected in this festival’s steering group, which brings together three of the city’s Arts Council funded venues, Déda, Derby QUAD and Derby Theatre, with the City Council’s events department, Derby LIVE, which also has responsibility for the Guildhall Theatre and the Derby Arena, a large scale venue at the Velodrome.

This quartet is joined by community arts group Baby People, which works with young
people from a range of disadvantaged backgrounds across the city. The festival steering group provides a neutral arena for these various interest groups to meet and work together at a time when the financial pressures of austerity are a source of tension. The fact that the project encompasses a number of agendas such as enhancing wellbeing, increasing a sense of belonging and civic pride, supporting local artists and opening up the city centre to groups who would otherwise feel excluded means that each can focus on achieving their own objectives within the festival. See Table 2.4 above.

**Ethical Issues**

In undertaking social research ethical issues are of paramount importance. Bryman (2015) noted that social researchers are in positions of power in relation to participants in that they are collecting, analysing and publishing data about them. They therefore have a duty to ensure that their research does not harm participants. The potential for harm can be alleviated by ensuring that the researcher has informed consent and avoids unnecessary invasions of privacy and deception. Permission to conduct the research was gained from De Montfort University's Ethics Committee in July 2013 (see Appendix 2).

All the depth-interview participants were chosen on the basis of their professional or voluntary involvement with a case-study festival and were only questioned in relation to that. All interviewees were fully informed in writing about the nature of the project (see appendix two). The size and interdependent nature of the festival field meant it was not possible to guarantee anonymity to participants. Bryman (2015) highlighted the difficulties in ensuring research participants were not identifiable in either written-up research or any records kept. Interviewees named in this thesis have been given the opportunity to read the sections relating to them and asked to check for factual accuracy of facts and interpretation. They were not given the opportunity to demand changes, but some of the email responses have been quoted and used in
the cases as additional information. Other interviewees’ views are presented anonymously, and care has been taken to ensure they are not identifiable. Each interviewee gave informed consent (see appendix two). Interviews were recorded and transcribed. Transcripts and recordings have been kept on an encrypted disk available only to the researcher and supervisors.

The researcher’s safety was also considered. All the interviews took place in offices or public spaces such as cafés.

**Sampling criteria and processes**

This thesis focuses on local arts festivals as an appropriate subject and site for analysis. The tripartite typology was used as a guide to identify three case-studies. This is a form of purposive sampling that enables the researcher to control the amount of variety in the sample in relation to key variables that relate to the research question (Bryman 2015). Once the festivals were chosen, individuals were selected and approached to participate. This is a form of purposive sampling that aims to create a strategic sample of, in this case, interviewees with knowledge and experience relevant to the research question and to each ideal type.

As with the case-study selection, clear criteria are necessary for selecting participants (Bryman 2015). The most significant criteria for selection from the typology included that each festival’s main focus would fit one of the types, as demonstrated in their programming and identifiable stakeholders. The criterion for selecting participants in this research was that they should be or have previously been significantly involved in the production of one of the case-study festivals. To this end, the executive or artistic director of each of the selected festivals was contacted about the research and invited to participate. At the end of each of those interviews, the researcher asked for suggestions of others who would have relevant experience. These individuals then suggested others and so on. This is snowball sampling and is
particularly effective in researching networks (Biernacki and Waldorf 1981). A weakness of snowball sampling is that it can limit the perspectives studied, and that was true in this study. It proved difficult to find interviewees excluded from production networks. However, since one of the research questions this study seeks to answer is who was considered important in the production of a festival by the others involved, snowball sampling was considered appropriate for identifying individuals to interview.

Data collection

Data were collected for this study through semi-structured interviews with individuals involved in producing the three case-study festivals, and detailed thematic analysis of documents related to festival management and cultural policy documents.

Semi-structured interviews were chosen as the primary means for collecting data as the objective was to collect rich ‘thick description’ and detailed answers on the general theme of festival production, but without leading the discussion, or restricting the interviewee to pre-prescribed topics (Bryman 2015, Mason 2017). An interview guide was developed (see appendix three) based on a conceptual model informed by Critical Incident Technique (CIT). CIT is widely used in organisational development and psychological therapies (Butterfield et al. 2005). The technique asks interviewees to describe specific events and phenomena they consider to be significant. CIT is considered particularly useful for collecting data on self-understandings of phenomena, as a basis for generating theory and building models (Woolsey 1986). In this case, the question ‘what are you proudest of in relation to your involvement with the festival?’ was useful in highlighting what interviewees valued most, an indicator of their underlying belief systems. When similar answers arose from different respondents, it was an indicator of shared beliefs.
This study was undertaken over seven years, 2013-2019, alongside my work as an academic at De Montfort University. Primary data were collected, transcribed and thematically analysed after the additional Buxton Festival fieldwork (2013-14); after the Leicester Comedy Festival fieldwork (2013-2015); after the Derby Festé fieldwork (2016-17); and finally after all the fieldwork was completed. The individual themes are developed in the case-study chapters through thick description of the case considering the literature survey. Cross cutting themes, and areas of similarity and difference are analysed and a theory advanced in chapters nine and ten.

**Reflections**

In addition to the issues of replicability and my personal biases discussed above it is important to note the research design’s other strengths and weaknesses. For example while snowball sampling proved effective in ascertaining the views of festival producers active at the time of the field research, and those still in contact with the festival, it is likely to have skewed the results towards those favourable to the festival in its current form (Biernacki and Waldorf 1981). The design left little scope for identifying alternate views, for example those who may have wanted to participate but were prevented or people who had left because the festival’s values diverged from theirs. This area would be interesting to explore in a future research project.

The research design also gave little weight to the views of audiences or residents. This was felt to be an acceptable omission as both have been a focus of festival research elsewhere (e.g. Snowball 2016, van Niekerk 2016), and the focus of this research was on production. However, one aspect that remains unanswered as a result is whether the producers have been successful in achieving objectives related to audiences and residents.

One further area of weakness was the necessity of selecting cases with evidence of longevity. By definition this makes them outliers as so many festivals do not succeed
for more than a few editions. This was felt to be an acceptable choice as the cases were settings through which to test the logics of the ideal types the focus was on how their value systems related to their hetero-regulatory environments. In focusing on successful festivals it was possible to trace these developments over time to show how their producers navigated cultural and urban policy changes. The contrast with less successful founders is one which might usefully be followed up in a separate study, particularly in light of the significance of charismatic leadership identified in the thesis.

Case-study research design summary

This chapter has discussed this thesis’ methodological underpinning and research design choices. It has sited the research within an ethnographic and phenomenological tradition that sees social life as both object and subject. It has discussed the use of ideal types as a method for selecting case-studies and justified the selection of three cases as exemplars. It has also considered the choice of case-study as an approach and discussed the choice of mixed methods including thick description for analysing the cases in order to generate theory. The shortcomings of these methods, including replicability, researcher bias and inherent exclusions in selecting participants due to snowball sampling were identified.

Whilst the three case-studies have been identified as exemplars of their type, thick description was an iterative process that aimed to explore where the data contradicted as well as supported the developing framework. The methodology therefore included continuously seeking out new themes. These themes are developed in the three case study chapters which follow and critically analysed as examples of hetero-regulation and charismatic autonomy in chapters nine and ten.
Chapter 6. Buxton International Festival Case-study

Introduction

Buxton International Festival was chosen for this study as its management structure and programme indicate it is a festival that prioritises an artistic tradition, in this case opera. Aesthetic festivals value artistic quality. They curate work from artistic traditions, rediscovering works or artists and commissioning new works. Aesthetic festivals operate within an existing artistic tradition and have closed curation processes controlled by experts, requiring significant cultural capital to appreciate the programme (Négrier 2015, Bull 2015, Wilks 2011).

This case-study examines the concept of the ideal aesthetic festival ideal type by exploring Buxton Festival’s producers’ values from its foundation in 1979 until 2014 when the last interviews were undertaken. If an artistic tradition and artistic standards demanding high cultural capital are central to a festival’s purpose and meaning, this should be evident in its practices, which will reflect and conform to those of its wider field, and indicate it sees itself as occupying an intermediary role in communicating those standards. By studying Buxton Festival’s history through interviews with sixteen people involved in founding and organising the festival, defined here as cultural producers and interests, supplemented by vox pop interviews with residents, and analysis of relevant media coverage, board reports and accounts, this chapter investigates shifts in cultural capital between the festival, Buxton’s policy networks and national and international arts and opera fields. It reflects upon the significance of opera as an art form widely considered highbrow, so likely to attract producers and audiences with high cultural capital, in determining relations between the festival and Buxton. It argues the festival’s field values enabled it to identify potential in the town’s history its residents had overlooked.
Description

The spa town of Buxton sits in the hills on the edge of the Derbyshire Peak District national park, a rural area in central England. In 1979 Buxton became the unlikely setting for an international opera festival staging unique productions of rarely seen operas. It takes place over seventeen days in Buxton Opera House, a 902-seat venue designed in 1903 by celebrated architect Frank Matcham. Buxton is a town of 24,000 people, twenty-eight miles south of Manchester, thirty miles west of Sheffield and fifteen miles from Chatsworth House, the ancestral home of the Dukes of Devonshire (High Peak Borough Council n.d.). The festival programme consists of operas produced by the festival and an ancillary programme of literary talks, concerts and recitals.

The festival is produced by Buxton Arts Festival Ltd, a registered charity, based in the town. In 2013 it turned over £1.5 million, employed nine staff and was funded as a National Portfolio Organisation by Arts Council England, and by High Peak Borough and Derbyshire County Councils (Buxton Arts Festival Ltd. 2013). A board of trustees, the Friends of Buxton Festival and the trustees of an endowment, the Buxton Festival Foundation, supported the staff team. The artistic director selected the opera programme, directed key productions and oversaw those directed by associates. The general manager managed other elements of the programme.

Audiences for the festival are largely over 45 years old and live outside Buxton (Maughan and Bianchini 2003), visit the festival as an annual treat and enjoy dressing formally. There is a crossover between the opera audiences and the larger audience for the literary talks, most of which take place during the day in the Opera House, Palace Hotel, Pavilion Arts Centre and Pavilion Gardens Marquee. The dress code for

---

the talks is smart, or hiking clothes, as a proportion of the audience enjoys walking in the Peak District National Park as part of their visit. The atmosphere throughout the festival is conventional, educative and social, a chance to meet friends in the town’s impressive heritage buildings and gardens, and to enhance their social and cultural capital (Wilks 2009).

Maughan and Bianchini’s (2004a) survey of festivals in the East Midlands region of England found Buxton Festival was unique amongst the festivals researched in attracting a tourist audience. 72 per cent of attenders surveyed lived outside the town and visited to attend the operas (91 per cent) and literary events (41 per cent). There is little crossover between opera festival attenders and the concurrent Fringe Festival, with 86 per cent of those surveyed saying they had not attended the Fringe. Residents approached during the festivals in 2010, 2013, and 2014 were unanimous in praising its ability to fill hotel beds and to increase turnover in shops and restaurants. They themselves sometimes attended fringe events or literary talks, but no one interviewed had been to or was planning on attending an opera. The prevailing attitude is best summed up

The Opera Festival isn’t really for us. You can’t knock it though; the hotels are rammed during the festival and you can’t get in any of the restaurants. It’s wonderful for that (Buxton resident, July 2013).

Buxton Fringe Festival and other festivals such as the Gilbert and Sullivan Festival⁸, the Big Session, the Festival of World Cinema and the Family Festival were all spoken

---

⁷ 10 people were engaged in conversation about the festival in informal ‘vox pops’ format whilst I was visiting the town to undertake formal interviews. Of the people engaged all defined themselves as Buxton residents and it is these conversations that are reported here.

⁸ The Gilbert and Sullivan Festival took place in Buxton from 1994 to 2013, when negotiations with High Peak Borough Council over the level of support it received could not be satisfactorily concluded. The festival has taken place in Harrogate, North Yorkshire since 2014 (Christiansen 2013).
of with affection, even if interviewees had not been. The Literary Weekend, organised by Buxton Festival, was also something residents might go to, but interviewees felt they lacked the cultural capital to enjoy opera, so Buxton International Festival was of economic value only.

**The festival’s beginnings**

Buxton Festival started in 1979. It was the brainchild of Malcolm Fraser, an opera producer who had moved from Welsh National Opera to work at the Royal Northern College of Music in Manchester in 1976. Fraser had received a Churchill Fellowship to undertake a tour of opera houses and festivals in Europe in 1969 and had been particularly taken with the Festival of the Two Worlds, Italy. Composer Gian-Carlo Menotti’s festival launched in 1958 in the small town of Spoleto in Umbria. Spoleto was convenient: it had two theatres and a Roman amphitheatre and was easily accessible by train from Rome (Spoleto Tourist Information 2016). The practicality of the town was something Fraser noted.

That trip lit quite a lot of fires in me. One fire in particular was festivals. Having been to Spoleto and talked to Menotti […]. I had worked at Glyndebourne in 1963, but although people kept saying this was going to be the Glyndebourne of the North, I never […]. Glyndebourne is so different. I kept saying that the extraordinary thing about this is that apart, from Glyndebourne, this is the only opera house outside an urban area capable of staging grand opera (MF 30 June 2010).

Fraser had been looking for an opening to develop his career but found it was “very difficult to find a stable base with a basic income as a director that would give me more flexibility to do stuff […]. so, I got a job at the Royal Northern College of Music” (MF 30 June 2010). Having moved to Manchester, Fraser took a day trip to
Buxton. He was immediately struck, despite its dilapidated state, by the town’s potential as a festival site.

I couldn’t believe how wonderful it was. There was this fantastic looking opera house and all these adjoining, as it were, festival spaces, which is the Pavilion Gardens (MF 30 June 2010).

He contacted a leading light in the town’s amateur dramatic community who had the Opera House keys.

I eventually found a lady called June Dunleavy and all the local theatre activity seemed to be coordinated by her in The Playhouse building⁹ […]. June took us in and the theatre was absolutely incredible because it was clear that the stage was as big as Sadlers Wells. The wings are not quite as big and it had this wonderful compact auditorium, intimate, but which had over 1,000 seats which is as big as Bayreuth. That’s what makes it so unusual, economically, there’s a high proportion of box office. At that time there was a river running through the pit and the stalls had sunk down and there was a major dip in the stalls with the seats sort of subsiding into it (MF 30 June 2010).

The Opera House’s beautiful setting and its size, which fulfilled the practicality criteria he had learned from Spoleto, appealed to Fraser as a cultural broker negotiating the boundaries between the artistic field and the market. He arranged to

---

⁹ Situated at the opposite end of the Pavilion complex, this space was called the Paxton Suite from the late 1970s until it was refurbished in 2010, when it became the Pavilion Arts Centre. It is a flexible performance space that can be configured as a 360-seat auditorium or a 90-seat studio. [http://www.buxtonfestival.co.uk/plan-your-visit/venues/](http://www.buxtonfestival.co.uk/plan-your-visit/venues/), accessed June 17 2016.
meet Ray Walter, chairman of the Council’s Amenities Committee, which was responsible for the building to discuss the festival proposal.

The Buxton context

Buxton, which has a natural hot spring, was developed by the 5th Duke of Devonshire in the 1780s as a spa town to rival Bath. He commissioned a number of statement buildings including the Crescent Hotel, and the then world’s largest unsupported dome (Devonshire Dome 2016). The Natural Mineral Baths opened in 1854, followed shortly afterwards by the arrival of the railway in 1863, which heralded a boom in visitors. The 122-bed Palace Hotel was built in 1868, creating demand for entertainment. The Pump Room opened in 1884 and the cast iron and glass Octagonal Hall, to which the Opera House was attached in 1903, the Pavilion itself and Pavilion Gardens were all developed during the 1870s (Buxton Advertiser 2003, Buxton Festival 2016). The town’s fortunes dwindled though and by the mid-1970s the town’s tourism economy was in decline. In his role as on the Amenities Committee, Ray Walter felt local politicians had neglected the sector.

Tourism had gone down to absolutely awful limits of nothingness, so many of the hotels had closed down. The major hotel, the Palace Hotel was under threat of closure. About 30 per cent of the shops in Buxton were closed. I had been on the Buxton Borough. One thing I remember from Buxton Borough was they passed a resolution that tourism was dead so we should go for engineering. [...] One or two of us said, ‘Wait a minute, you can’t dismiss tourism because half of the rates of this town are paid by hotels and guest houses and restaurants and shops catering for tourists. How are you going to replace that?’ But they closed the Pump Room, the thermal baths, the natural baths and were in the process of closing down the Playhouse Theatre (RW 16 July 2010).
As well as his political interest in Buxton’s tourism economy, Walter was a member of several local arts groups. Some ten years earlier he had volunteered as stage manager at the Playhouse Theatre. One evening Buxton Amateur Dramatic and Operatic Society (BADOS) arrived to find Buxton Borough Council had not only decided to close the venue but had made a start on building work to turn it in to a storeroom for a café in the Pavilion.

I went into the Playhouse Theatre to prepare […] but when I go there I found they had closed down two of the dressing rooms and cut a hole in the wall. And they said “Oh, we’re going to close the theatre down completely after you finish and going to make it storage”. So, I said, “Well, to start with put that back, make it good, because we have hired this theatre for a week and we want it as we saw it. It’s in the contract, it’s in the agreement.” So this went to the chief executive and the town clerk and there was quite a fuss, but they had to do it and we managed to put the show on. The fun started then. I started campaigning. “You’re not going to close that theatre, that’s the only theatre we’ve got in the town”. The Opera House was a cinema at the time. “For heaven’s sake, whatever you think, it’s a tourist town still and we need attractions for the tourists,” and there was a hell of a fight and in the end they said “Oh, alright, you take the theatre over”. So, we got it for a peppercorn rent […] So I formed a trust to run it and we operated that for 10 years (RW 16 July 2010).

This experience was formative for Buxton’s arts community. It created a tight-knit group with experience of successful political campaigning and venue management. Walter had also become Chair of Amenities, so was in a position to influence policy within the local authority when Fraser and Hose approached him. Here Fraser had identified a key insider actor within one of Buxton’s policy networks, an insider interested in the festival to encourage Buxton’s tourism economy (Rhodes 2006).
Refurbishing the Opera House

At the first meeting with Walter, Fraser pitched the idea of an annual international opera festival taking place over three weeks, arguing it would be a major tourist draw. The sticking point was the Opera House itself, which was leased to Hutchinson Entertainments Ltd. as a cinema. The lease had three years to run and, despite its damp, rundown condition, Hutchinson had proposed bricking up the theatre’s proscenium arch and building a wall down the centre of the auditorium to create a second screen, a proposal under consideration by the Council.

The late 1970s in the UK were economically difficult and there was pressure from national government on local authorities to reduce expenditure, making the idea of investing in a theatre difficult to justify politically. Walter, however, was convinced a festival could stimulate the town’s tourism economy. Despite opposition, he proposed investing in a feasibility study and managed to persuade the Council to find the £5,000 necessary. Walter recalled the architectural engineer crying out, “what a wonderful theatre. Look at it! You ought to be ashamed” (RW 16 July 2010).

The feasibility study was a turning point as it became clear what a rare building the Opera House was and how the Council’s reputation was being damaged by its decrepit state. There were political reservations. Restoring the Opera House and supporting a festival would be expensive and unpopular locally, when Hutchinson Entertainments paid a regular rent of £1,250. Even the Director of Tourism, Selwyn Jepsom, was unconvinced. He complained to Walter “we need an opera festival like we need a hole in the head” (RW 16 July 2010). However, following pressure from Walter, the Council leader Keith Allman cited the building’s poor repair and recovered the tenancy.

With the return of the lease, the question arose of how best to manage the Opera House. Walter suggested a charitable trust following the Playhouse model. This gave
him the opportunity to co-opt one of the festival’s fiercest and most powerful critics as chair.

One of the people who was against the whole business was the mayor at the time, Margaret Millican. […] I put it to the committee that we would need a trust to run the House and suggested that there would be no one better to run it than Margaret Millican. So, of course, immediately she was “Chairman of the trust? Yes, OK”. From that moment onwards she forgot all about opposition (RW 16 July 2010).

Millican, who owned and ran the town’s Lee Wood Hotel, went on to chair the Opera House trust for twenty-six years (Buxton Advertiser 2009). The festival was run by a separate trust, Buxton Arts Festival, chaired by David Rigby, a management consultant friend of Fraser’s based in Manchester. The governance division between the festival and theatre protected the Opera House from the financial risks associated with festival production and freed the festival to focus on questions of artistic quality rather than venue management. It placed the festival as an organisation for tourists and opera lovers from outside the town whilst the venue could focus on serving resident’s cultural tastes.

Once the trusts were set up fundraising for the refurbishment could start. Walter persuaded the Council to use its reserves as seed funding. The 11th Duke of Devonshire, descendent of the town’s founder and owner of the Chatsworth estate a major tourism draw some 15 miles away, contributed the first £1,000. With £450,000 from Europe and a contribution from English Heritage the Opera House was completed just in time for the opening of the first Buxton Opera Festival in July 1979.
Cultural assets

There was evidence in the fundraising of a divide between those interested in the refurbishment of the theatre, and those interested in the festival. Many Buxton residents echoed Selwyn Jepsom’s feelings about opera, which was considered exclusive (Bereson 2002). Walter, for example, was criticised as an elitist, although he had never seen an opera before the festival started and had little interest in it except as a tourist attraction. Fraser, by contrast, argued they were indivisible.

When we established [the festival], it was for the building and the environment. I knew that if we could put a product in there of a high enough standard it would work. Because it’s such a unique environment. I don’t know how you could just say, “We will establish a festival”. You’ve got to have a leading idea and usually that’s got to come back to a certain environment, a place. And fulfilling that place. Buxton is fortunate it has this building, this Opera House. It’s the only place of its type outside an urban area. And that’s what the festival is for. It’s for fulfilling this place, in the knowledge that if you fulfil it properly the whole package is irresistible (MF 30 June 2010).

To this end, the festival sought credibility by working with national and international figures from the opera world, to position the festival as part of the mainstream. With support from the Duke of Devonshire, Fraser and Hose used their professional connections within the opera field to recruit Lord Harewood, Managing Director of English National Opera 1972-1985 and Opera North 1978-1981 as well as artistic director at Edinburgh Festival and founder of Leeds Triennial Musical Festival to the board alongside baritone Geraint Evans; and John Tooley, General Director at Covent Garden from 1970-1988.
Rather than being simply a piece of good fortune, the existence of a grand 1,000-seat opera house in a small spa town is an indication of the town’s heritage. Grogan et al. (1995) argued a community’s culture is shaped by three elements: the beliefs and values transmitted through narratives, traditions and myths; the media used to express these ideas, including art, design, theatre and conversation; and the artefacts produced by the culture, such as buildings and spaces, in this case the Opera House, Pavilion, Pavilion Gardens and, by 1976, a surplus number of hotel rooms. These elements created a palimpsest of tangible and intangible resources that, over time, added up to unique sense of place. The existence of these resources in Buxton was because of its history; the fifth Duke of Devonshire developed it as a tourist destination to rival Bath in the eighteenth century and it continued as a successful spa town throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. From this perspective, Fraser simply recognised a largely forgotten part of Buxton’s heritage.

Whilst the Opera House was the main factor for some, others agreed the festival was an essential element for tourism and cementing the Opera House’s future.

Having the festival was absolutely the key. The festival had got to be a success. And it had got to be a success over a period of time, several years, before you could take the theatre seriously. We were in a period when theatres were closing down all over the country. In fact, I remember, our first public meeting trying to get money. And we invited the Duke of Devonshire as a guest and all of the editors of the papers […]. And the editor of the Daily Telegraph, a big fat fellow, got up and asked, “Why do you think you can reverse the trend and operate a theatre successfully when so many towns around you are failing, closing down their theatres?” (RW 16 July 2010).

Fraser, too, felt the theatre would not attract enough local residents to sustain the Opera House throughout the year.
I could never have envisioned the Opera House being as it is now.\(^{10}\) It’s only dark a few nights a year now. […] I never imagined there would be a public in Buxton for a year-round theatre (MF 30 June 2010).

In fact, the Opera House has become a core resource for Buxton’s residents; nearly 200 of whom regularly volunteer in customer service roles (High Peak Borough Council 2015) whilst the festival remains an event for visitors.

**Festival development and growth**

With the Opera House refurbished, the first festival took place in July 1979. Fraser had a very clear vision.

We had quite a lot of things to establish quite quickly. The first was that there was no point doing another opera-based festival with the same repertoire that you could see at most other places in England. So, we would go for that vast number of operas that had not had a great performance history. The important thing was to establish the repertoire with an opera that was not done that often, but on the other hand, we didn’t want it to be so way out that no one had heard of it, or that wasn’t known to be a wonderful piece that’s why in the end we chose *Lucia [di Lammermoor, 1835, Donizetti]*.

---

\(^{10}\) Buxton Opera House operates as a receiving venue with a programme of approximately 450 ticketed shows a year, including theatre, musicals, comedy, dance, classical music, folk, pop and rock gigs and community events. Events are primarily one night, with some theatre productions running for half a week. In 2015/16 the venue was dark for only 36 days, on most of which it offers theatre tours of the building. In addition to 39 salaried staff and casual technicians and event managers, 190 customer service volunteers run the theatre’s front of house operation. It is a registered charity and supported by High Peak Borough Council (High Peak Borough Council 2015).
In-house production of rarely performed operas was established as a core value for the festival and was still evident in decision-making fifteen years later when the festival came under pressure to become Opera North’s summer season as will be discussed below. Artistic quality, positioning the festival in the international opera circuit, was seen as essential, confirming the value system for aesthetic festivals identified in the typology.

We also wanted the best artists we could afford. We found it was important to have international auditions […].

There was this awful moment on the opening night when Fausto Tenzi the tenor, he was nervous. We booked him partly because he had a great voice, but partly because he was due to sing the same part at the Met in New York. But he never in rehearsal sang the high note. At the first performance, [the soprano] was quite a large lady, and just before his aria, he stepped behind her, put his head down and gobbed on the floor. And then he cracked the note. So, then we had to fire him. Quite a thing for the opening of a major opera house (MF 30 June 2010).

For Fraser, this was “the opening of a major opera house” to set alongside Glyndebourne and Aldeburgh. Establishing artistic credibility was essential. Sacking the tenor, a singer booked by the Met, demonstrated strong core values, identified Fraser as an ideological charismatic, a leader with a strong sense of beliefs.

Place and cultural brokerage

Bourdieu’s (1993a) conception of the field draws attention to power relations within and between social groups and these were evident in Fraser and Walter’s strategies for mobilising their professional and political resources. The significance of the Duke of Devonshire’s support in raising support amongst the aristocracy should also not be
underestimated. This also draws attention to how settings shape festivals. Buxton’s history as a spa town meant it had elegant buildings designed for wealthy visitors. This history was significant, as was its proximity to Chatsworth, since it is the major local town and has most of the area’s hotel rooms. Having additional tourist attractions in the area added to Chatsworth’s potential market. The town’s attractiveness and appropriateness as a festival venue was often commented on, particularly after its heritage buildings were refurbished. Walter attributed this change in perspective to the festival.

[W]hat Malcolm achieved with the festival […] is responsible for Buxton having looked up tremendously as far as tourism is concerned. We’ve now got at certain stages of the year not one single bed available (RW 16 July 2010).

Blau’s (1989) research into elite culture argued networks developed around particular cultural facilities. These networks’ expertise in sourcing relevant resources reduced costs for others who wanted to set up in the same market. The high profile of a cultural facility or festival had the effect of attracting or educating new audiences, thereby increasing the size of the market. Similarly, elite art forms, such as opera, are associated with particular lifestyles, such as fine-dining and particular fashion sensibilities, meaning restaurants and shops catering to this group will cluster nearby. Festivals bring a high number of actors in a field together in a specific place where these interactions can be viewed and analysed. The setting of a festival based around an art form perceived as elitist and highbrow, in a relatively isolated place with little apparent appetite for opera provides an interesting case for exploring ‘tournaments of values’ (Appadurai 1986: 21) where status and values are contested through ritualistic behaviours and symbolic and cultural interactions rather than economic exchange. Buxton Festival focused on high artistic values in an art form not popular amongst the town’s residents so provided a good site for exploring power struggles
between place and taste fields, local and elite social capital, and professional cultural capital.

The importance of cultural capital

Fraser invested a huge amount of time and personal cultural capital in the festival. His and Hose’s professional reputations meant they could attract singers and musicians, administrators and board members who would not otherwise have been interested in a new festival in a regional town. For example, Helen O’Neill who undertook the press and marketing for the first few festivals was also press officer at Glyndebourne. Such professional networks were essential in establishing the festival’s international standing. Once artists had visited Buxton and enjoyed its festive atmosphere, they were happy to return.

Malcolm and Anthony were able to use their professional and friendship networks to attract high quality performers to Buxton in the summer, when many opera houses are dark, at less than their normal fees. These people loved to come to Buxton for five weeks or so; it was like a summer holiday (DR email 2013).

These networks established the festival’s credibility amongst key financial backers. Whilst the town had the physical resources developed, it lacked the necessary social and cultural capital to recognise and exploit them. In lobbying for the Opera House to be refurbished as a home for the festival, the founders brought different groups together, some from Buxton and some from outside; some from the arts establishment, such as the chorus from the Royal Northern College of Music, and some from the town establishment. They attracted investment from philanthropists and local authorities into the festival and the theatre, and from commercial companies into two of the town’s main hotels, the four star Palace Theatre, which had
been slated for closure just before the festival was launched and three star Old Hall Hotel opposite the Opera House, which was refurbished in the early 1980s.

Once the Opera House was refurbished, the festival’s founders showed no interest in Buxton’s resident artistic community. Indeed, groups such as BADOS and individuals such as Dunleavy and Walter were excluded from the festival trust. More difficult was Michael Williams, a Buxton solicitor with excellent, albeit amateur, musical qualifications. Neither Fraser nor Hose wanted Williams on the festival board. They were determined the festival’s artistic programme should be on a par with Glyndebourne and felt such prestige could only be achieved by employing agents with high cultural capital, tacitly defined as professionalism.

The festival’s relations with the professional arts establishment in the form of the Arts Council of Great Britain (ACGB) was, however, problematic, probably because Rigby, the chairman, approached them for funding prior to the first festival, but lacked cultural credibility.

I used to go and see Keith Jeffery at the Arts Council. He was the festivals officer. I’d take him out for a meal. Basically, he couldn’t see why we needed another festival in a silly place like Buxton. I never even got him near to understanding what we were trying to do. I gave up in the end. That was the end of our relationship with the Arts Council. That was ‘77, ‘78, ‘79, that was when I was courting him. We never got anywhere near (DR 21 July 2010).

---

11 Keith Jeffery was Director for Festivals and External Affairs from 1971-1979. During his tenure some festivals became significant recipients of Council subsidy. In 1979/80 a new Regional Department took over responsibilities for mixed media festivals (Arts Council of Great Britain).
The Arts Council did not see the festival as embedded in Buxton’s local culture. The policy throughout the 1970 and 1980s was “a policy of response. If the local people demanded something and the local authority supported them, we would respond” (AF, Arts Council of Great Britain Finance Director 1957-1985, 9 June 2011). For Field festivals were a particular problem because the policy combined responsiveness to local demand with a focus on subsidising ‘creative performing companies’. Companies making new work were preferred to those that programmed from an existing canon, receiving theatres or festivals with a programme of non-touring work.

I advised, “we don’t want to subsidise a theatre. We don’t want to subsidise someone playing at being an impresario. We will give as much money as we can to all of the companies playing at Sadler’s Wells, Ballet Rambert and everyone, so they can pay a rent to the theatre.” Now festivals were a real problem for us unless they grew out of a creative force. The Stratford on Avon festival grew out of Shakespeare, Aldeburgh grew out of Britten, Malvern grew out of Shaw. There was always the feeling that we were […] supporting a creative force in that festival. It wasn’t an artificially brought together series of events whereby an impresario said, “Let’s have a festival”. We were always looking for the creativity side (AF 9 June 2011).

It was also felt important local authorities supported organisations. The Arts Council was reluctant to subsidise the Royal Shakespeare Company for many years because Warwickshire County Council was concerned about disruption by theatre visitors to Stratford-on-Avon. In Buxton’s case the County Council was unsupportive because of the festival’s focus on an art form it considered would not interest its residents. So, Buxton Festival was referred to the North West Regional Arts Board, then an independent trust. The Regional Arts Boards were more responsive to local authority priorities than ACGB, and some could see the benefits of using the arts for
community or economic development purposes, an approach to funding culture later labelled ‘policy attachment’ (Gray 2004). North West Arts provided some £18,000.

As O’Brien, Wilson and Campbell (2011) pointed out, the notion of cultural intermediaries is most useful when considering how boundaries between different social groups are negotiated. Who decides what is ‘legitimate’ culture? And how are these norms transmitted and received? Understanding of cultural forms such as opera that are no longer part of popular culture, requires specialist education. As a result, the opera world is often considered elitist and exclusive. In Buxton’s case there was little interest in opera amongst residents.

Fraser was a professional with significant cultural capital which allowed him to negotiate with North West Arts where Walter had been unsuccessful. He did not, however, have sufficient capital to convince Arts Council Great Britain to support the festival.

Quality at any price

The first festival was a success, with full houses and positive national press coverage. Despite problems with the tenor, production standards were judged to be high. Fraser convinced the board to expand to produce two operas of the same scale for the second edition. They decided on a Shakespeare theme and produced Ambroise Thomas’ Hamlet (1868) and Berlioz’s Beatrice and Benedict (1982).

And we got wonderful singers and performers and a wonderful director for the Beatrice and Benedict […] Opera Magazine said ‘two bull’s eyes’. They both got very good reviews. The great Thomas Allen singing Hamlet was extraordinary. […] And then to our shock and horror there were just hundreds of unsold seats (MF 30 June 2010).
The festival did not have any reserves, so the poor ticket sales caused a cash crisis and it became clear halfway through the festival that it could not pay everyone.

When Janet [the general manager] realised she couldn’t pay people they went on strike and said, “We’re not putting up the next show”. So, I got a call at home. I remember arriving in my DJ about noon. I got [the technical staff and stage management] to come onto the stage. Me alone. I said, “Look, as we speak someone is down at the bank in Manchester and my guess is that they will fund this and I want you to believe me that our heart is in the right place and you will get paid.” […] So they said, “OK, but we’ll just do this one.” […] Then what happened was, it was arranged that a suitcase full of pound notes would be brought up from Manchester. And we paid people in pound notes from the suitcase. A bit later that day, I went to see Tom Allen in his dressing room and I said, “Tom, we have a bit of a problem here, you’ve probably heard what’s happening, and we can’t afford to pay you.” And he said, “David, I’ll do it for nothing” (DR 21 July 2010).

At this point, the Duke of Devonshire’s networks were key to the festival’s survival. Local MP and stockbroker Spencer Le Marchant was well connected in the region and had been introduced to the festival by the Duke. He arranged a meeting between the festival’s directors, High Peak and Derbyshire County Councils and various potential donors and backers, at the Manchester branch of Williams and Glyn’s bank. A rescue plan was hatched including loans from the local authorities and an overdraft from the bank, which was written off some ten years later. Dennis Foreman, the chairman of Manchester-based Granada Television, donated £10,000, and an anonymous donor gave £15,000. David Hunter, a school friend of Le Marchant’s and a senior partner at a major Manchester stockbroker, was suggested as chairman of the festival trust to replace Rigby.
In retrospect, both Fraser and Rigby felt this crisis helped to crystallise support for the festival and catalyse donors to act.

The crisis helped people decide that they wanted the festival. The fact we had established that we could produce shows of a certain quality and bring in an international press made the guys in Buxton think “we don’t want to lose this” (MF 30 June 2010).

Hunter threw himself into the role, persuading affluent friends and acquaintances to donate. The festival entered a period of stability. Budgets were based on what the board and friends were able to raise, and Hunter kept a close eye on costs. Despite the relative lack of money, Fraser insisted the festival staged its own unique, rarely seen operas productions to attract national and international audiences. That period lasted until 1988 when Fraser left. Hose took over as artistic director. Hunter retired from the board in 1990.

A crisis of capital

Given the small scale of the organisation (three full-time permanent staff), the loss of both Fraser and Hunter, the main sources of cultural and economic capital, had a destabilising effect. Hose attempted to take over the reins but did not have the same credibility as Fraser. Rigby, who had remained on the board, felt the festival was drifting.

Late 1980s. I produced a business plan in order to give it a new direction. That’s the kind of thing I could do. It was all wrong as it happens. It was too logical, and this kind of business isn’t logical. We were clutching around. It was unclear where we were going. I wanted a vision, and how do we make money, and how do we continue to exist (DR 21 July 2010).
Buxton Festival’s vision had always been clear and widely shared: to produce rarely seen operas to encourage audiences to visit the town. The team that led the festival throughout the 1980s had established an entrepreneurial approach but failed to understand the Arts Council’s preferred policy. Hunter’s approach to financing had included nurturing the Festival Society (later renamed the Friends), including establishing a London-based arm, and encouraging them to fundraise for the festival. By 1990 there were some 900 members. Total unearned income for the 1989 festival amounted to £138,575, only 16 per cent was from public sector grants from High Peak Borough Council and North West Arts, the rest came from the Festival Society, business sponsorships and individual philanthropists (Buxton Arts Festival Limited 1989). Rigby proposed the festival needed new outlets for the operas it was producing, such as touring or corporate entertainment. In 1991 the festival’s production of *Die Entführung aus dem Serail* was to tour to Valencia. Unfortunately, just as the board was in a period of change, so too was the management. In the eight years between 1981 and 1989 there had been just two general managers. In the five years from 1989 to 1994 there were four. These changes in personnel combined with a new business model led to poor cost control and the tour had to be cancelled at short notice, effectively killing off the new strategy and leaving the organisation in limbo.

In the meantime, the board and artistic leadership were also in flux. The board had approached Raymond Slater, a property developer and director of Norwest Holst, who had refurbished the Palace Theatre in Manchester. Slater was interested in Buxton, seeing great potential in the 145-foot Devonshire Dome as a venue. Slater proposed ambitious plans, such as a five-week festival in 1992. However, when his plans for the Dome came to nothing, Slater lost interest in Buxton and left the board in 1991. Robert Huddie, chief executive of local company Carbolite, succeeded him.

Huddie researched models of opera festivals to apply to Buxton. He was particularly interested in Wexford in Ireland, another relatively rural festival reliant on
tourism for its audience, although it had substantial public funding and use of the RTE Orchestra at no charge. He felt Hunter’s hands-off approach to the programme was extremely risky as it relied solely on an artistic director’s ability to judge the size of the potential audience. He was reluctant to allow any artistic director a permanent contract and too much license, a view in direct contrast to Fraser’s view that artistic quality and good reviews were sacrosanct and such high levels of cultural capital require professional artistic leadership.

In 1991 Huddie appointed Jarrett, a fundraiser with experience in the arts world as general manager and established a relationship with Opera North’s Lord Harewood and Nicholas Payne. Jarrett raised £100,000 from the Foundation for Sport and the Arts (FSA), a grant-making body established by the Football Pools (Oakley and Green 2001). She was also aware the festival was not popular amongst Buxton’s residents who “complained about the inconvenience caused by the visitors” (SJ 9 September 2013), so sought to develop better relations through the Festival Society. She rebranded it the Friends of Buxton Festival, provided space in the festival’s offices and support for fundraising events. Her aim was to build cultural capital and loyalty. To “turn friends into knowledgeable opera attenders. We set up trips to see operas in London and in Europe. Surrounding the festival with opera buffs who knew the quality of what they were getting was important” (SJ 9 September 2013). Memberships, ticket sales and regular donations increased, although relationships with the town remained strained. Jarrett blamed the lack of any local residents on the board, which appeared to be full of ‘tycoons’ such as Peter Thornton (of Thorntons Chocolates), Raymond Slater, Bob Huddie and David Hunter.

The effect of the extra fundraising, particularly the FSA grant, was that the festival’s books, whilst lacking reserves, were debt free for the first time since 1979. It was also the start of better relationships between the festival and the town. Michael Williams, the Buxton musician who had been excluded from the festival board, was invited to produce ‘festival masses’ with his choral society. Blue Badge guided walks
were included in the brochure for the first time to encourage visitors to see more of the area, and better links were made with local business, including running performances and festival lunches at the Old Hall Hotel.

Although Huddie felt Jarrett’s appointment was a success, the recruitment of an artistic director to replace Hose was less effective, because the board lacked the cultural capital necessary to take a risk on an unknown name.

I wanted to relaunch the festival. In 1991/92 we set our sights far too high and tried to recruit Jane Glover\(^{12}\) as artistic director. It’s difficult [...] known names are too established, but we didn’t know enough to risk an up-and-comer. We should have gone to experts from the opera world. Nicholas Payne from Opera North gave some good advice, but we weren’t prepared to take the risk. So, we went to Jane Glover. She was already conducting *The Italian Girl* in Algiers [in the 1992 festival] (RH 9 June 2014).

It did not take long for doubts to emerge. Glover proposed an artistically excellent French-themed programme which made excellent use of her personal contacts in the form of singers but was more expensive than anything the festival had done before. The board were anxious but wanted to support their artistic director and tried to raise the funds required. By the autumn of 1992 it was clear there would be a shortfall of some £90,000 and Huddie asked Glover if she could retrench.

You need a good team to run a festival. The artistic director, chair and general manager all need to work as a team. And Jane Glover and I

\(^{12}\) Jane Glover was by 1992 one of the UK’s highest profile classical musicians. She had established a name for herself as Music Director of Glyndebourne Touring Operas, where she worked from 1981-1985, during which time she hosted two BBC TV series, *Orchestra with Jane Glover* (1983) and *Mozart – His Life with Music* (1985). She was Music Director of the London Mozart Players from 1984 – 1991 (Fennel 2016).
never completely understood each other, despite regular meetings. I thought I had always explained that her programme was too expensive for us, but [...] they had already talked to artist and agreed rates. The board did try to raise the money, but although we did raise more, it wasn’t enough. Jane Glover had hoped that her name would help with increasing the finances, but in the end the risk was too great for the board, so we agreed to part (RH 9 June 2014).

Glover resigned at Christmas 1992, leaving the festival with no artistic director and no programme plans for the July 1993 edition. Three strategies were proposed: to produce two operas in house, as the festival had been doing; to co-produce two shows; or to produce one opera in house and buy in a touring production. The Arts Council suggested asking Opera North for assistance. Opera North’s general manager Nicholas Payne and Chairman Lord Harewood could see the benefits of trying out their own productions at Buxton before touring them. They agreed to collaborate on the 1993 edition with Harewood as artistic advisor. Harewood and Payne were interested in managing the festival as part of the company’s portfolio.

We were quite prepared to do that. Buxton was a prestigious venue for a festival and Opera North would have been able to branch out, it would have opened up possibilities in that direction (Harewood 11 November 2010).

Harewood proposed two operas for 1993, an Opera North touring production, and a co-production with the festival. Both productions were popular, selling 90 per cent of the tickets. Despite this there was a significant deficit and no real prospect of the festival producing its own operas for 1994. Huddie resigned in autumn 1993 to work abroad, and Jarrett also left. Sir Philip Haworth, an old friend of Hunter’s based in Cheshire, took over the chair and decided to continue the relationship with Opera North. Despite disquiet amongst board members at the loss of the festival’s
independence and its commitment to producing its own operas, Lord Harewood and Ian Ritchie, Opera North’s new general manager, were formally appointed as artistic advisors. In 1994 the festival presented two operas, one a co-production with Opera North of Mozart’s *Il re pastore*, and a touring production by Pimlico Opera.

Michael Williams, who finally joined the festival board in 1992, argued the festival’s troubles over this period were due to a lack of understanding of Buxton’s specific place identity. The town’s relative remoteness from the arts establishment and history of rejection by the Arts Council had made the festival suspicious of the arts establishment.

**Professionalisation**

Following the 1994 festival, Jane Davies was appointed general manager. An experienced oil industry executive, she was employed to professionalise the festival’s management. She was married to Wyn Davies who conducted the children’s opera *James and the Giant Peach* in 1983 and had retained a relationship with the festival. Davies was valued for her commercial business acumen, which the board felt previous post holders had lacked, but was considered to have the cultural capital through her marriage to operate across the festival’s interest group boundaries.

Carrying a deficit of £20,000 from the 1994 festival, the board agreed to co-produce Monteverdi’s *The Return of Ulysses* with Opera North for 1995. The budget was based on ticket sales accounting for over 50 per cent of income, although as Davies was to find out,

who paid for what was not agreed. I think one of the festival’s successes has been the focus on operas that you can’t see anywhere else […]. A festival production is designed and constructed for five performances – because it costs far less than to construct a set you want to tour. So, one of the conflicts in the co-production of *Ulysses*,
was costs. We ended up with them paying most of that, because most of the costs were for the longevity of the production, which we weren’t interested in. That was one of the things that no one had thought about (JD 19 September 2013).

Despite good reviews, the 1995 festival was a financial disaster and a deficit of £66,000 was reported. It became clear some of the creditors, including Pimlico Opera, could not be paid (Kennedy 2004) threatening the festival’s reputation within the opera world. Davies felt

it wasn’t the sort of programme likely to attract a lot of people from outside. In hindsight it was probably a daft programme to put on, but it was much more on the side of quality, you know the artistic vision rather than balancing the books (JD 19 September 2013).

It is an interesting question whether, as Rigby had noted in the late 1980s, Davies’ business acumen was not appropriate as “this kind of business isn’t logical” (DR 21 June 2010). The problem was one of cultural entrepreneurship – a festival producer must have the skills to understand the market for taste (Toynbee 2016).

Davies and festival chairman Haworth went into a series of crisis meetings with Opera North and the Arts Council. Opera North’s new manager Richard Mantle argued the festival could not afford to produce its own operas and maintain quality, so Opera North should become producer, with the festival as its summer base. Harewood conceded “[i]t was, of course, a takeover bid by Opera North” (11 November 2010). Harewood met Arts Council Chairman Lord Gowrie for lunch and persuaded him to find £35,000 towards the deficit on the proviso there was a full review of the festival. That combined with funds from donors and sponsors brought the deficit down to £9,500.
Despite Arts Council pressure, the festival board felt it essential to produce their own operas, albeit not immediately, reflecting Fraser’s original analysis that Buxton needed a unique programme. In the meantime, the 1996 festival was co-produced by Opera North. In autumn 1995, following advice from Arts Council officers, an application for three-year funding of £50,000 to embed a partnership between the festival and Opera North was submitted. Harewood proposed a programme. This was perceived as a less risky option than the festival producing its own shows, and appeared to be supported by the Arts Council, which was keen to establish some stability and ensure artistic standards. Despite the encouragement the festival had received, in February 1996 the application was rejected. Even such a senior member of the establishment with many years’ experience of the Arts Council as Harewood was surprised.

I felt the Arts Council rather failed Buxton Festival. […] It gave mixed messages. Buxton was encouraged to apply for three-year funding, a great deal of work went in to it and then it was turned down because the festival was not producing its own work and did not have an artistic director. They had said that Opera North should be the producer. I found it surprising. I think that the Arts Council didn’t have the conviction, the belief we needed at Buxton. I certainly tried to persuade Lord Gowrie [Arts Council chairman] that it was a good festival (Harewood 11 November 2010).

The decision meant the partnership with Opera North was defunct. Davies was on holiday in Italy when the news came through. She and her husband decided they would try and produce a programme of presented works using their personal networks, feeling otherwise it could have been the end of Buxton Festival. Wyn had been doing *The Beggars Opera* at the theatre in Belfast and we’d loved it. So we said,
“Well if we do that and then we try and get Handel or think of another company small enough to come to Buxton.” And Wyn knew about James Conway’s outfit [Opera Theatre Company based in Dublin]. We got hold of James via the guy who ran Northern Ireland Opera (JD 19 September 2013).

A programme comprising two touring productions was cobbled together. For the first time, the programme did not include an opera produced or co-produced by Buxton Festival. However, it was considered a critical success and was within budget, which allowed it to produce one opera the following year. Davies suggested that, rather than appointing a permanent artistic director, they offer an artist-in residence role for a year to Donald Maxwell, who had a longstanding relationship with the festival as a singer. He agreed. The festival returned to producing with the triple bill of Cimarosa’s *Il maestro di cappella* (1793), Menotti’s *The Telephone* (1947) and Wolf-Ferrari’s *Susanna’s Secret* (1909). Critics were disappointed as the programme did not fulfil the rarely performed opera criteria of the festival’s vision. Although the festival lost £20,000, professionalisation of its fundraising meant it had the lowest deficit in its history. Echoing the Arts Council’s marketisation agenda, Davies argued, previous general managers were not “experienced enough businesspeople who understood they were selling a product” (JD 19 September 2013). She reorganised the Friends scheme so it gave exclusive access to the best seats.

[T]he theatre is 900 seats. Now that’s small for opera, but it’s also why it’s such a fantastic theatre to see opera. But that means, if […] you have somewhere you want to sit on one of the Saturdays, you have to be a Friend, nay, you have to be a Gold Friend, or even a Patron, to get what you want. […] By my fourth year we did sell out Saturday nights – the Friends started to build. They were always very loyal and always raised money, now they fund one of the productions each year (JD 19 September 2013).
The key to the Friends’ success was not just access to preferred seats, however. It was also a social group and organised trips to see operas in Italy and France and London. One volunteer admitted she had moved to Buxton on retirement because of the social network she had developed through the Friends (January 2011). Enjoyment of opera is a highbrow activity, appealing to elites with significant cultural capital. In developing new audiences through social groups and educational events, the Festival Friends acted as a cultural intermediary, growing the festivals’ market.

Davies stood down as general manager in autumn 1998 and was replaced by Glyn Foley, formerly Music Officer at Yorkshire and Humberside Arts. Shortly afterwards Sir Philip Haworth was replaced as chair by Roy Hattersley, a Labour MP and author who lived in Derbyshire. Foley negotiated an increase in North West Arts Board’s funding to £28,000, a success he attributed to his professional understanding of the arts funding system, a direct contrast to Rigby’s failure in the 1970s. A five-year artistic director post was created replacing the one-year role. And, crucially, Hattersley proposed the festival initiated a literary talks programme. The literary series, which took place during the day, was popular, inexpensive to promote and, consequently, a lucrative addition. By 2002 the festival was on a stable financial footing, although still not in receipt of regular Arts Council funding. The Festival Friends stood at 1,500 members with sufficient reserves to fund the production of a second opera in 2003.

The Friends grew to 3,000 members by 2012 (LP 16 July 2014), raising funds to pay for an opera production each year, and to buy the festival’s offices in Buxton. The festival’s funding operated on a model which Foley (27 July 2011) called a three-legged stool. It comprised sales income plus donations from the Friends and from an endowment called the Festival Foundation, which donated £25,000 in October 2013. Following the structure used to protect the Opera House from the riskier festival, each was a separate legal entity, ensuring the festival did not accumulate reserves that jeopardised income generation on its own books. Whilst its finances stabilised after 2000, the festival continued to receive little from the Arts Council although
North West Arts had supported it. High Peak Borough Council provided annual grants throughout, and Derbyshire County Council since 2001. When the Regional Arts Boards merged with the Arts Council in 2001-02 the festival became a Regularly Funded Organisation (RFO). The grant of £25,500 in 2001-2 (Arts Council of England 2003) reflected the sums given by North West Arts. The grant doubled to £50,094 in 2002-3 (Arts Council England 2004). By 2012-13 it had reached £120,000 (Arts Council England 2011), 16 per cent of the festival’s £1,317,166 turnover. 49 per cent of the festival’s turnover came from ticket sales and sponsorships while the Friends donated £250,000 (Buxton Arts Festival Ltd. 2013).

Despite its apparent incorporation into the mainstream indicated by regular Arts Council funding, £120,000 was a small subsidy for an opera organisation in contrast to Glyndebourne’s subsidy of £1,700,000 and Aldeburgh Music’s £1,368,199 (Arts Council England 2011). These festivals provide other services such as touring and education which, despite resource pressures, Buxton has continued to resist. It chooses not to tour because of its belief audiences will not attend operas available elsewhere and the Friends fulfil the educative cultural intermediary role. There is a reluctance, too, to be reliant on one source of income. The three-legged stool model was perceived to give the festival autonomy to act independently according to these values rather than having to respond to funders’ priorities (GF 27 July 2011).

Reflections

In tracing its history, this case-study has shown Buxton Festival as a complex web of taste, policy and geographical networks. It has been seen as a ‘tournament of values’ (Appadurai 1986: 21) in which interest groups from the opera world, the aristocracy and local cultural groups competed. As predicted by the festival typology, artistic quality was a key value with the board frequently taking financially risky decisions on the basis of maintaining independent production and standards. There were strong opera networks including the Royal Northern College of Music where Fraser worked;
Opera North and Davies’ Irish opera company connections, and which all contributed resources at times of crisis.

What was not predicted, was the significance of Buxton as a place. Fraser, Walter and Davies all commented on the importance of the town’s architectural heritage. Although he had an interest in producing an opera festival, it was not until Fraser saw the Opera House that he was able to envision it as a reality. He felt the festival was necessary to ‘fulfil that place’ by reimagining it, by creating a new place imaginary. By the time Davies took over she said the logic of the place as a festival town was so well established, had Buxton closed, another festival would have started. But before 1979, the town’s own tourism officer argued ‘we need an opera festival like a hole in the head’. Cultural planning concepts point to the centrality of cultural assets, in this case the town’s history as a spa resort, and the hotels and theatres that were built to service it, in placemaking (Bloomfield and Bianchini 2004). Buxton’s history showed these assets had become invisible to local ‘insiders’ (Rhodes 2006), and policy making was disconnected from place history and culture. In this case it took an outsider to see the town’s history and potential. Ray Walter credited the festival with reviving the town’s tourism economy.

However, it is also clear the festival’s success was inextricably combined with opera’s cultural status as a high art. Opera retains a cultural distinctiveness so signals aficionados’ status as cultivated. It is unlikely that a festival showcasing rock or folk music would have attracted the philanthropic support of the Duke of Devonshire, despite his local connections, or seen the Duke of Gloucester attend its opening night. The appeal of opera to affluent, educated and cosmopolitan audiences has resulted in the festival and, consequently, the town acquiring a certain cachet as a place to visit amongst national and international opera audiences. This has enabled the town to attract leisure industry investors to renovate its four- and five-star hotels and the Crescent Spa.
Place was, however, a disadvantage in terms of attracting public funding. Considering Bourdieu’s (1977) theory of practice perspective, Buxton Festival can be seen as relatively lowly in relation to other agents and institutions within the opera field. The most powerful agent in England is the Arts Council. Its dominant position has shaped the rules of the field. These rules are tacit and reliant on interpersonal relationships. Some interest groups in a policy area are deemed insiders and some outsiders. Outsiders are perceived as unrealistic, whilst insiders are amenable, responsible and realistic. Over time, insiders’ interests become institutionalised; their views automatically taken into account. ‘They don’t lobby. They have lunch’ (Rhodes 2006: 427). At their most intensive, these networks identify as a community, with shared values and beliefs.

Policy networks can be thought of as power-dependence with agreed rules-in-action. Trust is key so whilst the aim is to maximise influence, it is not in members’ interests to destroy another member. Policy discussions within the group are about how resources should best be shared to achieve shared objectives not the objectives themselves. From this perspective, sending Rigby, an arts outsider, to negotiate with the Arts Council was a fundamental misstep, although even Harewood, the ultimate privileged arts world insider, proved unsuccessful in the 1990s. By then, though, Buxton’s position as a minor player within the arts field was well established and difficult to change. By contrast, Fraser’s relationship with Walter, a local insider, was the key to support in Buxton.

The history of Buxton Festival has been tumultuous; it took over twenty-five years to become a financially stable organisation with regular subsidy from the Arts Council. Its exclusion by the arts establishment perplexed those interviewed. They felt it fulfilled the aesthetic criteria of maintaining an artistic tradition, introducing audiences to rarely seen works and emerging artists in high quality productions. Considering the festival as a tournament of values in a hetero-regulated ecology enabled the complex shifts in the status of the various actors to be illuminated and understood. Fraser’s
core values were institutionalised within the festival and guided actions even when he had left and there was strong pressure to stop in-house production, in contrast to Strange and Mumford’s (2002) finding that ideological charismatics were less effective at institution building than social charismatics.

Buxton largely fulfilled the criteria identified for an aesthetic festival idea type defined in chapter five because of Fraser’s vision. It is a registered charity and has an artistic director. It has had greater civic effects than expected, acting as a catalyst for the regeneration of the Opera House and the tourism economy. Surprisingly, it was not supported by the Arts Council and has, as a result, had to be more entrepreneurial than the model predicted. The commercial sector type will be the focus of the next chapter.
“One of the reasons comedy is my favourite art form is the Arts Council stays well away from it” (interviewee, Leicester Comedy Festival)

Chapter 7. Leicester Comedy Festival Case-study

Introduction

The purpose of this second case-study is to explore the commercial sector festival ideal type identified in the typology and to contrast its processes, decision-making criteria and engagement within its locality with the aesthetic festival case. The tripartite typology of festivals described earlier argued festivals’ values, operations and norms are shaped by their sectors’ economic and production structures. Leicester Comedy Festival (LCF) was selected as a case-study as it operates within a largely unsubsidised creative industry (stand-up comedy), does not have an artistic director and is primarily focused on growth, profit and efficiency rather than notions of artistic excellence or community benefit. It therefore provides a useful test of the typology’s validity.

This case-study identifies key influences on the festival’s values through an exploration of its foundation and development. Interviews were undertaken with fourteen respondents who have been involved with the festival at various points from its foundation in 1994 until 2014. These interviews were supplemented via detailed analysis of company accounts and relevant market research and through my personal experience of having worked in a venue used by the festival for five years, and as an academic on a degree programme with which the festival was partnered.¹³ The

¹³ I first became aware of Leicester Comedy Festival in 1995 when I started work at the Phoenix Arts Centre in Leicester, one of the first venues to support the festival. I was head of Marketing and Communications there until 1999. Alongside my work as a cultural producer and consultant I worked part-time teaching on De Montfort University’s BA Arts and Festivals
benefits and problems associated with my professional experience in the field were discussed in chapter five. It is worth commenting, LCF is the case I had most connection with. I was aware of the risks of professional blindness and also of self-censorship whilst analysing the case and have endeavoured to be rigorous in both respects by framing the analysis within Weber’s (2004 [1920]) concept of rational bureaucracy in capitalism and Bourdieu’s notion of the cultural intermediary, ‘all of the occupations involving presentation and representation’ (1984 [1979]: 359). This thesis conceives of commercial sector type festivals as acting as cultural intermediaries negotiating between the social and aesthetic requirements of governmental funding bodies and the market-driven motives of the commercial comedy, music or media sectors. Concurrent developments in the comedy sector, the UK cultural sector and the locale are therefore referred to as structural influences on LCF.

The chapter begins with a description of the festival and its history. This is contextualised though the changing social and political environment of Leicester, and related and concurrent developments in the comedy and cultural sectors. Links are made throughout to the national and international paradigms of new public management and neoliberalism as discussed in chapter four, as forces structuring the policies within which LCF’s decisions were taken.

**Description**

Leicester Comedy Festival (LCF) is a three-week collection of approximately 600 comedy events that takes place each February in venues across Leicester and Leicestershire. The programme consists primarily of stand-up comedy performances, 

Management from 2001-2016. LCF works closely with this course. Students on the degree course run festival venues as part of assessed modules and academic colleagues have undertaken annual social and economic impact assessments on the festivals behalf.

14 Venues in Leicester include De Montfort Hall, a local authority run 2,200-seater concert hall that hosts the annual launch event, the Preview Show. In 2015 the show was hosted by Alan Davies and showcased acts who would be appearing in the festival such as the 2014 Leicester Mercury Comedian of the Year. Curve, the city’s repertory theatre, and Phoenix Square, its
with an ancillary programme of exhibitions, films and comic theatre productions. Venues either book their own acts or a promoter books the acts and undertakes the marketing for share of the box office. LCF works with De Montfort University students studying Arts and Festivals Management to run two venues. The festival extends out of the city to university town of Loughborough some fifteen miles away, where the Council-run theatre, the Town Hall, participates.

The Big Difference Company (BDC), a registered charity, produces comedy-related health and education programmes and outdoor events for external clients such as the NHS, it also produces LCF. The festival is its largest production, instigated and directly managed by the company. LCF is financed through a mix of local authority funding, sponsorship and trading income. Access to the programme is open to anyone who wishes to accept the festival’s terms and conditions and is willing to pay an agreed fee. This fee provides inclusion in marketing materials and services such as ticketing (Big Difference Company Ltd. 2014c). Comedy promoters pay for venue hire, book acts and retain ticket income. BDC itself produces key shows such as new act competitions and the UK Pun Championships and the Leicester Mercury Comedian of the Year. The UKTV channel Dave, which specialises in comedy, was the festival’s name sponsor between 2012 and 2016 when it was known as Dave’s Leicester Comedy Festival (DLCF).

Big Difference Company employed seven people in 2014, the year most of the fieldwork for this case was undertaken, four on a full-time basis and three part-time.

**Independent arts cinema both promote events in the festival. These subsidised spaces are joined by commercial venues ranging from the 50 seat Criterion pub, which only hosts events during the festival, to Firebug and the Crumblin’ Cookie that promote music gigs and comedy throughout the year and the Y, a theatre run by the YMCA in Leicester. Other venues include hotels, restaurants, Leicester City’s grounds, the YMCA’s theatre, Leicester Cathedral, Leicester Tiger’s rugby ground and on the streets, although outdoor activity is limited as the festival takes place in February when the weather is likely to be poor.**
Geoff Rowe (GR) is BDC’s chief executive and LCF’s director. Paid roles in the company included three project managers who produce and manage BDC’s productions, and a partnerships manager overseeing relationships with sponsors and funders. Other projects became secondary to the operational demands of the festival during January and February each year.

Festival audiences were predominantly from Leicester and Leicestershire, with 1.4 per cent travelling from London in 2014 (Big Difference Company Ltd. 2014b: 8). Audience research undertaken by LCF during the 2014 edition indicated 94 per cent of attendees were aged between 17 and 64, and 88 per cent of respondents identified as white British (Big Difference Company Ltd. 2014b: 5-6).

**History**

The first Leicester Comedy Festival (LCF) took place over seven days in 1994 and was produced by a team of final year project students on the Arts Management degree course at Leicester Polytechnic (now De Montfort University). It consisted of forty shows that took place across twenty-three venues and attracted an audience of approximately five thousand people. Comedians who appeared included the then unknown Matt Lucas who went on to fame in *The Smell of Reeves and Mortimer* (1995) then *Little Britain* (2003) (IMDB.com Inc. 2014, Big Difference Company 2011).

LCF’s Director Geoff Rowe was a member of the original student group and remembers the discussions about what they should do as a project.

Somebody in our group said, “why don’t we do a comedy festival?” and everybody kind of went “well alright”, it could have been anything […]. There was no master plan. […] I liked comedy, but I wasn’t obsessed by it, it got me excited because of the whole
rock’n’roll, NME thing\textsuperscript{15}. It was the thing people loved at the time’ (GR 17 July 2014).

Stand-up was also a practical solution; it was popular, cheaper to produce than promoting music, dance or theatre and appealed to the city’s venues as a lucrative programming strand. It led to an open programming style like the Edinburgh Fringe, with LCF undertaking very little direct promotion.

I wasn’t prepared to invest my own money into it – I didn’t have any – and no one else was either, so we had to go to Phoenix, De Montfort Hall and the Y\textsuperscript{16} and say ‘would you put some comedy on during this week for us?’ And they all said “yes”. So that model grew out of necessity (GR 17 July 2014).

Rowe stayed in Leicester between the second and third year of university, working as a bin man during the mornings and going into the university during the afternoons to use the phone the course made available.

A friend of mine was working in comedy and television. I rang my friend Sandy and said […] “tell me everything you know about live comedy” and she did. So, then I had a list of phone numbers to ring, of agents primarily. And the other thing was, a friend of mine, I knew he lived next door to Tony Slattery. So, I knew Tony Slattery’s address. And, rather stalkerishly, I wrote to and said “hello, we think you’re great” – he was huge then – “we’re a bunch of students putting on a

\textsuperscript{15} Stand-up comedy in the UK went through a period of popularity and growth in the 1980s and 1990s. In 1988 Rob Newman and David Baddiel played the first comedy show at the 12,000-capacity Wembley Arena (Smith 1993). The tickets sold out and comedy was widely hailed in the press as ‘the new rock’n’roll’ (Cohen 2010).

\textsuperscript{16} The Phoenix Arts Centre was a contemporary arts theatre and cinema with 270 seats that was funded by Leicester City Council and the Arts Council of Great Britain. It closed in 2009.
comedy festival, will you be our patron?” And much to my amazement, […] he rang up one day and said, “I got your letter, yes, let’s meet” (GR 17 July 2014).

At this early stage Rowe was emerging as the group’s most determined member, with a vision of what the festival might be and the willingness to adapt his lifestyle in order to achieve it. He acknowledges taking control whilst the other group members were away for the summer:

I posted - I must have been a really annoying person - weekly updates to all the other students telling them what I’d done and, almost, giving them jobs to do (GR 17 July 2014).

Rowe is here developing into a charismatic leader, one who has extraordinary qualities attributed to him. Weber (2003 [1920]) argued charismatic leaders’ power came from affectual influence, a sense they had magical capabilities, a spiritual connection to god, or oratorical powers. Of these, Rowe’s extraordinary ability is managing meaning. The foundation stories narrated above are retold almost word for word in many of the interviews and profiles Rowe has given about the festival over the years.

On 4 November 2015 Rowe was named as winner of the Leicester Mercury Small Business Executive of the Year (Pegden 2015), despite running a company considered technically insolvent at the end of the 2013-14 (Big Difference Company Ltd. 2014a). He has also been honoured with a British Empire Medal (Chortle 2015) and an honorary doctorate (Leicester Mercury 2012), evidence of his ability to convince a range of audiences of his extraordinary abilities. A connection can be seen to Buxton’s strong vision of a festival producing rarely seen operas as articulated by Fraser from the start. Both men are strongly identified by interviewees as embodying their festival’s values.
Historical context: comedy industry

The stand-up comedy industry in England, the mainstay of LCF’s programme, was until the 1980s a white working-class genre, situated in Northern clubs and seaside towns. During the 1980s and 1990s it became politicised and middle-class epitomised by the popularity of the Comedy Store opening in London, which was compered by comedian Alexei Sayle, a communist who set the anti-establishment and anti-Thatcherite tone. The Comedy Store ran open-mic nights, where anyone could try out their act or new material with the audience reaction dictating whether or not they were ‘gonged’ off the stage. Other venues and pubs copied this model, providing comedians with a network of places to perform. In London the number of clubs means up and coming comedians can play several gigs a night to earn a living and hone their skills. Outside London few cities in the UK are large enough to support this kind of cluster and the club circuit is too geographically spread for comedians to do more than one gig a night (RG 1 April 2014). A comedy festival, a rarity in the UK in the 1990s, echoed London’s intensity of activity but over a short period so audience numbers were sustainable.

Historical context: Leicester

Leicester is a culturally diverse city in the English East Midlands. In the 2011 Census 45.1 per cent its population considered themselves to be white British (Leicester City Council 2012a), making it the UK’s first minority-majority city. Migration had happened in waves, starting with Ugandan Asians settling in the city in the early 1970s (Leicester City Council 2012b). It has seen a large decline in its textile-manufacturing base since the 1980s and could be described as a post-industrial city.

Historically, one of the ways Leicester City Council worked with the South Asian community was through the voluntary sector, including arts, sports and youth activities. Martyn Allinson, Director of Leisure Services in 1995 and subsequently Chair of the Big Difference Company, recalled:
At that time [...] leisure was one of the biggest departments. A £25m operation. It funded a lot of multicultural projects, youth projects, arts projects, play projects, sport projects. So maybe £2, £3 or £4 million would have gone to voluntary sector funding. Working with the voluntary sector was central to how we provided services (MA 23 April 2014).

LCF approached Leicester City Council for support for its second edition in 1995. Both Rowe and his idea impressed Allinson.

It would have been sold as something that was good for the city in some way. In those days we didn’t talk about research and evidence, economic development and impact – there would have been a strong community dimension and it would just have felt right to us (MA 23 April 2014).

The councillors on the Leisure Services committee approved £500 for the 1995 festival. In addition to that direct funding LCF’s success was reliant on the support of the city’s publicly supported theatres for their promotional experience and resources, and for the validation they provided.

And the other thing I did was to talk to all of the venues in Leicester, who we knew because we were studying arts management, so we knew the Phoenix and De Montfort and the Y, and we said to them, “can we form a consortium or an advisory group?” and they all liked the idea and [...] were incredibly supportive (GR 17 July 2014).

The not for profit arts sector in Leicester had been through a period of change in 1994. De Montfort Hall, a listed building had been refurbished, a process badly managed, and significantly more expensive than the original estimates (The Stage
and Television Today 1994, Bushby 1995). The Leicester Mercury was hostile, perceiving the Hall as an example of the Council’s financial profligacy and managerial shortcomings (personal conversation with senior Leicester Mercury journalist, 1996).

The management wanted a popular programme to help balance the budget and appeal to city residents. Phoenix Arts, a contemporary performing arts centre and art-house cinema subsidised by Leicester City Council, the Arts Council and the British Film Institute (BFI) had appointed a new general manager in 1994 who was keen to establish networks in the city. The opportunity to work with students from one of the local universities on a festival that would boost their profile and help to establish their reputation in the burgeoning comedy field was one neither venue could overlook.

**Festival development**

Having established a support network within the not-for-profit arts sector and Leicester City Council and the comedy world, LCF produced a small but successful event in 1994. Three students from the original group stayed on in the city after graduation to produce a second edition. At that point the festival was an extension of the university experience rather than a professional organisation. Funding was sourced from Leicester City Council and this was supplemented by £1000 from the Arts Council in 1995. None of the producers were paid and there was no formal company structure to the production organisation. It operated out of De Montfort University, which also supplied them with financial and accounting services.

LCF might not have continued, however, had it not been for its first commercial sponsor, InterCity Midland Mainline. Jane Lawrie, the public affairs manager, received a sponsorship proposal from the festival just as Midland Mainline was being privatised. It had developed a strategy to build links with communities in the cities between London and Sheffield, including Leicester. Festival sponsorship was seen as an excellent way to position the new company as part of the community. Lawrie felt
there “was also something kind of ironically interesting about comedy and the railways, given the railways were the butt of jokes” (JL 26 August 2014).

Organisational culture became a management tool from the 1980s as companies attempted to replace costly layers of managerial control with normative value sets, ensuring workers managed themselves (Schein 2004). Lack of fit between organisations’ cultures led to misunderstandings and conflict in partnerships, so organisational culture became an area sponsors study carefully before committing (Peck and Dickinson 2009). As part of the professionalisation associated with neoliberalism, arts sponsors became strategic about their sponsorship choices during this period, too. It was no longer sufficient to sponsor an arts organisation on a purely charitable basis, there had to be direct business benefits (Lewandowska 2015), in this case an improved local image.

The sponsorship provided LCF with financial support, professional credibility and an opportunity to learn from a commercial business. The increased budget meant that LCF could support the booking of famous acts increasing its media profile. “In the early days what I was most proud of was giving them the credibility, the financial backing I suppose, to attract some of the bigger names to become a credible festival” (JL 26 August 2014). In addition to the reflected credibility, alignment with LCF gave InterCity Midland Mainline access to its audiences at a time when they would be enjoying themselves and receptive to its messages (Anderson 2011). Lawrie felt the popularity of comedy and its ability to attract community involvement was an important part of LCF’s appeal to Midland Mainline.

The sponsorship provided a budget for LCF. It also gave it credibility it might otherwise have lacked. Lawrie was impressed with the team’s drive and determination, but was aware they lacked experience, governance infrastructure or understanding of a commercial sponsor’s needs. For both Lawrie and Rowe, Midland Mainline’s sponsorship was a partnership in which decisions were taken jointly.
throughout the year, not just an advertising opportunity. LCF “became a core part of [Intercity Midland Mainline’s] marketing strategy and we became a core part of theirs” (JL 26 August 2014). During 1996 Midland Mainline was involved in helping LCF become a company limited by guarantee, a not-for-profit organisation with a voluntary board, and in setting up management and reporting mechanisms. For Rowe the organisational development support was as important as the finance. He quickly grasped professionalisation, measurement and reporting were central to making his case to both commercial and public sector funders.

Midland Mainline’s sponsorship meant the second edition could invite national names, including the Comedy Store Players, the inspiration for TV show Whose Line is it Anyway? (1998-) and actor-comedian Felix Dexter (The Real McCoy 1991-1995; The Fast Show 1996; Citizen Khan 2012-2013). It also inaugurated the Leicester Mercury Comedian of the Year Award, aimed at new acts. Competitors were nominated by a panel of comedy promoters who were asked to recommend their favourite new act of the previous twelve months and competitors were then invited to perform during LCF’s final weekend (Big Difference Company Ltd. 2013c). The award fulfilled three functions for the festival; it created a media profile in the city, encouraged aspiring comedians to attend and gave the festival a reputation within the comedy sector as somewhere with an eye for talent. Jo Enright, the 1996 winner, subsequently became well known for her TV series Ideal (2005-2011) which also starred 1997’s winner Johnny Vegas. Not every winner of the award has gone on to fame and fortune within the comedy sector. By 2014 neither Stevie Knuckles who won in 1995 nor 1999’s Patrick Kitterick appeared on the industry’s talent search website Comedy CV, indicating they were no longer performing (Mullaney 2014). These two are exceptions, though, as most winners have gone on to successful comedy careers, positioning the award and, by extension LCF, as a prestigious accolade for an up and coming comedian. Its open programming structure means the festival can be seen as a proto-market similar to Toynbee’s (2016) musical scenes and through the competition LCF acts as a cultural intermediary, helping to commercialise comedians.
by valorising them as award winners. The inclusion of promoters on the selection panel ensured they had a vested interest in the act they choose as the winner, making it more likely they would book and support them, an example of hidden intermediaries at work (Bourdieu 1984 [1979]). It is worth noting, too, support from established companies such as InterCity Midland Mainline, and the Leicester Mercury gave LCF credibility despite it having only produced one professional edition.

Professionalisation

Despite the development of LCF’s programme, its local and comedy sector links, and its establishment as a formal company in 1996, after seven years it was still not financially stable. Rowe acknowledged “the festival was going well as a concept, but as a business it wasn’t” (17 July 2014). The budget was poorly controlled, with overspends threatening the festival’s existence in each of the early years (Board member 1, 1 August 2013). Leicester Comedy Festival Ltd. lost £50,000 in 1997/98 ‘as a result of inadequately managed expenditure and unachieved income targets in that year’s festival’ (Leicester Comedy Festival Ltd. 2001: 28). The precarious nature of LCF’s finances remained an on-going issue, with the most frequent answer to the question, ‘what are you most proud of in relation to your involvement with the Comedy Festival?’ being, with various expressions of embarrassment, “that it’s survived” (Board member 3, 23 April 2014) or “making the festival more [financially] sustainable” (Board member 2, 14 January 2014). For Rowe - the only member of the founding group who had stayed with the festival after 1997 - the financial insecurity was a personal problem.

I was skint [...] I was fed up of being poor. All my university friends were getting proper jobs and buying houses and I was thinking, “I’d quite like to buy a house at some point“ [...] so I decided I was going to apply for jobs (GR 17 July 2014).
Rowe left or, rather, he became the chair of the board and appointed a comedy agent, Delphine Manley, to manage LCF’s daily activities. Rowe and the rest of the board took this opportunity to undertake some longer-term planning, to attempt to create a viable commercial business plan.

Throughout the late 1990s LCF had been seeking support from the Arts Council, with varied success. ACE appeared to be unsure about its policy towards comedy and towards festivals (Board Member 1, 1 August 2013; Ilczuk and Kulikowska 2007), leaving LCF with sporadic project support until 2001 when it applied for a new National Lottery-funded organisational development subsidy aimed at encouraging arts organisations to explore new sources of income. This organisational development funding was part of a wider policy by the Department for Culture Media and Sport (DCMS) and ACE to professionalise arts organisations following a series of embarrassing high profile failures of Lottery funded companies is (Hewison 2014). ACE believed these failures could be resolved by professionalising the sector’s management by introducing commercial business practices such as strategic planning and project evaluation to ensure public money was spent efficiently.

Rowe returned to the newly created paid role of development manager, appointing a business consultant, Peter Luxton, with a brief to make Leicester Comedy Festival Ltd. financially sustainable. The company had struggled to pay its staff team of three or four consistently. Even had LCF generated a significant profit, it would still have to deal with the cash-flow problems caused by the cyclical nature of festival ticket sales.

Luxton pushed Rowe to identify the skills embodied within the staff team and to consider how these could be used more effectively to secure the festival’s future.

And he [Luxton] kept asking me, “what do you do 365 days of the year?” and I would say “we do a comedy festival”. And Pete kept
saying, “no, you don’t. What do you do?” and this went on for ages. After quite a while he managed to tease out of me what we did was project management. What we did was produce shows. What we did was touring. Venue bookings. It just so happened this was manifested in a comedy festival, but it could have been anything. So, he changed my thinking that those were the things that Leicester Comedy Festival Ltd. did […] A festival that’s on ten days a year, that doesn’t work to sustain the business, the organisation behind it. So, we started to do other things (GR, 17 July 2014).

Luxton identified a number of skills the organisation had developed that could be exploited. He suggested a range of business models (see Figure 7.1 below). The potential areas identified were primarily commercial operations within the comedy sector or providing services for businesses using LCF’s comedy and events management expertise. The exception was the community and education box, which was a not-for-profit approach using comedy to achieve instrumental social aims.

Luxton wanted LCF to develop a business approach in line with the commercial culture paradigm emerging at that time, a process of cultural capitalism and marketing of cultural resources (Rifkin 2000).

I wanted to embed in the LCF the notion they were a ‘creative business’ not an ‘arts organisation’, and that they should adopt this fully in the thinking behind their new business model. This new language articulated a new philosophy and a new way of working at the time (pretty much mainstream now) […]. [T]o think about implementing a plural business model, so that undertaking related event management and production contracts (as a paid service) could be as important and relevant elements of their portfolio as innovative
community and education initiatives, directly related to the Comedy Festival (PL email 26 October 2015).

Figure 7.1: Suggested development areas from the Leicester Comedy Festival Business Plan 2002 (Leicester Comedy Festival Ltd. 2001: 36)
LCF’s 2002-5 Business Plan recommended LCF should identify and place a monetary and market value on its knowledge of the events and comedy industries. There was an emerging understanding of its status as a cultural intermediary, with the ability to ‘construct value by mediating how goods (or services, practices, people) are perceived and engaged with by others’ (Matthews and Smith Maguire 2014: 2), in the suggestions of launching an artist management agency and programming consultancy, although neither of these were developed. The company’s board instead agreed to a strategy to broaden its activities to include community and education activities, and event management. The former reflected the organisation’s identification as part of the third sector, with a social purpose and provided the impetus for changes to the company’s legal structure to become a registered charity. This was in line with policy in the sector at the time. In 2002, a reduction in local government funding for the arts meant many arts organisations attempted to access other sources of funding by attaching themselves to social and economic policy objectives (Gray 2004, 2002).

Rowe recognised a contradiction between BDC’s charitable objectives and operating as a commercial event management company. There was a ‘new perception and understanding of the organisation as a creative and media business, not purely as a single art form based festival organisation’ (Leicester Comedy Festival Ltd. 2001: 30), which sited the festival firmly within the commercial comedy sector.

It’s an odd combination. Comedy – it’s changing a bit now because there are a number of community interest organisations using comedy as they would use dance or music […]. But for a long-time comedy was seen as a purely commercial endeavour. It’s not an art form, it’s entertainment. […]. it’s not just being about stand-up, it’s about what makes you laugh, and I always had this thing about people getting involved. So, when a doctor phones us up and says “can we do something together?”, we say “yes”. […] It’s really important
people can engage with the festival and with comedy. (GR 17 July 2014)

Through Luxton’s consultancy, the festival felt it had found a way to combine its social values whilst operating in a commercial sector in line with government policy to professionalise the third sector and reduce its grant dependency (Gray and Jordan 2011). In contrast to comedian Rob Gee who said,

[one of the reasons comedy is my favourite art form is the Arts Council stays well away from it. Who wants to develop artists who aren’t any good at it? God almighty, if there’s one job within the artistic sector where there’s a ladder of progression, it’s comedy, where you can start off at an open mic and four years later be on telly (RG 1 April 2014),

Rowe’s personal attachment was to social values: “I always had this thing about people getting involved”. His reluctance to become a purely commercial comedy business meant the festival rejected a number of the proven business models open to it that might have helped it achieve financial sustainability just as Buxton rejected Opera North’s take over in order to retain its original vision. Rowe did however embrace other aspects of entrepreneurship, namely its focus on innovation and growth.

**Growth**

From 2002 – 2011 the number of events and venues in LCF increased exponentially. In 2010 its run extended from 10 to 17 days (Big Difference Company Ltd. 2013b). But BDC continued to make financial losses until 2011 when the festival presented 315 shows in 44 venues and launched a Business Partners Club to attract support from Leicester-based companies (Big Difference Company Ltd. 2011: 3-4). Up to this
point, LCF Ltd and BDC had received sponsorship from InterCity Midland Mainline (1995-7) and John Lewis, which supported its Make Me Happy (2008-2010) arts in health programme. Both of these sponsorships proved pivotal in establishing new initiatives.

After Luxton reported, work began on developing new ways of operating, such as offering events management services to other festivals and local authorities and running public health campaigns using comedy. On 1 April 2009 Big Difference Company (BDC) was launched as a company limited by guarantee. It became a registered charity in March 2010. Structurally LCF was just one part of its business portfolio, which raised the question as to whether it was conceivable the festival would be dropped if it continued to be a major drain on BDC’s finances. This was a regular topic of discussion amongst board members.

…it’s been like that all the time. “Shall we ditch the festival?” “We’d be much more financially sustainable if we ditched the festival.” “But that’s what we do.” “Yeah, but we don’t now we’re the Big Difference Company.” And it goes round in circles. I think there is a general consensus now for us as an organisation that, although it’s not our mission, it’s the main thing we do and the thing that sustains our work throughout the rest of the year. Not financially, but in terms of the culture of the organisation. […] For me, if we didn’t do the festival, I’d leave. Everything else we do is to sustain the festival. (GR 17 July 2014)

There remains a fundamental contradiction at the heart of Big Difference Company; it has charitable objectives, yet its largest project operates in a commercial

---

17 Leicester Comedy Festival Ltd. had applied to register as a charity on previous occasions but had been rejected by the Charity Commission, as comedy was not considered a legitimate art form or educational tool (GR, 17 July 2014).
sector and was, during Dave’s sponsorship, a profitable festival. BDC’s accounts to the 31 March 2011, show a surplus of £6,235, against a loss of £6,380 the previous year. Dave’s sponsorship began in full with the February 2012 festival. The accounts to the end of March 2012 show an income some £200,000 higher than previous years, a figure sustained in 2013 and 2014. By 31 March 2014 BDC’s surplus had increased to £67,304, although the charity itself remained in deficit due to accumulated losses (Big Difference Company Ltd. 2011, 2012, 2013a, 2014a). In 2017 the company posted a deficit of £13,967, and lost £7,522 in 2018, demonstrating the extent to which it had been reliant on Dave’s sponsorship (Big Difference Company Ltd. 2018).

**Leadership**

It is germane at this point to discuss the pivotal role Rowe has played as a charismatic leader in founding and ensuring LCF’s survival as a company with a social purpose. As was noted above he took the lead in the foundational student group and, despite stepping back from day-to-day management for a few years, he retained control throughout and is closely identified with the festival. When questioned about this identification Rowe’s response was telling.

> I don’t think it’s my festival except when it comes down to some core things. I decide what the brochure cover is going to be and no one else is going to decide that. I do the vast majority of press interviews, but that’s only because no one else wants to do it. I’m the spokesperson for the festival. If I went under a bus or didn’t want to do it anymore, I like to think it would carry on. Only time will tell about that (GR 17 July 2014).

The contradiction between the reliance the festival has on the comedy field’s infrastructure for its financial survival, and its determination to retain a focus on social values is a direct result of Rowe’s personal values.
It’s just important and that’s sometimes very difficult to explain to myself, it’s also very difficult to explain to other people. So, an awful lot of people don’t know about the two sides of our work. They either know about the comedy stuff or they know about the community stuff. But those people who do know about both sides, they really like it. […] Historically it was very difficult to align the two, externally. It made total sense to me, but it’s been very difficult (GR 17 July 2014).

It is clear he felt a connection between the two but found this difficult to codify, so even he was not confident it is a core part of the organisation’s culture: ‘only time will tell’. The festival’s social purposes exist in conflict with the profit-making expediency the typology predicted for a commercial sector festival. This appears to be a result of Rowe’s strong personal value system. This echoes Strange and Mumford’s (2002) finding that ideological charismatics are less effective institution builders than social charismatics.

Despite having chosen comedy because of its commercial potential rather than personal taste, Rowe has become an expert intermediary. Venues, sponsors and audiences all rely on his judgement and he will, on occasion, exercise his veto.

We don’t just take anyone. If the venue’s crap, we’ll say “no”. If a performer’s not very good or offensive, I will say “no”. It’s about the only time I say “it’s my festival” is if someone wants to come who I think is crap or horrible (GR 17 July 2014).

Rowe’s intermediary authority has been legitimised over more than two decades through a process of narrativisation: the foundation myth in particular gives him traditional power. It is somewhat obscured by the ‘fringe’-style curation processes, which give the impression the festival is simply a brand marketing shows promoted by
others. Another source of authority has been Rowe’s cultural brokerage. He has acted as a nexus linking the comedy sector and Leicester. In this role he has become a powerful player on many of the city’s cultural fora.

**Leicester’s Festivals Strategy**

From its first grant in 1995 Leicester City Council has been LCF’s most consistent ally, although its policy rationale has undergone significant change as the political context has mutated from “that there would have been a strong community dimension and it would just have felt right” (MA 23 April 2014) to instrumental and economic arguments in line with the neoliberal drift of national policies discussed in chapter three.

In 2011 Sir Peter Soulsby, former leader of the Council and a former Labour MP, became Leicester City Council’s first directly elected mayor. This led to new decision-making processes with the City Mayor and his executive team making decision rather than member-led committees. Shortly after he was elected Soulsby founded the Cultural Strategy Partnership (CSP), a quasi-independent body, to champion ‘culture in Leicester, provide strategic leadership to facilitate social and economic regeneration through culture, and help to ensure “joined-up” and equitable delivery of cultural provision’ (Leicester Cultural Partnership Board n.d.). Members of the Board include LCF’s Geoff Rowe, Curve’s chief executive, the assistant mayor for culture, and cultural producers from the commercial, not-for-profit, community, youth and Asian sub-sectors. The CSP’s statement of its ambitions for culture in Leicester identified the potential for cultural activity to build connections between the city’s diverse communities by creating a shared sense of identity; encouraging cultural education and nurturing new talent; and helping the city’s economy to grow (ibid: 1).

While culture-led urban regeneration had centred on statement arts buildings during New Labour’s period in government from 1997–2010, the economic crash of
2007/8 and subsequent neoliberal austerity policies from 2010 saw local government funding severely cut, leaving councils to develop new economic growth strategies. Shortly after he was elected, the City Mayor decided to undertake a review of the Council’s funding for festivals and events.

The 2012 Festivals Review’s terms of reference focused on value for money ‘to ensure that public funds are used for the greatest benefit and to meet the changing needs of the city’s communities’ (Leicester City Council 2012c). The criteria used for making decisions were:

- Is there clear evidence of need/demand and how is this evidenced?
- Does the festival / event contribute to Council / City priorities?
- What is the quality of the festival / event and how is this evidenced?
- Has the festival/event complied with contractual requirements?
- What are the benefits /outcomes arising from the festival/event?
- Cost of the event and activity and value for money.

(Leicester City Council 2012c).

A City Council officer involved in the process expressed his concern a disproportionate weight was placed on evidence of economic impact which he felt had disadvantaged festivals run by voluntary staff that had not undertaken impact assessments (CO 11 June 2014). The review recommended a £5000 a year increase in subsidy for LCF to £23,500 in 2013/14 on the basis the festival raised the city’s national profile. A number of other festivals had their funding reduced significantly and the Dashera event run by Leicester Hindu Festival Council was cut completely (Leicester City Council 2012c). Having learned from Midland Mainline about the importance of this kind of evidence in securing sponsorship, LCF had regularly commissioned research from De Montfort University to evidence its impact, so could produce a convincing case.
In 2014 the City Mayor’s Culture Advisory Board, a body chaired by the Mayor himself, replaced the Cultural Partnership Board. The new Cultural Advisory Board advocated an approach to cultural policy based around high-profile events that promoted its economic, social and educational objectives (Leicester City Council 2014), a case LCF was well-positioned to argue at that time given its partnership with Dave.

**DLCF and Leicester’s place identity**

According to Maughan and Bianchini festivals thrive when ‘they grow organically in response to the needs of a local community… [they are] not artificial festivals manufactured by tourism or place marketing authorities’ (2004b: 25). This seems to contradict LCF’s success in the Festivals Review as LCF fulfils the criteria of “artificially brought together series of events” (AF 9 June 2011) of the sort the Arts Council thought unworthy of support, as not a creative expression of the genius loci; raising the question as to the significance of the festival’s relationship with the city.

To Rowe, place was important because of the networks needed to run the festival, not because of an emotional connection.

The place in which you are located is important and we happen to be located in Leicester. We happen to be located in Leicester because that’s where we set it up. […] You have to run a festival in the place you’re located in. So I’m no fan whatsoever of parachuting a festival into places […]. I don’t understand how that works – you can’t build those partnerships locally. I don’t know, sometimes I say things about Leicester and I just sound like a politician, and I, I quite like Leicester, I’ve lived here for twenty years, the festival is here, it’s important that we have an impact, but I don’t love the place. I don’t want to die here, I don’t have a love affair with Leicester, it’s just where I am (GR 17 July 2014).
Yet all the board members did not share this view: “Its identity is of a festival of its community […]. Its community being Leicester” (Board member 2, 14 January 2014). This difference is emblematic of the organisation’s divergent value systems caused by its engagement with different fields in its struggle to find a sustainable business model. It is clear though that key communities are not being served by the festival. In a city as ethnically mixed as Leicester, it is notable most of the audience is white (Big Difference Company Ltd. 2014b). Rowe does not feel that the festival should be concerned about the identity of its audience, simply its quantity.

[My] job is not to unite the diverse communities of Leicester. […] I run a comedy festival. Ninety-four thousand people came this year, I’m very happy with that. Would I like it to be more diverse and representative? Of course I would. Would I like there to be a time when our audience, and our performers are representative? Of course I would. But that isn’t actually my job and I don’t think we’re funded to do that (GR, 17 July 2014).

Others were less sanguine about its lack of community engagement. One former festival worker expressed surprise and disappointment it had done little to support the development of Leicester-based comedians.

I would have expected there to be more comedians coming out of Leicester by now. The festival doesn’t really get involved in that, in working with local communities and supporting new local acts and that’s disappointing (Worker 1, 4 August 2013).

Talent development is an important factor of economic development, so it is surprising the festival has not been pressured to engage more closely with this policy agenda by the City Council. It is also a key factor in Toynbee’s (2016) cultural
entrepreneurship concept. Identifying new talent was certainly a central rationale for Dave’s sponsorship.

**Sponsorship, identity and credibility**

Dave’s sponsorship launched with the 2011 edition, although talks began at the end of 2009, when Steve North, general manager of UKTV’s archive comedy channel Dave, met Rowe at the Montreal Comedy Festival. The channel was moving into producing new material and wanted to establish its credibility.

We needed to establish relationships with the talent and comedy agents in order to make original shows [...] to establish some credentials within comedy [...]. And from the viewer’s point of view, we wanted them to see that we had an association with stand-up comedy so when they thought about wanting to watch the comedy content they love, Dave was the destination for that (SN 2 September 2014).

Matthews and Smith Maguire suggested ‘cultural intermediaries are defined by their claims to professional expertise in taste and value within specific cultural fields. And they are differentiated by their locations within commodity chains’ (2014: 2). For North, LCF’s value lay in its credibility in identifying talent developed through the *Leicester Mercury* Comedian of the Year.

Dave’s sponsorship also had the effect of increasing awareness amongst BDC’s Board of the economic value of LCF’s cultural capital within the comedy field: “it turns out, our comedy connections are part of the way that we commercialise” (Board member 2, 14 January 2014). This realisation chimes with Luxton’s analysis from a decade before. Neither the board nor Rowe, however, revisited that analysis, so when Dave withdrew from the sponsorship the festival did not have other sources of income to replace it.
Whilst UKTV’s sponsorship was predicated on the credibility LCF provided to Dave’s brand in the comedy industry, the festival also benefitted from being associated with a national TV channel. The sponsorship was a form of legitimation for both parties as each lent the other credibility. In the audience research undertaken for LCF in 2014, 29 per cent thought the sponsorship was positive, with one fifth believing it increased the festival’s media profile and 13 per cent were positive about the greater influence the festival might have in the comedy industry (Big Difference Company Ltd. 2014b: 26). There was a feeling within the festival’s board the association had changed perceptions about it in the industry and in Leicester.

It was at a tipping point when I first arrived [in 2008], when people were going “crikey, we have to pay to be part of the festival? What are we getting for our money?” It didn’t have the brand, the clout that people were happy to buy into without questioning what they were getting for their money. I think it probably has now [...]. When the sponsorship came on board from UKTV [Dave] there was a tipping point where people went “OK, I would like to be associated with this” (Board member 2, 14 January 2014).

It remains to be seen if LCF will be able to retain its status independently. For North, the dominance of the Edinburgh Fringe Festival was a central problem.

We are striving each year to increase nationwide awareness and over the last few years the number of people coming from outside Leicester has increased massively. But Edinburgh is just so well known as a comedy festival and people will travel from all over the country during August. And Leicester for all of its success and the number of shows it puts on just doesn’t have the nationwide awareness that it needs for the long term and that’s a real challenge (SN 2 September 2014).
InterCity Midland Mainline had seen LCF’s local profile as a benefit as it chimed with their strategy to build local support; for Dave, it was a weakness. Prior to Dave’s sponsorship, BDC’s self-image had been as a central player in Leicester’s cultural community with an important profile in the city’s marketing campaigns. Uniting a community around a symbol, in this case a festival named after the city, was an example of this legitimation. The title change to Dave’s Leicester Comedy Festival marked an important moment when the organisation’s purpose shifted from local to a closer affiliation with national and international comedy sector’s commodity chain. However, since the sponsorship ended, the festival has returned to its core values of using comedy for social good and developed its local connections rather than pursuing commercial opportunities in the comedy sector.

Reflections

Since its inception in 1994, LCF has established itself as a significant part of Leicester’s cultural life and as an important civil society establishment that influences and reflects social and public policy changes in the city and nationally. LCF emerged as a resource-dependent organisation shaped at various points by the relative power of the market or public sector demands. Yet, in contrast to the expectations of a commercial sector type festival, the festival has resisted commercialisation, with the founder’s community values making some apparently rational business choices unpalatable. These underlying values became apparent in the narratives about the festival’s foundation.

The first narrative is of the festival beginning as a student project that almost accidentally grew. This creation myth can be found in media profiles on LCF and Geoff Rowe and on the festival’s and De Montfort University’s websites (De Montfort University 2014) amongst other places. It is widely known and was frequently referenced by interviewees during the research for this thesis. Giorgi et al. (2011) asserted festival’s role in producing and reproducing societal foundation myths
renews and reaffirms a sense of commonality by reminding people of their shared
history, whether factual or not. LCF’s foundation myth credits important actors in the
Leicester area – at various times De Montfort University, Leicester City Council, the
local media and the city’s public arts venues – in its establishment. In addition to
giving each of these a vested interest in its survival, such connections were classified
as typical of civic festivals in the typology, raising questions about whether this is a
fault in the original typology, or specific to LCF. If the latter, where do these civic
values originate? In the chapter on Buxton Festival, the founder’s values were found
to be highly significant and it seems likely Rowe has shaped LCF in his image too.

Throughout the interviews Rowe was identified as the embodiment of the festival.
There are clear memories of first meetings with Rowe where interviewees were
impressed by his professionalism. Rowe’s charisma provided the festival with an
unquestionable legitimacy (Thompson 1990), whilst his personality had shaped it.
Habermas’ (1989 [1962]) conception of communicative action contends beliefs and
norms are at the heart of individual agency. These beliefs and norms underpin shared
organisational cultures and form the basis for decision-making; and in this case, shape
the type of festival that has been created (Schein 2004). Whilst he was diffident about
the term leader, Rowe was aware of his identification with the festival. Despite various
attempts to develop legal-rational organisational structures LCF has remained reliant
on Rowe. So, what are the values Rowe embodies?

For Rowe, community involvement was key: “I always had this thing about people
getting involved”. This value led to fringe-style open programming structure and to
Rowe’s clear unease with the festival becoming a commercial enterprise, even when it
would have enabled him to buy a house. However, the festival is highly
entrepreneurial with an underlying assumption that ‘growth is good’. The festival’s
success was validated by increasing the number of shows presented and tickets sold
each year, and concurrently by its collection of social impact data in line with new
public management’s rationalist desire to quantify. Dave TV’s North identified the
festival’s entrepreneurial drive to “be constantly bigger and better” as central to the partnership (SN 2 September 2014). Discussions of artistic quality were limited to questions of ethics or represented as matters of market choice; audiences identify the ‘best’ acts, who will, therefore, sell more tickets and earn the opportunity to appear on TV. The managerial and curatorial roles of agents and scouts, Friedman’s (2014) hidden tastemakers, were obfuscated. The festival organisation, and Rowe in particular, are powerful intermediaries in the comedy sector. This point raises questions about the commercial sector type festival model. LCF does make aesthetic choices that are interventions in the form just as artistic directors at an aesthetic festival are, albeit less transparently.

The concept of social entrepreneurship was promoted by New Labour as an alternative to privatisation and by the Conservatives under the Big Society banner (Gray and Jordan 2011). This narrative fits with several of the festival’s long-standing interest groups’ purposes. The City Council and De Montfort University both claim a share of the reflected glory for their roles in supporting the festival in its early days, marking them out as far-sighted and the city as a supportive place for budding creative businesses to set up and thrive. De Montfort University is also keen to highlight its public engagement, local partnerships and encouragement of ‘an innovative and entrepreneurial attitude’ amongst its alumni (De Montfort University 2011: 4). As a graduate, Rowe’s values were influenced by his Arts Management degree’s focus on public arts. It was here he turned for support for the first edition, for example.

Whilst it is clear individual agency has been important in forming the festival, so has its context. Powerful influences such as sponsors and public sector funders have constrained its ability to operate in certain ways and supported others and their sway can be seen in the organisation’s decisions. Individuals and organisations, however, are not limited to one field to another. In LCF’s case, the market is perceived as less constraining, and more aligned to its underlying values than the demands of the
public sector. Comedian Rob Gee valued the perceived freedom the market gave in contrast to the bureaucratic or socially orientated demands of public subsidy.

For Rowe, the festival’s image as “creative and exciting” was an essential part of its appeal to Business Partners Club members. The creative organisation is an idea that plays to LCF’s sense of itself, and is appealing to many in the commercial sector, too. In post-industrial knowledge economies, traditional hierarchical bureaucracies are felt to waste employees’ potential, so companies have turned to partnerships with the arts for inspiration (Lewandowska 2015). LCF’s sponsors and its Business Partners Club members are attracted by the festival’s intrinsic organisational culture; a culture that reflects Rowe’s personal value system.

Rowe’s influence is substantial, in part because of his continuous involvement, but also because of his ability to create a strong yet adaptable narrative about the festival’s purposes and identity. Exploring the stories a community tells is a research method that provides detailed understanding of how a particular group understands the complex systems within which it operates. Boje (1991) conceptualised organisations as ‘collective storytelling system in which the performance of stories is a key part of members’ sense-making’ (ibid: 37). LCF’s foundation myth has been essential in shaping the festival’s identity and decision-making and has emerged as a powerful force in this case-study as an explanation for LCF’s social entrepreneurship.

In addition to its charitable status though, LCF does act a commercial sector festival type. It operates within the commercial comedy sector. It is, increasingly, building alliances with commercial companies as it searches for more effective and sustainable income streams that do not conflict with its values and culture. Its partnership with Dave appeared to be an efficient fit, as both operated within the same field, albeit at different places. Dave’s sponsorship provided a market value for LCF’s intrinsic knowledge and skills as a comedy festival producer, rather than for instrumental uses of comedy to achieve public policy aims. The shared focus of both
organisations was on using comedy to attract and satisfy the largest possible audiences to the brand in order to maximise income. In these senses the festival fits comfortably into the typology of a commercial sector festival proposed earlier.

Yet LCF also poses challenges to the typology; it is produced by a registered charity, has an interest in instrumental uses of comedy in health and education, is in receipt of public funding and is an influential organisation within Leicester’s public and arts sectors. This complexity appears to be a result of both structural and agency factors. Structural in that the festival has opportunistically responded to changes in public policy such as the instrumental use of the arts by the 1997-2010 Labour Government, as well as the neoliberal practices that have informed commercial business practices promoted in the name of professionalisation and organisational resilience. Agency factors are largely related to Geoff Rowe’s personal values, reinforced by the myth that comedy was an accidental choice and that Rowe isn’t an expert, or that the festival is a social rather than commercial enterprise. It is clear, for example, that Luxton pressured the festival to become a market focused events management company in 2001, but that Rowe and the board, chose a less financially secure path as a registered charity. Whilst not being willing to engage fully with public policy issues such as diversity, BDC developed relationships with public health and educational bodies as well as Leicester City Council, creating an image as socially and economically beneficial locally that is accepted by the city’s business community.

Ironically, having followed the various trends in public policy with little financial success, the festival’s credibility within the comedy sector was the key to the sponsorship deal with Dave TV. Despite Rowe having never particularly valued comedy for its own sake as an aesthetic festival director would, the festival is an effective broker in comedy’s proto-market, able to spot and promote emerging talent. The overlap between aesthetic, commercial and civic values will be explored in the next chapter, which focuses on the civic festival type.
“Is this what happens in Derby on the weekends now?”

(interviewee, Derby Festé)

Chapter 8. Derby Festé Case-study

Introduction

The conception of civic festivals in the typology in chapter five defined them as focusing on municipal concerns such as economic regeneration, social cohesion, or civic pride rather than artistic excellence or profit. Civic festivals valorise roles related to community engagement and management rather than curation have working practices focused on participation at various levels and points within the production process. Civic festivals were the type most strongly connected to the cultural public sphere (McGuigan 2005b) as their producers were likely to be active in civil society as community or campaigning groups, including local business organisations, or local authorities. Street arts festival Derby Festé was chosen as a case-study as an example of a civic festival because it was run by a consortium including Derby City Council and the Arts Council’s regularly funded National Portfolio Organisations (NPOs), takes place across the city centre’s public spaces and is largely free to attend.

Civic festivals operate in complex environments, with the potential to engage a variety of stakeholders and policy objectives. This can be a benefit if the festival’s core purposes sit happily with the policy agenda or funding streams it attaches to, but as Gray (2004) pointed out, chasing money can be a distraction and runs the risk of the festival being a junior partner in achieving others’ objectives. Where missions are truly compatible though, festival organisations will have stronger justification for their public sector funding (Hewison 2006).
As noted in chapter three, tourism is commonly used in urban cultural policy, linking culture to economic development (McGuigan 1996, 2005a). However, it is rare for festivals in the East Midlands to attract tourists (Maughan and Bianchini 2004a). Despite this evidence, festivalisation continues and questions of regeneration remain central to rationalisations for supporting them. Derby Festé was launched with an explicit economic regeneration agenda of driving footfall to the Cathedral Quarter in the light of competition from a newly opened shopping mall. This chapter investigates the festival’s history, working practices and structures as products of its value system.

**Description**

Derby Festé street performance festival takes place in the Cathedral Quarter of Derby city centre, an area comprising the Market Place, Derby Guildhall, the Silk Mill museum and key Arts Council NPOs QUAD digital media centre and Déda centre for contemporary dance. The festival takes place annually on a Friday evening and Saturday at the end of September. It is primarily aimed at families who might not go into the city centre in the evenings and attracts 30-35,000 people over the course of the weekend, with 3,000 paying to go to the climatic Saturday night spectacular at the Bass Recreation Ground a short walk away near the river. The performances include circus and dance acts, stages for local artists and community performances and a parade, often featuring giant puppets. The companies are often international, from countries such as Spain or France which have a history of spectacular street performances, creating a sense of carnivalesque otherness marking the festive period as different from other weekends.

On Friday 23 September 2017 festival started at 6pm at Déda with a performance by the Urban Choir, a group of young people from disadvantaged parts of the city, who were about to perform publicly. The room was full of their friends and families, people who would not normally visit a centre for contemporary dance, and a
scattering of middle-aged men in suits or smart casual wear. The latter were the festival producers, supporting the audience development project before heading off to the festival launch a couple of minutes’ walk away in the Silk Mill museum where the Choir performs again, this time for a room full of Derby’s establishment.

At the launch local politicians praised the festival as an example of Derby at its best, as a festival that attracts people to the Cathedral Quarter and as a celebratory community activity. As Stephen Munn, the festival’s artistic lead, said, “local politicians like it because it’s shiny, isn’t it? You get pictures of the city’s landmarks and that’s important and 30-35,000 people out on the streets feeling happy” (SM 19 February 2016). The Arts Council’s representative Rebecca Blackman referenced a range of policy areas where Festé has positive impacts: artistic risk, development of professional programming skills, support for emerging talent and social inclusion.

The festival attracts […] people from all kinds of background, many of whom are local people and many of whom might be people who don’t often or always get the chance to engage with this kind of arts and culture. So Festé works for local audiences and it works for local artists too, Festé supports talent development through their commission strand […] supporting the next generation of Derby artists (RB Derby Festé launch 23 September 2017).

Speeches over, the festival started with a contemporary dance performance on Cathedral Green outside the Silk Mill. On the other side of the town crowds are gathering. Families with young children are looking for the best place to watch the giant Sarruga Dragons, visitors from Barcelona, the main attraction of a spectacular parade through the city streets and back towards the Market Place. The Dragons themselves are quiet, waiting in darkness by Riverlights, a hotel behind the INTU Centre, only coming to life as the New York Brass Band arrived having led audiences, pied piper-like, from Cathedral Green.
History

Stephen Munn, chief executive of Déda, and Keith Jeffrey, then chief executive of QUAD, launched Derby Festé in September 2008. Both men started their jobs on the same day in 2007 having moved to the city from other areas and became friends. Jeffrey had worked in the cultural sector in the North East and Cambridge. Munn had worked in London at the Laban centre and both had been involved in festival activity in one way or another. They talked about the advantages they thought Derby had as a festival site that were not being exploited. These included the centre’s physical geography with several pedestrianised zones and a number of areas where crowds could congregate, such as Market Place and Cathedral Green, a square between the Silk Mill and the cathedral a few minutes from the Market Place. The whole city centre, and particularly the area now known as the Cathedral Quarter, was compact and easy to navigate on foot making it possible for audiences to move easily from one festival event to another.

Derby’s social geography was another factor. The city had the lowest rate of urban living in the country, a phenomenon caused by the fact the city’s tightly meshed business community focused around three main employers, Rolls Royce, Bombardier and Toyota, and their supply chains. Each of the employers is based at a separate point outside the ring road so, historically, people have lived and worked outside the city centre. Inside the ring road the centre has been used for leisure and retail, with some service businesses, meaning as Internet shopping grew there was a vacuum. This has been filled by a night-time economy of bars and a ‘vertical drinking culture’ a culture of binge drinking in large bars with cheap drinks and little seating. Munn and Jeffrey, founders of two new cultural buildings in the city centre were, in part, concerned this culture would prove off putting to their potential audiences.

A third factor was the opening of the 2007 Westfield Centre, renamed the INTU Centre in 2014. A significant investment of £250 million in Derby’s retail economy, the
centre pushed the city up the shopping league tables from about 50th to 15th. Such a large footprint was, however, a threat to the businesses outside the mall. Despite an agreement with the City Council that major anchor stores should not relocate, Marks and Spencer’s and Debenhams both moved to Westfield leaving three empty stores on the high street. There was a danger people would drive to the centre’s car park, go to the centre’s shops, then drive home again without ever seeing the other parts of the city centre.

At this time Déda and QUAD were involved with the City Centre Management, a local authority department, in the establishment of the Cathedral Quarter Business Improvement District (BID). The Cathedral Quarter identifies itself as an area with independent shops, arts and cultural venues, restaurants and bars. Whilst attractive, it might also be perceived as pricey, a factor exacerbated by the financial crash in 2007-08. Munn and Jeffrey decided to meet the challenge head on by finding a way to challenge perceptions about the area and to create a physical link with the Westfield Centre. They decided that an outdoor performance festival with a spectacular parade that used Déda’s programming expertise would attract families and other audiences who would not otherwise visit the area. The first festival took place on Westfield’s opening weekend with a parade led by the Barcelona street performance company Sarruga’s spectacular giant robotic dragon puppets that sought to make a link between the shopping centre and the Cathedral Quarter.

The first festival was considered a success, so the founding partners decided to continue the following year, which also became a celebration of the opening of QUAD digital media centre, whose building had been finished during the year. With the formalisation of the festival as an annual event came the formalisation of a structure for running it. Rather than set up a separate company, a steering group made up of Déda, QUAD, Derby LIVE (the City Council’s events team) and Derby Theatre was created to use the skills and resources of its members, many of which were new organisations themselves, in flexible ways. Funding for the festival was
sourced from Derby City Council (DCC) and Arts Council England (ACE). The budget fluctuated and did not account for in kind support from partners and volunteers, but averaged £160-£170,000, with £70,000 from ACE and £50,000 from Derby City Council with the rest being made up from box office income and sponsorship. There have been no headline sponsors or big donations, although INTU and the Business Improvement Districts have contributed.

Derby LIVE first became involved in the festival for pragmatic reasons. As charities neither Déda nor QUAD could reclaim VAT, whilst if the Council managed the finances, the budget increased by 20 per cent. The Council was also able to apply to the Arts Council’s project funding scheme, Grants for the Arts, which Déda and QUAD could not do prior to 2011 as ACE’s rules for Regularly Funded Organisations precluded that. In the first two years Déda and QUAD had contracted Arts Agenda and Walk the Plank, specialist outdoor cultural events companies, as project managers. Neither of these companies were local to Derby and contracting them accounted for approximately 25 per cent of the budget, so it was agreed Derby LIVE should become the festival’s event managers. As a Council department, Derby LIVE had local knowledge, events expertise and could use internal processes for road closures and booking Council-owned public spaces. The aim was to twofold: maximise the amount of money available for artistic products, and increase local event management capacity and expertise.

In 2015 Baby People joined the steering group. Baby People describes itself as a music and arts development organisation. It claims to be the UK’s first dedicated Hip Hop school which uses art and culture to engage and support the needs of the most deprived in our communities. We believe that art and music can be empowering tools and forms of expression for people in all stages of life (Baby People n.d.).
It became a National Portfolio Organisation in 2015. Unlike the other NPOs, its work is developmental and focused on supporting individual young people rather than presenting cultural work to the public. It also works primarily with musical genres the Arts Council has historically had little involvement with. Baby People is a social enterprise, a company limited by guarantee, but not a registered charity and finances most of its work through contracts with social services and the education authority rather than grant-in-aid. Its Arts Council funding is “only 10 per cent of our turnover, so it’s a small part, it’s a very important part, but financially it’s not a big part of our picture” (BJ 4 November 2016). Baby People’s participants were young people excluded from school or in care, city residents unlikely to engage with arts organisations such as Déda, QUAD or Derby Theatre. Baby People was included on the steering group because it became an NPO, however, its inclusion also pointed to the festival having socially and culturally inclusive agendas beyond economic regeneration in the city centre.

Historical context

In addition to the financial crisis and opening of Westfield/INTU, Derby’s cultural sector had experienced significant turbulence and its infrastructure was quite fragile. In November 2007 Derby Playhouse, the city’s producing theatre, went into administration. The theatre had asked the Council for an advance on its 2008 grant, which was refused. Derby LIVE took over artistic production at the theatre, which was sold to Derby University in 2009 and renamed Derby Theatre. Derby LIVE ran the theatre until 2012. QUAD and Déda were both relatively new organisations in new buildings, and Derby LIVE had to adjust to its new responsibilities at short notice, all at the time that Festé was being founded. The steering group became a useful forum for the city’s cultural institutions to meet that wasn’t purely about finances.

In 2011 the Council had planned to apply to the Arts Council’s new national portfolio funding system for Derby LIVE to become an independent body that ran the
theatre, the Guildhall Theatre, the Assembly Rooms and the city’s outdoor events programme. At the last-minute Derby University put in a separate bid for Derby Theatre, scuppering Derby LIVE’s plans. Arts Council England withheld its funding for several months while discussions were held. The final outcome was that Derby Theatre joined Déda and QUAD as members of ACE’s National Portfolio of core cultural organisations (NPOs). Derby LIVE reverted to being a Council department, but with a wider remit including licencing of outdoor cafes, street trading, temporary street markets and road closures in city centre spaces. It became license holder for Cathedral Green, Market Place and Bass Recreation Ground, three of Festé’s main spaces. Derby LIVE also operated the city’s events calendar as part of the City-Wide Event Strategy. Its officers sit on the Event Strategy Implementation Group alongside the Highways and Parks departments. This group evaluated new event proposal according to a set of four criteria: diversity, sustainability, innovation and artistic excellence (Derby City Council 2017) in line with local policies derived from Derby LIVE’s time running the theatre.

One outcome of this history was tension in relations between the NPOs and the local authority. This was exacerbated by the Council’s announcement it would withdraw grant funding from cultural services from April 2018, including the monies it had previously granted to Déda, QUAD and the city’s museums (Derby City Council 2015). Whilst there were no guarantees Derby LIVE would not also be cut, there had been no announcement about its future, creating suspicion councillors were defending their own staff and services at the expense of the third sector. This perception had been worsened by the closure of the Assembly Rooms due to a fire in 2014. The Council run venue, sited on Market Place was to be demolished and replaced with a multifunctional venue run by a commercial operator. The aim was to ensure there would be no on-going subsidy required, but there were doubts amongst the cultural sector whether it would be possible to find an operator, resentment about building costs and questions about why Derby LIVE’s staffing contingent was not reduced after the fire. For several interviewees Festé’s steering group was a rare
neutral space where they could work together to achieve a shared objective and that was not focused on discussions about funding. According to one interviewee:

There’s a lot of opposition, conflict, tension between the organisations on the steering group. Between the arts organisations and the Council, because the Council is withdrawing funding. Continuing to fund Derby LIVE seems a real bone of contention. That they’re putting money into direct provision rather than moving to an arm’s length funding model […] and it seems to be quite well funded, quite well staffed […]. I perceive a bitterness about that particularly as other arts organisations are losing their grant funding […]. There seems to be a lot of personal animosity actually. It seems historic. Which is where Festé feels like neutral territory. It is a forum where everyone is pulling towards the same end (Festé interviewee 1, 21 October 2017).

That the festival was a neutral space points to it as an autonomous institution within the city’s cultural ecology. Festival’s ability to interrupt everyday life and create shared communal interest is evident here in the production processes not just the festival period. The festival was perceived as bigger than any one organisation involved indicating, in addition to the stated economic development purpose, the festival’s structure acted to strengthen Derby’s cultural sector after a period of turbulence.

**Working practices and legal structures**

Rather than a separate legal entity, Festé was run by a steering group comprising Déda, QUAD, Derby LIVE, Derby Theatre, Gravity Digital and Baby People. The level of each partner’s commitment to the festival varied. For Déda the festival was embedded in its strategies, whilst for Derby Theatre, which sits within INTU, their role
was largely supportive. They provided technical support and mentoring for commissioned artists, and co-presented a circus event at the beginning of September as a warm-up event for the festival.

The steering group discusses long-term plans and ratifies the annual festival programme which is selected by a work group chaired by Munn, Déda’s artistic director. The chair rotates, a symbol of the collaborative nature of the festival’s working practices. Other work groups manage operations and marketing. Sharon Stevens-Cash, owner of Gravity Digital, a Derby-based marketing company sponsored the festival by donating her time to run its marketing. Peter Ireson of Derby LIVE chaired the operations subcommittee. Although Festé is regularly referred to as a collaborative space, it is clear Munn, as both founder and artistic lead, is seen as the primary force and a charismatic figure with a clear vision.

The festival organisers are the main cultural organisations within Derby, those being Déda Producing who very much drive Festé, so Stephen Munn drives Festé and he’s been involved since the very beginning; QUAD who have a very strong ethic about bringing culture to the people of Derby; and then there’s Derby LIVE and Derby Theatre (SS-C 4 November 2016).

Because it was not a separate legal entity, Festé could not apply for money in its own right, so Derby City Council has been lead partner in applications to Arts Council’s project funding stream, Grants for the Arts (G4A). Following ACE’s restructured funding system in 2014, National Portfolio Organisations could apply for project money through G4A in addition to their core funds. Until 2013 the festival applied annually for G4A support to match fund Derby City Council’s grant. This was becoming increasing difficult as G4A applications asked applicants to demonstrate growth each year, ‘additionality’ in the jargon; the funding stream was set up on the premise it would help start-up companies to grow and become sustainable, rather
than be an on-going revenue source. In 2013 Festé joined the Without Walls Associate Touring Network, a national consortium of outdoor performing arts festivals funded by Arts Council strategic touring funds (The Audience Agency 2015). Membership of the network was for three years (2013-2015) and was a capacity building exercise, with the smaller festivals such as Festé being encouraged to start commissioning new work from their region to, in time, feed into the outdoor arts supply chain. However, Festé needed to be able to plan further ahead than annual funding steams allowed.

Derby City Council was persuaded to create a five-year reserve of £250,000 that ran from 2013 to 2017, notionally £50,000 per year. With this funding in place it was possible to prepare a longer G4A application. ACE agreed to £210,000 over three years, 2013-2015, but with the funding front loaded so that it showed ACE’s funding reducing each year and the Council’s increasing. The steering group agreed to introduce a small charge for the Saturday night headline event at Bass Recreation Ground in line with ACE’s neoliberal belief that entrepreneurial arts organisations with a variety of income streams were more resilient.

Despite the longer-term funding, Festé’s collaborative working practices were not always easy.

It’s not always the easiest fit around the table. Because Derby LIVE are part of the City Council […] they’ve got a different agenda to the other partners […]. They can see the benefits for their organisations and for the people of Derby (SM 19 February 2016).

Derby LIVE was considered to have less interest in artistic quality than the NPOs, an attitude which, when combined with the potential funding cuts was seen as a
catalyst for deepening the relations amongst Derby’s NPOs and excluding Derby LIVE.

I think there’s an attitude at the moment where the Council is kind of withdrawing and they’ve kind of got this attitude that you switch the lights off, but there’s still people in the room. I think it’s galvanised everyone to say, “we need to do it now”. The leadership needs to come from the cultural partners (SM 19 February 2016).

From Munn’s point of view, DCC seemed unaware of the cultural partner’s social potential in the city. From DCC’s perspective the Arts Council and the NPOs’ interests appeared very narrow.

The Arts Council’s […] main concern is the NPOs and how they can be supported and sustained. So they always seem to take the view that the Council can do with its own service what it likes, but what ACE is looking for is support for its NPOs. And obviously the Council hasn’t got any cash (PI 21 September 2016).

This division was not explicitly discussed within the steering group, where the focus was kept on the festival events, but was an iceberg below the surface. All the producers subsidised the festival through in-kind support. If Déda and QUAD lost their local authority subsidy from 2018, their Arts Council grants were also under threat, as ACE required its investment to be matched by evidence of support from other sources. Rebecca Blackman, Senior Relationship Manager at Arts Council England, underlined the importance of the city’s cultural infrastructure in her speech at the launch of the 10th anniversary edition of the festival on 23 September 2016.

Now, of course, events like Festé, they don’t happen by magic. It takes vision, it takes hard work, it takes commitment from all the partners. And it couldn’t happen without the infrastructure you have
in Derby. Without people like Déda, QUAD, Derby LIVE, Derby Theatre, the University and many others. And that infrastructure and the artistic leaders within that infrastructure are vital assets to this city and they’re crucial to the continuation of events such as this and beyond this (RB 23 September 2016).

She appeared to be directly addressing the local authority with her final words

We know at the Arts Council that these aren’t easy times. We’ve been talking to local authorities up and down the land and we know how difficult it is […] Our chair, Peter Bazalgette, recently made a speech about this and our message was “we’re in if you’re in”. We know you’re under pressure, but please find a way to keep the faith (RB 23 September 2016).

From its earliest years, ACE had relied on partnerships with local authorities. Austerity pressures meant many were cutting non-statutory services, including arts provision. Even where there was not match funding, ACE demanded evidence of local support. In this case, Derby LIVE’s operational support saved the festival the costs of an event management company and demonstrated goodwill. However, it was evident tensions influenced the festival’s working practices, particularly such as community and audience development, where values were not aligned between the various organisations.

For Cathedral Quarter BID manager, Melanie Ferguson-Allen Festé’s collaborative model was one local authorities could learn from.

Part of the challenge when there are cuts is going on […] it’s about what I call delivering differently. And it’s about having your mind open. Two partners might have different agendas, but by working
together slightly differently they can both deliver their agendas. Win-win (MF-A 11 November 2016).

As the speeches at the launch indicated, Festé had a number of developmental objectives: artistic, economic, social and in production skills. Of these artistic and audience engagement are core cultural policy concerns, with skills management and production skills a necessary support element. Economic regeneration and social cohesion are traditionally concerns of civic authorities, for whom culture and the arts are non-statutory functions. The tensions evident in the festival’s working practices reflect these contrasting value systems. The difficulties of balancing artistic excellence and urban policy priorities became more evident in the festival’s approach to widening audiences and commissioning local artists.

Economic revitalisation

Ensuring the Cathedral Quarter retained its profile as a place to shop, work, and visit the arts organisations based there was a fundamental purpose behind Festé’s foundation. Outdoor arts, particularly the parade from the new shopping centre to Market Place, were chosen to showcase the area to people who would not otherwise visit. The expectation was local retailers would welcome the additional footfall. However, few shops in the area supported the festival by staying open late, decorating their premises or providing sponsorship.

A lot of businesses, believe it or not, think “well they all come, but they don’t visit my shop, so what’s the point in supporting it?”. They see it as a form of distraction […]. It’s taken several years to even get restaurants and bars to cotton onto the fact that they need to schedule additional staffing (MF-A 11 November 2016).
Given the centrality of economic regeneration to Festé’s objectives, this lack of support is surprising and contrasts with the support Buxton Festival and LCF receive from local businesses. Unlike both of those festivals, there is no internal production structure for engaging businesses. As detailed above, steering group membership is limited to Arts Council NPOs. Although Gravity Digital participates because of its significant investment in marketing the festival, even it is not a formal member. Business’ lack of involvement in the festival’s production points to alternative priorities as its real purpose. While economic regeneration is one strand of urban policy, as cultural events, civic festivals might be expected to be more concerned with social factors related to identity, belonging and pride.

**Talent development**

Festé started to focus on talent development and widening audiences when it joined the Without Walls network in 2013. One Without Walls aim is for each of its associate festivals to commission new work to feed into the following year’s touring menu for other festivals. Festé has a commissioning strand in its work, with support given to one or two companies from the East Midlands each year. Munn and Buss, QUAD’s chief executive, argued Festé had been a vehicle for supporting new artists and experimenting with new work from the start.

[T]hat was something we talked about from the beginning, but didn’t have the resource to do it, so we’ve built the resource in through the funding that we got in. And increasingly what we want to do is, over time, and we’re talking now about 10, 15, 20, 30 years, is for rather than us having to look to mainly central Europe for those big headline acts, we’re actually looking more in the UK and, hopefully, even more regionally than that, so that culture of street arts is even more embedded in the city and we start developing talent to come through and perform and take part (AB 21 October 2016).
For both QUAD and Déda, the festival provided a site for experimentation, to programme work that would not fit into the core aesthetics of their respective buildings. But it was also part of their commitment to Derby’s cultural ecology, of wanting to support emerging artists. The three-year Grants for the Arts application in 2013, therefore, place commissioning local artists as a core element. The festival would give either two £3,000 commissions or one £6,000 commission each year for artists to produce work for the festival. The artists would also be mentored by one of the partners. In addition to building the commissioned artists’ capacity, there was a secondary aim of improving partnership working between the steering group members, a task which proved more difficult than expected.

I guess it's the beginning of a journey that I think what we would like to do eventually but we’re not ready to do it yet is to produce, commission, a bigger piece of work working with more local artists. You know, that maybe the Theatre and Déda and QUAD would work together on and that would be quite a big community piece. [...] but we just didn’t feel ready to do that (SM 19 February 2016).

Although there were difficulties with commissioning, Festé had been effective in promoting joint operational working. The City had experience of running large scale outdoor events, but these were usually in parks or static stages in places such as the Market Place. Festé was conceived of as a cross art form activity that involved, multiple spaces, road closures, fire and spectacular high wire acts and it lacked the know how to deal with this. Derby LIVE’s Peter Ireson credited Festé’s collaborative working practices with developing the City’s event management capacity by programming acts that pushed boundaries.

it’s probably the most genuine thing where all the arts organisations do come together and [...] we’ve got genuine collaborations happening. Stephen Munn will come along and say “I’d really like to
do this” and then my events people will say, ‘it won’t fit on that space’, or ‘we’ve got to move the stage here’ and think through the practical implications, so it’s a really constructive dialogue to make the whole thing happen [...] – it’s a big undertaking. That’s part of developing the capacity in Derby – so we have the in-house skills to produce large-scale events (PI 21 September 2016).

For Rachael Thomas, Executive Director at Derby Theatre, a relative newcomer to the city, one of the distinctive features of Derby’s cultural sector was its pride in its collaborative working practices. She located this desire in the troubles the city’s cultural sector had experienced detailed above. For Ireson, the man at the forefront of the tensions resulting from the Council’s funding decision, this was certainly true.

It is where we genuinely are all partners at a difficult time. [...] you know there’s always talk about partnership and it can be a bit nebulous, or you know, rhetoric [...]. Festé is probably the most genuine thing where all the arts organisations do come together (PI 21 September 2016).

Whilst the partners were aware of the fragility of the local cultural ecology and keen to cooperate, there were problems associated with artistic leadership, which delayed some elements of collaboration such as co-commissioning.

You can’t just have someone running away with, “we’re gonna do this”, because the agendas are different [...]. I guess the trick of Festé is it means a lot to the city and it’s got to carry on doing that. It can’t just be formulaic [...] but it has to be four visions behind that, so buying in to the same vision, that’s quite difficult (SM 19 February 2016).
As the artistic lead, Munn’s vision was the primary one. He selected the festival’s programme, which was presented as a fait accompli to the steering group. There were divided opinions about this amongst interviewees. All agreed on the quality of the work Munn selected, the issue was rather whether or not his taste for contemporary dance and circus arts was suitable for all Derby’s citizens.

**Social cohesion**

From the start Festé had seen its role as trying to break down social divisions within the city by encouraging audiences into the city centre, which was conceived of as a neutral space. Widening participation followed the Arts Council’s audience development concepts, so was thought of as growing audience numbers and aiming for more ethnic and social diversity amongst attenders.

Given the suburban nature of the city you tend to have different demographics, classes, ethnicities living in different suburbs and there was no central meeting point because they weren’t necessarily using the city centre [...]. So, there’s social cohesion challenges and issues to look at and to deal with (AB 21 October 2016).

The approach to audience development shifted when the festival joined Without Walls. As well as developing festivals’ commissioning capacity, Without Walls aimed to diversify audiences for street arts. To this end it employed an Ambassador Scheme Co-ordinator for each of its members. According to Tim Jennings, Festé’s Co-ordinator, his brief was open with each festival approaching its work differently in response to the spatial and relational geography of its place. For Jennings, Derby was a small city with visible and invisible barriers preventing communities from going to the city centre.
The way that it’s laid out is quite interesting I think because you have the city centre, then you have this almost invisible iron curtain and then you have Normanton which is an area where you have a huge range of communities who live there in a very small space (TJ 19 September 2016).

He argued in trying to encourage diverse communities to visit the Cathedral Quarter by producing more cultural activity, albeit outside and family orientated, reflected an attitude that undervalued the diverse cultures within the city.

The thing is there’s an assumption that arts and Festé and stuff happen in the centre, so people aren’t coming to it. But if you go to Normanton there are tons of things that people are putting on there and it’s theirs and they own it and they go to it [...]. It’s not that they don’t engage with culture and arts, it’s just that they have their own. So, it’s trying to integrate that into the festival rather than assume that everyone is going to be into contemporary dance (TJ 19 September 2016).

His approach was distinct from Munn’s, which focused on artistic excellence within a Western tradition of circus, contemporary dance and festival arts, and Derby LIVE, which prioritised place revitalisation. Instead he started by researching the cultures of the communities the festival wanted to engage with. For Jay, founder and CEO of Baby People whose approach was similar to Jennings, to be effective, Festé needed a paradigm shift away from democratisation of culture, which places a high value on certain cultural forms as a mark of civilisation, towards cultural democracy, a belief that values different cultural experiences equally meaning community members are experts in their fields (Mulcahy 2006).
You’ve got to programme stuff they might already know of or be aware of, or culturally understand that genre or that style so it’s stuff they want to come and engage in. It’s not that Festé has to become West Indian Carnival or that Festé’s got to become international music day, but you have to think, if I want this to be accessible for the people of the city at the very least you have to give that equality (BJ 14 November 2016).

For both Jay and Jennings, the festival’s approach to widening participation was problematic because it failed to engage with the culture of the communities it wanted to attract on equal terms.

I can’t sit here as a white straight man and say “right, I’m going to programme a load of LGBT work” because how the hell do I know? Unless I’m really embedded in that culture and that scene, I’ve got to bring in people from those communities […]. How do I know whether this is going to be promoting the cause and pushing boundaries not just offensive, or derogatory or patronising (BJ 14 November 2016)?

The two competing value systems were in place, each driven by funding. The core arts programme was funded by the Arts Council and led by Déda, an ACE NPO. The widening participation agenda was funded by Without Walls and informed by Baby People, also an ACE NPO, but one which received over 90 per cent of its income from non-arts sources.

Over his three years in the role, Jennings has worked with three communities, one in the city centre and two in Normanton, a diverse and deprived neighbourhood two miles south west, outside the encircling ring road. The first group he approached was
the skateboarding community\textsuperscript{18}. Jennings instinctively conceived of skateboarding as a cultural form. He contacted two of the community’s leaders and discussed a way that they could be integrated into the festival, creating a skateboarding competition and showcase on the Friday evening at the Skate Park on Bass Recreation Ground. The objective was to use the festive atmosphere and sense of belonging to encourage Festé’s traditional audience to consider skating in a new light, and equally to encourage the skaters to be open to the skills demonstrated by the street performers in other parts of the festival.

The second group was the Ukrainian community in Normanton where he discovered Derby was home to Hoverla, an internationally renowned traditional music and dance group. Hoverla travelled around the world performing but had not been involved in Festé. Jennings worked with Hoverla to set up a fringe event at the Ukrainian Centre in Normanton in the run up to the festival.

[I]t was a mixture between one or two acts that are Festé stalwarts, then Hoverla performed and other acts through links I have to Normanton. So the idea was to bring people from the city centre to Normanton. Because there’s a theory that people from Normanton don’t go to the city centre, but people from the city centre don’t tend to go to Normanton (TJ 19 September 2016).

This approach raises two interesting questions. Firstly, Festé’s foundation narrative speaks very clearly about the centrality of the Cathedral Quarter to the festival, yet

\textsuperscript{18} Debates about skating as culture came to the fore in the UK in a campaign run by the skateboarding community to keep the South Bank Centre’s Undercroft open as part of its redevelopment. The Centre’s management had slated the area as a site to be developed for retail outlets that would provide it with a revenue stream. The skateboarders and their supporters lobbied for their practices to be valued as highly as the other cultural forms that the South Bank Centre was created to support and present, and eventually won, with the South Bank Centre going back to the architectural drawing board.
this fringe event asked audiences to travel to an area two miles away. If the festival has placemaking at its core, how broadly is place defined? Secondly, it again highlights the lack of integration between the NPO partners and Derby City Council, as there is no evidence of Jennings working strategically with Council’s community development or youth services to create synergies, but Jennings had created links with Baby People through the steering group. The third group was young people from the Roma community, a group Baby People had been working with.

Although there was a broadening of some partners’ thinking evident in Jennnings’ and Jay’s discussions, for Munn the focus remained on increasing interest in ‘his’ art form.

Stephen [Munn] was looking at one of the dance pieces that was on and it was really good, and he was like “you know there are 500, 600 people here. If I programmed this in Déda there might be 40” (BJ 4 November 2016).

There was a sense taking the art onto the streets and making it free made it accessible. However, as Bourdieu (1984 [1979]) contended, culture is inherently exclusive, with rules that take a lifetime to understand. Taking the work onto the streets certainly increased the number of people who watched it. There was little evidence, however, it had broken down the imperceptible barriers Jay had noted. Munn was aware, after ten years of Festé, the audience for contemporary dance within Déda had not changed. What had been effective was Baby People’s work with the Urban Choir described at the start of this chapter. Performing at Déda and the launch at the Silk Mill was, for many of the young people involved, their friends and family, their first experience of being welcomed into an arts building and feeling their culture was valued.
Throughout the interviews there was an explicit sense of the coordinating group wanting to collaborate more closely to build a strong cultural ecology in the city. Operationally this collaboration had been effective and had built Derby LIVE’s event management capacity. However, it was also clear tensions remained. These were particularly evident in questions related to cultural taste and widening participation where some partners focused on concepts of artistic excellence derived from their professional habitus, and others wanted to introduce non-professional participation strands and alternative cultural forms. This open/closed dilemma illuminates underlying tension about the festival’s purpose(s) and power relations. The arts organisations which founded the festival wanted to maintain their privileged influence, while newer members wanted to grow the festival’s market by opening it up (Weber 2004[1922]).

Festival purpose
Unlike Buxton Festival, Festé did not have a singular generally shared and widely known vision. And unlike LCF, its vision was not solely embodied in its founder. Driving footfall to the Cathedral Quarter for economic reasons and encouraging civic pride and a sense of belonging are two cross cutting themes, but there were distinctions in tone and interpretation. For Munn, Festé’s purpose was about creating a festival for the city to do with inward investment, to do with footfall in the city centre, that’s the business part of it. It’s also international artistically, with local and regional impacts (SM 19 February 2016).

By contrast, for Buss its purpose was primarily civic pride, about “understanding that your place, the place that you live in, can be a place where brilliant things happen” (AB 21 October 2016). This chimed with Ireson, who described it as a time when “the city centre comes alive and spaces are changed and adapted. There is a different buzz and feel in the city when Festé comes and I think people see spaces in
a different light” (PI 21 September 2016). So, Festé reimagined the city as a place without cultural barriers. The festival aimed to engage with communities who would not normally visit the city centre or perceive themselves as enjoying contemporary dance. Even here, however, there were differences. Stevens-Cash’s view echoed Ireson’s. She said,

I was standing outside the Bell, a nice, quiet drinkers pub. I saw somebody in there who had come from London […]. And I was like “have you come for Festé?” and he was like “what’s Festé?” […] and the next thing, the giant dragons stalk by and he was surprised, asking “Is this what happens in Derby on the weekends now?” (SS-C 4 November 2016).

This is clear evidence of Derby’s city centre being reimagined by those who already felt comfortable there. Jennings conceived of the festival’s purpose as extending the festival’s reach beyond the centre’s temporal, spatial and aesthetic bounds into surrounding neighbourhoods such as Normanton, which the Arts Council would define as an area of low engagement with the arts. He noted the importance of fun shared experiences in creating a sense of community and belonging. He also noted affective changes.

Everyone is having a good time and in a good mood. That is the most important thing about it, I think. It makes people feel differently about where they live (TJ 19 September 2016).

For Jay the festival was an opportunity to engage communities who normally felt contemporary dance or circus arts were ‘not for the likes of us’. As the festival was publicly funded, he argued it had to broaden its reach.
As soon as something becomes about the city, as soon as it has a civic responsibility, as soon as it’s claiming to be about a place, which is the city centre, it has to be equally accessible to the people of the city (BJ 4 November 2016).

Having grown up in Derby though he was aware of the potential impact of the festival in changing people’s attitudes to the city. The Cathedral Quarter, in particular, was known for its night-time economy based on young people congregating in bars with little seating, a practice known as ‘vertical drinking’ which was of particular concern in Derby.

I think that the arts and the arts organisations have to be central to driving this change of social environment. So that industry grows, and people want to stay here, and people want to move here and people want to work here and live here and engage in city life […]. And Festé is a really important part of changing that. So, on the last Festé on the Friday night there was about 4,000 people in the Market Place and, in my lifetime, I don’t think I’ve ever seen 4,000 in the Market Place (BJ 4 November 2016).

This view resonated with Buss’ sense of Festé as a catalyst for changing perceptions about what it means to be from Derby.

[T]here’s just this general sense of celebration and I don’t really like the word, but pride, kind of civic pride, understanding that your place, the place that you live in can be a place where brilliant things happen […]. So people can be inspired to do something interesting, different, challenge myself, whatever it might be (AB 21 October 2016).
Festé for Buss was, therefore, a stimulus, a catalyst for reimagining the city as somewhere more. Somewhere a resident could be proud to be from, and where they felt included. Each of the interviewees, whether they prioritised artistic, economic or civic purposes, clearly felt a sense of responsibility for the city, and that Festé actively changed people’s sense of place.

**Cultural leadership**

Cultural leadership according to Hewison and Holden (2011, 2006) combined managing creative individuals, balancing the books and, when the organisation is publicly funded, civic responsibilities that add layers of complexity. In addition to the pragmatic aspects of stakeholder relationships explored within the management literature, they discussed the responsibilities to be responsive to the public, remain legitimate and articulate or symbolise social issues. As public meeting places, agents in the production and distribution of cultural goods and, often, recipients of public subsidy, festivals often have a high profile in the public sphere. Getz (2009) and Sachs Olsen (2013) argued festivals have become disconnected from the explicitly cultural aspect of public policy and were more closely aligned with place-marketing and economic development than with artistic or cultural facets. Festé clearly reflects some of those concerns. Its foundation narrative prioritised economic development and footfall. Behind the rhetoric, however, there is a leitmotiv that values the artistic programme for its ability to reimagine the city. A number of interviewees spoke of Derby feeling like a ‘European city’ during the festival and of the importance of different constituencies sharing the space. Everyone struggled to articulate this, which is itself telling. Buss’s response to the question ‘what are you proud of?’ was closest.

One of the things I’m most proud of is the unplanned for audience activities. So for example, when we do an event at QUAD, people who haven’t come out for Festé, who are at Walkabout, […] who are
doing that vertical drinking and having a good time, will engage with the festival and they will engage alongside families and there won’t be a tension point, they’ll come together and they will enjoy the same thing in the same space. So, there is the slightly ethereal, slightly underlying thing like a psychological shift that says, we might live in these little pockets in those suburban areas but are part of the same community. [...] breaking down some of those barriers and actually we’ve got shared emotional responses to these things, we are all human beings, we do react in the same way, we can enjoy these things together they don’t have to be separate. So, for me the thing I’m most proud of is that general sense of togetherness (AB 21 October 2016).

Co-ordinating this is the festival’s artistic leader. Munn is identified by all the festival’s producing partners as the lynchpin, the founding visionary who overcame significant resistance in the city.

[I]t can’t be underestimated Stephen [Munn] as the driving force [...]. Because you have to recognise that although Festé is now an established event that happens every year and everyone thinks it’s brilliant, when it was first discussed no one really understood it, or understood what the potential benefits might be. And there were certain people in the city who were saying things along the lines of “that can’t happen in Derby” or “Derby people won’t be interested in that”. So, there was a big perception gap that had to be filled (AB 21 October 2016).

Clearly a skilful and determined leader, in terms of his ability to negotiate with and win support from the City Council, Arts Council England and the various arts and
cultural bodies in the city, Stevens-Cash argued Munn’s artistic vision was central to the festival’s transformational effectiveness

Who would imagine that a contemporary dance piece could include shopping trolleys? And the quality of those contemporary dancers is something that you just wouldn’t hire on a shopping Saturday for people to see, so that’s what sets Derby Festé apart […]. Festé stays true to pushing the boundaries with the art that happens. […] There are a lot of high-risk bookings in there. But they’re the ones that get the biggest reaction. By high risk, I mean they’re not typical. Have you heard of Dave Tool? He’s a dancer, he came with Stopgap Dance Company, and he’s got no legs, which this year, I remember thinking […] it’s difficult to watch. […] actually, the reaction from the audiences was very positive and people used the words “awe inspiring“ […]. And there’s a trust now, because it’s been happening since 2007 (SS-C 4 November 2016).

Strange and Mumford (2002) argued charismatic leaders created movement towards an idealised future goal through shared group identity, providing a common framework for action, to coordinate the work; and institutionalised vision and beliefs within hard structures and societal norms. They categorised leaders as charismatic, ideological or pragmatic, depending on each leader’s preferred recipe for mixing these measures. All the festival’s producing partners identified Munn as the lynchpin, the founding visionary who overcame significant resistance in the city. Although he did not have a pat articulation of his vision, the steering group members interviewed all felt they understood it and could identify with it sufficiently enough to compromise where they disagreed. During his interview, when asked about the festival’s vision, Munn started to look it up on his computer. When pushed he referenced inward investment and footfall in the city centre, followed by an international programme with opportunities for local artists. There are goals here to motivate the business
community, to provide a sense of identity as residents of a cosmopolitan city that also cares about developing its own talents. This is a vision that is ‘consistent with, but extends and integrates followers’ world views’ (Strange and Mumford 2002: 347).

Munn has also been highly effective in creating a common framework for action in the steering group. This institution has maintained a sense of collective endeavour strong enough to manage the tensions between the NPOs and the City Council. Soft structures, such as a belief in the centrality of collaborative working, have been embedded within the group’s working practices in the form of norms and values.

Applying Strange and Mumford’s typology, Munn emerges as a charismatic leader who models the behaviours he wants his followers to adopt. This is evident in the programming of artistically excellent work that might challenge audience’s expectations but always stays within the bounds of acceptability. Or the suggestion of a rotating chair of the steering committee. Both of these examples establish his credentials as authentic, a leader who fully understands the festival’s values and can be trusted to stick to them. At the pinnacle of their power, charismatic leaders are also described as adaptable and able to negotiate because their power resides in having established soft structures such as values rather than fixed sets of rules and regulations. Integrating Baby People into the steering committee and the widening of the concept of participation is examples of such adaptability.

Reflections

Derby Festé was selected as a civic festival case-study because its production network incorporated a range of public institutions, including the local authority and Arts Council funded organisations, so it appeared its priorities would be broadly aligned with urban policies in the city. The choice of a largely free programme of spectacular street performance targeted at families seemed to support this analysis, as did the main themes evident in Festé’s foundation narrative. Its genesis as a response to the
opening of a large shopping mall and its desire to create a new and distinctive image for the Cathedral Quarter both fitted comfortably into the city’s economic regeneration agenda. The centrality of arts organisations in leading the event fitted neatly into New Labour’s concepts of joined-up government and creative cities, making it a good exemplar of the type. As the festival developed so did its interest in bringing diverse communities into the city centre, developing a sense of civic pride and shaping place perceptions beyond simply branding to placemaking. These aims are also a good fit with urban public policy.

Where the festival diverged from the typology was in Munn’s insistence on placing his artistic vision at the heart of the festival, and in the creation of a structure which prioritised Derby’s Arts Council’s National Portfolio Organisations. Whilst the City Council participated in the steering group it was largely as a delivery partner, with little say on the programme. Artistic taste is an unacknowledged tension within the festival. Festé’s core programme makes assumptions of universality of taste, but cultural differences were evident when the festival attempted to widen participation to include young, working class or BAME people. According to the two interviewees most involved in widening participation in the festival, these communities did not perceive Festé as being for them because its main programme did not incorporate art forms or genres they identified with.

There was also no wider collaboration with youth or neighbourhood or local education services which might have been expected through Without Walls’ ambassador scheme which aimed to work with communities the Arts Council identifies as having low arts engagement. It was not until Baby People joined the steering group that these connections were made. Collaborative working practices were important, but narrow, with foundational norms and values drawn from Munn’s culture sector background rather than traditional civic policy priorities such as wellbeing and community cohesion.
In creating the steering group, Munn has, however, established a mechanism through which new ideas and alternative perspectives can be integrated. This is in contrast to Buxton, which had a foundation vision, which has remained central, and LCF, whose values are embodied in Rowe. So, as new members have joined the steering group Festé’s values have been modified. Engaging new communities became a central theme, and enabled the festival to navigate the Coalition government’s austerity policies, but it was not part of its foundation story. This is an example of charismatic leadership, an integrative and adaptable force, yet, as with Rowe and Fraser, Munn’s artistic priorities were inflexible, placing him as an ideological charismatic (Strange and Mumford 2002).

Returning to the typology, Festé does fit within the civic festival type, albeit with some elements of the aesthetic type. What this illuminates is the enduring power of the founders’ professional habitus and professional closure. Each festival has created production structures from within their professional fields, and under pressure has returned to the core values learned in those fields. In Festé’s case this included excluding the Cathedral Quarter’s businesses, despite the festival’s stated objectives being to help the district compete with the city’s shopping mall. Instead of the direct economic impacts conceived in new public management versions of cultural-led regeneration, Festé is a reimagining of the city centre as a place that appeals to families and site for intercultural communication. This placemaking differs from Buxton’s in that rather than building on historical cultural assets, it created a new festival in line with the opening of two new cultural buildings (QUAD and Déda) and the reconfiguration of other cultural producers in the wake of Derby Playhouse’s bankruptcy and the fire at the Assembly Rooms. Festé’s role in placemaking can be seen as a performance of a new identity, of Derby as a cosmopolitan city hosting performances by international artists. Through its novelty, Festé’s programme was claimed to have enabled different communities to share the space, brought together by its surprising spectacles.
Others felt the placemaking effect was limited: spatially to the Cathedral Quarter; culturally, to those with an interest in the types of art forms programmed, such as circus arts or contemporary dance; and socially, to those who felt connected to and represented in the festivals’ production processes. Where it was effective in attracting communities who would not normally attend an urban arts festival, such as the skaters or Roma choir, was when Festé had worked with the community for months prior to the festival to build trust and understanding. There was no evidence, however, of these communities being given a voice on the steering committee which remains limited to organisations valorised by belonging to the Arts Council’s National Portfolio, a norm that fits better into the aesthetic type than civic.

Ideal types are a device for abstracting essential features of social phenomena in order to understand their underlying logics. The three festival types used here had underlying logics related to culture and policy. The cases have demonstrated areas where they fitted well into the type, but other areas where they did not. The next chapter will explore the cross-cutting themes which have emerged to identify the shared norms and values of regional cultural festival production.
“The fate of our times is characterized by rationalization and intellectualization and, above all, by the disenchantment of the world” (Gerth and Mills 1991 [1918]: 155)

Chapter 9. Hetero-regulation and regional urban arts festivals

Introduction

Chapters three, four and five previously identified festivals as enduring institutions within hetero-regulated urban political economies. They noted the ways the Arts Council’s and local authorities’ policies had shifted after 1979 in response to neoliberal marketisation and new public management (NPM). The initial typology in chapter five was based upon a series of empirical assumptions about the regulatory influence wielded by these policy bodies through their financial control. It assumed aesthetic festivals would be primarily funded and influenced by the Arts Council, civic festivals by local authorities and commercial festivals by trading in the market. Toynbee’s (2016) work argued the complexity of regulation within the music industry in relation to talent spotting and creative management enabled individual brokers and small businesses to retain autonomy. This research found each festival type existed within complex ecologies including public policy actors, commercial actors and arts sector influences.

Resourcing festivals proved to be a struggle for all the case-study festivals, meaning all have developed hybrid financing systems comprising elements of public support, trading and sponsorship. The difficulties experienced by the festivals in engaging with wider societal structures and institutions such as achieving charitable status or support from cultural funding systems illuminated shifting norms within
mainstream society. Buxton finally moved into a stable financial situation twenty-five years after the initial edition. Leicester Comedy Festival and Derby Festé remained financially insecure. The main sources of non-trading income for the festivals in the study over their lifecycles were Arts Council (Festé), local authorities (LCF and Festé), commercial sponsorship (LCF) and philanthropic donors (Buxton). The present thesis thus far demonstrates festivals retaining autonomy within their environments as a result of their tacit knowledge, external networks and ability to find unregulated spaces between the regulatory bodies in their ecosystems. The present chapter explores the extent to which the heteronomous regulatory bodies identified by the interviewees influenced the festivals’ values and development. This and the following chapter are thematic and theoretical discussions of defining principles which can be applied to other regional urban arts festivals. In order to distance them from their settings, interviewees’ quotations are used anonymously throughout. Starting with the Arts Council, the chapter will review the policies at the time each festival was launched as this was when shared values and norms were established.

**The Arts Council (ACE)**

All the festivals discussed the Arts Council extensively; despite Leicester Comedy Festival (LCF) receiving minimal support and Buxton surviving over a quarter of a century with only sporadic project grants. Buxton and LCF expressed puzzlement about ACE’s policies, which were not explicitly stated prior to the publication of Achieving Great Art for Everyone (Arts Council England 2010). In fact, Upchurch (2004) demonstrated the Arts Council’s policy prior to the 1980s had not significantly changed from its founding documents. It provided subsidy to touring organisations so that regional audiences had access. Urban arts festivals were for the most part conceived of as local venues which, whether commercial or civic, received indirect support in the form of lower prices from those touring companies.
Creativity was defined as artistic inspiration. It was embodied in individual artists, not the work. There is no evidence of creativity being considered as a systemic phenomenon requiring intermediaries and brokers to shape and communicate it to audiences (Csikszentmihalyi 2014). A festival producer did not count as creative, he or she was an “impresario” creating an “artificially brought together series of events”. The implication was such a festival had no guiding artistic purpose. This policy was not understood by the festival producers interviewed and, in Buxton’s case, not followed. Buxton created new works in house each year, to a clear theme grounded in their vision of producing “rarely produced operas” which could not be seen elsewhere and received good reviews in recognised publications. So, the encouragement to apply for grants, which were then declined, caused great confusion.

ACE’s mixed messages point to an organisation either internally conflicted about its purposes in relation to regional arts, or disingenuous about what it was trying to achieve. Following Bourdieu (1984 [1979], 1993a), the Arts Council might be expected to want to maintain support for elite arts at the expense of popular forms. Given Buxton’s board included members of the aristocracy and its art form is opera, perhaps the ultimate elite form in the UK, disingenuousness seems unlikely. More likely is genuine tension and contradiction between policy priorities. Chapter three pointed to monetarist marketisation during the Thatcher period as the most probable cause as budget cuts would have made it difficult to fund new clients, however worthy.

Where it did support festivals and venues, the Arts Council sought evidence of local support, particularly from local authorities. If councils were unsupportive the Arts Council would not intervene, even where there was a strong connection to a “creative force”. One interviewee described how even the Royal Shakespeare Company struggled to persuade the Arts Council to support a theatre in Stratford-upon-Avon because of resistance from Warwickshire County Council, which was worried about
the effects of tourism on local quality of life. In Buxton’s case Derbyshire County Council was unsupportive, believing residents would not be interested in opera. Whether or not this was the reason the festival failed to gain Arts Council funding, the festival’s producers or their supporters, even those with close ties to the Arts Council did not understand decisions were so dependent on council recommendation.

Viewing the Arts Council’s policies historically, the foundation stories narrated in the cases spotlight three distinct phases. Buxton’s foundation was at a time when policymaking was informal and obscure. The Arts Council had significant autonomy; it was at ‘arms-length’ from Government and there was no culture department or secretary of state to report to. Leicester Comedy Festival came into being shortly after the Department for National Heritage (DNH) and the National Lottery had been established. Derby Festé launched as Lottery money began to be syphoned off for the London 2012 Olympics, and consequent lobbying for money to be spent outside London created an interest in regional spending to counterbalance disparities and promote local placemaking. Turning now to the implications of the establishment of the DNH (which became the Department of Culture Media and Sport after 1997) and the National Lottery.

The DNH was created after more than a decade of neoliberal policies in the UK had imposed marketisation across the public sector, including the arts. Funding for both the Arts Council and local authorities had reduced significantly. The National Lottery was introduced to increase the funds available. Suspicion that the money would be used to replace government grant-in-aid led to a policy of additionality; Lottery money could only be spent as capital not revenue, and there was a new focus on questions of equity in how the funding was allocated. None of the festivals researched have buildings; so capital funding had little impact on them. However, festivals’ image as democratic spaces meant they were of interest as sites for engaging a wider range of communities (Giorgi et al. 2011). Leicester Comedy Festival was launched in this era.
As an “artificially brought together series of events”, LCF would not have fulfilled the Arts Council’s policy criteria prior to National Lottery funding. There is little evidence of a “creative force” or no artistic director directly shaping the festival programme, although the producers do use their expertise to advise and recommend acts to promoters. There is curation of, for example, *Leicester Mercury Comedian of the Year* and *Old Folk Telling Jokes* despite LCF’s open selection process. This demonstrates the complexity of festival production. None of the cases studied fits neatly into one type, making them difficult to categorise or contain. The factors identified in the typology have, however, proven effective in illuminating areas where there are contradictory influences or tensions between hetero-regulatory interests and producers’ values. So, while the types are not mutually exclusive, the analytical distillation of defining principles enabled me to understand how each festival’s structures related to and informed their norms and practices.

After fifteen years of neoliberal valorisation of market economics and policies to broaden the audience for culture, a festival promoting a popular art form such as comedy and with an open production process might have fulfilled the new criteria for support. And, indeed, the Arts Council gave LCF £1,000 in 1995 and again in 1996. The relationship was always uneasy though. Despite the Thatcher government’s attempts to promote marketisation, the rhetoric of ameliorating market failure underpinned ACE’s decision-making. Along with other popular forms it defined as commercially successful, it was reluctant to fund comedy. For example, there were no comedy-focused organisations within the Arts Council’s 2018-22 National Portfolio (Arts Council England c).

The Comedy Festival’s final Arts Council funding was an organisational development grant in 2000. This grant aimed to help the festival develop a sustainable business model. It paid for a management consultant to identify commercial income streams. This demonstrated a shift in ACE policies, which were no longer predicated on there being a creative force – rather the grant actively
encouraged ‘impresario’-like behaviours. The focus was on organisational factors, on the producers’ skills, knowledge and business capacity rather than questions of artistic value.

The consultancy resulted in a business plan where the festival became just one project the company undertook amongst other events and programmes it ran as a production company (Leicester Comedy Festival Ltd. 2001). This plan will be discussed further in festival values and autonomy in chapter ten. Here it demonstrates ACE’s policy shift in line with Labour’s new public management approach introduced in 1997. One aspect of NPM was a formalisation of public private partnerships as more public services were contracted out. Contract specifications identified clear deliverables and close monitoring of partners became the norm, even within the cultural sector (Belfiore 2004, Löffler and Bovaird 2004). Management approaches from the private sector valorised during the Thatcher era became normalised and embedded in public services. In 2010 Arts Council England published a ten-year strategy. Two of the five goals related to business or management issues such as organisational resilience and leadership whilst only one related specifically to artistic quality and talent development of the sort implied in the term “creative force” (Arts Council England 2010). Unlike other components of the public sector where strategic needs were identified and contracts specified to fill them, ACE retained its policy of responsiveness. Arts organisations applied for funding and were judged against the criteria identified in a particular grant scheme. Underpinning all these schemes was an assumption of market failure. The most resilient organisations, those judged to be commercially viable, were excluded, as were those with no other form of support. In Weberian terms, the ideal grant recipient was an arts organisation with match funding from other public bodies, sponsors or donors judged to be evidence of the non-market demand required in ACE’s unspoken philosophy.

By the time Festé was launched in 2007, the policy environment had changed again. As identified in chapter three, the creation of the Department of Culture Media
and Sport in 1997 marked a change in the ways marketisation was inflected. In addition to NPM, New Labour introduced joined-up government and creative economy policies (Smith 1998). Joined-up government required departments and non-departmental government bodies to work together to tackle complex societal issues such as urban regeneration. Narratives about the positive contribution of the cultural sector to national and local economies fitted neatly into creative city and culture-led regeneration concepts underpinning city of culture and cultural quarter developments widely implemented in cities throughout the western world (United Nations Habitat 2004). Festé’s foundation as a response to an economic threat sits comfortably within these narratives. The opening of a new shopping mall rocketed Derby up the retail league tables. Despite being run by arts organisations primarily funded by the Arts Council, Festé’s concern was said to be economic, and place specific, illustrating a shift from the policy of supporting touring discussed earlier. Dédá and QUAD, the founding organisations, are both in the Cathedral Quarter, the historic city centre.

This economic rationale chimed with Arts Council’s policy rhetoric. Festivals were claimed to “drive urban regeneration” and “attract vital visitor revenue” as part of a broader argument placing cultural activity at the centre of economically successful cities popularised in Florida’s (2002) work. Despite being much critiqued, the claim vibrant cultures attract creative workers who then stimulate economic growth has proven highly attractive to policymakers, including the Arts Council.

Core to our work will be making the case to government, to local authorities, to our partners and to the public that adequate public investment is [...] crucial to sustaining the public value of arts and culture to the individual, to society and to the national economy (Arts Council England 2013: 14).
Outdoor arts festivals were particularly well placed to benefit from these policies as they make a direct intervention into public spaces. Unlike Buxton or Leicester, for Festé’s founders ACE was the easiest partner to engage. The Arts Council’s reported response to the proposal was, “why would you not do that, that makes sense”. The contrast with Buxton’s founders’ experience in the late 1970s “I never even got him near to understanding what we were trying to do” is a stark illustration of the changes in ACE’s festival-related policies between the 1979 and 2007.

Although visitor revenue was central to ACE’s argument and stimulating tourism a frequent theme within festival studies as a justification for public subsidy (e.g., Crompton and McKay 1994), it was never a central rationale for Festé’s founders. Their stated aims were to increase footfall to the Cathedral Quarter. Whilst this is an economic purpose, it was less about tourists than encouraging Derby residents from the suburbs to extend the areas they visited in the city centre. Just as important were the social purposes the arts had been encouraged to engage with through New Labour’s joined-up government policies (Department for Culture Media and Sport 2001); health and wellbeing and social exclusion, areas more readily conceived of as concerns than issues the Arts Council would be thought to address. The distinction between local festivals’ place-specific concerns and the tourism focus of mega- and hallmark- festivals studied in much of the literature and which has influenced urban policy is one of the important findings of this study.

**Arts Council’s influence summary**

The 28 years between Buxton Festival’s and Derby Festé’s launches highlighted significant shifts in Arts Council policies. It has moved from being unsure how festivals fitted within a policy based on a twin track of “creative force” and local responsiveness, to one of seeing festivals as central to urban revitalisation and the creative economy. It has, however, also resisted some aspects of neoliberalism. It has, for example, refused to incorporate comedy or other commercial art forms into its
portfolio. Whilst the Arts Council considers organisations with a range of income streams to be financially resilient, it has retained a concept of market failure as a core funding rationale, so art forms and genres it believes to be commercial are still excluded. Where change is noticeable is in ACE’s relationship to policies more usually seen as the purview of local authorities: civic pride, city marketing, and wellbeing. This intersection and its influence on festivals will be explored next.

**Local Authorities**

Local authorities are involved with festivals in range of ways and for several reasons. As with the Arts Council, local authorities are themselves regulated by national government policies and receive much of their income from funds dispersed centrally. Where they differ is in being democratically elected bodies able to generate revenue from business rates and in having statutory responsibilities for some services, such as education, waste-management and social care, but not culture. Councils can, therefore, disinvest from the arts when their budgets are tight. Consequently, arts organisations including festivals have, since 1979, developed a number of political arguments about the benefits cultural activity has for health, education and wellbeing, and for local economies. These were formalised in the Policy Action Teams New Labour developed in the late 1990s as part of its joined-up government policy (Department for Culture Media and Sport 2001). Festivals made the case they were part of the tourism economy through their role in place marketing (Buxton Advertiser 2009, Quinn 2010). This section discusses the extent to which these policy narratives can be traced in the festivals studied, asking whether they are relevant for arts festivals in regional towns and cities, or if the discourses are skewed by mega-events and hallmark festivals.

Local authority structures across England are complex and changes to the structures have had direct impacts on the festivals in this study. Buxton Borough Council, for example, was amalgamated into High Peak District Council, an authority
with wider boundaries covering a national park, in 1974. Leicester City Council elected a city mayor with executive functions in 2011. These changes sit alongside the distinctive policy phases discussed above: neoliberalism, NPM, joined-up government and placemaking. At some points these policies have enabled festivals and at others discouraged them. These conjunctions are reflected on next, with each festivals’ responses to crucial policy changes identified and considered. Starting with Buxton.

Economic rationales

Malcolm Fraser used regenerating Buxton’s tourism economy as his main argument when he approached the town with the idea of refurbishing the Opera House as a base for a summer opera festival. The plan illuminated two distinct imaginaries within the local Council about Buxton’s future. One faction argued Buxton’s best economic prospects were as a centre for light engineering, and one as a tourist centre. Before local government reorganisation in 1974, Buxton Borough Council had been dominated by working class councillors who had worked in the railways who, according to a tourism faction member were “clueless […] they had no idea of doing anything different or positive”. For the tourism faction, Fraser’s vision of Buxton as “the perfect place for an international summer opera festival” chimed with their desire for “a wider vision” of Buxton as a northern rival for Bath. This vision sat more comfortably within High Peak Borough Council, an authority that encompassed High Peak National Park, a major tourist attraction. Buxton is the Park’s main urban centre and provides much of the tourist accommodation. Audiences attracted by an opera festival were likely to be affluent and cultivated, with an interest in visiting an area of outstanding natural beauty, as well as Chatsworth and Haddon Halls sited nearby.

The fact the founders proposed an opera festival highlighted class differences between the two blocs. Opera in the UK is seen as the epitome of elite culture (Bereson 2002) so this division echoes Bourdieu’s argument that taste is both socially constructed and distinguished by class. The ‘engineering’ group were described as
having “chips on their shoulders and prejudices”. The tourism officer’s statement “we need an opera festival like we need a hole in the head” was retold as an example of a lack of understanding of what the festival could offer. It took the intervention of a well-respected local councillor and hotelier who could see the benefits to her hotel business, to finally win the naysayers over, and this was largely on the basis of the theatre being refurbished as a resource for the community rather than the festival itself.

Buxton Festival was identified in the typology as an aesthetic festival rather than one with an interest in civic benefit. In that respect it is unsurprising local councillors took some time to recognise what it might achieve for their residents. What is surprising, based on the wealth of literature and policy documents is the fact festival tourism was not in common parlance as a form of economic regeneration amongst local authorities in the late 1970s and early 1980s. By the time of the research twenty years later Buxton was promoting itself as ‘the Festival Town or the cultural capital of the Peak District’ (Derbyshire UK 2018). This is an example of the festivalisation of urban policy seen across the UK and Europe as neoliberal city marketing and tourism policies have stimulated city authorities to develop new approaches to economic regeneration (Richards and Palmer 2010, Smith and Richards 2013, Brown 2016).

Two questions emerge from this. Firstly, Maughan and Bianchini’s (2004a) study of East Midland’s festivals found Buxton was the only festival they researched which attracted significant numbers of visitors to the region, so is the tourism narrative that underpins much public funding of festivals more widely applicable outside a small number of cities? Secondly, has the civic concern for local residents’ values which underpinned the view an opera festival would be of little local interest been lost in the rush to justify support in economic terms?

Leicester Comedy Festival first approached Leicester City Council for support in 1995 and was warmly received as an addition to the city’s quality of life. Unlike
Buxton, there was no consideration of the economic impact the festival might have, or a discussion of it as a tourist event: “In those days we didn’t talk about research and evidence, economic development and impact”. Funding was not expected to have an economic return. The focus was on community benefits, which were very loosely defined indicating NPM had not yet been implemented in Leicester City Council.

This approach is in stark contrast to the situation in 2011 when the newly elected City Mayor decided to undertake a review of festival policy. This review had formal criteria asking festivals to demonstrate their economic impact on the city. LCF did very well out of the review, with its grant increasing from £15,000 per year to £25,000 whilst a number of other festivals had their grants significantly reduced and some were cut altogether (Leicester City Council Economic Development, Culture and Tourism Scrutiny Commission 2012). One interviewee explained the Comedy Festival was well positioned to make the case because De Montfort University staff had undertaken economic impact studies for several years. It could therefore claim to be generating £4 million for the city’s economy through ticket sales and ancillary spending. The festivals that lost out were community based without the resources to provide this sort of evidence.

That a festivals review was commissioned is itself a good illustration of changes in local government management between 1994 and 2011. In 1994 “we just awarded grants”, on the basis festivals had a “strong community dimension”. The introduction of NPM introduced a culture of measurement (Belfiore 2004). This combined with neoliberal ideology had moved the stated rationale for funding festivals from community to economic benefits. By 2007 when Festé was launched, this philosophy was so firmly embedded in both local government and cultural sector discourse, economic benefit was the first rationale given by both the festival’s founders and Council officers.
Although this economic argument was the first to be introduced, it was followed shortly afterwards in the interviews by discussion of the Cathedral Quarter’s “vertical drinking culture” and its effects on other city residents. Festé was conceived as an attempt to change the city’s spatial representation as a place to get drunk on a Friday night, as much as it was to encourage shoppers to step outside the shopping mall, making it a form of placemaking.

**Placemaking: space imaginaries**

This interest in public spaces use exemplifies a change in local government policies. Whilst they were still interested in economic regeneration and increasing footfall to the Cathedral Quarter, Derby City Council was also interested in more nuanced questions of access. Broadly categorised as placemaking, this policy philosophy grew out of instrumentalism and the creative cities agenda. It understands festivals as spatially and temporally bounded events that revitalise parts of the city and encourage experimentation. This means places can be reimagined, as social spaces. This was one of the central reasons for Derby City Council’s support for Festé.

Derby’s Market Place, a square at the centre of the Cathedral Quarter had become known for its “vertical drinking culture” where “people get as hammered as they can in the shortest time possible”. Meaning the city centre’s nighttime economy only served one demographic. Festé brought families into the Market Place on a Friday night. It represented Derby as a “European City”, somewhere surprising, with events that interrupted the rhythms of everyday life in the city, creating unlikely conjunctions, new spatial representations and new spatial practices (Lefebvre 1991b).

Derby had the lowest level of urban living in the country and some residents rarely or never visited the city centre and were even less likely to go to the Cathedral Quarter. So even within the city centre there were invisible political, economic and social boundaries. Understanding exclusion as place- and imaginary- based created a policy conjunction between cultural and local policy just as creative city narratives did.
The arts organisations in the city centre wanted to raise their own profile and attract new audiences and support the local authority’s desire to rebrand the Cathedral Quarter. A spectacular, artistically curated outdoor festival fulfilled both aims.

The narrative surrounding Derby Festé’s foundation depicted it as an attempt to change the spatial representation of the Cathedral Quarter to reflect the nature of the arts venues based there. This meant it was considered vital that the programme reflected those venues’ tastes and understanding of artistic quality. The issue of artistic taste is raised here to illustrate willingness by the City Council to support the extra costs of such programming, and to embed that in Derby LIVE’s policies. Whilst Buxton and Leicester’s festival producers were concerned about quality, neither of their local authorities commented on the quality of the festival’s programming. For Fraser, to fulfil a theatre of the standard of Buxton’s Opera House meant producing work of international quality, good enough to attract an audience from around the world. The connection between artistic taste and the town’s image was however not understood by most of councillors. By 2007, Munn’s task was easier as Derby City Council had an understanding of the role of culture in branding and city marketing not evident when the earlier festivals were launched.

As was found above in relation to the Arts Council, the ease with which Derby Festé convinced the Council to support it highlights a change in local policies towards city marketing and placemaking agendas. Despite the fact Buxton had used economic arguments not dissimilar to Festé’s, its vision did not chime with local politicians understanding at the time who, like Leicester City Council, were more interested in local quality of life. Policy narratives around the economic effects of festivals on city image, place marketing and cultural tourism promoted by the European and UK Cities of Culture competitions and the Arts Council had become the accepted norm in regional cities in the UK by 2007. Unlike Buxton neither LCF nor Festé have demonstrated economic impacts or changes in city image. Their effects have more to do with their status as enduring institutions within their cities.
Local networks and placemaking

As Bloomfield (2006) argued, placemaking is multifaceted, and as enduring civic institutions the festivals studied have a range of placemaking effects other than changing place image and spatial practices. These effects are related to the interest groups involved in producing and supporting the festivals. This section will consider festivals as actors in local networks.

Buxton Festival actively excluded local residents from its formal structures at the start. The founders created two trusts, one to run the Opera House and one to run the festival. The Opera House board was chaired by a local hotelier and councillor, while the festival board was chaired by a Manchester stockbroker. One talented local musician was excluded from Buxton Festival’s board because Fraser did not want his vision of the festival as an international attraction to be diluted. The aim was to create a bridge to external networks to invest resources and catalyse change (Putnam 1995). Fraser and Munn tapped into professional networks with experience of festivals in other settings, so understood their visions in a way councils and residents did not. And, as network members with a shared professional habitus, they could access resources from their closed networks their festival sites could not (Granovetter 1983, Weber 2004 [1922]).

By contrast, LCF had very little impact on place identity, but strong bonding effects amongst the city’s institutions. When asked what he was proud of, Rowe responded “how many people get involved, how many people we have partnerships with”. Rowe was on the mayor’s cultural advisor board and the bidding committee to be UK Capital of Culture 2017. He was a founder member of Leicester Arts Festivals, and has been honoured with a British Empire Medal for his services to Leicester, as well as an honorary doctorate from De Montfort University. He, and by inference the festival, were at the heart of the city’s cultural policymaking.
The open structure of the festival’s booking processes also ensured the festival institutionalised cross-sectorial communication. Arts venues, pubs, hotels and restaurants and even Leicester Cathedral promote comedy during the festival, which acted as a network node between civil society bodies, local businesses and the national and global comedy industry. Unlike Buxton, the link to the industry is not institutionalised in the festival’s board, rather it is through the programming processes, and sponsorships. Although it cut its title sponsorship deal in 2017 Dave TV maintained a relationship with the festival and still actively recruits talent there, as do agents preparing their rostras for Edinburgh.

For local businesses and those in other sectors, the festival was a chance to associate with figures from the entertainment industry, a rare opportunity in a regional city such as Leicester. The festival has a Business Partners Club, comprising about forty local businesses, which runs social events throughout the year. This brings together people from different industry sectors who otherwise have no reason to meet and encourages them to think differently about their city. Putnam (1995) argued civil society institutions were the backbone of local democracy as they enabled communities to meet in groups defined by shared interests rather than workplace or class, and to increase social capital and trust through experiencing reciprocity. Although there are status-issues in who decides whether a company becomes a member, and who gets to attend events, the Business Partners Club does bring people from a range of sectors together in ways no other institution in the city does. The festival’s bonding effects are not institutionalised within its board but are evident in its open programming processes and fundraising.

By contrast Festé acted to bond cultural bodies across the city rather than engaging different sectors. The festival’s steering group comprised of all the city’s Arts Council National Portfolio Organisations (NPOs) and Derby LIVE, the City Council’s cultural department. Each of these had its own priorities and there were evident strains between partners with marketing or economic development agendas,
those who prioritised artistic excellence and those more concerned with social engagement. The Council’s announcement it was withdrawing funding from non-statutory services, including all the NPOs but not necessarily Derby LIVE was a particular source of tension. The steering group was “probably the most genuine thing where all the arts organisations do come together, and we’ve got genuine collaborations happening”.

As with LCF, Festé’s production processes demanded collaboration between different partners. The practicality of producing a festival was in both cases a bonding experience. In Derby it was one of the few institutions where the city’s main cultural organisations could meet without the City’s disinvestment, and the consequences for each organisation, being the main topic of conversation. The practical nature of festival production led to “genuine collaborations” not seen elsewhere.

**Summary local authority influences**

Two forms of placemaking have been identified in the research: reformulation of place identities through changing spatial representations and, subsequently, spatial practices; and institution building. This was evident in Buxton and Derby where a physical restructuring of space was the impetus. In Buxton it was the refurbishment of the Opera House and its surroundings. In Derby it was the physical reorganisation of the city’s retail spaces, which moved the area surrounding the cathedral and Market Place from the centre to the edge, marginalising the Cathedral Quarter in terms of spatial practices. As in Buxton, this stimulated the founders to create an alternative vision for the place designed to appeal to communities that would not otherwise contemplate visiting. In Festé’s case these were city residents, families from the suburbs, rather than international visitors.

The second type of placemaking is less visible, but arguably the essential underpinning for the first to be successful. If a festival cannot engage the necessary
support, it will be unable to achieve its objectives. It was not until Buxton managed to persuade hoteliers of the festival’s potential that the Council began to support it. And Festé has not engaged with the retailers in the Cathedral Quarter who consequently do not understand its potential for their businesses and do not open. By contrast, LCF has little impact on the city’s imaginary, but is extremely well networked. The number of partnerships it has created is both “one of the reasons why it has been sustained for more than 20 years” and has placed the festival at the heart of civic policy making, influencing decisions about the Cultural Quarter, festival and tourism policies.

Local authorities’ narratives regarding festivals have been formalised as a result of new public management. Their underlying rationales for funding festivals have, however, not changed fundamentally. Councils want to maintain quality of life and are aware of the centrality of healthy local economies in that process. Thriving local businesses create employment and are a source of revenue for the authority to reinvest in services. What has changed is the perception of cultural activity as part of economic regeneration firstly as a factor in city marketing for tourists and latterly in residents reimagining local places. Although less visible, the bonding effect of festivals’ production networks and processes were found to be noteworthy. Who the festivals’ chose to involve in their formal structures was directly linked to their purposes. Where local groups were not structurally incorporated, such as Derby’s retailers, the festival did little to benefit them, despite its foundation myth’s claims. The relevance of these structures to festival impacts is a significant finding of this research.

**Universities’ influence**

Another noteworthy finding of this research is the importance of higher education institutions (HEIs) to festival foundation, values and production systems. Two of the festivals, Buxton and LCF, had close ties to HEIs. The Royal Northern College of Music (Buxton) and De Montfort University (LCF) were central to the establishment of
both festivals, as they were the reason the founders moved to the area. More significantly, there were synergies between the festivals and university. University students and staff have been found to be hidden protagonists who animated their local cultural scenes, and this was found to be true for the two cases (Comunian et al. 2014). For Ager (2016) universities’

portfolio of tangible and intangible cultural assets, the contribution made by academics and research bodies to public debate locally, nationally and internationally and their long history of training, nurturing and supporting artists means that their influence on national culture is huge and diffuse (ibid: 7).

Boundaries between universities and their localities are permeable, multidimensional and work in both directions. Universities have tangible assets in the form of art collections and spaces. They attract knowledgeable staff and students to an area. Festivals have expert staff who work with universities to support formal teaching and research. They also help to create vibrant places where students will want to study. One interviewee talked about the importance of making the city “sticky for graduates”, a place they would want to stay after their courses rather than moving to London. What are the key dimensions in these relationships?

Fraser stressed the importance of having moved to Buxton with his family in establishing local connections and credibility. The connection to the Royal Northern College of Music (RNCM) was also vital. Fraser spent his days working at the college and evenings on the festival. He taught opera production. Opera production is complex, expensive and requires specialist spaces. For Fraser’s students to have a live case-study in an opera house to work on was a rare opportunity, and a benefit RNCM informally supported as Fraser was not reliant on the festival for an income, which relieved some funding pressures. In return the festival gave students scholarships and
performance opportunities to work alongside and watch international artists, and to establish professional networks.

These synergies place festivals at an intersection between HE and professional practice. Festivals are communities of practice as well as communities of place and have a role in talent development as sites for experimentation (Comunian 2015). It was also important to create a sense of community for the artists. The festival insisted all rehearsals took place in the town in order to generate a sense of belonging. By holding all the rehearsals in Buxton the festival saved money as it did not have to hire spaces in London, and generated camaraderie amongst the performers which made the festival feel more sociable than others on the circuit. As the “great majority of social relationships are made up of both communal and associative elements” (Weber 2004 [1922]: 344), leading to an enduring sense of belonging. The classical music infrastructure including the Royal Northern College of Music’s opera production course facilitated this, providing their students with privileged access to a closed professional network.

Leicester Comedy Festival was started by students on the BA Arts Management at De Montfort University as a final project. The degree, like Fraser’s course, focused on production rather than performance or artistic skills. Like the RNCM course, it was embedded in the local cultural sector. Students worked with the city’s arts venues and companies throughout the degree. The networks developed during the course were vital to the festival’s foundation as they gave the students access to venue managers in the city and understanding of professional norms within cultural production processes.

Just as Rowe approached the City Council with an argument about the community benefits of the festival, his approach to the venues was welcomed because it spoke to their needs. A comedy festival would be potentially profitable and could appeal to new audiences by having a higher profile than any of the venues could achieve on
their own. His understanding of the different tacks to take was drawn from three years on a degree course learning about cultural policy and funding, production techniques and venue management. Indeed, the connection to the Phoenix was structurally embedded in the university. The university’s vice chancellor chaired the board and students on the Arts Management degree had work experience there in their first term, with many then continuing to work as ushers and box office staff.

This approach is one Rowe followed with the Comedy Festival. The university provided free office space and finance services for its first two years post-graduation, and staff from the arts management degree provided mentoring, sat on the steering group and, when the festival became a company, the board. In return, students are supported in learning about festival production through running one of the venues in their first year. As mentioned above, there were also research synergies. Academics at DMU have worked with LCF to research its social and economic impacts and to develop a model that was used in ongoing impact research (e.g. Maughan 2009). This multi-layered connection between LCF and DMU is one of the primary reasons the BA Arts Management became the BA Arts and Festivals Management in 2008.

By contrast, Festé has no obvious connection to Derby University. This appears to be a question of timing as Déda runs a dance degree in collaboration with the university. The festival takes place at the end of September, just before Freshers Week, so students have not started their autumn terms. However, unlike the Royal Northern College of Music’s opera production course and DMU’s Arts and Festivals Management course, Derby University’s event management course is not focused on the cultural sector, so does not have the same imperative to collaborate with local arts festivals, or the same tacit understanding of their processes.
University influences summary

The connection between these festivals and universities is deep, multifaceted and long-term. The boundaries between them are porous as both staff and students play multiple roles and there are clear synergies in operation. In both cases the presence of a degree course that focused on cultural production as a form of management, rather than making cultural artefacts was crucial. These courses attracted academics with production skills to the area, created a demand for live case-studies students could work on, a pool of graduates with the requisite skills and professional networks to run a festival. The influence of those professional sectors will be explored next.

Sectoral influences

If festivals act to deepen bonds by creating new institutions that bridge sectorial divides within their localities, they also act within their own professional sectors. As discussed in chapter five, institutional theory showed how norms and values within sectors with a high degree of dependency, such as the festival touring circuit, act as an iron cage discouraging innovation. This is amplified in the cultural sector by its reliance on tacit knowledge; know-how and rules in practice learned on the job rather than in the classroom, one of the reasons both RNCM and DMU’s cultural production courses are so deeply embedded with practice.

The typology in chapter five posited aesthetic festivals would owe the most allegiance to their art form networks and civic festivals least. There was an assumption that aesthetic festivals would express and uphold the tastes and values of their art form learned through, for example, music education (Bull 2016). Indeed, the section above showed strong synergies between two of the case-studies and their local universities, not as general civic institutions, but as parts of the cultural production ecology. Sectorial norms can be seen to regulate local arts festivals in three main ways: by establishing ideas of quality; by maintaining shared professional standards and practices; and by upholding annual rhythms that festivals have to fit in to (Moeran...
and Strandgaard Pedersen 2011). Festivals work within local, national and international systems of cultural production. They book artists, so have to fit in with touring schedules. They commission and produce work, which has to be of sufficient quality to be bought by other festivals and venues; and they provide a space for emerging talent to perform, becoming a marketplace for agents and managers to identify potential. One of the roles of festival producers is to navigate the conflicting regulatory pressures of their sectors and places. This section will consider the relative influence of their sectors and the extent to which sectors act, through festivals, as agents of change as the creative cities and culture-led regeneration paradigms suggest.

For Blockland and Savage (2008), bonding and bridging effects are two aspects of social capital. In introducing ‘outsiders’, ‘insiders’ become more aware of their shared bonds. Elements of this phenomenon can be seen in the responses of local councillors to the proposal to launch an opera festival, and in the Arts Council’s reluctance to embrace comedy as a suitable form for support. However, bridging capital is argued to be useful in catalysing change as it introduces new points of view and resources. The importance of new points of view was raised by the interviewees in Buxton and Derby to explain founders’ ability to envision change. The importance of having experience of successful festivals was felt to be highly significant in enabling the founders to envision how their own events could work.

For Fraser, the Opera House, which had been overlooked by residents for decades was “the only opera house outside an urban area capable of staging grand opera”, a perspective born from his experience as an opera producer. His knowledge of the opera world enabled him to see how “extraordinary” Buxton was. His Churchill Foundation research had shown him festivals in similar towns in Europe, so he had confidence that it could work. Festé’s founders, too, had experience of having worked on and seen festivals’ place-changing effects. Consequently, they noticed possibilities in Derby’s pedestrianised city centre and Market Place that residents had
not. Although not an outsider in the same way as Fraser or Munn, Rowe brought sensitivity to the potential of a new cultural form honed through his degree. He wanted to produce popular events, and in 1993 events comedy was being promoted as ‘the new rock’n’roll’. He was, like Fraser, aware of the business side of festival production. Comedy’s fringe model reduced the risk to Rowe and his fellow students.

Knowledge of professional norms, business models and contacts within the sector were, therefore, found to be essential to the foundation of each of the festivals. The founders could, as a result of their experience and tacit knowledge, envision a future that residents could not.

[People needed convincing that it was a good thing to do. It’s potentially a big, risky event […] it hadn’t been done before and we don’t know if it’s going to work and those were very powerful worries in the beginning.]

This quote relates to Festé but could equally apply to Buxton and, to a lesser extent, LCF. It was easier to persuade funders or donors to support a festival where they had prior experience. Festé, for example, was launched as part of a wave of street performance festivals so found it relatively easy to persuade the Arts Council to support them.

The Arts Council was strategically involved in developing a system of street performance festivals though its Without Walls Strategic Touring Network, a consortium funded to source and tour international outdoor work. Festé became a Without Walls member in 2012 and credited ACE’s subsidy with allowing them “to develop a festival that feels really robust”. There was some defensiveness about the extent to which the festival was artistically reliant on the external work, though, with a determination to develop a commissioning strand.
Buxton, too, resisted pressure from the Arts Council to reduce its artistic autonomy in the name of efficiency. The Arts Council wanted Opera North to programme the festival. Opera North was prepared to premier productions at Buxton, but as it would then tour them, they would not be exclusive “operas you can’t see anywhere else”. The Arts Council felt the relationship with Opera North would raise the standard of Buxton’s productions. But, as “they didn’t give us any money though”, the festival’s board felt able to reject it in favour of their original idea.

LCF’s most significant sectoral connection was Dave TV, which sponsored the festival from 2011-2016. Worth £100,000 a year to the festival, having a national TV channel that specialised in comedy as a partner positioned the festival as a significant player in the national comedy world. Timing and status within sectoral touring circuits are important regulatory influences within festival ecologies (Moeran and Strandgaard Pedersen 2011). They determine which agents and media will attend, how easy it is to attract sponsorship and, most importantly, which artists. Because of their connections, high status festivals can be seen to wield influence on which artists will break through and, consequently, to shape the tastes within their fields.

The bridging effect of professional networks brought new resources into each festival’s locality in the form of Arts Council funding (Feste), sponsorship (LCF) and charitable donations (Buxton). They also brought new ideas and the potential for change. Institutional values derived from sectoral norms were evident in the different stories the festivals told about the relative ease or difficulty they experienced in raising funds from these sources, indicating how well or badly these norms fitted with those of their places.

**Summary sectoral influences**

The festivals were all found to have been influenced by the norms and tastes of their fields, particularly in questions of artistic quality. Both Buxton and Derby resisted
pressure to become more efficient. LCF resisted commercialisation when it chose to become a charity focusing on using comedy for health and wellbeing rather than a commercial comedy agency or setting up a venue as recommended by its Arts Council funded business consultant, but was most stable when supported by Dave, a comedy sector organisation. Although financial considerations were important to all the festivals, if it came into conflict with their professional habitus, the latter prevailed and, rather than change their artistic or social goals, they sought other sources of income. Questions of autonomy will be explored further in chapter ten.

The Arts Council was shown to have attempted to control artistic vision through changes to its grant making policies in line with the changing policy imperatives identified in chapter three and the establishment of institutions. Rather than prioritising artistic quality, or local "creative forces", its interventions were aimed at market efficiency. This was largely resisted by the festivals.

Just as their professional standards enabled the festivals to resist heteronomous pressures and retain autonomy, their connections and professional expertise positioned them as outsiders in their localities, newcomers able to envision a different future. Through networks within their fields they were able to access the resources to deliver events unimaginable to residents. Having the support of the Arts Council, or high-status agencies in their fields, such as the director of the Royal Opera House, or a university gave the founders enough credibility to overcome local resistance. Consequently, they were able to act as change-agents developing new place identities and external connections.

In the commercial comedy sector, media support repositioned LCF as a hallmark festival within the field. Artists, agents and promoters had to be there to spot talent. This was the most influential institution identified in the research beside the professional habitus of the fields the festivals worked in. Arguably this is because
Dave TV was as imbued with that habitus as LCF and simply acted at a different point within the comedy ecology.

Professional expertise and outsider status meant the founders and the institutions they built acted as bridges to resources and new imaginaries for their localities. They did this by sticking closely to their field’s values and norms and resisting pressure to ‘follow the money’ when that would have required changing those values.

**Summary hetero-regulatory environment**

The research has shown festivals as heterodox institutions with strong value systems operating in hetero-regulated environments. The literature reviewed in chapter three identified festivals as organisations regulated by a range of political economy institutions. The most important of these were ACE, local authorities, sponsors and their professional networks. These bodies each had their own priorities and purposes. The significance of balancing the demands of hetero-regulatory interests and the festivals’ own values is a central theme of this thesis.

The Arts Council’s purposes emerged as opaque and confusing to the festivals. The historical view in chapter three showed its policies had changed in response to neoliberal political ideologies, and this was supported by the research for this study. It had moved from a policy of response to local needs and investing in creative forces to focusing on neoliberal managerial questions of financial resilience and efficiency. Despite festivals’ concern with money, where external pressures were in conflict with questions of artistic taste, they were resisted.

Councils’ priorities have also been influenced by neoliberalism. Where the Arts Council’s agenda had often been obscure, local authorities’ strategies were formalised, so festivals knew where they stood. Although there were local distinctions, councils were found to have responded to different governmental
agendas whilst trying to maintain concern for local wellbeing. The biggest shift that has affected festivals is new public management, which has created a culture of impact evaluation, particularly economic impact. Festivals have benefitted from this as creative city regeneration tropes have placed culture at the heart of placemaking policies, a conjunction that has created a synergy between festival’s purposes, those of local authorities and the Arts Council.

Universities emerged as a surprising and influential part of festivals’ ecologies. Two of the festivals studied had symbiotic relationships with specialist degree courses in cultural management. These relationships benefitted both the universities, which were able to provide practical experience for their students, and for festivals which had access to expertise and inexpensive labour. The universities were hidden cultural protagonists. They created a milieu that supported the producers and the artists they worked with. As educational institutions with a vocational approach, they were also an important link between their localities and the creative fields the festivals worked in. Students were introduced to professional standards and ethics, tastes and mores in the classroom and through practical experience. Although this research has shown connections between two of the cases studied and vocational university courses, neoliberal reforms of the higher education sector in England such as student fees, league tables and impact factors have increased pressure for universities to engage with their cities and local businesses. As Ager (2016) showed, festivals are a fruitful setting for this because, as will be discussed in the next chapter, both are influential brokers and intermediaries throughout the cultural production cycle.

Although festivals’ environments are hetero-regulated, the most powerful influences were the norms and cultures of each festival institutions’ art form sector. The festivals were conceived on models the founders had seen elsewhere. And when there have been crises, cultural institutions have supported them. In Buxton, despite the fact they were ultimately rejected, it was Opera North that stepped in to save the festival in 1995. In Leicester while the arts venues do not fund the festival, they do
provide significant help in kind, and Dave TV enabled the festival to become a hallmark in the comedy festival calendar. And in Derby, the Arts Council and its National Portfolio Organisations found a way to maintain funding for Festé when the Council disinvested. Alongside universities, their particular sectors shaped festival values over the long term more than any of the other institutions.

The festivals were, however, autonomous institutions that also wielded influence in their environments. They made choices about how they were structured that reflected their values and standards. As institutions they sit at the nexus between the various institutions in their ecologies and despite frequent struggles for resources, they have all retained their original visions. Festivals are not just Bourdieusian market intermediaries, nor cultural intermediaries in Toynbee’s sense, as sites as well as agents, they uniquely integrate their cultural ecologies and their places. The extent to which they retain their autonomy within this ecology will be the topic of the next chapter.
“An artist is not paid for his labor, but for his vision”

(James Whistler quoted in Garg 2005: 163)

Chapter 10. Autonomy, brokerage and imagined futures

Introduction

The previous chapter discussed heteronomous control in the case-studies’ political economy ecologies. It highlighted the complexity of those ecologies, and showed festivals were able to resist pressure to commercialise where this conflicted with their values. Research into cultural production in chapter four highlighted the difficulties of operating efficiently in highly creative fields. Commercial firms relieved this pressure by working with independent agents, talent scouts, and small independents who operated at the boundaries between artists and distribution organisations that focused on marketing and packaging (Hirsch 1972). Festivals can be seen as distribution organisations; in that they package and market performances. They also produce and commission work, acting as artists and talent scouts, too. Toynbee (2016) argued such brokers within the music industry were able to operate autonomously to influence cultural production and consumer tastes. With ambiguous boundaries between social life, commerce, politics, production and consumption, the case-studies proved to be difficult to appropriate. Relations were further complicated by producers’ heteronomous value systems, which evaluated success at least partly through non-financial criteria associated with their artistic fields or socio-political factors. The bodies discussed in the previous chapter included those with an interest in various aspects of political economy. In some cases, they were unable to see the synergies between their purposes and the festival’s. In others they outsourced their objectives to the festivals, which were able to undertake riskier tasks such as the refurbishment of Buxton Opera House and revitalisation of Derby’s Cathedral Quarter, or talent spotting comedians for Dave TV. Because none of the regulatory institutions were prepared to fully incorporate the festivals the producers had a
higher degree of autonomy than would be found is a less complex, more highly integrated market.

A question that remains to be answered is to what extent the festival producers’ ‘professional expertise in taste and value within specific cultural fields’ (Matthews and Smith Maguire 2014: 2) influenced the shape and development of their institutions. Those values were central to the typology and explored in depth in the interviews, where sector norms and values relating to artistic quality were found to be most influential in the long term. Festivals founders were seen throughout the case-study research to embody their organisations’ values. These individuals were ideological and instrumental charismatics, able to instigate change and build new formal and informal institutions, rather than intrinsic charismatics, embodiments of the ideal person of the time (Braudy 2010). Tacit knowledge of cultural tastes and business practices was a central factor in brokers’ perceived expertise in the music industry’s proto-markets (Toynbee 2016). Founders’ cultural expertise meant they operated independently, beyond the control of the main bodies discussed above, but consequently, with no guarantee of support.

This chapter will explore the festivals as independent boundary spanning organisations operating within hetero-regulated environments, able to navigate and exploit the interstices between regulatory bodies to create new structures and institutions within their localities. The ability to retain cultural values rather than following the money is seen as evidence of autonomy (Bourdieu 1993a), so this chapter starts by identifying the festivals’ core value systems. It explores points at which these core values were challenged by different regulatory bodies in order to identify if there is closer alignment with norms and values from their local or national, market, social or artistic fields. It then investigates the extent to which the founders operated as intrinsic or instrumental charismatic leaders. Did they change their places’ culture and imaginary? Did they build new, distinctive institutions? How have they reshaped the institutional frameworks within their places?
Primary values

The festivals studied were created by newcomers without institutional or traditional authority within their localities. Their festivals were beyond the scope of any individual public institution, and, as non-profit bodies, not wholly subject to market logics. They therefore had to find resources by creating alliances. This could be considered evidence of joined-up practices as advocated by New Labour, or the organisational resilience promoted by the Arts Council. Creating coalitions took brokerage work such as shaping and producing shows, identifying talent and developing marketing strategies. However, the previous section showed festivals had resisted pressure to commercialise where it impacted upon questions of artistic quality, even where that risked the festival’s survival. Here their respective fields defined artistic quality. The founders developed their tastes through a combination of cultural training, a form of habitus, and professional experience giving them expertise beyond those understood by any of the potential regulatory bodies or instrumental cultural policies.

Values and purposes were identified as significant factors in festival production in the original typology. Interviewees were asked ‘what are you proud of’ to elucidate underlying value systems, as opposed to the narratives regularly used as part of festivals’ marketing and fundraising efforts. Professional standards, institutional survival and “fulfilling this place”, broadly conceived, emerged as the main purposes. Underpinning these were clear but largely unacknowledged ideas of cultural value as something distinct from the market and from policy, to be protected from unskilled hetero-regulatory forces.

What are you proud of?

Institutional theory argued founding principles were influential in shaping organisational structures and cultures, so were traceable throughout their histories and production cycles (Schein 2004, Peterson and Anand 2004). As the genesis for
the festivals, founders’ values are therefore paramount. When asked the question what were they proud of, the three founders responded:

**Buxton:**
The building and the complex had such potential internationally. The vision from the start was international; it was going to get its audience from everywhere, but not Buxton. It’s the only place of its type outside an urban area. And that’s what the festival’s for. It’s for fulfilling that.

For Fraser opera’s international reach was fundamental in that it enabled a small regional town to attract audiences from around the world to enjoy Buxton’s unique architecture. In combination the art form and place were “irresistible”.

**LCF:**
Other than the fact that it’s survived for more than 20 years? […] I like the way that the industry and the city and all sorts of people feel a sense of engagement with the festival.

Rowe’s values were demotic. He wanted to create a space for participation. The choice of comedy, a form with few financial barriers to entry, was a function of the fact that neither he nor his student friends had money to invest, but it fortuitously meant they created a festival with open structures which enabled wide ranging partnerships.

**Festé:**
[C]reating a festival for the city that is to do with inward investment, with footfall in the city centre, but is also looking at an international reach for artists.
Like Fraser, Munn considered Festé to be set within an international cultural tradition with an economic agenda. Unlike Buxton the aim was to reimagine the city centre for Derby’s residents rather than tourists.

The original typology identified three festival purposes: aesthetic, curation and development of an art form or genre; commercial, to make a profit by curating and developing an art form or genre; or civic, instrumental public policy outcomes. Although the practical issue of survival was raised, profit was not a central purpose for any of the festival founders, indicating their distance from the market and supporting the notion of festivals as socially or aesthetically motivated.

Aesthetic motives can be seen in the pride taken in booking “international headliners”, attracting “audiences from everywhere” and in being able to broker partnerships involving “the industry and the city”. Working with international artists was mentioned by all the founders as significant in maintaining artistic quality, in raising the festival’s status, and for positioning the festival within its global field. This points to the centrality of professional networks and values within each case, not just Buxton, the case chosen as an aesthetic festival example. Artistic quality was a key indicator of success for all the cases and was evaluated by status within a field, rather than market success or achievement of political priorities.

Political and social effects identified as ‘civic’ were also valued by all three cases. Buxton’s founders were inspired by the town’s architecture as much as by their desire to run an opera festival. “It’s the only place of its type outside an urban area. And that’s what it’s for. It’s for fulfilling that”. LCF’s founder was proudest of the reach his festival had. He liked the fact, “all sorts of people feel a sense of engagement with the festival.” And Festé’s founders combined a concern for art form development with creating “a festival for the city that is to do with inward investment, with footfall in the city centre”, a largely economic driver.
What these value systems illuminate is festivals as complex organisations combining artistic and political economy priorities. There is, however, little evidence of neoliberal ideologies having been incorporated within their core values as a result of pressures from funding bodies such as the Arts Council. Indeed, there is more evidence of festivals having influenced practices and values within their localities than vice versa.

**Brokerage**

In creating new festivals, the founders all acted as bridges between their fields and the festival’s locality. In each case the catalyst was the cultural form rather than the place. The place was the setting for works created within a cultural tradition. Any transformational intentions such as renovating the Opera House or rebranding Derby’s Cathedral Quarter were related to place, not art form. The art form’s values were unchallenged.

The founders actively pursued knowledge of their sectors and sought to bring the best in their field to their festival. “I enjoy knowing what’s out there”. “I’m really proud of bringing Roseanne\(^\text{19}\) over”, “we had auditions in Germany, New York and London”. This connection to a global cultural community enabled the festivals to produce events that changed their localities beyond expectations. As experts within their cultural fields, the founders identified potential overlooked by longer-term residents. Their professional skills and paradigms meant the potential of a festival was self-evident to each of the founders. Fraser saw the Opera House as the perfect place for a summer festival. He “couldn’t believe there weren’t other people trying to find active solutions to it [the Opera House] as a living theatre”, yet even those councillors who saw Buxton’s latent tourist appeal had not considered the possibility of restoring

---

\(^{19}\) Roseanne Barr is an American comedian who, at the time she headlined Leicester Comedy Festival in 2006, starred in an eponymously named hit sitcom. This was her first gig outside the USA (Chortle 2017).
it. Rowe saw the potential of comedy because it was popular. Despite it being “the new rock’n’roll” the city’s cultural venues had not thought to programme comedy until the festival was proposed. Munn saw the possibility of changing perceptions of Derby’s city centre spaces by animating them with art works that would attract audiences who would not normally go there, to show the city “to be really attractive and accessible”.

The founders’ values differentiated them from those of the resident populations. Their professional habitus and experience meant they were able to envision and communicate potential futures for their cities beyond the scope of the existing local institutions. Festivals are high profile and complex, involving a number of partners, artists and audiences. The uncertain nature of cultural products is amplified by the temporary nature of festivals, making them an uneasy fit in organisations orientated towards market efficiency or bureaucratic stability. Festivals are “differentiated by their locations within commodity chains” (Smith Maguire and Matthews 2012: 2), placing an onus on founders to convince stakeholders with a range of priorities to risk their finances and reputations. As one interviewee put it, “it hadn’t been done before and we didn’t know if it was going to work and those were very powerful worries in the beginning”.

The cases worked directly and indirectly with artists, through commissions and in-house productions, and by providing structures through which they can reach larger audiences. They acted as cultural intermediaries who packaged and marketed events directly to consumers who had not been aware they wanted such a festival (Bourdieu 1984 [1979], 1993a). Yet, they were not commercially orientated as Bourdieu’s intermediaries were, rather they considered artistic judgements as non-negotiable, placing them squarely within their autonomous fields of limited production. Despite this they were not isolated from wider society or purely cultural producers. They acted on the margins of both their cultural fields and the regulatory political economy ecology. As was shown in the previous section, persuading the necessary partners
and funders to support it, particularly at the start, was a demanding process, requiring the founders to have significant cultural capital in order to influence potential supporters of their legitimacy.

**Legitimacy and cultural capital**

Chapter four showed a significant distinction is perceived in the nature of the role played by boundary spanning actors within creative fields. They were neither autonomous creators nor disempowered agents controlled by systemic or institutionalised hetero-regulated norms and structures beyond their understanding. Individuals had a generative capacity, within objective social relations (Bourdieu 1984 [1979], 1996 [1992]). In other words, although individuals were constrained by their environments, their idiopathic values and skills meant individuals had the capacity to shape and change that environment. Boundary spanning roles provided greater scope for agency, as bridged different systems meant mediating norms and brokering exchange of resources. As intermediaries they sat at the edge of different fields, embodiments of alternative paradigms and possibilities.

The interviewees frequently spoke of the founders in terms indicating they perceived them as extraordinary because of their ability to envision an alternative future and then to influence others to support them. This embodiment points to founders as charismatic leaders in the Weberian sense of outside existing institutional frameworks, and consequently disruptive of them. As enduring institutions, the festivals have reshaped the cultural ecology of their places, creating new networks and imaginaries. In Buxton’s case, the festival was “responsible for Buxton having looked up tremendously” in terms of tourism and civic engagement. In Derby, the festival is credited with being one reason for developing a City Event Strategy to co-ordinate activity in the city centre. Far from passive actors within hetero-regulated place ecologies, festivals disrupted and changed their localities. They created new imaginaries and potential futures, and new institutional structures that brought
people together in new combinations. This is a result of the distinctive value systems and norms they introduced, value systems and norms derived from their professional habitus and adapted for the unique situation of each festival’s place.

**Tracing values in festival's structures**

Institutional theory (e.g. DiMaggio 1977, Scott 2004) built on Weber’s ‘iron cage’ (2004 [1905]: 33) concept argues value systems are visible in formal structures as well as value systems and norms. If festivals are brokers, it should be possible to see evidence of where they connect with various interest groups in their structures, such as board memberships. Groups and communities excluded from closed decision-making processes can, therefore, be considered unimportant within the festival’s value system.

Buxton and Festé’s boards were dominated by interests from their fields. In Buxton’s case board members were selected for their ability to embed the festival within the global opera community. The opera network had connections to elites in the financial world and aristocracy who ensured the festival’s survival at various points and facilitated its three-legged stool business model of trading, individual donation and endowment income. These bonds weakened after 1995 with local civic interests taking a larger role in the festival’s governance. This shift happened after the board rejected Opera North because to “fulfil this place” meant attracting tourists and regenerating the area around the Opera House, place-based rather than sectorial priorities.

Festé had an explicit aim of changing perceptions of defined geographical spaces in the city. It used high profile spectacular to this end, but its networks did not reflect its change agenda. The festival’s core network was the steering group comprising the main Arts Council funded bodies in the city and the Council’s events department, Derby LIVE. This body became an important neutral space in which Derby LIVE was
included despite the underlying tensions caused by the Council’s austerity driven funding cuts. Creating and deepening these bonds was considered an important part of deepening social capital in a city that has seen major developments in its cultural ecology since 1997.

Surprisingly, given its stated aim was to increase business in the Cathedral Quarter, Festé’s organisers had little contact with local traders, who it was felt saw the festival as at best irrelevant and at worst disruptive. There is no evidence the festival’s management thought about how businesses could be integrated into its decision-making systems. In practice its emphasis was on artistic concerns and collaborative working within a narrowly conceived cultural sector. This democratisation of culture paradigm, which assumed the deficit lay with those who failed to participate rather than the arts organisation’s cultural offer or systems, was also apparent in Festé’s approach to community engagement. Without Walls, an Arts Council funded network of street performance festivals, employed an audience development officer to broaden the communities the festival worked with and attracted. Whilst community development work did take place, it was not seen as “a core part of the whole thing”.

There was reluctance “to adapt what you are doing to meet the needs of the audiences that you are now, theoretically, engaging”. As with the businesses, the expectation was, if audiences just saw the work, they would understand and be converted. There were voices who argued for change: “you’ve got to get them in. And that involves programming and programming then involves those communities being represented.” They were in the minority, though, and at the time of the research had not been successful in changing the festival’s structures or aesthetic values. Local artists were judged by standards set internationally within contemporary dance and circus fields and excluded if they could not achieve these. Questions of artistic judgement were sacrosanct and overrode the festival’s stated economic and community purposes.
Leicester Comedy Festival’s first and most consistent partner was De Montfort University. The two organisations worked together on both formal and informal bases. The festival was sponsored by the university, which presented Rowe with an honorary doctorate. In return the festival worked with the BA Arts and Festivals Management, providing experience and research opportunities embedded in its modules. Most of the festival’s staff were DMU graduates, and the festival was a willing case-study for this research.

In contrast to the other case-studies, rather than develop one structure where the primary actors in its production met, LCF’s open programming was mirrored in its approach to relations with interest groups. It was a core member of the City Mayor’s cultural advisory group, Leicester’s UK City of Culture 2017 bidding consortium and a founder member of Leicester Arts Festivals, which it set up to deepen collaboration between festival organisations across the city in the wake of Leicester’s failed bid. Board members were trustees of the charity The Big Difference Company which ran the festival and were, therefore, responsible for its wider social aims. For that reason, board members were primarily local residents rather than representatives of the comedy sector. Where the festival did have a strong bond with the sector was through Dave TV. This relationship was purely instrumental. Dave had a strategic plan to move from screening archive programmes to producing new shows, but no networks within the comedy industry. Its work with LCF enabled it to build relationships with emerging talent and, once these were strong enough, it reduced its sponsorship. For LCF a boost of £100,000 a year more than doubled its annual budget. The weak ties between the two organisations enabled Dave to innovate and LCF to invest in brand awareness to attract higher status acts, helping it to become a significant institution within the UK’s comedy circuit.

The festival promotes more than 600 acts each year, so is a good opportunity for comedians to try out new material on audiences willing to take more of a risk than they might at other times. It is the case-study which most closely reflects Bourdieu’s
concept of a cultural intermediary as a market actor shaping and selling creative products. Questions of quality were judged by ticket sales, critical acclaim and competitions the festival produced to identify new talent, such as the Leicester Mercury Comedian of the Year, or Old Folk Telling Jokes. The Comedian of the Year competition, which ran from the second edition, is one of the only formal links between the festival and the field as industry professionals such as agents are incorporated as judges. The competition in return validated the festival as a reputable place to see new talent as a large proportion of the winners went on to forge successful careers.

Although LCF made no claim to want to effect change, in practice it has catalysed and reinforced new local networks and working practices throughout the city’s cultural and business sectors, and developed bridges to the international comedy industry. It is a significant institution in the city’s Cultural Quarter and Rowe personally sat on several civic committees relating to culture and regeneration, brokering links between the traditional not-for-profit arts sector and businesses. Its connections to the local business community were deepened by the launch of its Business Partners Club, which enabled local companies to pay a fee for exclusive opportunities to work with the festival or see shows (Big Difference Company Ltd. 2015). Rowe believed the Business Club developed understanding and social trust between two sectors that had not previously had any connection, playing an important role in developing civic bonds. This contrast with Festé, which had no structures for engaging with local companies other than cultural organisations.

**Summary brokerage and autonomy**

Festivals’ formal structures illuminated their core value systems. In the case of Buxton and Derby Festé, artistic and cultural concerns were seen to be institutionalised through the board/steering group, with local interest groups marginalised. Leicester Comedy Festival’s board, by contrast, excluded the comedy sector, with its main
connections being local interests. In none of the festivals were artists represented within the formal structures, despite questions of cultural value emerging as central values. The literature discussed in chapter four argued the market operated to regulate seemingly independent bodies through processes of agglomeration outside the scope of individual control. Alexander (2017) showed how, as a result of neoliberal politics the Arts Council had been interpenetrated by the market which had consequently attempted to marketise the cultural sector in the UK. What has emerged from analysis of these three cases is a picture of festival organisations remarkably resistant to such interpenetration and commercialisation, even the case chosen as an example of a commercially orientated festival. Resistance was founded in a set of enduring values institutionalised within each festival’s structures and processes grounded in professional cultural fields. Rather than ‘follow the money’, each festival has chosen at key points to prioritise artistic quality (Buxton and Festé) defined by their “fields of restricted production” (Bourdieu, 1993: 115) or social engagement (LCF), arenas where the economic world is reversed and artistic or social values take priority.

Does this mean festival producers are truly autonomous? It is clear they operated on the margins of fields, brokering relations between different spheres of influence. From place-based or political economy perspectives, they brought new paradigms and resources into their localities from their closed networks, shaping futures unimaginable to the residents. However, if judged from the perspectives of their fields, the festivals are less distinctive, operating to the norms, practices and values engrained in their professional habitus. Where festivals had the most agency was in relation to place. The enduring institutions they founded are highly enmeshed within their localities. It is at the local level where changes can be found in social life and political structures. And it is the local interviewees who expressed the most fervour about the significance of the founders’ determination and personal influence in overcoming resistance.
Habitus and charisma

The resistance the founders experienced illuminated the existence of different purposes and value systems within each festival’s ecology. The previous chapter discussed the values of their main regulatory bodies and the section above showed festival producers operated as brokers between their place-based political economies and their fields. It concluded founders were most strongly influenced by their professional habitus. Habitus acted to synchronise behaviour within social groups. Assumptions and values are normalised and become invisible, effectively closed to those without the requisite training. Where social groups meet, as was the case when the founders proposed their festivals there was a need for translation, mediation and brokerage, with the encounter leading some or all the groups to gain new insights or experience change. Habitus is a form of socialised control, so the extent to which groups experience change during an encounter is an indication of where power lies.

Throughout the case-studies, there was evidence of miscommunication between festival producers and bodies within their ecologies, notably the Arts Council and local authorities. There were negotiations regarding the extent to which the festivals would achieve the regulatory bodies’ policy outcomes, and resources were dependent on their judgements. The festivals all made claims for their ability to attract tourists and drive economic regeneration. Whether or not these claims can be supported, there were also additional outcomes the festival founders aimed to achieve which were grounded in their professional habitus not political economy rationales. These outcomes related to the quality of the festival’s programme and its festivity, and were not discussed with the regulatory bodies, even the Arts Council, although, as seen above they were non-negotiable as far as the producers were concerned.

These unforeseen outcomes were a risk, particularly for local authorities, as residents who disagreed with a decision to fund the festival could vote councillors
out. It was noticeable in the research, where decisions were made to support the festivals, the interviewees did mention the strategic political economy aims, but quickly moved on to discuss the founders as an influential factor. It appeared the decision to support was as much about the person as it was about the idea: “I was impressed with him. I was impressed with the idea and I was impressed with him”. Where the idea was intangible and risky, founders’ charisma was crucial in fostering confidence. In cultural markets the ability to identify talent demands a range of skills. Festival producers have to broker relationships between artists, venues, funders and audiences. They have to convince all these people to trust their judgement in picking a programme that will sell, audiences will enjoy and that will be appropriate for the venue or city’s image. At their foundation, festival producers had to do this on the basis of personal allure. Fraser summarised it best when he explained: “[t]hey were prepared to make the commitment to us”.

Just as the Arts Council conceived of creativity as being embodied in artists, it is evident in the case of the three festivals studied, the founders were charismatic creative forces able to envision and produce festivals beyond the imagination of any of the local institutions. A synergy was perceived between founders and their festival institutions, just as there are echoes of charisma in traditional authority, so the effects of the festivals reflected upon their producers. Interviewees personalised the festival’s success, attributing it to the founders: “What Malcolm achieved”, “Geoff’s leadership is incredibly important”, “Stephen Munn, he drives Festé”.

Weber’s concept of authority showed how individuals identified as charismatic could disrupt existing structures and attain political power through personal allure (Weber 1978). Braudy (2010) distinguished between instrumental charismatics operating within the political field and intrinsic charismatics who have non-structural authority, such as cultural performers. He argued charisma is often defined in opposition to “or transcendence of the norms that characterize mass society, even while it seeks to carry that audience along with it” (ibid: 180). This could equally be
applied to festivals. Just as Weber showed charismatics challenged rational and traditional authority during industrialisation, so in modernity, fame and celebrity imbue the famous with the power to challenge cultural and political authority by offering the image of the ideal person. Festivity gives festivals charismatic authority by valorising times and places as different from the everyday (Falassi 1987) and, consequently, subverting everyday status markers. As Turner (1967) showed, this liminal space is one in which it is possible to redefine social relations. In launching charismatic cultural events, the founders harnessed the power of intrinsic charisma through the artists they bring to the city, and the power of festive spectacular to gain personal authority to build institutions that catalysed change in their localities.

The concepts of habitus and charisma illuminated two related factors that enabled the founders to establish enduring autonomous institutions situated within their localities. As outsiders, they were able to transcend the norms of their places, to offer alternative new, charismatic, ideals and imaginaries. These ideas were embodied in the founders themselves because of their tacit knowledge of cultural production and ability to draw intrinsic charismatics (artists) to the city, to bridge the gap between the festival’s place and their closed cultural fields. The celebratory and disruptive nature of festivals themselves augmented the sense of attractive difference associated with both the founders and the festival institutions they built. This enabled them to maintain autonomy at key stages in the production cycle.

Locating charismatic autonomy in festival production

Festivals were autonomous brokers, undertaking risky functions within hetero-regulated environments. These functions can be grouped into brokerage, in which agents operated within cultural fields to undertake roles such as talent spotting, or intermediation, where they managed the meaning of cultural activities within the market. As can be seen in Figure 10.1 below, festivals operate within fields of limited production, as brokers, cultural intermediaries and sites of mass consumption (the red
boxes). The hetero-regulatory interests are shown in the yellow linking boxes. Brokerage is situated between the cultural originators, the creative force interested in art for art’s sake, with market orientated cultural intermediaries focused on packaging cultural products for mass markets. Differentiating these two roles distinguishes the orientations of the different hetero-regulatory interest groups discussed above. The Arts Council and Dave TV, bodies from cultural fields, valued brokerage functions, whilst local councils and leisure businesses valued festival’s potential to create new brand images and increase ‘footfall’, in line with the neoliberal policies of the UK government.

The exception to this divide was universities, which emerged in chapter nine as important protagonists and interested bodies, with complex internal orientations. Their relations with festivals were multi-faceted, relating to professional norms, talent development, civic boosterism and social factors. Like festivals they were ambiguously situated within their places and professional sectors. They educated future artists and cultural producers, inculcating the professional norms which enable the sector to function despite its disorganised nature, but which also act to exclude through professional closure. They were also important civic institutions, operating in partnership with local authorities, voluntary organisations and businesses at a variety of levels and purposes. There were placemaking and professional development synergies between universities and festivals as a result.

Festival producers used their professional expertise and festivity’s aura as time out of time, which were both perceived by regulatory bodies as charismatic, to navigate
institutional complexity and identify spaces in which they could operate autonomously.

**Conclusion autonomy, brokerage and charisma**

This chapter identified festival producers, and festivals themselves as boundary spanning organisations operating within, and reshaping hetero-regulated environments. It showed how the enduring influence of values from the founders’ cultural fields moulded each festival’s formal structures and decisions about which interests would be included and excluded.

Founders and the institutions they created were able to act autonomously within their localities because their festivals operated at the edges of the various bodies within their political economies. Their boards and steering committees were places where public, private and voluntary sectors met. The question of who was or was not invited to participate in these formal structures demonstrated the interests the founders considered compatible with their values. Some groups, although significant in the locality, were excluded, as their interests were felt to be incompatible with the festivals’.

The festivals’ bridging connections meant they were able to harness their field’s intrinsic charisma, such as the glamour of knowing famous artists. The reflected glory of fame and festivity meant founders and producers were themselves viewed as charismatic. They were able to create cultural change to place imaginaries and instrumental change by building enduring institutions situated in previously unseen spaces in the political and social ecologies, and by linking the production cycle stages as shown in Figure 10.1.
“The ‘charismatic’ ideology [...] is undoubtedly the main obstacle to a rigorous science of the production of the value of cultural goods” (Bourdieu 1992 [1986]: 76)

Chapter 11. Conclusions

Introduction

This thesis has outlined, examined and explained the phenomenon of urban arts festivals in unheeded regional towns and cities. The study was informed by three principal observations: the phenomenon of festivalisation within urban policy, a perceived misalignment between the policy rhetorics being used to fund festivals based on their economic impact and their actual effects, and a personal awareness of festivals as enduring institutions within civic life. A tripartite typology based on Weber’s ideal type method for abstracting essential features of social life was developed and different methods and approaches were used to uncover the social, artistic and political purposes of three festivals within the East Midlands of England. The research documented the histories and core value sets of the festivals and their institutional partners situated in their political economies, places, times and cultural fields. At the heart of the study were question of power, autonomy and constraint within festival production. Who were the festivals for, what did they hope to achieve, and what did they actually achieve for the interest groups within their ecologies and fields?

Festivals were found to have a range of artistic and social purposes and organisational forms. They were created and supported by actors with diverse motivations, from love of an artform to career development, from economic regeneration to social inclusion. Their ecologies included national and local government agencies, cultural fields networks and place networks. As enduring social
and cultural phenomena, as both sites and actors, festivals were found to be significant institutions within urban life and public policy. Academically, festival studies emerged as an appropriate frame for interdisciplinary academic research.

Chapter five offered a new framework for studying festival as institutions dominated by one of three sets of priorities; questions of aesthetics, profit, or civic engagement. Rather than temporary, spatially bounded events, it viewed them as enduring boundary-spanning institutions brokering relationships between communities of place and interest. The empirical research supported this. It found values from the founders and producers’ cultural fields, their professional habitus were the central factors in shaping each festival’s praxis. This finding contrasts with the literature in chapters two and four which argued festivals were highly situated responses to the genius loci (Fabiani 2011, Chalcraft et al 2014) and ‘interstitial frames’ (Piette 1992: 41) within hetero-regulated urban political economy ecologies.

The theoretical approaches in chapter four situated festivals as institutions within political economies, influenced by market and political factors, but operating autonomously in the spaces between these regulatory structures either as brokers identifying talent or cultural intermediaries packaging and marketing culture to create alternative place imaginaries or tourist brands. This study concludes, as outsiders affiliated to the norms and values of their cultural fields rather than the festival’s place, founders were able to use festival’s intrinsic charismatic power, festivity, to catalyse change. Looking behind this ‘charismatic ideology’ (Bourdieu 1993c: 76), it asked who creates the creator, what are the foundations of festivity? In applying this concept to festivals the study found the power structures institutionalised within festival governance were rarely examined because ‘festive ideology’ created unquestioned rhetorics about festival impacts. These rhetorics provided festival producers with autonomy to operate in the spaces between their global cultural fields, national and local political bodies and businesses, and the public.
**Charismatic festivals**

What is clear from the interrelations within festivals’ ecologies is the choice of festival as a format was not haphazard. The founders intended to make an intervention into their localities’ political, social or economic spheres. Whilst their production organisations were enduring autonomous institutions, festivals appeared to be temporary events bounded in time and space, but full of transformational energy.

Chapter two theorised festivals as disruptive, ‘time out of time’ experiences (Falassi 1987). Festivity was used to promote values and behaviours which distinguished festival times and places from the mundane. Their cyclical nature interrupted everyday rhythms and created an annual reflexive moment. These wrinkles in time brought the past and present closer and, through the performed rhythms of repeated ritual and shared cultural memories, created communal confidence in the future. Because of the distinction from everyday life, festive periods were perceived as intrinsically charismatic. As Bourdieu (1993c) identified in relation to charisma, festivity became an ‘ideology which directs attention to the apparent producer’ (ibid: 76), in this case festive intensity, spectacular and social vivacity, suppressing the question ‘who creates the creator?’ (ibid: 76). One original insight of this thesis is the connection it demonstrates between the perception of festival producers as charismatic leaders and festivity as a disruptive agent. The concept of charisma as an ideological distraction preventing analysis of the underlying structures of cultural production can equally be applied to festivals. This study has shown the foundations of festivity lie in festival producers’ expertise, developed within and from their professional habitus, and are institutionalised in their governance structures. This social closure, symbolically hidden within festive ideology, is why despite the frequently repeated argument that festivals created unique place identities and challenged place imaginaries, that there was little evidence of wider participation or tourism.
In looking beyond the ideology of festivity to the brokers and intermediaries who produce them, the study identified effects which can be ascribed to festivals. Festival sites were perceived as ideal societies; attractive, distinctive, authentically sociable places where “people want to live and work”. Festive charisma facilitated change because it meant new imaginaries, affective affiliations and alternative futures could be experienced. And festival’s charisma reflected upon producers who became politically influential instrumental charismatics through the enduring institutions they built in the spaces they identified between the existing infrastructure bodies.

The focus on structures of production also revealed festival’s intensity created effects that outlived their brief flowering. They were charismatic celebratory moments that catalysed change in wider society. Although festival experiences felt effortless to participants, any transformative effects resulted from festival leaders’ ability to reimagine their localities, skills derived from their cultural expertise and professional know-how in implementing plans. The festival organisations researched were not temporary ‘time out of time’. They were enduring features of everyday political and social life in their cities. Producers sat on committees and developed new institutions to bring together influential bodies within their local and cultural ecologies. Just as charismatic artists’ appeal is grounded in mastery of their craft, so festival producers’ apparently intrinsic charisma was grounded in the instrumental charisma of their producing institutions. Greater awareness of the import of these skills within policy circles would focus attention on support for cultural production as much as consumption.

Festival production can be conceived of as a technique for creating unlikely conjunctions, conjunctions that catalyse renewal and regeneration. Anderson (1991) wrote of nation states as imagined communities, political bodies held together as much by affective cultural symbols as formal institutions. As a flexible cultural form festivals are particularly well designed for periods of flux, able themselves to adapt to the shifting structures in their ecologies. Rather than a response to nation building,
the current period of festivalisation is a result of technological change and, in the case of cities, the impact of on-line shopping on retail. The emergence of Floridian creative cities policies which aim to produce vibrant conviviality has been one response. In arguing cities are communities imagined by creative producers this thesis also makes the case to understand the forces shaping that re-imagination and to ask who is involved and what are they hoping to achieve?

As charismatic cultural forms, festivals undoubtedly act to catalyse change, although cause and effect are not clear-cut. Festivals appeared throughout the literature and the case-studies as idealised communities. Their festivity dazzled supporters into accepting spurious claims regarding their economic impacts because these fitted with neoliberal policy agendas. This distracted attention from the influence of cultural form and institutional inclusion to their cultural and social effects. It could be argued Festé was a failure, for example, since it did not encourage retailers to open. Yet the festival’s steering group was an important governance institution for the city’s cultural providers, a neutral space where they could meet despite funding cuts and differences over the City Council’s funding cuts. LCF did little to bond Leicester’s diverse communities but has become an important feature of the UK comedy circuit’s year, enabling talent to be developed in time for Edinburgh. That is not to say festivals did not have economic effects. In attracting international opera fans, Buxton Festival revitalised the town’s image and tourist economy. However, this was the exception, and the result of Fraser having recognised Buxton’s overlooked cultural history as a spa resort.

**Festive ideology, ambiguity and autonomy**

The ambiguous boundaries between production and consumption were a key element of festive experiences revealed in this thesis, as demonstrated in the diagram in chapter ten (page 262). Festivals were complex sites where audiences and artists met, where audiences were themselves part of the spectacle and atmosphere, and
where commercial imperatives met political and social priorities. Festival production existed on the edges of hetero-regulated systems. They produced or commissioned cultural products but were not artists. They spotted talent but were not agents. They created market opportunities but were not advertising or branding companies. As both brokers and marketplaces, commercial and not-for-profit, they were even more layered and complex than Toynbee’s (2016) music industry proto-markets. Rather than brokering relationships between artists they had discovered in a scene and commercial firms interested in packaging and marketing them, festival producers created temporary milieu. This ambiguity made them difficult and risky for interested institutions to categorise or incorporate. This insight has implications for policy makers as questions of taste, defined within cultural fields, were shown to be important in shaping each festivals place effects. Had Buxton’s chosen artform been something less elite, it would have been an easier sell locally, but would not have been as effective at attracting affluent tourists. By contrast, stand-up comedy and street performance are demotic art forms with local appeal making them easier to support. As Munn said of Festé, “politicians like it because it’s shiny”. However, both LCF and Festé’s cultural forms were highly commoditised and available elsewhere, so audiences were unlikely to travel far to see them. The effectiveness of the festivals lay in the fact they enlivened their cities for residents, making them effective in generating civic pride and a sense of belonging. By focusing on the nexus between fields and places, usually obscured by ‘festival ideology’, this study has illuminated the impact of cultural fields on festival design and, consequently, their outcomes within urban political economies. The concept of ‘festival ideology’ links Bourdieu’s (1993c) insights that charisma prevents analysis of the role of cultural production with Pieper’s (1999 [1963]) belief festivity was ‘received from a superhuman source’ (ibid: 26). This is an original contribution to the festival and cultural policy studies fields and raises new lines of enquiry. In particular, just as there is little in the cultural management literature on festivals as enterprises, in researching festival production through ‘generic management concepts and methods’ (Getz 2010: 6) event
management has neglected the influence of taste, which this thesis has identified as central to understanding festivals.

By focusing on festival production, this study has shown taste to be a central element in festival producers’ ability to operate with relative autonomy, as it placed festivals as sites with ambiguous boundaries and actors operating sometimes as brokers within high art fields at at others as enterprising intermediaries packaging and marketing cultural products for the market. LCF’s Comedian of the Year, and Buxton’s Festival Friends are both examples of the latter. This is important as it is evident from the policy history in chapter three, the Arts Council has viewed festivals as either marketplaces brought together by ‘impressarios’ in a convenient place, rather than autonomous creative institutions operating in ‘fields of restricted production’ (Bourdieu 1993c: 115) or as policy instruments for widening participation, or placemaking and revitalisation through tourism. The reality is more complex than these beliefs allow. The one festival studied which does attract tourists, Buxton, does so because its audience is a global one but it has not been funded for this. Leicester Comedy Festival is funded for its economic impact, which is perceived to relate to visitors. In reality, LCF’s economic impacts are a result of its status as an intermediary within the comedy field which mean agents and comedians attend the festival, and it has been able to attract a major sponsor. Meanwhile, Festé’s impact as a civic broker, developing a cultural network within its local ecology has been missed because the focus has been on its economic impact claims. The approach of researching festivals from the production perspective has drawn attention to the limiting effect of the policies paradigms in play since 1979.

By considering festivals as political economy actors, the study showed festivals undertook risky functions other institutions were unwilling to. These can be grouped into brokerage within cultural fields, or intermediation, managing cultural meaning within markets. As can be seen in Figure 10.1 (page 262), brokerage is situated between cultural originators and market orientated cultural intermediaries are
focused distribution and for mass markets. Differentiating between these roles illuminates the priorities of festivals’ interest groups. Bodies from cultural fields valued brokerage, whilst councils and businesses valued festival’s brand-making ability.

The exception was universities, which emerged as protagonists and interested institutions with complex relations with festivals relating to professional norms, talent development, civic marketing and social policies. Universities were also ambiguously situated between their urban settings and professional sectors. They educated cultural producers, inculcating professional norms. As significant civic institutions there were placemaking and professional development synergies with festivals as a result.

In terms of professional development universities are part of a system to instil and maintain values and norms within closed cultural fields. As habitus is tacit, experiential learning is required and festivals were flexible partners with limited resources of their own, so saw the benefits of developing relationships with emerging artists and arts managers. This habitus also informed festival founders’ core principles and those of the institutions they built. For Ager (2016) universities had themselves started to promote more festivals as a result of political pressure to prove the ‘impact’ of their research. In this study universities supported independent festivals for a variety of purposes in addition to promoting their research: teaching, developing professional networks, internship and employment opportunities, and as part of civic placemaking designed to make their cities “sticky for graduates”. The relations between universities, their places and independent festivals is an area ripe for further research.

The festivals’ institutionalised forms, their governance, were a good signal of their underlying values and purposes. Festé had no retail representatives. LCF’s partners were the city’s civic institutions and Buxton’s board was drawn from the opera establishment. Whilst festivals were undoubtedly an adaptable form, they were found
to be intensive performances of the cultural values and norms of the organisations producing them. These norms and values have been examined from a variety of perspectives in this thesis. Four additional theories offered significant insights into the roles played by urban arts festivals in regional towns and cities; institutional theory, Lefebvre’s theories relating to the production of space and the structuring effects of time and Bourdieu’s notions of habitus and intermediation.

**Governance, autonomy and hetero-regulation**

Because of festive ideology, festival organisations themselves appeared to be autonomous neutral social spaces where, when different interest groups met, the focus was on questions related to festival production rather than their own bilateral relations. However, examination of the extent to which different groups were incorporated into their formal decision-making systems, that is the extent to which they were given power, highlighted interests which were included or excluded and, uniquely, identified how founders’ value systems were embedded in these governance structures.

What is evident from these choices is where each festival located itself. Despite Fraser’s claims to want to ‘fulfil this place’, Buxton Festival’s board excluded most local interests. He and Music Director Anthony Hose were “the artistic people and we can’t have local amateurs, even very skilled amateurs, having too much influence on the artistic programme”. Instead the festival’s board was drawn from across the opera world establishment ensuring its standards were judged by the criteria of that field. By contrast Leicester Comedy Festival, despite having no real place affinity did not incorporated representatives from the cultural field on the board. Rather well-known comedy names have been patrons, a symbol of the festival’s status within the field, but without any decision-making power. Nor has Leicester City Council been formally involved in LCF’s governance, despite being its most consistent funder. LCF has
ensured its autonomy by maintaining an independent board that has connections to its regulatory environment but has not formally integrated them.

Derby Festé, too, argued for local support based on economic benefits to the city. Yet the festival’s main decision-making body, the steering group, included all the city’s Arts Council National Portfolio Organisations that wanted to be involved, and a marketing agency that provided in-kind services but not local traders, the supposed beneficiaries. The fact they generally failed to extend their opening hours during the festival demonstrated they perceived little or no benefit from the festival, nor were they consulted about ways in which the festival might be altered to support them better. Similarly, although Festé was pressured to undertake action to widen participation as a result of its membership of the Arts Council-backed Without Walls network, it was not until the incorporation of Baby People into the steering group once it became an ACE National Portfolio member that resources were dedicated from the festival’s budget. Even then, resources for participation elements of the programme remained “nominal compared to any of the main things.

It is clear decisions about inclusion in formal institutional structures reflected the festivals’ fundamental values, a contribution to festival studies resulting from the ideal type methodology used. These values were the essential rules-in-action underpinning festivals production processes. They could be traced in all the cases to the habitus of the founders. Malcolm Fraser’s background was within opera and he insisted on board members from this field. Geoff Rowe was a graduate of the Arts Management course at Leicester’s De Montfort University and Big Difference Company’s board comprised members of organisations he had met during this degree. Stephen Munn’s background was in contemporary dance, and the festival’s insistence on cultural organisations maintaining control reflected his belief “leadership needs to come from the culture partners” to maintain the city as a stimulating place for residents.
When the festivals came under pressure it was evident the values of their fields of limited production took precedence. Buxton appealed to its establishment connections within the opera world in 1980 and 1995 to ensure it could maintain its independence. LCF rejected the idea of becoming a commercial event producer, preferring instead to work in socially engaged arts. And when Derby City Council cut its funding, Festé turned to the Arts Council. Where festivals were successful was when synergies existed between place-based and artistic needs, but where adaptations were necessary to support those synergies, it was the places that changed rather than cultural fields.

**Perspectives on festival production**

Chapter four discussed a range of theoretical perspectives which argued festivals should be seen as institutions operating within neoliberal discourses of ‘creative cities’. Neoliberalism is an ideology that structures society in market terms. Human beings are conceived as competitive individuals seeking to maximise their personal wealth and cities are the hot houses of economic growth. Within neoliberal economies, cities compete with each other on a global scale and festivals are one element in this marketisation. As neoliberalism has interpenetrated public policy, festivals have, for this reason, found themselves increasingly having to justify public funding in terms of their economic contribution. Yet the ethnographic accounts in chapters six, seven and eight and festival research literatures showed not all festivals were effective tourism or inward investment marketing tools, particularly for regional cities without established visitor attractions, or industry sector expertise. This raised the question of whether or to what extent festivals were controlled by neoliberal policies enforced by resource dependency, or whether they were instead motivated by the social or aesthetic purposes identified in the typology, or indeed others. Where festivals resisted commercialisation, was this a result of their internal value systems or because neoliberalism had not, in fact, interpenetrated their funders and governance systems as fully as at first appeared?
Institutional theory

Institutional theory drew attention to the range of interests involved in festival production and the extent to which they constrained them within an iron cage of formal regulations and informal systems of norms and values. Market orientation was considered to be highly influential and to act against innovation. Individual agents undertook specialised tasks regulated by functions rather than norms without an overview of systemic goals, which are simply following the rationality of the underlying ideology. The rationales of each festival’s main interested parties were, therefore, analysed and compared with the festivals’ fundamental motivations and purposes to elucidate that ideology. In mapping the regulatory framework in which festivals operated it became clear, while local authorities and the Arts Council had been interpenetrated by neoliberalism, the festivals were able to maintain their autonomy from the market by negotiating resources on different terms with different supporters. When Dave withdrew its sponsorship, LCF turned to Leicester City Council. When the Arts Council refused to fund Buxton Festival, the opera establishment approached wealthy elites within their social spheres. Festé was supported by the Arts Council when its local authority disinvested from culture. The fact they comprised heterogeneous groups of activities, some culturally focused, some civic and some commercial, made festivals adaptable, able to find artistic and social synergies with potential partners. This flexibility was one important factor in enabling all the cases to resist marketisation. But, if they rejected market goals, the question arose what the festivals’ core purposes were.

Habitus and fields

Bourdieu’s (1990) concepts of habitus, the “principles which generate and organize practices” within social fields, can be used to explain festival producers’ resistance to market norms. He distinguished between marketised cultural fields, now commonly called the creative industries, which he felt had been incorporated by powerful commercial interests and consequently lost their autonomy, and fields of limited
production that resisted those hetero-regulatory forces. Fields of limited production operated according to aesthetic value standards learned through socialisation within families and education systems. Cultural habitus valorised artistic excellence, however exclusive, over market popularity. The purpose of an aesthetic festival would be, as Buxton was, to impress others within the field with the quality of its productions, rather than to appeal to mass markets. It is evident from this study all the professional festival producers were highly educated within their cultural fields and had, therefore, internalised this habitus.

The strength of a field’s institutional logic increased where there is a high degree of interdependency between organisations (DiMaggio 1977). Festivals were most reliant in this study on the bodies they incorporated into their governance structures, and on the artists, cultural producers and specialist support agencies from within their fields. For festivals, which work with performers, staging and security firms, and venues for just a short period each year, the ability to rely on shared understanding of professionally encoded behaviours and standards is essential. Ambiguity in a field’s goals further strengthened its unquestioned habitus. Cultural value is essentially ambiguous. Culture is symbolic, relational and experiential; its effects are personal, dependent on an individual’s prior experience, state of mind and, consequently, resistant to commodification and homogenisation. All the festivals were keen to demonstrate the quality of their programming, to discuss relations with artists and to locate themselves in comparison to other, similar, events. And, under pressure, it was to these values and the networks they shared them with that they turned.

An understanding of habitus also served to elucidate synergies discovered between the cultural production courses at Royal Northern College of Music and De Montfort University and festivals. Students on these courses who worked with festivals learned professional praxis, tacit theory-in-action that cannot be taught in a classroom. At the same time festival producers benefitted from cheap labour and were able to spot talent at an early stage. Both festivals and universities had
ambiguous boundaries between social life and professional practice, which these symbiotic relations enabled and reproduced. In addition to Festé's timing, it also explained the lack of links to Derby University’s business-orientated events management course.

**Production of space**

Lefebvre (1991b, 2004) considered places to be socially constructed through spatial practices, representations of space and representational spaces. Spatial practices referred to how places are used in everyday life. Representations of space codified spatial relations. Representational spaces were symbolic and affective place imaginaries and acted as disruptive modes of spatial production in cities primarily constructed to organise relations of production.

Festivals were found to be affective and experiential spaces. They demanded physical and sensual presence; their meaning was tacit, symbolic, performative and ritualistic. They were idealised countersites where social reality was reconceived, offering the potential of change. Festive appropriation of spaces reshaped social interaction, disrupted not just the way it was presented and experienced, but also the efficiency of relations of production. Even where festivals claimed to support commercial relations, they were disruptive. By interrupting normalised uses of space, they became ‘critical spatial practices’ (Tonkiss 2013: 107), reflexive interventions in social relations that drew attention to their underlying ideological purposes and meanings. Buxton’s history as a spa town was memorialised in its spectacular buildings and the Opera House, but this had been forgotten, the spa closed, and the festival had to compete with the Council’s engineering sector strategy to secure investment. It was the festival producers who raised the money to refurbish the Opera House and the festival which revitalised the town’s sense of itself as a tourist attraction.
In this sense festivals were political acts, performances of ideal futures. They invited different communities into spaces, temporarily rupturing existing social and power structures. In Derby, the festival aimed to change the image of the Cathedral Quarter from a ‘vertical drinking’ site to one in which families and people from other cultures felt comfortable. By creating new affiliations, and shared cultural memories, festivals redrew spatial boundaries, at least temporarily. The question of whether these changed perceptions had long-lasting effects on who used a place and how is open to question. Buxton is promoted as a festival town, a marketing image unimaginable in 1979, but there is little evidence either LCF or Festé have, yet, achieved a similar direct transformation in place perceptions.

Rhythms

In Chapter four Lefebvre’s concept of rhythm analysis was applied to festivals as cyclical intensifications of everyday life, ‘moments’ in social space that act as recurrent markers to draw communities together or as responses to conjunctural shifts in society’s ‘structures of feeling’, the ideological common sense of the day (Hall 1996, Williams 2001 [1961]).

Everyday social life is defined by multiple, dynamic, heterogeneous daily rhythms of work and leisure time. Festivals too are defined by time, but operate to a different, annual rhythm that interrupts and draws attention to the constraining rhythms of work. By marking time annually, they become cultural memories, symbols linking the past to the present (Assmann 1995). The beat of this underlying rhythm inspires a confidence in the potential future performed within the festival beyond the span of days and weeks.

Different rhythms made festivals appear ‘other’ and supported their ability to retain charismatic autonomy. An annualised timetable is difficult to incorporate into an institution more used to daily, weekly or monthly cycles. It is notable the other
bodies discussed in this thesis which operated on annual cycles of intense work periods followed by what appears externally to be quietude, were universities. Where festivals were able to synchronise their rhythms with universities their partnerships were embedded within each other’s working practices. By contrast, Festé is scheduled just before Freshers’ Week and has been unable to engage with Derby University.

Festivals were high profile events that created an immovable deadline for all the interest groups to work towards. This deadline helped to structure their varied rhythms and created a sense of shared priorities. In Derby Festé’s steering group was the only governance structure in the city which brought all its cultural institutions together. Because the focus was on the practicalities of producing events for 35,000 people over a weekend the partners reported “constructive dialogue to make the whole thing happen” not just at governance meetings, but throughout their technical, marketing and production teams, with all prioritising the festival rather than the ongoing operation of their various organisations.

Finally, the question of rhythms drew attention to historical time, and the changes in cultural policies between 1979 and 2016. The case-study festivals were launched in 1979, 1994 and 2007, roughly coinciding with the start of Thatcherite neoliberalism, the launch of the national lottery and new public management, and the financial crisis and subsequent period of austerity. It was evident these were factors in their attempts to become established. Both the Arts Council and local authorities were seen to have responded to neoliberal governmental pressure to marketise and measure effectiveness by demanding evidence of economic impacts in return for public support. All the festival producers were acutely aware of and able to use the discourses of economic regeneration, social and economic impact, tourism and, latterly, placemaking. What was less evident was the extent to which market ideology had interpenetrated the festivals themselves. Under resource pressure they resisted and returned to the principles of their cultural fields rather than the market.
Contributions to the field

This thesis began with four aims: to investigate the role of institutions in local festival production; to examine the significance of public policy in shaping festival production; to contribute to the understanding of regional and local cultural policies in England; and to add to the understanding of culture as an actor in social life. These aims have been realised through a close examination of the norms and values of three arts festivals in the English East Midlands. Looking in detail at the festival’s histories and governance structures has revealed the enduring influence of founders’ professional habitus on the festivals they created and, consequently, their ability to resist neoliberal pressures from within their political economy ecologies. Festivals were found to be an adaptable and hybrid culture form, which operated as brokers within proto-markets and cultural intermediaries within mass markets. This versatility enabled them to retain their autonomy as they could appeal for support to bodies that valued their aesthetic expertise and ability to spot talent or to those more interested in their place marketing potential.

The Arts Council, local authorities, and universities were found to be the main institutions which supported the festivals. The Arts Council’s policy had shifted from one of being the talent-spotter itself to supporting brokerage within the festivals, such as active production or commissioning of artistic works. Despite evidence it had been interpenetrated by neoliberalism, it remained resistant to funding activities to do with packaging and distribution; cultural intermediation. Local authorities by contrast were interested in those intermediary functions, specifically festivals’ ability to rebrand places and attract new markets. This was not, however, their main effect in the two cities with no history of tourism.

Relations between festivals and universities were found to be multifaceted and symbiotic. Both operated within cultural fields to spot and develop talent. Universities were part of the habitus system of instilling the professional value systems that
informed the core values of festival founders and the institutions they built. The synergies between festivals and universities pointed to both as heteronomous cultural agents within their localities.

As Jacobs (1958) said rebuilding a living city takes imagination. The local festivals studied were enduring, autonomous, charismatic institutions which brought imagination born out of immersion in their cultural fields to their cities. This study provides an insight into the significance of culture itself in festivals’ roles within their local political economies and their effects on local imaginaries. Festivity intensified culture’s intrinsic charisma, giving producers autonomous influence with their urban ecologies. This supplements existing research on festivals as actors within cities and opens new lines of enquiry within the emerging field of festival studies. The multidisciplinary nature of this study means it is necessary to consider its contributions from a range of perspectives, as what is considered significant in one academic field may be of little interest in another. In addition, one of the aims of this thesis was to be able to apply the findings to festival management and urban cultural policy, so their relevance to those fields is also identified.

**Academic contributions**

The choice of Weber’s ideal type proved to be an effective method for abstracting essential features of social phenomena in order to understand their underlying logics as a basis for subsequent more generalisability. The underlying logics were found to be embedded in professional cultural fields rather than locality, providing a framework for exploring festival production, and by extension other forms of cultural creation, as overlooked institutional actors in urban political economies beyond the English East Midlands. In particular, the methodology illuminated four academic contributions: the rich potential of festivals, heretofore hidden behind festive ideology, as sites of research into festival production and as actors within a variety of cultural, sociological and policy phenomena; the centrality of cultural values and
norms in structuring festival production through habitus imbued through education, and professional practices; distinctions in festivals’ roles within cultural production; and the insight that, rather than temporary events, festivals are enduring institutions operating on annual or bi-annual cycles.

In focusing on festival production over time, rather than consumption or impacts, this last finding provides a critique of the prevalent belief that festivals are disruptive forces which catalyse social and economic change. In fact, the festivals studied were found to be sites for reinforcing closed cultural boundaries, whether amongst opera professionals and audiences in Buxton, members of the comedy industry in Leicester, or Derby’s Arts Council-funded cultural institutions. This was both social and market closure. Festé’s rules-in-action, excluded Cathedral Quarter businesses from the steering group and, consequently, from involvement in funding opportunities the steering group was involved in with the Arts Council and the Business Improvement District. The cultural capital which made Derby’s NPOs feel most comfortable working with other arts organisations, were iron cages which provided protection, but also made it difficult for the festivals to operate successfully outside their structures. This was also a key factor in LCF’s on-going financial uncertainty. Rowe’s habitus was developed on his arts management degree, and its socially-engaged values and professional networks informed who he chose to work with from the start and are still evident in the choices made to develop the festival as a charity rather than a comedy business. Had the comedy festival chosen to develop a business plan within the norms of the comedy industry, as suggested by Luxton, the logic of the model suggests it would by now have a variety of income streams from promoting comedians or running a venue which would build on the festival’s brand and offset the risk of the annual festival.

In identifying cultural forms themselves as constraining structures, the typology’s focus on norms and cultural values within festival production also drew attention to nuances in the boundary spanning roles each festival played in its field, as
demonstrated in chapter ten. At times, they operated as cultural brokers operating to spot talent within proto-markets and fields of limited production through shared taste. Buxton’s focus on rarely seen operas, and willing to work with emerging talent are examples. At other times festivals were entrepreneurial cultural intermediaries, identifying commercial potential and packaging cultural products for the market through, for example, LCF’s Leicester Mercury Comedian of the Year and its sponsorship deal with Dave TV. The focus on festivals as highly situated events must therefore also consider their embeddedness and influence within their respective cultural fields and well as their localities.

Weber’s ideal type approach at the heart of this study proved to be a suitable method for extracting essential features of festival production as a phenomenon. The typology drew attention to the hard and soft institutions which shape festivals’ as social and cultural phenomena. In illuminating the significance of institutional dimensions such as producers’ sectoral habitus, the research has identified new approaches to research with wider implications in both cultural sociology and cultural policy.

Policy Contributions

As an interdisciplinary study into a relatively new phenomenon, festivalisation, this thesis sits at the intersection of academic research into cultural policy and its implementation within national cultural funding structures and urban policies. During the research it became evident policy rhetorics about festival’s cultural economic and social effects were well-established and formed the basis of negotiations between the three cases and the regulatory bodies in their respective ecologies. While the policy approaches started as responses to the neoliberal turn in national politics post 1997, the three case’s producers have proved adept at navigating the policy maze to ensure they have had enough support to continue. This makes them exceptional. As was noted in chapter five, festivals are easy to launch, but difficult to sustain in the
long term. The three cases studied are exceptional in that respect running as they have for over one, two and three decades at the time of the study. This strategic resilience is also significant for cultural policy makers in the Arts Council and local authorities. If, as this thesis contends, festivals are important brokerage institutions within urban governance, their ability to thrive in the long-term is important. So, what makes these festivals exceptional?

Firstly, as noted above, festivals and by inference other cultural producers, are located within professional fields. These fields shape and constrain organisations’ operations. The ‘rules in action’ are learned during artists and cultural producers’ professional training, a form of habitus, or cultural capital which bonds group members and excludes others. This is significant for two policy reasons. The first is the important role of civic actors such as the Arts Council and universities in developing and maintaining social and cultural capital in a locality. In two of these cases the festivals only exist because their founders were involved in degree courses focused on cultural management. In the third, it was a result of Arts Council investment in arts infrastructure. While arts education has been noted as a significant factor in creative milieu and the Arts Council has invested in cultural leadership training, this research points to the importance of intermediary roles, and the potential of investing in developing cultural entrepreneurship skills within localities through dedicated courses.

This insight challenges the policy rhetoric of festivals as catalysts of change able to widen participation and explains why so few festivals attract audiences from outside the local area. The exception in this study was Buxton Festival which catalysed the refurbishment of the Opera House and the town’s tourist economy. Opera’s status as an elite art form was key to this; it excluded local residents and attracted an audience and supporters from the global opera community able and willing to travel to experience ‘rarely produced operas’ in a unique setting. In that case, local residents were the excluded group, and little attempt was made to engage with residents to
change that. By contrast neither comedy nor outdoor arts can claim such a mobile audience. Similarly, all of the festivals appealed to audiences from within their cultural fields rather than widening participation or acting as sites for intercultural communication. As a promoter of stand-up comedy, a form with a genesis in working men’s clubs and pubs, LCF’s audiences remain overwhelmingly white, despite the festival taking place in the UK’s first minority-majority city. Cultural closure limited the allocation of resources to those within the exclusive group, explaining why, despite more than two decades of policy initiatives, audience development can be seen to have failed to diversify audiences for publicly funded arts forms in the UK. Consequently, contribution this thesis demonstrates the implications for urban policy makers of working with different cultural fields as taste is the determining factor in defining who will attend and, thus, the likely placemaking effects of a festival. If the objective is to increase tourism, outdoor arts which attract audiences from a five mile radius is unlikely to be successful. However, if the aim is to increase civic pride, or change the image of an area as part of a placemaking agenda, a highly photogenic street festival is likely to catalyse a shift in the local imaginary. The typology and subsequent findings show urban policy makers need to have clearly defined outcomes in mind, and to be aware of these likely effects of festivals dependent on their cultural programming.

While rational professional closure meant festival founders excluded local residents and businesses who were, in terms of policy and management rhetorics, their intended beneficiaries, it is apparent in the research that each festival has had public benefits. Buxton residents have a refurbished theatre which has proved to be a popular local resource and the festival’s board had raised huge sums which have been invested into the town. Derby Festé’s steering committee has proven to be an important institution for cementing relations amongst the city’s cultural partners. And Leicester Comedy Festival, in addition to attracting a major television channel to invest in a regional city in the East Midlands, has, through its Business Partners Club, established a network of local employers which as contributes to civic life and social
capital in the city. As Putnam (1995) demonstrated, such relations are significant elements in maintaining local democracy. Because festivals are liminal institutions in urban political economies, their governance structures are perceived as neutral sites where trusting relationships can be developed. These institutional bonding effects are important achievements, overlooked in the discussions about festivals’ social impacts which tend to focus on audiences or residents. As well as the practical policy questions, there is scope for further research to understand whether this is true of other aspects of cultural production such as theatres or participatory arts organisations, or whether festival’s different rhythms and charismatic appeal mean they have more ambiguous boundaries.

Festival Management Studies

Festival studies is a relatively new and interdisciplinary field. By taking an institutional approach, this thesis contributes to the discipline by drawing attention to the structuring power of each festival’s cultural form, to the ways in which social and market closure were fixed in governance systems, and festival’s ambiguous positioning between production and consumption, within their places and within their fields. It has shown festivals are a suitable subject for and site of academic study within cultural sociology, cultural policy, arts, business and event management.

The cases produced art works but were not artists. They spotted talent but were not agents. They created market opportunities but were not advertisers companies. They were brokers and marketplaces, commercial and not-for-profit, actors who created intermittent milieu. This ambiguity made them vulnerable, as none of the regulatory bodies felt responsible for them. It also gave them charismatic power through their exploitation of cultural capital as a form of expert power within their localities. This raises questions of stakeholder management and festival design for festival producers, as well we asking where they want to position their festival in relation to their fields. Do they see their festival as brokers spotting talent through
emerging artist schemes or commissioning, or intermediaries curating competitions or ‘best of’ shows? Differentiating between these illuminates where festivals’ interests lie, with implications for funding bodies, artists and residents. While Sachs Olsen (2013) raised the issue of festival design in relation to city strategies, this study extends that understanding by drawing attention to the power of cultural fields’ values and structures in determining their effects.

In selecting the cases for this research it became clear, while festivals are high profile, charismatic cultural institutions, their different rhythms and need to scale up and scale down for each edition mean they are also very difficult to manage and financially vulnerable, so most do not survive. The three cases studied are exceptional in that each has survived for over a decade and maintained annual editions in turbulent environments. In analysing their histories, the study identified their founders’ ability to navigate complex regulatory forces while maintaining core values from their habitus was the key to that. There are implications for festival producers and festival management as an academic field. Stakeholder management was shown to be a complex question, including both place- and taste-based interests that act to close the festival to new participants. The research draws attention to the significance of governance structures in enforcing this closure.

Taste expertise, or cultural capital, was a source of power for festival producers, particularly within their localities, where it was interpreted as charisma. Cultural expertise and access to art form fields meant festival producers were able to find interstices in their places’ hetero-regulatory fields as a result of their cyclical rhythms and intensity. This meant they could, depending on circumstances, manipulate rhetorics to persuade funders, donors and sponsors to finance them. Producers’ cultural field expertise appeared magical to place-based interests and was reinforced by the charismatic nature of festivity itself. Each of the festival founders was able to imagine their cities differently and then to harness resources to make that vision a reality which surprised both their supporters and nay sayers. Both the festivals and
festival producers were viewed as charismatic because of this ability to surprise. The 
discernment that cultural expertise is a source of institutional and political power is 
one of this study’s contributions to the festival studies field. It is related to the 
concept of festivity, which is also noteworthy.

Festivity was found to be central to festival’s power to draw audiences, create 
place imaginaries and bond communities, as well as imbuing festival leaders with 
charisma. This thesis argues festive techniques, including spectacular and 
intensification of cultural experience within a limited time span which distinguishes 
festivals from other forms of cultural production and from everyday life. Festival 
design, including choice of acts and art forms, timings, spaces, site décor and 
marketing communications, are core cultural brokerage skills. What is significant for 
festival management is these skills are shared across cultural fields but, while the 
charismatic nature and effects of on-stage and screen talent has been discussed in 
the academic literature, cultural producers’ charismatic power has been overlooked 
(Nisbett and Walmsley 2016). In the cases studied in this thesis the festival producers 
have been largely benign. However, charismatic power is not always so as the 
behaviour of charismatic producers across theatre, film, TV and the music industries 
identified in the wake of the #MeToo movement has shown. This study points to the 
fact they were allowed to operate unfettered because their abilities as cultural 
brokers and intermediaries were hidden behind festive ideology. The valorising 
power which distinguishes cultural management from other forms of business has 
been shown to be central to the success of the festivals, pointing to the significance 
of arts management courses as foundational elements within cultural fields.

By illuminating core skills, one contribution this study makes is, therefore, to show 
festivals do not happen by magic. Successful festival producers are entrepreneurs, 
diplomats, negotiators and visionaries. They are embedded in their fields, able to 
navigate complex hetero-regulated political economy and cultural ecologies by 
controlling their governance structures and responding flexibly to policy rhetorics.
Although largely unnoticed behind festive charisma, festival production in the cases studied led to the creation of enduring and influential civic institutions. In addition to the consequences for festival managers, this is an area ripe with research potential within critical management fields, urban studies, cultural policy and cultural studies.
Bibliography


ARTS COUNCIL ENGLAND, June 27 2017, c-last update, National Portfolio: 2018-22
[June 27, 2017].


125-133.


MAUGHAN, J. JORDAN and F. BIANCHINI, eds, Focus on Festivals: Contemporary European

International, pp. 21-41.

BABY PEOPLE, n.d.-last update, Baby People / Home [Homepage of Baby People, Derby],


Selected Writings of Bakhtin, Medvedev, Voloshinov. London, UK: Arnold, pp. 194-244.


BENNETTO, J., 14 February 1995, 1995-last update, Lottery forces pools company to cut
donations [Homepage of The Independent], [Online]. Available:
https://www.independent.co.uk/news/lottery-forces-pools-company-to-cut-donations-
1572945.html [May 3, 2018].

BERESON, R., 2002. The Operatic State: Cultural Policy and the Opera House. London, UK:
Routledge.

BHAGAT, A., May 2011, 2011-last update, Adrian Ghagat talks to Giles Croft about Neat ‘11
[Homepage of LeftLion, Nottingham: UK], [Online]. Available:
http://www.leftlion.co.uk/articles.cfm/title/giles-croft/id/3644#.Uoud7GRmXLA [November 19,
2013].
BIANCHINI, F., Cultural Planning Approach: An Overview, Lecture to MSc Cultural Events Management students, De Montfort University, Leicester, 30 April 2014.


BIG DIFFERENCE COMPANY, 2011. Leicester Comedy Festival... A Serious Business. Leicester: Big Difference Company.


BUXTON ADVERTISER, 04/12/2003, 2003-last update, Treasured jewel of our spa town [Homepage of JP Media], [Online]. Available:


IORDANOVA, D., ed, 2013b. The Film Festival Reader. St Andrews, Scotland: St Andrews Film Studies.


MAUGHAN, C. and BIANCHINI, F., 2004b. Festivals and the Creative Region: The Economic and Social Benefits of Cultural Festivals in the East Midlands: Key Findings from A Study by De Montfort University, Leicester. Leicester, UK: De Montfort University.


SKENE, P., 12 December, 2017-last update, The National Lottery has changed the face of the arts, but is the tap running dry? [Homepage of The Stage], [Online]. Available: https://www.thestage.co.uk/opinion/2017/prue-skene-the-national-lottery-has-changed-the-face-of-the-arts/ [May 2, 2018].


315


Appendices
# Appendix 1: List of interviewees

**Buxton International Festival**  
**Interviews pre-2013**
- Festival General Managers x 5  
- An Arts Council Great Britain Finance Director  
- Co-founder/Festival Director  
- Opera North founder  
- Co-founder/music director  
- Former Festival chairman  
- Former Artistic Director  
- Owner, Local Hotel  
- Former chairman  
- Former Buxton Borough and High Peak Council member  
- Musician/Opera House board member  

**Interviews post-2013**
- Festival administrator  
- Former Festival General Manager  
- Board member / Literary Strand Manager  
- Former chairman  
- Festival board member  
- Fringe venue manager  
- Festival Friend  
- Tourism information officer  
- Buxton Opera House staff member  

**Leicester Comedy Festival**
- Comedians x 2  
- Board member  
- Leicester City Council officer  
- De Montfort University  
- Venue manager  
- Chairman and former Director of Leisure Services, Leicester City Council  
- Former festival administrator  
- Former chair  
- Intercity Midland Mainline Sponsorship Manager
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Consultant</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dave TV</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Founder, Festival Director</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volunteer</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Derby Feste</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Resident Derby suburbs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resident Derby suburbs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resident Derby suburbs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pub manager, Derby Cultural Quarter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shop owner, Derby Cultural Quarter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Derby QUAD CEO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BID Manager</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Derby LIVE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baby People founder/CEO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Festé Ambassador Co-ordinator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Artistic Lead/Deda Artistic Director</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gravity Digital CEO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Derby Theatre Executive Director</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


## Appendix 2: Case-study selection

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date established</th>
<th>Legal status</th>
<th>ACE funding</th>
<th>Council funding</th>
<th>Economic purpose</th>
<th>Aesthetic purpose</th>
<th>Civic purpose</th>
<th>Community purpose</th>
<th>Place</th>
<th>Data available</th>
<th>Contacts</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Art on the Map, Open Studios in Lincolnshire</strong></td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>Unincorporated organisation</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Lincolnshire</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>Purpose unrelated to tourism policy narratives. Discontinued 2015.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Buxton Festival</strong></td>
<td>1979</td>
<td>Charity</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>Buxton</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>Undertaken prior research so have contacts and interviews which can be repurposed. Opera is perceived as an elite art form.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Buxton Fringe Festival</strong></td>
<td>1980</td>
<td>Charity</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Buxton</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>City Festival</strong></td>
<td>2012</td>
<td>Council</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Leicester</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>Only one edition at start of research. Unsure how likely to continue.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Derby Caribbean Carnival</strong></td>
<td>1975</td>
<td>Charity project</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Derby</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>Purpose unrelated to tourism policy narratives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Frequency Festival</strong></td>
<td>2011</td>
<td>Social enterprise project</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Lincoln</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>Only two editions prior to start of research. Unsure how likely to continue.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>GameCity</strong></td>
<td>2006</td>
<td>Independent non-profit supported by Nottingham Trent University</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Nottingham</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Discontinued 2013.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Leicester Belgrave Mela</strong></td>
<td>1983</td>
<td>Independent non-profit supported by Leicester City Council and sponsorships</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>Leicester</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>Purpose unrelated to tourism policy narratives prior to incorporation into City Festival in 2012.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Leicester Comedy Festival</strong></td>
<td>1994</td>
<td>Charity project</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Leicester</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>Have contacts and understanding of the festival from working with them at Phoenix Arts and DMU.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Newark on Water Festival</strong></td>
<td>1999</td>
<td>Council</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Newark</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>Discontinued 2004. Purpose unrelated to tourism policy narratives.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Northamptonshire Open Studios</strong></td>
<td>1985</td>
<td>Unincorporated organisation</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Northants</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Purpose unrelated to tourism policy narratives. Discontinued 2015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>NottDance</strong></td>
<td>1994</td>
<td>Charity project</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Nottingham</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>Biennial rather than annual. Purpose unrelated to tourism policy narratives.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>NOW</strong></td>
<td>1989</td>
<td>Council</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Nottingham</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>Discontinued 2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tideswell Well Dressing, Derbyshire</strong></td>
<td>1946</td>
<td>Unincorporated organisation, Tideswell Wakes Committee</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Tideswell</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>Purpose unrelated to tourism policy narratives.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Wirksworth Festival</strong></td>
<td>1978</td>
<td>Charity</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Wirksworth</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>Main focus on art/architecture trail. No tourism policy narratives associated with the festival.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Derby Festé</strong></td>
<td>2007</td>
<td>Unincorporated organisation</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Derby</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>Have contacts as way in. Interesting combination of council and arts organisations. Street performance is an emergent urban festival form.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Diwali, Leicester</strong></td>
<td>1983</td>
<td>Independent non-profit supported by Leicester City Council and sponsorships</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Leicester</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>Incorporated into Leicester City Council’s Festivals and Events Department in the 2012 Festivals Review</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table A2.1 Festivals considered during case-study selection