

RECONSTRUCTING COMMUNITY-BASED ARTS: CULTURAL VALUE AND THE NEOLIBERAL CITIZEN

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Abstract

The relationship between 'community' and 'culture' is an increasingly important one in the context of contemporary neoliberal policy strategies. Within this policy context, 'culture' is routinely argued for in terms of its usefulness *and* its opposition to instrumental rationales; while the notion of 'community' serves as a locus of resistance to the perceived dangers of modern life, and acts on populations by invoking their autonomy.

This thesis examines how community-based arts have been drawn into these policy agendas through case studies of Footscray Community Arts Centre and Multicultural Arts Victoria. The study is informed by the Foucauldian perspective of governmentality, as well as the broad approach of 'everyday multiculturalism'. It examines the rationales underpinning community-based arts. Specifically, it considers the relations that these organisations invoke between 'community', 'culture', and notions of cultural value. The thesis also examines the implications of these relations for the subject of community-based arts, who is variously conceived as 'citizen', 'consumer', 'audience' and 'artist'.

Contemporary community-based arts activity complicates prevailing relations between artists, audiences, cultural institutions and 'communities'. The exclusionary tendencies of the aesthetic ethos are heightened in the current policy climate where economic value is attached to art and creativity. However, the forms of subjectification that take place through the norms of the neoliberal cultural economy are tied up with other norms of self-government, including affirmative practices of self-styling. This dual character of the aesthetic suggests that the 'intrinsic' value of 'culture', and its instrumentalisation are interrelated, rather than opposed, and it requires that we rethink the relationship between the cultural 'margins' and the 'mainstream'.

DECLARATION

This is to certify that

- i. the thesis comprises only my original work towards the PhD except where indicated in the Preface,
- ii. due acknowledgement has been made in the text to all other material used,
- iii. the thesis is less than 100,000 words in length, exclusive of tables, maps, bibliographies and appendices.

Signed _____

This research project has been approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) at the University of Melbourne. Ethics ID no. 0826692 and 0829843.

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INTRODUCTION

In 1993, Gay Hawkins wrote about the invention and development of the community arts movement in Australia. She called for a ‘new politics of community arts’ and asked whether ‘community arts [is] a cultural program whose moment has passed?’ (xxv). This provocation sought to highlight what seemed to be the field’s growing irrelevance; the community arts movement was marked by an inability, and unwillingness, to engage with practices of ‘popular’ cultural consumption and production, as well as a ‘lack of aesthetic vitality’ (Hawkins 164). These limitations meant that community arts was at risk of marginalising itself. It had become dependent on a nostalgic invocation of ‘community’ that undermined its ability to meaningfully engage with people’s diverse cultural interests.

It is now apparent that community arts’ day is not over. This thesis is a response to the fact that, over the last fifteen years or so,¹ the community-based arts sector has been imbued with new meanings and uses.

¹ This period is nominated because it is during this time that the neoliberal politics of ‘community’ – on which I elaborate in Chapter One – have risen in prominence. In Australia, this period is marked by the conservative Howard government’s reworking of notions of ‘citizenship’ and ‘obligation’ (Everingham 15). It is also during this time that the policy rhetoric of ‘creative industries’ and its valorisation of ‘creativity’ has emerged. The UK Creative Industries Taskforce, which has had a strong influence on Australian cultural policy, was established in 1998.

'Community' and 'culture' are at the centre of a range of governmental policies and instruments, referred to as neoliberalism. The cultural activity encompassed by 'community arts' has thus taken on a renewed importance, and these instrumentalisations of 'community' and 'culture' have been the subject of considerable debate. This thesis suggests that the terms on which this debate is played out are inadequate. Further, community-based arts organisations in Australia have redefined themselves in response to accusations that their cultural production lacks relevance and 'aesthetic vitality'. However, these redefinitions have also situated the field on problematic territory. For these organisations, the 'value' of culture, as it is conceived by neoliberal political rationales, has presented both significant opportunities and reasons for concern. And this has resulted in circular discussions about how to respond to this dilemma.

I hope to intervene in these debates – specifically, by rethinking community-based arts in ways that take account of notions of cultural value, and its potentially exclusionary, or affirmative, effects. This thesis examines the rationales underpinning community-based arts programs, and how they negotiate and manage cultural difference in the context of neoliberal policy agendas. I use the Foucauldian perspective of governmentality to examine the work of two organisations – Footscray Community Arts Centre (FCAC) and Multicultural Arts Victoria (MAV). In doing so, my research considers the relations that are invoked between 'community', 'culture', and notions of cultural value, and their implications for the subject of community-based arts – variously conceived as 'citizen', 'consumer', 'audience' and 'artist'.

I begin this introductory chapter by describing how my work is informed by the theoretical framework of governmentality. This framework enables me to consider not only the workings of cultural policy, but the ways in which organisations and individuals interact with these policy agendas, as well as with other rationales that constitute the field of community-based arts. This approach also allows for a more practical and nuanced description of the sorts of contestations and convergences that take place between these different rationales, as well as of the processes of self-formation that are enacted in these sites. I then situate my thesis in the context of existing literature on

community-based arts and make a case for the significance of my study. Unlike most existing studies of this field, my research offers a critical distance from the notion of 'community art'. It does so by historicising the concepts of 'community' and 'culture', as well as by considering the relationship between cultural participation and cultural value. Existing critiques of the influence of neoliberalism on instrumentalisations of culture have not offered a detailed, and grounded, account of its specific implications for community-based cultural activity. I will then discuss my research methodology in more detail and provide an outline of the thesis itself. Conceptual dilemmas inherent in the notions of 'community' and 'culture' have created practical problems for community-based arts, and these problems have been complicated by the prevailing currency of economic rationalisations for 'culture'. This thesis offers a way of describing and analysing these problems in a way which, I hope, resonates in both a critical, theoretical context as well as in a more practical one.

A GOVERNMENTAL READING OF COMMUNITY-BASED ARTS

My research is strongly informed by the work of Michel Foucault, particularly the notion of 'governmentality' that he developed in his lectures at the Collège de France ('Governmentality'). One of the aims of this thesis is to question the 'self-evidence' of community-based arts. This is informed by what Foucault describes as the technique of 'eventalisation' – which involves a 'breach of self-evidence, of those self-evidences on which our knowledges, acquiescences and practices rest' ('Questions' 76). It means thinking of community-based arts as a discourse, or a regime of practices, which is distinct from text- or language- centred notions of 'discourse' ('Questions' 5). This conception of community-based arts is especially useful because it enables an account of 'the displacement of boundaries which define the field of possible objects' (Foucault 'Politics' 56); accounting for the ways in which the shifting relations between cultural policies and specific institutional agendas have reconstituted the field. It also means a 'multiplication or pluralisation of causes' ('Questions' 76). So, for example, the instruments of neoliberal programs of government are not confused with an overarching

'ideology' determining the sorts of relations and subjectivities enacted in community-based arts programs.

The Foucauldian literature on governmentality examines how the 'population' emerges as an object of government, specifically by way of a dispersed set of processes and techniques that shape the conduct of individuals (Barry, Osborne and Rose; Bratich, Packer and McCarthy 'Governing'; Burchell, Gordon and Miller). Foucault describes 'governmentality' as an ensemble of 'institutions, procedures, analyses and reflections, the calculations and tactics that allow the exercise of this very specific albeit complex form of power' ('Governmentality' 102). Using governmentality studies for this project requires asking a series of questions about community-based arts; including what sorts of problems such activity is set to work on, how these problems are defined, and the strategies used for doing so. It also entails looking at the ways community-based arts have been called into question; how, for example, the field might be described as 'irrelevant' or 'ineffective', and the ways it has subsequently been 'rehabilitated' (Bratich, Packer and McCarthy 'Governing' 11). 'Government' is not limited to the machinations of the state, but comprises a range of both formal and informal rationalities of power concerned with the 'conduct of conduct' – that is, the management of populations through the self-regulation of the subject (Bratich, Packer and McCarthy 'Governing' 4; Gordon 2). The next chapter will show how 'community' is a crucial tool through which government takes place 'at a distance', outside of the direct injunctions of 'policy'. It is these modes of *indirect* government that I am interested in.

A number of writers have made the case for bringing the perspective of governmentality to cultural studies (Bennett 'Culture and Governmentality'; Bennett 'Putting Policy'; Bratich, Packer and McCarthy 'Governing'). Bratich, Packer and McCarthy describe how the present historical moment demands a reconceptualisation of 'culture' that 'does not simply reduce it to the site of ideological reproduction or to the location of resistance' (Bratich, Packer and

McCarthy 'Governing' 19).² Rather than imagine 'culture' as a set of signifying practices, they envisage it as a regulatory instrument – or a 'set of reflections, techniques, and practices that seek to regulate conduct' (Bratich, Packer and McCarthy 'Governing' 8). It is this approach that I take up in my chapter about 'the uses of culture'. Tony Bennett explains the significance of governmentality to a study of culture in these terms:

It is through the deployment of particular forms of expertise in particular relations of government that particular ways of speaking the truth and making it practical are connected to particular ways of acting on persons – and of inducing them to act upon themselves – which, in their turn, form particular ways of acting on the social. ('Culture and Governmentality' 54)

Importantly, this means that rather than a sole focus on cultural policy, it is necessary to consider how such policy interacts with rationalities and practices of self-government. Bratich, Packer and McCarthy describe this as 'the intersection of policy and ethos' ('Governing' 8). In this respect, community-based arts can be thought of as a 'practice of the self', as this permits an account of the various sorts of ethical capacities and forms of self-relationship that such activity generates (Foucault *Use*).

What this also means is that it is possible to theorise something like 'agency', without having to resort to problematic notions of identity or interiority. In Nikolas Rose's reading of Foucault's work, 'identity' is the site of a historical problem, rather than the basis of a historical narrative about the politics of cultural forms. Rose problematises the 'hermeneutics of depth' which informs discourses such as community-based arts, and argues that these forms of politics involve:

a therapeutic version of subjectivity in which health depends upon the discovery, acceptance and assertion by oneself of who one really is, upon bonding with those who are really the same, upon the claim that one has the natural right to be recognised individually and collectively in the name of one's truth. (*Powers* 196)

² The authors describe this historical moment as comprising 'an increasing globalisation of culture, the emergence and extension of neoliberal governance, in addition to the growing importance of electronic mediation, migration and diaspora formation in the production of notions of popular memory, history, subjectivity (specifically citizenship and community), and truth' ('Governing' 18).

Instead, as I suggested, community-based arts might be thought of as a technique of the self; that is, a practical domain that prescribes certain sorts of relations with the self, and that seeks to develop specific sorts of ethical capacities such as trust, reliability or 'self-esteem'.

This means examining community-based arts in terms of the forms of knowledge that it generates, and the regimes of self-reflection and self-identification in which participants, artists and others engaged in the practice, are implicated. Bratich, Packer and McCarthy describe these processes of subjectification as enabling attachments to 'the games of truth about ourselves and the world' ('Governing' 9). This not only entails thinking about what 'community' means, but *how* it means – and 'the role of different authorities of truth, and the epistemological, institutional and technical conditions for the production and circulation of truths' (Rose *Powers* 30). This is not a process of 'interpreting a particular ideology to discover the real objectives that lie behind it', but, as Rose suggests, of analysing arguments, strategies and objectives in terms of the specific and diverse rationalities that inform them (*Powers* 56).

SITUATING A STUDY OF COMMUNITY-BASED ARTS

While the parameters of the term 'community-based arts' are difficult to define with any precision, I use it to refer to a practical field of cultural practices, events, texts, policy agendas and cultural economies, which are made possible by, and operationalised within, programs of government. The boundaries of community-based arts are not fixed, and part of my aim is to trace the shifts in its trajectory and operation. In Australia, as subsequent chapters of this thesis explain, the 'community arts' sector was redefined by the Australia Council³ as 'community cultural development' in 1987. The Community Cultural Development (CCD) Board was dissolved in 2005 and then replaced by the Community Partnerships Program (CPP) in 2006. This has marked a return, by some agencies and arts advocates, to the language of

³ Australia's peak federal arts funding body.

'community arts'.⁴ At any rate, despite these changes in terminology, it is possible to offer a definition that describes the object of analysis in this thesis. Community-based arts is, as I suggested, a practical field. It has traditionally denoted cultural activities and processes which privilege *process* over product; emphasise the *participatory* nature of these processes; argue for their purportedly *transformative* effects; and which involve a subsequent tension surrounding the role of the *expert* within these processes. The term 'community arts', as I use it in this thesis, refers to the community arts sector as it is constituted by the Australia Council, and it is a discursive formation that I seek to historicise here. I use the alternative term 'community-based arts' to refer to a wider range of cultural activity – including multicultural arts – which does not necessarily define itself as 'community arts'. Interestingly, despite the definitional (and institutional) separation of multicultural arts and community arts today, the Australian multicultural arts movement historically emerged out of 'community arts' organisations and programs (Gibson *Uses* 112). The notion of 'community' thus continues to define the field of 'multicultural arts', making it relevant to the concerns of this study.

It is important to contextualise my study of community-based arts by considering accounts of the field that have been offered by others. There are a number of features that make this analysis distinctive. Firstly, there are few studies of the field that maintain a critical distance from it. The 'worthiness' associated with community-based arts has made it difficult to problematise.⁵ This is related to the fact that much writing on community-based cultural participation comes from arts advocates seeking to lobby policymakers for increased support. Secondly, many existing studies on community-based arts activity take the form of 'arts impact studies' which seek to document the field's instrumental 'outcomes', or to evaluate the success or otherwise of specific programs. Many of these studies are methodologically problematic. Moreover, they are premised on an assumption that cultural participation is

⁴ Footscray Community Arts Centre is an example of one such organisation that has, despite shifts in terminology at a federal policy level, retained the label 'community arts'. The report by Mulligan et al., *Creating Community: Celebrations, Arts and Wellbeing within and across Local Communities*, also argues that the term is still a useful one for describing the sector (10).

⁵ I discuss this moral authority associated with 'community' in more detail in Chapter One.

inherently empowering, with little critical interrogation of the *sorts* of cultural participation that are facilitated, and their relation to regimes of cultural value. There are a small number of critical studies of community-based arts that exist, and while they offer many valuable insights, they do not provide a sufficient reflection of the way in which current neoliberal policy agendas are shaping the field. Analyses of cultural policy trends that do consider the influence of these agendas focus on the policies themselves, resulting in an overemphasis on the ‘dangers’ that these economic rationales pose, with little analysis of their potentially more productive or positive effects.

Much of the literature discussing community-based arts is celebratory in nature and not concerned with problematising the sorts of assumptions which inform the practice (Adams and Goldbard *Community*; Carey and Sutton; Evans; FCAC *An Ear*; Kay; Keating; Kreml; Moynihan and Norton; Moriarty; Pippen; Pitts; Sonn, Drew and Kasat; *Visions*). While the works cited above are examples of the theorisation of community-based arts by (and for) ‘experts’, there has been a historical reluctance on the part of community artists to overdetermine the field through such theorisation. That has led to an absence of a critical language to describe these programs, and little acknowledgement of its discursive complexity. Many of the texts cited above are also nostalgic in character – describing the benefits of community-based arts in terms of a perceived ‘loss’ of community in the face of the uncertain effects of a globalised modernity (Adams and Goldbard ‘Community’). A similar argument can be made about evaluations of community-based arts which emphasise the role of these programs in fostering social capital (Matarasso; Williams *Creating*).⁶

There are a large number of studies which argue for the social ‘impact’ of the arts and culture, and which form part of an international move to develop a stronger evidential base for the arts and cultural sector. Many of these studies have a focus on community-based arts programs. A wide range of social impacts for community-based arts are posited, including the role of the arts in enhancing individual and community wellbeing, fostering social capital and

⁶ The ‘nostalgic’ character of this discourse on ‘community’ is examined in more detail in Chapter One.

social cohesion, generating educational outcomes and opportunities for self-development, and providing environmental and health benefits (Barraket and Kaiser; Guetzkow; Holden; Jowell; Landry et al. *Social*; Matarasso; McCarthy et al.; Mills and Brown; Mulligan et al.; Reeves; Schuster; Williams *Creating*; Williams *How*). In policy terms, it is on the basis of these impacts that community-based arts organisations assert legitimacy and make claims for funding from state and non-state agencies.

However, there is some debate over the credibility of a number of these studies. One of the critiques of this work is that the benefits claimed for the arts are too broad; researchers tend to oversimplify the causal link between arts and a range of impacts (Belfiore and Bennett *Social*; Galloway; Merli; Mulligan et al.). Belfiore and Bennett suggest that one reason for this is the fact that many of these studies come from arts advocates themselves, or researchers with an advocacy agenda, rather than from independent researchers with a critical distance from the arts and cultural sector (*Social* 6). In addition, a number of these studies are methodologically problematic. Paola Merli's critique of the influential study by Francois Matarasso, for example, highlights a number of methodological and design flaws. Merli argues that while the study demonstrates a correlation between the arts and its impacts, it does not establish causation. She also points out that even if the arts generated the benefits it claims to, there is rarely any consideration of the 'opportunity costs' associated with this – that is, that the positive impacts of arts and culture might be generated in other ways, or via other sorts of public programs, such as sports (Merli 112; Guetzkow; McCarthy et al.).

My research does not set out to prove or disprove these 'impacts', or to engage in a detailed way with this body of 'arts impact' studies. Instead, I am more concerned with thinking about the rationales that inform these studies. Much of the impetus for these works emerges from a desire to shift policy attention away from the economic outcomes of the arts, towards social outcomes. But this concern with demonstrating the 'outcomes' of the arts is itself a product of the sorts of instrumentalisation that I seek to problematise in this thesis. There are some who suggest that even this emphasis on social benefits instrumentalises art in a way which does not capture its more

complex, intangible, long-term or diffuse impacts (Mulligan et al.). However, I also try to avoid the position of researchers concerned to demonstrate this more *intrinsic* value of the arts (Holden; Jowell; McCarthy et al.; Mulligan et al.). As I will argue in more detail in Chapter Two, there is a need to think outside of confusing and circular debates about the 'value' of arts, in which the commentators cited above are themselves implicated.

There have been a small number of Australian studies that have taken a more critical stance towards community-based arts, and the policy context in which it operates. The most important study that resonates with the concerns and approach of this thesis is Gay Hawkins' work *From Nimbin to Mardi Gras: Constructing Community Arts*. This was the first piece of research to examine community arts as a governmental program; as 'the outcomes of a varied set of policy, political, aesthetic and ideological circumstances and calculations' (Bennett 'Foreword' ix). Hawkins discusses the community arts movement as it was constituted by the Community Arts Program (CAP) of the Australia Council, examining the Program's evolution over its first two decades.⁷ Her work follows earlier studies of the Australia Council – such as Tim Rowse's *Arguing the Arts* – which are similarly interested in this 'official' constitution of 'culture'. Both of these works examine the discursive ground informing state arts and cultural policy, particularly the elitist and homogenising effects of Australia Council funding categories such as 'excellence' and the 'nation'. Hawkins extends this critique by looking at how the CAP mobilised 'community' and 'culture' in a way which set out to undermine the assumptions of cultural homogeneity that had historically informed the Australia Council's funding categories.

Central to Hawkins' analysis is a tension she perceives between the discourse of 'correcting' cultural disadvantage, and that of an affirmation of cultural difference (the 'cultural rights' discourse). The CAP was premised on its opposition to 'high' or 'elite' arts and its contestation of 'the ideological and aesthetic privilege that art occupies within cultural policy' (Hawkins 10).

⁷ The CAP was established in 1973 and was redefined as the Community Cultural Development Board in 1987. Hawkins' study, published in 1993, begins with the formation of the CAP and follows its shifting institutional form over the next twenty years.

However, Hawkins suggests that while community arts was supposedly about ensuring 'access' and 'participation' in the arts, in its earliest incarnations this translated to participation in particular, privileged art forms. 'Access' was considered important only insofar as it spread the 'civilising benefits' of art. Hawkins questions whether this approach to democratising 'culture' really disrupted the categories of value it claimed to, or whether it simply reduced its constituencies 'to the status of the "culturally deprived" leaving the sanctity of art and its audiences intact?' (23).

Hawkins is careful, however, to avoid a narrative of community arts in which a recognition and affirmation of cultural diversity replaces this discourse of cultural lack. She suggests, rather, that different pressures have surfaced at different moments of community arts' history, resulting in an ongoing anxiety between this reformist, 'civilising' agenda and that of promoting 'cultural rights' (Hawkins 72). This latter framework found expression in the emergence of 'ethnic' or multicultural arts in the early 1980s. This set of cultural practices was not seen as a corrective one (that is, for ameliorating a perceived cultural 'lack'), but as an instrument for maintaining and expressing collective identity, asserting difference, and facilitating self-determination. Rather than exemplifying a form of cultural disadvantage then, migrant groups were seen as inherently 'cultural'.

Despite the usefulness of Hawkins' work, there are two limits to her study which make evident the relevance and importance of my project. Firstly, Hawkins is concerned with the emergence and discursive constitution of the Australia Council's Community Arts Program. However, her focus on the micro-politics of the Australia Council does not account for the various ways in which community-based arts are being respecified today. Hawkins' study is not concerned with the broader governmental rationalisations of 'community' into which community-based arts is being drawn, and which have resulted in a shift in the field of community-based arts from concerns with social reform to market- and audience-oriented frameworks. Since Hawkins' study was published, many community-based arts organisations have set out to redefine the artistic and aesthetic standards of their work,

largely in order to boost the sector's 'relevance'.⁸ These shifts have also been accompanied by renewed instrumentalisations of 'diversity' that make an updated study of community-based arts, which includes a more sustained examination of multicultural arts, increasingly pertinent.

Hawkins is concerned with how official discourses of arts funding and patronage define and delimit what community arts can conceivably be, and any critical potential it may therefore have. She expresses particular concern at the 'power of the Community Arts Program of the Australia Council to prescribe certain meanings for community arts' (xix). But by positing the problem in this way Hawkins is unable to consider the various other relations which are generated by, and circumscribe, community-based arts practice. Since the early 1990s there has been a diversification of the administrative field of community arts – including local, state, and federal government funding structures, associations and other networks of professional exchange that contribute to the ongoing redefinition of community-based arts.⁹ The rise of 'cultural planning' discourse has also created new possibilities (and limits) for community-based arts, and made the practice available to new rationales of economic and urban renewal.¹⁰ In this respect, systems of state arts patronage alone are no longer wholly responsible for constituting, and can no longer account for, community-based arts.

Finally, Hawkins' attempt to look at community arts as the product of an administrative field is accompanied by a concern with the representational politics of the practice; a concern that does not inform my work. This emphasis on the symbolic politics of community arts cannot adequately

⁸ I will examine these moves in Chapter Three and Five of this thesis.

⁹ For example, the Victorian-based Cultural Development Network, Community Arts Network of Western Australia, and Community Arts Network of South Australia, are all state-based organisations which provide advocacy, training, publications, networking opportunities and in some cases, program funding within the community-based arts sector.

¹⁰ As Deborah Stevenson points out the origins of cultural planning discourse are not straightforward. She traces it to a range of sources including the strategies of UK local councils in the 1980s, as well as the work of Landry and Bianchini – all of which culminate, as she wrote in 2004, in the 'now considerable evidence that cultural planning is deeply implicated in creating spaces of middle-class consumption and enclaves of exclusivity' ('Civic' 122).

address whether such cultural work actually fosters the sorts of broad-ranging material transformations it claims to, or indeed how these transformations might come about. In Hawkins' analysis of community arts projects, she is interested in whether the shifting policies of the Australia Council enable community arts to fulfil its resistive ethos, and contest dominant ideological categories of 'art', 'nation', and 'culture'. Her case studies are undertaken with a view to examining the sorts of (potentially 'radical') expressions of ethnic, class or gender difference that are made possible by arts policy. And her suggestion that community arts practice should seek to 'produce a more critical edge' in its texts makes her complicit in the sorts of 'social change' agendas she attempts to historicise (145).

Justin Lewis, a British cultural policy theorist, similarly argues that community arts has been unable to fulfil its political promise. While he does not offer the sort of sustained analysis that Hawkins does, he shares her concern with the potential of the field to disrupt existing hierarchies of artistic value, and how they might instead perpetuate these dominant systems of arts patronage. Hawkins' suggestion that community arts has been somewhat ineffectual in contesting these systems is expressed more forcefully by Lewis. He argues that:

[Community arts] has failed to make art and culture more accessible to most people. Far from challenging or storming the citadels, it has remained a harmless and irrelevant skirmishing on the sidelines. ... Perhaps most importantly, the community arts movement has let the elitist aesthetics of the dominant subsidised culture off the hook. Most community artists were opposed to this cultural elitism, and yet, by forming a separate entity, 'the community arts', they allowed themselves to be appropriated by it. (113)

Lewis is troubled by community arts' marginality.¹¹ And while I, like Hawkins and Lewis, examine the field's relationship with these hierarchies of value, I do not assess this in terms of the *failure* or *success* of community arts' political project. I am more interested in the practical ways that community-based arts organisations respond to the opportunities and problems presented

¹¹ See Chaney's similar suggestion that despite the apparent fragmentation of boundaries between 'low' and 'high' culture, public investment in 'high culture' institutions is stronger than ever (165).

by changing policies – specifically, by redefining or reorienting their work in strategic ways. Also, both Lewis’ and Hawkins’ accounts pre-date contemporary concerns with how this arts and cultural policy sphere might converge with, or contest, neoliberal policy agendas.

A more recent study by Mulligan et al., *Creating Community*, is in some ways a more comparable one to mine. This report by a Melbourne-based research team was commissioned by VicHealth¹² and examines both the policy frameworks that inform a range of community-based arts programs as well as their relation to the subjective experiences of program participants. It provides a useful critical analysis of the notion of ‘community’ and the way it is mobilised in contemporary ‘social inclusion’ programs. The authors’ suggestion that ‘community’ be reconceived as an ‘ongoing process of invention and self-reinvention’ is also one that resonates with the forms of ‘community’ I advocate in Chapter One (22). However, the report carries a normative and instrumental concern with what constitutes ‘good’ community arts practice, from which this thesis tries to distance itself. While the report brings a significant level of conceptual rigour to these discussions, in arguing for the ‘deep and enduring’ benefits of community arts, it relies on an unproblematised and commonsensical notion of the value of ‘culture’ (10). This emphasis is perhaps understandable given the institutional context in which the report was commissioned, and its focus on the relationship between community arts and ‘wellbeing’.

The report is also focused on localised community arts activity, particularly that which is facilitated by local government, because of the perceived opposition of such activity to the influence of increasingly *globalised* cultural forms. My emphasis is somewhat different. MAV and FCAC both produce culture that responds to this kind of ‘globalism’, but not because these globalising forces are seen as a ‘threat’ to local culture. Rather, the organisations are themselves redefined by these processes and take on an increasingly global orientation. This relates to my broader interest in

¹² VicHealth is a state government agency which funds health promotion programs, and has been influential in the promotion of ‘community wellbeing’ outcomes from arts activity.

examining how policy shifts have changed the conceptual terrain on which community-based arts organisations are situated, and the sorts of practical dilemmas that this poses.

Other scholars have written more generally on neoliberal mobilisations of 'culture', particularly in the British context where the discourses of 'creative industries' and 'creative economies' have had the most purchase in the last fifteen or so years (Galloway and Dunlop; Garnham; Hesmondhalgh 'Cultural'; McKinnie). However, none of these have included a sustained analysis of uses of community-based arts. Deborah Stevenson has offered a number of interesting critiques of these trends in Australian cultural policy, drawing attention to the ways in which economic agendas are marginalising social or 'cultural development' goals (*Agendas; Art; 'Civic'*). Many of her findings have been incorporated into my own analysis of these policy shifts. However, her analysis is focused primarily on the policies themselves with little emphasis on the ways in which these policies are translated and implemented by arts and cultural organisations, or on the sorts of practical encounters and forms of exchange that they might engender. She argues in relation to community arts, for example, that what was once a radical, oppositional discourse,

has been subverted through a conservative reworking of the idea of community that has resulted in community arts programs being little more than creative forms of social therapy or welfare for 'disadvantaged' groups. (*Art 56*)

So her analysis of these changes is a resolutely critical one.¹³ While this perspective is important for pointing out the challenges that neoliberal policy agendas present for the traditional ideals of community-based arts organisations, it offers no scope for thinking about the potentially productive and strategic ways in which organisations and artists might respond to these challenges. In regarding the relations of power which inform these processes as a totalising form of social control, Stevenson is unable to explain the

¹³ See also Christine Everingham for a similarly critical analysis of neoliberalism's redefinition of 'community' from a once radical discourse to a conservative one.

contingent and provisional ways in which programs of power are enacted by people and institutions.¹⁴

I also depart from previous studies of community-based arts because I offer an analysis of how (what is described in Australia as) 'multicultural arts' is drawn into the policy trends I have been describing. As I explain in subsequent chapters, these policies endow 'diversity' with specific forms of instrumental value. However, there has been little critical examination of these developments. Hawkins' work has shown how community arts historically provided a discursive space for multicultural arts to emerge, because 'community' was a useful category with which to group constituencies previously marginalised by the arts establishment. Her analysis of multicultural artists reflects the concerns of much of the critical writing in this area, which focuses largely on the unequal politics of arts patronage (Blonski; Grostal and Harrison; Kalantizis and Cope; Papastergiadis, Gunew and Blonski). These works consider the assumed consensus of values and cultural homogeneity dominating the Australia Council's funding categories. They discuss whether existing funding policies and frameworks of aesthetic evaluation are inclusive of migrant communities and artists, and whether these groups have the same sorts of access to resources and opportunities as 'mainstream' communities. There is also concern over multicultural arts' associations with 'amateurism' because of its marginalisation within the broader arts sector. And since most of these studies carry an implicit advocacy agenda, there are more generalised calls for the increased advocacy and support (read, 'funding') of the multicultural arts sector (MAV and VMC). All of these works assume the inherent 'value' of multicultural arts and its role in processes of social change and community empowerment. None of them examine how multicultural arts, like other forms of community-based arts, have been historically implicated in normative governmental agendas.

¹⁴ Stevenson argues, for example, that 'When the ways in which ideas of social inclusion fuse so readily with cultural planning are considered it becomes clear that the central assumptions are not about using the arts or cultural activity to achieve social justice, but are concerned with social control, place management, and the achievement of conservative forms of citizenship and community' ('Civic' 125).

RESEARCHING RELATIONS OF GOVERNMENTALITY: A METHODOLOGY

My analysis of the interactions of the various governmental rationalities that inform community-based arts is enriched by an empirical approach. Despite the emphasis of governmentality on both formal and informal mechanisms of power, most studies of governmentality privilege *policy* as a regulatory instrument. Thus, they do not consider how the ethos of neoliberal governance converges with other rationalities of power – in this case, of the arts organisation, the urban planner, the ethnic ‘community’, or the artist herself. My methodology allows for an examination of what community-based arts is being asked to do in the current policy context, as well as what is actually happening, and the points of dissonance or contestation that emerge here.

Because ‘government’ does not only encompass the specific administrative technologies collectively referred to as ‘policy’ but a whole range of diverse technical relations and practices, governmentality studies also offers a way of looking at the everyday effects of community-based arts. As Rose explains, it is often at a ‘vulgar, pragmatic, quotidian and minor level that one can see the languages and techniques being invented that will reshape understanding of the subjects and objects of government’ (*Powers* 31). In order to understand the relations between everyday, micro-practices and “‘government” in great buildings and capitals’, Rose employs Latour’s notion of ‘translation’ (*Powers* 48). As he explains:

In the dynamics of translation, alignments are forged between the objectives of authorities wishing to govern and the personal projects of those organisations, groups, and individuals who are the subjects of government. (*Powers* 48)

So it is through these irregular processes – rather than some coherent or totalising ‘ideological’ project – that relations are formed and made intelligible. Rose contends that these mechanisms of translation are crucial for enabling neoliberal political rationalities to govern ‘at a distance’ by shaping the conduct of populations ‘in ways conducive to particular conceptions of collective and individual well-being’ (*Powers* 49). This characterisation of governmental power acknowledges that, as Foucault argues,

These programmes don't take effect in the institutions in an integral manner; they are simplified, or some are chosen and not others; and things never work out as planned. ('Questions' 80)

It is this notion of 'translation' that informs my research with community-based arts organisations.

My study focuses on two institutions – Footscray Community Arts Centre and Multicultural Arts Victoria. These organisations were chosen because they embody relations between 'community', 'culture' and cultural value, in distinct ways. FCAC defines itself explicitly as a 'community arts' organisation, and was borne out of the community arts movements of the 1970s, when it was aimed primarily at bringing arts to the working classes. MAV's history is somewhat different. It began as an annual festival for local 'ethnic' communities in inner-city Melbourne and was incorporated as Victoria's peak organisation for multicultural arts in the early 1980s. While it has never defined itself as a 'community arts' organisation, it shares the sector's concern with 'grassroots' cultural activity, the democratisation of 'culture' and its broad political agenda of cultural pluralism and social change. I elaborate on the histories of both of these organisations, and the ways in which they have responded to policy shifts in the arts and cultural sector in different ways, in subsequent chapters.

My empirical research into the governmental strategies that have traversed the histories of these organisations involved a number of components. Firstly, I analysed relevant policy documents, as well as annual reports, program evaluations, grant applications and acquittals, organisational reviews and research, media reporting related to these organisations, and other archival material relating to their cultural programs. Secondly, I undertook semi-structured interviews with both current staff and ex-staff and board members of these organisations. Combined with an analysis of textual material, this enabled me to examine the various strategies that informed the cultural activity of these organisations – particularly how policy agendas are 'translated' via the personal and professional interests and priorities of organisational staff. This is done without reducing these interests to a form of straightforward governmental 'intention'. Rather, they are seen as techniques

of the self, or strategies of self-regulation that interrelate with 'official' forms of governance.

Interview subjects were asked about the history of the organisation they worked for, particularly the shifting aims and agendas that have informed its cultural activity. The interviews also sought to uncover how the organisations defined their constituencies and the terms on which this is justified; the discourses of value that informed their cultural programs; how the field has been defined and is being redefined; and the tensions that this gives rise to. The 'semi-structured' interview technique meant that while I had a clear research agenda, I was not confined to asking a prescribed set of questions. Rather, I could explore the relevant points while also adapting and expanding the interview to address other issues that arose. This flexible and informal approach also meant that the interests and agendas of both the researcher and interviewee could be acknowledged in the course of the interview (Devos 55).

An account of the 'effects' of these relations and interactions was enriched by participant-observation research that I conducted at events and programs facilitated by both FCAC and MAV. In the case of MAV, this research enabled me to make contact with a number of the organisation's 'multicultural artists'. I subsequently interviewed these artists to gain an understanding of the relationship between their artistic activity and the obligations and opportunities afforded by their involvement with MAV. I considered how their personal and artistic projects related to MAV's organisational strategies; or how institutional attempts to govern populations map onto personal strategies of (self-)governance. This approach made evident the ways in which community-based arts creates crucial sites of everyday encounter and subject formation, and the administrative, institutional context in which this takes place. While certain sorts of reformist or normative agendas may inform community-based arts practice, this can still result in material effects that may contest or contradict these governmental objectives, or which enable the self-realisation or affirmation of individual subjects.

This research into the actual contexts in which community-based arts programs are enacted is also important because it avoids generalised and

speculative theorising about the relations between 'culture' and difference. This has been a particular problem in discussions about multiculturalism, which I discuss in some detail in Chapters Five and Six. A number of Australian theorists advocate the approach of 'everyday multiculturalism' which, as Greg Noble suggests, refrains from either 'a romanticised view' of multicultural relations or from 'the abstract rhetoric of existing debates' (50; Ang et al. *Connecting; Wise; Wise and Velayutham*). Relations of cultural difference are conceived in more practical and affirmative terms, in ways which acknowledge everyday and quotidian strategies of cultural negotiation and recognition. I use this approach because it is aligned with the reconceptualisation of power and subjectivity offered by governmentality – where power does not emanate from a coherent or unified source but is implicated in a range of material processes and techniques.

Researching cultural institutions in this way raised some specific challenges. I was dependent on the cooperation of the organisations to access information such as individual contact details for interviews, as well as internal documentation and reviews. This required that I maintain a positive rapport with staff within the organisations, but it also created an obligation for me to justify my research in terms of its *usefulness* for the organisations. When I commenced discussions with MAV about my proposed research, for example, I was asked if I could videorecord interviews with staff to contribute to a documentary about the organisation's history. I did not agree to this request because of the possibility that this level of collaboration would undermine the critical distance I was attempting to maintain with the organisation. However, the request was indicative of the sorts of tensions that inevitably arose in the course of my research. It also raises the difficult question of what place a theoretical account of the governmentalisation of community-based arts has in the more mundane context of practical processes of organisational planning and decision-making. These are questions that were not within the scope of my thesis to consider in any depth, but which have informed my overall approach – to prioritise the material relations and effects enacted in

the research sites over symbolic ones, and to favour a reflective empiricism over speculative theorising.¹⁵

The politics of 'pragmatism' in cultural studies has been the subject of some dispute (Osborne 'Whoever'). Early debates about instrumentalism in cultural studies were caught up with discussions about the place of 'policy studies' in the discipline, and were in many ways the result of a renewed Foucauldian emphasis (Bennett 'Putting Policy'). However, as Tom O'Regan has suggested, these debates tended to resort to antagonising binaries between this 'policy' perspective (which was criticised for its overly instrumental and reformist tendencies) and work that was seen to have a 'critical' and radical political agenda ('(Mis)Taking').

In recent years, these polarising debates have given way to a more constructive way of talking about the politics and possibilities of cultural research. This is the question Ien Ang broaches in her article 'From Cultural Studies to Cultural Research'. She advocates a move away from 'the style of enquiry so common in cultural studies (theory-laden deconstructive criticism)' towards 'inventing modes of positive, reconstructive *intervention* (providing advice and recommendations, constructing alternative discourses)' ('From' 195).¹⁶ It is in this spirit of *reconstruction* that I undertake my analysis of community-based arts, and from which I derive the title of my thesis. Ang states that in some ways this approach involves a kind of acquiescence with political pressures that university humanities departments are increasingly being burdened with – to generate research that is justified in terms of its relevance to the norms and agendas of neoliberalism. However, Ang argues that cultural studies has always existed in a negotiated disciplinary space. In the disciplinary context of 'cultural research', she regards the field's relationship with instrumental agendas as a form of 'productive negotiation' rather than 'compromise' ('From' 192). Thus, Ang reads these pressures in terms of the opportunities they might present for generating research that is

¹⁵ See Osborne *Structure* 6, 7.

¹⁶ A number of Ang's own recent research projects exemplify this approach – see Ang et al. *Connecting Diversity*; Ang, Hawkins and Dabboussy.

grounded, and has both significant theoretical implications and practical relevance.

THESIS OUTLINE

This thesis is divided into three broad sections. The first two chapters are largely theoretical ones, which examine some trends in cultural policy – specifically, the uses of ‘community’ and ‘culture’ in neoliberal programs of government. These uses, and the practical tensions that consequently arise for policymakers and advocates, are related to conceptual dilemmas inherent in the notions of ‘community’ and ‘culture’ themselves. The second and third parts of my thesis examine the two case study organisations – FCAC and MAV, respectively – in light of these problems.

I begin this thesis by considering the uses of ‘community’. Specifically, I consider the mobilisation of ‘community’ in governmental programs and demonstrate the political ambivalence of the term. This has historically given the term a strategic malleability, and made it useful to a range of political agendas and interests. Significantly, I show that on both sides of politics the term comprises part of a nostalgic discourse; and it constructs a space of rhetorical and ethical opposition to the uncertain effects of globalisation and modernity. It functions both as a tool of moral reformation and as a means for governmental programs to activate individual ethical projects. Both of these functions are brought to bear on contemporary programs of neoliberalism, which work by way of a *responsibilisation* of ‘community’. The ambivalence of ‘community’ means that these processes entail both the morally prescriptive regulation of subjects, and the self-regulation of the subject by way of more affirmative, individual projects of ethical self-formation. This creates a tension, which might be circumvented by reconceiving ‘community’ as provisional and indeterminate forms of belonging. This reconception of ‘community’ has productive implications for the way we might rethink community-based arts, which will become clearer in my discussion of multicultural artists and their negotiated forms of belonging to their ethnic communities, in Chapter Six.

Chapter Two of the thesis frames community-based arts as an attempt to democratise aesthetics, and examines this in light of debates in cultural policy between the *intrinsic* and the *instrumental* uses of 'culture'. I suggest that in these debates it is the 'aesthetic ethos' that has historically defined 'art', which is privileged in conceptions of art *and* 'culture''s 'intrinsic' value. It is this position which informs current anxieties about the over-instrumentalisation of 'culture'. This has prompted calls for a re-assertion of 'culture''s aesthetic value, and led to a conflation of 'culture' and 'art' in the community-based arts field. However, attempts to argue for the arts and 'culture' by privileging their 'intrinsic' (aesthetic) function are inevitably drawn into judgments about cultural value. And what is rarely acknowledged in these debates about the value of culture is the fact that both its intrinsic and instrumental aspects are actually interrelated. The 'aesthetic ethos' is both the reason for culture's governmental use and the problematisation of this instrumentalisation. The aim of this argument is not to discredit the 'aesthetic' dimension of 'culture', but to problematise arguments which valorise the aesthetic as a more 'authentic' or valuable form of 'culture' than its instrumental ones. I conclude this chapter by suggesting a more useful way of thinking through debates about the uses of 'culture'; that is, by looking more closely at the relationship between cultural participation and cultural value. This can be achieved through a consideration of cultural capital and its relationship to the more pragmatic framework of 'cultural citizenship', and how this might be applied to recent developments in community-based arts.

Chapter Three considers the way in which the conceptual malleability of the term 'community' is exemplified in the practical problems that it presents for FCAC, and how this, in turn, has implications for FCAC's uses of 'culture'. My research briefly traces the history of the organisation in the 1980s and 1990s before looking more closely at the sorts of changes that it underwent between 2000 and 2008.¹⁷ During this period the Centre sought to improve its organisational positioning by emphasising 'quality' artistic outcomes over

¹⁷ Interviewees (past staff and board members of the organisation) were chosen on their capacity to reflect on FCAC's history in the context of these changes. Fieldwork was undertaken in 2008 and 2009 and my study does not take into account more recent developments that have taken place at the Centre under the leadership of its current director, Jennifer Barry.

other kinds of cultural practice. I argue that these changes are a partial response to federal-level policy changes that have taken place in the Australian community cultural development (CCD) sector in the last decade. However, they are also due to the problematic nature of the notion of 'community arts' itself. In particular, they are the result of the dilemmas raised by the expansive nature of the term 'community', and the resultant need to draw parameters around the cultural activity the organisation sees itself as responsible for. These dual imperatives – to engage with the 'local community', and to build an organisational profile within the arts sector – situate FCAC in a difficult conceptual and practical space. These changes have also had significant implications for the participatory politics of community-based arts, and I consider the role of the 'expert' or 'artsworker' in this context.

Chapter Four resumes the discussion of FCAC's positioning as an 'arts producer' but examines this in the context of emerging narratives of urban regeneration and the aestheticisation of 'community' that this involves. I look at the discourse of gentrification that is increasingly being used to describe (anticipated) changes to Melbourne's western suburbs. This discourse relies on a use of 'culture' which is crucial to constructing a desirable, class-based urbanity in the area. It is to this discourse that I suggest the cultural work of FCAC potentially contributes. I examine how FCAC's activity might be drawn into these strategies of urban regeneration – specifically, through the promotion of an aestheticised 'sense of community' that might be incorporated into middle-class lifestyle cultures. I argue, then, that such programs produce forms of symbolic and cultural capital that generate unequal benefits for the various 'communities' that such cultural activity seeks to engage.

Chapters Five and Six continue the discussion of debates about the instrumentalisation of the arts but in a different context – that of multicultural arts. Both chapters consider the implications of changes in arts and cultural policy for 'multiculturalism'. Here I am not concerned with multiculturalism as it constitutes an overarching theory about ethnic difference, or simply as a discrete set of cultural policies. Rather, I am

interested in the more specific and strategic ways in which multicultural discourse is put to work.

Chapter Five shows how current distinctions between economic and humanistic modes of valuing the arts are counter-productive, and attempts to find a way through these debates. It does so by considering MAV's conceptualisation of the subject of community-based arts as 'audience' – a move which is itself strongly informed by instrumental and economic rationales. Specifically, this has meant supporting artistic activity which has appeal for 'mainstream' audiences, or which might have a place in 'mainstream' arts venues. At MAV, this is largely justified by its conception of the 'mainstream' audience as itself a culturally diverse formation. However, criticisms of this approach regard it as a problematic acquiescence to economic agendas. Such criticisms can be related to concerns about official multiculturalism more generally – for example, the way in which this is articulated in Ghassan Hage's work. I argue that Hage's account of the politics of multicultural display is dependent on a binary between a White, potentially cosmopolitan subject and a passive, non-White object, which does not account for the cultural diversity of the Australian mainstream. It does not consider the complex practical agendas which inform instruments of multiculturalism and the way in which these might actually be welcomed by 'ethnic' audiences and participants of multicultural arts.

Chapter Six, 'The Multicultural Artist as Subject', continues my analysis of MAV and my examination of Hage's work on multiculturalism. Over the past couple of decades, MAV's role has increasingly become one of 'advocate' for the 'multicultural artist'. I focus on the construction of the multicultural artist by considering these artists as knowing, agential and self-regulatory subjects. By rethinking the subjectivity of the multicultural artist in terms of the theoretical framework of governmentality, I consider how a reciprocal relationship exists between these artists and MAV. Specifically, MAV provides these artists with the normative framework for their self-realisation and self-styling, which in turn help to further MAV's organisational goals. These practices of the self have a dual character – they are both aesthetic and ethical ones. And it is the instrumentalisation of their art which enables these

personal projects. This allows us a way around debates between the instrumental and the intrinsic value of the arts. Moreover, it offers an important model of intercultural exchange and engagement. I show how Hage's theorisation of these processes of exchange presents them as a form of either assimilation or subjugation of cultural difference. Instead, I suggest the need for a more positive understanding of difference, and MAV's role in negotiating these relations of difference as well as fostering productive forms of cultural capital for its artists.

My work attempts to articulate the relationship between institutionalised (and instrumentalised) cultural participation and notions of cultural value. While both FCAC and MAV take on a somewhat 'aspirational' orientation towards the arts and cultural establishment or 'mainstream', the implications of the organisations' cultural work are somewhat distinct. At FCAC, attempts to incorporate economic rationales for the arts and culture into their work have prompted an emphasis on 'quality' artwork, but this has not been accompanied by a proper consideration of the hierarchies of cultural capital in which this might be implicated, or of the sorts of exclusionary or differential advantage this might generate. MAV demonstrates a similar privileging of 'high quality' art which, while not examined in detail in this thesis, can be drawn into discourses of urban and economic regeneration in ways that are comparable to FCAC. However, there is a greater awareness at MAV of how this might connect to the 'audiences' of their work, and the potential for both their culturally diverse audiences and artists to benefit from the symbolic capital this cultural activity generates.

In some respects this also has to do with the enduring role of aesthetics in these cultural practices, and the problematic politics associated with its neoliberal rationalisations. Both MAV and FCAC have heeded calls for greater attention to the 'aesthetic vitality' of their cultural production (Hawkins 164). However, the 'aesthetic ethos', as I argue in Chapter Two, is inescapably tied up with judgments about cultural value and in this way has an exclusionary potential. This exclusionary tendency is now heightened by the sorts of economic value that are increasingly being attached to art and creativity. However, aesthetics can also have a productive function: as I

demonstrate in the last chapter, it can allow subjects to *participate* in these cultural economies, as well as enable positive modes of intercultural self-styling – both as audiences and artists. It is this duality of aesthetics that informs the problematic terrain of community-based arts. An understanding of this tension and its relation to cultural value provides a clearer set of terms for thinking about the possibilities of community-based arts, and the sorts of subjects it might produce.

1

THE USES OF COMMUNITY

A 2006 Scoping Study for the Australia Council notes that the community-based arts sector is stronger and more diverse than ever (Dunn 1). However, despite the resurgence of the field after a period of crisis a number of years ago,¹ there is anxiety over the extent to which it is being drawn into political agendas and programs that are out of keeping with its traditional aims. These contemporary incarnations of community-based arts are informed by specific uses of the term 'community' which have not been adequately mapped or theorised. This chapter aims to redress this gap by tracing the uses of 'community' as they relate to community-based arts. I argue that 'community' is so regularly deployed in governmental strategies because of its particular relationship with individual ethical projects. While this has led to some anxiety over how such processes of subjectification might amount to a form of social control, I suggest that we can rethink 'community' as provisional and potentially positive processes of belonging.

As I demonstrate in this chapter, 'community' is a nebulous and politically unstable concept, and malleable enough to be taken up in a range of different

¹ This 'crisis' refers to the dissolution of the Community Cultural Development Board of the Australia Council in 2005. The implications of this policy moment and perceived financial threat for community-based arts practice will be examined in Chapter Three.

political agendas. I will situate my analysis by noting the resurgence of the concept of 'community', and its particular significance to community-based arts practice. These approaches to 'community' characterise it as a remedy to a kind of societal 'loss', and as a locus of resistance both to the uncertain effects of globalisation, and to the perceived corrupting influence of modernity. This is a nostalgic discourse that is incorporated into the agendas of both sides of politics, and instrumentalised in a range of institutions, from government initiatives, private organisations and social movements (Besch and Minson 52). The reason for this, as I will show, is that 'community' serves as 'an affective and ethical field' (Rose 'Community' 7). It is used to mark out an ethical space outside of the state, effacing the relations of power between 'community' and government. The effect of this is to valorise 'community' as a site of emotional investments and moral reformation. Moreover, 'community' functions as a tool by activating individual ethical projects, particularly by mobilising the idea of 'citizenship'.

I go on to argue that these uses of community can best be understood through the theoretical framework of 'governmentality'. In this context, 'community' is a 'surface' by which government acts on the social, and it is also imbricated in a relationship between government, 'culture' and the subject which is crucial for understanding community-based arts in the context of neoliberal social policy. This relationship – between government, 'community' and 'culture' – is central to discourses of social capital and social inclusion. It involves the *responsibilisation* of community and the activation of the agency of the subject, ultimately implicating the individual citizen as a player in government. This self-regulation of the subject is made possible by projects of individual, ethical self-formation. However, in harnessing these processes of self-formation prevailing programs of 'community' take on a moral character. This creates a tension between the moral and ethical imperatives of these instruments of self-regulation, and leads to an anxiety regarding whether such projects should be read as a form of social control, or whether they might enable productive forms of self-realisation and self-styling. I conclude by arguing that in order to think productively through these debates and dilemmas, we should rethink 'community' as a provisional and open-ended process of belonging. By seeing it as an indeterminate space we can think

about how it might be used for affirmative ethical projects and narratives of self-fashioning.

THE UNCERTAIN POWER OF 'COMMUNITY'

While the notion of 'community' appears to be an outmoded one, it continues to animate contemporary discussions about culture and policy in complex ways. In the context of cultural studies, for example, it is argued that 'community' is losing currency as processes of identity formation and belonging are increasingly enabled by popular and everyday cultures. 'Community' is perceived 'either as a relic of New-Left struggles or a piece of populist nostalgia', both of which have 'become hopelessly dated in a world of apparently free-floating identities' (Ashbolt 137). But debates about 'community', and the uses to which this concept is put, remain significant. As Nikolas Rose argues, while 'community' is apparently in crisis, 'the idea of community' – primarily, as a cure for social ills – is stronger than ever (*Powers* 93). This is in no small part due to the rhetorical power of the term. Joe Kelleher explains that

[C]ommunity functions not as a set of practices or shared knowledges, not even really as an idea; it functions rather as a quasi-theatrical 'appearing', something that looms behind the dialogue, a rather mysterious 'power' that is already amongst us and summoning us. (178)

Kelleher speaks specifically here of the deployment of 'community' in the Third Way politics of the former British New Labour government. However, this description – of the 'mysterious power' of community – is a pertinent one for understanding how 'community' functions in a broader political context. In fact, as I will go on to demonstrate, the political ambivalence and malleability of the term enables its mobilisation for a range of agendas and calculations.

My intent in this chapter is to identify the ways in which notions of 'community' are dispersed and instrumentalised across a range of governmental rationales; and this will enable an understanding of how these rationales inform community-based arts practice. I will not provide a

comprehensive history of the notion of 'community'² but trace the uses of this concept as they relate to community-based arts. Only a few scholars have written explicitly on the role of the notion of 'community' in community-based arts. As Tony Bennett notes, much of what has been written about community-based arts 'has shown scant appreciation of the discursive minefields' which inform this field, and have tended to favour 'simple commonsense definitions which can be operationalised easily for policy purposes' ('Foreword' ix). Gay Hawkins' *From Nimbin to Mardi Gras* is significant here, as it provides a useful history of the term as it has been deployed in the Australian community arts sector since the 1960s. Hawkins describes how community arts emerged out of a broader resurgence of the idea of 'community' in the 1960s and 1970s, whereby 'community' was remade into a descriptor which subsumed a whole host of categories, including health, welfare, education and the arts. In Australia, community arts emerged from a broader set of changes that were happening in social policy at this time (Hawkins 31). In this context 'community' was used to refer to a range of 'marginal' groups, including ethnic communities, women, indigenous communities, and so on. It was the very ambiguity of the term, and its multiple uses and effects, that made the field conceivable, and which enabled a diverse set of practices to be collectively grouped under the rubric 'community arts'.

'Community' enabled a leftist politics through its signification of marginality, and via its claim to the 'local'. Hawkins states that the term 'community', as it was used by Whitlam's Labor government, implied a 'generalised concept of disadvantage' (32). For the Australia Council's Community Arts Program (CAP), which was established in 1973,³ community 'was an extremely convenient category in which to group all those left out in the cold by the restricted and elitist definitions of value constituted by the discourse of excellence' (Hawkins 13). As well as signifying the collective identity of these

² See Delanty for a more comprehensive overview of the term and its various theoretical inflections.

³ The CAP was established in 1973 as the Community Arts Committee (Hawkins xviii). In 1977 it became known as the Community Arts Board (CAB) and in 1987 changed form again to become the Community Cultural Development Committee and finally the Community Cultural Development Board.

diverse constituencies, the term enabled community arts to delineate and distinguish itself from the categories of both 'high' and 'mass' culture (Hawkins xix). 'Community' provided a space from which these constituencies could assert a political challenge to the arts establishment, where cultural disadvantage could be reformed, and where various forms of difference could be expressed and affirmed (Hawkins 26).

Hawkins' own allegiances are apparent here – her history of community arts seems to advocate a return to this 'radical potential' in order to disrupt the dominant discourses of cultural value espoused by the arts establishment. However, what I focus on is how this discourse of 'community' is mobilised politically and used to remedy a perceived societal decline or *loss*. The sort of 'loss' envisaged here relates to two aspects of modern life – the loss of 'authentic' local, communal bonds suffered as a result of 'globalisation', and the decline caused by the prevalence of 'mass' (and other kinds of 'undesirable') culture.

The crux of 'community's' oppositional power is widely seen to lie in its connection to the 'local'. In community arts, 'community' was seen to constitute an important site of resistance within discourses of the 'nation', particularly as these were articulated in the arts policies of the Australia Council. These policies privileged arts that expressed a specific kind of pre-conceived national identity, and 'community' asserted the place of the 'local' in the 'national', putting pressure on these national discourses and thereby facilitating more democratic cultural production (Hawkins 14). As Hawkins argues, 'A fundamental antagonism between community and Art becomes the rallying point for a variety of claims about the progressive impact of community arts' (18). 'Community' was synonymous with 'authenticity', and it is this version of community that becomes such an important discursive tool for the political movements of the left. It is this alignment of community with 'the people', that Hawkins argues gave community an 'inherently oppositional' character (21).

Several decades later, the power of this version of 'community' lies in its role as a locus of resistance to forces of globalisation (Adams and Goldbard

'Community'; Mulligan et al.; Mulligan and Smith 'Stepping'). Mulligan and Smith, for example, examine how the effects of 'accelerating global change' impact communities, and how community arts might help people negotiate these impacts ('Stepping' 43). They argue that more complex understandings of community are becoming necessary, 'at a time when all social life – from the local to the global – is being constantly reconstituted by far-reaching "global" changes' ('Stepping' 45).⁴ Such arguments are not always developed in detail. For Mulligan and Smith, for example, the knowledge that communities are being eroded by global flows of people and commodities, and by the transnational orientation of cities and nation states, is a sort of commonsense. The precise character and effects of these global processes are not articulated. Rather, as Kelleher points out in relation to the Blair government's deployment of the term, 'community' itself emerges as a discursive effect 'of ongoing processes of dissolution and disorientation linked to "globalisation"' (178). In this sense, 'community' is a 'diagnosis of globalisation', which becomes a strategy for 'managing some of globalisation's more pernicious effects' (Kelleher 178). And there is a certain circularity at work here. The 'global' is believed to compromise the authentic communal bonds of the 'local' – and 'community' is prescribed as the solution.

This tautology – whereby a lack of 'community' is regarded as a symptom of modernity, and 'community' is also identified as the solution – is connected to arguments about the negative effects of 'mass' culture. Hawkins summarises this well:

Community arts was a new term for an essentialist popular creativity and a panacea for the dangerous effects of mass culture. It was both something people had always done and something people needed to take up in order to be saved from the manipulation and mediocrity of mass culture. (73)

As Hawkins rightly notes, this narrative is informed by communitarian thinking, where community becomes 'a nostalgic invocation of an idealised

⁴ A more affirmative reading of the effects of the 'global' on the 'local' can be found in the characterisation of the global city as a 'transnational actor' (Delanty 58). As Delanty suggests, in this perspective, 'To the extent to which cities can connect with other cities and not depend on national governments, the global society can offer local communities many possibilities' (63). See also Castells; Sassen.

past ... [and] the central point of social identity and organisation' (19). Consequently, it is also 'an antidote to contemporary alienation' (Hawkins 18). Emanating primarily from the work of US writers such as Amitai Etzioni and Robert Putnam, communitarianism perceives contemporary life to be characterised by a loss of tradition and intimacy. John Frow points out that 'community', here, is regarded as something closer to 'the pre-industrial village rather than the abstract and highly mediated cultural spaces of the late twentieth century' (59). It is cast as the civic foundation of the polity, and becomes a site for encouraging participation, loyalty, solidarity and commitment (Delanty 73).

While this narrative about society's decline has been around for some time it is most significantly espoused in the relatively recent academic and policy literature on social capital.⁵ The use of the term 'social capital' in contemporary discussions in social policy and community development can largely be attributed to the influence of the work of Robert Putnam.⁶ Putnam's most influential exposition on social capital, *Bowling Alone*, was written in 1995. This study documents declining rates of political participation, associational membership, charity, volunteering and informal social networks in the last several decades of contemporary US society. He argues that this results in a decline in social capital, which he defines as 'trust, norms, and networks, that can improve the efficiency of society by facilitating coordinated actions' (*Making* 169). Eva Cox, who is an Australian exponent of social capital, and strongly influenced by Putnam's work, describes the sense of pervasive social malaise attending this decline:

The constant news of warring groups and the break-up of societies, of the way we seem to move from optimism to pessimism. There are too many of us

⁵ Field describes the 'explosion' of the discourse of social capital over the last two decades as an explanatory framework for describing contemporary life (4). It is used, for example, by international agencies such as the World Bank, in their policies on economic development. It is also widely used in Australian domestic policy instruments, evident in a number of research reports and studies undertaken on the concept by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (Australian Bureau of Statistics; Biddle et al.; Edwards).

⁶ The term, as it is used here, is distinct from Bourdieu's definition of the term. For Bourdieu, the term is evaluated negatively – it describes the interpersonal networks and relations which *perpetuate* existing class hierarchies and inequalities, rather than being a mechanism for *improving* the position of marginal groups.

who feel pessimistic about the future, who feel society is gradually coming apart at the seams. The idea of the social is losing ground to the concepts of competition, and the money markets are replacing governments. (*Truly* 9)

So there is a connection made between a decline in social capital and a decrease in economic prosperity, health and happiness. However, the basis for this pessimism is questionable. Cox acknowledges that while community surveys demonstrate widespread feelings of unease or dissatisfaction, 'quality of life' and social wellbeing indicators seem to be improving – 'school retention rates have risen, more people have paid jobs than twenty years ago, our houses have become bigger and our households smaller. ... We live longer and are generally healthier' ('Diversity' 73).⁷ This discrepancy is significant – the 'decline', then, is a perceived one.

The discourse of social capital blames social 'decline' on lifestyle or 'cultural' factors, and contains a distinctly moralising critique of modernity. This is evident in Cox's description of the role of contemporary lifestyles in eroding meaningful communal bonds:

We rarely have time to walk, often avoid public transport, shop hurriedly and use technology to provide home-based entertainment and work. We need to make time for social interactions and the development of trust relationships. What once happened by accident needs to be recognised and encouraged. (*Truly* 17)

Putnam writes along similar lines, although he pins the blame more squarely on the 'anti-civic' effects of television.⁸ Of course, this perceived association between television and passive, individualist values is not a new one.⁹ What is important here is that in implying the moral disintegration caused by certain types of 'culture', Putnam's argument about social capital is a

⁷ Field makes a similar case, arguing that while there may be a decline in family-based social capital in the US, there is also evidence to show that friendship ties and other sorts of interpersonal bonds are becoming stronger (111).

⁸ He also argues that social decline is due to 'generational change' (see Field 35). However, Putnam's evidence here is unconvincing, and he does not state what forms the basis of the shifting attitudes and practices of different generations (see Szreter).

⁹ Field presents a strong case against Putnam's evidence for the negative effects of television (101). He suggests that certain technologies – such as digital and online technologies – seem to have a correlative relationship with civic engagement, and that this ultimately has more to do with factors such as education and class, rather than being a direct result of the inherent character of specific forms of media (104).

normative one. This can be traced to understandings of 'community' that emerge from communitarianism – where moral order is enforced and taught through 'the rituals and traditions in the everyday life of communities' (Rose 'Community' 9).¹⁰

An important aspect of the circularity of 'community' is that it forms part of both a nostalgic and a utopian discourse, and this accounts for the political instability and malleability of the term. This also relates to a confusion between the descriptive and prescriptive aspects of 'community'.

'Community' is a contested term because there is tension between what it is and 'what it should be or what it should do' (Vasta 108). Hawkins notes how this tension is central to how the term is used in community arts – 'It is a term that is both deeply nostalgic in its invocations of harmony and integration and profoundly political in its call to collective action and alliances' (167).

Both left and neoliberal political discourses are united in their use of community as a remedy for the decline of modern society. Where 'community' is regarded as lost and in need of being recuperated, it forms part of a conservative critique of modernity. Left discourses (which may still be similarly nostalgic for certain aspects of community) are more utopian in character; 'community' is posited as 'an ideal to be achieved, rather than simply being recovered from the past' (Delanty 20). Raymond Williams' *Culture and Society*, for example, 'looked to a modern kind of community based on solidarity and equality as opposed to traditional rural values' (Delanty 40). However, these simply constitute different inflections of a normative conception of community in which, as I argued above, 'community' implies 'authenticity'.

Importantly, 'community' marks out a normative and 'ethical' space outside of the state and, seemingly, outside of politics (Yúdice 332). Again, this is evident in Hawkins' description of community arts – where community 'is

¹⁰ There are different versions of this communitarian argument – for example, Richard Sennett argues that social decline is not to be attributed simply to individualism and mass culture, but more specifically, to capitalism and the changing nature of work (*Craftsman*; Delanty 86). Thus, in his formulation, 'community' itself is not the solution to social decline. These variations in understandings of community's role in addressing social decline inflects cultural and social policies in different ways, as is discussed throughout this chapter.

something to be constructed as a weapon against the state, as the first step in winning back control' (20). This is the normative power of 'community' – it is a space of belonging, identity formation and emotional investment. As Rose describes,

Community ... names a transactional reality: It consists of multiple objectifications formed at the unstable and uncomfortable intersections between politics and that which should and must remain beyond its reach. ('Community' 7)

'Community' is seen as a search for belonging – and this includes spatialised forms of belonging (as evident in contemporary writing on urban communities),¹¹ as well as various types of mediated or interest-based communities negotiating new relations of proximity and distance. What these various forms of community entail is an emphasis on 'the immediacy of direct relationships', which are seen to lie outside of 'society' or, at least, the state (Delanty 9). Delanty traces how, historically, as the 'state' and society have become aligned, the notion of community has evolved to encompass the more 'social', or experiential, aspect of society, and to counter the impersonal relationships implied by the state (11). In this way, the term 'community' functions as a critique of the state – at the same time as it effaces the power relations implied by the state.

What I want to consider is how this conceptualisation of 'community' – as an ethical tool apparently outside the state – enables it to become the 'surface' by which government *acts* on the social. Here I draw from Bennett's discussion of the cultural turn in sociology and the way in which the cultural and social realms are seen to be permeable and interchangeable ('Acting' 18). As he describes it,

The social ... is denied any existence independently of the cultural forms in which it is constituted, whereas the action of culture consists in the role it plays in structuring the discursive ground on which social interaction takes place. ('Acting' 19)

The cultural is brought 'into the fabric of the social' and this has historically enabled government to act, for example, on classed individuals *via* culture

¹¹ See, for example, Abu-Lughod; Castells; Sassen.

(‘Acting’ 19). What Bennett shows us, and what is important for our discussion here, is how, more recently, ‘community’ has formed a crucial coordinate in these relations between culture, government and the social. ‘Community’ in its everyday and policy usages, is about ‘belonging’, and this occurs through the shared systems of meaning that might collectively be referred to as ‘culture’. The most obvious example of this is the ‘ethnic community’ which animates policy discussions about cultural difference. A straightforward and sometimes essentialising relationship between ‘community’ and ‘culture’ is assumed, reifying these categories and emphasising ‘tradition’ (Dreher 93). In these discussions, ‘community’ and ‘culture’ almost become synonymous, and both encompass ‘the social’.

This has also been described by Rose as ‘the death of the social’ – where the social is reconstituted as ‘culture’, and becomes crucial for (re)-establishing ‘community’ and, ultimately, fixing the ‘social’ (‘Death’).¹² Again, there is a confusing circularity which underpins the relationship between these concepts, where each seems to be interchangeable with the other. This is the dubious logic which informs Putnam’s indictment of certain forms of culture for a deterioration in communal bonds. It is also the justification for a raft of instrumentalisations of ‘culture’ for ‘social’ ends – for example, the use of cultural planning and cultural development to achieve social inclusion and local citizenship (Stevenson ‘Civic’), as well as the diverse ‘social’ goals of community-based arts and urban regeneration programs.¹³ So it is not only ‘community’, but a specific relationship between ‘community’ and ‘culture’ which is prescribed as the solution to the sorts of social decline we have discussed above.

In summary, then, ‘community’ functions by apparently existing outside of the state – and it is from this position that it takes on a normative power. Importantly, as Bennett reminds us, the loose and indeterminate relations

¹² See also Amin’s ‘Local’ for his account of how the social has been redefined in terms of ‘community’.

¹³ Much community-based arts activity focuses on determinants such as mental health and wellbeing, which include ‘increased social inclusion’ ‘freedom from discrimination and violence’ and ‘increased access to economic resources’ (Mulligan et al. 8).

between 'community', 'culture' and the social that are set up here mean that these goals are not necessarily underpinned by a 'single unifying purpose' or political agenda ('Acting' 29). 'Community' does not have a definitive political character but can only be understood in its specific uses. There are two key aspects of its use that are relevant here, and which will be discussed further in the next section – as an (ideally) self-managing collectivity, and as a site of individual identity-formation. Both of these aspects of 'community' have been critiqued for their broader role within neoliberal political agendas, and these criticisms will also be examined in the following section of this chapter.

'COMMUNITY' AND GOVERNMENTALITY

The relationship between 'community' and 'government' can most usefully be understood by way of the theoretical framework of governmentality. This set of theoretical precepts is informed by Foucault's work on 'government' and argues that conventional ways of analysing politics, where the state is imagined as a centralised body authorising all other forms of official and 'legitimate' authority, are no longer adequate. This framework challenges existing explanations of governmental power which tend to focus on the state – both in terms of its 'intrinsic power' and its 'unlimited force of expansion in relation to the object-target, civil society' (Foucault *Biopolitics* 187). By contrast, the governmentality literature conceives of 'government' as a highly dispersed set of processes that are used to shape and manage the conduct of populations (Burchell, Gordon and Miller; Barry, Osborne and Rose; Bratich, Packer and McCarthy *Foucault*). Government, here, depends on 'the invention, contestation, operationalisation and transformation of more or less rationalised schemes, programs, techniques and devices' (Rose *Powers* 3). These 'rationalities of power' may be formalised (say, in policy documents) or not – they may, for example, consist of informal schemes that are manifested in the practices of community artswriters or in the actions of arts project participants.

Thus, 'government' does not refer only to the management of populations via explicit codification and legislation, but encompasses a whole range of

technical relations, instruments and programs that situate the self as a subject of regulatory action. It reformulates the relationship between governor and governed, so that the key activity of government becomes the 'conduct of conduct', or programs of self-regulation (Bratich, Packer and McCarthy 'Governing' 4; Gordon 2). This kind of self-management covers a range of regulatory norms and frameworks. As Colin Gordon points out,

Government as an activity could concern the relation between self and self, private interpersonal relations involving some form of control or guidance, relations within social institutions and communities and, finally, relations concerned with the exercise of political sovereignty. (2-3)

Later chapters of this thesis will consider some of these other modes and relationships of self-government. For now I focus on how 'community' can be understood as a technique of government, and some of the critiques that have been directed at this governmental practice.

In the discussion above, we observed how the political power of 'community' lies in its positioning as an ethical space outside of the state, and as an antidote to state power. However, the perspective of governmentality reveals how 'community' is in fact strongly implicated in processes of governance. These uses of community constitute what has frequently been described as 'governing at a distance', particularly when they take place outside of the direct injunctions of 'policy', and assume the form of 'commonsense' understandings about interpersonal norms and networks of belonging (Bratich, Packer and McCarthy 'Governing' 8). As Gordon points out, governmentality reveals the 'distinct *modes of pluralisation* of modern government which contribute towards the relativisation of the notional boundary line between state and society' (36). Foucault reminds us that this distinction between the state and civil society is not a 'historical universal' but 'a form of schematisation peculiar to a particular technology of government' (*Biopolitics* 319).

In dissolving the boundary between the state and what lies outside it, governmentality shows how 'community' becomes a 'tool' or mechanism in a range of governing practices. This mobilisation of community forms part of a

broader mode of *indirect* government which, as Gordon points out, also includes:

the renewed mobilisation of the voluntary sector in social services; the function accorded to representative organisations of capital and labour as 'social partners' engaged in tripartite dialogue with the state, bodies whose function as ... governing institutions rests on their positioning exterior to the state apparatus. (36)

'Community' is specified and operationalised via an array of such strategies. In this way, governmentality provides us with a set of precepts for mapping the relations of power that are inscribed in community-based arts practice.

Foucault, and others who are informed by his work, have written that this analytical framework is an optimistic one. As Gordon clarifies, Foucault's thought consists of two strands of optimism: the first is that governing becomes conditional on its 'rationality' – which means it must 'be credible to the governed as well as the governing', and is dependent on 'the manner in which governed individuals are willing to exist as subjects' (48). Gordon describes this as a kind of 'moral judo' or 'agonism':

[T]o the extent that the governed are engaged, in their individuality, by the propositions and provisions of government, government makes its own rationality intimately their affair: politics becomes, in a new sense, answerable to ethics. (48)

This relates to the second strand of optimism in Foucault's work on governmentality – which is that the very multiplicity of the programs and techniques deployed to govern mean that they are 'more contingent, recent and modifiable than we think' (Gordon 48). The need for government to continually make itself accountable to the governed requires the constant pluralisation and transformation of processes of government, and makes these formations unstable ones. This optimistic reading of governmentality informs my own analysis of the relations between 'community' and government.

Much writing on these relations is undertaken in the context of analyses of neoliberalism. Critiques of the programs, mechanisms and relations of power encompassed by neoliberalism started to emerge in the 1980s in response to

the New Right governments in the UK and US and their disassembly of the welfare state and its centralised model of regulation (Hay 165). For Foucault, liberalism is defined by a 'self-limitation of governmental reason'; it is informed less by 'the imperative of freedom' than the 'management and organisation of the conditions in which one can be free' (*Biopolitics* 20, 64). This is the agonistic relationship referred to earlier – 'between the production of freedom and that which in the production of freedom risks limiting and destroying it' (*Biopolitics* 64). Thus, liberalism defines 'domains in which one can intervene and domains in which one cannot intervene' (*Biopolitics* 133). Neo- or advanced liberalism, however, intervenes in everything – the question, Foucault argues, is of 'how you touch them. The problem is the way of doing things, the problem, if you like, of governmental style' (*Biopolitics* 133). Neoliberalism, then, becomes a kind of active or 'positive' liberalism (*Biopolitics* 133). It does not represent the withdrawal of the state but 'a reconfiguration of the relations between State and society' (Coffey 207).

The other significant transformation in neoliberalism is the primacy attributed to market relations. The principle of *laissez-faire* is abandoned in favour of the free market becoming an '*organising and regulating principle* of the state. ... In other words, a state under the supervision of the market rather than a market supervised by the state' (*Biopolitics* 116). Certainly, most critiques of neoliberalism take the form of a critique of the privileged place of market relations (Gilbert). However, Foucault argues that the singularity of neoliberalism lies in the centrality of enterprise, so critiques of neoliberalism should not be directed at mass consumption and exchange, but more specifically at the enterprise society (*Biopolitics* 149). The significance of this perspective is that it directs attention to the formation of a specific kind of citizen-subject who is in fact a crucial 'player and partner' in neoliberal governance (Gordon 36). Self-government becomes a crucial component of political rationality. For Rose, neoliberal strategies function by encouraging and producing a new sense of individual responsibility, and this takes place along with new rationalisations of the market, the community and the individual, so that the relation between government and subjectivity is reconceived primarily 'along economic lines' (*Powers* 141). So the political legitimacy of these citizen-subjects is specifically derived from their

positioning within an enterprise society; the ideal subject of neoliberalism 'is not the man of exchange or man the consumer; he is the man of enterprise and production' (*Biopolitics* 147). This is an extension of Foucault's theory of the 'care of the self' but in a more specific sense; it involves, as Gordon points out, becoming an entrepreneur of oneself, and continuously preserving and maximising 'one's own human capital' through the 'managerialisation of personal identity and personal relations' (44).

Interestingly, there is a sense in which Foucault's description of this framework remains incomplete – at least for the analytical task at hand. The notion of the subject as an 'entrepreneur of oneself', or his theory of *homo oeconomicus*, situates the subject at the interface between individual and governmental power so that 'power gets a hold on him to the extent, and only to the extent that he is a *homo oeconomicus*' (*Biopolitics* 226). Foucault draws attention to the problematic place of the economic within this realm; he describes 'civil society' as 'a spontaneous synthesis within which the economic bond finds its place, but which this same economic bond continually threatens' (*Biopolitics* 303). The economic both arises from and 'in a way strengthens' the bonds of civil society, at the same time as it 'undoes it' – 'by picking out the egoist interest of individuals, emphasising it, and making it more incisive' (*Biopolitics* 302). There is a tension then, surrounding the figure of the *homo oeconomicus* which threatens to overwhelm this grid of power. The subjectification that takes place through the norms of the enterprise society is not a totalising one but an unstable process, and is also tied up with other norms and modes of (self)government. However, while it is via the surface of the economic that government acts on the individual 'this does not mean that every individual, every subject is an economic man' (*Biopolitics* 253). Foucault is unclear, then, about 'the validity and applicability of this grid of *homo-oeconomicus*' to non-economic domains of life (*Biopolitics* 268). In fact, this raises the question of how non-economic domains can be delineated, what forms the citizen-subject might take in these domains and the sorts of interplay with governmental power that arise here. The figure of the neoliberal citizen as an 'entrepreneur of the self' is a significant one when we consider the practices of self-formation that take place via

community-based cultural activity. It is a figure to which I return in the concluding chapters of this thesis.

RESPONSIBILISING 'COMMUNITY', ACTIVATING THE CITIZEN

A number of writers have demonstrated how neoliberalism reframes the relationship between 'community' and government in a particular way, most significantly through the *responsibilisation* of 'community' (Amin 'Ethnicity'; Amin 'Local'; Cruikshank; O'Malley; Rose 'Community'; Rose *Powers*). This entails a particular paradox – while 'community' describes a space of spontaneous, emotional affiliations, these are simultaneously the focus of various programs and narratives of expertise. In the second half of the twentieth century, community has become the object and tool of an array of governmental programs. Communal bonds and sociability are continually worked on by 'educators, campaigns, activists, [and] manipulators of symbols, narratives and identifications' (Rose *Powers* 177). 'Community' has been made the object of diverse positive knowledges and the truth claims of experts (Rose *Powers* 190). Devices emanating from the social sciences, such as market research surveys, for example, map out these spaces to make them usable for authorities. And emotional and moral investments entailed in 'community' are tied up in strategies of governmental expertise that aim to organise groups so that they become self-governing and self-managing collectivities (Bennett 'Acting' 28).

The figure of the citizen is a crucial component of this self-governing community; and it is the agency of the citizen, and its relation with 'civil society', that becomes the reality on which neoliberal arts of governing are exercised. In this sense, the role of the citizen relates to what can be described as 'a new game of power: the community-civility game' (Rose 'Community' 5). Eva Cox is exemplary in her description of this ideal citizen: 'Civil societies are also civic societies, that is, we as citizens must take some responsibility for changing what we do not like' (*Truly* 8). So the governmentalisation of 'community' is aligned with the emergence of civil society as a significant site of political investment and struggle. Responsibility for addressing society's

needs is moved to individuals, firms, organisations, parents, schools and hospitals.

Significantly, the active role of the community/citizen actually involves, as Rose points out, 'a double of autonomisation and responsabilisation' ('Community' 6). The political ambivalence of 'community' can be traced to the dual character of the citizen, as both 'entitled' and 'dutiful' (Delanty 90). That is, the citizen entails both rights and obligations. As Barbalet notes,

For the present-day left, citizenship connotes responsible cooperation and radical democracy; for the present-day right, it connotes individual responsibility for economic circumstance and social welfare. Each of these positions draws upon a key aspect of citizenship as community. (95)

There is concern over how power operates at this interface between 'community' and the citizen and the way that citizenship seems to constitute a kind of false empowerment where responsibilities are emphasised over rights, and the citizen is remade with 'more active, consumerist modes of relationship to public services' (Clarke and Newman 59).¹⁴

Deborah Stevenson makes a similar observation in her analysis of contemporary cultural planning programs, and how 'the ideological assumptions of the left regarding citizenship interact with, and frequently legitimate, those of the right' ('Civic' 120). For Stevenson, this raises the worrying question of 'whether the discourses of the left are in effect being mobilised in support of the marginal or to validate regressive social goals' ('Civic' 122; Belfiore). She regards this strategy as an appropriation of the language and policies of the left by the political programs of the right. Anxieties of this sort are particularly evident in critiques of the British New Labour party, whose politics of conduct involved reconstructing citizens 'as moral subjects of responsible communities' (Rose 'Community' 1). Consequently, a number of writers have expressed concern at this reworking of 'progressivist rhetorics of community' (Steinberg and Johnson 30; Clarke and Newman; Levitas; McKinnie). However, this reworking is made possible

¹⁴ Clarke and Newman add that neoliberal governments of the last two decades – both in the UK and in Australia – have tried to 'redraw access to citizenship and the relationships between citizenship, national membership and national identity' (61).

by the fact that the two agendas are not as distinct as is often assumed. As long as the left is using the language of 'community' to further its social and political goals, it is already implicating itself in the neoliberal discourse of 'responsibility'. The governmentalisation of 'community', then, is not a disingenuous appropriation of leftist goals, but a logical extension of the rhetorical and normative power of 'community'. Acknowledging this point means moving away from simplistic assertions about the 'threat' posed by neoliberal discourses of 'community' and citizenship to the politics of the left.

It is also worth examining the discourse of *participation* which informs this ambivalent figure of the citizen. As well as its managerial style of governing, and demand for accountability, one of the defining features of neoliberal governance is its revival of a relationship between state and people through 'a commitment to public consultation and participation' (Clarke and Newman 55). Governmental processes are reliant upon the community, and the *active* citizen-subjects that make up these communities. Besch and Minson argue that such 'community participation' is usually thought of as 'a moral demand for change addressed to a democratically deficient reality in the name of an ideal of self-governing community' (Besch and Minson 55). However, they question the self-evident value of this participatory norm of democratic government. They suggest that there is a need to 'think about participation as itself a reality, one that is too wide-spread, messy, and complicated to be weighed on any single scale of values and that imposes moral demands on participants' (Besch and Minson 55).

In community-based arts in particular, the process of participation itself is often regarded as a morally educative, transformative process. Similar types of participation are valorised in the influential discourse of social capital. Delanty points out that this usually amounts to participation in 'associations and voluntary deeds' and 'a culturally neutral civil society' (83). And this is because the point of participation is not to overcome conflicts but 'to promote values of trust, commitment and solidarity, values which allow democracy to flourish' (83). These are the forms of 'moral education' Besch and Minson allude to, and which they argue obscure the fact that 'the character-forming

dimensions of participation are rather more mundane and circumscribed' (56).

This discourse of participation is also wrongly conceived in terms of a *right* to participate, rather than as a form of circumscribed expertise. An ethics of democratic participation depends on 'the right to participate and the obligation to shape one's participation around commonly reiterated principles such as equal respect, preparedness to revise one's own views, and openness to differences of outlook that are matters of reasonable disagreement' (54). However, this raises problems when participation is sought by 'uncivil' groups, or is dominated by elitist or unrepresentative community activists and spokespeople.¹⁵ Besch and Minson suggest, therefore, that it is more productive to think of participation, not in terms of the rights of citizens, but in terms of 'the various kinds of expertise, including moral and political capacities, which they may either bring to it or acquire as a result of such involvements' (55). They argue that there are a range of 'worldly personal capacities' that both citizens and officials require if these forms of community participation and consultation are to contribute productively to government (53). Certainly, this question of the necessary, and appropriate, 'capacities' of citizen-subjects, and how such capacities and resources might be distributed to citizenries, is an important one, and is explored in more detail in subsequent chapters of this thesis. The problem, then, with this politics of participation is its assumption of the equal distribution of power, and participatory capacities, amongst citizens; as well as the presumed neutrality of the agency facilitating this participation. In this respect, the simplistic link that is asserted between participatory citizenship and democracy is problematic. Chapter Three of this thesis examines the dilemma this raises for FCAC – specifically, in its negotiation of the relationship between the 'community' and the 'expert', and the pressures this framework places on the organisation itself.

¹⁵ See Stevenson's critique of the role of the state in these processes, where it is conceived as 'the neutral arbitrator which must mediate between the divergent interests of competing groups', when in fact she argues the state is itself complicit in elitist, usually commercial, interests (*Agendas* 133).

So the uncertain politics of the responsabilisation of 'community' is itself a product of the ambivalence of the active or participatory citizen. Both of these tropes inform the contemporary discourse of 'social inclusion' – a policy formation which turns on the strategic relationship between 'community' and 'culture' I referred to earlier, and which has also been the subject of considerable critique. Markus and Kirpitchenko point out that the idea of social cohesion has long been a focus of academic enquiry and political theory – for example in the work of Durkheim and Weber (21). However, 'social inclusion' re-emerged as a policy framework in the mid-1990s, particularly in Canada, France, and Britain (Markus and Kirpitchenko 21). In Australia, social inclusion and social cohesion frameworks have also seen an increasing currency in a range of policy contexts over the last few years.¹⁶ According to Mulligan and Smith, 'social inclusion' refers to the mobilisation of 'inclusive communities' as a key 'means of government', guarding against 'social tensions and conflict' ('Art' 5). This notion of inclusiveness and cohesion is underpinned by an emphasis on shared values and 'a sense of common identity and of belonging to the same community' (Nieuwenhuysen 2). In an Australian context this means that debates about social cohesion are often intertwined with debates about multiculturalism and migration.¹⁷

More specifically, in the context of the Australian community-based arts sector, the concepts of social capital, social inclusion and social cohesion are seen to contribute to a broader societal indicator – that of 'wellbeing' (Mulligan et al. 25). Both community and individual 'wellbeing' are frequently cited as key outcomes of successful community-based arts programs (Hawkes *Fourth*; Mulligan et al.; Williams *Creating*). Mulligan et al. write that while 'wellbeing' refers to physical and mental health it 'is also very related to our sense of social connectedness, inclusion and participation,

¹⁶ A number of policy documents aimed at fostering social inclusion have emerged in the last few years, at both state and federal government levels (Commonwealth *Australia*; MACVC; Vinson). The *Social Cohesion in Australia* anthology is also evidence of the policy currency of the term and the academic discussion that this has spurred.

¹⁷ See, for example, Andrews, who describes a number of Australian federal government instruments for managing cultural difference – such as the Federation of Ethnic Communities Council and the Integrated Humanitarian Settlement Strategy – as strategies of 'social cohesion' (48; Jupp, Nieuwenhuysen and Dawson).

existential security and safety, political citizenship, self-development and actualisation, and opportunities for education, recreation and creative expression' (22). So the language of wellbeing is tied up with these other social policy objectives, which themselves comprise the apparatus of neoliberal governance. Jon Hawkes, an influential community arts advocate,¹⁸ argues for programs which foster diversity and cultural vitality; but this is accompanied by an emphasis on cohesion, connectedness and 'the capacity of the individuals within a community to understand, respect and trust one another' (*Fourth* 18). The agenda of social inclusion in Hawkes' work is an implied one but it is typical of the way in which these discourses inform community-based arts programs.

The language of social inclusion has frequently been attributed to the policies and politics of British New Labour, and it is largely within this context that the use of the term has been critiqued. Ruth Levitas argues that the earliest uses of 'social inclusion', dating from the 1980s, were as part of a redistributive model which saw poverty and wider patterns of social inequality as inextricably linked, and requiring a substantial redistribution of resources in order to be addressed (44). However, she describes how this redistributive agenda has been obscured by more contemporary uses of 'social inclusion', which do not acknowledge the structural basis and material and economic processes causing social exclusion (44; Bennett and Silva 93; Merli 112; Mulligan et al. 26; Rose 'Community' 12).¹⁹ As Stevenson argues, 'the Third Way proffers a range of policy "solutions" that seek to address the manifestations of exclusion, but not its causes' ('Civic' 127).

These 'solutions' have two key aspects – they attempt to govern by way of consensus, and they insist on moral explanations for material problems. The sort of consensus that is imagined here involves the presumption of shared values amongst the population (Rose 'Community' 9). This mode of government can, of course, be traced to communitarian frameworks in which

¹⁸ Hawkes was also Director of the Community Arts Board of the Australia Council from 1982 to 1987.

¹⁹ Social inclusion frameworks are also problematic because they do not focus on the voluntary exclusion of those at the top of existing structures of exchange and production. Rather, they only focus on those at the bottom (Mulligan et al. 26).

'consensus either exists or can be unproblematically created' (Delanty 89). The language of social inclusion is often used in conjunction with 'social cohesion', and glosses over differences and divisions that may exist, restricting possibilities for the expression, contestation and recognition of cultural difference. As Clarke and Newman argue, the policies of New Labour envisaged 'a nation of "communities" of place and identity arranged in a non-antagonistic and consensual social order' (57). Discussions of Australian social policy also emphasise the importance of a common 'stock of values and traditions' in maintaining social cohesion (Jupp 10). The issue, then, is one of managing conflict and difference, and those who are excluded become the subject of a range of techniques of social control. As Stevenson argues in her discussion of neoliberal cultural planning programs, 'it becomes clear that the central assumptions are not about using the arts or cultural activity to achieve social justice, but are concerned with social control, place management, and the achievement of conservative forms of citizenship and community' ('Civic' 125). Mulligan et al. state that this amounts to a counter-productive and 'forced inclusion' which does not let people, particularly those who may be socially isolated, 'exercise control over the forms and extent of their engagements with particular communities' (146).

'Inclusion' is defined narrowly, mainly in terms of inclusion in the paid labour force, and state policies attempt to integrate these excluded groups into the 'mainstream' by bringing them into the labour market (Jupp 19; Rowse 'Family'). This is particularly problematic when, for example, New Labour's employment policies privilege work as the activity which rightfully "'inserts" people into the social' and 'attaches them to citizenship rights' (Clarke and Newman 60). In doing so, other modes of unwaged work, such as voluntary activity, domestic labour and caring, are devalued and 'continually wished away' (Clarke and Newman 60). In this way, existing relations of exchange and production which are actually the cause of social exclusion are not questioned. The aim of social inclusion programs are 'simply to integrate individuals into the dominant structures of society' (Mulligan et al. 27).

Importantly, these structures constitute a moral order and a set of normative principles for thinking and acting on social problems. Jupp states that social exclusion describes the situation where some members of society:

do not share the same range of benefits as the average citizen. This induces feelings of alienation and even despair, which are manifested in antisocial behaviour, crime and poor mental and physical health. (19)

As I suggested, commentaries such as this tend to emphasise the symptoms and effects of social exclusion, rather than acknowledging the material processes that might cause them. In addition, those who are socially excluded are seen to be positioned this way 'either by choice or as a result of their own failings – they are "irresponsible" in some sense' (Clarke and Newman 57; Bennett and Silva 93). The governed must earn their place in society 'by building strong communities and exercising active responsible citizenship' (Rose 'Community' 4). These policies, then, are informed by a meritocratic, communitarian nostalgia for 'autonomous (and hard-working) families, producing moral order and bound together in self-regulating communities' (Clarke and Newman 58). By privileging this work ethic, the political rationality informing the figure of the responsible community / citizen becomes a moral injunction.

This returns us to the circularity of 'community' referred to earlier. Rose suggests that within these discourses, 'community' is presented 'simultaneously as diagnosis and as cure. ... [A]s a description of certain social and economic ills, a diagnosis of the causes of these ills and a solution to them' (173). In the neoliberal policies described above, old-fashioned notions of society as a collection of 'connections and commitments' are stitched together with ideas of market freedom, growth and enterprise (Amin 'Local' 614). As I will argue below, this moralised, communitarian influence is problematic given the sorts of pluralised ethical self-fashioning that are facilitated by contemporary cultural forms.

GOVERNING FREEDOM: POWER AND ETHICS

The critiques described above make important interventions into the policy uses of 'social inclusion' rhetoric. However, I want to consider the underlying political and normative tenor of these critiques – namely, the tension surrounding the sorts of 'freedoms' generated by these governmental strategies of 'community'. In most of these cases, social inclusion is characterised as being contrary to the aims of social justice (which has an explicit redistributive agenda) (Stevenson 'Civic' 126). A number of writers draw attention to how the injunctions of social inclusion are cast as 'pragmatic' ones. That is, these policies are simply responding to the 'reality' of social change in the modern world (Clarke and Newman 56; Johnson and Steinberg 10). As stated above, this involves a consensual approach to governance, and this approach is advocated as though it is the only 'realistic' option. Questioning this approach, then, appears irrational and counterproductive (Steinberg and Johnson 33).²⁰ Clarke and Newman critique the policies of British New Labour for parading as 'post-ideological', and in doing so they suggest that such policies perpetuate a hegemony which silences 'divergent possibilities of being modern' (56). This strategy of solving contemporary social problems within existing structures is described disparagingly, by Johnson and Steinberg, as a 'passive revolution' (13).

In these critiques of 'social inclusion' there is an anxiety over the way power acts on subjects by manipulating their agency – putting all identifications and emotional investments at the service of this political agenda. As Kelleher argues, the significance of building *trust* in the community, and between people and governing institutions is that it works to *bind* people to the state (178). This concern about social inclusion as a form of social control is reflected in a reading of governmentality that defines governmental power as a power of domination, or a power *over* subjects, rather than a productive power. Here, governmentality describes the way in which the population is policed. Mark Banks' discussion of governmentality is a case in point, and he defines it as an:

²⁰ See also Rose – 'Given this slippage between the descriptive and the normative and given that what must be is dictated by what is, it is not surprising that there is so little political inventiveness on display' ('Community' 2).

approach that identifies cultural work as a vehicle for the application of managerial (and thus capitalistic) authority; a form of control that not only relies on discursively constructed and practically applied 'mechanisms of rule', but is also exercised through workers' own apparent willingness to act as dutiful 'enterprise subjects'. ... Beyond some nascent accounts of workers' 'tactical' maneuverings, few, if any, writers have employed a Foucauldian perspective to highlight how the actors might utilise power in order to prioritise autonomous creative production or to progressively transform cultural work contexts through the pursuit of a more pronounced form of resistance. (183)

In this context, governing at a distance is interpreted as a form of hegemony, and analyses of governmentality are still state-centred.²¹ By contrast, Bennett offers a more affirmative reading, where he characterises governmentality as a 'means of acting on the social that respects the freedom and autonomy of individuals (or communities) ... by involving them as active agents in the processes of their own transformation and self-regulation' ('Acting' 21). This informs his optimistic assessment of community-based arts:

This involves the use of artistic resources as a means of building strong, self-reliant communities that are capable of managing themselves and producing a strong, but not exclusive, sense of identity and belonging for their members while contributing to the resolution of social problems at the community level ('Acting' 26).

Bennett allows the autonomy of the subject to exist at face value, rather than speculate about its hidden (ideological) agenda.

The differences in these analyses of neoliberal strategies and their relationship with the subject can be understood in terms of the role of individual ethical projects in these broader programs of power. Bennett's reading of the productive possibilities of community-based arts can be traced to the kind of personal autonomy implied by Foucault's notion of an 'aesthetics of existence' (*Use*). This is an ethics – or a reflexive self-styling – that is distinct from the self-discipline of moral work. 'Ethics', in this context, is a kind of critical orientation aimed at an autonomous existence, or escaping 'what is given' (Osborne *Structure* 69). It is a 'thin' rather than 'thick' concept; that is, it does

²¹ Toby Miller also makes this point in an interview with Jeremy Packer (Packer 32).

not have a pre-conceived or substantive character (Osborne *Structure* 7). As Osborne suggests, this form of ethics is 'not something which comes, so to speak, law-like from outside but which is generated on the basis of reflexive relations of the self with itself' (*Structure* 78). So whereas a moral existence is lived in accordance with an externally imposed, codified set of norms, 'ethics' refers to a wider possible range of forms of self-relationship, aimed at a critical autonomy from these norms.

It is important to note that neoliberalism works by harnessing these powers of autonomy. This does not amount to a straightforward appropriation of these ethical projects but involves the continual deployment of a range of governmental techniques in order to mobilise these capacities. As I suggested earlier, the neoliberal 'community' and 'citizen' are characterised in terms of their potential for autonomy *and* responsibility. Rose describes these processes as 'ethopolitics' and, as I suggested earlier, 'culture' is a crucial component of these strategies. It is through culture that neoliberal governmentality 'seeks to inscribe the norms of self-control more deeply into the soul of each citizen' (Rose 'Community' 15). Governing frameworks seek

a way of acting on the ethical formation and self-management of individuals to promote their engagement in their collective destiny, in the interests of economic advancement, social stability, and even justice and happiness. (Rose 'Community' 4)

Ethopolitics operates through the values and beliefs that underpin one's obligations to others. In doing so, it also *enacts* individual freedom by intensifying and redirecting interpersonal forces such as responsibility, trust, guilt and duty. Rose suggests that it is 'in these ways, perhaps, that free and autonomous individuals can be governed through community' ('Community' 5; Bratich, Packer and McCarthy 'Governing' 9; Hay 166). 'Culture' is the means by which these modes of political subjectification occur, as well as terrain on which techniques of ethical self-fashioning take place.

As other writers on governmentality and culture have shown, these political strategies have historically operated through projects of moral reformation. For the last two centuries a range of institutions have used culture to develop specific kinds of self-governing capacities, instill moral discipline, as well as

foster collective cultural identities (Dowling; Bennett *Birth*; Hunter *Culture*; Maltz). However, the forms of political organisation entailed in these projects of moral management are no longer adequate, and contemporary 'ethopolitical' strategies have taken on a distinct character. Rose states that the popular and commercial cultural forms of today create very different kinds of subjects from the 'moral, sober, responsible, and obedient individuals' of the nineteenth century, and from the 'civility, social solidarity and social responsibility' of the twentieth century ('Community' 5).

In this respect, Rose describes a contemporary version of Foucault's ethical selfhood: where morality can be defined as 'compliance with an externally imposed code of conduct and values in the name of a collective good', ethics refers to the 'detailed shaping by individuals of their daily lives in the name of their own pleasures, contentments, or fulfillments' ('Community' 8). So lifestyle choices – including those in music, goods and taste – have an ethical character insofar as they enable individuals to 'shape an autonomous identity for themselves' (Rose 'Community' 8). This is a result of what Rose describes as a 'pluralisation of the moral order' so

individuals and groups then manipulate, use or subvert these recipes for purposes they take to be their own. Hence, these practices both presuppose and intensify a shift of emphasis from morality to ethics. ('Community' 8)

Contemporary cultural forms effect a pluralisation of ethical possibilities and dilemmas and Rose suggests that these identifications and lifestyle communities actually contribute to 'civility'.²² However, in some ways, this 'pluralisation' is at odds with neoliberal social policies which, while activating individual ethical projects, are still informed by communitarian notions of 'community', and hence attempt to govern through a specific and singular moral order. As we saw in the case of contemporary strategies of 'social inclusion', the citizen is conceived in terms of a moral responsibility to address his or her own 'exclusion'.

²² This also suggests a link between citizenship and the private realm, upsetting the private-public distinction that is usually assumed in citizenship debates (Cunningham et al.). In their study, Cunningham et al. examine the television consumption practices of Vietnamese diasporas and the way this enables a means of participation in the public sphere.

The forms of self-styling enabled by commercial culture exist outside the reach of programs of politics and civility, presenting a significant challenge to attempts to regulate these practices of self-government. This is the challenge that arises in the context of the discourses of 'community' and 'social inclusion'. While it may be the aim of these policy agendas to harness these ethical projects, there is a dissonance between the forms of power emanating from these policy strategies and the modes of self-government and self-fashioning emerging from other cultural formations and institutions. Meredyth and Minson describe this as 'the consumer- and lifestyle-based civility-community game' that 'is so central nowadays to the ways in which identity is being formed' (xxv). So the pluralisation of ethics and identities, and the formation of distinct and often incommensurable domains of culture and values presents a challenge to how we understand and negotiate difference, particularly if we are to still use the moralised notion of 'community' to do this.²³

Community-based arts are framed by this 'community-civility' game and offer subjects a means to enact both their freedom and self-regulation. As we have seen, this takes place by way of the two broad configurations of ethopolitics that Rose describes. The first involves the governance of the individual 'in terms of fixed moral codes justified by relation to some external set of principles or concepts of human nature' ('Community' 5). This relates to policy discourses which advocate the obligations and responsibilities generated through the emotional and interpersonal bonds of 'community'. The second form of ethopolitics involves the 'aesthetic elements' of self-governance which are derived from Foucault's work on the aesthetics of the self. This refers to 'the self-crafting of one's existence according to a certain art of living, whether this concerns friendship, domesticity, erotics or work' (Rose 'Community' 5). In community-based arts there is an attempt to activate this kind of aesthetics of the self via targeted programs of creative expression and identity formation. I will examine the implications of these practices of aesthetic selfhood in Chapter Six. The significance of community-based arts is that by both emerging from official discourses of 'community' and activating

²³ Rose describes this challenge as a question of how 'multiple identities receive equal recognition in a single constitutional form' ('Community' 7).

individual 'creativity', the practice attempts to govern through – by converging – morality and ethics.

CONCLUSION: RETHINKING COMMUNITY, POWER AND THE SUBJECT

While this chapter has, in many ways, been a critique of the notion of 'community', I would like to outline some possibilities for rethinking 'community', and the sorts of relations it invokes with the self, more productively. Hannah Arendt's work provides a useful starting point here, particularly her description of participation in public life as invoking a crucial aspect of human freedom. Arendt analyses the three components of *vita activa* – labor, work and action – and argues that of all three, 'action', has the most immediate relationship with freedom. Her definition of 'action' is complex – she states that 'To act, in its most general sense, means to take an initiative, to begin ... or to set something in motion' (179). Where 'labor' and 'work' are activities of human necessity and have only a functional value, action belongs to the realm of politics. And where 'work' produces 'tangible things', action produces 'stories' (180). It is both the sole prerogative of 'man' and always, necessarily communal – it is 'entirely dependent upon the constant presence of others' (182).

The concept of 'action' is useful for us if it can be thought to encompass the array of self-regulatory practices and processes of subjectification we have described as governmentality. Arendt's perspective is significant because she reminds us that action is always 'conditioned by the fact of human plurality' (179), and that

Wherever men live together, there exists a web of human relationships which is, as it were, woven by the deeds and words of innumerable persons, by the living as well as by the dead. Every deed and every new beginning falls into an already existing web, where it nevertheless somehow starts a new process that will affect many others even beyond those with whom the agent comes into direct contact. It is because of this already existing web of human relationships with its conflicting wills and intentions, that action almost never achieves its purpose. And it is also because of this medium and the attending

quality of unpredictability that action always produces stories, with or without intention, as naturally as fabrication produces tangible things. (180)

'Action' as Arendt describes it here, does not have a single author, but is the sum of these interpersonal relationships, narratives and contingencies. This suggests that practices of self-government – of the sort that take place in community-based arts programs – effect a plurality of outcomes, which cannot be predicted in advance, and which 'almost never achieve its purpose' (180). This also points us to the limits of official governmental programs. As John Field reminds us, such programs:

can bring people together, and ensure that the conditions exist for instrumental cooperation. They cannot force people to like each other, fall in love, or enjoy time in each other's company – and then go the extra mile in terms of trust and regard. (133)

There are limits, then, to the sorts of informal, interpersonal relationships that can be orchestrated by policy instruments and cultural institutions.

According to Arendt, the ethical projects described above take place in a web of contestations – and it is from here that a sense of agency might emerge. Insofar as 'action' produces 'stories', or narratives of meaning, there is both an ethical and aesthetic dimension to it. This is similar to what Mulligan et al. describe as making one's 'experiences cohere' by creating a sense of 'narrative agency' in their lives (7). This resolves the fragmented life narratives that are a result of the 'consumer-spectator-citizenship' relationship which dominates contemporary life and which, they argue, art is in a privileged position to address (7). They argue that 'narrative agency' is enabled through art, and is perhaps the most significant outcome of participation in the arts (7). By thinking of this in the context of Arendt's discussion of 'action', we can consider how this relates to a more useful, and indeterminate notion of 'community'. As she explains,

The absence of a maker in this realm accounts for the extraordinary frailty and unreliability of strictly human affairs. Since we always act into a web of relationships, the consequences of each deed are boundless, every action touches off not only a reaction but a chain reaction, every process is the cause of unpredictable new processes. This boundlessness is inescapable; ... In

acting, in contradistinction to working, it is indeed true that we can really never know what we are doing. (180)

It is this 'boundlessness' or indeterminacy of human relationships and ethical projects that the notion of 'governmentality' could be aligned with, and which might help us rethink the relationship between 'community', government and the self in more productive ways.

This indeterminate aspect of governmentality is rarely discussed but provides us with a significant way of rethinking how power acts on individuals in the context of official programs of 'community'. One of the inherent difficulties with implementing social policy – including policies which mobilise 'community' – is managing its unintended and unforeseeable effects. In practice, 'governing at a distance' often means that programs pass through 'partners and intermediaries who may then act in unanticipated ways' (Field 120). This process is described by Pat O'Malley as the 'translation' of governmental rationalities via a range of instruments, techniques, and calculations (which might, in practice, be policy instruments, the practices of community-based representatives, and so on). These processes of 'translation' can produce 'unanticipated shifts in the operation of rule, between the intentions of the initiating programmers and the practices which are put into effect at relationally distant points' (O'Malley 163). So the heterogeneous assemblages which connect broad political rationalities with specific programs of government, and in turn with everyday life are actually 'a matter or fragile relays, contested locales and fissiparous affiliations' (Rose *Powers* 51). It is therefore important to acknowledge the contingent nature of these relations, the fact that programs of governance always potentially fall short of their target and the subsequent gap between the intentions of governmental programs and their actual effects (Malpas and Wickham).

Thinking in these terms enables a redefinition of 'community' which emphasises its instability and provisionality, and sees it as something that is continually made and remade via the sorts of ethical and governmental projects described above. Delanty describes the dilemma of 'community' in this way:

Community offers people what neither society nor the state can offer, namely a sense of belonging in an insecure world. But community also destroys this by demonstrating the impossibility of finality. The new kinds of community are themselves, like the wider society, too fragmented and pluralised to offer enduring forms of belonging. Very often the communal spirit is empty of meaning, which must always be individually created. Thus community ends up destroyed by the very individualism that creates the desire for it. (192)

Mulligan et al. also critique definitions of community which over-emphasise its coherence, particularly the mechanistic notion of 'community-building' – a phrase that is frequently used in the rationales for community-based arts projects (10). Instead, Mulligan et al. advocate transitory and ephemeral types of community – such as 'a succession of rave parties' – and the forms of open-ended belonging they engender (22). In fact, these sorts of provisional and experimental social relations, which are frequently deemed a threat to 'community', may actually be quite favourable to informal modes of civic and cultural participation, and identity-based social and civic formations (Field 113).

Despite being a somewhat historically burdened term, then, 'community' might still be a useful concept to think with insofar as it refers simply to an 'an open-ended system of communication about belonging' (Delanty 187). The critical task is to think about the *sorts* of community that are fostered in community-based arts. If 'community' is conceived as a *provisional* space of belonging – that is, one which might be temporary or ephemeral in form – then it is at less risk of lapsing into the sorts of consensual and morally prescriptive frameworks we have observed. Mulligan et al. suggest the idea of 'projected community' – which involves 'the active establishment of a creative space in which individuals engage in an open-ended process of constructing, deconstructing and reconstructing identities and ethics for living' (18). In this case, the relationship between 'community' and its citizen-subjects is 'mutually constitutive' but retains some sense of its open-endedness and instability, allowing for an 'ongoing process of invention and self-reinvention' (17, 22). For now, it is still a coherent (either nostalgic or utopian) ideal of 'community' which underpins contemporary discourses of 'social inclusion' and 'social capital' – both of which inform the terms in which

community-based arts programs are rationalised. This amounts to the conceptualisation of community as a consensual 'moral' space. These programs attempt to govern difference through the imposition of interpersonal norms and obligations that are at odds with the contemporary forms of ethical self-styling I have described. Instead, 'community' might be conceived as an *ethical* space – in which individuals engage in creative and provisional practices of self-fashioning that are rather more indeterminate in effect.

It is along these lines that Ash Amin suggests community-based programs can lead to a useful, agonistic public culture that gives expression to multiple publics – and that these programs can incorporate 'imaginative experiments in the everyday urban ... that bring people from different backgrounds together' in order to create 'a commons without community' ('Local' 628). Rose, despite his critical reading of governmental power, also offers a hopeful assessment:

Whatever closure it may itself seek to impose, it seems to me that this inescapably plural field invites an agonistic politics of ethics, one that argues for the powers of 'other communities' and 'other subjectivities', for an experimental ethical politics of life itself. (*Powers* 194)

What both Rose and Amin seem to be saying here is that practices such as community-based arts can open up spaces for negotiating cultural difference – but that this is a process that comes without guarantees. Each 'instance' of community-based arts then, needs to be examined in its specificity, together with the governmental rationalities that become operationalised within it, and the particular ways these interact with community-based arts' constituents.

The relations between 'community' and government that are invoked in the context of community-based arts can be characterised as highly problematic. The key issue is the political malleability of 'community', which is evidenced by its uptake in both conservative communitarian discourses, as well as more progressive frameworks. This situation has emerged from the fact that 'community' functions by attempting to activate the ethical projects of its subjects – and in doing so wields a normative, and sometimes moral, power. This moralising tendency is particularly apparent in the discourses of 'social

inclusion' and 'social capital', surveyed in this chapter. It has also led to a tautological use of 'community', as both symptom and cure for a range of social ills. I have attempted to rethink the relation between 'community', government and the self affirmatively, to highlight the forms of ethical self-formation that take place in the context of 'community', or what has been described elsewhere as a 'community-civility-game'. However, these process of self-fashioning should not be dismissed as a kind of repressive self-government, servicing a suspect ideological project. Rather, these ethical projects can form the basis of the various narratives of agency that are a fundamental way of acting in and on the world.

The more open-ended and productive forms of 'community' I have described are somewhat evident in discourses on 'cosmopolitan community' – where community is described as a crucial site for negotiating the local and the global (Delanty 158). This conception of 'community' sees globalisation as presenting opportunities, rather than threatening 'community', and celebrates the proliferation of identities and modes of belonging enabled by these processes. Delanty suggests that the cosmopolitanism of transnational, migratory and diasporic communities derives from the 'mobility by which they transcend place and the resulting cultural mixing produces identities that are constantly in the process of definition' (158). This hybridity, and the sorts of multiple belonging this implies, however, also gives rise to possible social conflict and instability. And it is in an attempt to manage this that official programs of 'culture' are often implemented.

In this way, 'culture' is, as we have seen, both an instrument of population management and a tool for ethical self-fashioning. The way in which 'culture' is instrumentalised will form the basis of my investigation in the next chapter. It will ask, after Bennett, 'How does the concept of culture need to be approached if it is to be effectively integrated into an analytics of government?' ('Culture and Governmentality' 56). Significantly, this will also consider injunctions like those of Mulligan and Smith, who, in critiquing the notions of 'social inclusion' and 'civic participation', suggest that "'Creative engagement with complex local communities'" describes the challenge better than flat terms such as "increasing civic participation"' ('Art' 5). Despite

rethinking 'community' in terms of its provisionality, the notion of 'creativity' goes unproblematised. This valorisation of 'creativity' as a mode of authentic expression, and as a tool of social and economic regeneration, will be scrutinised in the next chapter.

2

THE USES OF CULTURE

The previous chapter examined the theoretical framing for this analysis of community-based arts and the specific uses to which 'community' is put in the service of various policy agendas. This chapter considers the governmentalisation of community-based arts along another register – specifically, the uses of 'culture'. The aim of this chapter is to highlight the problematic terrain on which these uses are founded and to point to a more pragmatic framework – that of 'cultural citizenship'. I want to suggest that the governmentalisation of 'culture' examined here – and particularly that which has traditionally informed the community arts movement – involves an attempt to democratise aesthetics. This has created an ongoing indeterminacy for cultural policy makers, demonstrated by circular debates about the instrumentalisation of culture versus its 'intrinsic' value. I show how this conceptual and practical bind is a result of the enduring *interrelation* of the aesthetic and the instrumental. In doing so, I do not seek to discredit this aesthetic function. Rather, I show how the forms of culture promoted in community-based arts programs continue to be valued in terms of their relation to an 'aesthetic ethos'; and this is inevitably tied up with questions of cultural value. I conclude by mapping out an alternative framework and policy agenda for the mobilisation of culture, and consider the role of cultural capital within this schema. To this end, I suggest the need for a more nuanced

understanding of the relationship between cultural participation and cultural capital.

This chapter begins by considering the two historical senses of culture – culture as ‘aesthetics’ and as a ‘way of life’. In the first sense, ‘culture’ is equated with ‘high culture’ and conflated with ‘art’. Community-based arts is a very deliberate response to this; it is premised on an attempt to democratise the sorts of exclusionary value associated with this conception of culture. This response formed part of a wider push (evident, for example, in the disciplinary emergence of cultural studies) to redefine culture as a ‘way of life’. I examine some anxieties surrounding the governmentalisation of culture as they are manifest in policy debates about the impact of the arts, and the ‘creative industries’ policy agenda. Concerns that ‘culture’ is being marginalised – and that the ‘intrinsic’ value of culture is being neglected – have led to calls for a re-assertion of culture’s aesthetic value, and a renewed emphasis on its transformative power, reuniting it with ‘art’. The ongoing conflation of ‘culture’ and ‘art’ demonstrates the continuing influence of notions of the ‘aesthetic’ in these debates. The ‘aesthetic ethos’ is both the reason for culture’s instrumentalisation and its problematisation. Significantly, my arguments do not attempt to simply dismiss this ethos as a form of self-interested ethical cultivation; rather they point out the problems involved in *valorising* the aesthetic function of culture – a strategy routinely used to justify arts and cultural funding today.

DEFINING ‘CULTURE’ IN COMMUNITY-BASED ARTS

Difficulties with the notion of ‘culture’ itself render the uses of culture problematic and indeterminate. As Toby Miller suggests, the ubiquity of the term has led to ‘that troubling domain of the decontextualised vocabulary, where words mean everything and hence nothing’ (‘Creative’ 92). In dealing with this concept, then, it is a question not of asking what culture *is*, but *how* one operates with the concept (McHoul 425). In this respect, as Terry Eagleton suggests, culture can be understood as ‘more know-how than know why, a set of tacit understandings or practical guidelines as opposed to a

theoretical mapping of reality' (*Idea* 35).¹ It is in this spirit that I consider the notion of culture and investigate how it becomes operational, what sorts of practices it enables, and how these are rationalised.

A number of theorists have written about the etymological evolution of the term 'culture' from 'cultivation', and its eventual expansion to the ideas of 'civility', 'art' and 'high culture' (Eagleton *Idea*; Miller 'Creative'; Williams *Culture and Society*). This distinction between different versions of culture has gone on to be understood as an anthropological version of culture or 'way of life', versus an aestheticised notion of culture (Williams *Culture and Society*). The tension and, as we will see, enduring interrelation between these two versions of 'culture', is a defining dilemma for community-based arts.

Commentators have also pointed out the nebulous character of the term 'art'. Attempts to circumscribe the concept, or identify its essential character or quality, routinely fall short. Justin Lewis, for example, considers whether 'art' might intrinsically involve 'creativity', 'self-expression', 'emotional response' or 'understanding something in a new or different way' (5). However, he argues, these 'invariably flounder in their generality. You can be creative washing up, express yourself by making love, respond emotionally to a friend's misfortune or understand the laws of physics in a new way' (5). Others have argued that the only thing that is guaranteed about art is that it facilitates 'insight' (Hawkes 'Fourth' 20) – although, there are, of course, a myriad of non-artistic experiences and practices that might also provide such insight. What these efforts to define 'art' reveal is its very multidimensionality and, as Belfiore and Bennett suggest, 'the subjectivity and unpredictability of encounters with the arts' ('Determinants' 262).

Despite the intangibility and elusiveness of 'art', it has, at least in the recent history of the West, been associated with 'aesthetic experience'.² This mode of thinking about 'art' has been strongly informed by the work of Kant and other German idealists since the eighteenth century. Kant's *Critique of Judgment* has

¹ See also Kendall and Wickham, for their account of 'culture' as a way of 'ordering' practices.

² See Belting for an account of the historical specificity of this notion of 'art'.

perhaps had the most influence on the notion of 'aesthetic experience' – whereby the aesthetic is perceived as an autonomous realm, distinct from the sphere of 'everyday life', and which entails a mode of 'disinterested' appreciation of form (Belfiore and Bennett *Social* 229; Harrington 85; Shusterman *Performing* 4). This response of 'disinterested pleasure', conceives of art as an ideal sphere, removed from other forms of human activity, and detached from any ulterior or instrumental purpose. The autonomy of art is emphasised here as a domain or institution with, as Richard Shusterman describes, 'its own specific aims, experts and logic' (*Performing* 3). Shusterman goes on to describe 'aesthetic experience' as it is conventionally conceived, as,

the island of freedom, beauty, and idealistic meaning in an otherwise coldly materialistic and law-determined world; it was not only the locus of the highest pleasures but a means of spiritual conversion and transcendence. (*Performing* 16)

It follows that aesthetic judgments are deemed to be universal – formal aspects of artworks are privileged over the social, economic and political contexts in which they are produced – and operate in an analogous way to moral judgments (Belfiore and Bennett *Social* 30; Harrington 85). It is art as 'aesthetics' that has dominated the history of cultural institutions in the West, mobilising a liberal humanist discourse in which 'culture' is associated with an 'ideal of perfection'³ that transcends social and cultural differences (Belfiore and Bennett *Social* 27).

The inherent normativity of this conception of aesthetics is significant. It implies certain ethical practices by which individuals situate themselves as the subject of aesthetic experience. These practices are differentially available to certain social groups over others and involves, for example, the social codes and culture of leisure, connoisseurship and gentility associated with a certain strata of eighteenth-century civil society (Harrington 89). In this sense, the aesthetic is implicated in a minority practice of self-cultivation. It imposes a specific kind of self-discipline – what Ian Hunter describes as an 'aesthetico-ethical imperative' – to 'complete the self' via these forms of aesthetic experience. This imperative has historically taken on a moral character,

³ Most famously championed by Matthew Arnold.

involving ongoing self-improvement and self-refinement, and which culminates in the 'cultivated' persona of the art appreciator (Belfiore and Bennett *Social* 145). While Hunter refers to the forms of self-cultivation associated with the literary field, others have described similar sorts of ethical formation in the visual arts (Belting 19). Moreover, while Hunter describes the ethical function of a specific modality of the aesthetic – that is, emerging from German idealism and influencing British valorisation of 'high culture' in the nineteenth century – I want to suggest the enduring influence of this conception of the aesthetic on contemporary cultural policy.

Linda Dowling's account of attempts to democratise aesthetics in Victorian programs of social reform demonstrates the historical interrelation between art's aesthetic impulse and attempts to instrumentalise it. This can partly be attributed to the influence of Schiller's ideas on aesthetic education – in which the aesthetic is no longer something that operates on the individual mind, but is transferred to society as a whole. Art is said to reconcile the conflict between reason and sensuality, harmonising human capacities (Belfiore and Bennett *Social* 119; Dowling 21; Harrington 119). This is then seen to have a more general transformative effect in the social sphere – where aesthetic experience becomes 'a source of moral regeneration in a world awakening to the bleaker consequences of historical progress' (Dowling 22). Schiller's ideal of wholly realised human development, then, entails 'an impulse toward restored community' (Dowling xi). In this sense, the aesthetic has historically embodied a kind of utopian ideal to which society might aspire; it entails a certain normative quality. It is this conception of the aesthetic that sees it as having a 'power of social redemption' and which has led to attempts to harness art in various instrumental programs (Dowling ix; Eagleton *Ideology*). Diana Maltz describes British 'missionary aestheticism' of the nineteenth century, for example, where aesthetics are tied up with 'the fantasy of remedying slum chaos and slum brutality through communal aesthetic revelation' (1).⁴

⁴ This conception of the aesthetic also informs attempts by figures such as Arnold and Ruskin to use art to restore moral order.

However, despite this history of instrumentalisation, it is also this tradition of aesthetics which contemporary notions of 'art' recall in their 'silent critique of exchange-value and instrumental rationality' (Eagleton *Idea* 16). Hunter describes this withdrawal from worldly commitments as an 'ethic of the aesthetic'; as he suggests, it is 'a powerful technology for *withdrawing* from the world as a sphere of mundane knowledge and action' ('Aesthetics' 354). This has to do with the aesthetic being defined at the outset as a minority practice of self-cultivation. It means that the aesthetic practice of the self is a way of investing oneself with ethical value, and 'for placing true experience beyond the reach of all who do not undergo the rigours of the discipline' (Hunter 'Aesthetics' 358). In this way the aesthetic function of art involves an anxiety over instrumental rationality, and this is what Dowling describes as the 'paradox of aesthetic democracy' (xii).

The aesthetic, thus defined, is inescapably tied up with questions of *value*. Art is valuable because it offers aesthetic experience. However, 'true' experience is constantly threatened by its instrumentalisation, and thus some artistic forms are more readily seen to offer meaningful aesthetic experience than others. Consequently, the aesthetic realm is subject to various forms of anxiety and regulation, most clearly evident in the cultural policy debates I examine below. It is the reason why, as Justin Lewis suggests, 'art is art when somebody says it is. ... This gives the definers of art – controlled by a middle-class establishment – a great deal of power' (5).⁵ In other words, the uncertainty surrounding what constitutes 'art' and legitimate modes of artistic appreciation, is implicated in forms of social stratification (Harrington 89; Hunter 'Aesthetics' 351; Shusterman *Performing* 57). Thus, insofar as discussions of the aesthetic value of art cannot avoid questions of cultural value, it has a potentially exclusionary effect. While aesthetic experience is, arguably, something we all participate in, the *valorisation* of the aesthetic function of art has led to the hierarchical valuing of specific sorts of art.

⁵ Lewis argues that a '*system of value* [underpinning such a definition] is *unavoidable*' (5). Given the inescapability of such a value system Lewis goes on to stipulate a specific framework for artistic 'value', and suggests that policy debates about arts funding should be focused on these values (30).

This exclusionary effect is regularly explained with reference to Bourdieu's class-based critique of 'art' and his notion of cultural capital (Belfiore and Bennett *Social*; Harrington; Lewis; Shusterman *Performing*). Bourdieu draws attention to the ways in which discussions of art are bound up with questions of 'taste' that legitimise the preferences of the middle-classes and enable them to differentiate and distance themselves from the lower classes. Artistic value is bestowed upon cultural forms which require specific cultural competencies – or 'cultural capital' – to be understood. According to Bourdieu, the differential possession of these competencies amongst the population are directly related to inequities in class and education. So, as well as the uneven ways in which certain cultural forms are valued over others, this means that the practices by which individuals situate themselves as subjects of aesthetic experience are more readily available to some groups over others. This has resulted in a situation where contemporary community-based arts movements have sought to *expand* the aesthetic realm, by arguing for the kinds of aesthetic value that might be found in a wide range of previously discredited or undervalued cultural forms. It is this expansion that has resulted in the apparent privileging of (an anthropological definition of) 'culture' over, the more narrow, 'art' in community arts discourse. At the same time, as we will see, these cultural programs attempt to more equitably confer the sorts of competencies that will enable culturally marginal groups to benefit from existing, narrowly defined, sources of aesthetic value. It is these strategies that underpin community-based arts' efforts to democratise aesthetics.

EXPANDING 'CULTURE': SOME PROBLEMS

Tom O'Regan tracks the shift from culture as aesthetics to culture as 'a way of life' in Australian cultural policy, and suggests that this has effectively resulted in both 'too much' and 'too little' culture:

On the one hand it is a victim of its own success in convincing governments, firms, and movements of the central importance of culture. Culture is becoming too important a field – socially, culturally, economically – to be left up to cultural policy making institutions. ... On the other hand, cultural

policy frameworks and cultural practice areas risk marginalisation on a number of fronts. (*Cultural 1*)

Thus, it is argued, advocates of culture now have to deal with the consequences of their own success, and the implications of the increasingly broad remit of the 'cultural'. O'Regan suggests that the 'democratising impulse' that informed governmental efforts to bring high arts 'to the people', happened in part because of the increasing recognition of the value of culture to national identity and cultural affirmation (*Cultural 3*).⁶ It is in this way that, in Australia at least, culture was expanded beyond aesthetics, and arts policy became cultural policy (*Cultural 4*). According to O'Regan, the anthropological definition of culture enabled innovations such as community arts, as well as the language of 'cultural diversity' in policymaking – both of which are concerned with 'rhetorics of entitlement to cultural participation on the part of various marginalised groups, but also to affirming, developing and maintaining identities' (*Cultural 6*). Culture has been put to work for an increasingly wide array of governmental objectives and there is an expanding body of both theoretical and policy-oriented studies which argue the sorts of social 'impact' the arts and culture are regarded to have (Guetzkow; Holden; Jowell; Matarasso; McCarthy et al.; Mills and Brown; Reeves; Williams *Creating*; Williams *How*). In policy terms, it is on the basis of these impacts that arts and cultural institutions assert legitimacy and make claims for funding from state and non-state instruments.

One exemplary study, which has been both widely influential and the subject of some methodological critique,⁷ is Francois Matarasso's study, *Use or Ornament?* This report, commissioned by the Comedia group who have carried out a number of influential studies into the role of the arts, is a meta-review of British arts programs that encompass 'many different values and motivations, but always with the active participation of non-professionals' (iv). Matarasso's research establishes a list of fifty 'outcomes' of the arts, encompassing 'personal growth', 'enhanced confidence', and 'skill-building'

⁶ See also Gibson *Uses* for an account of the way in which culture was instrumentalised in Australia primarily because of its entanglement with identity – and in this way the administration of art programs which sought to target the public were never simply 'for art's sake' (96).

⁷ See my discussion in the introduction to this thesis. See also Merli; Mulligan et al.

(vi); 'social cohesion' and 'social change' (vi); 'community empowerment and self-determination' (viii); 'local image and identity' (viii); 'imagination and vision', as well as a number of environmental and health benefits (vi). Such a comprehensive list exemplifies O'Regan's suggestion that the sheer breadth of culture's expediency has meant that it is now too important to be left simply to cultural policymakers (*Cultural*).

This presents a significant dilemma for cultural policymakers, particularly for proponents of community-based arts and cultural development. To illustrate this point I want to turn for a moment to the work of Jon Hawkes. Hawkes was Director of the Community Arts Board of the Australia Council from 1982 to 1987, but is known today as a cultural policy consultant and 'cultural advocate' whose emphasis, like Matarasso's, is on promoting the benefits of cultural participation. Hawkes' ideas have become influential in Australia within the community-based arts sector, cultural development and municipal level cultural planning. He is also cited in international cultural policy documents such as the United Cities and Local Governments *Agenda 21 for Culture*.⁸ In Hawkes' conceptual framework, the broad and nebulous nature of 'culture' is crucial. It enables 'culture' to bring together 'a range of concepts and issues that have, thus far, developed in parallel: wellbeing, cohesion, capacity, engagement, belonging, distinctiveness' (*Fourth* 1). 'Culture' encompasses 'the full range of social relations and organisations' and 'gives a name to the processes we use to discuss our futures, evaluate our pasts, and act in the present' (*Fourth* 1-2). In this way, he says, culture constitutes an essential component, or 'fourth pillar', of sustainability – '[c]ulture is the basic need – it is the bedrock of society' (*Fourth* 3). Significantly, 'culture' is also seen to have a pivotal relationship to 'community':

Community cohesion is utterly dependent upon the capacity of the individuals within a community to understand, respect and trust one another. These qualities are built through cultural interaction. (18)

So culture is both fundamental – a 'basic need' – but also an external mechanism which is mobilised to act on communities in particular ways. These processes are regarded as crucial to a range of public policy areas and,

⁸ United Cities and Local Governments was founded in 2004 as an international advocacy organisation for municipal governments.

he asserts, can only be meaningfully comprehended and mobilised via a 'cultural lens' ('Fourth' 18). The range of uses to which Hawkes puts 'culture' certainly suggests he might be over-invested in the notion of 'culture' as a panacea for social change.

Hawkes is left in something of a predicament: he is critical of public planning discourses which he argues have inadequately incorporated cultural considerations into their policies. However, he is also wary of community cultural development programs that he perceives as being usurped by these other (neoliberal) policy agendas. He expresses concern that community arts and community cultural development, as they are practiced in Australia now, are privileging the development of audiences and markets rather than 'recognising, valorising and nurturing the productive and creative capacities of ordinary people' ('Fourth' 19). Hawkes attributes this, to some extent, to the notion of 'development', which he argues carries questionable economic and 'industrial' connotations (*Fourth* 22). On the one hand, then, Hawkes seeks to expand the role of culture in governmental instruments; on the other, he is worried that such instrumentalisation will mean the marginalisation of culture relative to economic agendas. Both sides of this position are justified on the basis of what he perceives as culture's intrinsic transformational power.

Hawkes advocates an expansion of 'culture' in cultural policy, which he believes is still too often used to refer only to the 'arts'. Broadening the scope of 'culture' would enable a consideration of a range of fundamental values within other policy areas, including: 'participation, engagement and democracy; tolerance, compassion and inclusion; freedom, justice and equality; peace, safety and security; health, wellbeing and vitality; creativity, imagination and innovation; love and respect for the environment' (*Fourth* 7). This can be achieved, he argues, via a 'whole of government' approach – rather than the current model where 'culture' is a discrete policy domain, overseen by government agencies which have no bearing on the operations of other policy areas (*Fourth* 8).

However, he goes on to argue that the principal way we can 'liberate the voices, the imaginations and the creativity of the community' is via the arts (*Fourth* 23). The arts, he contends, are 'the paramount symbolic language through which shifting meanings are presented' and 'the democratisation of arts practice has to be at the forefront of our strategies' (*Fourth* 24). So at the same time as advocating a broadening of 'culture', Hawkes yields to a nostalgic valorisation of the arts as a means of authentic expression, distinct from more mundane spheres of human activity. His cultural advocacy, then, is underpinned by an argument for the intrinsic value of the arts, which is expanded to encompass 'culture'. 'Culture' is accorded a special significance and moral weight, and it is precisely because of this singularity that it *must* be put to work in policy instruments; but it is also because of culture's distinctiveness that it is perpetually at risk of being misused. Hawkes thus remains bound by the tension between culture's perceived intrinsic and instrumental value. He is not, however, the only commentator who is caught within this predicament. O'Regan is right to point out that one of the corollaries of the supposed democratisation of arts and cultural policy is that culture has become 'just another business' (*Cultural* 29). I now want to consider how debates about the implications of the 'creative industries' reflect this dilemma.

DEBATING 'CULTURE' IN THE 'CREATIVE INDUSTRIES'

While culture is increasingly being drawn into economic rationalisations and policy objectives, the anxieties surrounding this move are not new. Adorno's pessimistic account of the 'culture industry' provides a useful starting point for situating these debates. He argues that the commodification of culture arising from technological advances of the early twentieth century resulted in culture being compromised by private interests and directed towards standardised production. After Marx, it was thought that autonomous cultural labour was constrained and workers were alienated 'from some natural human essence (or the "species-being")' (Banks 16). These concerns

about the implications of 'mass culture' continue to reverberate today, and Lewis points out that they are at least partly informed by aesthetic interests:⁹

The cultural industries have been ignored by arts funding bodies for two reasons. The dominant aesthetic ideology discounts them not so much because they are not seen as 'art', but because they are deemed to have little or no artistic value. They are too popular. High levels of cultural competence are not necessary to appreciate them. The other argument for ignoring them is that, since they are already sustained by the free market, they do not need public subsidy. (52)

Lisanne Gibson traces this debate as it took place within the context of Australian cultural policy, beginning, she suggests with the release of a 1976 Industries Assistance Commission Report evaluating government subsidy for the arts (*Uses* 79). The reaction to this report amongst the arts sector was a resoundingly critical one. The study was seen to ignore the 'public benefits' arising from the arts, while prioritising commercial outcomes. Importantly, as Gibson points out, the main source of consternation was the fact that art was viewed as instrumental, 'at a time when the dominant cultural policy paradigm was based on the self-evident importance of the arts' (*Uses* 79).

In the 1990s, particularly with the establishment of the Department of Culture and the Arts in 1993, the arts took an increasingly high profile and became strategically positioned by government as part of the 'cultural industries'. The release of the *Creative Nation* federal policy document in 1994 confirmed culture's dual emphasis on both the economy and national identity, and 'humanistic and industry rationales for support were placed side by side' (Gibson *Uses* 88). The cultural industries, in this context, involved a redrawing of policy objectives. It entailed, as O'Regan argues,

a model for a certain kind of rapprochement between the subsidised and unsubsidised culture which acknowledged the diversity of cultural forms, the importance of better connecting diverse governmental programs and building connections between these programs and the commercial cultural industries for national (economic and cultural) benefit. (*Cultural* 18)

⁹ See also Hesmondhalgh 'Cultural' and Garnham for similar accounts of the reaction of the arts establishment to the 'cultural industries' and its perceived commodification of art.

Crucially, despite this reworking of the governmental mechanisms associated with the arts, the arts sector was still situated at the centre of the 'cultural industries'. This model recognised 'the role of the subsidised arts in the research and development for the commercial cultural industries' (*Cultural* 19). Just as importantly, in this framework, the governance of 'culture' remains situated within the sphere of cultural policy.

O'Regan argues that this is the key difference between the cultural industries and what has been termed the 'creative industries'. The emergence of 'creative industries' rhetoric is generally traced to the Blair government in the UK, and its establishment of the 'Creative Industries Taskforce' in 1998 (Cunningham 'From'; Cunningham 'What'; Garnham; Hesmondhalgh 'Cultural'). In this document the 'creative industries' are defined as:

Activities which have their origin in individual creativity, skill and talent and which have the potential for wealth and job creation through the generation and exploitation of intellectual property. (Cunningham 'What' 5 citing culture.gov.uk)¹⁰

What these activities actually encompass, in practical terms, is not clearly defined here, but it is obvious that they have a broad remit, including a range of practices that were not previously understood as 'cultural'. While the cultural industries might be defined as those sectors where the communication of symbolic meaning is the primary function (such as the film and television industries), 'creative industries' is premised on an expanded definition, including areas such as advertising and software design, some of which have little discernible 'cultural content' (Galloway and Dunlop 17).

O'Regan argues that in this schema:

Both the existing 'subsidised' and commercial culture alike became of interest here for the 'resources' – of people, skills, talent and practice forms – they could provide for building enhanced capacity. (*Cultural* 20)

¹⁰ Cunningham suggests similar language is in evidence in Australian policy documents, including Department of Communications, Information Technology and the Arts' (DCITA) *Creative Industries Cluster Strategy* (2002), their *Digital Content Industry Action Agenda*, the Australia Council's *Creative Innovation Strategy* and Victorian state arts policy documents ('From').

Thus, the 'arts' no longer form the core of this policy model, but are simply one of many examples of 'creativity' that can be put to use in a range of policy domains. As Stuart Cunningham reminds us,

The 'price' to be paid for a creative economy is that the case for arts and culture will become less about their special or exceptional difference, and become diffused into the need for creativity across the economy and society. ('What' 4)

Public subsidisation of culture, then, is no longer premised on 'public good' arguments about the intrinsic value of arts and culture – rather it is on the basis of the sorts of (largely economic) value they can bring to other governmental programs (Anderson and Oakley; Banks; Cunningham 'From'; Cunningham 'What'; Flew; Gibson 'Creative Industries').

As a number of commentators have pointed out, this means that the 'creative industries' have a distinctive relationship to the market – namely, that arts and culture are primarily put to work as an economic resource (Galloway and Dunlop; Hesmondhalgh 'Cultural'; O'Regan *Cultural*). Hesmondhalgh suggests that the cultural industries model – to the extent that policymakers are still concerned with issues of access and equity – 'does not lose sight of issues of power and inequality' ('Cultural' 554). It was founded on a certain ambivalence towards markets, while also questioning the legitimacy of 'high cultural' forms ('Cultural' 556). However, he argues, the influence of neoliberalism that has culminated in the concept of the 'creative industries', means that this 'recognition of the importance of cultural markets' is turned, in practice, 'into an accommodation with the market' ('Cultural' 556). The creative industries are pitched as a key growth sector of the economy, including as a critical source of employment growth and export earnings (Garnham 25). As a result, governments are now investing heavily in resources to strengthen these economies, encouraging individuals and institutions to equip themselves to 'meet the challenges of this new "creative age"' (Banks 1).

The important point here is that as culture is mobilised in other non-cultural policy spheres, it becomes transformed. Creative industries rhetoric emerged out of the post-industrial discourse of the 'information' or 'knowledge'

society. As Garnham argues, 'It draws its political and ideological power from the prestige and economic importance attached to concepts of innovation, information, information workers' (15). He suggests that this respecification of 'culture' into 'creativity', 'knowledge' and 'innovation', promotes an 'artist-centred' model of culture, which privileges production over the broader policy issues of distribution, consumption and 'access' (15). A number of writers have commented on the decidedly individualistic impulse underpinning the 'creative industries' policy framework (Miller 'Creative' 94; Garnham). David Throsby suggests that this individualistic orientation can be attributed to its economic agenda, and contrasts this with the collective impulse historically associated with 'culture' (*Economics* 13). Economic objectives, he argues, reflect the self-interested goals of both individual consumers 'seeking to maximise their utility' and of 'producers seeking to maximise their profits' (*Economics* 13). Writing about the displacement of the social objectives of 'culture' by economic goals, Garnham states,

The qualitative benefits of this shift are equally important: the ostensibly collaborative nature of the arts supplies the ideal labour process that New Labour desires for the broader economy, and the arts also embody a pre-industrial ideology of artisanship that is sympathetic to the new economy's post-industrial privileging of individual entrepreneurs. (196)

In this sense there is a certain operational, if not ideological, 'fit' between the creative industries' emphasis on individual human capital as the source of creativity, and aestheticised notions of culture which privilege the role of the artist. This compatibility is reflected, for example, in the notion of the 'author' as the source of both intellectual property and creative genius.

Michael McKinnie notes this compatibility between the arts and the market in his analysis of New Labour's reworking of the arts sector in the UK. He suggests that this policy framework involves a distinctly neoliberal confluence between the priorities of the 'creative industries' model and the arts sector. This has taken place by way of:

a particularly affirmative reading of the social function of the arts themselves – the arts as a medium through which social inclusion occurs, the arts as a virtuous form of economic production ('creative industries'), and the arts as an object of technocratic 'modernisation'. (188)

The strategic and opportunistic benefits of the 'creative industries' model for the arts sector – insofar as it means greater government attention and investment – are clear. The notion of 'creativity' encompasses 'both artists and markets'; in this context, the mobilisation of the arts and culture for 'social inclusion' and for economic objectives, have a complementary or, what McKinnie describes as, 'sympathetic', relationship (194).

It should be noted, however, that the contribution of 'creativity' to the economy is difficult to measure and, some argue, overstated (Garnham).¹¹ Claims about the economic outcomes of 'creativity' also mean that 'we lose the ability to measure the actual contribution that cultural life (i.e. symbolic) goods make within the knowledge economy context' (Galloway and Dunlop 26). In Richard Florida's 'creative class' thesis – which has been enormously influential in urban and municipal-level planning, as well as in state cultural policies in Australia – the key rationale for subsidising culture is wealth creation (McGuigan 295). In Florida's schema, the 'creative class' is defined broadly enough to include 30% of the US workforce – including software developers, market researchers, artists and accountants – or what might otherwise be described as the 'professional-managerial' class (McGuigan 293). Economic opportunities lie in stimulating this 'information' or 'knowledge' sector, and a set of strategies are proposed for attracting these desirable workers to cities – namely, via a kind of cosmopolitan urbanism, which allows for the proliferation of ostensibly 'bohemian' lifestyles (Banks; Brooks; Lloyd; Osborne 'Against'). However, the extent to which Florida's strategies actually succeed in attracting the 'creative class' to cities, and whether this actually leads to economic growth, has been the subject of some debate (Malanga; McGuigan; Miller 'Creative'). As Miller argues, 'there is minimal proof for the existence of a creative class in Britain or for the assertion that "creative cities" outperform their drab brethren economically' ('Creative' 96).¹² Despite this lack of evidence, however, the 'creative class' thesis, and

¹¹ McKinnie also provides an account of the way in which neoliberal reformulations of the arts envisage a broad range of impacts, including economic ones, at the same time as it increases pressure to provide evidence of these impacts.

¹² Miller makes the particularly scathing assertion that the 'creative class' theory has such a poor evidential and critical foundation that it represents little more than a 'desire for power' on the part of its 'propagandists' ('Creative' 96).

associated 'creative industries' rhetoric, continue to wield considerable influence in policy spheres.

So while the expansion of culture from the arts, and its eventual translation into 'creativity', means that the remit of culture is broader than ever, its objectives remain largely confined to what is regarded as economically instrumental (Galloway and Dunlop 17). As such, criticisms of 'creative industries' are based on a perceived opposition between the cultural citizen and consumer, and a belief that 'creative industries' policies are privileging the latter at the expense of the former. The implications of this for community-based arts are expressed by Hawkes:

We persist in believing that art is made only by experts. This attitude is almost as prevalent in the world of community cultural development as it is anywhere else. We also persist in believing that art is the result of individual enterprise. ('Fourth' 20)

This returns us to the earlier predicament of both 'too much' and 'too little' culture. Belfiore and Bennett assert that there are two common and related narratives in accounts of the impacts of the arts, which also represent something of an orthodoxy amongst arts advocates. The first is a belief in the transformative power – and hence fundamental social importance – of the arts. The second narrative is 'one of crisis and beleaguerment, which circulates with similar ubiquity and which suggests that the arts are undervalued and in serious danger of collapse' (*Social* 4). Both of these are related to the power, and associated anxiety over, the 'aesthetic ethos', as discussed earlier. It is these narratives which inform concerns about increasing requirements for accountability from the arts sector; for example, the worry that the need to demonstrate 'outcomes' in the arts will mean that 'unintentionally, these pressures will institutionalise cultural mediocrity by encouraging both funders and funded to take safe bets' (Holden 21). This reference to 'mediocrity' betrays Holden's concern about the effect of culture's instrumentalisation on cultural value. In the next section I consider how attempts to counter this situation have entailed a return to arguments for the 'intrinsic' value of the arts, and how these might be read as a re-assertion of culture's aesthetic function.

DEFINING CULTURAL VALUE: RE-ASSERTING THE AESTHETIC

In debates over the instrumental versus the intrinsic value of the arts, a number of academic and policy commentators have argued for the necessity of retaining some sense of the autonomous and transformative nature of art (Harrington; Holden; Jowell; Mulligan and Smith 'Art'). As Banks points out, this is actually facilitated by the individualisation of culture enacted by the 'creative industries' push:

Individualisation has arguably led to a revival of artistic and creative cultural production, marking a resuscitation of the long-standing interest in the 'aesthetic' as a field of contrast or opposition to capitalist rationality. (95)

Banks describes this not as a return to a 'pure aesthetic domain' but as 'an attempt ... to initiate *ethical* forms of production that attempt to re-embed and re-moralise economic life' (96). However, in practice this amounts to the sort of mobilisation of aesthetics as a counterpoint to capitalist rationality that I referred to earlier. As Belfiore and Bennett argue, since the beginning of the twentieth century,

artists that espoused theories of art for art's sake turned their marginal position in the current art and literary markets into a badge of honour, whereby the unmarketability and 'uselessness' (to practical ends) of their art became not only their 'trademark', but an aesthetic, moral and political asset and the foundation for their higher ethical ground. (*Social* 183)

Arguments for the aesthetic value of art can be framed in a more practical way. Mulligan and Smith suggest that for the successful instrumentalisation of culture for social objectives, for example in community regeneration projects, a sense of the intrinsic artistic value of the work is crucial; if a cultural form does not have any such artistic value, they argue, there is nothing to instrumentalise ('Art' 5).¹³ This argument holds significant currency in contemporary arts policy settings and I examine its implications in more detail in subsequent chapters.

For now I want to demonstrate how this strategy for defending culture via a recuperation of aesthetics is possible because culture's expansion to a 'way of

¹³ The authors argue that 'Artistic projects can only shift perceptions and attitudes in a meaningful way if they have a "wow factor" related to an inspirational artistic vision and/or the clever crafting of diverse and well-targeted activities' ('Art' 5).

life' simply involved an expansion of the aesthetic ethos to a wider range of cultural forms; rather than a reconception of 'culture' in substantively different terms.¹⁴ The anthropological definition of culture is thus still a normative one. Eagleton puts it this way:

Culture as a way of life is an aestheticised version of society, finding in it the unity, sensuous immediacy and freedom from conflict which we associate with the aesthetic artefact. The word 'culture', which is supposed to designate a kind of society, is in fact a normative way of imagining that society. (*Idea 25*)

Eagleton describes the way that culture – even as a 'way of life' – is imbued with a moral authority and has functioned as a kind of 'anti-capitalist critique' (*Idea 15*). McHoul suggests that the anthropological notion of culture 'does moral work of various, indefinitely many, and locally specific kinds. ... It is not itself a moral category as such; rather it works to show that its *predicates* ("drinking", "gambling", "obsessed by media", "fake", etc) are to be heard in terms of moral value rather than, say, descriptively' (29). The 'unity' or reconciliation Eagleton alludes to here is also significant, and relates to the duality on which the term 'culture' is premised. Eagleton shows how in the early sense of the term, as 'cultivation', 'culture':

commingles growth and calculation, freedom and necessity, the idea of a conscious project but also of an unplannable surplus. ... [It] can also suggest a division within ourselves, between that part of us which cultivates and refines, and whatever within us constitutes the raw material for such refinement. (*Idea 5*)

This might be translated, or understood, as a tension between culture's aesthetic impulse and 'its fleshly incarnation'; or between the transcendental and the empirical (*Idea 19*). This duality echoes the reconciliatory function of the aesthetic mentioned earlier. In this way 'culture' implies the same ethical

¹⁴ Eagleton points out that Raymond Williams' efforts to legitimise and prioritise culture 'as a way of life' stops short of interrogating the relationship between this and the other sense(s) of culture. Eagleton sets out to make these links more explicit; in his discussion, 'culture (in the sense of the arts) defines a quality of fine living (culture as civility) which it is the task of political change to realise in culture (in the sense of social life) as a whole' (*Idea 20*). It is via this narrative, then, that 'the aesthetic and anthropological are thus reunited' (*Idea 20*).

injunction as the aesthetic – to reconcile and harmonise the self. So the forms of self-cultivation that define the aesthetic realm, define that of culture too.¹⁵

It is in this way that ‘culture’ – even as it is envisaged in its broad, anthropological sense – retains its civilising function, and is implicated in the disciplinary forms of self-cultivation I associated earlier with the aesthetic. It simply adds a ‘civic dimension and socio-political significance’ to these transformative processes (Belfiore and Bennett *Social* 145). There is an emerging tradition of analysis that attests to this governmental function of culture. Tony Bennett’s work on museums, for example, demonstrates how cultural policies have long been used as mechanisms for the moral supervision and management of populations. With reference to the emergence of literary education, Hunter argues that by configuring specific, localised and instrumental objectives for culture, the ‘aesthetico-ethical practice of the self’ becomes redeployed as a technique of governmental administration – namely, for the moral supervision and cultural formation of populations (*Culture* 29). In her work on Australian arts policy, Lisanne Gibson picks up on these discussions, arguing how ‘art programs have been part of a complex of institutions and knowledges which manage populations by equipping individuals with the capacity to be self-regulating in various ways’ (*Uses* 7). In all of these examples, ‘culture’ is used to construct a certain sort of citizen, and to imbue individuals with particular, desirable capacities.

It is the enduring aesthetic function of ‘culture’ – and its injunction to a certain kind of self-cultivation and self-formation – that lends it to being drawn into techniques of government. However, it is also this normative aspect of aesthetics which is the source of resistance to this instrumentalisation. As Hunter argues, it is the “governmentalised” form of society that the aesthetic ethos constitutes as the “mechanical”, “alienated”, “ordinary” and “mundane” world to be transcended’ (*Aesthetics* 362). This puts the policies associated with ‘culture’, and community-based arts in particular, in a bind. Such policies become interminably caught in a tension between intrinsic and

¹⁵ According to Hunter, these practices of the self involve an imposition of a division between ‘thought and feeling, consciousness and social being’, and defines a certain ‘critical’ outlook (*Culture* 82). This results in an incompleteness of the self which, after Schiller, Hunter relates to the figure of ‘the alienated society’ (*Culture* 70).

instrumental justifications for 'culture's' worth – rationalisations which serve to both reinforce, and undermine each other. The remainder of this chapter considers alternative policy frameworks for thinking about 'culture' – ones which might circumvent this tension and the sorts of circular debates that accompany it.

CULTURAL CITIZENSHIP AND CULTURAL CAPITAL

Theorisations of 'cultural citizenship' might offer a way out of the dilemma associated with the uses of 'culture' described above. Twenty years ago, Stuart Cunningham asserted that 'a renewed concept of citizenship should become increasingly central to cultural studies as it moves into the 1990s' (*Framing* 10). It is worth reflecting, then, on how the concept of citizenship might usefully be conceived. As the term has been mobilised in the context of international cultural policy statements, it hinges on notions of 'cultural development' and draws on the discourse of cultural rights (De Cuellar). Central to this discourse is a belief in culture's distinctiveness, or what was described above as the 'intrinsic' value of culture.¹⁶ The thesis of the 'cultural exception', for example, asserts that because of culture's crucial role in facilitating human expression, provisions must be made to allow for 'market failure in the market for culture'; the market mechanism functioning alone will 'fail to provide the amount of culture that society actually wishes to consume, and, importantly, is willing to pay for' (Galloway and Dunlop 26). This kind of cultural advocacy is, to some extent, a response to the perceived dominance of economic objectives and marginalisation of culture caused by default market relations.¹⁷

However, perhaps the most prominent aspect of the agenda of cultural citizenship – at least as it is expressed in the UNESCO policy documents cited

¹⁶ An example of this perceived distinctiveness is contained in Article 8 of the Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity which states that cultural goods and services should be seen as 'vectors of identity, values and meaning, [and] must not be treated as mere commodities or consumer goods' (UCLG 7).

¹⁷ While this rhetoric is most pronounced in international policy instruments, they are clearly endorsed by some domestic governments – evidenced, for example, by the UK government's support for the UN Convention on Cultural Diversity (Galloway and Dunlop 27).

above – is its focus on facilitating cultural sustainability. This refers to the perceived marginalisation of local cultures and identities in the face of increasing flows of mediated culture in a globalised world, and posits ‘culture’ as the means by which groups claim rights to expressions of difference (Adams and Goldbard ‘Community’; UCLG). The United Cities for Local Government *Agenda 21 for Culture* policy document, states that culture is as ‘necessary for humankind as biodiversity is for nature’ (5). This is reiterated by definitions of cultural citizenship found elsewhere – as ‘the maintenance and development of cultural lineage via education, custom, language, and religion, and the acknowledgement of difference in and by mainstream cultures’ (Miller and Yúdice 25). So the expression of local identities which are increasingly under threat are seen as vital not only to meaningful democracy, but to ‘sustainable development’ (Galloway and Dunlop 27).

While, as I mentioned, these arguments are still informed by assumptions about the ‘intrinsic’ value of culture, what is significant is that this policy framework endeavours to find a way through the opposition between the subject as ‘citizen’ and ‘consumer’. This is attempted by situating the economic, not as an outcome, but as a means to an end. The United Cities and Local Government Committee on Culture state their agenda in these terms:

Proper economic assessment of the creation and distribution of cultural goods – amateur or professional, craft or industrial, individual or collective – becomes, in the contemporary world, a decisive factor in emancipation, a guarantee of diversity and, therefore, an attainment of the democratic right of peoples to affirm their identities in the relations between cultures. (7)

Such assertions demonstrate how considerations of economic value are invariably tied up with cultural production and consumption; cultural practices are always-already imbricated with economic ones (Throsby *Economics* 102).¹⁸ In this way, it is possible to read economic justifications for culture affirmatively, and consider how they might work alongside, rather than in opposition to, humanistic rationales. Colin Mercer, for example,

¹⁸ David Throsby argues, for example, that ‘creative activity can be modeled as a rational decision process, where the maximisation of value guides the artist’s hand and choices are made in a systematic way’ (*Economics* 104).

argues that 'cultural or creative industry development can *at the same time* be about community capacity-building, social inclusion, cultural diversity and cohesion' (*Towards* 21). Miller and Yúdice describe this interconnection of the cultural and the economic another way:

The consumer and the citizen loom large in global discussions of textual exchange, with one supposedly exercising free will in buying culture, and the other in authorising the state to use tax money to make culture. But commodities are always cultural, and cultural products are always commodities. (75)

It is the aim of subsequent chapters of this thesis to focus on these links between the citizen and consumer, and how these figures have informed the development and implementation of specific community-based arts programs.

The notion of cultural citizenship highlights how culture constitutes the means by which particular groups claim resources and seek meaningful inclusion in political processes. A number of writers have explored this concept and its role in managing various forms of cultural difference (Bennett *Differing*; Chaney; Miller and Yúdice; Stevenson *Agendas*; Stevenson 'Cultural'). Mercer's work provides a particularly clear articulation of 'cultural citizenship' as a framework for talking about culture as a 'resource'. Mercer describes 'culture' as the means by which people access power, and as providing a direct link with 'civil society' and the 'nation' (*Towards*). Rather than reducing the effects of 'culture' to the more benign outcomes of 'social inclusion' discourse – for example, 'confidence-building' or creating a 'sense of community' – he grants it more political force. 'Culture' is the means by which groups can *participate* in, rather than simply seek *inclusion* in, official discourses.¹⁹ Mercer describes what he sees as the political implications of 'culture' in these terms:

The soil of culture is rich and complex. It is made up of narratives, stories, images, sense of place and of belonging: the resources of identity and of cultural citizenship. And ... these are also the filaments and capillary

¹⁹ Of course, claims to citizen rights can equally be translated to 'obligations', and this is certainly the reading of the Australian Liberal government's introduction of the Citizenship test to migrants in 2007.

networks of civil society, the constituent components of social and cultural capital that are crucial to any process or program of sustainable development. (*Towards xx*)

Yúdice suggests that the notion of culture as a 'resource' subsumes both anthropological and aesthetic versions of culture (4). Certainly, the intertwining of these two notions has been a defining tension in debates about culture's instrumentalisation. Thinking of culture as a 'resource' potentially involves a pragmatic, and productive, take on these tensions – one which posits a link between 'culture' and 'civil society', but which does not over-emphasise either the normative aspect of culture or its economic benefits.

Crucially, populations require specific capacities to *access* citizen rights and effective civic participation. These capacities have a 'cultural' aspect because it is relations of cultural difference which underpin their (in)equitable distribution. In this respect, Bourdieu's notion of cultural capital has been read by some as central to the politics of cultural citizenship (Jeannotte; Karim; Mercer *Towards*; Murray).²⁰ Jeannotte usefully distills Bourdieu's notion of 'cultural capital' into three components:

- 1) embodied capital (or habitus), the system of lasting dispositions that form an individual's character and guides his or her actions and tastes; 2) objectified capital, the means of cultural expression, such as painting, writing, and dance, that are symbolically transmissible to others; and 3) institutionalised capital, the academic qualifications that establish the value of the holder of a given qualification. (126)

So cultural capital contributes to social stratification along class lines; and this is enabled, and such stratification reproduced, via the education system. Cultural capital is usually linked to the possession of an aesthetic disposition towards 'high' cultural forms which grants individuals status or prestige and, in this way, is implicated in relations of social inequity (Harrington 94; Karim 146). Bourdieu regards the education system as the principal mechanism for reform and transformation in order to ameliorate the effects of unequal transmission of cultural capital (Bennett and Silva 88).

²⁰ See Savage and Bennett for a detailed discussion of the reception of Bourdieu's work across disciplines in social and cultural analysis.

In order for 'cultural capital' to further understanding of cultural citizenship it needs some modifications from Bourdieu's formulation – significantly, by broadening the forms cultural capital might take, and by considering how cultural capital might operate in the context of racial and ethnic differences (Bennett and Silva; Karim). Most significantly, it refers to a broader set of cultural competencies and knowledge than certain aesthetic dispositions. Karim describes, for example, the sorts of competencies required for meaningful civic engagement:

The citizen role involves a range of forms of tacit knowledge, competence and taken-for-granted assumptions. Citizens must know how to engage in citizenship activities. They require basic working knowledge of the political system and skills in accessing and processing information, interpreting political talk, and debating public issues. All of this must be contained in the taken-for-granted knowledge which comprises their (shared) lifeworld. (147)

Karim provides some specific examples of such competencies, including knowledge of the 'jargon' required at a workplace that go beyond the technical requirements of a job; and other sorts of 'insider knowledge' that are not formally and publicly available, but which come from membership and inclusion in particular social groups (149). In this respect, Karim refers to, what has been described elsewhere, as a culture *of* citizenship (Couldry); and it is the knowledges required for inclusion in this culture that are unevenly distributed amongst the population. This is similar to Ghassan Hage's notion of 'national capital' which refers to the advantages derived from membership in a majority ethnic group from their 'at homeness' within a national cultural frame (*White*; Bennett and Silva 91). Thus, contemporary interpretations of cultural capital recognise the role of ethnic differences in contributing to the differential distribution of capital (Bennett and Silva).

There have been a number of attempts to incorporate a discussion of cultural capital into policy by considering how cultural capital might be related to *social* capital (Mercer *Towards*; Jeannotte; Murray) – a concept which has enjoyed substantial policy currency for a number of years. It has been suggested that a recognition of the effects of cultural capital is crucial for understanding the type or *quality* of social capital that is generated between individuals. That is, the sort of social capital one might have is influenced by

the sorts of economic and cultural capital one's connections might possess (Mercer *Towards* 47). As Catherine Murray argues, 'cultural capital contributes to societal networks because it *directs the social connectedness*: its function is diversifying, contextualising, imbuing with meaning' (37). Jeannotte describes how cultural capital contributes to 'bonding' social capital by 'reinforcing ideologies, values and social differences, and by strengthening ties between intimates' (126). More debatably, however, she suggests that cultural capital might contribute to 'bridging' social capital,

by promoting social solidarity (or commitment to a larger whole), social integration (or linkages between functional elements), and sustainable communities (patterns of social and spatial interaction distinguishing a collective). (126)

She goes on to suggest the impact of cultural capital on 'personal empowerment', increased cultural participation and civic engagement, 'quality of life', and 'cultural sustainability' (127).²¹ In some ways this expansive reading of the effects of cultural capital moves, as Bennett and Silva note, significantly beyond Bourdieu's original conception and political agenda (104). While this is not a problem in itself, the concept of cultural capital is perhaps not the right explanatory tool for these other axes of cultural policy. Nonetheless, Mercer posits the possibility of a 'cultural capital assessment tool' which might form a standardised measure in examinations of cultural policy (*Towards*).²²

Perhaps the more critical issue is what form a redistribution of capacities of citizenship might take; that is, whether the distribution of cultural capital is oriented towards the 'social inclusion' of minority groups into an existing cultural canon, or whether it involves shifting the grounds of cultural legitimacy themselves. The former implies a 'civilising' agenda and a preservation of existing hierarchies, and is a closer approximation of Bourdieu's own position. Bourdieu argued for the redistribution of cultural

²¹ Johnson offers a similarly broad interpretation of cultural capital, in which it takes the forms of 'confidence, image, individual well-being, social cohesion and economic viability' (296).

²² Mercer bases this on Krishna and Schrader's widely cited 'Social Capital Assessment Tool' (*Towards* 35). However, In Chapter Four I consider some problems associated with this conception of cultural capital as a communal resource.

capital rather than changing the relations that produced differences in levels of legitimacy attributed to different cultural forms. This is underscored by an enduring belief in the universal value of various forms of 'high' or legitimate culture. As Bennett and Silva suggest, Bourdieu argued that affirming the cultural tastes of the working classes

merely confined the inner-city poor to their class destinies since it did not affect the ways in which the relations between legitimate high culture and the education system served to lock them out of the mechanisms through which middle-class educational and occupational success sustain each other. (90)

While Bourdieu retained this belief in the hierarchical structure of the aesthetic sphere, contemporary theorists of cultural capital have instead had an empirical focus on 'the extent to which participation in legitimate culture still serves as a marker of social distinction' (Bennett and Silva 90). Bennett et al.'s study, *Cultural Capital and Social Exclusion*, considers these questions in order to rethink the issue of access to cultural resources in a way which does not simply reduce it to the agenda of social inclusion – that is, the 'social and moral integration of a range of deprived or marginalised constituencies into "the mainstream"' (Bennett and Silva 94).

It is this latter possibility that involves the recognition of culturally differentiated competencies and their role in actually respecifying hierarchies of cultural legitimacy, and reshaping the sorts of cultural knowledge required to access citizenship rights. As Bennett argues, the issue here is the development of inclusive forms of cultural citizenship which 'go beyond the promotion of more equitable patterns of participation' in certain, legitimated forms of cultural activity ('Introduction' 8). Rather, cultural citizenship could shift the terms on which such judgments about legitimacy are decided.

Mercer describes the implications of such a policy orientation:

There is an emphasis here on the productive cultural capacity of communities and individuals not just to celebrate and affirm their culture but to actually enter into the cultural and creative industries by recognising, mapping, and exploiting their own indigenous and cultural resources on their own terms. This is an invitation to the training and positioning of socio-economic and socio-cultural entrepreneurs as an outcome of projects rather than simply 'beneficiaries'. ('Indicators' 16)

In this framework, the function of art and culture is not its 'integrative' or even 'transformative' effect, but its potential as a mechanism for conferring the necessary capacities to eventually enter into the processes through which the uses, and value, of cultural forms are decided.²³ In this respect, as Murray argues, 'cultural capital *works* on the social' (37). In Mercer's example, the emphasis is on developing entrepreneurial capacities – but this could sit alongside other sorts of competencies and forms of institutional leverage required for meaningful civic engagement.

There is a need, then, to distinguish between different types of cultural participation and the relative sorts of advantage they might offer – something which is currently missing from policy debates in which it is assumed that any cultural participation is inherently empowering. Not all cultural participation is equal; there is a substantive difference between a cultural program which might engage individuals in some vague form of 'community', and one which involves the meaningful redistribution of specific instrumental capacities. This might entail providing individuals with certain forms of cultural training and literacies that enables them to, as Mercer suggests, exploit their own cultural resources on their own terms, or to intervene in existing hierarchies of cultural production and use. Cultural participation should be assessed in terms of the nature and context of that participation, the specific sorts of cultural capital it generates, and its implications and effects.

This signals the need for a better understanding of the relationship between cultural participation and cultural capital. A number of efforts to reach such an understanding exist, including Peterson and Kern's widely cited work on the 'cultural omnivore' – that is, the thesis that hierarchies of 'high' and 'low' culture have been replaced by the distribution of 'omnivoreness' as a capacity

²³ Chaney's discussion on cultural citizenship argues for something similar: 'Perhaps, rather than trying to decide what sort of culture should be made available, policies for access, etc., policy-makers should be concentrating on ways in which they can facilitate citizens *deciding for themselves what is to count as culture and how it is to help them decide who they are*' (170).

in itself.²⁴ Perhaps the most significant and rigorous attempts to examine the relationship between cultural participation and cultural capital have been Bennett, Emmison and Frow's *Accounting for Tastes* and Bennett et al.'s 'Cultural Capital and Social Exclusion' project.²⁵ Both studies shed light on the extent to which hierarchies of 'legitimate' culture still operate, and the sorts of social stratification that result from different sorts of cultural participation. The latter project distinguishes between various modes of cultural involvement (or different 'component parts' of cultural capital): cultural tastes, knowledge and frequency of participation (Bennett et al. 'Cultural Capital' 3). The study also suggests a number of possibilities for distinct formations of cultural capital, and the apparent 'mainstreaming' of what might be called 'snob' tastes (25).²⁶ Significantly, despite the apparent loosening of boundaries between high and low culture, Bennett et al.'s work suggests that there are still different modes of cultural consumption and participation which have a basis in distinct social formations within the population.²⁷

Significantly, Bennett and Silva have emphasised that cultural tastes do not conform to a unified logic that is wholly explicable in terms of a person's class or social position, and that in most cultural capital literature, the coherence of an individual's tastes has been exaggerated (91). Individuals belonging to a particular social group do not necessarily all share 'a distinctive aesthetic

²⁴ See also DiMaggio and Mukhtar. While the 'cultural omnivore' thesis has become a staple in discussions of cultural capital, Warde, Wright and Gayo-Cal suggest that it is problematic to assume that the 'omnivore' exists as a singular and coherent 'type' (158).

²⁵ See the major publication arising from this project, Bennett et al.'s *Culture, Class, Distinction*.

²⁶ The five distinct formations of cultural capital found include, that of the Kantian aesthetic; 'a more conventional form of "snob" culture'; culture that is mobilised by the professional middle classes as 'a key aspect of transgenerational strategies of inheritance'; the cultural omnivore thesis; and Ghassan Hage's notion of 'national capital' (Bennett et al. 'Cultural Capital' 24).

²⁷ See for example, their distinction between active or spectacular modes of participation, and more contemplative or aesthetic cultural consumption, and how these, in some instances, map on to discernible class formations (Bennett et al. 'Cultural Capital'). The more active forms of cultural participation – such as that found in museums or festivals – encourage wider access than the aesthetic modes associated with art galleries or the opera (Murray 47).

ethos or lifestyle that operates as a unifying principle' (Bennett and Silva 91). So the apparent taste 'profiles' of particular social groups cannot be extrapolated into the assumption that these groups possess the capacities required for cultural citizenship, and others do not. Bennett and Silva draw from the work of Lahire, who reveals the contradictory or 'dissonant' elements that comprise individuals' tastes (Bennett and Silva 92). Thus, the picture is far more complicated than a simple distinction between those who possess cultural capital and those who do not.

This dissonance in the profiles of various social formations relates to a more general proliferation of taste cultures that have emerged in recent decades. This has been accompanied by a multiplication of identities occurring largely as a result of the increased segmentation and fragmentation of commercial culture (O'Regan *Cultural* 8). Cultural capital – insofar as it informs these patterns of cultural consumption and production, and contributes to concomitant processes of inclusion and exclusion – is still a crucial consideration, but it has become more complicated. O'Regan suggests that it is actually this diversification of tastes and identities which has resulted in the de-privileging of 'legitimate' or 'high' culture referred to earlier. A number of other writers have discussed this apparent blurring of boundaries between high and low culture, as being caused by processes of commodification (Miller 'Screening'; Miller and Yúdice; Prior; Yúdice). So these shifts in the hierarchicisation of taste cultures are primarily the result of *commercial* cultural forms and their influence on everyday tastes and cultural participation, rather than due to government-initiated efforts to 'democratise' culture.

Consequently, there is a need for policymakers to recognise the role of commodified culture within a broad cultural policy framework. Cultural policy – and its mandate to subsidise culture – has traditionally denigrated commercial culture, and this accounts for much of the disdain towards the creative industries rhetoric referred to earlier. However, as Lisanne Gibson argues,

in order to find an even balance between cultural and economic objectives for cultural support, we need to be particular about what our uses for art are,

who we are applying them to and which cultural forms are most useful to our particular aims at any one time. (*Uses* 119)

In some instances this might lead to public advocacy and support for more commercialised cultural forms. For policymakers to regard their publics as internally differentiated and segmented might mean thinking of them in the same way as the commercial cultural industries – as audiences (O'Regan *Cultural* 10).²⁸ Chapter Five of this thesis examines the influence of 'audience development' frameworks on subsidised culture.

CONCLUSION

An approach that brings together the notion of 'cultural citizenship' with considerations of cultural capital is not premised on the 'intrinsic', aesthetic value of culture. Rather, it has specific, instrumental ends: to promote the more equitable distribution of cultural competencies that might offer various forms of (civic or economic) advantage, via cultural participation. However, this framework does retain some sense of the distinctiveness of culture – as the forms and processes through which meaning and symbolic capital is transmitted.²⁹

For now, though, the uses of 'culture' continue to be implicated in debates over its 'intrinsic', aesthetic value, and its instrumentalisation. The notion of culture as 'resource' is still largely understood as a denigration of 'culture' and, at least at the level of policy rhetoric, has intensified antagonisms between the two versions of 'culture', rather than 'subsuming' them as Yúdice suggests. Culture's historical divisions have not been absorbed and replaced; as we have seen, these divisions endure and continue to inform current debates about cultural value and the 'uses' to which culture is put.

Interestingly, Hunter suggests that the expansion of popular education since the beginning of the nineteenth century has meant that 'more individuals

²⁸ See also UCLG for an account of how building audiences might constitute a key element of cultural citizenship (6).

²⁹ See Mato and Miller 'Creative' for a debate over why everything should not be seen as 'cultural'.

have access to the aesthetic ethic today than ever before' ('Aesthetics' 358). This ethic is no longer the esoteric discipline of a minority class but 'a discipline of self-formation for a large cross-section of the educated population' ('Aesthetics' 358). In saying so, Hunter does not deny the specific forms of social privilege implied by the aesthetic; he is arguing firstly, that it is not *necessarily* the direct expression of a class-based political hierarchy, and, secondly, that the 'aesthetico-ethical imperative' has much wider reach than is usually readily admitted. So the democratisation and expansion of 'aesthetics' I discussed earlier has, in this respect, been effective. What is problematic is the continuing *valorisation* of the aesthetic function of art and culture as a defence against its instrumentalisation. This means the continuing legitimisation of specific cultural forms over others, as will become apparent in subsequent chapters of this thesis.

The aims of community-based arts might be understood as having two registers – the first involves 'bringing art *to* the community', and the second entails the democratisation of the production of art itself (Lewis 113). Both of these can be traced to the different senses and uses of culture discussed in this chapter. If the first objective entails a problematic 'civilising' agenda, the second objective – the desire to expand artistic production to sectors of the population that are normally excluded from these processes – has, according to Lewis, largely resulted in the production of art that 'no one wants to consume. ... Community art has, in this way, marginalised itself' (112). He argues:

Far from challenging or storming the citadels, [community arts] has remained a harmless and irrelevant skirmishing on the sidelines. ... Perhaps most importantly, the community arts movement has let the elitist aesthetics of the dominant subsidised culture off the hook. Most community artists were opposed to this cultural elitism, and yet, by forming a separate entity, 'the community arts', they allowed themselves to be appropriated by it. (113)

This contention, that community-based arts has been incorporated into dominant hierarchies of cultural value, is one that I will examine in the following chapters. I will also explore the sorts of cultural participation fostered by contemporary community-based arts, and the kinds of cultural capital this might generate.

3

SOME PROBLEMS WITH 'COMMUNITY ARTS': READING CHANGES AT FOOTSCRAY COMMUNITY ARTS CENTRE

'Community' and 'culture' are totally contested words. 'Art' is also a contested word, and so is 'development'. So you always have to deal with that. My personal belief is that a community arts or CCD organisation sits in a really difficult place. ... [I]t's always in a really dodgy area between all these words and their definitions. This makes it the most interesting area too. You can get away with not having to deal with any of those words, because you're actually dealing with stuff that's happening on the ground with real people.

(Everist)

The previous chapters of this thesis problematised two key ideas underpinning community-based arts – 'community' and 'culture'. Chapter One tracked uses of 'community' – particularly the sorts of conservative and nostalgic projects they imply, and how, in the context of contemporary 'regeneration' or 'development' programs, these are placed uncomfortably alongside a purportedly progressive political agenda. Within these strategies a specific relationship between 'community' and 'culture' is set up to remedy a perceived social decline, and the effect of this is to problematically bring a

moral agenda to contemporary ethical projects. I suggested that rather than conceive of 'community' as an overdetermined, moral space, it could be redefined as a provisional and open-ended project, that forms part of indeterminate processes of self-fashioning. Chapter Two examined the notion of 'culture' in order to highlight the way in which its aesthetic and instrumental aspects – though often pitted against each other in debates about 'culture' – are actually interrelated. The aim of this was not to discredit the aesthetic dimension of 'culture', but to problematise arguments which valorise the aesthetic as a more 'authentic' or valuable form of 'culture' than its instrumental ones. Moreover, as aesthetics are deeply imbricated with everyday, individual projects, it is only the attachment of certain types of *value* to aestheticised culture which I wish to critique. The notion of cultural capital helps us to understand how aestheticised culture has historically involved an exclusionary hierarchy of value. I concluded the chapter by looking at how cultural capital might be thought of as a resource or capacity, rather than as a tool of social distinction. If this is the case an analysis of community-based arts needs to take into account the sorts of cultural capital and value that it generates and distributes. It is to this task that I turn in the next two chapters.

In this chapter I examine the conceptual and political malleability of community-based arts by considering some shifts that have taken place in the relatively recent history of Footscray Community Arts Centre (FCAC), an organisation based in Melbourne, Australia. The history I provide is necessarily an incomplete one that looks briefly at some aspects of the organisation's work in the 1980s and 1990s, before a more detailed reading of its response to changes in arts policy between 2000 and 2008. FCAC has been in existence since 1974 and in that time has undertaken a vast number of projects, varying in form, scale, intent and effect. The analysis contained in these chapters is a reading of interviews with past staff and board members of the organisation, as well its annual reports, program documentation, promotional material and some internal records and organisational reviews. The majority of fieldwork was undertaken in 2008 and 2009 and my study does not take into account more recent developments that have taken place at

the Centre under the leadership of its current director, Jennifer Barry.¹ I do not seek to provide a comprehensive account of the Centre's manifold projects, nor do I offer a celebration of its 'achievements'. Such projects have been undertaken elsewhere and in fact form part of the archival material I review here.² The aim of this analysis is to show how the theoretical problems surrounding the concepts of 'community' and 'culture' are reflected in practical and political dilemmas faced by FCAC during its history.

The chapter begins by focusing on how FCAC operationalised 'community arts', particularly early on in the Centre's existence, when, it has been suggested, the field was a particularly pliable one (Hawkins; McCracken). FCAC has traditionally defined its constituency geographically, as Melbourne's western suburbs – a region which is regularly associated with social disadvantage. In this sense, its 'community' is *spatial*, and is also equated with *cultural marginality*. FCAC's work was typical of the sorts of inclusive, participatory and democratic ideals of community arts, and in pursuing these goals, the Centre's programs developed and expanded in a relatively flexible, unstructured way. However, it is this very openness which caused significant problems for the Centre and forced it to undergo major upheaval five or so years ago – redefining its constituency and the focus of its arts and cultural practice. I argue that these changes were the result of two factors: firstly, broader shifts in Australian cultural and arts policy in the last decade have required organisations across the community-based arts sector to respecify their practice in accordance with neoliberal policy priorities. Secondly, changes at FCAC are the result of the problematic nature of 'community' itself. While the Centre attempted to address the dilemmas associated with this notion of 'community' I explain how this is complicated by the unstable relationship between aesthetic and anthropological versions of culture. Despite the efforts of the community-based arts sector to reconcile

¹ This caveat alludes to the practical dilemmas involved in conducting this kind of instrumental research. While my findings were 'current' at the time research was initiated, the extent to which my analysis remains so has been disputed by the Centre's *now* current director. The presentation of my research in forums where FCAC staff (who may wish to distance themselves from my findings) circulate, also raised questions about my position as a researcher and the sorts of exchange that might result from the critical analysis I have undertaken.

² See for example, Beissbarth and Turner; FCAC *An Ear*.

the two, recent shifts in Australian arts policy have reasserted the divide between these forms of 'culture', resulting in an institutional split between the pursuit of the 'arts', on the one hand, and 'cultural planning' and 'development', on the other. Finally, since the changes I describe at FCAC have involved a redefinition of the role of the arts 'participant' and 'community', I consider the implications of this for the participatory politics of community-based arts. Specifically, I examine the notion of the 'expert' in community-based arts – usually, the 'artsworkeer' – and the role they take on now that the position of the arts participant is increasingly being called into question. This will lead to a discussion of the problematic place of the notion of 'citizenship' in community-based arts.

DEFINING 'COMMUNITY' AT FCAC

FCAC was established in 1974 and it was oriented, largely, towards bringing the arts to working people ('About'; Dimasi). It was funded primarily by the Community Arts Committee of the Australia Council – forming part of the recently elected Labor government's 'experiment with social democracy' (Hawkins 29). The push for increased access to, and participation in the arts was not new, and it formed part of long-standing efforts to spread the 'civilising benefits' of art (Hawkins xviii; Gibson *Uses*). Hawkins argues that the Whitlam government's agenda to democratise culture falls into this tradition – this was the 'Opera in the Park' model of cultural access, with an emphasis on 'culture' with a capital 'c' (31). So while the imperative of 'access' is often regarded as being antagonistic to the elitist one of pursuing artistic 'excellence', these programs might both be read as part of a larger 'civilising' agenda.

The history of FCAC, in many ways, reflects the shifting history of federal arts policy discourse, and my account will move between the two to highlight these parallels. Both FCAC and the Community Arts Program of the Australia Council – FCAC's main funder – were established within several years of each other; the Community Arts Committee was formalised as the

Community Arts Board in 1977,³ and in 1979, FCAC moved to its present site on the banks of the Maribyrnong River. Hawkins provides a useful history of the development of community arts in Australia as a policy formation of the federal government. Her account describes how the CAP set the terms on which community arts projects were funded and evaluated, and how its changing priorities were reflected in the landscape of the community arts sector. Hawkins is right to point out that

The funding body was constitutive in the sense that it established a field with wide references under which a multiplicity of disparate activities and discourses were gathered together and *re-presented* as community arts. (xix)

In policy terms, 'community implied diversity', and one of the effects of the CAP was to generate 'a proliferation of new constituencies', ultimately compelling a recognition of cultural difference (Hawkins 23). The CAP was also historically FCAC's biggest funder and it has informed the various axes along which the term 'community' operates at the Centre – spatially, as a marker of cultural 'lack', and as a signifier of a kind of populist authenticity. It is in these spaces that FCAC's constituency lies.

Throughout its existence, FCAC's constituency has primarily been defined geographically. The Centre is emblematic of the connection between 'community' and the 'local' discussed in Chapter One, and the way in which 'community' continues to be emphasised as 'a regional or geographically coded space' (Hawkins 36). Based in what is now described as the 'inner-city' suburb of Footscray, and having received more or less continuous program funding from the City of Maribyrnong local council, the Centre has always defined its constituency geographically. Despite being based in Footscray, the Centre has, in theory at least, aimed to service the cultural needs of the broader western region of Melbourne. One account of the Centre's history describes FCAC as 'dedicated to the spirit and soul of the people of Melbourne's West' (FCAC *An Ear* 1). Melbourne's western suburbs, or 'The West' is a large geographical area encompassing six local government municipalities and is home to a residential population of about 600 000 people

³ For the sake of consistency, both the Community Arts Committee and the Community Arts Board will be referred to as the Community Arts Program (CAP) throughout this chapter.

(NIEIR 2). The history of the area since white colonisation is usually described in terms of its role as a centre of industrial activity (NIEIR 3; FCAC *An Ear* 66). Continuing factory expansion from the early twentieth century until the 1970s was accompanied by residential development, and today dominant industrial activity in the area includes heavy industry such as petrochemical, metal, engineering, and shipbuilding (FCAC *An Ear* 66; Lack). Recent decades have seen something of a decline in industry, and an increase in land use for residential, commercial, and educational purposes (City of Maribyrnong 3). These diverse activities have been met with a shift in the demographics of the area, including emerging gentrification in certain suburbs – the implications of which are discussed in more detail in the next chapter.

The western suburbs of Melbourne have historically been seen as culturally ‘disadvantaged’, or at least ‘marginal’, and one of the aims of the Centre since its establishment was to bring opportunities for creative expression and participation to these communities, reducing the region’s isolation from what was perceived as the cultural mainstream. During the Centre’s early years, parts of the West were in many ways lacking basic infrastructure such as sewerage, hospitals, transport and recreation facilities (Mills *Footscray* 9). The availability of affordable and temporary accommodation in the western suburbs, particularly in Footscray, also made it home to a large number of new migrant groups and today the area remains one of the most ethnically diverse in Melbourne.⁴ Thus, the area has a long-standing association both with cultural diversity and socio-economic disadvantage that make it an exemplary site for community-based arts activity. FCAC was one of the first cultural organisations to address this perception of social disadvantage and cultural ‘lack’ in the West.

Many of FCAC’s projects in its thirty-year history have been aimed at celebrating the West and creating a sense of local pride.⁵ The early work of the Centre reflected what Hawkins describes as the ‘populist aesthetics’ of

⁴ In 2004 38.8% of the area’s population was foreign born – 4% higher than the average for the Melbourne metropolitan area (NIEIR 2).

⁵ Projects such as *West of the West*, FCAC’s collaborations with *The Big West* festival, and *The Go Show*, are all examples of this effort to construct ‘a sense of place’, the implications of which are discussed further in the next chapter.

community arts, where various forms of participatory art were mobilised to celebrate 'community' but – usually because of their 'amateur' production standards – 'rarely circulated beyond their original site of production' (25, 45). Significantly, as Hawkins argues, 'communities' were defined as distinct from 'audiences' because they were seen to lack skills of appreciation or aesthetic contemplation (45). This meant that certain artistic forms were privileged – such as the festival or mural (for collective expression), and the workshop (for raising self-esteem). Therefore, 'art was primarily a form of therapy, a hands-on activity, an aid to self-expression and identity. Communities participated, audiences appreciated' (Hawkins 37). This critique of the patronising politics of community arts is important to bear in mind when considering FCAC's more recent cultural activity. It reminds us that even as the organisation changes and new priorities are introduced these versions of 'community' have not been completely displaced. These historical problems continue to inflect the work of FCAC, while at the same time new discursive dilemmas surrounding the notion of 'community' emerge.

As FCAC expanded into the 1980s, it worked with a larger number of sub-groups and constituencies, producing an ever-greater quantity of work. One significant shift in this decade was the influence of a 'cultural rights' agenda on the Centre's work. In this discourse, the arts are mobilised in order to facilitate the collective expression of identity and self-determination of various groups, rather than for their corrective or 'therapeutic' effects (Hawkins 15; Mercer *Local*; UCLG). The role of the arts here is to celebrate difference. As 'community' was broadened to refer to a common interest or experience, this provided the terms on which FCAC started working with a range of groups, including young people, women, disabled people and, with the appointment of one of Australia's first 'ethnic arts officers', it began working with some of Footscray's diverse ethnic communities. It is in this way that the notion of cultural pluralism began to inform community arts discourse, and specific groups were celebrated for their distinctive aesthetic practices and preferences. It was also around this time, in the early 1980s, that the role of the CAP took on a clearer focus. Particular patterns of funding began to emerge and there was less confusion surrounding the agenda of the Board and its funding criteria (Hawkins 59). With respect to these

developments, FCAC was both a product of its time and ahead of its time. The appointment of an 'ethnic arts' officer was both a reflection of a more general appreciation for ethnically diverse expressions of cultural identity, and a precursor to the establishment of similar positions in arts organisations around Australia.⁶

So even though the 'community' of FCAC was, and continues to be geographically defined, it is inflected with these other meanings – as a community of 'disadvantage', of cultural difference, and of aesthetic 'authenticity'. This connection – between the spatiality of its constituency and its other distinctive features – are summed up well in a book project facilitated by FCAC entitled *West of the West: Writing, Images and Sound from Melbourne's West*. This edited collection reflects the diversity of the area via a range of narrative forms and voices. It is careful to avoid projecting a singular or prescriptive 'image' of the West and in this way exemplifies the potential for the Centre to construct the sort of open-ended and indeterminate forms of 'community' referred to previously.

In much of its work FCAC benefited from the strategic ambiguity of 'community'. As one previous staff member describes it, this created an experimental space, both for FCAC and for arts policymakers. During much of the 1980s, he says, the aims of the Centre were, 'what we now call community development', but at the time,

We had to work out a philosophy on where we fitted because it was all changing so quickly. ... We didn't have the vocabulary. Because it was all being made up. And the thing was from the funding authorities' point of view, we were useful as a place to experiment. (McCracken)

This reminds us that during this period the policies of the CAP were 'made on the run', in a kind of 'dialectical relationship between the assessment procedures and funding requests' (Hawkins 41). But while Hawkins argues that clearer criteria for funding and support had emerged by the mid 1970s,

⁶ The appointment of an 'ethnic arts officer' at FCAC in 1985, came shortly after the establishment of peak multicultural arts organisations in Victoria (Multicultural Arts Victoria) and Western Australia (Kulcha), and was followed by the establishment of a Queensland based multicultural arts organisation, BEMAC in 1987.

staff at the Centre emphasise the flexibility and openness with which they were still able to operate, long after this point. I want to consider the sorts of opportunities and problems that this ambiguity went on to present for FCAC.

Many of those associated with FCAC during those years believe that one of the strengths of this ad hoc approach was that it gave the Centre a certain flexibility and responsiveness. The Centre's artswriters were granted a significant degree of autonomy. Over time, and into the 1990s, the organisation developed an artform-based structure – where a coordinator was given responsibility for visual arts, music, ethnic or multicultural arts, writing, or theatre – and the Centre developed according to the personal agendas, interests and expertise of each of these coordinators. They brought with them a fairly open definition of who their constituency was, usually depending on the relationships staff had, or developed, with particular groups in the area. One former staff member suggested that this organic approach meant that, 'People actually came to us and said, I've got this good idea, does it work? Can it fit in here? So people were actually coming to us with ideas' (McCracken). Groups came in and set their own agendas, and the Centre was able to respond to these demands in various ways.

It might be suggested that the development of the Centre at this time took place in a somewhat unstructured way. In addition to the Centre's main organisational goals, each artform department also had its own set of aims, and the relationship between these specific objectives and the Centre's overall vision was never clearly articulated. For example, the aims of the multicultural arts department and gallery included developing a base for multicultural arts in 'the West', providing access to 'Non-English Speaking Background'⁷ people to the arts, and promoting cultural exchange; the goals of the theatre department encompassed exploring a diversity of community theatre models, responding to issues of social justice, and creating high standard theatrical works; while the music department aimed to 'challenge

⁷ This was a term used in policy discourse to refer to migrants of non-Anglo-Celtic background. It has since been displaced, in an Australian context, by the descriptor 'Culturally and Linguistically Diverse', although they are, arguably, used to refer to the same constituency. See McLennan.

populist views of music', to encourage music appreciation and participation, and develop cross-artform exchanges (FCAC AR 1994 20). There were also writing, visual arts, adult training and women's circus programs, each with their own aims and agendas.

A 1992 publication commissioned by FCAC, *An Ear, an Eye and a Heart*, celebrates the diversity of projects and participants served by the Centre and exemplifies the inclusionary approach underpinning the organisation's work. As it states:

Our theatre, music, literature, visual arts and crafts courses are the backbone of the organisation. We also develop arts projects which cross artform and cultural boundaries; they are open to people of all ages and levels of artistic experience, regardless of their ability to pay. The projects are designed to assist people to gain the skills needed to make art that expresses their aspirations. ... Self-directed groups from the community use the Centre for rehearsals, meetings and performances. (3)

The book is written by FCAC staff members of the time, each discussing their particular artform portfolio. At many points it provides a kind of dialogue between FCAC staff and community participants, although always framed by the interpretation, and authority, of the artswoker. The form of the book itself – a loosely structured montage documenting the Centre's various artistic programs through staff accounts, prose, poetry, photography and participant testimonials of their involvement – reflects the approach of the Centre and its open curatorial framework. The book avoids projecting a unified narrative and allows the voices of staff members, participants and various anecdotes about the Centre's programs to speak to, and interrupt, each other. This can be read as a conscious strategy to reflect the fluidity and flexibility of the organisation at the time.

What also emerges in this book is the emphasis on 'community' not just as a site from which participants *emerge*, but as something participants actively *construct*, by using arts practice itself to develop networks of support and belonging. The account of FCAC's writing program, for example, states that:

Writing in the West is about getting together, support, encouragement, critical feedback, fun, groups, newsletters, phone calls, computer

commiserations, borrowing pens, classes, workshops, readings ...
perspiration, aggravation, more rejection letters, more laughter, oodles of
support. (*An Ear* 27)

The emphasis is not on artistic product, but on the sense of communality and collegiality that emerges through the artistic processes themselves. In a similar vein, the Centre's *Artlife* program is described in this publication as providing opportunities for disabled people to participate in artistic activities, but also to develop a range of 'life skills'.⁸

By this stage FCAC itself was growing at an unprecedented rate. In the Centre's own view they were regarded 'as a major organisation by State and Federal funding bodies', and were offered triennial funding from Arts Victoria (FCAC AR 1994 5). The 1994 Annual Report outlines ten aims for the Centre – from facilitating a 'diverse and vital Australian culture', providing access and enhancing people's 'appreciation of the arts', encouraging group participation and autonomy, artistic excellence, and driving social change (2). There was a sense that these varied goals were in fact quite commensurable – they reflected the expansive conceptual frame implied by 'community arts', and it was felt that the Centre was appropriately positioned to pursue them.

However, the organic and unstructured growth of the Centre was accompanied by a corresponding narrowing of the field overall. In 1987, the CAP was re-formed as the Community Cultural Development Committee of the Australia Council. In a review of projects commissioned by the CCD Board of the Australia Council, Mills and Brown describe community cultural development as 'the collaborative and empowering processes by which participants engage with creative activity' (6; Dunn 1). Mills and Brown also emphasise the potential of these processes to achieve 'active citizenship' and 'to foster the greater involvement of citizens in government processes' (88). They suggest that while community arts was originally about providing access to and opportunities for participation in the arts, CCD is a more specific process, 'aimed at strengthening the capacities of communities to

⁸ It states, for example, that 'In between learning useful skills, like how to eat with chopsticks and how to persuade the bank to part with your money so you can spend it, the group is also learning a wide range of art and leisure options' (FCAC *An Ear* 21). The program continues to operate today although in a somewhat different form.

develop and express their own cultures' (Mills and Brown 6). These processes are envisaged as collaborative ones, between the artist and community participant. While this participatory imperative has long been part of the community-based arts agenda, its redefinition as CCD brought with it a more distinct language of capacity-building, empowerment and citizenship (Mills and Brown 88; Mills *Cultural*). The anticipated outcomes of such creative activity are wide-ranging but also prescriptive; encompassing social capital, social inclusion, as well as health and environmental outcomes.

The establishment of the CCD Board also marked the increasing professionalisation of the sector and a consolidation of the position of the community 'artsworkeer' (Hawkins 59; Mills *Cultural*; Mills *Footscray*). The role of CCD workers and arts and cultural officers at a municipal level, in state government arts departments, and in some non-'arts' agencies, such as health departments or migrant resource centres, was becoming more entrenched. A number of state-based professional networks and advocacy organisations emerged around the country, which generated conferences, publications and networks of professional exchange.⁹ In Victoria, the Cultural Development Network was established in 2000, serving as a professional association and lobby group for community cultural development workers, predominantly based in local government. The establishment of these networks brought the sector a certain self-awareness; and provided the context for FCAC to adopt a similarly reflexive position.¹⁰ Significantly, however, the fact that the CCD Board still existed and operated in the context of a national *arts* policy meant that the definition of 'culture' as 'arts' still prevailed. As will become clear, this tension has shaped FCAC's in a number of ways.

⁹ The Community Arts Network of Western Australia, Community Arts Network of South Australia, and Cultural Development Network of Victoria are examples of such organisations. Some notable publications include Pitt; Pippen; Krempf; Moynihan and Norton; Sonn, Drew and Kasat; *Visions*.

¹⁰ FCAC has held a number of public forums and stakeholder and community consultations aimed at making the organisation's agenda more representative of community 'needs' and expectations. The 2003 forum 'Creative Shift', for example, confronted questions about the move from 'art' to 'cultural development', primarily to address reports 'indicating that artists are feeling increasingly left out of the loop' and that 'the field has become too bureaucratised' ('Rethinking'). The perceived threat of bureaucratisation and professionalisation of course, is not a new one and Hawkins documents similar concerns that were expressed by artsworkeers as early as the mid 1980s (69).

In the flexible and 'open' organisational context of FCAC, the persona of the community arts worker brought with it a particular kind of politics and aesthetics and came to define the nature of the projects that were pursued. The cultural expressions of the 'community' were in this way refracted through the 'progressive' politics of the artsworker. The Women's Circus, one of FCAC's best known programs, is a case in point.¹¹ The Circus was auspiced by FCAC from 1991 to 2003 and aimed to provide:

opportunities for women from all backgrounds to acquire physical, technical and musical skills while working in a safe, non-competitive and supportive environment. It presents feminism to the wider community through dynamic, high-quality circus/physical theatre, performances and workshops.
(Beissbarth and Turner xii)

The Circus worked initially only with women who were victims of sexual abuse, but gradually expanded its program to specifically target 'older women' and women of ethnic minorities. This was felt to be more representative of the western suburbs and to cater more effectively to women most in 'need' of the sorts of empowerment and support the Circus offered. Significantly, the political agenda of the program was an important part of its self-image; it was an explicitly feminist project and the Circus' founder, Donna Jackson, asserts that it reflected her 'belief in the ideals of socialism', enabling her to make theatre 'that was socially and theatrically relevant' (Beissbarth and Turner 4).

As well as the ambitiousness of its conceptual scope, FCAC also spread its resources broadly – by 1994, among twenty-seven resident art groups, and fifty-seven other arts and community groups who used their facilities regularly (FCAC AR 1994 34). As the Centre's funding base grew over the next few years, so too did the numbers of groups and projects they became involved with. By 1998 the organisation reported that 93 000 people had visited the Centre as participants or observers of events or classes in that year (FCAC AR 1998 1). By 2002 the expansion of Centre's activities meant that it

¹¹ The Women's Circus ceased its affiliation with FCAC and became incorporated in 2003. The program's 'success' is seen to lie in its history of fostering individual empowerment and esteem-building, while also receiving praise for the quality of its artistic output (Beissbarth and Turner).

struggled to contain operations within its budget, and it started to face financial difficulties. Finally, in 2003 the Centre was put 'on notice' by the Australia Council, who stated their intention to terminate the triennial funding they had been awarding FCAC since 1997. By this stage, funding from the CCD Board of the Australia Council amounted to almost \$200,000 per annum, so losing this funding meant that the Centre would have to do without a critical component of its operational and programming budget (FCAC AR 2003 23). The very existence of FCAC was in question and it was only after a difficult process of overhaul and restructure, including the redundancies of a number of long-term program staff, that the Centre managed to survive.

UPHEAVAL AT FCAC: SETTING LIMITS TO 'COMMUNITY'

I want to now consider the factors that led to this 'crisis' at FCAC, and the ways in which the Centre subsequently remodeled itself and reframed its work. I argue that the problems that arose at FCAC were caused by the expansive, and hence problematic, notion of 'community' that it mobilised; and this is reflected in broader policy changes that occurred in state and federal arts policy at the time of this crisis. Moreover, these changes are also related to the unstable relationship between anthropological and aesthetic definitions of culture which continue to inform community-based arts.

In 2004, FCAC lost its core triennial funding from the CCD Board of the Australia Council.¹² While the reasons for this were never made completely explicit, some ex-staff report that FCAC's relationship with the CCD Board had deteriorated from the late 1990s, and that the Centre had become dependent on funding from a body whose basic funding criteria they were perceived to be no longer meeting. Other reasons for this decline in relations have been mentioned from those within FCAC, including a lack of development in the Centre's programs over time, a lack of responsiveness to changing community needs, insufficient performance and program

¹² FCAC had previously been awarded triennial funding in 2002, along with other high-profile community arts organisations including CCD NSW, CANSA, CANWA, Feral Arts and Liverpool Migrant Resource Centre ('Oz Co').

evaluation, a perceived lack of clarity about the Centre's objectives and how they defined their constituency, and a lack of engagement with the broader CCD sector and the CCD Board itself (Mills *Footscray* 6).¹³ There is a general sense among Centre staff that, in pursuing its broad vision for community arts, the Centre lost a clear sense of its own purpose, and could not make itself properly accountable to itself or to funding authorities. A major renovation and building project, which had been a focus of the Centre's efforts for the four or five years prior to losing its funding, and for which the Centre had raised over one million dollars, was also put on hold indefinitely, leaving the Centre looking somewhat directionless (FCAC AR 2003).

What the situation required, then, was for FCAC to clarify its agenda and improve its organisational profile. The Centre commissioned a comprehensive organisational review, resulting in a raft of recommendations to streamline its financial processes, restructure the board and management, and to develop a more coherent business plan, artistic vision and 'corporate image'. Despite being met with significant resistance from some staff, many of the report's recommendations have since been implemented by FCAC management, particularly those relating to the narrowing of FCAC programs and better marketing and promotion of the FCAC 'brand'. In the three or four years following the organisational review, FCAC reconstituted the sorts of community-based arts activities it undertakes – namely, by privileging artistic 'excellence' and narrowing the sorts of 'community engagement' it facilitates. This was partially a response to arts policy changes in the last decade, but it is also due to the problematic nature of 'community arts' itself – particularly, the expansive nature of the term 'community'. It was the very openness and responsiveness of the Centre that ultimately created problems for it.

A month after FCAC lost its funding, the CCD Board of the Australia Council was also dissolved, and it was clear that the language of community cultural development, at least in the context of federal arts policy, had fallen out of favour. It could be speculated that community arts, as it was traditionally

¹³ Former Operations Manager Sarah Masters has stated that the concerns of the Australia Council seemed to include a 'lack of clarity about who we were, lack of clarity about what we did, and a lack of clarity about who our constituency were'.

envisaged by the CCD Board and practiced by FCAC, did not meet the requirements of accountability and financial self-sufficiency that were increasingly being demanded of it. Notwithstanding this, the dissolution of the CCD Board was not widely anticipated, particularly given the professionalisation of the field, and the growing currency of 'cultural planning' rhetoric at a municipal level – a discourse which incorporates community-based cultural development processes into strategies of urban regeneration. The apparent strength of the sector was also reflected by a report commissioned by the Australia Council in 2002 which intended to 'explore the effect of its funding on the policies and programs of those government agencies concerned with community wellbeing' (Mills and Brown 4). The report profiles and celebrates the achievements of CCD Board-funded organisations and it contains a strong sense of the sector's political impact and agenda.¹⁴ Mills and Brown argue for the role of CCD not only to achieve 'social inclusion', but to enable more profound sorts of structural and institutional change (8). In this way the report reiterated the politics of social change that had defined the community-based arts project for the last three decades.

From the mid 1990s onwards there had also been a spate of 'arts impact' studies – predominantly focused on the social impacts of community-based arts interventions – undertaken, both in Australia and internationally (Guetzkow; Landry et al. *Social*; Matarasso; Williams *Creating*; Williams *How*). The intention of such studies was to form an evidence-base and framework of accountability for the sector, and these have become increasingly important tools for lobbying for community-based arts. These studies also developed and standardised a language for speaking about the impacts of community-based arts – in terms of 'social capital', 'wellbeing' and 'capacity-building' – and in this way have further consolidated the rationales that inform the sector, and signaled its wider acceptance. It is also for this reason that many

¹⁴ The report profiles a range of small arts organisations working with various constituencies including Big hART (a community arts organisation concerned broadly with the role of arts in addressing social disadvantage), Somebody's Daughter Theatre (an arts group working mainly in prisons), Artful Dodgers Studio (which targets 'at-risk' young people), and arts organisations based at public housing estates.

of the recommendations made to FCAC in its organisational review offered a kind of reinterpretation of CCD, arguing for the Centre's need to incorporate this more contemporary discourse of 'arts impacts', and away from the more traditional 'welfare' model.¹⁵

It is for these reasons, then, that the dissolution of the CCD Board in 2005 was met with surprise, and significant protest from artswomen in the CCD sector (Mills *Cultural*; Jose; Dunn). A 'Scoping Study' was commissioned in response to this outcry, and it was only after this that the Board was replaced with the Community Partnership Program (CPP) of the Australia Council in 2006 (Dunn). Significantly, FCAC actually began its process of restructuring before new funding criteria had been set for it by the CPP. During this two or three year period, many of the recommendations of the Centre's organisational review were put in to place, and there was a complete turnover of its board. The Centre eventually became one of only two arts organisations in Victoria to return to triennial funding from the Australia Council, and is now named as one of eleven 'key producers' of the Community Partnerships Program ('Community') – suggesting that FCAC had, in fact, preempted the CPP's new funding priorities.

In thinking through the sorts of 'community' that are fostered in community-based arts it is clear that the very expansive notion of community mobilised at FCAC contributed to the situation of 'crisis' that the Centre eventually found itself in. Historically, FCAC had given community members relatively free reign over use of the Centre's space, with a view to affording these participants a sense of ownership over the Centre's activities. The structure of the Women's Circus, for example, involved participant-run committees that reported to the program director, and who in theory, had a substantial influence over the governance of the group (Beissbarth and Turner 20). Similarly, other programs that were gaining a significant local reputation –

¹⁵ Also see Mills' account of the CCD sector's move away from the language of 'disadvantage': 'In this sense it is the culture and the art-making arising from it which is proposed as the starting point for the practice, not a person's or community's place in the economic or social life of the country' (*Cultural* 12).

including a number of youth theatre programs¹⁶ – were considered successful not only because they produced dynamic, locally relevant art but because they exemplified FCAC’s key objectives of ‘democracy, self-sufficiency and eventual independence’ of community groups (FCAC AR 1994 5). These groups went on to become independent from the Centre and demonstrated the potential of community arts as it was traditionally envisioned – as a space for ‘authentic’ and genuinely collaborative community engagement.

Over time, however, this also presented the Centre with a significant dilemma. As some staff members reported, the broad parameters surrounding community members’ participation in FCAC programs meant that the Centre was being used for purposes that were not being defined or determined by the organisation. Some at the Centre believed that it had lost a sense of its own artistic objectives. The Centre became bound by its pre-existing obligations to particular groups. Negotiating these relationships was also time- and resource-consuming, and this had the effect of limiting other, more strategic, possibilities and directions for the Centre. Some staff involved with the Centre at this time felt that the organisation had given up too much power; and that in forging genuinely collaborative relationships with the community, it was not meeting the increasingly codified set of outcomes that the CCD sector was setting for itself. According to one long-serving staff member now working at Arts Victoria,

The centre ... evolved without a clear vision of a whole. ... I think that it was a great thing, in some ways, and there were some great people [working there], and fantastic things happened but I think in terms of being an identity that had a vision and basically could compete in ... the current funding and social sort of climate, it just needed to be better at articulating a unified vision. (Everist)

He goes on to say that while the old model of community engagement practiced at FCAC meant that ‘brilliant things happened’, it was ultimately ‘not sustainable’ (Everist).

¹⁶ This included the Vietnamese Youth Theatre program, ‘Y3P’ (Young People’s Performance Projects) and ‘SCRAYP’ (Schools, Community, Research, Arts, Youth and Performance).

In remodeling itself in subsequent years, the Centre sought to narrow the breadth and forms of community engagement it offered. This meant establishing a more coherent relationship with its constituency and putting in place stricter criteria of inclusion and exclusion for participation. Significantly, one way in which FCAC managed to set limits to its relationship with its constituency was to define more clearly the sorts of cultural activity that took place there; primarily, by privileging 'art' over a broader, anthropological understanding of culture. This made a strategic sense, given the concurrent dissolution of the CCD Board, and the reassertion of the historical marginality of 'community' in arts policy. Moreover, this move is easily accommodated within the paradoxical conceptual space of 'community' – which always sought to both reform and celebrate cultural difference. The dissolution of the Australia Council's CCD Board cleared a space for FCAC to recast itself as an *arts* organisation, and this has had a number of impacts on the Centre's work. It has meant a shift away from local priorities and a narrowing of its participant base within the community. It has also entailed a renewed emphasis on the production of artistic 'excellence', which, in practical terms, meant limiting the autonomy of program participants.

As I mentioned, the CCD sector's protests in response to the disbanding of the CCD Board prompted the Australia Council to undertake an extensive 'scoping study' into the possibility of forming a new Board or Committee. These reports provided a commendatory assessment of the sector – but also signaled a new direction for federally funded, community-based cultural activity. Rather than disposing entirely of this activity, and discrediting the sector, it was argued that such cultural work take on a new form. The report by Jane Jose, for example, is clearly influenced by the 'creative industries' agenda, and she argues for the role of community-based cultural activity in servicing economic goals. In Anne Dunn's report, she highlights the achievements of CCD work in fostering greater 'inclusiveness', 'belonging', 'community building', 'identity', 'diversity', and 'dialogue' (3), but uses a different kind of rhetoric for discussing the future of CCD. She argues that the main 'outcomes' of CCD will have to do with improving its self-sufficiency. This basically refers to leveraging funding from diverse sources and building

(primarily financial) partnerships with a range of organisations – and this is the basis for the language of ‘partnerships’ which defines the new Community Partnerships Committee of the Australia Council (Dunn 5).

The Scoping Study also served to cast the termination of the CCD Board as a necessary move to address perceived problems within the sector. In it, Deborah Mills argues that despite the successes of CCD work, there had emerged a certain CCD ‘dogma’ and an insularity that was limiting the impact of the field (*Cultural* 13). There was, she suggests, a need within the sector ‘to address the poverty of cultural engagement with mainstream arts institutions’, and to make the forms of cultural activity facilitated by CCD organisations more ‘relevant’ (*Cultural* 12). A similar sentiment has been expressed by other critics who note the inability of community-based arts more generally to address the diversity of contemporary forms of cultural engagement and consumption. Lewis states, for example, that

The failure of an arts project to appreciate or understand cultural consumption has, all too often, decreased the value of the cultural activity it has generated. It has led to art that either no one wants to consume (because the needs and interests of audiences have never been considered), or that no one is able to consume because it has not been properly marketed, distributed, or exhibited. Community art has, in this way, marginalised itself. (112)

This is a somewhat damning assessment of the failures of community-based arts but one which seems to inform FCAC’s strategies of redefinition.

BECOMING AN ‘ARTS PRODUCER’

In the period of upheaval at FCAC, between 2004 and 2008, there was a discernible move away from the local. Several former staff and board members comment that at the beginning of this period five or so years ago, there was some discussion over whether to even keep ‘Footscray’ in the Centre’s name.¹⁷ It was thought by some that the Centre’s association with the

¹⁷ In the next chapter I will demonstrate that it is in fact by striking a careful balance between a localised image and ‘global’ outlook that the Centre defines its current success.

area would not help it to build a strong regional and national profile. In 2008 there were also less locally based people on the organisation's board, and while the Centre continues to work with schools, there is substantially less outreach work undertaken with some of the further reaches of the West. Also, while there is considerable focus on the changing cultural diversity of the area, there is less acknowledgment of the socio-economic disadvantages of the region. One past board member suggests that the organisation does not 'interact with the local community terribly well. If you ask a cross-section of people, even a mile from here, many of them would not know where the arts centre is' (Horrocks). While this personal view should not necessarily be read as a statement of fact it does point to the problems faced by the Centre in defining the sorts of 'community engagement' it is responsible for.

These problems are related to a shift in FCAC's emphasis – from servicing cultural 'needs' or 'disadvantage' to being an arts producer. The relationship between these two objectives is a complex one. As the Centre's recent Operations Manager explains,

From an artistic point of view what we did was we set in place a curatorial framework, so we said, well, what can we do and what can't we do. ... I suppose we moved towards more emphasis on producing our own work and working with quality artists in a community context ... and making decisions about what we would support, and wouldn't support, so that it gave our artistic profile, and the things that we were creatively producing, a greater level of rigour, artistic rigour. It allowed us to stand up, rather than to be pigeonholed as a community arts organisation. (Masters)

Maintaining this level of rigour, or artistic quality, required the Centre to establish criteria for inclusion and exclusion. To a certain extent, this meant narrowing the Centre's participant base. As one past board member states,

To work in a community centre, you have to have some skills to be able to do that. You have to be able to work with other people, it's not a drop-in centre, you have to be motivated to work as a group. So there's probably a lot of misconception about what the Centre does. A lot more people could be using the Centre, but on the other hand there's a limit to how many people can. (Brack)

The need for the Centre to set limits to who participates in its programs, and to redefine the terms on which they participate, was thus a significant aspect of the Centre's restructure.

Debates about the politics of artistic quality or 'excellence', in community arts are not new. A number of commentators have pointed out the elitist tendencies of the funding category of 'artistic excellence', particularly in an Australian context (Grostal and Harrison; Hawkins; Rowse *Arguing*). What I am interested in here are the specific rationales informing the Centre's pursuit of 'artistic excellence'. One of FCAC's main motivations was to move away from instrumentalisations of art that were seen to compromise its more intangible and 'intrinsic' value. However, what tends to go unacknowledged in this renewed emphasis on 'intrinsic' value, is its inherent interrelationship with the instrumental. Even apparently 'intrinsic' rationales for the arts have an instrumental aspect;¹⁸ in the case of FCAC it is not only to increase community 'capacity' or encourage cultural expression, but to raise the profile of the organisation, with a view to improving its standing among the wider arts establishment.

The influence of this set of rationales is certainly evident in the organisational review commissioned by FCAC. As I noted earlier, many of the recommendations contained in this review are concerned with clarifying the Centre's strategic purpose and intent. While this is purportedly in order to better respond to the needs of FCAC's community participants, such strategies are equally concerned with meeting the demands of the broader arts sector. Changes at FCAC have involved better marketing and branding of the organisation and a clearer articulation of its forms of strategic competitive advantage in relation to other arts organisations. Over FCAC's lifetime the 'West' has seen a substantial rise in the number of organisations, venues and

¹⁸ For example, Bennett notes after Bourdieu, that "the disavowal of the 'economy' associated with the commitment to art as an end in itself that characterises the behaviour of various agents in this field (the author, artist, critic, art dealer, publisher or theatre manager) is itself a form of "economic rationality" which, once the symbolic capital it represents has been cashed in, will yield both symbolic and economic profit to its champions' ('Historical' 144).

infrastructure for housing and facilitating community-based arts activity;¹⁹ so the Centre's renewed organisational identity was in many ways a response to this increasingly competitive funding environment. In this respect 'excellence' describes not only aesthetic 'excellence' but alludes to the performance and standing of the Centre in relation to its 'competitors'. This concern with being a 'leader' in the field was also reflected in FCAC's official aims and objectives. The Centre's 2008 Annual Report describes its 'vision' in the following terms:

Footscray Community Arts Centre is a leader in contemporary community-based art. We are a place of excellence where artists and communities come together to create, experience, and enjoy art.

Our work as a 'producer', an 'enabler' and a 'space' underpins our Vision and Mission. FCAC envisages a society in which:

- artists and communities collaborate to produce outstanding art
- the arts belong to us all
- places exist for artists and communities to thrive. (FCAC AR 2008 1)

Their 'Mission' as 'Victoria's leading organisation for community-based art' is to:

- engage with our world to produce outstanding art
- invite everyone to participate
- are a vibrant centre of activity.

Working primarily with the communities of Melbourne's West, we make our region a cultural reference point for Melbourne and beyond. (FCAC AR 2008 1)

While the traditional rhetoric of cultural access and inclusivity remains, there is no articulation of the political goals for this agenda, beyond cultural and artistic production as an end in itself. Moreover, the agenda of inclusivity is somewhat overshadowed by a concern with demonstrating regional 'leadership' and producing 'outstanding art'.

In Chapter Two I considered how, despite the efforts of community-based arts to separate 'aesthetic' and 'anthropological' notions of culture, they remain intertwined, and the separation between culture and 'Art' is not as

¹⁹ This includes the establishment of the Barkly Arts Centre (a program of the Western Region Health Centre), Phoenix Youth Centre (funded by Maribyrnong City Council), the Dancing Dog Café and Gallery and the Big West Festival.

clear as it is widely thought (Mercer *Towards* 19). This is particularly problematic given the policy changes arising from current 'cultural' and 'creative industries' discourse. These policy frameworks present opportunities for the community-based arts sector insofar as they bestow a certain value and legitimacy on 'creative' activity. However, this is problematic because it largely remains an economic value, that is limited only to certain forms of cultural activity.²⁰ While the Australia Council's current commitment to community-based programs appears significant – in the 2008-2009 financial year it invested \$11.8 million in its Community Partnerships program (AC AR 2008-2009 35) – this is contingent on a continuing, and awkward, commitment to 'excellence'. In the Australia Council's 2008-2009 Annual Report, 'excellence' is defined within the CPP,

in terms of the artistic output and the process of authentic artistic engagement with the community. ... The activity must be by, for and with the community, which involves working with each community in ways that are meaningful and relevant. (35)

There is evidence, then, of an attempt to reconceive 'excellence' in terms of the 'quality' of community-based processes, rather than artistic value or elitist aesthetic standards. However, I would argue that in practice this revised notion of 'excellence' does little to overcome the slippage between 'arts' and 'culture' referred to above.²¹ Rather, as we have seen in the case of FCAC, there is little reference to 'excellence' defined in terms of the 'quality' of community engagement. Traditional understandings of artistic or aesthetic excellence are simply inflected with the language of sector 'leadership'. Thus, 'excellence', as it informs current practices at FCAC, remains an exclusionary, market-oriented notion, particularly as it is reflected in the use of terms such as 'outstanding art' and 'artistic rigour'.

This is especially evident when placed in the context of prevailing state government policies on the arts. In these frameworks, 'excellence' is associated with certain kinds of high-profile, often 'globally' oriented cultural

²⁰ See, for example, federal research into arts and culture which emphasises the importance of the 'cultural industries' to the Australian economy; one report cites that in 2006-07 Australia exported \$534.1 million of cultural goods (SWG *Arts*).

²¹ Australian 'cultural policy' continues to refer primarily to 'arts' activity. See my discussion of O'Regan *Cultural*; Hawkes *Fourth* in Chapter Two.

activity, evidently because of their economic value. Stevenson documents this trend in her analysis of state cultural policies, highlighting their emphasis on cultural tourism and the traditional 'high' arts, through the continued support of galleries, museums, state theatres and cultural centres (*Art* 72). She regards the state of Victoria to be at the forefront of such cultural policy trends, through its early embrace of the 'industry development' approach (*Art* 85). Stevenson's account dates back to 2000, five years after a conservative state government, led by Jeff Kennett, released its arts policy, *Art* 21. She shows how the Kennett government's policies were part of a broader project to make Melbourne the 'cultural capital' of Australia, but that this project shows little appreciation of the priorities of cultural workers.²² The current Labor government's *Creative Capacity+* policy places more emphasis on the role of community-based cultural activity; however, this is still framed within the broader context of a globalised 'creative economy'. When the benefits of community-based arts are mentioned, as they are in Arts Victoria's 'Strengthening Local Communities: Arts in Community Settings' document, they are framed in terms of the objectives of 'social inclusion' and 'urban regeneration',²³ as well as benefits that are available to artists themselves (8).²⁴

In this way, economic imperatives *reassert* the divide between these two versions of culture. This is reflected, for example, by the positioning of 'cultural planning' strategies within the domain of local government, while state and federal agencies claim responsibility for more high-profile cultural activity – with little apparent overlap between the two. FCAC's efforts to define itself as an 'arts organisation' should be seen in this context. This trend has been developing for some time – because of 'community's' historical association with the 'local', community-based cultural activity has long been relegated to local government while federal and state funding bodies

²² The six 'strategy areas' of the *Arts 21* policy, for example, do not contain the words 'culture' or 'art', but include 'Providing World Class Facilities, Creating Great Programming; Promoting Leadership; Customer Focused Marketing Into the Information Age; Delivering to Australia and the World' (Stevenson *Art* 82).

²³ The report states, for example, that 'Communities that embrace diversity, creative expression and cultural activity are richer, stronger and better able to deal with social challenges' (i).

²⁴ These include 'inspiration for the development of their [artists'] work', and 'networks and future opportunities for work' (8, 9).

concerned themselves with more prestigious and economically valuable 'arts' programs and infrastructure (Stevenson *Art* 72; Hawkins 15). However, there does seem to be a more recent reassertion of the role of local government in pursuing these cultural planning objectives. Despite the diminishing visibility of the language of CCD at a federal level, a study by Mulligan and Smith aims to convince local government policymakers of the need for them to 'embrace CCD' (*Art* 2), and a report commissioned by the Australia Council cites international examples to argue for the importance of local government in facilitating community-building processes (Jose 11). What I want to suggest is that because of the incorporation of these community-based cultural programs into localised governmental strategies, they are becoming increasingly institutionally segregated from 'arts organisations', which continue to define their work along traditional notions of aesthetic excellence. Presented with this (re)emerging institutional and discursive split, it seems that FCAC has chosen (or is at least leaning towards) the latter.

It is this tension that has complicated the work of FCAC and influenced its move towards becoming an arts producer rather than an agent of 'community cultural development'. In opting for this organisational direction, the Centre aimed to reposition community arts in relation to the rest of the arts establishment; to lessen the divide between 'community' arts producers, spaces, and audiences, and 'mainstream' ones. It was believed that this could be achieved by producing 'outstanding art', and by rebranding itself as an innovative 'contemporary community-based arts' producer (FCAC *AR* 2008 1). It was hoped by the Centre's director at the time of the restructure that this approach would also transform FCAC's reputation into an organisation that was desirable for professional artists to work with, as well as present new possibilities for the politics of contemporary art. While previously, as one artsworker said, 'the snobs wouldn't come near us', the Centre sought to encourage an openness to 'community-based art' among the arts establishment, with a view to shifting the class politics of art that historically positioned community arts on the margins (McCracken). A number of staff involved with FCAC at this time do not see this emphasis on producing 'quality art' as conflicting with the Centre's obligations as a community arts

organisation. *The Go Show*, a program which I profile in the next chapter, was cited as an example of how the two agendas might be reconciled.

In practice however, while the Centre built its reputation as an ‘artistic producer’, this did not completely displace its CCD agenda, and it continues to negotiate the two, albeit at times awkwardly. Currently, the artistic production of the Centre is divided into three categories – ‘arts and learning’ (which is primarily constituted by its wide-ranging program of arts workshops, funded by Adult Community and Further Education); ‘arts and access’ (a program targeting people with disabilities and for which the Centre receives funding from the Victorian Department of Human Services); and ‘arts and community’ (a more loosely defined category, enabling the Centre to pursue a broad range of cultural programs). The Centre is influenced by the assessment criteria of its key funders – not just the Australia Council and ArtsVictoria – but these non-arts organisations. So the Centre has to justify its work, and the art it produces, in line with the agendas of these disparate organisations, complicating its efforts to produce ‘quality’, ‘excellent’, or ‘rigorous’ artistic work. As well as its ‘high-profile’ projects the Centre offers a range of workshops that cater to its traditional agenda of providing the means for a variety of forms of amateur cultural participation.²⁵

CONCLUSION: RENEGOTIATING ‘COMMUNITY’ AND THE ‘EXPERT’

These changes also raise a significant question about the relationship between the artswoker and community participant. As I have noted, community-based arts has long been informed by a democratic and participatory imperative, and this is certainly evident in FCAC’s history of granting community groups significant agency to decide the form and agenda of their projects.²⁶ However, as some critics have pointed out, this seemingly inclusive

²⁵ The range of workshops offered in recent years have included culinary tours of the West, hip-hop and ‘kumping’ classes, and Mother’s Day and Father’s Day events (FCAC *Choose*).

²⁶ This relationship between artswoker and participant has long been a fragile one. Deidre Williams points out that ‘At the heart of every case study project, the success of the project and the resulting benefits were due to the ability of the professional artist to involve people in a way that was meaningful to them, and to produce an artistic result that was highly valued by the project’s stakeholders’ (*Creating 2*).

and collaborative approach masks tensions that have always existed between the artist and 'community' (Stevenson *Agendas*; Hawkins 123). Hawkins describes how, early on in the sector's history, artists' accounts of working with communities read like an ethnographers's account of an 'exotic other world' (123). In this respect, community arts was 'the saviour of artists, the method for placing them back in the social', as well as a source of 'inspiration for jaded male creativity' (123). She states that as the sector matured, this relationship became a more comfortable one, and the notion of the 'artist-in-community' was replaced by 'community artist' (125). What is interesting, and perhaps controversial, however, is that this shift has not perhaps been as marked as Hawkins seems to think. In 2005 FCAC introduced an 'Artists in Residence' program aimed, as I mentioned briefly above, at bringing 'high-profile' artists to work on community-based projects. As the Centre's description of this program reads:

The Artists in Residence program attracts outstanding artists to the organisation to further their practice in developing art with communities. ... High quality artistic activity requires high quality artists. To this end, Footscray Arts Artists in Residence are outstanding practitioners in their fields. ('Artists in Residence')

Instead of the sorts of collaborative and collective cultural work envisaged by the CCD sector in earlier years, this approach marks a shift back to notions of individual authorship and creativity. This is the result, then, of the move towards producing 'quality', innovative, artistic work and attracting credibility for the organisation within the arts sector.

These changes mean that continuing claims within community-based arts work that see its supposedly collaborative processes as fostering 'active citizenship' and 'self-determination' deserve greater scrutiny (Mills and Brown 88). Stevenson argues that the strategies of participation employed in contemporary policy discourses of 'community' are rooted in an 'idealistic pluralist conception of politics' in which power is assumed to be 'diffused widely and equitably between a range of associations and groups' (*Agendas* 133). That the politics of self-determination underpinning community-based cultural participation might be somewhat idealistic and conceal relations of

paternalism is an important point.²⁷ Stevenson attributes this unequal balance of power to the hegemony of economic interests within civil society (*Agendas* 136). While this is certainly an important consideration, we should also consider the problems that are an inherent result of the tension between ‘culture’ and ‘art’ that informs the sector. Recent attitudes emphasise the need to establish a more definite ‘curatorial or critical perspective’ within community-based arts work (Mills *Cultural* 36), and this inevitably turns on the role of the ‘expert’ and the sorts of power they wield in defining legitimate and *valuable* forms of community cultural expression.

If we consider this in terms of the claim that FCAC was not adequately engaged with the broader CCD sector, it could be argued that FCAC re-oriented itself to meet the needs of a different kind of ‘community’ – that of the professional artswriters and policymakers of the arts sector itself.²⁸ As the organisation’s chairperson states in the 1999 Annual report, the Centre had a role ‘in the delivering of creative opportunities within our immediate community *and* throughout the community arts movement nationally’ (FCAC AR 1999 2). What this demonstrates is an awareness of the context of reception of the Centre’s activity – that it worked not just to meet the local community’s needs but also sought the continual affirmation of the wider community arts sector. The changes at FCAC that I have profiled in this chapter, then, can be read as a partial result of the Centre’s historical privileging of the needs of the local community of arts participants over the ‘needs’ of the arts sector. In addressing this crisis, one of FCAC’s key strategies was to redress this balance, by improving its standing within the broader arts establishment. The extent to which community-based arts is capable of disrupting dominant hierarchies of aesthetic value in this way will be a recurring question throughout the rest of this study.

²⁷ See Dreher 92.

²⁸ See Banks for an interesting discussion of these associated personnel as ‘cultural intermediaries’, after Bourdieu, and their role in ‘brokering’ and negotiating notions of cultural value (106). This role of FCAC staff and artswriters as ‘cultural intermediaries’ is investigated further in the following chapter.

4

THE AESTHETICISATION OF 'COMMUNITY': COMMUNITY-BASED ARTS IN THE 'CREATIVE CITY'

We're a community arts centre in the western suburbs of Melbourne. When you stand in the gallery at Footscray Community Arts Centre and look across the river and across the docks to Melbourne you realise you're two and a half kilometres from the centre of the city. It's a city fringe sort of place.

(De Pasquale)

Community-based arts was historically enabled through an effort to bring together anthropological and aesthetic definitions of culture. However, problems with this model of community-based arts, as well as recent policy changes, have seen a reassertion of the divide between the two. This is evident in the re-emergence of an institutional split between 'culture' and 'art'; as I argued in the previous chapter, in an effort to adopt a more coherent organisational identity, FCAC responded by positioning itself as an 'arts producer'.¹ The previous chapter sought to identify how conceptual dilemmas associated with 'community arts' are related to practical problems for

¹ As I detailed in the previous chapter, this 'response' took the form of an organisational restructure undertaken between approximately 2004 and 2008.

community-based arts organisations and policymakers. The present chapter resumes this investigation but positions these problems in the context of contemporary urban planning frameworks and the aestheticisation of 'community' that these entail.

I begin by considering how developments in urban planning and placemaking discourse inform local planning and regeneration strategies for Melbourne's western suburbs. These are related to emerging narratives of gentrification that are used to discuss Melbourne's West and which – through their reliance on the uses of 'culture' – valorise a kind of class-based 'urbanity'. Such narratives form part of a broader discourse which privileges the role of 'culture' in the contemporary city. The remainder of the chapter examines how the cultural work of FCAC might be read as having a complimentary relationship to these strategies. Firstly, I look generally at the Centre's increasingly 'global' orientation during the period under study. This was reflected in its concern with representing or constructing 'community' to an imagined 'globalised' consumer; a strategy which aligned the organisation and its associated artists with contemporary discourses of 'creative cities', bringing FCAC currency and credibility. I go on to consider one of FCAC's past programs in more detail. *The Go Show* was a recent program that constructed an aestheticised 'sense of community'. Given the emerging gentrification of the area, the program can be situated as part of a more general lifestyle culture with potentially exclusionary effects. Finally, I consider how the notion of 'cultural capital' is caught up in these dilemmas, as well as the role of the cultural worker or 'cultural intermediary' in these processes. The aim of this chapter is to consider how the work of community-based organisations might inadvertently be drawn into strategies of government, such as urban planning discourses, in ways that complicate their efforts to facilitate more inclusive cultural activity.

URBAN PLANNING IN MELBOURNE'S WEST

The cultural production of FCAC is informed not only by the shifting cultural policy context examined in the previous chapter, but by changes taking place in Melbourne's western suburbs. These strategies have generated a somewhat

aspirational discourse to describe Melbourne's West, in which the area's past and future are linked together via a narrative about its enduring 'character' and cultural vibrancy. Reports of the area's historical marginalisation and cultural isolation are being increasingly displaced by descriptions of anticipated gentrification, future development and 'potential'. Specifically, as a planning document commissioned by the City of Maribyrnong council asserts, such 'growth' will involve an increase in the proportion of higher income households and inner-city workers to add to the West's already 'eclectic mix' of working class residents, university-qualified professionals, students and migrants (CPG 8).

These narratives of gentrification – either current or anticipated – are supported by predictions of population growth and private sector investment in the area.² In the Victorian state government's *Melbourne 2030 Planning for Sustainable Growth* policy document, Footscray and Highpoint (a commercial precinct in the western suburb of Maribyrnong) are both identified as 'principal activity centres' ('Melbourne 2030').³ The western campus of Victoria University is also described as a 'specialised activity centre', meaning that these precincts will be the focus of considerable state and local government attention and investment in order to accommodate, and facilitate, this projected growth. It is expected in turn that this economic growth will lead to improved amenity and, importantly, *lifestyle* for the area – it will help to 'achieve the community's vision of a more attractive place to live, work, learn and invest' (CPG 2).

Such strategies have been the subject of significant academic critique.⁴ For a number of writers, the key problem with prevailing urban planning

² It is predicted that the population of the City of Maribyrnong will grow 1.8% per year from 2006 until 2031 and that the highest growth will occur in the suburb of Footscray – which is set to increase by 57.9% between 2006 and 2021 (City of Maribyrnong 3).

³ 'Activity centres' are defined here as areas which 'provide the focus for services, employment and social interaction in cities and towns. They are where people shop, work, meet, relax and live. ... They are not just shopping centres, they are multifunctional. Activity centres attract high numbers of people, and generate a significant volume of trips in metropolitan Melbourne' ('Activity Centres').

⁴ The relationship between place and identity has been the subject of a large body of academic analysis, concerned with the discursive production of meaning within and via space (Harvey; Malpas; Massey; Stevenson *Agendas*). Such work provides a

frameworks is their emphasis on economic goals above all else, and the use of 'culture' to achieve these goals. (Gleeson and Low 199; Philo and Kearns 3; Stevenson *Agendas*). Such strategies awkwardly deploy the arts and culture to revive what Stevenson describes as 'the flagging community spirit' that is often associated with economically depressed areas (*Agendas* 54). Philo and Kearns describe what reviving this 'spirit' might entail:

[A] subtle form of *socialisation* designed to convince local people, many of whom will be disadvantaged and potentially disaffected, that they are important cogs in a successful community and that all sorts of 'good things' are really being done on their behalf. (3)

This is achieved through 'a conscious and deliberate manipulation of culture' – usually by promoting culture that is 'supposed to be *locally* rooted' and which therefore appears to have 'an "authentic" quality spawned by the cultural life of the places themselves' (Philo and Kearns 3). These trends are particularly relevant to the use of culture in Victorian state development programs, and their emphasis on cultural tourism strategies.⁵

Such uses of culture are widely criticised for their 'inauthenticity' (Hage 'At Home'; O'Connor and Wynne; Philo and Kearns; Stevenson *Agendas*; Stevenson *Art*; Zukin *Cultures*; Zukin *Landscapes*; Zukin *Loft*). Philo and Kearns suggest that these uses involve a rewriting of 'negative' historical associations – particularly in areas that have suffered from significant socioeconomic disadvantage – into 'a powerful statement about a local history full of initiative and enterprise which projects into an exciting and prosperous local future' (Philo and Kearns 6). Stevenson also notes that despite such use of localised history and culture to assert the distinctiveness of a place, this has

critical framework for comprehending planning strategies which aim to negotiate the divisions and tensions that arise from increasingly diverse urban populations (Gleeson and Low 147; Landry and Bianchini).

⁵ See for example, the current Victorian government's *Creative Capacity+* policy.

too often involved formulaic strategies borrowed from other locales, and which bear little relevance to local communities (*Art 147*).⁶

This discourse is 'aspirational' because, so far, the effects of gentrification and growth in the western suburbs have been limited. While increasing house prices and average incomes are being reported in suburbs such as Yarraville and Williamstown, this developing affluence seems relatively contained, and points to an emerging gulf between different areas within the West.⁷ In this sense, this discourse of gentrification has preceded the actual fact of such growth or development in most areas. Local council documentation acknowledges continuing problems with public space within the municipality including, 'a number of unattractive, dysfunctional and unsafe spaces, with many vacant, under utilised or redundant sites' (CPG 18). Statements like this are presented alongside perceived opportunities for the area, such as:

Discrete pockets of intact residential heritage conservation areas comprising traditional streetscapes, older-style homes and narrow streets with an intimate 'feel'; ... Diverse and interesting shop-fronts within the centre's core, including individual buildings and streetscapes with heritage value; ... Converted warehouses and other historic commercial buildings, particularly along the riverside; ... A number of landmark structures such as the Bunbury Street railway bridge, the Town Hall, Barkly and Grand Theatres and Railway Reserve Rotunda. (CPG 18)

Descriptions of the area's dysfunction or dilapidation, then, are recast as *potential*.

⁶ Stevenson divides the uses of culture within these placemaking and regeneration strategies into two distinct approaches – the more commercialised 'festival marketplace' approach, first popularised in the US; and the more low-key 'europeanisation' model, which relies on the marketing of 'authentic' local culture in selected cultural precincts (*Art 90*). She mentions that in practice, however, urban redevelopment programs often combine elements of the two.

⁷ A report written for the Melbourne West Area Consultative Committee states that this is likely to remain the case for the City of Maribyrnong as employment levels in this area increase (NIEIR 12, 26). It states, 'Key issues facing the western economy, unlike many other areas which have seen re-gentrification of suburbs, include the levels of social exclusion which are higher than areas which have been transformed' (NIEIR 1). See also Gleeson and Low's account of the disparities of wealth and lifestyle that have emerged *within* suburbs and localities as a result of processes of gentrification.

The role of the Footscray 'arts precinct' is central to this discursive strategy. While the area currently includes FCAC and Big Fish (a design and construction studio), it has historically been home to a number of artists' studios, including the Maribyrnong River Edge Artist Movement (MREAM), who were forced out due to impending residential development of the area.⁸ 'Culture' is strongly tied up with the historical assets of the area, and both are crucial to boosting the desirability and 'potential' of the West:

Significantly, the [arts] precinct houses a broad range of heritage assets including the Victorian and Edwardian era Old Footscray Township east of the station and industrial heritage of the river, and a number of early commercial sites, civic places, places of worship and significant archaeological sites. ... With excellent access to Footscray Station, the Maribyrnong River waterfront and corebusiness area of the CAD [Central Activities District], it is a desirable location for living and working within the centre. (CPG 42)

This emphasis on heritage demonstrates how projections of the future and 'opportunities' for the area take place by way of descriptions of the past – and the two are linked through the work of 'culture'. This is exemplified by statements of the following kind:

The Footscray of 2030 will be creative and a home for artists. Footscray will encourage artistic talent, professional and amateur alike, and the 'business' of arts and culture. (CPG 10)⁹

Given the importance of the artistic credibility of Footscray, it is not surprising that the perceived role of Footscray Community Arts Centre is also made explicit in these strategies:

The riverside precinct comprises a highly valued Community Arts Centre, as well as artist studios, commercial enterprises and associated facilities. Promoting a community-friendly arts scene that actively engages different cultures at all levels is vital to the Footscray community. The availability and affordability of creative spaces for artists and arts organisations is a key issue.

⁸ MREAM moved in July 2008 and in early 2010 established a new studio in a former meatworks factory in Maribyrnong ('Mream').

⁹ The document also states that, 'Having long been a hub for economic activity and overseas migration, Footscray boasts a rich history and a diverse, multicultural community. ... Over the past few years, Footscray has begun to experience considerable regeneration and renewal, with significant government investment and associated development potential' (CPG 7, 8).

Public art and cultural events play an important role in activating spaces and building a sense of place. (CPG 14)

Significantly, the aim here is not simply to foster the artistic activity of Footscray, but to *'promote Footscray as an artsy, edgy, affordable, regional and multicultural centre'* (CPG 5, my emphasis). It is via this rhetorical sleight of hand that an urban and cultural planning document becomes a promotional and branding strategy.¹⁰

This is the logic that informs Richard Florida's work and his argument that economic development is dependent on certain forms of 'creative' activity, and its capacity to foster (and sustain) a highly skilled workforce or 'creative class'.¹¹ Florida's ideas are referred to in a FCAC organisational review, which itself draws from an earlier report commissioned by the Melbourne West Area Consultative Committee. This latter report looks more broadly at the economic history of the area and possibilities for future 'growth'. It is concerned with the changing population dynamics of the area and makes specific arguments about the role of creativity in the regional economy.¹² The report makes use of Florida's 'creativity index' to measure the West's economic potential. This index includes a range of measures of an area's 'diversity' (which are regarded as crucial for enabling 'creativity') – including the diversity of residents based on qualifications, country of origin, family structure, 'bohemian occupations', sexuality and high tech output. The relatively high scores ascribed to various local government authorities in Melbourne's West derive largely from the area's multicultural history and ethnically diverse population (NIEIR 119). As this planning report states,

Diverse inclusive communities that welcome unconventional people – same sex households, immigrants, artists, and free-thinking 'bohemians' – are ideal

¹⁰ Tanja Dreher writes about Cabramatta, a multi-ethnic suburb in western Sydney, that, like Footscray, has historically been characterised as a site of cultural 'lack' (95). Her description of the 'symbolic struggle' that informs discussions of Cabramatta – as "multiculturalism gone wrong" *and* as a "multicultural success story", an "Asian ghetto" *and* a vibrant, diverse tourist attraction" – makes an interesting comparison to Footscray (95).

¹¹ See Barnes et al. for a critique of the application of Florida's ideas in Australian urban planning strategies. They describe these strategies as 'entrepreneurial planning' or 'entrepreneurial governance' (337).

¹² See Chapter Two for some criticisms of Florida's work.

for nurturing the creativity and innovation that characterise the knowledge economy. (NIEIR 90)

In this way, the cultural diversity of the area is cast as an *asset*; aimed at 'attracting' certain desirable sub-groups (residents and workers) which might further contribute to the area's 'knowledge economy' industries.

This strategy for economic growth is dependent on the 'locational choices' of these 'holders of creative capital' (NIEIR 90). The 'strengths' of the local community are seen to lie in the sorts of people it is able to attract, rather than the inherent qualities of the community itself. 'Diversity' becomes instrumental; it holds out a kind of promise for Melbourne's West, situated in the future economic value of these desirable groups, rather than in whatever enterprise activity may already exist within the area. In this way, culturally diverse groups function as a placemaking and 'place-marketing' tool;¹³ and in lauding the 'artsy', 'edgy', and 'multicultural' aspects of Footscray these planning documents transform diversity into a kind of desirable 'backdrop' for middle-class lives (Robson and Butler 78).¹⁴

Such strategies also offer no discussion of the role of cultural diversity in the longer term, once gentrification of the area sets in more emphatically. Gentrification that has occurred within major Australian cities since the 1960s has frequently resulted in the displacement of lower-income households and their relocation to 'poorer-serviced fringe suburbs' (Gleeson and Low 52). Also, in casting cultural diversity simply as an asset, these strategies preclude any consideration of the sorts of tensions or difficulties that might arise from this diversity, particularly the problems these might pose for the construction of consensual forms of 'community'. In envisaging 'cultural diversity' as a component of middle-class consumption and lifestyle cultures, there is no account of the challenges that these forms of difference might present, or the

¹³ Scott Brook offers an affirmative reading of the aestheticised multiculturalism that is central to cultural tourism strategies of Sydney's inner-West. In doing so, he critiques Ghassan Hage's dismissal of the forms of cosmopolitanism that are generated through these strategies. I pursue a similar critique of Hage's work in Chapter Five of this thesis.

¹⁴ See also Reid and Smith on the gentrification of New York's lower east side and the role of the arts industry in 'converting the dilapidation and squalor of the neighbourhood into *ultra chic*' (197).

uneven effects of gentrification for those living in the area. It has been suggested that poorer or more isolated groups can benefit from gentrification because they can use 'culture' to participate in the emerging knowledge economies (Mills *Footscray*). However, such participation requires specific sorts of capacities and resources that are differentially available to these isolated groups in the first place. Moreover, as I discuss in more detail below, such accounts rely on a problematic conception of the benefits of cultural activity, in which cultural capital is envisaged as a *communal* resource that is accessed equally throughout a population or 'community'.

'LOCAL' CULTURE IN THE 'CREATIVE CITY'

These processes of gentrification depend on a redefinition of the relationship between place, culture and identity – articulated in terms of a new relationship between the 'global' and the 'local'. These redefinitions are evident in the reorientation of specific programs at FCAC, towards an imagined 'globalised' audience.¹⁵ I have examined the relationship between the 'global' and the 'local' in earlier chapters; particularly how community-based arts work is motivated by concerns about the pervasiveness of globalised culture, and the threat this poses for localised forms of cultural expression. In some accounts, it is this concern to bring value and legitimacy to localised cultural activity that is the basic rationale for community-based arts (Adams and Goldbard 'Community'; Mulligan et al.). What I want to suggest, however, is that the terms of this relationship between the 'global' and the 'local', particularly as it informs community-based arts work, might be changing. That is, the 'local' is not necessarily posited as a source of resistance to the 'global', but is itself reconstituted by a globalised outlook. I want to demonstrate this, firstly, by looking at the planning framework that situates Melbourne within this discourse of the 'global city' and the specific role 'culture' plays in these frameworks. In the next section I consider how these trends have shaped the work of FCAC.

¹⁵ In this chapter I profile some specific programs which show evidence of this re-orientation. However, it should be noted that the Centre still continues to undertake a range of more 'localised' activity as part of its raft of cultural programming.

There is a burgeoning body of literature on the politics of the 'global city' (Landry and Bianchini; Ley; Sassen; Scott; Stevenson *Agendas*). While the definition of a 'global city' is by no means a precise one,¹⁶ such cities are generally characterised by the influence of globalised cultural flows and international financial circuits. The 'global city' also forms part of a decidedly *competitive* discourse concerned with turning urban centres into 'premier' world cities by fostering an ostensibly 'global culture' (Stevenson *Agendas* 47).¹⁷ This usually amounts to high-profile and large-scale cultural and sporting events, as well as investing in standardised 'cultural precinct' developments aimed at projecting a "'world-class" image of place' (Stevenson *Art* 85). Thus, these strategies involve a 'blurring of arts, sport, culture, spectacle and entertainment' in order to cultivate a cultural economy with international currency (Stevenson *Art* 86).

It is these sorts of frameworks which underpin pronouncements about Melbourne's status as the 'cultural capital' of Australia (Stevenson *Art* 82). Indeed, a number of planning documents situate Melbourne within this competitive discourse of symbolic capital achieved through a 'globalised' culture. The *Culture and the Metropolis* policy document which forms part of the Victorian state government's Melbourne Metropolitan Strategy, incorporates these arguments (as well as ideas about social inclusion, and the civic benefits of culture) into a statement about the importance of 'cities' as the site of communal cultural activity:

Cities bring together people of different origins and cultural backgrounds, and they serve the fundamental purposes of enhancing the collective actions in which people engage to produce, organise, experience, consume, and express themselves. Cities also foster civic institutions and teach civility. The culture of the city represents identity, memory, heritage, tradition, diversity and community celebration. It also involves the creation of products, knowledge, architecture, landscape and the symbols that express the city's distinctive character. (Clark, Hawkes and Untaru 3)

¹⁶ Stevenson states that despite apparent 'globalising' trends, it is 'untenable to speak of the existence of an all-encompassing, emerging "global culture"' (*Agendas* 47).

¹⁷ See Chris Gibson 'Creative Arts' for a critique of this competitive place discourse.

Rhetoric about the distinctiveness of a city's 'culture' is tied up with a more general valorisation of 'creativity' and its wide-ranging social and economic benefits:

The competitive position and prosperity of Melbourne depends on creative cultures that facilitate creativity, innovation, economic vitality, learning and knowledge, strategic alliances, collaborative planning, partnerships and community building. (Clark, Hawkes and Untaru 3)

These 'creative cultures' are enabled by what the authors describe as 'creative infrastructure', which is in turn made possible by 'the globalisation of information technologies and communications ... the role of cultural institutions in the urban environment; ... [and] the emergence of distinctive urban lifestyles and subcultures' (Clark, Hawkes and Untaru 18). If such arguments seem incoherent this is due in large part, to their circularity: 'culture' (or, in this case, 'creativity') is both a mechanism for, and outcome of, economic growth *and* social inclusion. In addition, this 'creativity' is something that 'has always been' present in cities; 'The task is to *recapture* this creative potential of cities' (Clark, Hawkes and Untaru 20, my emphasis). As with much of the discourse of 'culture' and 'community' I have been examining, this argument is a nostalgic one.

The *Culture and the Metropolis* document uses an expansive version of 'culture' that is informed by the work of UNESCO. It is seen to encompass 'the values, beliefs, languages, arts and sciences, traditions, institutions and ways of life by means of which individuals or groups express the meanings they give to their life and development' (Clark, Hawkes and Untaru 4). The authors relate this to their notion of 'vitality', which they define just as broadly:

For some the vitality of a city is indicated by the arts – music, drama, painting and literature. For others it is the experience of learning and intellectual engagement. Others find vitality in the tangible and intangible heritage of a city – monuments, vistas, gardens, rivers, seafronts, shipwrecks, churches, public buildings. Some regard language, tradition and social customs as the essence of a vital culture; others identify it with community activities and rituals – sport, festivals, garden shows, technology-expos – events that provide a sense of achievement and identity. (7)

The report pursues such a broad view of what constitutes 'the life of a city' because it seeks a democratic and inclusive framework that attributes equal value to diverse activities and cultural forms.

Interestingly, in deploying this expansive definition of 'culture' the report appears to support a wide range of contexts of identity- and community-formation that reflect, to some extent, the sorts of fluid and indeterminate 'communities' that I argued for in Chapter One. The report even cites Stuart Hall's arguments about identity as 'a process of becoming' rather than 'being' (8):

This is identity as 'production' rather than inheritance and/or the result of circumstance. It is identity constituted in, and not outside, history and culture, and it becomes a concept of multiple and mobile identities. (8)

This is a significantly more affirmative view of cultural difference than the discourses of 'social inclusion' and 'community cohesion' considered so far.¹⁸ As they argue,

A precondition for social justice in this era, then, is a politics of inclusion which is grounded in an understanding that there are multiple publics: that is, a heterogeneous public, with different cultural values, interests and concerns. (13)

Indeed, 'inclusion' or 'cohesiveness' seems to be replaced by the notion of cultural 'vitality', and this appears to reflect the report's concern with addressing increasing social polarisation within Melbourne.¹⁹

¹⁸ To a great extent this reading of place, identity and difference is derived from the work of urban and cultural geographer Leonie Sandercock. Accordingly, the authors' conception of social capital also acknowledges a diversity of types of relationships and bonds (Clark, Hawkes and Untaru 17).

¹⁹ The report states that, 'Although Melbourne today can boast higher levels of wealth and wellbeing than in the past, some of its people have not benefited from economic restructuring and the development of the information society, and income disparity has been increasing steadily since the 1970s. ... [O]ccupational restructuring and social polarisation is leading to the emergence of new urban forms. In Melbourne, an important feature of these new patterns is the increasing status of inner areas. ... [and] trends associated with ethnic or cultural or social clustering. ... The social ecology of Melbourne will continue to be characterised by increasing social and cultural complexity and differentiation among, between and within neighbourhoods' (Clark, Hawkes and Untaru 12).

However, despite ostensibly being influenced by the theoretical precepts of cultural studies, and the report's overall affirmation of difference, the authors bring an awkward instrumental agenda to this framework. For them the importance of 'identity as production' is the emphasis it places on *producing culture*. In seeking to *promote* fluid forms of identity and communal identification, and hence more 'vital' cities, they suggest that certain forms of culture and cultural activity should be supported over others. This leads them – despite passing references to the everyday cultures of shopping centres, healthcare centres and other public urban spaces – to privilege certain sorts of participatory and interactive cultural practices over others. So the authors read Hall's work as a directive – about how identities *should* be produced – rather than as an analysis of the discursive constitution of identity. As they write, 'The MMS [Melbourne Metropolitan Strategy] must facilitate the celebration of all these identities, respect their existence, and *exploit them to stimulate the vitality* of the whole' (9, my emphasis). Vibrant urban spaces are characterised as the essential backdrop for the 'performance' of these cultural identities. As they argue,

The city needs to provide movement between cultural identifications in different situations and places, and allow multiple cultures and identities to inhabit places so that there are multiple grids of difference and varied links between place and identity formation. (9)

In this way, their celebratory view of difference also posits a *use* for it; this is what will enable the strategic forms of 'growth' that are ultimately sought by this planning strategy. Thus the report problematically conflates the economic and civic benefits of 'culture' (3).

Also, the rhetorical move that occurs – from a celebration of *all* culture, to a privileging of specifically participatory and communal cultural activity – coincides with the use of the language of 'community'. In the move from 'identity-formation' to 'community', the report's focus also shifts to 'public space': because this is 'the common cultural ground where people carry out the functional and ritual activities that bind communities' (Clark, Hawkes and Untaru 9). This argument emerges out of the narrative of social decline I examined in Chapter One; that is, the notion that the privatisation (and commercialisation) of people's cultural lives must be remedied by way of

these forms of communal activity. Public space is cast in opposition to these forms of privatised pleasure and meaning-making, and equated with the values of 'citizenship, democracy, pluralism and tolerance of diversity' (Clark, Hawkes and Untaru 29). Here, public space 'represents an important neutral territory where people can mix and mingle and where to some degree everyone is equal' (Clark, Hawkes and Untaru 29).

The report is typical of cultural planning discourse in assuming 'culture's' contribution to civility, and there are a number of reasons why such associations between public space, cultural activity and a democratised citizenry are problematic. Such planning frameworks are tied to a nostalgic urbanism that is in turn informed by the perceived benefits of 'civic culture'. I describe these processes as 'nostalgic' because they are related to the conservative strategies of revival and recuperation associated with the term 'community' which I examined in Chapter One.²⁰ Stevenson explains how a discourse of 'loss' underpins these urban policy agendas:

A telling indicator of its centrality is the extensive use of the prefix 're' in the language of cultural planning. The literature is weighted with examples, reenchantment, reconstruction, recreation, rejuvenation, revitalisation and the like, to an extent which suggests a project that is both cyclical and nostalgic. (*Agendas* 105)

Cultural planning strategies regularly articulate the social benefits of this urbanism in terms of the assumed benefits of 'civic culture'. The physical spaces of a city are regarded as a crucial aspect of the public realm, and central to facilitating 'community solidarity' and 'local democracy' (Stevenson *Agendas* 112). And it is via the shared meanings generated through 'culture' that such 'solidarity' is formed. In much critical discourse, this notion of 'civil society' is regarded as important because it provides a position of externality and autonomy from which to critique and intervene in state and economic processes (Cox *Truly*; Field 83; Stevenson *Agendas* 129).

²⁰ Also, like the use of the term 'community', there is a circular logic informing cultural planning strategies which see social inclusion achieved via the economic development enabled by creative industries; but this creative activity itself is said to operate 'in way that "includes" the marginal and rejuvenates degenerative urban spaces' (Stevenson 'Civic' 128).

In addition, arguments about the civic value of urbanism are problematic because they assume that such benefits are experienced equally by the residents of a locality. They gloss over the differentiated uses of space by distinct groups, and are thereby informed by a homogeneous conception of the public realm. This also has the effect of privileging certain types of space over others – so that city squares are emphasised over supermarkets or school playgrounds, usually in a way which is gendered and exclusionary in effect.²¹ For these reasons, the connection between ‘civil society’ and cultural democracy should not be assumed (Amin ‘Collective’ 7). In addition, the policy goal of ‘cultural citizenship’ I advocated in earlier chapters should avoid relying on an idealised and simplistic relationship between ‘civil society’ and certain forms of urban space. These positions do not account for the plurality of sites of political and civic encounter, and the fact that public culture is shaped by ‘circuits of flow and association that are not reducible to the urban, (e.g. books, magazines, television, music, national curricula, transnational associations), let alone to particular places of encounter within the city’ (Amin ‘Collective’ 6). Moreover, Amin argues against this traditional privileging of the urban as a site of civic and political formation because of the difficulty of predicting the sorts of relationships that are formed in this context:

The dynamics of mingling with strangers in urban public space are far from predictable when it comes to questions of collective inculcation ... This is precisely why even the most imaginative attempts to engineer social interaction in public space ... are normatively ambivalent. (‘Collective’ 7)

It follows, then, that urban and cultural planning programs cannot assume that creating ‘more vibrant’ city spaces will in itself facilitate cultural democracy.

CONSTRUCTING A ‘SENSE OF COMMUNITY’ AT FCAC

Some of FCAC’s recent programs can be read as being informed by this urban policy discourse, and are potentially drawn into the sorts of placemaking

²¹ Toby Miller offers a critical analysis of ‘the idealised notion of the public sphere and citizenship’ which excludes women by ignoring important relations between public and private realms (*Well-Tempered* 5).

strategies described above. These programs also reflect in interesting ways, on the complex relationship between the 'local' and 'global' currency of community-based arts. FCAC's constituency, as I mentioned, has traditionally been defined as Melbourne's 'West'. As I also noted, this spatialised definition of 'community' has been inflected by various manifestations of 'cultural disadvantage' and difference. More recently, FCAC's work has been influenced by a globalised cosmopolitanism, most clearly evident in the sorts of broad audiences it seeks for its work, its collaborations with artists of international reputation, and its more general efforts to position itself as a 'flagship' facility.²² This shift in the Centre's work is partly justified as a response to the multicultural makeup of the residents of the western suburbs; that the Centre's local constituency is itself a 'global community'. However, this 'global' orientation also formed part of a strategy to bring the organisation credibility within the arts sector.

In this way, the 'global' outlook adopted by FCAC has been a strategic one. The Centre's key focus over the last few years has been a major capital works upgrade, involving the construction of a 250-seat performance space, a new gallery, a computer lab and other multi-use spaces at its current site ('Building project'). This building project, which was put on hold in 2003 and finally completed in September 2010, is the culmination of almost two decades of planning and lobbying by Centre staff for an upgrade of its facilities. It is the result of funds acquired from a range of government, philanthropic and corporate donors, as well as difficult and protracted negotiations with municipal stakeholders. Heralded by the Centre as its 'greatest achievement yet' this reconstruction of the Centre's facilities is a timely marker of the shift in FCAC's artistic program that has taken place over the last five or six years ('Building project'). It could be argued that the building project reflects the emerging gentrification of the area, and the increasingly high profile ascribed to the Footscray 'arts precinct' in local urban planning strategies. The upgraded site can be read as part of the Centre's broader effort to build new local and non-local audiences. It also

²² As the Centre's chairperson states, 'We see ourselves as a Australia-wide flagship for community arts. We now work with prominent artists that work with communities – high profile artists, high profile international artists, even, that work with our communities to produce artistic outcomes' (De Pasquale).

complements the Centre's collaborations with non-community-based arts organisations, such as the Melbourne International Arts Festival and the Australian Centre for Contemporary Art, which sought to bridge the divide between the city's centre and the West, and between the arts establishment and its margins. These strategies mark a subtle shift from aiming to lift the 'esteem' of the people of the western suburbs via participation in cultural activity, to raising esteem by enhancing the profile of the area itself, and lifting the Centre's organisational profile in the context of the broader arts sector. The building project is one of a number of examples that points towards FCAC's increasing 'global' emphasis; insofar as this means enhancing its status as an internationally significant organisation and orienting its work towards an imagined globalised consumer. Its workshop program, for example, shows evidence of a broadening of what might count as valuable or 'authentic' local culture – in many cases by incorporating popular cultural tastes into these programs, or by bringing in international artists to lead these workshops.

One example, which also exemplifies FCAC's efforts to be an 'arts producer', is *Crowd Theory*, a photography project which was initiated in 2004. The project resulted in a series of large-scale photographs taken by artist, Simon Terrill, depicting various sites in the Western suburbs. In the construction of these photos, local volunteers were asked to arrive at a site chosen by the artist, and then 'inhabit' the space however they choose.²³ The Centre's then director states that one of the aims of the project was to

demonstrate FCAC's new vision and artistic framework, 'writ large'. This vision and framework emphasises a proactive approach to working with communities to develop outstanding projects. The result is one of artistic excellence: we work with some of Australia's finest artists – and add the skills, energies and cultural life of the communities around us – to create socially-relevant art. (Rechter *Crowd 2*)

²³ The project involved shoots at four sites in Melbourne's West – Maribyrnong River in Footscray (2004), Skinner Reserve in Braybrook (2004), Footscray Station (2006) and Port of Melbourne (2008). Shoots usually lasted for a number of hours, during which time the artist asked communities to pose for the photo ('Crowd Theory @ Footscray Station').

In this statement, the value of the project is as a form of promotion for the Centre's new artistic approach. As a project of 'artistic excellence' it attracted attention not just for the Centre, but for the artist himself, and led to exhibition opportunities for Terrill in Paris, as well as in other venues nationally. Interestingly, the project was intended to be both 'about' the local communities, *and* 'a spontaneous creation of the communities themselves' ('Crowd Theory'). However, the artist himself acknowledges that the photographs are a 'highly authored situation that fuse social reality with carefully calculated artifice' (Palmer 5). The photos are thus about the *performance* of 'community'. This kind of self-reflexivity seems an appropriate response to the troubled space of 'community arts'. However, its effect is to valorise the authorial and critical power of the artist, and in doing so, it provides little space to explore or engage with the diverse creative interests of the project's participants. While the project may have aimed to 'connect art with real people' (Palmer 5), descriptions of the project centred on the approach and philosophy of the artist, while the participants themselves remain anonymous representatives of 'community'. And although the project may have enabled positive interactions and encounters for community participants, the effects of these are fleeting compared with the direct and strategic benefits to the artist and organisation.

Despite the critical praise of this project,²⁴ such attempts by artists to seek out 'real people' to enhance their artistic practice are, of course, nothing new. A report by Arts Victoria outlines the 'benefits for artists' of community-based work, as 'a source of inspiration for their art practice' and a means of building networks 'that assisted in creating further work opportunities' (*Strengthening* 8). And Hawkins reminds us that this fraught relationship – whereby the artist takes on the role of ethnographer encountering 'exotic other worlds' for 'inspiration' – has always been part of community arts' history (123). Importantly, the role of 'community' here is as 'object' – the *Crowd Theory* project was 'concerned with how we imagine and inhabit the idea of community' (FCAC *Choose* 14). In the following section of this chapter I want to dwell on these constructions of 'community', and look at how it amounts to an 'aestheticisation' of community.

²⁴ See 'Crowd Theory Port of Melbourne'; Dawkins; Palmer; Rann.

THE GO SHOW: AESTHETICISING 'COMMUNITY'

The 'idea of community' was explored in another program at the Centre, *The Go Show*, which aimed to *represent* 'the West' to both local audiences and to those from outside the West. The program ran for two years, in 2006 and 2008, and in its second year was performed as part of the high-profile Melbourne International Arts Festival. It was frequently cited by staff I spoke to as one of the Centre's biggest recent 'successes', particularly in reconciling the dilemmas I have described between 'traditional' forms of community-based arts and contemporary, 'high-quality' forms, and between 'global' and 'local' emphases.

The program began as a partnership between the Centre and the local Western Bulldogs football team, itself an icon of the West. Provisionally called 'Kickin' goals', the program had a loosely defined brief – a collaborative community-based project exploring the relationship between art and football (FCAC *Kickin' 1*). It revolved around 'a series of small dances ... created with communities, based on individuals' experience and/or collective memory of football' and these dances were woven together to 'create a large-scale community event' (FCAC *Kickin' 1*). The development of these performances made use of existing cultural activity already taking place at the Centre, as well as seeking out relevant performers in the broader community, and inviting these groups and individuals to participate. Participants were largely drawn from FCAC's own community networks – particularly with isolated or disadvantaged young people, people from non-English speaking backgrounds and people with disabilities. Project development was a multi-faceted process, involving five smaller 'sub-projects' which worked towards the final production.²⁵ The project evolved into a dynamic, large-scale 'cultural tour' of Footscray, and is described as follows in its 2008 program:

Welcome to The GO Show, a suburb-sized performance around and about the inner West, celebrating the way a shared activity can unite us, inspire us and

²⁵ As stated in the program's acquittal report, these projects included 'Resident Group Activities' (in which tutors worked with 'resident' community groups who were already involved with the Centre); 'Participatory Community Workshops' (including children's art, hip-hop dance and animation workshops); the development of an interactive, new media installation; the development of work by the Centre's own 'resident artists'; and finally, the show itself (FCAC *Go Acquittal 1*).

reveal something significant about us. ... As you jump on our GO Show bus and venture to Whitten Oval (home of the Western Bulldogs Football Club), Maddern Square (a public space in Footscray's CBD) and Footscray Community Arts Centre (the heart of the arts in the West) you'll be meeting actors, video artists, sound designers, musicians, hip hoppers, cover bands, krumpers, Vovinam practitioners, umpires, historians, sports experts, boat captains, Western Bulldogs fans, professional artists, enthusiastic amateurs and everything in between. (FCAC FCAC: *Go Show*)

The show comprised many components, including music and dance performances, sound installations and video art. In the program's first year, the number of performers and audience members were approximately equal, allowing the show to have a somewhat 'interactive' nature – although deliberately avoiding anything audience members might find too confrontational. The show also endeavoured to be as inclusive as possible and program staff state that any interested individual or group was given an opportunity to participate.

Importantly, staff were careful to avoid the perception that the program was an amateur production, or a 'community variety show', and this required the careful artistic direction of professional artists (Hilton). The Centre employed Rebecca Hilton, a Melbourne-based dancer and choreographer, to curate the show as part of its Artist in Residence program; a strategy which sought to provide a space 'for the interrogation of the artist's individual practice, whilst also linking in with FCAC's strong community focus and external activities' (FCAC *Kickin' 2*). Hilton, now a Footscray resident, had trained and performed internationally and was one of the founding members of the acclaimed Lucy Guerin Dance Company, thus meeting the requirement of 'excellence' that the Centre had set for itself (FCAC *Kickin' 6*). As FCAC's then director, Jerril Rechter states, the Centre's focus at the time was very much an 'arts-centred' and 'artist-centred' one (personal interview). What such an approach demanded however, was a way of reconciling this focus with the creative interests of community participants. It was believed that recent developments in contemporary art set a precedent for this approach – that there was an emerging trend among professional choreographers and

dancers, for example, to present their work in new community-based contexts and to incorporate themes *about* 'community'.²⁶

The show was promoted under the rubrics of both 'community' and mainstream contemporary art and the latter was in fact emphasised during the second incarnation of the program, in 2008. In this year, *The Go Show* was presented as part of the Melbourne International Arts Festival and attracted sell-out audiences. Rechter herself had worked as part of the Melbourne International Arts Festival for a number of years, reflecting the increasingly blurred distinction between these different artworlds. She states that one of the 'challenges' of the show in its second year was to 'lift' the standard of performance and elevate it from a community arts project to something of a 'professional standard', and with broad appeal (personal interview). In this sense, she argues that the program involved a crucial 'skills development' aspect, bringing in tutors to work closely with program participants.

The direction of the show entailed the careful management of its diverse performers, including the level and type of their participation. For example, while the program documentation states that the project was 'purposefully inclusive', professional artists who were approached for involvement were chosen because they embodied a specific attitude, or 'brought a sensibility appropriate to pushing the work's context and how we engage with artistic experiences' (FCAC *Go Show 2008* 1-2). In both incarnations of the program, but more significantly in its second run, professional artists and choreographers played a critical role in defining this artistic and political 'sensibility'. The use of this language in the program documentation was a strategic way of referring to the artistic merit and value of the work; and justified the role of program directors and professional artists in determining the show's structure and presentation. While the contributions of *The Go Show's* many participants were allowed to develop with a degree of flexibility,

²⁶ Program documentation cites the *Bal Moderne* production – staged by the Melbourne International Arts Festival in conjunction with Regional Arts Victoria – as an example of this 'community engagement approach', and the potential for arts organisations 'to re-imagine opportunities for their future work to involve community participation. This clearly has the potential to transform the culture of Australia's dance sector in the long-term' (FCAC *Kickin' 2*).

the Centre's artistic vision for the show involved a specific *representation* of 'community'. Rechter states that the conventional belief, that community participants should be able to work with the Centre on their own terms was naïve and 'really problematic' – particularly so, she says, for 'an arts organisation' (personal interview). In this sense, traditional ideas about community participation were not always reconcilable with Rechter's 'arts-centred' approach and FCAC's revamped organisational identity. Letting 'the community' set the agenda resulted in a 'passive' mode of community engagement, rather than the more 'proactive' one Rechter sought for the Centre (personal interview).

One of the main impacts claimed for the program was the relationships or forms of 'community' that it generated amongst its many participants. Hilton comments that in the 2008 show,

The groups spent three hours a night together so the most incredibly diverse community was formed over the run. We provided the food and the hundred or so participants provided the party. Some great relationships emerged, relationships that could only have happened in the very specific environment of *The Go Show*; VU [Victoria University] students hooking up with krumpers, Art Day West participants joining Krump crews, differently abled drummers swapping tips with DJs, the Sudanese parents of the girl hip hoppers coming to see them perform for the first time and really getting it etc. (*Go Show 2008 5*)

While the show succeeded in creating these communal bonds and, for some participants, instigating a positive and ongoing involvement with the Centre, this draws attention to a recurring critique of community-based arts practice. A number of commentators argue that such encounters are too fleeting or transitory, and bringing participants together over a week of performances is not the sort of committed, long-term, capacity-building or community development work that such programs could be undertaking (Mulligan et al. 76). At any rate, I would suggest that the relationships that emerged were a 'side-effect' rather than an explicit aim of the show, and its real 'achievement' was in fact the show itself.

Documentation about the program describes one of its main outcomes as its role in shaping perceptions of 'the West' and, importantly, of FCAC. In the acquittal report from the 2006 show it was stated that the program had fostered 'a sense of civic and cultural pride', and that it was 'an event of high quality that, in its diversity and energy, was somehow expressive of the West itself' (FCAC *Go Acquittal* 7). The show's perceived representativeness could be attributed to the fact that it had incorporated existing cultural activity within the community into its performance. In this sense, the intervention and curatorial control of FCAC staff could be described as a light-handed one.

Hilton explains this process:

I didn't want to go in there and 'help' people make things. I wanted to come up with a structure where what people already did could be presented as it was.

Thus the show sought to legitimate the cultural expressions of these groups, and affirm them as 'important and valued' (FCAC *Go Acquittal* 7). Crucially, doing so also helped to ensure that the show provided an 'authentic' representation of 'the West'.

The show's efforts to construct a 'sense of community' encapsulated a certain tension. The program endeavoured to bring a 'sense of community' to the Centre's 'artist-centred' processes, as well as to the sphere of mainstream art itself. It constituted part of the Centre's broader effort to move art away from its status as an elite, individualist practice, sequestered from the social context from which it emerges. As Rechter describes, this strategy involved a 'recontextualisation of community' in which 'community' is *represented* – to local and non-local audiences, as well as the mainstream artworld (personal interview). In the analysis that follows I want to consider what this 'recontextualised' 'community' entails, and what it is being made to do.

It is worth considering the different ways in which *The Go Show* is 'read' by staff who were involved with the program, and the distinct rhetorics that are used to discuss it. While 'official' accounts of the program in funding applications and acquittals highlight its 'community engagement' aspects, it is the *artistic value* of the show that is emphasised in staff accounts. It is for this reason that I suggest the main 'achievement' of the program was the show

itself. Hilton acknowledges this disjunction between different aspects of the program and states that she used one 'language' to talk about and promote the show as a 'fantastic' arts event when speaking to artists and arts administrators, and another to speak to the participants, who 'didn't care if it was this significant arts event' (Hilton). These differences become even more marked in Hilton's own reading of the performance, in which 'community' – as material processes and contexts of belonging – is transformed into an aesthetic. The 'sense of community' constructed by the show amounts to an aestheticisation of community:

You see something and suddenly everything feels like performance. You know, like you're sitting in Madden Square [where part of the performance was held] and there are all these drunks and drug addicts who hang out there But it was kind of great because we were very welcoming. And they would come and sit on this bench and be like, in the show, and they would come every night, but they didn't realise they were part of the show. They were watching the show because that's just where they always sit. And it was gorgeous. (Hilton)

The presence of these 'drunks and drug addicts' is cast as a textual element of the performance, enabled by Hilton's re-reading of their marginality as an endearing quirk of the show. Similarly, the 'tackiness' of one of the dances is read ironically so that it contributes to the artistic significance of the performance:

There were a bunch of girls from the YMCA doing Britney Spears ... as part of the show at Madden Square – twenty of them, horrible. As a person with a dance background it would just make my skin crawl, but they're gorgeous and they're there with a lovely light on them. And across the back is a staggering junkie – like just walking across the back wall. Those sorts of juxtapositions are really 'real life' in Footscray. So that was really fantastic. (Hilton)

Hilton speaks of these dancers with humour and affection and, as a long-time resident of Footscray, may indeed have the 'authority' to make this otherwise condescending judgment. Nonetheless, the 'ironic pleasure'²⁷ she derives from the work is enabled by her artistic literacy and cultural capital, a resource that she possesses in unequal proportion to many of the show's participants and

²⁷ I derive this notion from May's work on cultural capital and cultural difference (204).

audience members. The artistic value of the show, then, is 'read in' to it by those who have the cultural competency to do so, rather than as a direct result of the 'authenticity' of the participants' cultural expressions.

Of course, this dilemma is characteristic of all art consumption that involves judgments of merit made at the expense of those who do not possess certain cultural capital and competencies. As Bourdieu has famously argued, this leads to processes of social distinction and stratification. Importantly however, we all participate in these processes of meaning making and social distinction, and accordingly, they do not always result in the sorts of clearly differentiated hierarchies that Bourdieu's work suggests. Thus, I do not want to argue that any aestheticisation, or ironic reading, of what might otherwise seem inexpert or tedious performances is necessarily problematic. Episodes of the kind described above by Hilton were the spontaneous outcomes of staging a performance in a public space in Footscray. In some respects this reflects Amin's point about the normative ambivalence of such encounters in public space ('Collective').²⁸

However, it is possible to examine the politics of the program by considering the show's construction of, and relationship to its audience. It is here that we can most meaningfully think about the work that the show is being made to do. After the first run of *Go*, a small-scale audience survey was conducted suggesting that most audience members had found out about the event by way of 'word of mouth'.²⁹ This indicates that the audience was drawn mainly from the Centre's existing networks, including friends and family of participants involved in the program (*Go Acquittal* 9). The majority³⁰ stated that they had been to FCAC before and only a very small proportion heard

²⁸ However artistically interesting or innovative a performance like *The Go Show* may be, Amin reminds us that 'it is too heroic a leap to assume that making a city's public spaces more vibrant and inclusive will improve urban democracy' ('Collective' 7). Such encounters can, nevertheless, contain a certain kind of 'collective promise', which he locates 'in the entanglement between people and the material and visual culture of public space, rather than solely in the quality of social interaction between strangers' (8). This, then, is both an argument *for* the value of a performance such as *The Go Show*, as well as a qualification of its political possibilities.

²⁹ The survey only achieved a sample size of thirty-seven, so the results are indicative only and not conclusive.

³⁰ Twenty-two out of thirty-seven people.

about the event from general advertising.³¹ In this way, it seems that the program perpetuated existing patterns of cultural access, attracting those who already had connections to the Centre or to other cultural and arts institutions and networks in the area.

For Hilton one important outcome of the show was its success in attracting, albeit in small numbers, some audience members who were not regulars to FCAC programs, but locals who rarely attended arts events. She mentions, for example, the parents of a number of hip-hop dancers of Sudanese background who attended the show, and for whom it was the first time they had seen their daughters perform. Hilton explains how this provided them with a context in which they could 'really get' what their daughters did, and the sorts of cross-generational and cross-cultural understanding this brought for these families. However, not all instances of cross-cultural engagement were as successful or straightforward. Hilton describes how she convinced her Ethiopian neighbours to come to the show and the discomfort they experienced being part of the audience:

I said, 'what did you think?' and they said, 'it was good, it was very interesting but it was very uncomfortable for me because there were all these people of colour in the show and everyone watching the show was white. ... African people don't do that. You don't go to a show and just watch people. If you go, you're like, in the show'. And I said, 'Well that's what I was trying to do' and she was like, 'Well you didn't'. (Hilton)

Such feedback certainly highlights some inherent problems with the model of cultural tourism and the participant-spectator relationship set up by the show. The fluency with which some audience members took to the show compared with the obvious discomfort felt by these Ethiopian women make clear the inequalities of cultural capital and positioning that underpin these practices of cultural display and consumption.

These tensions are further highlighted by the fact that, in 2008, when the show was remounted as part of the Melbourne International Arts Festival, many audience members were from *outside* the West. As Rechter admits, although the program did not target any specific group, it definitely attracted 'a festival

³¹ Six out of thirty-seven people.

audience' in the second year, and the show was billed as an opportunity to come and 'experience the scary West' (personal interview). Promotional material for *The Go Show* in 2008 states that:

Remounting The GO Show for Melbourne International Arts Festival provides a unique opportunity for those of you not familiar with the western suburbs to come and see what we're about. Traditionally a working person's suburb, Footscray and its surrounds are home to an astoundingly diverse array of ethnicities, a wide range of socio-economic groups and a thriving artist and performer population, all of whom contribute to the cultural vibrancy of the place. Separated from greater Melbourne by the mighty Maribyrnong River we can see the city from all the high ground in Footscray and somehow in relation to that we've forged an independent (and extremely loaded) identity as 'Westies'. (Hilton quoted in FCAC FCAC: *Go Show 2*)

For many audience members, then, the show amounted to a form of cultural tourism; and I consider the politics of this consumption of 'cultural vibrancy' in more detail below.

GENTRIFICATION AND CULTURAL CAPITAL

I have been referring to the construction of 'community' in *The Go Show* as an aestheticisation of 'community', and I use this phrase because of the way the cultural work of FCAC is potentially drawn into the strategies of placemaking and gentrification that are taking place in Melbourne's West. Gentrification depends on a commodification of urban space, and in this context, the experience of 'cultural vitality' and vibrancy offered by the show contributes to a specific lifestyle culture.³² The politics of a program like *The Go Show* should be read in the context of two intersecting processes. Firstly, a cultural policy and urban planning agenda which recasts an area's diversity as economically desirable. Secondly, the ways in which FCAC's cultural work might have contributed to the formation of a distinct lifestyle aesthetic and

³² Gary Bridge describes gentrification as a process which turns cultural capital into economic capital by enabling a 'gentrification aesthetic' to be 'absorbed into the overall "price" of the property and the neighbourhood in which it is located' (723; Zukin *Landscapes*; Zukin *Loft*). Over time this creates a situation where economic capital can be converted into cultural capital, or used to *buy* cultural capital. Anderson and Oakley describe gentrification as a problematic outcome of the 'success' of the increasing profile of 'culture' in urban planning.

enabled projects of (broadly middle-class) self-formation. Many existing accounts of the role of commodified urban space in identity formation tend towards (often celebratory) descriptions of the ‘postmodern city’, and do not consider how such processes are implicated in contemporary frameworks of urban governance (Featherstone; O’Connor and Wynne). It is this relationship between urban and cultural planning frameworks and their aesthetic and ethical dimensions, which I attempt to analyse here.

The changes in Melbourne’s West described earlier regard gentrification as a process which will help to alleviate long-term economic and social decline. However, as I have mentioned, such arguments overlook the displacement of existing communities that inevitably results from these processes.³³ Moreover, they do not consider how such displacement is preempted by the sorts of lifestyle cultures and aesthetic formations to which the cultural work of FCAC might contribute. It could be argued that a program such as *The Go Show* – with its attempt to appeal to ‘festival’ audiences – are complicit in a commodification of the area in which devalued urban space is ‘revitalised around middle-class notions of taste’ (Delanty 59).

Of course, these arguments require some qualification. In Chapter Two I suggested that there has been a proliferation of identities based around a multiplicity of forms of cultural and aesthetic consumption. As individual identities are drawn from an ever-wider range of discourses they become more diffuse (Thrift and Glennie 44). And this means that the notion of ‘class’ itself, particularly in contemporary urban Australia, has become somewhat more dispersed, and the sorts of hierarchies that previously informed class distinctions are becoming increasingly blurred.³⁴ Given this, I do not wish to suggest that programs such as *The Go Show* necessarily have a divisive and negative effect on existing relations of inequality and social exclusion in Melbourne’s West. The situation is too complex for this. Moreover, such an

³³ See Bridge; Delanty 59; Zukin *Loft*.

³⁴ Bridge notes, for example, that class affiliations – particularly those derived from the possession of cultural capital – can change over time as people move between neighbourhoods, depending on lifestage. Bridge characterises this as a tension between the imperatives of acquiring institutionalised and objectified cultural capital – between wanting to live in a certain area because of the associated cultural cachet and the desire to live in an area with better educational prospects for children (726).

argument assumes that arts and cultural programs can even have a direct impact on structural relations of social exclusion or inequality, something I try to contest throughout this thesis. Rather, what is problematic is that such programs are implicated in the affirmation of (sometimes exclusionary) identities, lifestyles and cultural formations, and that this effect goes largely unacknowledged by the administrators, artswomen and other cultural intermediaries who implement, and themselves benefit from, these programs.

The middle-class 'festival' audience that was seen by the Centre's director as a marker of *The Go Show's* success, is broadly comprised of the sorts of 'desirable' residents and workers who will ideally contribute to the 'creative' and 'knowledge economies' of Melbourne's West. This is what Richard Florida has described as the 'creative class', and which has been described elsewhere by Jon May as the 'new cultural class'. He suggests that the interest this class may have in 'difference and otherness' can be explained as 'a project of cultural capital through which members of the class seek to display their liberal credentials and thus secure their class position' (May 196). In this reading, the cosmopolitanism displayed by audience members of *The Go Show* is a form of cultural capital that is enabled by 'a powerfully aestheticised reading of both the area's past and its other residents' (May 197). And this means that the sorts of cultural 'difference' that are celebrated or deemed desirable are contained within a narrow 'lifestyle aesthetic', rather than opening up the potential for 'a more progressive place identity'; difference is desired as long as it can be controlled (May 205).

This aestheticised reading of urban space has frequently been discussed in terms of a 'postmodern' aestheticisation of everyday life, in which subjects are said to form a distanced or ironic relationship with urban life, largely as a result of the commodification of these spaces (Featherstone; O'Connor and Wynne). Certainly, this might explain the ironic readings of 'community' and 'community art' enabled by *The Go Show*. A number of writers have pointed out that this amounts to a stylisation of everyday life that relates to the figure of the nineteenth century flaneur (May 197; Featherstone; O'Connor and

Wynne).³⁵ Writing specifically about the effects of gentrification, May suggests that

[W]hat we may be witnessing is the emergence of a new urban flaneur, for whom an interest in difference represents only a new form of cultural capital and the contemporary inner city little more than a colourful backdrop against which to play out a new 'urban lifestyle'. ... The city and its other residents are reduced to the sights of an afternoon stroll, part of an agreeable lifestyle aesthetic for those suitably insulated from the reality of life in a declining inner-city neighbourhood. (197; 208)

What is important in May's account is that it suggests how these aestheticised experiences of difference are informed by regulatory strategies of urban governance – which are themselves a response to cultural difference and diversity.

It is the very diversity of an area that makes the construction of a shared 'sense of place' or 'sense of community' such an important governmental strategy. As Thrift and Glennie explain,

perhaps the only way left to provide a joint appeal to this whole unstable, ambivalent mess of social groupings is by providing them with a 'sense of place': a 'sense of place' that invests the practices of buying and trafficking in commodities with localised meanings. (46)

It is through the formation of this shared feeling that difference is able to be accommodated and managed. However, when this 'sense of community' is formed via an aestheticisation of community, the extent to which it can be shared is limited. It becomes part of an ethical game in which only some members of the community can participate, because participation requires a set of cultural competencies and literacies to which various groups have differential access.

Some writing on cultural participation and the social impacts of the arts suggests, however, that such programs can successfully work to increase the

³⁵ Featherstone argues that these supposedly postmodern regimes of signification actually have their origins in 'the growth of consumer culture in the big cities of nineteenth century capitalist societies' (69). That is, they are the result of practices of identity formation in modern consumer societies.

'stock' of cultural capital within a community (DiMaggio and Mukhtar; Johnson; Landry et al. *Art*). In this view it could be argued that by encouraging the participation of a wide cross-section of the community at events such as *The Go Show*, the Centre helps to develop cultural capital in those who may otherwise be culturally 'isolated' or 'disadvantaged'. In Chapter Two I made a similar argument – for cultural organisations to take on an educative role and facilitate the more equitable distribution of cultural capital. However, the former argument is problematic because it defines cultural capital as a *communal* property, and as something that can be conferred to groups in a straightforward way. Rather the redistribution of cultural capital is something that can only take place via more specific and sustained forms of ethical training. Bridge argues that this reinterpretation of cultural capital, as a communal resource, encompasses both Florida's description of 'culture' as a lifestyle asset, and the use of 'culture' as a participatory tool for achieving social inclusion or improved 'quality of life' outcomes (719). 'Cultural capital' here, is 'the summation of all the creative assets of the city' (Bridge 721). To the extent that 'cultural capital' is given any consideration in a contemporary policy context, it is this version of cultural capital that dominates thinking about 'culture'.³⁶

In this policy context, the significance of cultural facilities for 'healthy neighbourhood life' is highlighted, and the relations between cultural assets, social capital and economic capital are emphasised (Bridge 721). These frameworks are problematic, however, because they 'treat cultural capital as some kind of resource that can be built up across neighbourhoods and cities *with implied benefits to all*' (Bridge 722, my emphasis). Bridge questions whether cultural capital can indeed be thought of as a 'generalised social resource' (722). Moreover, these perspectives overlook the tensions that arise when the two approaches to cultural capital are conflated. In his critique of gentrification, Bridge describes the effect as follows:

³⁶ It is this thinking that is evident in state government policy documents such as Arts Victoria's 'Strengthening Local Communities: Arts in Community Settings', in which it is stated that 'Communities that embrace diversity, creative expression and cultural activity are richer, stronger and better able to deal with social challenges' (i; see also *Creative Capacity+*).

The gentrified neighbourhood is the clearest expression of new middle-class cultural capital, a fact that Florida and others from their perspective celebrate in terms of the assets and competitive edge of the city as a whole. (722)

At FCAC, while cultural activity might be aimed at empowering the ‘community’ as a whole, this also has the effect of creating a desirable cultural experience for broadly middle-class people. There is a tension between the participatory possibilities of culture – as a way of building up ‘cultural capital’ – and the unequal access to these cultural processes (and their benefits) that exists in the first place.

This also raises questions for studies by cultural planners calling for improved auditing of local cultural resources and ‘assets’. Bridge’s critique reminds us that cultural capital is not ‘a homogeneous asset’ that can be ‘captured by some static audit of cultural resources within a neighbourhood’, as is advocated in much work on ‘cultural mapping’ (728).³⁷ Rather, a more meaningful approach to ‘cultural mapping’ requires a consideration of the critical, Bourdieusian definition of ‘cultural capital’ – it necessitates an account of ‘the times and spaces of the deployments of cultural capital (in its objective, institutionalised and embodied states) ... to be traced’, and their possible hierarchical effects (Bridge 729). Thus, if cultural capital is to be conceived of as a *resource*, we need to find more meaningful and specific ways of thinking about, measuring and redistributing it.³⁸

As I discussed earlier, the role of FCAC staff in shaping the ‘sensibility’ of a program like *The Go Show* was crucial. It was particularly important because it was via these figures – who I refer to as ‘cultural intermediaries’ – that the economic and aesthetic rationales that inform these programs, were brought together. The term ‘cultural intermediary’ comes from Bourdieu’s work,

³⁷ See Mercer *Towards* for an outline of such an approach.

³⁸ Bridge asks for example, ‘What are the objective manifestations of cultural capital in different neighbourhoods? What do these objective realisations of taste implicitly or explicitly define themselves against as objectifications of “bad taste”? ... How is embodied cultural capital performed in the neighbourhood? Does it enhance community relations or do differences in body presentation, styles and movements keep people in separate social worlds despite sharing the same neighbourhood space?’ (729). See also Brook for an interesting argument about cosmopolitanism as cultural capital and the possibilities of more equitably distributing this capacity.

although it is a figure he does not examine in depth (Negus 503). Bourdieu uses it to refer to the role of certain segments of the 'new petit bourgeoisie', in shaping tastes within consumer culture (*Distinction* 359); and he locates this segment 'between the disaffected, educated, bohemian middle class and the upwardly mobile, newly educated working class' (Negus 503).³⁹ Although his writings are specific to France, Negus suggests that 'the concept has certain similarities with what other writers have called a "service class" or "knowledge class"' (502). Featherstone describes these workers as historically being comprised of

artistic and intellectual countercultures, the bohémias and artistic avant-gardes, members of whom became fascinated by and sought to capture in various media the range of new sensations, and who also acted as intermediaries in stimulating, formulating and disseminating these sensibilities to wider audiences and publics. (69)

The concept encompasses 'those workers who come *in-between* creative artists and consumers (or, more generally, production and consumption)' (Negus 503). Their role is not so much in symbolic production as it is in the cultivation of taste.⁴⁰ And this amounts to a certain cultural privilege and class power. In the context of the sorts of cultural programs being examined here, 'cultural intermediaries' could describe a range of professions and 'ancillary workers' associated with the institutionalisation of community-based arts (Featherstone 95).

Staff and artists who defined the cultural activity of community-based arts are potentially implicated in this shaping of tastes, and the lifestyle formations that go along with these tastes. As I noted in the previous chapter, the positioning and credibility of FCAC and its staff has been an important factor in its ability to wield a certain degree of cultural authority. The role of staff as cultural intermediaries can also be understood as repackaging

³⁹ Others have referred to this class category with some derision. Banks, for example, comments that 'if the role of the artist or bohemian was/is to occupy a critical space outside of the mainstream, ... in defiance of markets and modernisation, a new breed of sub-bohemian grouping has emerged in the urban contexts to promote the virtues of art and culture, albeit, it seems, in more ambiguous fashion' (106).

⁴⁰ The term has been used, for example, to describe professionals in the advertising industry (Negus) and literary publishing (Nixon and du Gay).

community-based arts – particularly because some of the most significant changes at the Centre in recent years relate to its modes of presentation, and the language with which its cultural work is framed. These shifts have to do with the Centre’s attempts to make connections with ‘mainstream’ arts organisations and audiences, and it reflects the professional profiles of some FCAC staff and artists who have a significant professional history of involvement with the ‘establishment’ artsworld. As such they have a professional, and perhaps personal, stake in the sorts of cultural activity promoted by FCAC.⁴¹

CONCLUSION

A related aspect of discussions of ‘cultural capital’ in cultural planning and urban regeneration programs is its supposed role in enhancing social capital. The creation of a ‘sense of place’ or ‘sense of community’ through culture becomes a device for creating the bounded social networks and relations of trust that are considered crucial to community ‘wellbeing’. We have already considered how this ‘sense of community’ is constructed, in the case of FCAC and a program such as *The Go Show*, as an aestheticised one; that is, as a representation of ‘community’. What this means for a culturally diverse area such as Melbourne’s western suburbs, is that it is not really a *shared* sense of community. Rather, the differential access that residents have to the competencies required to decipher this ‘sense of community’ mean that a privileged cultural class is ‘being provided with a readymade sense of place’ while other, sometimes disenfranchised groups miss out (May 201). In constructing a ‘sense of community’ there is perhaps insufficient attention paid to *who* this is constructed for.

Robson and Butler examine the relations between different social and ethnic groups in Brixton in the UK and suggest that the ‘vibrancy of the urban landscape’ in the area serves ‘for most of its middle-class residents, as an ideologically charged and desirable backdrop for lives conducted at a remove

⁴¹ For a critical reading on this point it is worth turning to Banks’ analysis of cultural intermediaries. He argues that while they ‘extol the virtues of autonomy and creative self-expression, in their regularity and predictability they may produce only conformity and a reproduction of historically ascribed social roles’ (84).

from its multicultural institutions' (78). They describe this model of social relations as 'tectonic'; while multiculturalism is embraced 'as an ideal of city living' this only takes place by way of an 'informal, voluntary segregation' between groups (Robson and Butler 77).⁴² The implication is that cultural institutions such as FCAC might play a useful role in providing opportunities for a more integrated experience of diversity without resorting to the consensual forms of 'community' I critiqued in the first chapter.

One of FCAC's strengths is its increasing awareness of some of these dilemmas, and its continuing attempt to incorporate discussion of these issues into its cultural programs. However, the programs profiled in this chapter point to the *aspirational* orientation of the Centre. It might be argued that this desire for inclusion in the arts 'mainstream' reinforces its position on the margins, and it relates to the important question of whether an institution such as FCAC is capable of disrupting the norms of the established artsworld. This question turns on whether cultural activity at FCAC can actually work to shift middle-class artistic tastes – for example, by bringing a community 'aesthetic' to 'mainstream' arts production and consumption – or whether such cultural forms simply become incorporated into these exclusionary hierarchies of value.

In a positive evaluation of FCAC's work it could be argued that the sorts of aestheticised 'community' that it has promoted are in fact, a necessary strategy for negotiating the varied, and incongruous, priorities and interests of such a diverse community. The ironic readings of Footscray's eccentricities I discussed above might be the only way for such diverse social groups to live together in a convivial way. Still, if FCAC's stated role as an inclusionary cultural institution is to be taken seriously then the potentially exclusionary effects of its cultural activity are worth scrutiny. In taking on the problematic rhetoric of cultural planning and 'creative cities' discourses, and citing these agendas as *opportunities* (because of their apparent support for increased cultural activity), the Centre's attempts at meaningful cross-cultural exchange

⁴² Robson and Butler argue that 'The price of openness and heterogeneity in Brixton, then, is the undercurrent of tension and unease articulated by many of its middle-class residents' (78). See also May.

and engagement become obscured by these other agendas. And as long as discussions of urban regeneration in Melbourne's West are tied up with Floridian ideas about culture and diversity as an 'asset', such cultural activity remains implicated in economic projects which necessarily involve unequal benefits to people within its constituency.

5

GOING 'MAINSTREAM': INSTRUMENTALISING MULTICULTURAL ARTS

The economic rationales that increasingly inform state-based systems of arts patronage have been the subject of much concern – both in a theoretical context and in policy debates. This chapter takes up the discussion introduced in Chapter Two about the sorts of tensions that arise between the cultural citizen and consumer. As we have seen, attempts to characterise the 'value' of the arts have been caught up in a debate between humanistic and economic modes of valuing art, with few attempts to find any points of convergence between the two. I want to consider how this duality has shaped contemporary debates over the instrumentalisation of a distinct strand of community-based arts – multicultural arts – and I do so by scrutinising the cultural work of a particular organisation, Multicultural Arts Victoria (MAV). My analysis suggests that current distinctions between economic and humanistic approaches to the arts are counter-productive; and points to ways in which this binary might be overcome. This chapter offers a more affirmative reading of the possibilities of community-based arts from those offered in the previous two chapters. One reason for this is that MAV's cultural programming explicitly considers the question of 'audience', and is thereby able to more usefully think about the sorts of cross-cultural exchange that might be enabled by its programs. However, like FCAC, MAV is troubled

by how it should situate its work, and its constituencies, in relation to the cultural 'mainstream'.

The organisation began in the 1970s, as a community-based festival aimed at the cultural expression and maintenance of migrant communities. It has since evolved into an advocacy organisation for aspiring professional artists, and has formed partnerships with 'establishment' arts organisations in an effort to make multicultural arts more 'mainstream'. These moves, informed by more general trends within Australian arts policy towards economic justifications for the arts, have tended to be evaluated negatively; usually, for their assumed complicity with neoliberal policy agendas, and the assumption that this has weakened its commitment to 'cultural development' goals. Such critiques, however, in privileging and defending arts' liberatory or transcendental potential, too readily discredit arts' instrumentalisation.

I suggest that Ghassan Hage's analysis of the multicultural festival as a perpetuation of 'White' domination in Australia, is an extension of such critiques. Problematically, his argument presupposes a binary between a white, cosmopolitan consumer of multicultural arts, and a passive, 'ethnic' object. Moreover, in criticising the symbolic politics of multicultural rhetoric he is not able to account for how economic rationales for culturally diverse arts might actually sit *in practice* with (an organisation such as) MAV's non-economic agendas. Here, my critique is informed by the approach of 'everyday multiculturalism', which focuses on quotidian processes of cross-cultural exchange, rather than on problematising discourses of multiculturalism in abstract terms. I thus propose an alternative analytical framework – one which can more readily account for multicultural arts as a set of practices informed by diverse agendas, and which acknowledges how such practices might contest and converge with official government policies. Such an approach would involve overcoming the tension between humanistic and economic rationales for the arts, and provide a more useful point of entry into current debates in cultural policy.

CULTURE VERSUS ECONOMY: DEBATING THE INSTRUMENTALISATION OF THE ARTS

Toby Miller's explanation of the term 'culture' provides a useful starting point for situating debates between economic and humanistic justifications for the arts. In his view, 'culture', particularly since capitalism's division of labour, embodies a certain contradiction – between instrumentalism and the cultivation of individual taste ('Screening' 98). He argues that 'culture', as it has gone on to be conventionally used now, 'blends ideas about custom and society with ideas of meaning and textuality', imposing a distinction between a thing and its representation ('Screening' 97). This contradiction can, of course, be traced to the definitional frame articulated by Raymond Williams and which I examined in Chapter Two. It is the distinction between, 'culture' as a 'way of life' (or set of practices) and 'culture' as 'high culture' (or as a transcendental category). The tradition of aesthetic philosophy has meant a historical privileging of the latter meaning for 'culture' as 'art'; and it has meant a valuing of art for its *intrinsic* aesthetic function over any *instrumental* value.¹

This dilemma has taken on a renewed significance with the increasing currency of neoliberalism in cultural policymaking, which inform debates surrounding cultural 'citizens' versus 'consumers', and their competing claims for the nation and market respectively (Miller and Yúdice 72). While the specifics of this policy shift have varied in different national contexts, it is characterised by a move away from 'cultural development' agendas,² towards a focus on the development of individual human capital, where new forms of value are attributed to the individual artisan or entrepreneur (McKinnie; Miller 'Screening'). As I demonstrated in the previous chapters, these policy agendas entail 'an uncomfortable mix of social and economic goals'; for example, a desire to rebuild 'community' and civic pride, while all the time

¹ Shusterman presents an interesting account of a number of historical precedents for overcoming this binary between the two notions of 'culture' – most significantly, in Nietzsche's notion of *Erholung* or 'recreation' ('Entertainment').

² It is these agendas which largely informed the redefinition of 'community arts' to 'community cultural development' at the level of federal arts policy. See Chapter Two for a description of the distinctive political agenda of the latter framework. Lianne Gibson provides a useful definition of 'cultural development' as involving two things at its core: to 'facilitate cultural diversity and give local communities opportunities for cultural expression', and to 'facilitate cross-sectoral partnerships as tools for the encouragement of sustainable cultural activity' ('Creative Industries' 27).

extending the marketisation of arts (Hesmondhalgh 'Cultural' 555). Michael McKinnie suggests that neoliberal cultural policy reads the utility of the arts expansively; it sees 'the arts as a medium through which social inclusion occurs, the arts as a virtuous form of economic production ("creative industries"), and the arts as an object of technocratic "modernisation"' (188). It is a framework which redefines the relationship between the arts, the state and private capital, and the role that the arts play in public and industrial spheres.

Several commentators have examined these shifts in cultural policy within an Australian context (Gibson 'Arts'; Gibson 'Creative Industries'; Gibson *Uses*; Stevenson *Art*; Throsby 'Does'). It has been suggested that it was in the mid 1970s, particularly with the 1976 Industries Assistance Commission report made to the Australia Council, that official economic justifications for the arts – as profitable and marketable – began to surface (Gibson *Uses*; Throsby 'Does'). Stevenson suggests that these economic rationales gained momentum into the 1980s, as the 'arts came to be regarded as an industry and not a part of the welfare state' (*Art* 34). It is at this time that the language of economics – with its accompanying emphasis on 'nurturing "demand" rather than subsidising "supply"' – gained visibility, and public provision models for the arts began to give way to entrepreneurial frameworks (*Art* 34). This set of official justifications for the arts increased in prominence with the Keating government's 1993 policy document *Creative Nation* – widely regarded at the time as the most explicit articulation yet of the merging of nation-building and economic goals via the arts (Stevenson *Art*; Throsby 'Does').³

Lisanne Gibson's work examines various political rationalisations or 'uses' of the arts as they have surfaced throughout Australia's history. She traces the emergence of the discursive split between humanistic and economic justifications for the arts; between a view of the 'arts as industry' and a 'public

³ As David Throsby argues, the proposals contained in *Creative Nation* were informed primarily by ideas about Australian identity and cultural sovereignty, but it was also, equally, an economic policy: 'The essential element common to both cultural and economic progress was seen to be creativity; on one side artists would generate innovative ideas reflecting our distinctive cultural identity, while on the other side creativity would be fostered as a key resource in the development of the new economy' ('Does' 14).

provision' model of the arts ('Arts' 107). While the rhetoric of 'cultural development' found its way into the policies of the Australia Council in the 1980s and 1990s, she examines how this emphasis has been displaced by the language of 'audience development', and a broader 'creative industries' approach. Specifically, she documents the implications of the establishment of the Audience Development and Advocacy Division in 1996. 'Audience development' transfers responsibility onto the arts organisation for the generation of audiences, and thus to a greater extent than before, the acquisition of funds. Gibson argues that by prioritising the successful development of audiences and funds as the critical goal of the arts program, over its erstwhile *cultural* development goals, the 'audience development' model apparently reifies the division between 'arts as profit' and 'arts as identity' ('Creative Industries' 25). As the discourse of 'audience development' has gained credibility in policy circles, there has been continued resistance to it from both academics and practitioners within the arts industries. These critiques are primarily concerned with the potential for economic rationales to displace the 'cultural and social purposes' of the arts (Gibson 'Arts' 110).

Stevenson's analysis of *Arts 21*, the 1994 Victorian government's arts policy statement, is an example of such a critique. She demonstrates how this document constituted a crucial break – both symbolic and actual – with the funding practices, policies and ideologies of previous Victorian state governments (*Art* 81). The document reflected the cultural policies that were being advocated by the federal government of the time – particularly the proposals put forward by the *Creative Nation* policy. It formed part of the state government's vision to cast Melbourne as Australia's 'cultural capital', and sought to bring national and international attention to Victoria by creating a cultural sector that was enterprising, innovative and ultimately a major contributor to tourism. But Stevenson suggests that these objectives – with their focus on revenue-generating, large-scale sporting and cultural events – had the effect of subsuming any concern with cultural development (*Art* 82).

Such an assessment could equally be applied to more recent developments in Victorian state arts policy. The current Labor government continues to

advocate the marketisation of the arts that was initiated by their predecessors, while merging this focus with goals of community participation and regeneration. Three of the key objectives articulated in the current government's policy statement, *Creative Capacity+* include facilitating 'a culture of participation', 'an economy based on innovation', and fostering a 'creative place' (3). There is an uneasy alignment between these social and economic goals: the emphasis on world-class events and facilities remains, and success is still measured and documented, to a large degree, by the numbers of international and domestic visitors Victoria manages to attract (*Arts Victoria Art-Look*).

As we saw in Chapter Two, responses to these policy developments have taken the form of efforts to re-assert the *intrinsic* value of the arts and culture. Jon Hawkes, for example, censures governmental approaches in which art is simply taken up 'as a tool of social policy' and justified in terms of a set of objectives that are 'fundamentally foreign to the actual practice of art-making' ('Fourth' 18, 20). He argues instead for a return to traditional community arts emphases on 'locally-based arts making' and 'participation', which have apparently been displaced by an official focus on innovation, industry-partnerships and cultural tourism ('Fourth' 22). Deborah Mills, another arts industry consultant, voices her concern in these terms:

We must acknowledge and protect our rights as creative producers, and not be content with having our involvement relegated to the ranks of consumers; we must become actors, not spectators. ('Necessity' 18)

Prevailing economic justifications for the arts are here seen to deny agency. By casting populations as 'consumers' or 'spectators', rather than 'creative producers', an opposition is established between an empowered (and participatory) cultural citizen, and a passive (and culturally deprived) consumer. And this is traced to a distinction between 'instrumental' and 'intrinsic' uses of art. The 'necessity of the arts', as Mills describes it, lies in its capacity to 'free us from the traps of habit, help us to see things from a different perspective, suggest connections between varied subjects and transform communities and the way in which government agencies operate' ('Necessity' 2). What she argues for, then, is a greater acknowledgement of the liberatory and transcendental potential of the arts – which these

commentators believe are undermined, and subsumed, by the prevailing 'creative industries' approaches.

The tensions that define the cultural work of FCAC demonstrate that this binary is somewhat overstated; and I hope to elaborate on this point via my analysis of Multicultural Arts Victoria. This arts organisation, also based in Melbourne, Australia – perceives its primary achievement (and continuing goal) to be the 'mainstreaming' of multicultural arts. After examining the implications of this, I go on to suggest how this counter-productive tension between humanistic and economic discourses of art might be circumvented; an aim which has become particularly important in a moment when, as Miller argues, 'culture is simultaneously folkloric, industrial, and textual' ('Screening' 89). As 'one group's religious rite is another's tourism ritual' the opposition between transcendental and instrumental understandings of 'culture' is particularly untenable ('Screening' 91).

FROM MARGINS TO 'MAINSTREAM': CONCEPTUALISING MULTICULTURAL ARTS'

AUDIENCES

Recent discussions of multiculturalism have been marked by a tendency to proclaim multiculturalism 'in crisis'. Academic pronouncements of this sort reflect the way in which the term has receded from cultural policy frameworks in a number of Western countries in recent years (Delanty 93; Modood). However, Ghassan Hage points out that despite its limits, multiculturalism remains 'a multifaceted reality' ('Intercultural' 235). It exists as a set of political theories,⁴ as regulatory frameworks and policies for governing cultural minorities,⁵ and as 'a cosmopolitan principle of cultural production in the arts and culinary sector' ('Intercultural' 235). This last point alludes to the 'everyday' dimensions of multiculturalism that are crucial to the account of multicultural arts provided here.

⁴ See for example, Delanty; Parekh.

⁵ See Modood who looks at multiculturalism as a political idea in a European context and the implications of anti-multiculturalism sentiment.

In Australia, the language of multiculturalism has fallen out of favour at the level of federal cultural policy.⁶ But what I want to suggest is that rather than signaling the ‘end’ of multiculturalism, this has simply created a dissonance between federal policies and the continuing currency of multicultural discourse at other levels of government – where ‘multiculturalism’ still provides the terms on which various agencies think through and act on cultural difference. Municipal-level planning documents and policies continue to use the term;⁷ in the state of Victoria, the Victorian Multicultural Commission is a statutory authority that implements the *Victorian Multicultural Act (2004)*, and which, in 2008, launched a statewide multicultural policy, *All of Us*.

In the account provided in this chapter, I am not concerned with ‘multiculturalism’ as it constitutes an overarching theory about cultural difference. Rather, I want to consider the more contingent and provisional ways in which multicultural discourse is put to use. In this respect, my methodology draws from the set of approaches known as ‘everyday multiculturalism’ (Amin ‘Local’; Permezel and Duffy; Wise; Wise and Velayutham). Wise and Velayutham see this as encompassing a range of positions and theoretical concerns, including cultural capital and habitus (Bourdieu), cultural hybridity (Ang *On Not*), gift exchange (Mauss), and affect (Rodaway; Stoller). My interest here is in the relations of cultural ‘exchange’ and ‘interchange’ that might be generated by multicultural arts, which have the effect of ‘opening and refiguring identities’, and enabling what Amanda Wise calls ‘quotidian transversality’ (3). This perspective will be followed through in the next chapter which looks more closely at the experiences of ‘multicultural artists’ and their vernacular expressions of cultural difference.

⁶ This has largely been attributed to the political agenda of the conservative Liberal government elected in 1996. However, despite a change in government in 2007, Australia’s current multicultural policy, *Multicultural Australia: United in Diversity*, has not been updated since 2003. And in 2007, just prior to the election of the Labor government later that year, the Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs was renamed the Department of Immigration and Citizenship.

⁷ See for example, *Yarra City Council Multicultural Policy* and *A City of Opportunity – a Multicultural Strategy for the City of Melbourne*.

In taking up this approach, I aim to address the dilemma that informs much critical analysis of multiculturalism, where a tension arises 'between a policy-oriented conception of multiculturalism and the empirical recognition of diversity within contemporary society' (Semi et al. 66). Instead I want to consider the sorts of exchange that might occur between the two by looking at how governmental frameworks of multiculturalism are translated and implemented by MAV staff, and the sorts of cross-cultural exchange that this facilitates – particularly amongst the artists that the organisation works with. What is distinctive about my account is its concern with how these practical processes of cultural exchange operate in the context of arts and cultural institutions, where difference is routinely aestheticised and commodified.

MAV describes its overarching aim as 'promoting cultural diversity in the arts' (MAV AR 2008 8). Throughout its development it has been responsible for an array of festivals, events, training and cultural development programs, as well as advocacy services for multicultural artists and communities in Melbourne. My findings are based on a series of in-depth interviews conducted with past and present staff and board members of MAV, concerning the significant shifts the organisation has undergone over its thirty-five year history. While documentation such as annual reports, board minutes, grant applications and program evaluations were available for analysis, it was clear that textual documentations of MAV's programs alone did not account for the complex rationales and disjunctions that informed MAV's cultural production.⁸ Interviewing key decision-makers and program developers at the organisation allowed for a more nuanced analysis of the disparate agendas informing the use of rhetorical categories such as 'audience development' and the 'mainstreaming' of multicultural arts. The interviews also highlighted how these uses at times diverged from their stated policy 'intent'. This aspect of my research demonstrated the irregular processes by which policies are translated into programs and how, for example, MAV's deployment of the official rhetoric of multiculturalism and state arts policy at times contests state and federal government agendas.

⁸ See Sharon MacDonald's study, *Behind the Scenes at the Science Museum* for how such a methodology can provide a more comprehensive account of the nature and complexities of a cultural institution – particularly, 'the disjunctions, disagreements and "surprise outcomes" involved in cultural production' (8).

MAV emerged as a small, community-based committee for organising what was then known as the Festival of All Nations. The Festival was based in Fitzroy, one of a handful of suburbs in Melbourne's inner-city that was home to the first waves of post-World War II European migration. It was initiated and funded by the local Fitzroy Council in an effort to bring together representatives from the various ethnic communities – at that time, mainly Southern and Eastern European – living in the area.⁹ The convening of this Festival was, in many ways, a reflection of broader developments in federal cultural policy. It was founded in 1973 – a year after Gough Whitlam's Labor government came to power and dismantled the last vestiges of the White Australia policy,¹⁰ as well as introduced the term 'multiculturalism' into official parlance. However, it is important to avoid suggesting that the development of such cultural institutions was enabled only as a direct outcome of policy changes – what Hage describes as 'policy determinism' ('Intercultural' 236) – and to acknowledge the role that such initiatives actually had in *influencing* policy.

Until this point, 'ethnic arts', as far as it was promoted and supported by government, came under the broad rubric of 'community arts'. The growth of community arts during this period owed much to broader social movements of the time, and 'community' became a convenient category with which to group constituencies, such as ethnic minorities, that were otherwise marginalised by the arts establishment. It was in this context that the arts and cultural policy objectives of 'access and participation' were first articulated with respect to ethnically diverse communities. This was followed by 'a more pluralist understanding of government arts funding' reflected in the Australia

⁹ The first Festival included performances from the Greek, Italian, Yugoslavian, Russian, Polish, Argentinian and Sri Lankan communities.

¹⁰ The 'White Australia Policy' refers to a number of pieces of legislation, although its discriminatory power was enabled mainly by injunctions contained in the *Immigration Restriction Act 1901*. This legislation deliberately restricted non-white immigration to Australia, and included a dictation test that would preclude non-European migrants from entering the country.

Council in the early 1980s,¹¹ and which today is most explicitly articulated in the Council's 'Arts for a Multicultural Australia' policy (Gibson *Uses* 112).

The Festival of All Nations consisted of an annual 'folkloric' concert 'showcasing' the diverse cultural traditions of the migrant communities living in and around Fitzroy. Performances consisted of musical and dance acts and the main purpose of the concerts was to provide an opportunity for the cultural expression of these communities. By holding this event in the Fitzroy Town Hall, and making it open to the public, it was also about granting these expressions an official or 'mainstream' legitimacy. The committee grew out of the local ethnic rights movements of the time and considered what it was trying to achieve to be relatively radical. As an ex-chairperson of MAV states:

[T]hat's where we started and it was mainly the need for recognition, for acceptance, and for appropriate levels of funding for proper services whether it was in education, or health or welfare. And Australian governments at the end of the sixties they were starting to realise that their vague education programs for migrants weren't working. (Papadopoulos)

The Festival of All Nations was the first festival in Australia of its kind. It was because of the marginality of these cultural forms that it encountered a degree of initial controversy; an ex-committee member remembers the consternation expressed by one conservative talk back radio host about the fact that 'the wogs¹² are having a festival' (Badrudeen). So while this archetypal multicultural festival may now seem a banal or clichéd attempt at cross-cultural engagement, in Melbourne in the early 1970s it was unprecedented.

¹¹ This reflected the increasing emphasis on multiculturalism in other areas of government, and also enabled the institution of the first 'ethnic arts officers' in existing arts organisations such as FCAC. A Multicultural Arts Committee was set up in 1985 but this was disbanded a year later, with the multicultural project manager position moved to the newly formed Community Cultural Development Committee (Gibson *Uses* 112). The Multicultural Arts Advisory Committee was re-established in 1990 whereupon it developed the 'Arts for a Multicultural Australia' policy and continues to manage the implementation of multicultural policy across the Australia Council's programs.

¹² The term is an ethnic slur which came into popular usage in Australia in the 1950s in response to the large numbers of migrants from Southern and Eastern Europe. The term continues to have widespread currency in Australia and although it has, to some extent, been reappropriated by these communities as a term of affirmation and affection, in this context the intent would have been derogatory.

Notwithstanding this, the response to the Festival was regarded as largely positive. The first chairperson of the Festival, Mike Zafiropoulos, states that

[P]eople, not only from ethnic communities, but from the broader community, embraced the concept. They embraced it in terms of attendance to the activities that we organised, and I remember quite vividly the long queues at the lower Fitzroy Town Hall where we had the multi-ethnic restaurant. ... We had a restaurant where we had different cuisines from different minorities who were providing their own delicacies and what have you. And there was a queue that went all the way to Brunswick St. We had three or four hundred people waiting to get into that restaurant. And remember this seems amazing because now we have a hundred restaurants in Brunswick St. In those times I don't recall more than two or three. So we introduced diversity, which became cosmopolitan, exotic, interesting, part of the mainstream.

What made the Festival unique, then, was the fact that it cast 'cultural diversity' as something to be 'embraced' – in this case, via the consumption of these signifiers of diversity. Significantly, as Zafiropoulos notes, while this idea was then relatively peripheral to Australia's self-image, it has now 'become part of the mainstream, part of Australian culture'.

As the Festival grew, the committee was able to obtain funding from other sources, including commercial sources.¹³ This allowed for the appointment of an artistic director and an overall improvement in the 'quality' and 'professionalism' of the productions. As Zafiropoulos states, 'as the years passed by, funding increased, [and] groups would take pride in presenting their culture. ... So the presentation would be much better as we progressed and that's how the quality was improved'. As we have seen, this concern with 'quality' has been a contentious issue throughout the history of community-based arts in Australia. Critics like Carmen Grostal and Gillian Harrison have identified the problems with connotations of amateurism that have accompanied debates about multicultural arts throughout the sector's development. Because of its associations with community arts' traditional welfare objectives, there is an expectation that multicultural arts does not

¹³ By the mid 1970s the Festival was obtaining annual funding from the Shell petroleum company.

meet the aesthetic norms of 'mainstream' artforms. It is argued that this has served to undervalue multicultural arts; it 'is usually assumed to be for ethnic community consumption only and not necessarily engaged in the achievement of "excellence" or high professional quality on a par with parallel "mainstream" arts' (Bilimoria 120).

The Festival of All Nations continued for ten years until, in 1983, the committee remade itself as Multicultural Arts Victoria. In response to the sorts of concerns described above MAV has, over the last twenty years, expanded its focus from 'amateur' cultural expressions to include the work of the 'professional' ethnic artist. The organisation has redefined its key role from that of producing an annual cultural festival to becoming a more general advocate for multicultural artists. Over the past 25 years, this has also meant a move from facilitating the 'folkloric' cultural activities of the Festival of All Nations, to advocating for more contemporary and hybrid forms of cultural expression. However, there is some disagreement over how 'traditional' or 'authentic' the folkloric cultural forms at the Festival of All Nations were. As Zafiroopoulos suggests, even the most traditional of their folkloric presentations were hybrid affairs:

You could see that even though traditions have conservative elements about them, nevertheless, people got involved in the costumes, and they started bringing in complexity in the choreography, in the colour and vibrancy of the presentation and so on. ... [W]e were learning and we were developing our own traditions of culture, particular to our own environment.

Cultural traditions were not just maintained, but 'learned', 'developed' and 'redeveloped' in ways that were specific to the present cultural context of the performers. So there was always a reconciling of the traditional with the contemporary, of cultural pasts with presents and possible futures. The 'folkloric versus contemporary' binary that has been written into the history of multicultural arts, then, is a problematic one.

Nonetheless, developments at MAV can be understood in terms of what Stevenson describes as the two contrasting approaches that frame governmental support of multicultural arts in Australia – 'grassroots' and 'excellence' (*Art* 164). While 'grassroots' programs are aimed at the cultural

maintenance of different ethnic communities, often through community cultural development initiatives or specific sorts of infrastructure support, a focus on 'excellence' involves government support to artists to develop their work for consumption by the mainstream or 'arts establishment' (*Art* 164). In previous chapters I have been critical of the aesthetic hierarchy that such a distinction entails, and the commodity relation that is set up between the 'ethnic' cultural producer, and the discerning (and presumably Anglo-Australian) consumer of the 'arts establishment'. What I will go on to suggest, however, is that this concern might be tempered by an account of the forms of cultural production and consumption that are enabled at MAV, particularly through its construction of 'audience'.

MAV's current position could be said to straddle both of these positions; between 'amateur' and 'professional' cultural forms, or an emphasis on grassroots artistic expression versus 'excellence'. The organisation's stated 'values' are three-fold. There is, firstly, an agenda of cultural inclusion – that is, 'to encourage access and participation in the arts by all cultures' (MAV AR 2009 6). Secondly, there is a broader egalitarian political agenda – to promote the 'acceptance and understanding of cultural diversity by all cultures' (MAV AR 2009 6). And thirdly, there is a more specific aesthetic agenda – to facilitate 'excellence and innovation in multicultural arts practice' (MAV AR 2009 6). This last objective is characterised by some at MAV as the defining shift of the last fifteen years, and a critical factor in motivating a more general 'mainstreaming' of its cultural production. The matter of who or what the 'mainstream' is, is a problematic one. And it complicates questions of what multicultural arts are, and who they are ultimately for. I use this term, however, because it is in these terms that changes within multicultural arts practice are described by those involved in it.

The changes that have taken place at MAV have not been universally welcomed by all those involved with the organisation. There are some ex-staff and board members who lament the 'mainstreaming' of multicultural arts and its increasing acceptance and *use* by government – a process in which they believe MAV has been complicit. Zafiroopoulos states that:

[T]he problem with acceptance is that ... we have lost that initial energy to fight, to ensure that our culture survives; that's been lost, I think now. We have gained in some respects and lost in some other respects.

This sort of narrative alludes to the shift from 'multiculturalism' as a marginal, activist discourse to an accepted, legitimate but politically benign one. And it assumes that the incorporation of multicultural arts into 'mainstream' cultural policy necessarily means the denial of 'authentic' or 'resistive' modes of cultural production. Such concerns are reflected by Hage's critique of the assimilationist tendencies of multiculturalism, on which I focus later in this chapter.

Multicultural arts' move from the periphery to the centre is not an unexpected one; and it is easy enough to locate this within a broader narrative of changes that have occurred at the level of multicultural 'policy'. Sneja Gunew and Fazal Rizvi's introduction to *Culture, Difference and the Arts*, for example, credits the increasing acknowledgement of multicultural arts to a wider acceptance and normalisation of multiculturalism since the 1970s. What is controversial, however, is the degree to which MAV's move to the 'mainstream' has depended on an acceptance of economic justifications for the arts. More specifically, it raises a question over whether its attendant use of 'audience development' frameworks has impacted the organisation's 'cultural development' goals.

AUDIENCE DEVELOPMENT AT MAV: *Mix It Up*

MAV's current audience development program, *Mix It Up*, offers a relatively novel approach to multicultural arts programming, and provides an interesting case study of these trends. The program focuses on generating 'high-quality' productions, and is an ongoing collaboration with Melbourne's Arts Centre – a venue which describes itself as the 'flagship of the performing arts in Victoria and the focal point of Melbourne's cultural precinct' ('The Arts Centre'). The *Mix It Up* events have two key aims: they are about producing art that can 'reach potential new audiences from non English speaking backgrounds and communities' (MAV AR 2007 10), and are also about 'opening up quality, culturally diverse product to the existing mainstream

Arts Centre audiences' (MAV AR 2007 10). Performers have ranged from local acts to high-profile international artists such as Anoushka Shankar, Horace Andy and David Bridie. By enabling local culturally diverse artists to perform alongside well-known, international acts, the program provides local artists with the opportunity to present their work to audiences they would not normally be exposed to. In doing so, the program aims to generate the sort of cultural product that will appeal to 'the public at large' and which can be presented alongside the 'high-end' offerings of the arts establishment.

Who Goes There? is a 2004 Australia Council report, written by Fotis Kapetopoulos, ex-Executive Officer of MAV, which suggests that audiences for multicultural arts might be conceived of in terms of market psychographics. The report recommends marketing strategies which are devised according to the target audience's demographic details and the 'value segment' to which they belong (5). As an example, the report identifies those most likely to attend multicultural arts events as belonging to either 'The Something Better' market segment – who are 'generally well educated, hold responsible jobs, feel confident, are ambitious and see themselves as progressive' – or 'The Socially Aware' segment – who are 'socially responsible, community minded and are likely to be involved in social issue-based activities, the arts and travel' (5, 6). By 'segmenting' audiences in this way, and understanding them largely in terms of their consumption patterns, multicultural arts takes on the communication strategies of the commercial sector.

What this illustrates is that multicultural arts is being justified in terms of its ability to meet *consumer demand*. As Kapetopoulos puts it, 'There is a thirst in Australia for multiculturalism and diversity' (*Who* ii). There is also a concern amongst small arts organisations over a shrinking arts economy, coupled with the reality of having to compete for audiences with mainstream entertainment and popular culture. As a result, a case is also made for 'high-quality' multicultural arts. As the same report argues:

Audiences for multicultural arts are sophisticated and have a high expectation for quality. ... [They] have a low threshold of tolerance for

average presentation and average artistic skills, regardless of their Socially Aware background and commitment to multicultural arts. (7)

The emphasis, at least in the rhetoric, is on creating and marketing a product, as much as it is on developing collective identities or facilitating community empowerment. Justifying multicultural arts in terms of market demand or filling a market niche, rather than more egalitarian notions of 'cultural rights' or even 'social inclusion', certainly constitutes a significant shift in multicultural arts' self-definition.

That MAV has established a program such as *Mix It Up* is not surprising, given the sorts of developments in arts and cultural policy we have examined. However, it is also necessary to situate this program in the context of another set of changes that have been occurring in the community-based arts sector. The increasing growth and codification of community-based arts throughout the 1990s were said to result in the development of a 'CCD dogma' – where only certain types of projects with explicit 'social change' agendas were granted legitimacy (Mills *Cultural* 13). This created problems for multicultural arts. As Mills suggests, there has been a 'strong call for a more flexible approach to this kind of work, one with which culturally and linguistically diverse communities and Indigenous communities in particular can identify and engage' (*Cultural* 11). It is these appeals for greater 'relevance' to migrant communities that precipitated *Mix It Up*, a program that is regarded within the organisation to have achieved considerable success. An internal evaluation of the program suggests that by developing new audiences both for the Arts Centre, and for multicultural arts, *Mix It Up* offers opportunities for new modes of cross-cultural engagement and partnership (Rentschler 4). It is a means for generating audiences but also a way of 'imbuing new audiences with a sense of inclusion, confidence, security and ultimately ownership' (Mills *Cultural* 14). It is in this sense that 'audience development' is regarded by those involved with MAV as complementing the organisation's 'cultural development' goals. As Bennett states, 'However they are conceived, the social dynamics of diversity have to connect with – or be propelled by – market mechanisms if they are to prove sustainable' (*Differing* 59). Rather than reading MAV's espousal of market-based rationales as a

negative move, we can see how it might in fact complement its traditional focus on community cultural expression.

Nobuko Kawashima provides an interesting account of 'audience development' frameworks as they have been implemented in cultural programs in the UK, and considers their relationship with the agenda of social inclusion.¹⁴ After providing a kind of taxonomy of existing audience development approaches,¹⁵ she makes an overall distinction between 'product-led' and 'target-led' strategies (67). The former involves developing a cultural product and then targeting the audience segment that is best suited for the product; while the latter determines the audience group an organisation wishes to engage with first, and then develops products that are considered relevant to that group. Kawashima argues that 'target-led' strategies do not necessarily demand that an organisation 'compromise on artistic quality', but require them to 'identify the kinds of benefit these non-regular attendees seek and determine if it can offer it to them' (67). While MAV's approach to audience development does not explicitly pursue either of these strategies, I argue that in practice, MAV's partnership with the Arts Centre leans towards the former. The selection of artists for the *Mix It Up* series aims to be generally 'representative' of an array of locally-based ethnic groups, rather than reflecting concern for the cultural interests of any specific group. Artists for the events are sourced on the basis that they are 'high profile' and popular enough to attract a large enough 'mainstream' audience to ensure the overall 'success' of the program.

'Product-led' and 'target-led' approaches have substantially different outcomes in terms of the relations of cultural access and cultural capital they engender. As we have noted, most mainstream cultural institutions are

¹⁴ Kawashima's study focuses on the cultural work of British museums. Ien Ang's 'Predicament of Diversity' provides an interesting comparison here, examining the Art Gallery of New South Wales' strategies for diversifying its audience base and cultural programming.

¹⁵ Kawashima outlines four types of audience development frameworks, including 'extended marketing' (a financial strategy for engaging with lapsed/potential attendees); 'taste cultivation' (working with existing audiences to broaden their tastes and 'cultural scope'); 'audience education' (which provides existing audiences with an opportunity for study into a specific aspect of the arts); and 'outreach' (taking arts to places and communities with little access to the arts) (57).

premised on an exclusionary hierarchy of cultural value, and in this way, Kawashima argues, serve to institutionalise social exclusion (67). The biggest challenge for 'mainstream' organisations, then, is to become more inclusive, and it is this imperative that Melbourne's Arts Centre seeks to address via its partnership with MAV. The significance of this approach lies in its educational aspect – in providing the means to 'help potential audiences to understand what is otherwise intellectually inaccessible' (Kawashima 64). However, this might involve a pragmatic acceptance of existing cultural hierarchies, rather than disrupting the terms on which such hierarchies are formed.

'APPRECIATING' CULTURAL DIVERSITY: SITUATING AN AESTHETICISED MULTICULTURALISM

A number of commentators are wary of such claims about the productive potential of 'audience development' frameworks. Stevenson, for example, argues that 'audience development' approaches serve only to position "'audiences" from non-English speaking backgrounds' as an 'untapped market niche' (*Art* 169). Certainly the claim made on the Australia Council website, promoting their report on multicultural audience development, that 'Cultural diversity adds value in a world of product and brand clutter', seems to uncritically adopt the language of the market without any attempt to articulate this with an underlying social agenda ('Who Goes'). By relegating multicultural arts to an object of consumption, and the relationship between audiences and multicultural artists to one of commodity exchange, these frameworks seem to leave in tact existing relations of privilege between the arts establishment and the cultural production of migrant communities.

This argument is elaborated by Ghassan Hage who attributes such a positioning of multicultural arts to the broader problematic of Australian multiculturalism, and its instrumental role in nation-building policies. In his influential *White Nation*, Hage suggests that multiculturalism is based on the 'use' value of cultural diversity; that cultural diversity is something that can be possessed, and which has a specific governmental end – primarily, to 'enrich' the national self. For Hage, official multiculturalism is inherently self-

interested – it revels in both the economic and cultural enrichment provided by diversity. It is based on, what Hage describes as, ‘a differentiation between manager and managed, a national subject imagining themselves capable of exercising their will within the nation and a national object perceived as an object of value’ (White 94). In this context, multiculturalism is constituted as ‘an economically exploitable resource in the form of hitherto untapped potential’ (White 128).

Moreover, the consumption of culturally diverse arts is motivated by a desire for a ‘cosmopolitan’ cultural status, rather than any desire for genuine cross-cultural interaction or engagement. This entails a form of ‘*internal* orientalism’ – whereby the ‘ethnic’ other is reduced ‘into a passive object of government’ (White 17). Hage suggests that the generic multicultural festival is a blatant example of this process:

Far from putting ‘migrant cultures’, even in their ‘soft’ sense (i.e., through food, dance, etc.), on an equal footing with the dominant culture, the theme conjures the images of a multicultural fair where the various stalls of neatly positioned migrant cultures are exhibited and where the real Australians, bearers of the White nation and positioned in the central role of the touring subjects, walk around and enrich themselves. (White 118)

The ‘cosmopolite’ is both a White person and a class figure ‘capable of appreciating and consuming “high-quality” commodities and cultures, including “ethnic” culture’ (White 201). So in Hage’s words, multiculturalism promotes the fact that ‘we appreciate diversity’, but it obscures the possibility ‘of a national “we” which is itself diverse’ (White 139). Hage describes the multicultural festival as an ‘ethnic zoo’; and he criticises it for producing a form of *passive* belonging that does little to contest the dominance of the White mainstream.

I focus on Hage’s critique because it is an influential one; and there are a number of reasons why I consider it to be untenable. At the very least, it does not offer a sufficient analytical framework for evaluating the sorts of developments I have described happening at MAV. There are two main problems with his position: the first is his proposed binary between the White or Anglo-Australian mainstream and ‘non-White’ Australians, and the

assumption that any desire for multicultural arts on the part of White Australians is a form of neo-colonial race-based distinction. These sorts of symbolic critiques of multicultural arts, accusing it of an empty cosmopolitanism, are complicated by questions of *who* is actually doing the valuing, or the appreciating, of this diversity, and to what effect. The second difficulty with his argument – and this problem is associated with more general critiques of economic rationales for the arts – is that by considering any appreciation of multicultural arts to be informed by relations of commodity exchange, it denies as inauthentic any aspiration on the part of culturally diverse artists to be seen as aesthetically (and economically) desirable. I address this second point in the next chapter which looks more specifically at the relationship between MAV and its artists.

Hage's critique is based on an objection to a class-based cosmopolitanism, which he believes informs official Australian multiculturalism.¹⁶ However, it is worth turning to alternative theorisations of cosmopolitanism, which consider it in terms of 'everyday' attitudes to cultural difference. In their study for Australia's public multicultural broadcaster, SBS,¹⁷ Ang, Hawkins and Dabboussy describe an 'everyday cosmopolitanism' which involves an openness to difference based on everyday encounters and interaction – rather than the exclusionary cosmopolitanism of 'taste' (39).¹⁸ An interesting comparison can, in fact, be made between MAV and SBS. Ang, Hawkins and Dabboussy's study traces the institution's shifting role from niche ethnic broadcaster – what they describe as 'ethno-multiculturalism' – towards a 'popular multiculturalism'. This positions the Australian 'mainstream' – rather than an elite minority – as its target audience, and it echoes claims

¹⁶ See also Chaney for a similar reading of cosmopolitanism. Chaney asserts the relationship between cosmopolitanism and class by defining it as a 'source of prestige' for 'elite formations' (159).

¹⁷ The Special Broadcasting Service, Australia's public multicultural and multilingual broadcaster, was established in 1975 to 'give voice and exposure to multicultural Australia; to define, foster and celebrate Australia's cultural diversity' (*SBS Corporation*).

¹⁸ See also Ang et al. *Connecting Diversity*. This is an earlier report commissioned by SBS which involves a large-scale survey of everyday attitudes towards cultural difference. The authors suggest that the survey demonstrates an 'everyday cosmopolitan citizenship' among broad sectors of the Australian population.

made at MAV that the *Mix It Up* program is a reflection of their current agenda to:

take a lot of the activities in the multicultural arena that were on the periphery and put them on the main stage. ... What we're arguing is that rather than call it 'multicultural arts in Victoria', we're saying 'arts in a multicultural Victoria'. (Romaniw)

These statements are an attempt to account for the ways in which cultural diversity is an increasingly ordinary aspect of everyday life in Australia.

What is at stake in Hage's analysis is a supposed division between a passive, 'ethnic' object, and a White, active and potentially cosmopolitan subject. However, this does not account for current trends in multicultural arts consumption.¹⁹ Audiences at MAV's *Mix It Up* events, for example, have been far from homogeneous; and they have been a much more dispersed formation than the audience of Hage's 'ethnic zoo'. These audiences have tended to be both younger, and more culturally diverse than other performances at Melbourne's Arts Centre; 22% of the total audiences for *Mix It Up* in 2006 were aged between 25 and 34 (compared with 10% of other Arts Centre audiences), and 25% of *Mix It Up* audiences spoke a language other than English at home (11% more than for other Arts Centre events) (Rentschler 15, 16). MAV's current Executive Officer, Jill Morgan, comments that the program is 'about diversifying the mainstream':

It's about having contemporary approaches to cultural diversity. ... [The] challenge is you can't walk up to someone and say you're Anglo, because they might be married to a Croatian. ... You don't know, it's complicated. Or people have adopted an Ethiopian child. ... There was a time when multiculturalism meant Non-English Speaking Background people. Now I

¹⁹ In a more recent article Hage acknowledges the effects of generational change, and the demands this places on multiculturalism. He describes how second generation migrants are 'interpellated' by the state differently from first generation migrants, rendering traditional constructions of multiculturalism largely irrelevant to this younger generation: 'Multiculturalism ... often leaves the second generation outside its operative sphere, as it were. This has worked to considerably weaken its legitimacy among the young' ('Analysing' 504). While this remains an ongoing dilemma, MAV exemplifies how instruments of multiculturalism have themselves shifted in response to these demographic changes; and that multiculturalism needs to be conceived as a dynamic, rather than static, set of policies, programs and positions on cultural difference.

think multiculturalism is changing and you're having to look at it in a very different way.

It is suggested that there is no longer a clear split between the Anglo-Australian mainstream and its ethnic others; that the line separating multicultural arts' constituents from everyone else is not clear-cut. As Morgan states, multicultural arts used to be about 'ethnics' who were 'out there' on the margins, but it is now, apparently, about a culturally diverse 'we'. So it is not, as Hage contends, the power relations masked by multicultural 'tolerance' that precludes the possibility of 'a national "we" which is itself diverse'. Rather, it is Hage's insistence on a division between the consuming (and governing) White subject and the migrant who can only be comprehended in terms of their cultural 'authenticity', that is unable to acknowledge this possibility (*White* 139). Recognising the position of migrants as willing producers *and* consumers of multicultural arts disrupts the binary that forms the crux of Hage's argument.

Such claims about the increasing diversity of 'everyday' Australia relate to the notion of cultural hybridity. Rather than thinking about cultures as compartmentalised groups we need to consider, as Bennett suggests,

the flows and crossovers between cultures ... and the patterns of their intermingling that are produced by the movement of peoples and, of course, the restless cultural mixing that now characterises the organisation of all developed cultural markets. (*Differing* 53)

Wearing, Young and Stevenson argue something similar in their discussion of tourism – that rather than viewing culturally distinct groups as 'fixed entities', they should be regarded as 'dynamic interacting systems whose cultures and ways of life are capable of adaptation and cultural economic sustainability' (107).²⁰ And this is related to thinking of 'culture', and cultural diversity, as a *process* rather than a 'reified "thing"' or 'inert resource' (Murray 40; Bennett *Differing* 53; Noble 59). This points to the complexity of the processes of 'mainstreaming' that MAV refers to: rather than thinking of 'culturally diverse' groups simply joining 'White' Australia, it is a much more piecemeal process. As Tariq Modood writes,

²⁰ Noble describes this as a move from understanding cultural variety as 'discrete cultures' to a 'diversification of this diversity' (47).

[I]t is very likely that different minorities may seek to reach out to and connect with different aspects or parts of mainstream society; if they are successful there will be a form of integration but the overall result will be plural, overlapping forms of integration; not the disappearance of 'difference' but multiple forms of integration. (118)

This complicates arguments about the 'assimilationist' tendency of multiculturalism that we have witnessed, both in Hage's work and in the concerns of multicultural arts advocates worried about the increasing 'acceptance' of multiculturalism. Any integration of culturally diverse groups that might occur will always take place in a partial and provisional way. In this sense the process of 'mainstreaming' is never an absolute one.

Hage is right to regard the position of the cosmo-multiculturalist consumer as a form of historical privilege; what is missing is any acknowledgement that migrants might themselves aspire to this position, or any account of *how* such a capacity might be adopted. That significant numbers of people of diverse backgrounds attended the *Mix It Up* events indicates that it is not just the 'White' mainstream, but culturally diverse communities who also desire the signifiers of difference that are presented at these events – however culturally 'inauthentic' Hage might deem them to be. Scott Brook's analysis of Hage's 'cosmo-multiculturalism' suggests that the problem lies in Hage's wish to *transcend* this desire, rather than come to terms with its implications for the distribution of cultural capital (Brook 515).

Morgan considers the positioning of multicultural arts on the same aesthetic hierarchy as 'mainstream' arts to be empowering – and to signal a move away from the previous undervaluing of multicultural arts as simply a 'worthy cause'. For Morgan, being 'mainstream' permits multicultural artists to participate in the same sorts of symbolic exchange as other artists, and no longer merely being left to 'wear our poncho and sit in the corner and be ethnic'. This is a reference to the more recent objectives within MAV, of producing 'high-quality' arts, and to distance itself from the patronising, welfare associations of traditional forms of 'community arts'. This involves generating cultural forms that are both desirable and relevant, and developing artists at the same time as audiences. Despite their use of

marketing and 'audience development' rhetoric, staff at MAV consider their role equally as that of artist advocate, and seek to facilitate ways that these artists can actively participate in the forms of aestheticised multiculturalism Hage disparages. Critics of these approaches are perhaps too caught up in the division between humanistic and economic rationales for the arts, and too quick to evaluate this move towards 'quality' production as a morally objectionable acquiescence to economic policy rationales.

While MAV does not explicitly use the language of 'community empowerment', the social egalitarian and cultural rights agendas that precipitated its early work still endure. Significantly, the new market-based rationalisations of multicultural arts I have mentioned are not necessarily seen by practitioners as being at odds with their community development goals. There are some at MAV who suggest that this respecification of 'community' as 'audience', and the shift in multicultural arts' self-definition from a social interventionist program to a market-oriented one, not only co-exists with, but perhaps even extends, its 'cultural development' agenda. As one board member comments

If you can show to them that the product that you have is a damn good product – forget about what the person looks like or their background – if it's a good product they will accept it. (D'Amico)

Also of significance is the fact that those within the organisation continue to see their work as often *challenging* – rather than being supported by – official attitudes towards cultural diversity. That is, the organisation's role is perceived not simply as engaging with 'communities' or 'audiences', but engaging with 'government'. There is a sense within the organisation that while state government policy has, for the last thirty years, highlighted the potential contribution of multicultural arts in Australia, more needs to be done to facilitate or enable these contributions in concrete ways – for example, through the adequate provision of infrastructure and funding for organisations like MAV. Government funding for MAV is still disproportionately lower than that for larger, more traditional arts organisations and attempting to remedy this is a key lobbying point for

MAV.²¹ While the organisation certainly deploys the official rhetoric of multiculturalism, its political project only at times complements, and is often at odds with, state and federal cultural policies. Staff at MAV talk about their, at times, antagonistic relationship with bureaucrats. Their current Executive Officer describes MAV's role as a 'political agitator' and the extent to which influencing policymakers has been an ongoing focus of their work. The work of MAV – that is, the sorts of cultural forms that are produced, the audiences this generates, and the kinds of dialogue that might ensue – does not necessarily correspond to the intentions of government policy. There is a relationship of continual negotiation and contestation between MAV, its funding bodies, individual bureaucrats and policymakers, and its constituents. And this highlights the ways in which the apparatuses of multiculturalism are not static, but active in creating and contributing to policies and perceptions of multiculturalism. Critiques of multicultural policy alone, or of multicultural rhetoric, do not capture this potential disjuncture.

What this points to is a more general methodological limitation with Hage's critique; specifically, its overemphasis on multicultural rhetoric, and *the image* of multiculturalism, at the expense of analytical attention to how such rhetoric is put into practice by apparatuses of multiculturalism. This becomes apparent in his assertion (which is, in fact, one of the main theses of *White Nation*) that:

White multiculturalism cannot admit to itself that migrants and Aboriginal people are actually eroding the centrality of White people in Australia. This is because the very viability of White multiculturalism as a governmental ideology resides precisely in its capacity to suppress such a reality. (*White* 22)

Here, Hage distinguishes between 'multiculturalism as a governmental ideology' and the 'reality' of multiculturalism, in which migrants and Aboriginal people are actually seen to have a decentralising effect on structures of White domination. However, in maintaining this distinction between practices and representation, Hage fails to look at the relationship

²¹ See, for example, the report commissioned by Multicultural Arts Victoria and the Victorian Multicultural Commission, *Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) Community Needs Analysis in the Arts Report: The Way Forward – Arts in a Multicultural Victoria*.

between the two; how it is that structures of White power are being eroded, and the role that migrants have in these processes of erosion, often through their actual involvement in these instruments of government. Leveling this sort of symbolic critique at an organisation like MAV assumes that the sorts of cultural forms facilitated by MAV are necessarily a product of official governmental policy or 'intention'; and it is unable to account for the mixed governmental rationales which inform such cultural production. Hage is unable to explain the ways in which the multicultural apparatus, with its programs and processes of cultural production, distribution and commodification, might actually be welcomed by its 'ethnic others'. For Hage, any appreciation of, or engagement with an aestheticised multiculturalism (by White or, presumably, 'ethnic' audiences) is said to mask relations of domination. And multicultural arts therefore cannot be anything more than a site of ideological reproduction.

CONCLUSION

Having provided an affirmative reading of the 'audience development' strategies of MAV it is also important to note its limitations. Given that a significant aspect of MAV's role is one of artist advocate, some artists complain that the organisation tends to work with a limited circle of aspiring artists and cultural practitioners. This is a result of the fact that the individuals and communities MAV works with are determined by way of the personal networks of MAV staff and contacts. While this is a useful strategy for enabling a kind of 'insider' knowledge about specific communities, it can also have an exclusionary effect. In this way, while the organisation confers specific benefits to the individuals they work with, it is not clear how these benefits might be distributed more equitably. This dilemma – of discerning the *communal* benefits of community-based arts – relates to the discussion in the previous chapter about how cultural capital is often erroneously conceived of as a communal resource.

Moreover, there are concerns that the 'audience development' strategies implemented by *Mix It Up* do little to engage with some of Melbourne's most culturally isolated communities. The expense associated with attending is a

significant factor,²² as well as the problems with the ‘product-led’ approach outlined by Kawashima earlier. In this way, MAV struggles with the dilemma of whether to foster inclusion in existing cultural hierarchies (by offering hitherto excluded communities with *access* to mainstream institutions), or to find ways of contesting these structures of cultural value (by providing communities with the means for more meaningful forms of cultural participation and production).

Of course, *Mix It Up* is only one of a number of cultural programs that MAV offers, including the *Emerge* festival (a large, annual multicultural festival held in Fitzroy) and a range of artist development programs²³ – both of which make use of more traditional, participatory, community-based arts approaches and which are less concerned with agendas of artistic ‘excellence’. What this reminds us of is the way in which such organisations can work towards a range of agendas, making use of a variety of approaches to do so, and which cannot be simplistically described by policy objectives such as ‘social inclusion’, ‘audience development’ or ‘artistic excellence’. Rather, organisations such as MAV and FCAC move flexibly between these different policy goals, highlighting the ways in which they are interrelated. As we have seen at MAV, this sometimes means using the language of one set of policy objectives – namely, economic ones – to describe activity that has ‘cultural development’ outcomes.

Concerns about the use of market-based rationales in this context can be attributed to a more general resistance in academic critiques of the arts to instrumentalism itself – both as a justification for cultural production, and as an ethical positioning for the critical intellectual. This precludes any affirmative evaluation of the sorts of developments which have been happening at MAV, which are increasingly influenced by neoliberal policymaking, but which are also driven by other agendas – as is evident in

²² Tickets for the *Mix It Up* events range between \$40 and \$70, an expensive night out for the most ‘socially excluded’ community groups (‘Mix It Up’).

²³ The most significant of these programs is the *Visible* mentorship project which partners aspiring artists (mainly musicians) of African background with ‘established’ ones culminating in the production and release of a CD and regular concerts at the Arts Centre.

the justifications and evaluations provided by practitioners within the organisation. As Morgan states, 'the core objectives haven't changed at all. It's just the method of delivery. I mean, it's always about supporting diversity, our artists' communities, and highlighting the rich resources we have here'. There is a tendency – both within academic writing on the arts, and amongst commentators from within the arts sector – to regard any instrumental use of 'culture' as a compromise to the liberatory promise of the arts, and therefore objectionable. However, while the arts might continue to be valued for its aesthetic function, discrediting any other 'uses' of the arts in order to defend this role, does not offer a useful position from which to intervene in these developments. These critiques deny the everyday reality of arts organisations such as MAV which might provisionally justify their work in terms of neoliberal policy priorities, but attempt to contest official cultural policies at the same time.

Lisanne Gibson provides a useful, and optimistic, description of policy as constituting a set 'possibility spaces' for cultural activity (*Uses* 106). MAV has, throughout its history, mobilised a variety of relations between art, populations and government, including efforts to develop cultural forms and audiences which better engage with existing cultural tastes and preferences. As far as evaluating the terms in which these developments are being justified – that is, primarily, via the language of the market – there is a need to move away from symbolic critiques which cannot account for the multiple and conflicting rationales behind multicultural arts as an institutional practice.

Despite suggestions that multiculturalism's moment might be fading and critiques of multiculturalism which seek to find a *non-instrumental* space in which cultural diversity might exist, there is considerable evidence of the sorts of productive relations that might come about through institutionalised discourses of multiculturalism. What I hope to have shown in my analysis of MAV are moments of both contestation and convergence between emerging policy trends and actual programs of multiculturalism, and the opportunities this holds for imbuing multicultural arts with new (and continuing) forms of relevance. The next chapter continues this discussion – but rather than looking at how MAV frames *communities* (as 'audiences'), it focuses on the

forms of *individual* engagement practiced by the organisation (namely, in the form of artist development).

6

THE MULTICULTURAL ARTIST AS SUBJECT

The previous chapter examined MAV's efforts to bring multicultural arts into the 'mainstream', primarily by diversifying the audiences for multicultural arts. This chapter focuses on another aspect of MAV's work – its relationship with the 'multicultural artist'. As part of its broader project to reduce the marginality of multicultural arts, MAV operates as an advocacy organisation for what it describes as 'emerging' multicultural artists. It provides these artists with funding support, mentoring, training, and access to a range of performance and promotional opportunities. The sorts of practical assistance that could and should be provided to artists by organisations like MAV, as well as the funding bodies and policymakers on which these organisations are dependent, has been the subject of some discussion. As we witnessed in the last chapter, there has also been much academic debate over the politics of multicultural display. However, there has been considerably less focus on the subjectivity of the 'ethnic other' of Australian multiculturalism, particularly of the 'multicultural artist'. It is for these reasons that I want to examine the multicultural artist as subject, largely by way of interviews I carried out with a number of artists who have been involved with MAV.

I aim to provide an account of how MAV frames its artists, but one which rethinks power and subjectivity in terms of the theoretical framework of

governmentality. The multicultural artist is conceived here as a knowing, agential and self-regulatory subject, and their projects of self-realisation are described, after Foucault, as practices of the self. In this case, these practices have a dual character. They are, firstly, *aesthetic* practices – subjects aspire to become ‘artists’ (or to fulfil the role of ‘artist’ ascribed to them by MAV). However, these practices also constitute part of an *ethical* project to ‘represent’, and advocate on behalf of artists’ cultural distinctiveness. I will go on to show how these two projects are intertwined with the organisational objectives of MAV; that is, how MAV provides them with the normative framework for their self-realisation.

I then consider the artists’ apparent dependence on the affirmation of white audiences and, more generally, on the apparatuses of official multiculturalism. While this relation has been the subject of considerable critique, I argue that it is possible to rethink it positively. This discussion builds on my critique of Ghassan Hage’s analysis of multiculturalism in the previous chapter. I conceive of the politics of difference and recognition in terms of everyday processes of aestheticised self-fashioning and cross-cultural exchange, so that the role of the multicultural artist does not have to be read in terms of its complicity with an assimilationist multiculturalism. This more adequately explains the sorts of self-formation and cultural exchange that take place in this context. In making these arguments, I consider how we might construct cosmopolitanism as a productive (rather than exclusionary) capacity, and suggest the forms of economic and symbolic capital that MAV might generate for its artists. Finally, I think about how artists’ projects of self-realisation work to complicate, at the same time as negotiate, their relationships with their ‘community’.

SITUATING THE MULTICULTURAL ARTIST AS SUBJECT

The key aim of this chapter is to bring analytical attention to the multicultural artist as subject. Doing so involves examining the relations of power that inform how MAV frames its artists, and how these artists situate themselves in response to governmental strategies for managing diversity through culture. There is, particularly in academic writing on Australian

multiculturalism, a scarcity of literature examining the subjectivity of such artists. A notable exception here is Gunew and Rizvi's edited collection, *Culture, Difference and the Arts*, and I will discuss some aspects of this work below. For the most part, writing on multicultural arts and festivals has involved expressions of concern over the politics of multicultural display – specifically the perceived tendency towards an elitist cosmopolitanism – and the way that such displays are mobilised in the interests of an exclusionary, nationalist agenda (Gilbert and Lo; Hage 'Analysing'; Hage *White*; Kalantzis and Cope; Stratton and Ang; Zizek). However, there has been little examination of the multicultural artist as a potentially willing agent in these processes.

One important and problematic critique, which will go on to be a focus of this chapter, is Ghassan Hage's *White Nation*. As I discussed in the previous chapter, this work seeks to describe the ways in which the official discourse of Australian multiculturalism works to negate, or erase, the 'will' of the 'ethnic other'. Hage's account is certainly useful for bringing attention to the 'White-centred conception of the nation' which permeates some discussions of Australian multiculturalism (*White* 23). It is also valuable for the way it highlights those aspects of multicultural discourse which inhibit 'the emergence of a politics capable of countering extreme-right racism' (*White* 22). His argument becomes contentious, however, when he describes the ways in which multiculturalism operates as 'a fantasy of White supremacy', where 'Aboriginal people and non-White "ethnics" are merely national objects to be moved or removed according to a White national will' (*White* 18). As I suggested, there is a certain contradiction at work here; specifically, Hage's argument is sustained by his very refusal to acknowledge the complex subjectivity of the 'non-White ethnic' and their role in the instruments of multiculturalism he sets out to critique. His account of how White Australians are interpellated by the 'White nation fantasy' does not examine how 'non-White' Australians are positioned within this supposed 'fantasy'. While Hage proves his point via an examination of the structures of affect that define the white nationalist, there is scant attention paid to the affective dimension of the 'ethnic object'. It is this limitation that I wish to overcome by undertaking an investigation of the multicultural artist. As we will see below it is also via

this analysis that Hage's political critique of multiculturalism will be called into question.

Throughout this chapter, I refer to those artists involved with MAV as 'multicultural artists'. Although the term seems semantically incongruous – 'multicultural' is generally a descriptor for populations or 'communities', not individuals – it is a useful term for the purpose of this discussion. Sneja Gunew considers this problem in her own account of multicultural art. Referring to such art as 'ethnic' implies that 'Anglo-Celtic' artists do not have an ethnicity, or that some artists are ethnically marked and others are not. Calling it 'migrant art' is also problematic because it means having to expand 'the notion of migration to cover second and even third-generation Australians' (Gunew 4). 'Multicultural artist' is the term used by MAV to describe the range of individuals that it auspices. The artists are first- and later-generation migrants of various ethnic backgrounds. Significantly, MAV does not have any specific criteria that determines which artists fall within their organisational ambit and which do not. There is no systematic process by which MAV comes to know of artists, and then selects them as appropriate targets for intervention. Instead, discussions with the artists reveal that they are brought into the organisational fold through the informal, personal networks of MAV staff and contacts. Of course, this has left the organisation open to accusations of unrepresentativeness or preferential treatment for artists perceived to have 'connections' with it. Further, it means that the criteria by which the artistic practices of some individuals, and not others, are defined by MAV as relevant to their normative agenda, remain obscured. The label 'multicultural artist', then, allows MAV to define their field of responsibility in broad and relatively vague terms.

Given the prevailing theoretical frameworks for discussing identity politics in cultural studies, the overwhelmingly positive terms in which these artists describe their relationship with MAV presents a problem. Within the critical schema of cultural studies, the constitutive relation between structure and subjectivity is generally regarded as one of tension, and there is an ongoing anxiety surrounding the agency of the subject. These theoretical tendencies are particularly significant in the case of the 'artist' whose subjectivity has

been traditionally tied up with the idea of an emancipatory and resistive consciousness. These are the concerns that inform critiques of the instrumentalisation of the arts. They are also echoed in the views of some ex-staff at MAV, worried about the constraining effect the organisation might have on the identity of the artist. Specifically, they are uncomfortable about the limits the organisation poses for the ways in which their art might be received and valued – as ‘multicultural art’, rather than ‘art’ per se.¹

What I want to pursue in this chapter is a conception of the multicultural artist as a knowing, agential and self-regulatory subject. Here, the relations between power and the subject are thought in terms of the theoretical framework of governmentality. This means that power does not have a coherent, unified form, emanating from a singular source (such as the ‘neoliberal economy’). Instead, power is operationalised via an array of mechanisms and practices, and acts in ways that are difficult to predict. As Bennett reminds us, the subject of governmentality is imbricated in various practices which ‘seek to mould and form us in different ways, and it is the contradictory effects that this generates that give rise to specific forms of agency’ (‘Culture and Governmentality’ 61). In this sense, governmentality does not provide a *theory* of agency as such. Rather, the contingent and irregular effects of power mean that subjects continually negotiate and contest regulatory structures. In this respect I am interested in the modes of self-reflection and self-identification that MAV facilitates for its subjects. This means examining the forms of (self-)knowledge that it constructs for artists and the role it has in artists’ projects of the self.² It also means considering the specific context within which power is enacted and negotiated; as Anita Devos states, governmentality is concerned with ‘the way in which one takes up the project of managing one’s own conduct within the prevailing conditions’ (10). This approach has significant implications for my analysis of the types of cross-cultural exchange and self-fashioning that MAV enables. It

¹ As Fotis Kapetopoulos, ex-Executive Officer of MAV and policy consultant, states, ‘as an artist and a writer I was tired of having to be shoved into the box of multiculturalism, and then within that box having to be placated about what sort of work I should do’ (personal interview).

² See Devos for a theoretically comparable account of the ‘biographical project of the self’ enacted by women academics in the context of university-based mentoring programs (iv).

also requires a rethinking of prevailing theorisations of the politics of difference and recognition more generally.

Thinking of the multicultural artist along these lines requires a research methodology which accounts for the ways in which these artists negotiate the various regulatory frameworks in which they are implicated. I conducted seven semi-structured interviews with musicians and visual artists who had been auspiced or supported by MAV. Artists were asked to describe how they positioned themselves in relation to their personal aspirations, their 'communities', and the mentoring strategies of MAV. They were chosen on the basis of my own participant-observation research at MAV events, and I sought to reflect a diversity of age ranges, ethnic backgrounds, artforms and levels of involvement with MAV. This is not to say, however, that they comprised a strictly representative 'sample'. By interviewing these artists at length my objective was to acquire an understanding of the rationales for their cultural activity; and I have focused on accounts which make interesting reflections on these processes of self-formation. The 'semi-structured' interview approach meant that while I had a clear research agenda, I was not limited to asking fixed questions. Importantly, this approach acknowledges 'the personalities and interests of the two parties' involved, as well as providing the scope to explore issues as they arose in the course of the interview (Devos 55).

Moreover, this methodology brings a grounded perspective to the study of aestheticised multiculturalism, and is aligned with the sorts of empirical research undertaken in recent studies into the 'everyday cosmopolitanism' enabled by multiculturalism (Ang et al. *Connecting*; Noble; Wise). Rather than conceiving of multicultural arts as a mode of *representation* of cultural difference, I consider how it forms a part of broader 'practices of co-existence' and vernacular responses to diversity (Noble 50). As Permezel and Duffy highlight, most accounts of multiculturalism tend to focus on 'the limits and problems of cultural negotiation' and fail to describe (or are uninterested in describing) what might actually be possible, or effective, in these sites of cultural exchange and negotiation (358). Instead, this chapter aims to

contribute to a discussion of the sorts of productive and positive exchange that multicultural arts might generate.

CREATING POSSIBILITIES: ‘THEY HAVE HELPED SOMEONE UNDERSTAND THEMSELVES’

The stated objectives of MAV’s mentoring and advocacy strategies include bringing multicultural artists into the ‘mainstream’ by enabling them to navigate the norms of the ‘mainstream’ artsworld. As the organisation’s 2008 *Annual Report* states, it endeavours to provide these artists with ‘vital connections, support structures and pathways’ that enable them ‘to create exceptional art’ and help them ‘showcase their amazing talents to the public at large’ (10). As one staff member reports, ‘these artists don’t know what opportunities are available to them. ... They’re not aware of funding programs – and if they are, it’s just a labyrinth that’s really hard to decipher’ (Larkin quoted in Stephens). These concerns are reflected in Gunew and Rizvi’s *Culture, Difference and the Arts*, which brings together academic accounts, as well as those of arts practitioners and consultants, of the multicultural arts sector in the early 1990s. It includes discussions of the politics of exclusion that informs mainstream arts policy (Gunew; Kalantzis and Cope; Rizvi), but also more practical directives intended to better facilitate the integration of multicultural artists into the arts system. In particular, the chapter by Anna Epstein and Susan Faine, both of whom are ex-MAV staff, provides a checklist for ‘NESB’³ artists seeking support from government and non-government arts and funding bodies. It addresses issues such as dealing with bureaucracy, acquiring sponsorships, dealing with the media, and guidelines for writing grants, acquittals, and budgets.

The artists I interviewed attest to receiving these sorts of benefits from their involvement with MAV, although they tend to express this in more general terms. Aminata, a singer of mixed Burundian and Ivory Coast heritage, had little awareness of, or contact with, other singers and musicians when she

³ ‘Non English Speaking Background’ was the standard policy descriptor for referring to people of non Anglo-Celtic background at the time of publication of this work (in the early 1990s). The term has since been widely replaced, in policy contexts, with ‘Culturally and Linguistically Diverse’, or CALD.

migrated to Melbourne less than two years ago. She became involved with MAV in a typically incidental way;⁴ she was contacted by MAV after a friend of one of her band members passed her number on to the organisation. She is now a singer with roots-reggae band, *Black Roots* and Ethiopian jazz-hip hop outfit *Black Jesus*. She describes the support she has received from MAV this way:

They just organise so many things. I think they help a lot. I think they also make you feel at home. And especially when they discover that you've got talent, they try really hard. ... They assist with things that are very very helpful. ... You know, you've just arrived in a new country, you don't know anyone, where do you go, where do you start? So that was so good for me because it made me realise that actually I can do so much for myself. ...

[T]hey assure you, they give you back that confidence sometimes. You feel like, oh, at least I've got people who care.

Other interviewees respond in similar terms, speaking generally about the wide-ranging 'opportunities' and 'support' with which MAV has provided them.⁵

This extends not just to practical and professional assistance, but to various forms of personal support and encouragement. Rebecca is a soul singer who was born in Haiti and adopted into an Anglo-Australian family as a child. She describes her relationship with MAV this way:

They really, really support me. ... They really love my stuff and encourage me which is really good to have – you know, at that standard. ... Even when I was sick telling me, you know, I have to keep singing. Very big help. I owe them a lot. I have to write a song for MAV.

Like Aminata, she describes the sense of isolation she experienced prior to her involvement with MAV and the personal affirmation she felt afterwards. Nazia, a textiles artist of Pakistani background, responds similarly when asked about the sorts of personal assistance MAV has provided for her:

⁴ As I mentioned above, the way in which MAV sources their artists is somewhat unstructured. Staff at MAV 'find out' about artists via their existing personal networks in various ethnic communities,

⁵ One frequently mentioned opportunity was the *Visible* project – a program initiated in 2005, targeting musicians from Melbourne's African communities who are given the opportunity to be mentored by 'established' musicians.

It's personal, everything's personal. It's all about – at a very minor stage getting confidence in myself. ... I'm still absorbing this overwhelming response to my work. I'm not able to absorb it, it's not easy. I mean, at this age, it's not easy for a person to absorb this much appreciation when I got fifteen years of rejection. ... [I]t would be good for the MAV people to know that they have helped someone understand themselves.

All three of these artists, then, speak of the forms of personal support they have received – both as an aspiring artist and regarding their sense of cultural displacement and isolation.

When asked, none of the artists could identify the sorts of assistance that MAV *were not* able to provide them, or the ways in which they might, as artists, feel constrained by their relationship with MAV. For example, I asked Rebecca whether she was worried about performing mainly at 'multicultural' events, and rarely at 'mainstream' gigs, but she insists that it is because of her association with MAV that she is invited to perform at these other 'mainstream' events at all. Khaled, a hip-hop MC with the group *Diafrix*, mentions the problems he faces with trying to find a bigger audience. This, he suggests, has little to do with perceptions of his ethnicity, or any stigma that might be associated with the classification of his work as 'multicultural'. Instead, he cites the familiar problem of any musician trying to reach a broader audience within a small and competitive scene:

It's nothing personal - it's more about trying to reach an audience that don't normally listen to hip-hop and trying to attract them. More than anything else.

When asked whether he finds it hard to shake off the multicultural 'tag' he says:

Well, we've been very careful of that. No, we don't really get that. From other hip-hop artists we actually get more respect. Even though we're 'multicultural' we're still working as hip-hop artists. ... So you know, it boosts our props, more than anything else.

What is suggested here is that within the context of the local hip-hop scene, this perceived identification with ‘community’ and ‘diversity’ actually increases his legitimacy rather than compromises it.⁶

These kinds of comments reiterate the difficulties with evaluating the work of cultural producers such as MAV in terms of how well they meet their constituents’ ‘needs’.⁷ For example, Khaled – who, after a number of years of contact with MAV was appointed as their youth officer – believes that ‘They’re doing everything they can. I don’t think there’s anything they could do better’. While his commendatory assessment of MAV is no doubt informed by his position as an MAV employee, it also highlights that artists are not making demands and do not have pre-existing ‘needs’ which a researcher can then assess as having been addressed adequately or not. Rather, it is the organisation that *creates* needs, or, perhaps more accurately, creates *possibilities* for these artists. I will go on to discuss below how artists are made aware of these possibilities and how these are incorporated into their own techniques for managing their selves.

MAV AS ENABLER: AESTHETIC AND ETHICAL ‘BECOMING’

I suggest that artists’ relationships with the organisation can most constructively be thought of as involving the production of forms of self-knowledge. Nazia’s comment, that the organisation helps her to ‘understand herself’, is a sentiment shared by most of the artists I interviewed. In this respect, it is worth turning to Devos’ account of the processes of ‘becoming’ that subjects undertake *as part of* the disciplinary function of an organisation:

‘Becoming’ was not simply a matter of acquiring new skills and knowledge, or of developing networks – it was about the taking up of new identities, new ways of understanding and conducting oneself in the organisation and within a disciplinary field. (7)

⁶ Much has been written on this identification of hip-hop with expressions of ethnic difference and empowerment (Keeler; Perry). This might suggest that MAV’s political agenda is more successfully pursued by supporting some genres or aesthetic forms, such as hip-hop, rather than others.

⁷ See for example, Keating; MAV and VMC.

In the case of MAV's artists, these personal projects involve two interrelated strands: an aesthetic one – that is, becoming an 'artist'; and an ethical one, which relates to subjects' desire to 'represent' or act on their cultural distinctiveness.

Significantly, some of the artists engaged with MAV did not identify as an 'artist' prior to their involvement with the organisation. It was only with the kinds of discursive framing of their work offered by MAV that they began to characterise their creative pursuits as 'art'. This is most explicitly expressed by Nazia:

In my environment they never acknowledged that I'm an artist, and I've always struggled with it. Like, for fifteen years I have been dealing with textiles and art and creativity but I never gained confidence about my work – I didn't know it then, I wasn't acknowledged for it. ... I knew my work very well but I didn't believe in it.

She goes on to speak more specifically about her uncertainty over the *value* of her work, and MAV's role in defining her work as 'art':

I didn't believe whether it was good for the market, good for someone, or good for anything. I know my work is good, but I don't know for what. ... Where did it stand? Was it good for a pillowcase? Or was it good for a gallery?

In defining these particular cultural forms as 'good for a gallery' and ascribing them a kind of public value, the organisation enables, or at least legitimates, Nazia's identification as an 'artist'. This is important, and below I continue exploring the ways in which MAV's discourses of value are incorporated into the artists' own personal projects.

There is a body of work which theorises these practices of self-realisation as forming part of an everyday 'aesthetic experience' (Featherstone; Foucault *Use*; Maffesoli; Shusterman *Performing*). Such accounts move beyond traditional notions of the 'aesthetic' as an autonomous and rarefied realm of culture. Richard Shusterman describes, for example, how everyday attempts at self-expression and fulfilment involve a kind of creative self-styling:

Life poses an artistic project in calling for creative self-expression and aesthetic self-fashioning – the desire to make ourselves into something fulfilling, interesting, attractive, admirable, yet somehow true to what we are. (*Performing* 10)

Shusterman avoids defining ‘aesthetic experience’. Rather, after reviewing existing definitions that are inflected by romanticism and associations of ‘high art’, he suggests that the usefulness of the concept lies in its directional nature:

We thus find at least one good use for philosophical recognition of this concept: its orientation toward having the experience it names. Rather than defining art or justifying critical verdicts, the concept is directional, reminding us of what is worth seeking in art and elsewhere in life. (*Performing* 34)

‘Aesthetic experience’ is thus not an intrinsic criterion of art, but a subjective experience towards which one aspires. In this way the concept sets up a ‘telos’ of the subject – it describes an ongoing project of ‘self-fashioning’ towards a projected moment of self-fulfilment.

The desire of the multicultural artist to be recognised as an ‘artist’ can be regarded as such a project of personal aesthetic cultivation, particularly given the distinctly aspirational terms in which they express their involvement with MAV. Artists speak of their desire to become a better, more successful, or more widely recognised artist, and this is often connected with a wish to more effectively express their own cultural distinctiveness. Nazia has some specific ideas about a number of textiles projects she would like to pursue along these lines:

Right now I’m in the process of developing designs using my language alphabet. Especially the letter that represents ‘us’, as in harmony, me, my. I just get one of the alphabet and manipulate it into designs. Then take it off and print it. I intend to print and design these using just the alphabet and gradually build up into a series of paintings. And then when I’m done I’ll go to MAV and say, okay, I’ve got my thing. Right now I’m just starting off. ... I’m not ready for it right now because it takes a lot of energy and a lot of research.

Aminata, similarly, sees her musical projects, and herself, as works in progress:

I'm planning to do my own thing ... And for me, I don't do it for the money or what. No, I just do it for the love of music, the love of art, and I'm taking it slow and I'm getting more and more ideas and I want to write with meaning. I just don't want to bullshit. ... I just want to sing my daily life, you know, what I'm seeing, what I'm going through. ... [T]his has been my dream for a long time, since I was twelve. I was like, I'd love to sing, I love to do this. I've been traveling a lot, I haven't called a place home, I haven't lived somewhere for more than ten years and said, this is my home. And all my life with my family traveling here and there, it's not easy, it's like, what's your identity?

Aminata's discussion of her musical aspirations moves seamlessly into a rumination on her ethnicity and questions about her identity. For Aminata, as for most of the artists I spoke to, her ongoing project of personal fulfilment and self-expression encompasses both her art and her identity.

Foucault's notion of the aesthetics of the self describes the practices by which individuals problematise their own conduct, and seek to form themselves as 'ethical subjects'. The connection he makes between 'the aesthetic' and 'ethics' is of particular interest. Foucault theorises in the latter volumes of *The History of Sexuality* that an aesthetics of the self has to do with the techniques of self-problematisation that enable individuals to recognise themselves as subjects of a particular normative code. It is

a process in which the individual delimits that part of himself that will form the object of his moral practice, defines his position relative to the precept he will follow, and decides on a certain mode of being upon himself, to monitor, test, improve, and transform himself. (*Use 28*)

As I noted above, Nazia and Aminata talk about themselves with reference to an ongoing desire to effectively, or meaningfully, express their difference through their art. In a sense, what they are referring to is becoming an advocate for cultural difference. For some of the artists, this has meant going on to become a representative for the organisation itself, and for its message of 'cultural harmony' and agenda of cultural pluralism. In taking on these roles, the artists perform a kind of 'ethical work' on themselves. For example, Rebecca says that:

It was good because I know that I can give voice to Haiti, like talk about Haiti, so I love working with them [MAV]. ... That's my story – that's all I got really. So yeah, for me, definitely later on I really want to open people's eyes and let them see what's happening in Haiti ... and I think multicultural arts [MAV] is definitely the best place to do it, you know. ... My dream is to sing, and sing about my people and try and make a difference for my people and learn more about my people.

It is by way of these reflections and problematisations regarding her perceived responsibility to speak about her cultural background, that Rebecca links her aesthetic project to her efforts to form herself as an 'ethical subject'. The two projects are related; it is via the strategies of self-styling enabled by her art that she is able to meaningfully express her cultural difference and fulfil what she perceives as a normative obligation.

These forms of self-problematisation are enabled by MAV. As I mentioned earlier, MAV creates *possibilities* for the individual artists it works with. Significantly, the dual aspirations to become an artist, as well as a responsible advocate of cultural difference, are reflected by MAV's program objectives: firstly, by its focus on artist training and support (which includes the sorts of practical assistance mentioned earlier) and, secondly, in the form of 'ethical' training it offers to help these artists become representatives of cultural diversity. As Rebecca observes, 'they don't just want you to perform for them, they want to educate you as well and for you to educate other people'. This is most clearly exemplified by the progression of some of the artists I spoke to into mentors for other emerging artists, or into agents of the organisation itself.

Khaled, for instance, who has been involved in the local hip-hop scene for about seven years, was contacted by MAV in 2004 to host the *Emerge* festival – an annual cultural celebration of recently arrived refugee communities in Melbourne. After working for MAV in a volunteer capacity, he went on to be employed as their youth officer, while continuing to pursue his musical career. In this way, Khaled embodies the ideal trajectory of an MAV artist. He says that in his role as a co-ordinator for the *New School Rulez* youth music program, and more generally as a youth mentor, he was able to attract 'kids

from the community', and knew how to 'open new outcomes and resources for emerging kids'. As part of the successful practice of his role he takes on the language of the organisation and its bureaucratic concern with 'outcomes and resources'. He is adept at translating his experiences into forms of knowledge that can be utilised by MAV, and which can also be shared with the 'community'. As he asserts,

[My role was] mostly about knowledge. Knowledge is the most important thing. A lot of them [young artists] don't know how to do it, how to go about it. And that's where we come in as mentors.

Khaled was trained by the organisation in specific artistic and vocational literacies – to do with succeeding as a hip-hop artist – which it became his role to then translate and share. After helping to cultivate this knowledge in the first place, then deeming it valuable, the organisation gave Khaled the opportunity to disseminate this knowledge.

In this way MAV sets up a self-fulfilling regime in which artists engage in projects of self-realisation, while also working towards the governmental agendas of the organisation. Ian Hunter's arguments allow us to take this insight further. In his terms, MAV's role constitutes a 'normative imposition of a certain *aesthetico-ethical obligation* (to complete the self)' (*Culture* 25). Rather than negating the will of the multicultural artist, it could be argued that MAV *activates* these personal projects, and the agency, of these artists. The artists incorporate MAV's goals of 'cultural development' into their own projects of self-government. This provides them with a normative framework in which they recognise and frame their own moral obligations, ultimately creating a relationship of mutual dependence and recognition. Thus there is a reciprocal relationship between the artist and the organisation, in which each affirms the other's legitimacy, and which enables MAV to recast the artists' practices of the self as 'cultural development'.

RELATIONS OF DEPENDENCE?: RETHINKING DIFFERENCE, RECOGNITION AND FORMS OF SELF-STYLING

One way of reading the artists' projects of self-realisation is that they amount to a relationship of dependence on MAV and, therefore, on official

instruments of multiculturalism. For example, a number of the artists I spoke with mentioned the sorts of personal and professional legitimization they received from their encounters with primarily Anglo-Australian audiences, and the ways in which these audiences valued their work. A photographer of Ethiopian background, Befekir, describes how he wants to inform Australians about Ethiopia, and to demystify Ethiopia, through his art:

When I came here I didn't know what to do, but one of the many reasons why I wanted to do photography – especially photography of Ethiopian people and Ethiopian culture and show it in an exhibition – was because I believe people do not know enough about the cultural aspect of where I come from. ... I wanted to capture Ethiopians practicing their culture in Melbourne in different situations and show it back to the Australian community. The wider Australian community – to facilitate better understanding of the [Ethiopian] community.

With the assistance of MAV, Befekir and two other Ethiopian visual artists exhibited their work at an inner-city gallery targeting 'the wider Australian community'. For him, the exhibition was a success because of the attendance of these non-Ethiopian audiences.⁸

Most of them [the audience] were non-Ethiopian. It's a very popular gallery area and according to the people that run the gallery the exhibition was visited by approximately 200 people per day for two weeks. ... It might be because of the story that was run in *The Age*. The story that was run was a positive story. ... It starts off by saying most of us know Ethiopia as a land of famine and that sort of thing and that's exactly what the exhibition was trying to challenge, that sort of idea. So it did exactly what we were trying to do.

Thus, the rationale for Befekir's exhibition is an educative one, specifically targeting 'mainstream' Australian audiences.

⁸ However, as I demonstrated in the previous chapter, audiences at MAV events are not homogeneous. As Khaled points out, this particular exhibition was widely promoted and a surprisingly broad cross-section of people attended: 'It's not just Africans doing paintings for high class type people. Like when we had the Ethiopian painting exhibition there were lots of Ethiopians – there were high class people but a lot of people from the community too'. Thus, while the presence of non-Ethiopian audiences was of personal importance for Befekir, the organisation measured the 'success' of the exhibition largely by its ability to attract a culturally diverse audience. This effort to diversify audiences at 'mainstream' arts institutions is, as discussed in the previous chapter, one of MAV's main priorities.

Ghassan Hage problematises this relationship between the White self and 'ethnic other'. He argues that it constitutes an objectification of this 'otherness' on the part of White audiences who attribute certain sorts of 'value' to ethnic difference. This, in turn, is seen to produce a kind of *passive* belonging for the non-White subject. However, as I argued in the previous chapter, such criticisms of the 'use' value of diversity overlook the increasingly diverse formation that is 'mainstream Australia'. In addition, Hage envisages the relationship between the multicultural artist and 'mainstream' audiences as being informed by relations of commodity exchange. This means that any aspiration on the part of the multicultural artist to be aesthetically or economically desired by their audience is seen as problematic. Of course, what such arguments overlook is the fact that MAV's relationship with multicultural artists can be seen to reflect the relationship between arts patronage organisations and their artists more generally.⁹ In this sense, the forms of self-reflection that MAV facilitates, and the artistic ethos that it cultivates amongst its artists, assists them to participate more successfully in the 'mainstream' art world. In Bourdieusian terms, this might be understood as the fostering of certain kinds of symbolic capital that will help MAV's artists to invest in, and benefit from, the economic logic of the art field.

The aspect of Hage's critique that I want to scrutinise here is the problematic relationship it draws between the 'unconscious' of official multiculturalism (envisaged as a form of neocolonial desire) and the 'reality' of multiculturalism (which includes the increasing presence of 'non-White' Australians in public life). This leads to a negative conception of 'desire' and difference which does not account for the more affirmative aspects of multicultural artists' relationship with MAV, and with their audiences. I attempt to remedy this by considering how such 'desire' for difference can be reconceived in a more positive way.

In explaining the 'fantasy' of multiculturalism Hage states that cultural forms such as the multicultural festival exemplify a form of 'white national zoology' (*White* 151). The politics of this exhibitory multiculturalism is informed by 'a relationship of exteriority between self and other' (*White* 148). It involves the

⁹ See Velthuis for a Bourdieusian account of art fields in New York and Amsterdam.

careful positioning of the 'ethnic other' as part of a deliberate 'process of control and normalisation' where:

every multicultural celebration of difference in Australia operate[s] paradoxically like a mourning ritual. Every celebration becomes a tomb to the difference it is celebrating. (*White* 164)

The problem with Hage's bleak assessment is his attempt to reconcile this 'fantasy' of the White nationalist, which is said to inform official multiculturalism, with the more complex and differentiated 'reality' of multiculturalism. Hage acknowledges, for example, that,

there are clearly tendencies in Australian society for non-White Australians to assert themselves as equally empowered Australian national wills within the field. (*White* 133)

Hage argues that the multicultural fantasy works to contain or deny this reality through the ongoing objectification of the 'ethnic other'. However, given the pervasiveness of the 'multicultural fantasy', he is unable to account for how this 'reality' of multiculturalism came about in the first place.

In fact, his critique of multicultural discourse seems to assume that multiculturalism *in practice* is an outcome of this 'fantasy'. Hage acknowledges that the 'nationalist fantasy' he speaks of does not exist in isolation, and that there are other constructions of multiculturalism which have 'opened up a space which permits the articulation of diverse cultural forms', and enable 'various structures that help them in their continuing struggle for equality within Australian capitalism' (*White* 84). However, there is no analysis of what the relationship between this 'nationalist fantasy' and these other multiculturalisms are; the instruments by which these multiculturalisms are enacted; and the sorts of 'ethnic' selves that are formed in the process. His critique is a speculative one, and his discussion shifts, awkwardly, from an explanation of 'fantasy' to an evaluation of the '*practices*' and '*technologies* aimed at the containment of the multicultural Real' (*White* 137, my emphasis). This slippage between 'fantasy' and practice is problematic – it seems that in explaining the 'unconscious' of White nationalism, what he is really trying to explain is material, and in trying to connect the two he ends up conflating them.

Hage's notion of 'fantasy' is influenced by Lacanian psychoanalysis. It is a fantasy which gives purpose to the subject's life, and yet always remains unfulfilled. As Hage writes, it is 'guided by the desire to make an other that is not quite an object into an object' (White 70). Here, the object is both an object of desire, and that which 'causes the subject to exist as a desiring subject' (White 72).¹⁰ So desire has a constitutive function – it emerges as an attempt to rectify a form of originary 'lack', however this 'lack' is simultaneously one which can never actually be overcome.

This leads to a negative understanding of identity, and it is one which is foundational within cultural studies. Stuart Hall asserts that in attempting to theorise the relation between structures and subjectivity, some notion of 'the unconscious' is crucial. In his broadly Althusserian framework, this is central to understanding the way in which subjects are interpellated by structures of domination. However, he is concerned by the fact that the construction of identities through discourse,

entails the radically disturbing recognition that it is only through the relation to the Other, the relation to what it is not, to precisely what it lacks, to what has been called its *constitutive outside* that the 'positive' meaning of any term – and thus its 'identity' – can be constructed. (4)

This is the same conception of identity that Hage draws from. His view is that the self is constructed in relation to 'what it lacks'; that it works, by necessity, to repress the 'other'. It is this 'relationship of exteriority' between self and other that I cited earlier. The problem with this theoretical framework is that multicultural artists – because of their identification and relationship of affirmation with the instruments of multiculturalism – necessarily become

¹⁰ This Lacanian conception of the ideal national or the 'imaginary nation as fantasy' is one Hage derives from Slavoj Žižek. Žižek argues that the affirmation of the nationalist self occurs by way of the repression of the Other, and this is particularly evident in the forms of 'tolerance' exemplified by liberal multiculturalism:

Liberal 'tolerance' condones the folklorist Other deprived of its substance – like the multitude of 'ethnic cuisines' in a contemporary megalopolis; however, any 'real' Other is instantly denounced for its 'fundamentalism', since the kernel of Otherness resides in the regulation of its *jouissance*: the 'real Other' is by definition 'patriarchal', 'violent', never the Other of ethereal wisdom and charming customs. (37)

complicit in Hage's 'fantasy' of White empowerment. That is, they are implicated in their own 'othering'. An alternative theorisation of the relationship between the self and 'other', and of the politics of identity and difference, might allow a more productive way of thinking about the artists' intersubjectivity.

As I stated at the outset, I aim to find ways of describing the agency of the multicultural artist. My Foucauldian analysis of the relationship between MAV and its artists allows for a positive conception of identity formation, in which the artists are conceived as knowing, self-styling subjects. Instead of attempting an understanding of the self via an account of the unconscious, Foucault looks at the practices and techniques through which individuals relate to themselves, and construct themselves as subjects of moral norms and action. He is interested in looking at processes of subjectification and forms of self-relationship and the ways in which these are 'defined, modified, recast and diversified' (*Use* 32). This practical definition of the self does not depend on a negative relation with the 'other' or repressive notions of 'fantasy' or 'desire'. Rather, I suggest that 'desire' can be reconceived as a practice of the self. This can be applied to both the audience's desire for multicultural art, and the desire on the part of the artist to *be* desired. I want to consider the possibility that both the multicultural artist and consumer of multicultural arts (whether this is a White nationalist, in Hage's sense, or the diverse audience described in the previous chapter) *both* use their experience of art to participate in positive forms of self-styling, or what Shusterman calls 'artful self-transformation' (*Performing* 213).

Here, it is worth turning to Majid Yar's reconceptualisation of the politics of recognition. He argues that processes of desire and recognition have problematically been theorised in post-structuralist critical theory – usually in terms of the objectifying power of the gaze and its 'operation of domination' (57).¹¹ This involves a 'pessimistic' vision of intersubjectivity where subjects 'seek to make each other objects of the gaze as the pre-condition of reclaiming their inner freedom' (Yar 61). The self is affirmed either through the

¹¹ See Gilroy; Mulvey; Said. In making this point Yar argues that such accounts are founded on a problematic reading of Hegel's 'master-slave' dialectic.

subjugation of the other, or through its assimilation. In this sense, as Yar explains, 'the subject's ontological lack is made good by "appropriating" the other for-itself' (63). Yar's critique focuses on the accounts of desire and recognition found in Sartre and Levinas¹² but could be extended to the Lacanian notion of subjectivity I referred to above. In this framework, 'desire' amounts to 'the experience of a founding *lack* which seeks its *satisfaction*' (58).

Yar's account is useful because he seeks to find an alternative model of 'ethical engagement and communality' that involves rethinking 'recognition' in a more optimistic way (57). He argues that

the affirmation-constitution of ourselves as the kinds of subjects we desire to be requires another *consciousness* (i.e., a subject) who will be aware of us and thus capable of conferring recognition upon us in the terms we wish to be 'taken'. Thus it is only via a *mediation* through the consciousness of another that the subject is able to identify itself, and so come into itself as a self-conscious human subject. What this specifically 'human desire' amounts to is a *desire to be desired, a desire for the desire of another*. (65)

This affirmative view of desire – as enabling a 'mutuality of recognition' while retaining the other's alterity – is important (68).¹³ Such a perspective allows a consideration of relations of difference *and* sameness. Further, Yar's argument is important because it constitutes 'recognition' as a dialogic process of persuasion and negotiation. And it is possible to construct a role for MAV within these processes of negotiation – as a 'mediating structure' which might work to 'reconcile subjects in common normative and practical orientations' (Yar 72).

¹² Yar argues that Sartre and Levinas provide two differing, yet problematic readings of Hegel – as offering a 'pessimistic' or 'pathological' vision of intersubjectivity, respectively (59). As he suggests, 'Neither of these options holds out the possibility of thinking of a political solidarity based on mutual affirmation and shared understanding' (64).

¹³ There are other similarly affirmative views of 'desire' which might be drawn upon here. Deleuze's conception of desire that informs intersubjective encounters similarly seeks out points of commonality and recognition, rather than difference. As Claire Colebrook points out, Deleuze's work argues for a subjectivity in which 'I become human in perceiving other bodies as "like me", in desiring or imagining some common ground' (xvi).

In this sense 'desire' has a constitutive power but one which promotes a positive mode of intersubjectivity in the form of practices of self-styling and self-identification. These strategies are taken up by both the audience and the multicultural artist. In his discussion on aesthetics and multiculturalism, Shusterman extends the relations of recognition and affirmation I describe above. He writes specifically about ways of incorporating experiences of the culturally 'other' via forms of self-styling that might avoid the trappings of Hage's self/other binary. As he argues, while these processes may be self-interested,

Exploring the self through comprehension of the other proceeds not simply by confrontational contrast but by way of integrative participation. We learn to understand ourselves better by discovering the cultural others in us.
(*Performing* 192)

In this respect, self-realisation occurs, 'not by mere contrast but through accretion or absorption' (*Performing* 195). He cites the example of fans of American country and western music listening to black popular music of the 1940s and 1950s in order to appreciate its influence. As he suggests, 'Most cultures are hybrid and historically constructed through dialogical exchange with each other' (*Performing* 198). 'Enriching' ourselves, here, has to do with learning something about our own histories and the relations of cultural exchange that have informed them; it is not an exploitative form of self-enrichment, but an enrichment of our *understanding* of ourselves.

In conceiving of these kinds of aesthetic engagement as strategies of self-expression and self-understanding, Shusterman also draws on a Nietzschean notion of the self which involves the 'doubling of the self to include not simply what one already is but, more importantly, what one can become' (*Performing* 211). This raises an interesting dilemma – the 'ethical paradox of the double self, with its demand for both honest expression of what one is and of perfectionist striving to make oneself other and better' (*Performing* 213). This tension is embodied in the idea of 'cultural expression' that informs MAV's work; the belief that the work of their artists is an 'authentic' or representative expression of their 'culture'. What MAV actually facilitates, and perhaps what they are less aware of, are artists' attempts to use their art to experiment with, as Shusterman says 'what one can become'. This relates to my earlier point –

about the framework MAV provides more generally in these narratives and projects of *becoming*. It is worth noting the account of Nazia, who rejects the way she is perceived by her Pakistani acquaintances, preferring, instead, her constitution as culturally ‘other’ and ‘interesting’, by her non-Pakistani audiences. This desire to be valued in specific ways by specific audiences, might be an example of the process Shusterman describes as ‘artful self-transformation’ (*Performing* 213). Of course, this also connotes a tension between Nazia’s self-identification and her relation to ‘community’, and I will consider this further below.

For now I want to think about how these practices of the self relate to (a certain rethinking of) the notion of cosmopolitanism. The forms of aesthetic self-styling I outlined involve a kind of productive openness to difference – and the incorporation of these forms of difference into projects of self-realisation. In the previous chapter I referred to recent work on ‘everyday cosmopolitanism’ where cosmopolitanism is not regarded as a class-based, exclusionary capacity¹⁴ but a practical openness to quotidian forms of cultural difference. In this sense, cosmopolitanism can be seen to encompass the kinds of intersubjective practices of the self I have mentioned. And it can also describe the sorts of capacities generated through the personal projects carried out by MAV’s artists. A number of writers have argued that this kind of cosmopolitanism operates as a form of cultural capital.¹⁵ Karim’s comments here are exemplary:

[Cosmopolitanism] provides an opportunity for innovative engagements with emerging domestic and global situations. Embracing outlooks that incorporate multi-dimensional cultural scenarios that often are the norm under globalisation, it enables populations to gain wider ranges of cultural competencies that are becoming necessary to operate effectively in the transnational contexts interlaced with human, cultural, and technological flows. (156)

¹⁴ See Bryson for an analysis of ‘cosmopolitan’ capacities associated with musical tastes, their relation to educational backgrounds and levels of ‘cultural tolerance’. Interestingly, she argues that while tolerance overall increased with education, ‘cultural tolerance should not be conceptualised as an indiscriminate tendency to be nonexclusive, but as a reordering of group boundaries that trades race for class’ (895).

¹⁵ See also Gilbert and Lo.

Importantly, this is not necessarily the kind of cultural capital acquired from becoming literate in the norms of the 'high art' world – for example, by training multicultural artists to perform at 'mainstream' or prestigious arts venues (although, as I mentioned earlier, such literacies might lead to the long-term acquisition of economic capital). Rather, this kind of cosmopolitanism can result from more prosaic practices of cultural exchange and interchange. The case of Befekir, the Ethiopian photographer, to which I referred earlier, exemplifies this possibility. His exhibition at a well-known Melbourne gallery does not ensure his status as an artist of 'excellence' or of significant prestige. What it does enable are productive intersubjective encounters between him and the people who come to see his work.¹⁶ In this sense, MAV's artists can be regarded as cross-cultural enablers who facilitate, what Ang describes as 'the incremental and dialogical construction of lived identities' (*On Not* 110).

In this respect my argument entails a rereading of cosmopolitanism as, what Noble calls, a 'practice of co-existence' (50); he describes the potential for such practices to generate 'an emerging cosmopolitan citizenship' (47).¹⁷ Despite the exclusionary tendencies of cosmopolitanism it is also worth bearing in mind its productive potential, as a means of generating cross-cultural exchange. Of course, this seems to raise a dilemma. On the one hand, *everyday* cosmopolitanism comprises of 'a practical relation to the plurality of cultures, a willingness and tendency to engage with others' (Noble 48). On the other hand, the cosmopolitanism of distinction might take the form of the

¹⁶ Interestingly, Karim argues that migrants have a particular propensity to develop this form of cosmopolitanism. He states that, 'Their homelessness seems to produce a highly creative state of mind and production that puts them in the ranks of the avant-garde, indeed at the cutting edge of modernity. They demonstrate the possibility of developing hybrid cultural capital that is cosmopolitan, derived from questions they ask in trying to make sense of struggle at the border between at least two worldviews. The cultural competencies that they offer are seen as rising far beyond the traditional notion of the marginal "ethnic"' (154). In aligning the migrant's 'state of mind' with that of the artistic 'avant-garde' Karim might be overstating the sorts of cultural advantage migrants have access to. Nonetheless, these sorts of arguments are important for recasting what is usually seen as the cultural marginality or *disadvantage* of migrants as a positive capacity.

¹⁷ See also Nick Stevenson for a similarly affirmative account of cosmopolitan and its relation to cultural citizenship ('Cultural').

cultivation of a particular lifestyle aesthetic (as I described in Chapter Four) and involve a

plundering of surface characteristics so that ethnicity becomes reduced to a kind of fashion accessory which can be pinned to a cultural product and, far from creating something new, manifests an empty formalism or superficial imprint of the exotic. (Gunew 6)¹⁸

Judgments about the perceived 'superficiality' of a cross-cultural exchange involve a speculative kind of moral critique. Moreover, in many instances, cosmopolitan cultural forms can give rise to both possibilities – a practical openness to difference, as well as the potential for a superficial appropriation of the exotic – which is why such encounters must be assessed in their specificity, rather than via abstract or generalised critiques.

CONCLUSION: NEGOTIATING 'COMMUNITY'

It is clear from the artists' comments that their relationship with their 'community' is not always a comfortable one. Not all felt supported by their ethnic communities, or considered themselves to be representative of these communities. In some cases, their self-identification as an 'artist' positions them on the margins of their ethnic community. In this respect, the artists' practices of self-fashioning reveal a disjuncture between individual and community self-realisation. Befekir, for example, is concerned that he does not conform to his family's expectations:

At the moment I live with my mother and she doesn't really want me to do this. She would rather have me finishing my studies, starting full time work, getting married and she wants to be a grandmother soon. So these are her expectations. ... So I haven't decided what to do, whether to succumb to my mum's pressures or to follow what I really want.

These sorts of contestations – between one's self-government, and the rationales of the family, or 'community' – create obvious kinds of tension.

¹⁸ See also Gilbert and Lo and their notion of 'happy hybridity' (168).

Tanja Dreher problematises conventional discourses of 'community' which posit a straightforward link between 'community', 'culture', and tradition. It is, she argues,

a discourse in which community-culture-homeland-tradition-language-folklore are almost seamlessly linked, reifying the various categories and creating an emphasis on bounded communities and a focus on tradition (93).

Dreher is concerned that support of these sorts of cultural expression tend to reify insular and parochial versions of culture, at the expense of more open and hybrid ones. Such discourses, as Dreher points out, produce ethnic communities as homogenous, essentialised and bounded entities defined by visible markers of 'cultural difference' (93). This is certainly the sort of discourse MAV has mobilised at times – particularly in its earlier guise as an advocate for mainly 'folkloric' cultural expressions. By moving away from these traditional modes of community cultural expression to a more individualised approach – albeit an approach still framed by the organisation as 'cultural development' – MAV seems to allow for more differentiated expressions of 'culture' and 'community'. Interestingly, this does not seem to be a deliberate move, but an incidental outcome of MAV's shift towards artist advocacy, and the fact that these artists tend to be situated in provisional kinds of relationships with their 'community', rather than straightforwardly 'representative' ones.

This is particularly evident in Nazia's description of her relationship with the local Pakistani community:

Coming from Pakistan, you know, they don't understand art. ... they're too busy cooking and cleaning. Seriously, it's not normal. They don't even think about art – they find it very peculiar that I do art, and dance, for leisure.

In addition, she believes that her artwork simply does not hold the same appeal for Pakistani audiences who are already familiar with some of its stylistic elements. As she says:

I really don't get involved with the community. My area of interest is the westerners, I want them to look at my work. They [Pakistanis] know it, they don't value it because they know it. I want other people to come and see, and

I want to be a medium to tell them in the best way I can – to show them different aspects of my culture.

As well as highlighting Nazia's self-perception as a cultural mediator – or what I described above as a 'cross-cultural enabler' – this points to the sorts of legitimation MAV offers in helping her to negotiate her sense of estrangement from her community. Of course, the essentialising terms in which Nazia articulates this tension – 'they don't understand art' – are somewhat problematic. However, it demonstrates that what she may have experienced previously as cultural marginality or isolation, is recast as a *self-affirming distance* from her community. Her role as multicultural artist enables her to promote certain aspects of her cultural distinctiveness without necessarily having to 'belong' to her community.

Moreover, her experience highlights the fact that there is no coherent, consensual, pre-existing 'community' which Nazia can be seen to 'represent'. The forms of self-identification enabled by artists' association with MAV provide them with a means of negotiating this fraught relationship with 'community' – by allowing them to maintain appropriate relations of distance and closeness. In this sense we can see how multicultural arts *works on* 'community'. It is a practice of the self that, rather than constructing collective identities, or facilitating communal capacities, enables the individual self to negotiate provisional forms of belonging to 'community'. And while Nazia positions herself on the margins of the local Pakistani community, the sorts of interaction and exchange enabled by her artistic practice have facilitated other forms of communality and sociality – including contacts she has formed with the local council and other community groups.¹⁹ These constitute various distinct but overlapping communities that give life to Nazia's identification as a multicultural artist. And in this respect we can see how rationalities of 'community', 'family' and 'homeland', converge in productive ways with the organisational rationalities of MAV. It means that the kinds of self-regulation that MAV encourages also operate as modes of ethical self-styling.

¹⁹ See Maffesoli for an interesting theorisation of the connections between individual aesthetic experience and forms of solidarity and sociality.

Hage asserts that his critique is of the 'multiculturalism of having'; here, I have provided an analysis of the multicultural artist as subject, of a 'multiculturalism of being' (*White* 140). In undertaking this, I have attempted to reformulate the psychoanalytic notion of 'desire' into something that might afford a more optimistic account of the strategies of self-styling that multicultural arts enables – both for the artist, and for the audiences of this art. Rather than seeing MAV as belonging to official apparatuses of multiculturalism which perpetuate the problematic discourse of 'cultural enrichment', we can regard it as an instrument which enables personal projects of self-realisation. This takes place, specifically, by valuing the artists' work as 'art', constructing a regime of self-reflection which enables their identification as 'artist', and providing opportunities where they can make use of these newfound identities, literacies and ethical obligations. The relations set up by this aestheticised, and governmentalised, multiculturalism can lead to productive forms of cross-cultural exchange and self-styling. Finally, while the organisation aims to support cultural activity that is regarded as 'authentic' and 'natural' expressions of culture and creativity, we have seen that such cultural expression is actually enabled via a negotiated distance between multicultural artists and their communities.

CONCLUSION

This thesis set out to examine the rationales informing community-based arts and the relations they invoke between 'culture', 'community' and notions of cultural value. I was specifically interested in how these relations are reconstituting community-based arts practice, and their implications for the subject of community-based arts. My aim was to intervene in these policy formations by looking at them not simply as discourses which determine our symbolic positioning within relations of power, but as regimes of practice which circumscribe our practical relations with our selves. This approach avoids assumptions about the 'outcomes' of community-based cultural activity and participation – which is a common trait in the literature in this field. Such works depend on a celebratory, uncritical account of the value of 'culture', which is often framed as a response to the 'threat' of neoliberalism. However, if this thesis has demonstrated anything it is that not all cultural participation is equal. Such considerations are missing from policy debates about the uses of community-based arts; cultural participation is still largely seen to be inherently empowering, rather than something that is inescapably related to differential forms of cultural value, which offer unequal kinds of advantage, and over which economic rationalisations loom large.

Shifts that have taken place in the cultural work of FCAC and MAV have been justified by both organisations in terms of their desire for increased relevance and appeal to 'mainstream' audiences, communities, artists and funders. These justifications raise the question – which has been a recurring theme throughout this thesis – of whether the purpose of such cultural activity should be to contest, or simply to 'join', existing hierarchies of cultural value. However, I suggest that both of these approaches are interrelated; that the choice between either disrupting dominant regimes of cultural value, or perpetuating them, is in fact, a false one. This dilemma concerning the politics of cultural value at these organisations is tied up with the dual character of aesthetics. As I have argued, the notion of aesthetics continues to inform community-based arts. It has the potential both to contribute to existing patterns of inclusion and exclusion, and to be used in affirmative projects of individual self-styling. I will suggest how this character of aesthetics also means that there is no coherent or totalising (neoliberal) regime of cultural value to simply be 'joined' or 'contested'. This fact holds significant promise when we think about the terms on which cultural activity might be played out, and the sorts of subjects such activity might produce into the future. It also means that arguments for or against these processes need to acquire a level of precision that does not currently exist.

CULTURAL ECONOMIES AND THE SUBJECT OF COMMUNITY-BASED ARTS

Within policy and academic debates, 'culture' is routinely argued for in terms of an opposition to its instrumentalisation and economisation – processes which are both broadly ascribed to neoliberal governmental programs. The notion of 'community' is also made to do something similar – to serve as a locus of resistance to the perceived dangers of modern life, and to act on and manage populations by invoking their agency or autonomy. What these arguments fail to consider are the ways in which 'culture' is itself transformed through the programs of neoliberalism. The ways in which 'culture' has been reconstituted make it difficult to argue for 'culture' in terms of its 'intrinsic' value or character, or on the basis of its presumed opposition to neoliberal social policy. The ways in which 'culture' has been shaped by these processes is, of course, reflected in the ways that community-based arts has been

respecified in the last fifteen years. Mapping some of these changes, and the dilemmas they give rise to, has been one of the key concerns of this thesis.

Community-based arts activity is more open to popular cultural forms than it has been in the past. While the community arts movement, in its early incarnations, was founded on a rejection of 'mass culture', today programs at FCAC and MAV encompass forms such as hip hop, various styles of 'street' dance, dj-ing, animation, multimedia projects and so on. Others have commented on the need for this kind of responsiveness to popular tastes, particularly in order to appeal to younger audiences and participants whose primary mode of cultural consumption and participation is with the 'popular' (Gibson *Uses* 126). It also means there is increasing acknowledgment within these organisations of the links between the cultural 'citizen' and 'consumer'.

The other way in which 'culture' and the community-based arts sector have been transformed is via an increasingly 'globalised' discourse of culture. Cosmopolitanism is an increasingly important form of currency within these discourses, and it clearly informs the recent work of MAV and FCAC. The 'global city' discourse, and the cultural economies which surround it, position cultural organisations within a competitive, placemaking framework. This discourse is at least partially responsible for a renewed emphasis on 'high quality' art, and on aestheticised representations of 'community' that will appeal to audiences with requisite forms of cultural capital. It has also prompted a general concern with maintaining the national and international profiles of these cultural organisations. In addition, this policy context highlights the way that, although federal level cultural policymaking appears to be receding in importance to state and city (or municipal) level cultural and urban planning, these latter frameworks are themselves increasingly influenced by a competitive, 'global' orientation.

In many ways these changes in the community-based arts sector constitute an accommodation of economic rationales for culture. The incorporation of these rationales into their cultural work has been justified by both FCAC and MAV as an effort to broaden the appeal of their cultural activity. It has meant taking on, as I have stated earlier, an *aspirational* discourse, where cultural

forms are situated in relation to what is perceived as 'mainstream' culture and the arts. The effects of this 'aspirational' positioning have been different for each of the organisations. In the case of MAV I have argued that one of its strengths is that it sees 'mainstream' culture and audiences as dispersed and variable formations. The organisation is able to justify its work on these terms because its self-definition is not tied up with the notion of 'community' in the same way as FCAC. Although I have described the cultural work of MAV as a form of community-based arts, staff at MAV are careful to point out that they are not a 'community arts' organisation. FCAC's positioning as a 'community arts' organisation has made its efforts to align itself with 'establishment' arts institutions more problematic.

One strategy employed at MAV has been to assist 'emerging multicultural artists' to join these 'mainstream' cultural formations. The organisation's programs aim to train artists in the symbolic capital they might need to do this, as well as providing them with more specific forms of vocational training and practical assistance. Besides the personal affirmation this training provides them, the artists are also more readily able to invest in the economic logic of the art field and potentially benefit from the value associated with these forms of symbolic capital. Rather than conceiving of the 'artist' as the bearer of aesthetic and cultural expertise that is situated outside of the 'community', the figure of the 'artist' is a more flexible one. In this way the organisation works to cultivate an ethos that helps culturally 'marginal' individuals to participate in emerging cultural economies.

It is from these kinds of value and economies, that I have suggested community participants in the programs I have reviewed at FCAC are less able to benefit. Attempts to accommodate economic rationales within these programs have, as at MAV, led to a greater emphasis on 'high quality' art, but the exclusionary forms of cultural value that potentially underpin this emphasis are less clearly addressed. Such value is not regarded as something that the 'community' can benefit from, except by association: that is, by living in an emerging 'hub' of cutting-edge, 'creative' activity – where esteem is raised by raising the profile of the area, and by promoting a generalised, and aestheticised 'community'.

To some extent however, these arguments need to be qualified. The cultural work of both organisations is more wide-ranging than I have generally accounted for. As I have alluded to elsewhere in this thesis, both organisations continue to be informed by a range of agendas – particularly because, as in the case of FCAC, they are also influenced by the funding criteria of *non-arts* organisations. The community workshops and arts and disability programs at FCAC, for example, attest to these varied, and in some ways more traditional, community arts agendas. These programs are less oriented towards artistic outcomes of ‘excellence’ and more concerned with ‘grassroots’ forms of cultural expression and participation.

The limitations of MAV’s advocacy approach should also be acknowledged. In pursuing its role as an advocacy organisation for individual multicultural artists, MAV is constrained in its reach. One of the most common complaints about the organisation in the course of my research was the unsystematic way in which it chooses and promotes particular artists, favouring those with existing links to the organisation’s networks.

One telling example of the limits of the model of community-based arts practiced at both of the organisations is the issue of a physical space as the privileged site of cultural activity. FCAC has recently seen the completion of a large-scale building project, including the construction of a new performing arts space and gallery, as well as a number of other multi-use spaces. This is regarded as a significant achievement of the Centre, and will likely raise the profile of many of its events and exhibitions, as well as attract more high-profile artists to the organisation itself. Negotiations are also taking place between MAV and its key state-based funders to construct a dedicated performing arts venue for multicultural arts. Those lobbying for this venue at MAV regard it as a question of the legitimisation of multicultural arts. A performing arts venue in inner-city Melbourne would give the organisation a more credible base from which to promote multicultural arts, as well as raise the profile of their cultural activity. However, such a venue also raises potential problems for MAV. The organisation’s programs have historically evolved with a degree of flexibility and responsiveness to their constituents’

interests; if a physical venue becomes the sole focus of MAV's cultural activity it has the possibility of constraining this flexibility. Also, as I suggested, one of the organisation's current strengths is the way in which it reworks notions of the cultural 'mainstream'. A venue that is dedicated to 'multicultural arts' as a discrete cultural form has the potential to marginalise it by formalising its position *outside* of this mainstream.

Being aligned with a physical space also implicates both organisations in the spatialised discourse of the 'creative city', where inner, urban areas become privileged sites of 'creativity'. Focusing FCAC's cultural work on its new performance space and gallery has the potential effect of overlooking the sorts of cultural and creative activity that might be taking place in the further reaches of the western suburbs. Indeed, the creativity of the suburbs is an underacknowledged and underresearched phenomenon in both academic writing and in the context of institutionalised cultural work.¹ Significantly, these are the areas to which many local residents may be driven if predictions about the impending gentrification of Footscray and surrounding areas prove correct. More generally, it is the outer suburbs of Melbourne that are home to the most recent waves of migration and where cultural infrastructure is the least developed. Also, in the case of FCAC, their positioning within prevailing placemaking strategies have prioritised a concern with the *representation* of 'community' over other modes of engagement with the community.

I have tried to think about the issue of 'mainstreaming' in terms of the notion of cultural capital, and how it might be mobilised in these forms of cultural work, as a resource. However, this raises the question of what the most politically pertinent approach might be – that is, whether to pursue a more equitable redistribution of cultural capital in order to *include* marginal groups in existing regimes of value, or whether other strategies should be deployed to *contest* these regimes. The former seems the more pragmatic approach and certainly the one with the most immediate benefits for culturally 'excluded' groups.

¹ A current project by researchers at Queensland University of Technology entitled 'Creative Suburbia: A critical evaluation of the scope for creative cultural development in Australia's suburban and peri-urban communities' is one notable attempt to redress this gap.

However, my analysis of FCAC and MAV suggests that, in practice, the division between the two is not as marked as it might seem. There is a need to think beyond this binary between a complicit 'mainstreaming' process and a more politically incisive contestation of prevailing hierarchies. In many cases, the former actually facilitates the latter. Enabling 'marginalised' individuals to perform to 'mainstream' audiences, and to gain cultural recognition or financial recompense from this experience, potentially has the long-term effect of shifting 'mainstream' cultural tastes, as well as the terms on which practices of cultural exchange take place. Populations are not divided into groups that have cultural capital and those that do not – rather, as Bennett and Silva remind us, there is a continuum of cultural capital via which different groups derive value from processes of cultural participation and consumption (95). There is a need for greater acknowledgement of this interrelation between pragmatic and more overtly politicised strategies for community-based cultural activity. Policy goals such as 'social inclusion' or 'community empowerment' can be pursued by either or both of these strategies, but there is little recognition that this is the case.

It is worth thinking about this relationship between community-based cultural activity and regimes of cultural value in terms of the notion of aesthetics. 'Aesthetics', as I have defined and used the term in this thesis, has a dual character; as a potentially exclusionary minority practice, and one that is used in individual and group projects of positive self-affirmation. Of course, these two aspects of the aesthetic ethos are related. Ethical projects of self-styling can also be projects of distinction. It is this duality that led me, in Chapter Four, to critique the role of aestheticised notions of 'community', while in Chapters Five and Six, to speak more positively of the possibilities that aesthetic practices might hold for projects of self-realisation. Mulligan et al. comment on the implications of this for using art to achieve 'social inclusion':

[S]ocial inclusion begins to undermine itself. If something becomes so inclusive that the costs of admission are reduced to almost nothing, then it is likely that being included will not be valued that highly since the benefits of

being included ... are much lower than would be the case where a more exclusive orientation remains. (75)

This caution is worth bearing in mind. It describes the value that is associated with exclusionary forms of aesthetic activity and self-cultivation. While Mulligan et al. emphasise the kinds of advantage that such aesthetic practice might bring, there are also problems associated with this – particularly in the current policy climate. The value associated with these forms of exclusionary aesthetic practice is heightened because it is increasingly caught up with discourses of economic value. There is still a tendency amongst cultural organisations such as FCAC and MAV to regard the valorisation of ‘creativity’ that is currently prevalent in economic discourses as an opportunity, rather than to acknowledge how this might contribute to patterns of cultural and economic inclusion and exclusion. So the relationship between the cultural and the economic in this context is complicated, and my research has revealed some of the tensions – and the confluences – between the two.

This fraught dynamic between the cultural and the economic raises the question of the *sorts of subjects* that are produced in these programs. It is useful to refer here to Foucault’s later writing on governmentality. Foucault regards the figure of the ‘entrepreneur of the self’ as emblematic of neoliberal governmental formations (*Biopolitics* 226). This is a citizen-subject whose political legitimacy is derived from their positioning within an enterprise society. It involves, as Colin Gordon points out, maximising one’s human capital through the ‘managerialisation of personal identity and personal relations’ (44). This figure can be contrasted with Foucault’s notion of an ‘aesthetics of existence’ and the creative negotiation with existing norms that it implies (*Use*). Foucault is not clear, however, about the relationship between these two figures, although it might be suggested that the latter is put forward as a more autonomous, alternative mode of existence to the former. Thomas Osborne suggests that Foucault was ultimately concerned with the question of an ethical autonomy:

Foucault insists that the idea of an aesthetics of existence in the modern world ... functions as a kind of implicit, if fragmented and periodic, affront to the pastoral power over life. (*Structure* 86)

In this respect, an 'aesthetics of existence' relates to the stylisation of one's public or political life. It also means that while, for example, MAV's 'multicultural artist' could be broadly characterised as the ideal self-entrepreneurial subject of neoliberalism, this figure is actually an unstable one.

The neoliberal cultural economy is a variegated and dispersed formation. There is no coherent or totalising neoliberal 'reality' that such subjects are joining or perpetuating. The subjectification that takes place through the norms of the enterprise society is also tied up with other norms and modes of self-government, including the affirmative practices of self-styling I referred to in Chapter Six. As I suggested, these practices potentially complicate prevailing relations between the artist, their communities and notions of cultural difference. Any 'reproduction' of the terms of neoliberal government that such subjects might participate in is, in the long-term, an irregular process. The figure of the artist can still form the basis for a critical autonomy (although in Foucault's work the 'artist' is actually not a privileged site for such practices of self-styling). At any rate, these are issues that could be explored in a more sustained study of the ethical and professional trajectories of these artists. The processes of gentrification in which the cultural activity of FCAC is implicated is also an uneven process which might give rise to unforeseen forms of intercultural exchange that again, could only be understood via further study.

What does seem clear, however, is that the most tangible benefits of community-based arts work are modest and quotidian ones – primarily, the provision of the tools for self-realisation, and for positive relations with others. Any more communal benefits are still a result of the ways in which the arts and culture work on the self; for example, by imparting ethical capacities such as cosmopolitanism which might engender forms of openness to difference and lead to productive forms of interchange and communality. The economic benefits of art are also an important consideration but require a

longer-term investment in culture. Even then, it is difficult to speculate about how specifically this might take place for particular artists or groups.²

TOWARDS A MORE USEFUL LANGUAGE FOR COMMUNITY-BASED ARTS

In Chapter Two of this thesis I suggested that the discourse of ‘cultural citizenship’ might be useful for thinking about the productive potential of community-based arts. It provides some terms with which we can begin to relate cultural participation with cultural value, and explore the civic and political possibilities of these relations. However, the rhetoric of ‘cultural citizenship’ requires greater precision. To begin with, the figure of the ‘citizen’ is, as I have suggested, a politically ambivalent one that is implicated in neoliberal programs of ‘responsibilisation’.

The important emphasis in some of this literature is that cultural participation that is implicated in emerging cultural economies, should be produced and promoted on the participants’ *own terms*. That is, it highlights the continuing importance of the ownership of culture, and the question of who benefits from the symbolic and economic capital generated by these cultural forms. What is more complicated however, is the question of what it actually means for culture to be produced on one’s ‘own terms’. Again, as our example of MAV’s multicultural artists demonstrated, individual projects of aesthetic production might also entail relations of institutional ‘dependence’. These artists’ self-expression and self-realisation took place by way of their implication in MAV’s projects of government. The relationship between the artist and the organisation, in this case, enabled a positive, aestheticised self-styling – with potential economic benefits – but which takes place in conjunction with an instrumentalisation of their art.

There is also a need to think more carefully about what is meant by ‘culture as a resource’. In the context of discussions about cultural citizenship there are proposals for ‘cultural mapping’ projects which can account for the ‘stock’ of

² The economic value ascribed to Australian indigenous art, for example, and the uneven benefits that it brings to the artists, their patrons, and the communities from which these works emerge, demonstrate the complexity of these processes (Myers).

culture that is available to particular communities or groups (Mercer *Towards*). However, such proposals depend on an unproblematised understanding of both 'culture' and the relative value of different forms of cultural participation. As I argued in Chapter Four, much of this discussion of cultural participation is informed by a reinterpretation of Bourdieu's notion of cultural capital as a *communal* property with widespread benefits, which can be measured and distributed in a straightforward way – for example, by increasing the number of cultural facilities or 'creativity' of an area. There is certainly a tension between the potential for 'culture' to be used in processes of training and education that might increase one's cultural capital, and the unequal access to these cultural processes that exists in the first place. Thus more critical investigation of what it actually means to confer or redistribute cultural capital, in the context of community-based cultural work, needs to take place.

The problems I have pointed to throughout this thesis regarding the practice of community-based arts should be tempered with an acknowledgement of the continuing positive 'impacts' of this cultural work. I have pointed to some of these benefits in this concluding chapter. While these organisations might promote simplistic and consensual understandings of 'community' and 'culture', in doing so they also enable more indeterminate, and provisional relationships between individuals, their 'cultures' and 'communities' to take place.

What is lacking is an appropriate language for these organisations to talk about these processes and their effects. The problem with the instrumentalisation of community-based arts is not that it compromises the intrinsic value of such 'culture', but that the *language* of instrumentalism tends to overstate and overprescribe its 'outcomes'. Complaints from staff at both FCAC and MAV about the ways in which the bureaucratic language of arts funding circumscribes and constrains their cultural activity are common. Organisations have responded strategically; I described how MAV, for example, has found ways to both work with, and contest, the funding and policy norms that surround their work. Nonetheless, this sort of response has resulted in a situation where organisations are unable to argue for the work

they do in a precise way. The relationships that were formed between the many participants of FCAC's *The Go Show* were not part of the program's explicit aim; its objectives were more concerned with representations of Footscray and 'community'.

This means that the positive 'impacts' of these cultural programs are often *incidental to* their official objectives, or take place *despite* the policy frameworks from which they emerge. And this is not a strong basis for organisations to argue for their continuing relevance. By providing an account of the rationales that inform, and which are respecifying community-based arts, my thesis contributes to a more useful framework for thinking about the possibilities and limits of these cultural practices. It is only by sharpening our understanding of what it is that community-based arts practice does, that cultural organisations, artists and 'communities' can start arguing for what it *should* do.

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