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Art and counter-publics in Third Way cultural policy

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Abstract

Art and counter-publics in Third Way cultural policy

In the UK, over the past decade, the rhetoric of 'Third Way' governance informed cultural policy. The research sets out how the agenda for cultural policy converged with priorities for economic and social policy, in policies implemented by Arts Council England, in the commissioning of publicly funded visual art and within culture-led regeneration. Hence visual art production was further instrumentalized for the purposes of marketization and privatization. The practice-based research examines the problems, issues and contingencies for visual art production in this context.

Public sphere theory is used to examine ideas of publics and publicness in Third Way cultural policy context, in state cultural institutions and programming. Using Jürgen Habermas' conception of the public sphere, the research proposes that cultural policy functioned as 'steering media', as publicity for the state to produce social cohesion and affirmative conceptions of the social order, i.e. the management of publics. In contrast, public sphere theory is concerned with societal processes of opinion formation, of self-forming, deliberating and rival publics.

The research also applies theories of the public sphere to the theories of art and participation associated with socially-engaged art practice - theories that articulate art in relation to its publics. While socially-engaged artists have produced new modes of art practice that have shifted arts ontology, the research points to how Third Way cultural policy was quick to seize upon socially-engaged art for its own agenda.

Public sphere theory informed the strategies and tactics of the Freee art collective (Dave Beech, Andy Hewitt, Mel Jordan) in the production of publicly-funded artworks. The artworks were a means to test the hypothesis and to find evidence by intervening in Third Way cultural policy with alternative ideas. Freee's public spherian art proposes new modes of participative art to counter Third Way cultural policy - a 'counter-public art'.

For Mel and Frankie

Art and counter-publics in Third Way cultural policy

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Fig.1. *The Economic Function of Public Art is to Increase the Value of Private Property*, Sheffield, Commissioned by Public Art Forum, Freee, 2004.

Art and counter-publics in Third Way cultural policy

Introduction:

    i.   The problem and the research questions
    ii.   The methods and topics in the study
    iii.   The outcomes

i. The problem and the research questions

This practice-based research examines the relationship between the visual arts and state cultural policy, in particular, the commissioning of visual art to support the agenda of social and economic regeneration. It does so over the period when New Labour increased state funding for official culture in order to counter social exclusion in areas most affected by post-industrial decline.[1] This instrumental policy, set out a new Third Way agenda for the state funded art sector, increasing access and participation in art, and therefore to create 'new audiences' or a new 'public' for art. The practice of the Freee art collective (Dave Beech, Andy Hewitt, Mel Jordan) provides a new perspective on this context.[2] Freee's strategic artworks discussed in this study, seek to propose alternative conceptions of participative and socially-engaged art: to enact ideas of 'counter publics' as a rival process to the construction and representation of publics in official cultural production.

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[1] The context for the study is cultural policy in the UK between 1997 and 2010.

[2] The members of the Freee art collective Andrew Hewitt, Dave Beech and Mel Jordan, have collaborated to co-author artworks since 2004. Concepts for artworks are formed via discussion and the production and management of projects is shared equally between members. Hewitt has known Beech from his postgraduate studies at the RCA in the early 1990s. Jordan had studied at Leicester Polytechnic with Beech in mid 1980s. Hewitt and Jordan have worked collaboratively since 1998. In the PhD, Hewitt established a critical framework and research questions that he uses to reflect on particular art projects the members of Freee had co-authored. Therefore, as was stated in the RF6 form, the content of the thesis is Hewitt's and he is sole author of the written thesis and the subsequent research papers based on chapters from the thesis. At Chelsea School of Art and Design Beech was second supervisor to Hewitt along with Dr. Mary Anne Francis, both working in conjunction with Director of Studies (first supervisor) Professor Neil Cummings. Hewitt received tutorial support including feedback on written work from all members of the team, via email and within individual and group tutorial meetings. Beech's role was as a subject specialist in the supervisory team. Beech has a reputation as an expert in the field of the politics of art, the legacy of the avant-garde, and research into art and the public sphere. His practice is as an artist with Freee but also as an independent writer and curator.

Research questions

In this practice-based PhD research I address two questions:

1. Can public sphere theory enable new conceptions of publics in the visual art funded by UK cultural policy?

2. What artistic strategies can be developed to counter the instrumental conception of publics and publicness in Third Way cultural policy?

The research attempts to explore, what was meant by 'public' in the context of cultural policy, formulated by Arts Council England (ACE) and agencies that commissioned art, which were intent on expanding the audiences for art and culture. The aim was to understand the implications of this policy - the 'public goods' and the value to the public, they were said to produce.[3] In the study, I consider how cultural policy conceived of art's function and what the consequences were for art commissioned by the Third Way state. The thesis provides evidence, of how Third Way cultural policy aimed to produce visual art that conveyed positive perceptions of Third Way citizenship and society. The problem with this instrumental function for art is that, if art becomes a form of publicity and opinion formation for the state, it risks becoming a hegemonic art. Despite New Labour and now Lib-Con rhetoric that promotes art as a good within cultural policy, I remain sceptical of the claims made for the benefits that art is said to bring as there is no evidence to substantiate these claims.[4]

In the research, I examined how the function for publicly-funded visual art under New Labour became tied to social inclusion policy, and the 'recognition of difference' under an agenda for 'diversity'. Slavoj Zizek (2008: 119) describes this as the 'Liberal multiculturalist's basic ideological operation: the 'culturalization' of politics'.[5] Under

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[3] See for instance the arguments made for art as public goods in *The Realise Statement: Realise your right to art* (2005) Visual Arts and Galleries Associations. http://www.vaga.co.uk/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=74&Itemid=93 (last accessed 12.8.2011)

[4] The lack of evidence to support the claims made for state funded art is discussed in Belfiore, E. (2006), 'The Social Impacts of the Arts – Myth or Reality?' in Mirza, M., (2006) (ed.), *Culture Vultures: Is UK arts policy damaging the arts*, Policy Exchange, London: pp. 21–37.

[5] Zizek proposes that political differences – differences conditioned by political inequality or economic exploitation – are naturalized and neutralized into 'cultural' differences, that is into different 'ways of life' which are something given, something that cannot be overcome. He follows Walter Benjamin's response: *from the culturalization of politics to politicization of culture*.

New Labour, the roles given to arts policy became *convergent* with other policies, in order to tackle the deleterious effects of the global market economy on post-industrial cities in the UK: the social atomization of working class communities following the loss of traditional industries; unemployment and deprivation leading to dependency on state support; the re-training of workers for a diverse range of service and 'cultural industries'; the economic regeneration and redevelopment of former industrial areas.

Thirteen years of Third Way cultural policy changed the agenda and to some degree the practices of ACE funded institutions. It instigated the wider commissioning of visual art across the public, private and Third Sector and heralded the introduction of new Quangos that professionalized the provision of community art practices within culture-led regeneration. My research attempts to gauge this process at the point of implementation of policy – the commissioning and production of visual art. The practice-based study aims to demonstrate, that a practical engagement with making art in Third Way cultural policy is needed, in order to reveal the actual conditions for cultural production today. This is to ascertain the ideological impact on cultural production. The research 'tests' if the ideological agenda of state-funded culture can support modes of socially-engaged art that aims to ask questions of cultural policy, publics and the state.

In this thesis, I examine the politics and ideological purpose of state-funded cultural production. I argue, that what a democracy needs is more debate and disagreement, that the art that produces social cohesion has the effect of flattening or denying political, cultural or social difference. It is therefore hegemonic, in that it supports and maintains the status quo by preventing open democratic discussion. Hence, it becomes crucial to defend and re-articulate key concepts in progressive politics, such as public interest, social justice and democratic debate, and to demand the effective translation of these ideas, through the activity of state institutions, for example, those that produce visual culture.

Theories of the public sphere are concerned with communities of people engaged in deliberation on moral and political issues. As Jürgen Habermas (1996 [1992], pp. 360]

says, 'the public sphere can best be described as a network for communicating information and points of view (i.e. opinions expressing affirmative or negative attitudes); the streams of communication are, in the process, filtered and synthesized in such a way that they coalesce into bundles of topically specified public opinions.' Thus, public sphere discourse problematizes the mechanisms for collective decision-making - of publics engaged in producing opinion and debate and their effect on the institutional apparatus of the democratic state. As a discourse, it deals with the tensions that exist between dominant established publics with official public spheres, and those counter-publics on the margins of power who may not have equal representation in decision-making. For as art theorist, Peter Weibel (2005: 125) says, 'you cannot speak of democracy without speaking of the public sphere.'

The PhD study is practice-based and comprises of a series of artworks I produced with the Freee art collective. The members of the Freee art collective: Dave Beech; Mel Jordan; and I have worked together since 2004. The study investigates how Freee's art practice has been engaged in the context of Third Way cultural policy, examining conditions, processes and outcomes via our interventions in this field of cultural production.[6]

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[6] Freee share some common ground with socially engaged artists working in the context of Third Way cultural policy in the UK as exemplified by the case studies in Josephine Berry Slater's and Anthony Iles' *No Room to Move: Radical Art and the Regenerate City* (2009). The aim of the book is to bring together artists 'engaged critically with the exclusionary politics of urban regeneration', and includes artists Alberto Duman, Freee, Nils Norman, Laura Oldfield Ford and Roman Vasseur. Berry and Slater also refer to earlier art based interventions into urban development, in particular the *Docklands Community Poster Project* (1981-1991) by Peter Dunn and Loraine Leeson, in which the artists collaborated with Isle of Dogs residents to produce billboards with narratives that countered the agenda of the London Docklands Development Corporation. Freee takes a critical position on the economic and social function of art in society and its generation within cultural policy. It is the connection of art to social and cultural division, to class, social exclusion, gentrification, and emancipatory politics that is key. It is the hegemonic function of cultural policy that is the driver behind my interest in practice and this PhD research and hence its focus on how art projects can actively explore aspects of the social and the political. Freee's work is didactic not simply propositional and we take a clear unequivocal and oppositional position on art, politics and the politics of art through texts and artworks on arts social function. So this specificity then sets up some difference between Freee and other practices on the left as socially engaged art is a diverse field. Conceptions of socially engaged art vary and sometimes conflict as was evident in The Interrupt Symposia in 2003, a series of five events to ask the question "Where does socially engaged, participatory and education arts activity stand within current debates around contemporary arts practice?" (http://www.interrupt.org.uk/) These differences in approach have been central to my own enquiry on socially engaged art practice for example in the project *Futurology: The Black Country 2024* A project curated by Hewitt & Jordan at New Art Gallery, Walsall in 2004. The project set out participation, culture-

Following the tradition of the avant-garde, Freee seek to question art's social functions and its relationship to hegemony. Freee's work is informed by theories of contemporary art, for example, ideas of audience, participation and spectatorship. Freee are interested in ideas of collective agency. The authorship of the artwork is collective; Freee's ideas, strategies and artworks develop through a reflective analysis with works developed through discussion.[7] Freee's art practice operates via projects usually produced through commission, and with artworks manifest and published in exhibition or via print or the use of broadcast media.

What is significant about the project, from an intellectual perspective, is that it uses public sphere theory in relation to socially-engaged art practice in the context of Third Way cultural policy agenda. Public sphere theory has been discussed theoretically in

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led regeneration and social and cultural division as a critical framework. We commissioned artists Barby Asante, Dave Beech, Nick Crowe & Ian Rawlinson, Simon Poulter and Becky Shaw to develop projects in the context of state schools (see Futurology (2010) ISBN 0 946652 82). Other examples of difference might include Liberate Tate who can be seen as a single-issue pressure group centered on ecological activism and the ethical and economic relationship between capital and cultural institutions. Artists such as Cornford & Cross have produced work that extends ideas of site, the public realm and occasionally within the context of urban development, for example in the artwork *Camelot* (1996). What differentiates Freee is their aim to transform an audience into a discursive but also a dissenting public. Freee intend to occupy the public sphere as a site of contestation, social transformation and agency.

[7] Collectives, collaborations or groups are a means of identifying artists who work together with shared interests. The recent exhibition *Dorm*, curated by Seamus Kealy brought together 22 different artist collectives in an art fair style event at The Model, Sligo, Eire, 2010. They included Freee, Critical Art Ensemble, Fastwurms, WochenKlausur, General Idea and RAQS Media Collective. The exhibition draws attention to the various models of politicized art activity represented by the groups but also considers the question of difference and of the relationship between the individual and collective identity; ideas of community and sharing between individuals, fellowship as opposed to alienation, and allowing oneself to be transformed by the needs of others. Freee's collaboration since 2004 is based on a shared enquiry and co-production which we perceive as a social norm but one that still remains a minority mode of production in the artworld. We think the strength of the collective is based on what Dymtry Vilenski from Chto Delat? calls an 'ensemble of singularities', a formation described as a 'we' but in which the individual is not subsumed by the collective. Freee's strategies to form counter-hegemonic counter-publics is prefigured by the work of other artist collaborations that produce a politicized art practice, those that mix criticism of dominant culture with politically nuanced counter-positions, utopian idealism, transformatory desire and fearless speech. Examples of artistic work include the manifestos of avant-garde groups such as Dada and Tristan Tzara, the anti-institutional practices of the Guerrilla Art Action Group during the later 60s and early 70s, The Artist Placement Group (APG) that sought to reposition the artist into a wider social context, General Idea who adopted the techniques of popular media, the aggressively defiant and ribald group BANK in the 1990s, the social sculptures of Clegg and Guttman, to the combination of political theory, and art and social activism in the aforementioned Russian ensemble Chto Delat?

relation to visual art production, most notably by the curator Simon Sheikh (Sheikh 2005), however, this study is the first to utilize public sphere theory, in relation to the agenda, directives, mechanisms and outcomes of Third Way cultural policy. This approach produces a 'public-spherian art' that has distinct characteristics, tactics and modes of spectatorship that aim to encourage opinion formation. In the context of Third Way cultural policy, this interventionary approach signals a form of praxis that enables critical analysis and public scrutiny of the ideology of the state and of publicly-funded art.

ii.   The methods and topics in the study

In the practice-based research, I aim to identify and problematize, through practice, the key issues at the point where state cultural policy, visual art production and conceptions of democratic politics meet. The methods I use are literature reviews; practice-based research; and writing, in order to reflect upon my practice. The method differs in each chapter of the thesis: chapter one sets out the context as a review of literature, of policy and practices in the field; chapter two considers the theoretical aspects of the research by reviewing the literature on public sphere discourse; chapter three examines literature and practice related to socially-engaged art, together with reflection on an example of Freee's practice in the field; and chapter four examines two examples of Freee's approach to making artworks in the context of Third Way cultural policy that propose new and alternative forms of art practice.

Practice-based research

The study utilizes three examples of Freee's art practice:

- The several artworks developed within the art project *How to Be Hospitable* (2008) commissioned by Collective Gallery, Edinburgh. The artworks connect with aspects of arts function, within the social inclusion agenda of cultural policy, and to theories and models of participative art;

- The artwork *How to Talk to Public Art* (2006) commissioned by BBC and ACE. In our 'sloganeering' artworks, Freee utilizes dialogical tactics in a 'template' for a dissenting participation. We embody our political ideas, and

find techniques to publish and disseminate them in order to divide opinion and
encourage dissensus;

- The art project, *How to Talk to Buildings* (2006), commissioned by ARC, Hull. Freee proposes alternative and rival models of participation within workshops, which aim to encourage deliberating counter-publics.

In this practice-based research, the artworks provide a new way of thinking about the problems immanent in the field. The artworks were produced for specific commissioning contexts, developed within, the sometimes, unpredictable constraints and parameters of the field of publicly funded art. The art projects feature several propositional artworks that are informed by, and address, the topical and critical frameworks in the study.

The aim of the public spherian artwork is to open up the field of practice to closer examination and public scrutiny. It was my view that new evidence could be gained via an agonistic method of production that aimed to 'test' the agenda of policy, its interpretation and its implementation, i.e. the ideology of the institution. The process of producing the artworks, sets out to examine, intervene, question or undo the agenda of Third Way cultural policy; the artworks engage dialogically with the context in which they are produced by asking questions of cultural policy via their content and actions. Through an interventionary and agonistic process it was hoped that the limitations, negations and obscuration within the dominant modes of practice would be revealed. It is through this process, that insights may be gleaned; analysis can take place and issues become evident. The artworks enable an engagement with the actual conditions of production in the field, where policy is realized, i.e. what is commissioned and why? What modes of participation do commissioners want?

All the artworks were produced in the UK and provide an analysis of conditions specific to the UK. The artworks are not an attempt to set up fieldwork in order to test and draw quantitative results on which to base conclusions, such as in social science research, i.e., to evaluate the artworks in terms of their success in producing counter-publics. Nor are the artworks discussed as part of a reflexive process of studio-based 'making',

traditionally premised on formal experiments with media, in which one propositional artwork would inform the making of the next. The artworks test theories and extend them. Ideas become realized via practice as physical acts with actual consequences that can be considered in relation to theories. By applying public sphere theory to Third Way cultural policy, the artworks provide evidence of the dominant ideology within state-funded art.

Contextual frameworks

I consider four contextual frameworks in the study. Each of the contextual frameworks coincides with the chapters 1- 4. They are:

1- Third Way cultural policy
2- Theories of the public sphere
3- The theories and practice of socially-engaged art
4- The Freee art collective's conception of art as a counter-public sphere

1 Third Way cultural policy

Chapter one entitled *Privatizing the public: the rhetoric of public value in art in 'Third Way' cultural policy*, sets out the problems for the thesis and context for the art practice; namely, the convergence of cultural policy with Third Way politics as theorized by Anthony Giddens (1992). I discuss how the agenda for publicly-funded art was tied to: New Labour's communicative role for culture as a cultural public sphere; the Third Way economic model of public-private partnerships (PPP); and for social amelioration, whereby art is given instrumental objectives within social inclusion policy.

This literature review examines aspects of cultural policy as set out by critics in the field such as: Raymond Williams, Jonathon Vickery; Jim McGuigan; and Malcolm Miles. The rhetoric of Third Way cultural policy connects to social and political issues, and therefore, I use theoretical texts that analyse hegemonic culture, as described in the cultural critique of theorists such as: Pierre Bourdieu; Tony Bennett; Deborah Stevenson; Sharon Zukin; and Paola Merli. I review the field of state-funded art practice, of policy directives and documents on UK cultural policy to understand the institutional structures

of ACE. I also look at forms of curating and art practice produced over the period of this policy directive, to see the work of curators and artists working in this field, examining catalogues and exhibitions. I refer to practitioners in the field such as Simon Sheikh and Anthony Iles.

2 Theories of the public sphere

In chapter two, entitled *Consensus, dissensus and public spheres,* the main theoretical tools in the thesis are discussed. Theories of the public sphere are concerned with the effectiveness and openness of democratic political deliberation. Theories of the public sphere, articulate ways in which opinion formation between citizens in civil society can impact on centralized political decision-making in modern Western democracies. Jürgen Habermas and other critical social theorists such as Chantal Mouffe and Nancy Fraser are attempting to seek a practical conception of participation in political discourse that can contend with rationalizing forces of the state and the free market. For those on the Left, there is agreement that resistance is needed to counter the increasing autonomy of economic and administrative systems, as seen in neo-liberalism. In this chapter, I consider if this theory remains useful against a backdrop of neo-liberal gains that has led to the further instrumentalization of the institutions of the Liberal Democratic state.

In his first major text - *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere – An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society* ([1962] 1989), Jürgen Habermas presents his ideal 'bourgeois public sphere', that for him, is a blueprint for communicative action between actors within civil society. He describes the public sphere as a social intermediate space between the systemic forces of state and capital. This is the 'lifeworld' where political and social values are produced through communicative action, although always under pressure from the colonization by the system. For Habermas, rational debate in the bourgeois public sphere filters directly into the political government of the state. According to Habermas this historical 'public' was short lived. The term 'debased' public sphere, characterizes what he sees as the process of the professionalization of politics and the commercialization of the press and with it the loss of spaces for critical public deliberation.

Jürgen Habermas provides the concept of 'steering media', that is the inherent directing and co-ordinating mechanisms of state administration and the economy that are in the hands of experts and administrators and operate away from public scrutiny and possible democratic control. Therefore, his theory describes how systems of money and power cut into the 'lifeworld' (communication and association in the family, household culture etc.) and funnel agents into instrumental patterns of behaviour that also integrate us into the system.

Habermas is a controversial figure; he is a Marxist theorist with a pragmatic and empirical approach to social theory. He is criticized for his defence of aspects of the enlightenment project and for his theories of social order such as the bourgeois public sphere. However his contribution has been central to debates on social theories relating to publics and democracy.

Critics of Habermas' bourgeois public sphere, suggest that, far from being a space of equals, engaged in debate on matters of common interest, it was instead the foundation for an emergent class who were set to repress weaker plebian public spheres. Later theories, such as in Oskar Negt and Alexandar Kluge, Nancy Fraser and Michael Warner, provide ideas of counter-publics, comprised of marginal groups, seeking social justice, who make demands based on cultural or political alterity. Counter-publics, transform the public sphere from a place of talk to one of unrest, violence and social change. This multiplication of public spheres suggests that there are official and powerful public spheres and a host of rival counter-publics in existence.

3 The theories and practice of socially-engaged art

Chapter three, entitled *Public art against the public: state funded art, participation and socially engaged art*, aims to provide some evidence of how concepts of social art practice have become fused with Third Way cultural policy. The study covers a period that saw an increase in art activity by practitioners, theorists and by the state that looked to engage audiences, coined as 'the social turn in art' by Claire Bishop (2006). The

chapter analyses current debates on theories of art, in which art produces social relations between viewers. The positions I discuss include: the convivial micro-utopias in Nicolas Bourriaud's Relational Aesthetics; Grant Kester's ethics of participation; Claire Bishop's agonistic model of participation; and the more recent dissensual model proposed by Kim Charnley.

In the thesis I discuss what happened when theories of social art practice met Third Way cultural policy. I examine what were the aims of the state in utilizing culture and why this should be a matter of concern. The practice-based research examines how Third Way cultural policy mediates social art practice; how curators and commissioners looked for art practice to meet the agenda of policy directives; how convivial forms of social art practice can be preferred to art practice that asks questions; therefore how art institutions can become unpromising arenas for open, public debate.

I discuss the weaknesses in those theories in order to arrive at another conception of participation in art. A conception proposed by Freee, which uses public spherian ideas of participative publics, that I claim, produce 'stronger' theory and practice for social art in the context of Third Way cultural production.

4 Freee art collective and conceptions of art as a counter-public sphere
In chapter four, *Toward a counter-hegemonic art*, I discuss Freee's propositional artworks, and Freee's tactics, that propose ideas of 'counter public spheres' in the context of Third Way cultural policy.

In the chapter, I discuss two questions:
What ideas or strategies influenced by theories of the public sphere do Freee's artworks bring to the context of Third Way cultural policy?
In what ways do Freee's artworks contribute to discourse on contemporary theories and practice in social art?

The artworks are used in the research as a process of generating ideas in relation to the thesis frameworks. In chapter four, I analyse what Freee's artworks *do* and how they do it, within the critical framework I have set, i.e. what makes them public spherian. It is this combination of practice and theory in Freee's art practice, that I believe, provides new perspectives on contemporary forms of cultural production in context of state-funded cultural policy.

Documentation of Freee's artworks:

Visual evidence of the practice-based research is provided in the form of documentation of the artworks discussed in chapters three and four. Additional examples of Freee's artworks are included as illustrations in the thesis in relation to the issues and topics in chapters one and two. They are further examples of artworks produced by Freee, within and in response to, the contexts of Third Way commissioning and are selected from Freee's wider body of projects over the period 2004-2010.

iii.　　**The outcomes:**

The research will examine recent developments in cultural policy and trends in political governance, in the UK under New Labour, against the backdrop of the rise of neo-liberalism. The research will examine how cultural policy converged with the agenda of Third Way social inclusion policy. The research then attempts to identify how Third Way cultural policy, its rhetoric and the subsequent implementation of policy through cultural institutions constructed ideas of the public and of publicness.

Evidence produced by the research as an outcome

Freee's artworks are informed by public sphere theory and are applied to the context of Third Way cultural policy. In doing so, they provide some evidence of the dominant ideology within state-funded art; that to meet the agenda of social inclusion policy, art commissioners prefer convivial and affirmative modes of social art practice rather than those that ask questions or are critical of policy.

A public spherian critique of Third Way cultural policy as an outcome

From the practice-based research, informed by public sphere theory, I will propose a critique of Third Way cultural policy. I will claim that art produced via Third Way cultural policy has economic and social aims, that it functions as a means of opinion formation, carrying dominant ideology, constructing conceptions of publics and publicness, via state communication systems. Using Habermasian terms, I claim that cultural policy is a 'steering media' that further debases the public sphere. Cultural policy, and the art that it produces, acts to colonize, for instrumental purposes, the lifeworld of citizens and to funnel their behaviour. I will discuss how instrumental cultural policy is the top-down administration of publics, through the management of public space and the public realm, but that it does not facilitate deliberative public spheres.

Freee's public spherian art practice as a theory of socially engaged art
In this practice-based research, art practice by Freee i.e., the strategies and tactics for making artworks, is informed by aspects of public sphere theory. The artworks demonstrate a new paradigm in contemporary social art practice – a public spherian art.

Freee's public spherian art practice will set out new characteristics and agenda for art in engaging publics as participants in opinion formation and in political deliberation. This conception of participative art differs from the established theories of socially engaged art such as those from Bourriaud, Bishop, and Kester. In the thesis I discuss the limits and weaknesses of these theories. The research points to how those theories of social art can be co-opted, de-politicized or instrumentalized within Third Way cultural policy. Affirmative conceptions of social art mediated through Third Way social inclusion policy or liberal art institutions have a tendency to flatten difference and remain unpromising arenas for the political. I will propose how Freee's conception provides stronger forms of participative art that better contend with contemporary hegemonic conditions in state-funded cultural production. Freee's art practice suggests new ways to counter the instrumental agenda of Third Way cultural policy and its conception of publics.

Fig. 2. *The Function of Public Art for Regeneration is to Sex Up the Control of the Under-class*, Homerton High Street, Hackney, London, August 2005. 'For Real Estate: Art in a Changing City', curated by B+B, as part of 'London in Six Easy Steps', Institute of Contemporary Art, London. Freee, 2005.

Chapter 1: Privatizing the public: the rhetoric of public value in art in 'Third Way' cultural policy

1.1 Introduction

Under New Labour, novel ideas were developed about the social value and function of visual art in cultural policy.[8] Publicly funded art and culture was presented as having universal benefit to all and having important functions within a modern society.[9] John Holden (2008: 29) says 'the existence of a successful and creative visual culture is a public good, just as much as are clean air, domestic security, public health and universal education. All these goods can be subjected to economic calculation, but we do not rely on the market to produce them.' Despite the problems of instrumentalization, Holden believes that art and culture, funded by the state, can help 'release the talents and increase the capital of the whole of society'.

'Public goods' are connected to governance and political decision-making with the state supporting what it sees as public values or public interest via policy for collective, ethical

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8 The period in question is that of the New Labour Government between 1997–2010.

9 The context for the PhD study is the publicly funded art sector, first established as the Arts Council in 1945 and run on an 'arms length' principle whereby the state provides funding but does not organize the running of the body.

notions of the 'good', usually to counterbalance public and private interests between the state, citizens and business. However, what constitutes a public good or is perceived as universal is an ideological matter; some public goods might be beneficial to one social group but detrimental to another, and this is perhaps the case with state sanctioned art and culture.

Under New Labour, the roles given to cultural policy became convergent with other policies in order to tackle serious deprivation within post-industrial cities. Within the new cultural settlement, visual art was dominated, by two emerging economic structures namely culture-led regeneration and biennale style art fairs, thus, art production became a highly visible constituent of the enlarged culture industry of a global economy. Art was funded to higher levels than ever before but at a cost: art was instrumentalized as an agent for political, social and cultural complicity.[10] As a consequence, affirmative claims were made for the visual arts as they were said to provide the 'power to change people's live and communities', to create 'civic pride' and build 'vibrant communities' [11], or for example, they were said to be valuable in:

> Building people's capacity for understanding the world around them
> Enriching people's experience of life and offering an important emotional connection
> Creating links between different communities – one example of many wider benefits.
> *Great Art for Everyone 2008-11*, ACE

In this chapter I characterize New Labour cultural policy as three mutually supporting and persuasive rhetoric's that came out of the Department of Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS), Arts Council England (ACE) and by advocates of art, which purported the benefit of art and culture for the whole of society. The three rhetorics are: firstly, the

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[10] The chief patron for the visual arts in the UK, ACE was earmarked £1.6 billion for the art 2008-2011, (figures from *Great Art for Everyone*, ACE http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/about us/artspolicies.php last accessed 2.3.2010) Funding is not to simply produce more artworks, the provision is also for capital projects such as new buildings and for staffing and administration costs for the many Quangos and agencies ACE funds.
[11] http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/. (last accessed 12.12.09)

rhetoric of art as discursive cultural democracy; secondly, art as an economic driver; and thirdly, art as enabling social amelioration.[12]

The rhetoric of art as a cultural democracy proposed how publicly funded art institutions and the art they mediate could provide a space as a public sphere for debate on contemporary social matters, those topics and issues that would contribute to the revitalization of civil society. The rhetoric of art as an economic driver encouraged the use of art within urban regeneration, in visual 'place-making' and in art biennials, thereby contributing to the re-branding of the post-industrial city for inward investment and as a tourist destination, for example, in the case of Liverpool. The rhetoric of art as social amelioration as a policy ambition, set out to provide opportunities for 'economically marginalized' citizens, to participate in art and culture and thus, according to the rhetoric, to be 'inspired' and therefore to 'aspire' to better lives.

This rhetoric functioned to support the agenda of the administrative state that *cannot* be deemed as a public good or in the public interest. I claim the rhetoric of Third Way cultural policy is a distortion of the public sphere; art functioned to produce an impression of positive social change while state policy was actually driving further privatization of the state sector, diminishing the transparency of governance, and exacerbating social division. In effect, the three rhetorics of Third Way cultural policy combined to bolster the diminishment of the public sphere. As such, the putatively positive functions imagined for art by the Third Way ultimately had negative consequences for democracy. In short: ideas of access to art as a force for change in society, offered a very limited scope to alter socio-economic divisions; top-down state art institutions and agencies provided a weak platform as a public sphere; art functioned as part of a property-led and consumption-orientated urban development; and lastly, despite its claims of access, art under the Third Way, remained primarily of benefit to an elite

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[12] In my characterization of the agenda of Third Way cultural policy I attempt to typify what the issues and processes are that have emerged. I refer to a number of critics and theorists in the UK and abroad who work across art, cultural policy, urban and cultural geography and sociology, as well as from personal experience working in the field from 1998 to the present day. However, my critique attempts to further this discourse by combining a detailed examination of arts policy and art practice and its relationship to urban, social and cultural spheres. These topics are usually not discussed in tandem.

and therefore preserved both cultural and social division.

1.1 Art, cultural policy and the Third Way

Under New Labour, state cultural policy used a new rhetoric to describe the potential of art for social, economic and democratic change, and this underlined the new *values* of cultural policy to Third Way society. In addition to the argument that culture produces economic benefits, as had been the rhetoric under the previous Tory administration (Wu 2002: 134), in Third Way governance, it was also believed that culture could contribute to making Britain a fairer, modern and more cohesive society with access, or social inclusion as it was now known, linked to cultural policy. The policy of ACE spelt this out clearly as late as 2008:

> We will support the development of visual arts in order to achieve our ambition
> of putting the arts at the heart of national life and people at the heart of the arts.
> We'd like to see broader recognition of the ways in which visual artists contribute
> to sustainable communities particularly in the areas of education, health and
> criminal justice where access to high quality visual art and architecture can make
> a demonstrable difference. (ACE 2008)

In 1997, New Labour set in motion a new phase of instrumental policy for art and culture, further expanding the idea of 'access', when Tony Blair stated that culture was to be available to 'the many not the few' (Labour Party 1997).[13] In post-Fordist Britain, culture and the 'cultural industries' were perceived as providing a means to economically regenerate the nation via the signs and symbols of 'cultural capitalism' (see Rifkin 2000). As Griffiths points out, 'In the UK the cultural sphere has been gaining a more central role in public policy over the last 10 –15 years' (Griffiths 2004: 415). Culture was to provide new 'public goods', justifying state 'investment'. The DCMS was established by the first Culture Secretary Chris Smith to promote the interests and potential of the

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[13] The problem of what to do with 'dominant culture' has been a difficult issue for the Labour Party. Their earlier concept for arts and cultural policy was first known as 'extension', which became 'access' and known more lately as 'inclusion'. In forming the Arts Council for Great Britain in 1946, the Labour government aimed to promote access to cultural institutions in order to bridge what they saw as a gap between class interests, as such these institutions were, as Raymond Williams understood, functioning socially for 'the cultural interests of an older upper middle and middle class'.

'creative industries', a wide field of artistic, cultural and technological practices including an instrumentalized conception of fine art. This was an expanded idea of culture, which was market-orientated, described by Murdock (Murdock 2003: 19) as a 'shift in public policy to marketization, privatization and liberalization', and with it the function of culture for government.

But how had culture become a significant policy theme? Culture, specifically the 'cultural industries' was a buzzword, in the new terminology of the early 1990s; redolent of economic diversification, the shift from traditional industries to a mix of new commercial industries, including leisure, retail and service industries, as well as design and technology. Cultural workers were especially praised as cutting edge citizens, as theorized by 'urbanist' Richard Florida (2002) in 'The Creative Class'; despite many such workers enduring precarious and low paid forms of employment. Cities were no longer industrial but were defined as post-industrial; large urban centres like London became 'global' cities within a new 'weightless economy' (Giddens 1998).

These were themes that became central to the policy of Third Way political governance. Social theorist and New Labour advisor, Anthony Giddens was an architect of the Third Way, a new social democratic politics that, he claimed, was a response to the dilemmas facing Western post-industrial society and, more pragmatically, an issue that would bring Labour to power. Third Way politics was influenced by neo-liberalism, but adapted to the UK context of welfare state reforms. For New Labour, the Third Way was an ideological leap to the right, undermining the left's core social and political values, i.e., the traditional Labour Party goal of social justice via intervention by the state. In Third Way political theory, social justice is replaced by ideas of social inclusion.[14] The concept of Third Way citizenship then becomes framed in terms of the 'individual' in society and how effectively one participates in the economic system.[15] The state then aims to produce

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[14] Social inclusion policy as an affirmative action to counter social exclusion, i.e., the economic marginalization of citizens in economically developed countries such as those considered to be without full citizenship due to unemployment, mental health or race. http://www. socialinclusion.org.uk

[15] Privatization was to continue under New Labour; the market would be regulated on behalf of the citizen consumer by a government seeking economic growth but with social equality. New Labour maintained the system of public-private partnerships (PPP) set up under the conservative administration (Hall et al 1999)

the conditions for a meritocracy in which all citizens have an opportunity to prosper.

Advocates of the arts and 'creative' practice within urban regeneration, such as Charles Landry and Franco Bianchini (1995), promoted the notion of an innovative and dynamic creative class who were reshaping the old industrial cities into the 'creative city'.[16] Miles and Paddison claimed that 'the idea that culture can be employed as a driver for urban economic growth has become part of the new orthodoxy by which cities seek to enhance their competitive position' (Miles and Paddison 2005: 833). Therefore culture-led regeneration is concerned with urban planning and the visual re-branding of cities, and includes the development of new art galleries, museums, cultural visitors' centres and the programming of arts festivals and biennales. Spectacular cultural festivals are given themes that tie social issues together with cultural production, thereby cultural projects are routinely defended in terms of their positive local social impact, such as 'more jobs, a stronger economy and a better place to live.'[17] Beatriz Garcia, more specifically, describes how culture and the visual arts have become a component of this process when she says:

> The distinctive characteristics of a culture-led regeneration process, emerges out
> of the fact that it is driven by cultural activity, often with a high public profile.
> Common examples are major cultural events or iconic cultural infrastructures. But
> other examples could include a comprehensive urban cultural strategy or cultural
> planning approach. The main values attached to a regeneration process that is
> driven by cultural activity is the emphasis placed on identity issues, as well as

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although New Labour placed an emphasis now on social rather than economic frameworks delivered through Regional Development Agencies (RDA). In their early phase of government, New Labour maintained the provision of PPPs as a pragmatic way to deliver change through economic growth and a target to improve skills and generate jobs. However the RDAs remained as top-down, centralized structures that were not accountable to the public or public bodies, only to ministers.

[16] The work of Landry and other advocates came out of new ideas of urban planning. A shift came in policy in 1999 with the Urban Task Force led by Richard Rogers and the new Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE). These new bodies brought with them new thinking in social and economic considerations, to affect the quality of urban design, i.e. visioning, or looking 25 years ahead and imagining how to design the ideal city. A 'holistic approach' was called for, as proposed by Landry's group Comedia in the early 1990s, as one that included a sociological consideration of place and a design process that responded to the needs of residents. In Government the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister was central to these initiatives forming the Construction Task Force and the Urban Task Force (UTF). The UTF produced the report *Towards a Strong Urban Renaissance* (2005).

[17] Liverpool 08 www.liverpool08.com (last accessed 4.11.2009)

creative developments, often linked to artistic creation. (Garcia 2007)

Therefore, within state policy, publicly funded art was set to feature strongly as a tool for the priorities of governance, most evident within schemes for the visual improvement to urban areas, using art and art's role within social inclusion policy in gallery education and civic renewal.

1.2 The rhetoric of art as cultural democracy

Through the activities of artists and arts institutions, art is said to empower people, 'create trust and respect', to revitalize civil society and to produce discursive public spheres through the ideas about society it produces (Holden 2006: 17). The decline in participation in civil society, seen as a diminished relationship or dialogue between ordinary citizens and professional politicians and their agencies, began to concern political leaders in the 1990s. There was never any question of building full participatory democracy, so the decline of civil society became a focus for managerial solutions. Cue the civic renewal agenda, and the introduction of citizenship studies into the school curriculum as a compulsory subject (Blunkett 2003).

It was assumed within policy-making contexts that civic identity could be created out of a fractured social order and culturally heterogeneous public and that arts would be a catalyst in this process. Reformers such as 'cultural broker' Peter Jenkinson believed that the opening up of culture to a wider audience is egalitarian in nature. According to his call for a 'right to art' in 'The REALISE Statement' for the Visual Arts and Galleries Association (VAGA 2006), the visual arts are a 'common wealth' yet they are 'detached' from many people. He proposes a modern and progressive conception of citizenship with participation and access to art and visual culture at its core.

ACE set out to increase the audience or 'access' to the arts to help tackle social exclusion. A new wave of museums and art centres were commissioned as part of urban regeneration programmes, examples include, The New Art Gallery Walsall and The Baltic Centre for Contemporary Arts in Gateshead. Charles Leadbeater and Kate Oakley (1999:17) heralded them as 'centres for social change' in 'promoting social cohesion and

a sense of belonging'. They claimed 'art, culture and sport create meeting places for people in an increasingly diversified, fragmented and unequal society', meeting places that once were 'provided by work, religion or trade unions'. For Leadbeater and Oakley, leisure and culture held the potential as new convivial public spheres, despite 'official' culture being the traditional social division between the leisured elite and a working mass.

During this period, national museums and independent galleries received an increase in funding and large cultural projects were funded by proceeds from the National Lottery, including The Millennium Dome in London.[18] New Labour policies included free entry to the leading museums and galleries in the UK, with a target to increase the numbers of children visiting to 7 million by 2006, and to target adult visitors from the socio-economic group C2DE by 8 per cent in the same time frame.[19]

Third Way policy was influenced by a recurrent interest in ideas of civil society - civic liberalism perceives public spaces as locations in which civic culture can be renewed; therefore improvement to the urban environment (which can include the use of art projects) offers a 'public good'. According to Deborah Stevenson, by rebuilding public spaces, Third Way desires to:

> rebuild the public sphere; by 'animating' and regenerating public space, where civic culture takes place, and where the excluded can reconnect to the public sphere. Public spaces, [including within art galleries] are imagined as the 'new agora', therefore, culture-led regeneration connects ideas of democracy and citizenship; supporting local culture it is imagined, renews the public realm. (Stevenson 2003: 107)

It was argued (Worpole 1992) that the reconstruction of the city centre through culture-led regeneration was valuable in the reconstruction of local identity, which was

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18 Visitors centres and attractions with a pedagogic function flourished during this period, although in some cases they were shortlived. In South Yorkshire, two flagship projects, The Centre for Popular Music in Sheffield and the Earth Centre, an environmental project on the site of a former colliery at Denaby Main, both folded soon after opening citing dwindling visitor numbers especially school parties, which had been a target group.

19 The National Readership Survey (NRS), a market research group developing social grades of demographic classification in the UK. C2 is skilled working class, D is working class: semi and unskilled, E is those at the lowest levels of subsistence.

considered crucial to an empowering experience of urbanism. Landry describes how city centres 'represent places for commonality where some form of common identity and spirit or place can be created – counteracting the dangers of spatial segregation by social class – and where people of different ages, social classes, ethnic and racial groups, can mix and mingle in informal and unplanned ways.' He suggests this aspect of the public realm can help develop creativity in citizens because it allows people to go 'beyond their own circle of family, professional and social relations' (Landry 2000: 120).

The policy of expanding provision and access to state-funded culture led to the wider application of visual art in new contexts. Strategies to build new audiences and to increase access to art and culture, included the work of new community arts agencies, developed to target new audiences (a euphemism for the working class or the under-class).[20] The new visual art commissioning agencies - either Quangos, charities or private companies that deliver on cultural policy initiatives - now stipulated that the artist must include some aspect of public participation, in order that they engage and be actively involved in specified communities.[21] As David Butler observed, 'the agenda underpinning current government strategies for change has shifted from an economic one to a social one …. The underlying agenda is primarily art as a tool' (Butler 2003: 81). Therefore,

> Developers to park wardens are turning to the arts for new ideas, regeneration, problem solving and community bridge building. The employment of artists in these (traditionally non-cultural) fields, where there are other non-art issues and agendas at stake, is becoming the norm. (Butler 2003: 83)

In New Labour cultural policy, artists were perceived as service providers, contracted to work within institutional parameters regulated by policy directives.

1.2.1   Constructing civic identities and managing public opinion

Jonathan Vickery argues that this form of culture-led regeneration functions to *construct*

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[20] For example the programmes developed by organizations such as The Public in West Bromwich, Knowle West Media Centre in Bristol or METAL in Southend-on-Sea.

[21] Quasi-Autonomous Non/National Government Organisation – a term popular in the 1970s and 1980s to describe executive agencies funded by central government but operating at one remove from direct democratic accountability, such as ACE and the BBC.

civic identities, which is a top-down idea of the city and its people, produced as a form of public relations. 'Urban regeneration projects often attempt to engage in a process of civic identity - reconstruction through city - branding, where slogans are constructed on what it is a place "stands for" and thus what needs to be articulated' (Vickery 2007: 73). Vickery talks about power in culture-led regeneration, when he states that 'there remains a strong case to be argued that the "culture-led" component of regeneration maintains an unwitting ideological function in de-politicizing (obviating the rationale for political opposition) the private sector colonization of public cultural terrain' (Vickery 2007: 25).

One such problem area is the planning process and the deliberation between planners and communities, described by Pattie et al. as 'the management of public opinion rather than a deliberative dialogue between the decision-makers and the public. Elites are seeking legitimation for their initiatives rather than a dialogue about what should or should not be done in the future' (Pattie et al. 2004: 278).

Why should the use of the visual arts in this process be considered a problem? If the function of art and cultural policy is ideologically driven in order to 'funnel' citizens to behave as the state wishes then there is good reason to be concerned. Pierre Bourdieu ([1979] 1984) reminds us that cultural pursuits are a form of ritualized pleasure and so it would be naive to tackle social reform premised on the professional interests, world view, taste and lifestyle of elite art advocates. James Heartfield (2006) says you cannot fix social problems, divisions and stratification using cultural policy. Advocates of art might therefore be in danger of over-stretching the social function of what is a 'dominant culture' (Zukin 1995: 1). Vickery points to a conception of art and culture as being universal, a general good or at least benign in culture-led regeneration. As a result it can be used quite cynically to promote what might be contentious urban development in order to defuse or negate criticism. In his analysis, Miles suggests that one of the reasons for the growth of culture-led regeneration is that 'the arts are cheaper and arts projects are easier to understand than deeper enquiry into social problems'. (Miles 2005: 895)

It is possible, then, to typify the main issues in this rhetoric of art as a cultural democracy.

The cultural sector was expanded and saw increased funding for the building of new museums and the spread of art-related commissioning, forming partnerships with public, private and third sector stakeholders in order to reach into new social contexts and find new audiences, in particular the 'economically marginalized'.

Art was made available to all and imagined, like ideas of 'creativity', as a universal or at least a benign field of practice, without political or ideological difference or interests. High art or minority culture is not a universal language but one that is socially constructed and is learnt through understanding its codes, ideologies and histories.

The visual arts were imagined to provide agency in renewing civil society and empowering citizens. However, art's agency is managed and directed by professionals and civic identities are constructed in line with Third Way conceptions of citizenship. Art may produce debate, discussion and sometimes rancor; but the communicative potential of art in culture-led regeneration is limited as it is highly managed and top-down. The art that Third Way funds is not designed to foster democratic opinion formation, debate or for that matter disagreement. The arts then become a vehicle for public relations between the state and citizens.

1.3 The rhetoric of art as an economic driver in culture-led regeneration

'Public art' or art that is sited in the public realm is said to provide economic value by branding urban space or by aiding 'place-making'. Such an example is Mark Wallinger's proposal for a giant white horse, commissioned by Ebbsfleet Project Limited, a company funded by Eurostar, Land Securities and London and Continental Railways (LCR) to stand near Ebbsfleet. Also, as part of the planning process, artists are commonly engaged in advocating and promoting change with 'communities', for example Roman Vasseur's role as lead artist in Harlow. In biennales and city art festivals such as in Liverpool Capital of Culture 2008, art and cultural projects are believed to function to improve the profile of the city, and to encourage inward investment, cultural tourism and to effect the aspirations of residents. The machinery of cultural policy has then become central to economic policy initiatives by the neo-liberal state to advance corporate interests in

period of industrial decline and associated urban depravation.

The attraction of cultural policy for the state and local authorities was that it offered a new form of economic investment that contributed to the reversal of the decline of post-industrial cities such as Liverpool, Birmingham and Newcastle. Policy aimed to engender the redevelopment of former industrial sites, the change of use of former industrial buildings, and the reclaiming of the city centre, of docks, canals and large tracts of land previously occupied by industry. Landry et al. had provided a new rhetoric influenced by ideas of 'new urbanism', i.e., 'good' design can promote 'good' communities, comprising diversity and mixed development for compact walk-able cities (Talen 1999: 36). It spelt the return of the middle class to inner city living from the suburbs.

McCarthy claims that culture-led regeneration, as a form of urban economic planning, had 'become widespread throughout many cities in Europe, encouraged by European Union funding' (McCarthy 2002: 2). Glasgow in the UK and Bilbao in Spain were heralded as success stories and other industrial cities followed the planning concept, including Liverpool, Barcelona, Rotterdam, Dublin and Hamburg.[22] This form of regeneration is evident in the designation of The European City of Culture, which has established the concept of arts and culture as providing 'holistic' outcomes, bringing economic diversification and visually enhancing areas suffering from economic decline.[23] The Capital of Culture competition proposes a clear link between the arts, and the social and economic regeneration of post-industrial cities; using the case of Glasgow, Capital of Culture in 1990, former Culture Secretary Chris Smith described how the city has experienced 'substantial economic and social benefits and made excellent use of arts and

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[22] The building of the Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao is often cited as a good example of cultural-led regeneration in a post-industrial city, referred to, as the 'Guggenheim effect'. However, as Lorenzo Vicario and P. Manuel Martinez Monje (2003) point out, this area of Bilbao was already an exclusive middle class neighbourhood, and they suggest, that this process of economic development by the city council, simply 'accentuates existing social and spatial inequalities'.

[23] In the UK the competitive tendering process in 2002 for the Capital of Culture 2008 saw twelve cities vie for the title: Birmingham, Cardiff, Bristol, Liverpool, Belfast, Oxford, Brighton, Canterbury, Norwich, Bradford, Newcastle, and Inverness. Each city devised a strategic policy for culture-led regeneration as I noted in an art project that followed this event (Hewitt & Jordan 2004). This competition helped to establish the language of culture-led regeneration as a norm within the planning process in the UK, each city branded its identity via its provision of cultural facilities for visitors and residents alike.

culture to strengthen and communicate its regeneration' (DCMS 2001b).

1.3.1 The work of publicly funded artists

Public art has become a significant industry, with numerous specialist commissioning agencies and consultants working on behalf of clients to commission artists and to write public art or cultural strategies in what is a highly regulated process.[24] Vickery (2007: 25) describes 'the emergence of a sector of art and cultural consultancies', for example, new commissioners of art include Groundwork UK, Sustrans, and British Waterways. Funding is via local authority patronage, Percent for Art schemes, 106 planning-gain money, RDA projects or private developers.[25]

Visual and aesthetic public artworks provide symbolic value, adding visual or didactic cultural values and controversies that highlight change in post-industrial sites. The 'artist as part of the planning team' is now firmly established. Artists are 'experts', employed in the styling of contemporary urban environments, most evident within the redesign of city pedestrian areas, and as 'landmarks' for place-making in the city environment. Contexts for commissioning include redevelopment schemes, new public buildings, private developments, and large-scale planning projects such as the Thames Gateway.

Artists also visibly occupy the new cultural quarters, within subsidized purpose-built studios and publicly funded galleries. Within city branding, artists feature as a 'cool' group, marketed as entrepreneurial and a visible and lively community. The artist is marked out as 'special' and presented as a scarce but valuable commodity.

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[24] Public art agencies act as specialist art intermediaries working between the artist and the planning and building teams, and working within the strict bureaucratic systems of regeneration. These groups have worked to professionalize the field, advocating arts in planning with public and corporate partners, and in developing codes of practice. Groups include Futurecity (www.futurecity.co.uk), Artpoint (www.artpointtrust.org.uk), Commissions East (www.commissionseast.org.uk), General Public Agency (www.generalpublicagency.org.uk), and Freeform which is one of a number of new genre arts consultancies specializing in urban arts (www.freeform.org.uk.)

[25] In urban development, '106' planning-gain policy stipulates that private developers must provide some funding toward collaborative projects with city councils for improvements to 'public' amenities. Typically this is used for enhancing green space or the production of visual artworks thought to improve the physical fabric of the city or that offer symbolic value, i.e., artworks with historical or heritage themes.

Third Way cultural policy encouraged artists to work in the public realm aided by a significant increase in funding and the opportunities for commissions. Artists have been active in finding new approaches to working in the public realm. Groups such as Muf and Public Works develop interdisciplinary methods to provide new models of practice in urban and rural contexts. Neo-conceptual artists also routinely work in projects in the public realm beyond the context of the 'white-cube', including artists such as Jeremy Deller, Mark Wallinger and Liam Gillick. These artists combine their work in the commercial gallery sector with projects in the publicly funded sector, either with art galleries or in publicly funded regeneration contexts. The public sector brings opportunities for large-scale works and equally large-scale budgets, and the current trend in artwork as landmarks delivers impact for development projects, both visually and as publicity for the project in the media.

At the same time there has been an enormous growth of theoretical and political interest in the public sphere by thinkers such as Chantal Mouffe, Simon Sheikh, Michael Warner and Mary Jane Jacob. Artists such as Andrea Fraser, Krzysztof Wodiczko, Jens Haaning and WochenKlausur occupy the public sphere *politically* as a site of contestation, social transformation and agency.

1.3.2 The spectacle of the consuming city
Culture-led regeneration functions as a form of public relations and publicity for cities. In an effort to revive their economic status, cities began to compete with other cities, for investment, for tourism and for key workers. Culture-led regeneration would provide 'image, amenity, liveability, visitability' for the new 'creative city'. Culture-led regeneration is therefore symbolic and often occurs in specific areas to maximize visual impact and is aimed at cultural visitors to a city. According to Stevenson, 'one of the most significant trends of the so-called postmodern turn in architecture and urban design has been the conceptualization of the landscape of the city as spectacle' (Stevenson 2003: 107).

Vickery claims that the signifying work of building public artworks is, in many ways, a

substitution for living communities who have vacated city centres (Vickery 2007: 74). Through cultural planning and urban zoning the city has become an entertainment and leisure complex, providing the visitor with spectacular precincts for consumption, the staging of art festivals, biennials and special events as leisure.[26] Physical improvements to the public realm have the purpose of attracting custom and investment so that public space, i.e., the square, city centre parks and urban design features such as pedestrian schemes, were to function as amenities to support economic consumption.

The boom in inner city development in the 1990s was developer-led and based on real estate speculation. The public benefit of '106' planning gain policy has not been guaranteed or consistent. The increase in the commissioning of visual art and design projects in the public realm was in part due to planning legislation set out within urban renewal, such as in 106 policy. Developers have been quick to negotiate improvements that are of benefit to their development and add value to their commercial project, for example using 106 monies to produce decorative, themed fascias to their buildings, for decorative security gates or railings or for sculptural objects that occupy lobby or courtyard areas that have no public access (Hewitt and Jordan 2004). Whilst there are examples in which public benefit has been successfully secured via 106, in some cases it would seem that either developers are too smart for planning officers, or simply that planning regulations are not adhered to by local authorities.

Inner city development has been criticized for creating new spatial and social segregation. Market driven urban development target specific wealthy social groups at the cost of mixed use development including housing for low wage earners, families and the elderly. The creative class, designers, media people, policymakers and ICT workers

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[26] Funding has been provided by the ACE for city-wide art festivals such as art biennials. Such events are collectively organized by RFOs, city council-funded art institutions and artist-run-spaces. The emphasis is on developing 'new audiences' with artworks and events developed in non-art venues and in the public realm, as well as in conventional gallery spaces. The cultural capital associated with high art provides those cities re-branding themselves with high profile, sophisticated, visual artworks that attract visitors and can provide a backdrop to the promotion of redevelopment areas. Funding for such projects can come from public good commissioning groups such as philanthropic charities Esmee Fairbairn, and The Wellcome Trust, and from commercial companies such as the Northern Rock Foundation (as was) and RDAs. Examples include the Liverpool Biennale, the Sheffield Contemporary Art Forum (SCAF), Public Art Leeds, and Arena Festival, Leicester.

have been quick to inhabit the regenerated inner city. This group, believed to drive the knowledge economy who form 'clusters' of human capital, are the beneficiaries of the new planning. It is after all, as Miles says, 'they who consume and produce the leisure, culture and arts in acts of cultural consumption, which extend beyond the visual and performing arts into design and architecture, new media, food and drink, fashion and modes of transport' (Miles 2005: 892).

Cultural development or gentrification of an area invariably forces out low-income residents. Gentrification is essentially about consumption. In his book *The New Urban Frontier*, Neil Smith writes:

> …. Gentrification as a structural product of the land and housing markets. Capital flows where the rate of return is highest, and the movement of capital to the suburbs, along with the continual de-valorization of inner city capital eventually produces the rent gap. When this gap grows sufficiently large, rehabilitation (or for that matter, redevelopment) can begin to challenge the rates of return elsewhere, and capital flows back in. Gentrification is a back to the city movement all right, but a back to the city movement of capital rather than people.

(Smith 1996: 70)

As such, gentrification is a process of middle-class colonization in which professional groups take over inner-city areas and produce communities based on their needs and ideals. Tim Butler refers to how the middle class in London have attempted to adapt to neo-liberalism and the longer working hours it brings by moving back into the city, in order to improve their lifestyle and to reduce the time they spend commuting (Butler 2003: 46). Moving into former working-class areas, they stamp the environment to reflect their taste and values.

1.3.3   Art and planning; opaque processes and privatization

Despite the claims made for culture-led regeneration, critics suggest that it is not any more effective than other types of economic development. They point to the process of culture-led regeneration as being expensive, ineffective and indirect (Miles 2005: 899), for example the Millennium Dome (McGuigan 2004).

Garcia believes that:

> once local authorities decide to invest in and support such cultural initiatives, they tend to overrate the possible outcomes of culture-led regeneration. This is particularly the case in the UK, where culture-led regeneration has become a keyword and key aspiration for most cities and regions – particularly those having suffered the effects of post-industrial economic decline. (Garcia 2007)

She explains that,

> The tendency to overrate potential outcomes is often fuelled by reports and related media coverage that offer a partial or inflated picture of the situation. […] Culture-led regeneration should be understood as a factor that can contribute or advance the case for some issues (particularly in terms of local identity, self-confidence and external perceptions) but cannot resolve structural problems on its own.

Moreover, the planning processes in regeneration policy are generally opaque to citizens who are excluded from the process. Evans points to the problem of re-branding cities, of 'place-making' or the re-zoning of areas for commercial, residential and cultural functions, as it involves conceptual spatial practices. Consequently, it is the primacy of professionals not inhabitants, particularly dominated by design professionals. These processes are top down, solidifying the privileges and power of the cultural class and reinforcing the powerlessness of ordinary citizens through opaque knowledge and systems, what Evans describes as 'the professionalization and the bureacratization of both cultural and other policy realms and design decision making structures.' (Evans 2001: 277)

According to Vickery the problem of facilitating 'inclusion' within the processes of regeneration projects is 'chronic', as participation in an urban development process is complex and the involvement of a 'general' public is unwieldy. Inclusion, therefore, usually only operates at the level of representation, involving a network of key stakeholders. These stakeholders are an intrinsic part of the institutionalized structure of power and by their nature not identified with 'the public', always leaving the

commissioning authorities with a legitimization issue. (Vickery 2007: 77)

Cultural policy is riven with tensions between public and private interests. Landry and Bianchini (1995) admit that, within the shift to Third Way priorities, development is more likely to be driven by market considerations rather than those of public benefit. In this new function of city space, Miles claims 'public ownership of space is being dissolved' and co-opted for commercial use (Miles 2005: 892). He says that former industrial cities are now producers of leisure and services – as central spaces become areas of pure consumption this negates their use as public spaces of cultural participation.

Private firms are moving into what were once wholly public aspects of public service provision. In order to maintain core aspects of local government service, regional and local councils have turned to selling off land and tendering contracts for work. Anna Minton (2009) has recently discussed the privatization of city space and the centralization of control through new corporations. She describes a shift in the ownership of UK cities, redistributing priorities towards property and retail rather than for what might be deemed as the common or public good. UK government policy has encouraged business development on the US model, raising the power of the corporate sector, and re-conceiving place as a product – run by private firms with a levy on local business for clean, safe areas for improved consumption. This neo-liberal model has emerged in the last ten years but taken off in the last five years and comes out of the USA, where the low tax economy and small public sector cannot maintain the public realm and where the public realm and public infrastructure is poor. Minton argues that Local authorities are weakened and poor and therefore are happy to unload responsibility for the provision of services in city centres. She wants what she describes as 'the common good' as the basis for planning, arguing that this would strengthen democracy.

The main aspects of the rhetoric of art as an economic driver in culture-led regeneration are that it is commensurate with the redevelopment and re-imaging of the post-industrial city. Art workers are engaged to produce landmarks and visual spectacles to support economic planning and investment. This process is geared toward the property market,

generously financed by state intervention, which aims to stimulate real estate speculation and increase consumer spending.

Creeping privatization permeates the public sector. The development process is not open and masks the slippage of interest between what is private and public. This is manifest in the spatial zoning that increases social division and gentrification, which sees the re-colonization of the inner city for social groups who benefit the most from its redevelopment for the consumption of culture.

1.3 The rhetoric of art and social amelioration

As well as culture producing economic benefits, Third Way governance gave credence to the idea that culture could contribute to making Britain a more cohesive society, with access or social inclusion linked to cultural policy. Culture was imagined to provide 'ways of nurturing participation in society and developing citizens.' (Stevenson 2004: 125).

According to advocates, culture-led regeneration would provide methods for bridging the gap between the UK's poorest communities and the affluent majority. The arts were to address social aspects of regeneration: in education, neighbourhood renewal, health, criminal justice and employment. In his speech, Culture Secretary Chris Smith introduces the notion of the arts as a catalyst in community cohesion:

> Labour's fundamental belief is that the individual achieves his or her true potential within the context of a strong community….
> For too long governments have considered the arts as something of a sideshow, an add-on to the main business in hand … The arts are not optional extras for government; they are at the very centre of our mission. (DCMS 1997)

The Social Exclusion Unit was set up in 1997 to make recommendations across all government departments. After the 1999 Policy Action Team 10 report, the ACE and other cultural organizations in Britain took significant steps to widen access and participation in the arts. The 2001 Green Paper, *Culture and Creativity: The Next Ten*

Years reaffirmed the government's commitment to widening access and increasing participation in the arts. The *Urban White Paper* (November 2000) set out an agenda for revitalizing urban communities, making it more accessible for British artists to become involved in public art. By including and emphasizing art in planning, policy-makers, architects, artists and communities placed in direct association. This had an effect were during the new centralized urban planning process RDAs were set up to co-ordinate investment from both public and private funding, renewal included community engagement as part of its 'focused, integrated regeneration strategy for key towns and cities' (www.urcs-online. co.uk). This led to an articulation of social policy attached to urban planning to create 'a better place', 'iron out uncertainties' and 'build social cohesion' (English Partnerships 2007: 4). Hence the social form of culture-led regeneration was designed to have a community benefit whilst urban development was seen to be of benefit to the interests of private commercial partners.

1.4.1 Art, participation, education

The social trend in Britain throughout the twentieth century has been the atomization of the citizen in the face of marketization and privatization, i.e., what Pattie et al. call 'the rise of individualistic forms of participation at the expense of collectivist forms' (Pattie et al. 2004: 275). This follows precisely the trajectory outlined by Étienne Balibar when he says:

> so long as the contradiction between the 'socialization of the productive forces' and the 'desocialization' of human beings is not resolved, the talk of progress to be found in bourgeois philosophy and political economy can never be anything but a mockery and a mystification. (Balibar [1995] 2007: 100)

As this contradiction is exacerbated over time, the fear of an increasing underclass and of increasing inequality also grows. For Third Way neo-liberals, these developments call for a managed solution: social inclusion policy.

The aim of a 'social' art policy was to counter fixed social 'stratification' with an emphasis on employability: art policies aim to raise aspirations by providing

opportunities for economically marginalized citizens in post-industrial contexts, by increasing access to and promoting participation in cultural programmes.[27] Citizenship in New Labour's civil society involves participation in economic activity and adapting to new models of employment. Indeed, education initiatives and workshops are a central feature in culture-led regeneration, aimed at improving the citizen. In this field of cultural policy, artists' work features in projects that aim to include participants in informal educational experiences; to affect change via raising aspirations and advocating educational initiatives and, for example, to counter negative social behaviour such as youth crime and drug dependency.

New jobs in visual arts management were premised on social inclusion policy as part of the professionalization of the sector. Training within artist development schemes [28], aimed to encourage artists to work within social inclusion programmes in culture-led regeneration or art and education programmes, such as that initiated by Creative Partnerships. [29]

Participation in art projects is perceived to restore community and social bonds, using workshops, didactic art projects and convivial encounters, bringing people together often via the work of the artist. Advocates such as Landry claim that participation in culture can strengthen social cohesion, increase personal confidence and improve life skills. It can also improve people's mental and physical well-being, strengthen people's ability to act as democratic citizens and develop new training and employment routes. Regeneration, he claims, aims to change the 'mindset' and 'behaviour' of residents, 'to

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[27] Social stratification is the existence of structural inequalities between groups in society, in terms of their access to material or symbolic rewards. Most distinct forms involve class division, as in Giddens, A. (2001) *Sociology Polity*, pp. 699.

[28] See for example the artist development scheme at Yorkshire Artspace that delivers an uncritical approach to working with 'communities' on education, community outreach, public art and regeneration inclusion projects. http://artspace.org.uk/programmes/artists-development (last accessed 9.7.11)

[29] DCMS initiatives included 'Creative Partnerships' (CP) where artists and other 'creative professionals' were employed to develop projects in state schools that aimed to affect and improve the delivery and content of the school curriculum. Artists are engaged by CP to connect with an agenda identified by CP and the school's creative projects, then attend to these objectives. 'Artists in schools' is not a new initiative, although this was a large-scale project working in 2000 schools across England and placing large numbers of artists in non-art contexts. According to Alan Davie, it was 'an audacious idea and a phenomenal success'. In April 2009 it become a new department under the title Creativity, Culture and Education (CCE), based in Newcastle and became the single largest funded organization in the DCMS.

improve their effectiveness in creating capital and growth in order to reduce what is seen as a dependency on state provision' (Landry 2000: 9).

Such forms of cultural policy represent a liberal tradition in the arts, which promotes reforms aimed to help the working classes, but also to improve them. This follows a Victorian logic that Tony Bennett has analyzed in his book *Culture: A Reformer's Science*, in which art is enlisted 'to "govern at a distance" by creating frameworks in which individuals will voluntarily regulate their own behaviour to achieve specific social ends rather than needing to be subjected to forced direction' (Bennett 1998: 110). Arts advocates in culture-led regeneration claim that through contact with the arts, people (in deprived areas) are able to better themselves and their circumstances, and so benefit from a specific kind of education, via cultural activity, which functions to teach individuals new life skills and to give them higher aspirations. There has been little evidence to suggest that art can make this happen, but it has been a remarkably effective argument to lever further funding for the arts from the government (Belfiore 2006).

1.4.2   Managing the under-class

What is happening when government agencies, artists and cultural workers take official minority art and culture into communities where previously it had not been an intrinsic part of that community and its culture, high culture being the traditional social division between the leisured elite and a working mass?

Class is at the heart of arts production and consumption. The consumers and producers and hence the beneficiaries of arts' social, economic and symbolic capital are those that come from middle class backgrounds with the highest disposable income. When discussing culture-led regeneration the American writer, Sharon Zukin, (Zukin 1995: 9) says that culture offers ways to deal with difference, but that it also 'offers a coded means of discrimination, an undertone to the dominant discourse of democratization'. Miles (Miles 2005: 896) also proposes that cultural norms tend to remain with an arts bureaucracy, which reproduces an older parochialism. So that access is widened to a culture predetermined in the image of the governing cultural body. Arts publics are

thereby rendered passive receivers of culture rather than being empowered to shape cultures. The use of agencies such as publicly funded arts institutions repeat this management process and, in the case of the arts, act as a means to promote community relations. Paola Merli is scathing in her attack on cultural policy, that 'the poor should be soothed through "therapeutic" artistic activity'.

> The concern for addressing social cohesion and inclusion through a 'soft' approach, such as the use of cultural projects, might be seen as convenient means to divert attention from the real causes of today's social problems and the tough solutions that might be needed to solve them. According to this line of reasoning, the whole discourse of social inclusion is a lot more appealing to the political elite than the old fashioned rhetoric of poverty and the call for economic redistribution. (Merli 2002: 113)

She points out that 'making deprivation more acceptable is a tool to endlessly reproduce it'. She also calls for a direct engagement with the political issues at the heart of social division: 'Social deprivation and exclusion arguably can be removed only by fighting the structural conditions, which cause them. Benevolent art programmes will not remove such conditions'.

Stevenson agrees when she says:

> Where social justice is premised on a commitment to social equity, social inclusion is concerned with social order. The goal of social justice requires an interventionist state with a redistributive agenda, while social inclusion legitimates mutual obligation and 'small' government. Also important with regard to cultural planning is that, in the language of the Third Way, the 'social' of social inclusion has become synonymous with the economy to such an extent that participation in society (full citizenship) can only be achieved through participation in the economy. (Stevenson 2004: 125)

In Third Way citizenship, the active citizen is the economic citizen but this offers a limited and depoliticized conception of what is public and what is citizenship. Instead, social inclusion policy functions as a form of social control; those targeted are seen as the

'losers' or the 'exiles' from the industrial age who need to be 'encouraged' back into work. Social inclusion is not about investigating the causes of exclusion; it is concerned with enacting policy against lower-class social groups. Cultural policy tied to this agenda, that claims to function for social amelioration, is hegemonic.

To summarize, the main aspect of the rhetoric of art for social amelioration centres on the use of culture in social inclusion policy. Third Way policy helps citizens to 'develop' in order to compete in the jobs market, to help themselves and not depend on the welfare state. The political economy that produces the underclass has to find a suitable way to manage them. The arts are then harnessed to do new social work, to improve the citizen and their behaviour. Despite the arguments of advocates there is no evidence to support this hollow rhetoric when faced with major issues of economic and social division. Cultural policy and with it minority culture as a form of intervention by the state into the social is a weak and irrational form of intervention.

1.4 Conclusion

This chapter examined the further instrumentalization of cultural policy - one aspect of New Labour's response to the social impact on the UK's post-industrial cities with the rise of the global market economy. Third Way embraced the shift to marketization, privatization and liberalization and took the UK down this road. Citizenship or participation in society was individualistic, consumer orientated and based on flexibility in employment. The state was in an administrative role. Over time, ideas associated with culture, creativity and the post-industrial city have converged with the interests of the Third Way state. State funded culture including, visual art, was presented as having universal values and benefits to society. This rhetoric of new public value became a New Labour message through the implementation of their policy - culture was 'cool'.

The linking of cultural policy - previously a minor governmental responsibility - to the prime social and economic functions of the state spelt a significant change. Visual art was a minority culture – now it was said to be good for all and a power for change. State funded art was conceived for the public good, bringing value to the whole of society.

With the policy change came a persuasive language of change, of public relations and hype. This was not a rational language but most irrational, not evidence-based activity but wishful.

In the rhetoric of art as a cultural democracy, visual art was said to contribute to the revitalization of civil society, new social bonds and social cohesion. Through wider consumption of visual art, a more informed and collective citizenry would emerge. Access to art would be via new galleries and museums or by the funding of art agencies in specified 'communities'. Art in this instance was a public good, perceived as a benign force.

As a policy ambition, however, this universal and didactic art was directed from the top down by the state via Quangos or by state funded art galleries. Under the policy of social inclusion, the marginalized in society - those unfamiliar or new to art - would meet its traditional users whose values and interests shape it.

The rhetoric of art as an economic driver in culture-led regeneration art proposed that the visual arts be central to the economic redevelopment of post-industrial cities. Artists were employed as part of visual re-branding and place-making, they contributed to the festivals and biennials that sought to forge new identities for old cities, or simply featured as highly visible occupants of trendy areas of the town.

However, this economic regeneration and its use of culture, was not without controversy. Planning authorities set about re-conceptualizing the city as a spectacular location for the pursuits of consumption and leisure. The city and its inhabitants were commodified and branded, a process from which most citizens were absent. This real estate driven-process re-imagines the city but in the light of the market's and the financier's demands. The beneficiaries of the spectacular city are the cultural class gentrifying the inner city.

The promotion of art and social amelioration took art to the socially excluded, to bridge the gap between the UK's poorest and the rest of the population. Artists were thought to

have some skills that could enhance neighbourhood renewal, criminal justice and employment. This new wave of community art was instigated by New Labour as part of their project to implement educational and vocational programming: to affect change by raising aspirations and countering anti-social behaviour.

Artists were encouraged to 'engage' with people through commissioning and funding. What was an instrumental idea of art was also a challenge to art's social isolation. However, social inclusion policy via art and culture set out to change peoples' behaviour and mindset, and this programme saw the recipients of culture as those who needed to be governed. There was no evidence that this would create social mobility. Instead, it set out the social rules of Third Way society. This is artistic therapy via minority culture for the benefit of the status quo.

The claims made for the potential of state funded art were exaggerated from the beginning and remain unsubstantiated today. The hyperbole surrounding the potential value to society of Third Way cultural policy, either from the state or the arts sector, was without evidence. The quality of one's life can be *enhanced* through the provision of state funded cultural policy but this is also dependent upon one's economic and social position in society. The value of state culture is not universal. The attempt to ameliorate social division with culture was misguided and disingenuous. New Labour's 'cultural' meritocracy was based on the Billy Elliot model of social intervention, on dropping into the local art gallery to find a sense of community or an aspiration to improve your lot, together with the chilling image of art workers employed to manage the behaviour of the underclass. This makes what are socio-economic problems appear like psychological disorders in need of some therapy. The rhetoric of New Labour cultural policy was, in the end, destined to leave a hollow legacy. Culture became one of the few areas of intervention. As art critic and curator JJ Charlesworth (2002: 361) says, New Labour "effectively transposed the responsibility for social development, amelioration and progress, however limited, away from broader interventions into social organization, and

into the realm of culture'.[30]

The potential for state-funded art to contribute to social change was bound to be limited when managed through the policies of the Third Way, of public-private initiatives and through the field of art itself, a contested political field. The public sphere can not flourish in a top-down administrative culture. Democratizing access to state-funded culture is simply to expand the audience to whatever the state or liberal art institutions provide.

What the rhetoric of cultural policy would hide was the structural changes which were underway, such as encroaching privatization and increasing state administration, in a period when social division was increasing and social mobility was diminishing leading to a 'polarization' in British society, in terms of wealth and geographic location.[31] Therefore, as a very rough rule of thumb, social inclusion failed. What we need is social justice and a return to political debate on the social.

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[30] Charlesworth, J.J., 'Twin Towers: The Spectacular Disappearance of Art and Politics', ed. Beech, D. *'Art, Politics & Resistance'*, Third Text, vol. 16, 1, 2002, pp. 352-366
[31] See the Joseph Rowntree Foundation (2007) report that reveals the gap between rich and poor in the UK is as wide as it has been for 40 years.

The concept of public space, beloved of lonely myopic law-abiding right-on gushing morons, can only imagine the public as a mass of bodies.

The concept of the public realm, preferred by shifty piss-guzzling half-witted busy-body nerve-wracked self-serving technocrats, can only imagine the public as a mass to be administered.

The concept of the public sphere, in the radical tradition of Critical Theory, imagines the public producing itself through politicized acts of cultural exchange.

FREEE
www.freee.org.uk
Freee is the art collective of Dave Beech, Andy Hewitt and Mel Jordan

Fig. 3. *The concept of the public space, public realm, and the public sphere,* script from the video, for 1,000,000mph Gallery, London, 2007 and produced as a text for the 'One Mile' Newspaper, Collective Gallery, Edinburgh. Freee, 2007.

Chapter 2: Consensus, dissensus and public spheres

2. 1   Introduction

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2.6   Conclusion

2.1 Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to articulate the differences between open forms of democratic political deliberation imagined in public sphere theory as opposed to what I claim are, the debased and top-down forms of administration produced by Third Way governance. Public sphere theory provides a critical and historical analysis of deliberating publics and of social order. Thus it may then enable an analysis and further understanding of existing conditions in cultural policy and in particular the agenda set out for state-funded visual art.

Having examined the rhetoric of New Labour's cultural policy formulated in response to the economic and social agenda of the Third Way, I now focus on the condition of political culture in the UK following the rise of Third Way politics.[32] More specifically, an analysis of how the new 'radical centre' of Liberal Democratic governance actively

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[32] The model of governance also known as New Public Management.

seeks a consensus form of political order, in tandem with a neo-liberal political economy of 'common sense', whereby conflictual politics is deemed outmoded and where market forces rule. I argue that current formations of Liberal Democratic political culture are problematic as they suppress open, progressive political debate, wherein the merits of alternative social and political systems can be debated. How then, can such universalizing and rationalizing forces be resisted? What is the hope for the building of a democratic political culture in which debate and disagreement are central to the authorization and legitimization of political decision-making within the institutions of the state? What models of political theory can help us to think of an active, deliberating political citizenry?

Public sphere theory is concerned with those social mechanisms and associations that produce opinion, debate, co-operation and collective decision-making as distinct from the apparatus of the state or the market economy. Public spheres are formed around issues of common interests and as a consequence they are regularly produced when actors gather for social or leisure activity.

However, public spheres also have the potential to become premised on the need to reconfigure how actors can live better or live together better. Hence public spheres become political public spheres as actors make their demands known to the state. This process is through established political representation, or, if this is unsatisfactory, publics establish their own rival institutions to make their demands known. Publics then confront established political powers, which raises the potential of violence, as politics cannot be without it. Despite contemporary Third Way political theories that aim for consensus and cohesion, the state is usually quick to defend itself against rival ideologies by mobilizing the apparatus of the state to assert the hegemony of the Liberal Democracy.

There is some miscomprehension over terminology associated with the public sphere, with a slippage of meaning between the terms public sphere, public sector, public space and public realm. The public sector is an arm of state governance, public space consists of physical areas such as parks or pedestrianized precincts managed and policed by

public authorities, whilst the public realm refers to the idea of public access to published matter. An example of this confusion in terminology occurred in Naomi Klein's book *The Shock Doctrine; The Rise of Disaster Capitalism*, when she uses the public sphere to describe the public sector in the US.[33] This is a common reshuffle of terms and meanings. Similarly, the BBC is regarded by some as a public sphere simply because it is a 'public' service broadcaster that is not a (wholly) commercial enterprise and, as such, operates in a different way to commercial broadcasters. The public sector was established through democratic struggle that led to establishment of the welfare state where conceptions of public interest where imagined as enshrined. However, the administrative and bureaucratic functions of state controlled agencies have increasingly become privatized, operating under the directives of public, private partnerships (PPP).[34]

In contradistinction, the term public sphere emerges from the work of political philosophers and social theorists examining the historical, political, cultural and ideological consequences of the forces of capitalism acting on social relations and modern institutions. Public sphere theory is then a critical theory that is associated with the Left and connects to progressive ideas of social justice and democratic participatory political organization.

Some aspects of public sphere theory remain useful today under the conditions of global neo-liberalism, some forty years after Jurgen Habermas' concept on the public sphere was first published in the text *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere – An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society* ([1962] 1989). However, the research also considers critiques and extensions of public sphere theory that include modern conceptions of political discourse in multi-cultural Western democracies, lately characterized as 'difference democracy' and the politics of *cultural* representation in Third Way governance and social inclusion policy.

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[33] A comment made by Jim McGuigan at the symposium, *A Politicized Art,* Loughborough University, 19th November 2008.
[34] For a full description of Public Private Partnerships see P., Jones and J., Evans (2008) *Urban Regeneration in the UK*, Sage.

2.1.1 Third Way Liberal Democracy and the politics of consensus

The Third Way was said to be a modern approach to political governance; Giddens (1992) argued that the traditional adversarial politics, the politics of 'us and them', based upon a friend/ enemy position was now obsolete and deemed a relic of old ideology from the days of the cold war. The new political system was to be a 'reflexive' one, with an emphasis on 'sub-politics'. However, what subsequently formed was a new political and administrative consensus – a 'post-politics' or what Jacques Ranciere (1991: 102) calls a 'post-democracy'. Stuart Hall (2002: 28) described this as the 'unchallenged hegemony of neo-liberalism', 'with its claims that there is no alternative to the existing order.' Harvey (2005:2) says Neo-liberalism is 'an ideology that considers the free market as the only way to organize culture and society, an ideology that has fiercely organized against all things public.'

New Labour was at the 'radical centre' where radical *moderation* would lead to what Slavoj Zizek (2002: 77) describes as the 'administration of social matters', of 'good ideas' and 'ideas that work.' Harvey (1999: 199) claims that 'new public management' spread across Europe from Britain to other former social democratic countries and address how 'the former goal of extending employment and benefits programs to all citizens is effectively cast aside, having become impossible under the conditions of functional borderless economics.'[35] This means that one accepts, in advance, the (global capitalist) constellation that determines what works and that it does not infringe on capitalist profitability. Zizek (2002: 199) calls this form of politics the 'art of the possible', whereas 'authentic politics' is the exact opposite, the art of the impossible, as it changes the very parameters of what is considered 'possible' in the existing constellation.

Hall (2002:27) claims that the shift to the centre in politics led to:

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[35] Harvey describes how the state is forced to 'strip the public sector down to the hard-core functions of a night watchman state: police, justice, diplomacy, and army'. He says that this is difficult for most countries that see it as a break with the constitutional core of the nation, but the pressures of global economics are difficult to contest. Harvey (1999).

'The short circuiting of democratic contestation and accountability… the centralization of executive power, even within the so called parliamentary system, coupled with the erosion of local government and local democracy; the managerialist style of governance, with the country run like a private corporation with the Prime Minister as its CEO and elections as occasional meetings of an emasculated body of shareholders; the expansion of an entrepreneurial style of governance, where government functions and departments are increasingly 'outsourced' or converted into agencies, with no clear line of accountability, and public service are recommended to entrepreneurialize their practice and 'take ownership' of policy'.

In neo-liberalism, politics is diminished as a space for social transformation. The legitimacy of Liberal Democracy depends upon the right, the opportunity and the capacity of those subject to a collective decision to participate in consequential deliberation about the content of the decision; this is a citizen participating rather than just voting. However, as Patie et al (2004: 278) say, 'Debates about policy making take place between professionals and largely excluded citizens and the wider community.' This leads to a sampling of public opinion and feedback from focus groups, the 'management of opinion' rather than a deliberative dialogue between decision makers and the public, 'elites seeking legitimation for their initiatives rather than a dialogue about what should or should not be done in the future.' In this context, the public is a constraint on political action – and therefore something to be managed, rather than as partners or stakeholders in a process of policy formation and implementation.

Hall (2002: 27) describes the problem of the debasement of political democracy as the:

Massive manipulation of public opinion and consent by a swollen echelon of political public relations and focus group polling; the way special interest lobbying outweighs the cumbersome practices of public argument; the consistent adaptation of policy to the agendas of the media, which become a more authentic ventriloquizing 'voice' for 'the people' than the people themselves.'

There is the weakening of institutions of civil society (unions etc) leading to a decline in dialogue between citizens contesting the state and a decline in deliberation. Pattie et al (2004: 282) says this produces atomized citizens and 'the rise of individualistic forms of participation at the expense of collectivist forms of participation'. They claim it leads to a weakening of institutions which support collective actors, such as political parties 'the most important institution in civil society', and that 'their decline means a weakening of collective action' and with it 'growing inequality in Britain, which is an inevitable product of a marketized society' (ibid).

2.1.2 Liberalism and the private

The Liberal Democratic state is a force somewhere between being coercive and consensual that attempts to connect the desires of individuals into a wider construct called society constituted on the interpretation of ideas of liberty and equality. However, the state is perceived as being potentially detrimental to liberal values, for example, in Liberal political theory, as in Rawls' (1972) *'Theory of Justice'*, the state in plural society must be neutral on conceptions of 'the good life', i.e. different ways to live based on culture, religion and sexual orientation, as this is considered too diverse for the state to encompass.

Seyla Benhabib (1992) describes how the Liberal tradition put a just and stable public order at the centre of political thinking. She describes this as a legalistic model of public space exemplified in Bruce Ackerman's (1980: 4) 'public dialogue' (as a shared view of many liberals) that 'Liberalism is a form of political culture in which the question of legitimacy is paramount' and a way of talking about power. She describes 'conversational constraint' and neutrality as rules that prevent a power holder from asserting their 'conception of the good life' as being better than that of other citizens. This avoids a discussion on moral life and offers a path to mutual coexistence. However Benhabib (1992: 80) claims that this conversational constraint is not neutral as it 'presupposes a moral and political epistemology' that will prevent any new agenda being discussed that would leave excluded groups at a disadvantage.

Liberalism is an ideology concerned with the line between what is private and what is public. Chantal Mouffe (1993: 150) says liberalism has 'many different interpretations' but it places an emphasis on the needs of the individual. Liberalism sees a tension between liberty and democracy, with concerns about the loss of rights to a tyrannical majority and the suppression of the few by the mass. Raymond Williams (1976: 181) says that Liberalism 'is a doctrine based on individualistic theories of man and society and is thus in fundamental conflict not only with socialist but with most strictly social theories.' Some liberals are not democrats at all, as for them, too much democracy is a threat to individual liberty. Instead they place an emphasis on individual rights and freedoms with the state as both small and neutral, hence the liberal idea of 'neutrality'

At the heart of liberal thought is the esteem and the protection of the 'private sphere' – private life, privacy, private citizens, private space, private interests and private property. Consequently, one of the key contributions to political thinking made by the liberal tradition has been that private individuals need to be protected from the state. Politics within Liberal Democratic societies is thereby reduced to a minimum that, if it works, private individuals can ignore and simply live their lives.[36] The purpose of politics, therefore, is to maintain individual rights and to maximize freedom of choice - to limit the power of the state in order to protect individual rights through ideas of legitimate power and consent in rule of law.

Williams (1976: 289) points out how liberal ideas of individualism merged with 'the competitive and antagonistic ethos and practice of capitalism which individual rights and political competition merely qualify.' Liberalism as an ideology then hides social division or normalizes it as part of the story of consensus, masking the repressive aspects of society. Terry Eagleton (1991: 135) describes this as its 'ideological contradictions'. For example, private property rights work in favour of those with large amounts of property and against those with little or no property. Mouffe (2005: 18) says that in this social

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[36] In this way Liberal Democracies do not call forth citizenry in political debate and collective action. Instead politics is professionalized, specialized and separated off from society in general and politics becomes a process for a political elite.

hierarchy, liberal democracy becomes hegemonic and represses other possibilities.[37] The neo-liberal state devises new laws to suppress adversarial politics, to restrict trade unionism, open voting, forms of collective agency and social activism. Therefore, according to Tariq Ali (2009), alternative political ideas remain 'untested', or old ones, such as socialism are branded as redundant: Hall (2002: 26) describes liberalism as 'remorsefully opposed, ideologically, to redistribution *as an idea'*.

2.2 Public spheres and democratic politics

How then can such universalizing and rationalizing forces such as those produced by the Third Way state be resisted? What models of political or social theory can help us to think of an active citizenry engaged in this project?

Theories of the public sphere are concerned with communicatory interaction and opinion formation between social actors. Conceptions of discursive publics have been theorized by Jürgen Habermas in his first major text - *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere – An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society* ([1962] 1989). Habermas is concerned with the potential renewal of democratic politics, and therefore, he takes a keen interest in the political institutions of the Liberal Democratic state. In a break from his predecessors in the Frankfurt School, he takes a position on what a 'good' society should look like and calls for making public institutions more democratic, by making them able to resist the power of both capital and state bureaucracy.

Structural Transformation covers an historic period of Western modernity that saw the emergence of bourgeois society combined with the development of capitalistic and state structures that was to lead to contemporary forms of mass democracy and the welfare state. In the early text, Habermas first sets out his analysis of inter-subjective communicative processes: he is interested in aspects of societal integration or social order as a process of communication not domination. The text centres on both the quality of

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[37] Liberal representative government is not dependent upon membership of large parties – it carries on anyway, it is not mandatory to vote, and this is particularly problematic when there is a general apathy or even cynicism toward political institutions.

debate for social actors and the openness to participants of this process, and with it the potential for social emancipation.

In *Structural Transformation*, Habermas also attempts to describe the historical categories of 'publicness'.[38] He provides an account of the bourgeois public sphere, the formation of enlightenment modernity, the eighteenth century bourgeois revolution or negotiated realignment with church and monarchy. According to his theory, the rise of a bourgeois public formed as a result of power struggles, i.e. the ruling elite or monarchy becoming remote from the people, leads to critical publics forming as a response.[39] This, he says, occurred when the state became more demanding, for example when raising tax for war. With a rise in differentiation, in norms, e.g. law and private moral beliefs, the state is progressively 'decoupled' from the inter-subjective fabric of everyday life.

Craig Calhoun (1992: 6) describes how the public sphere offered the 'potential as a mode of societal integration'. The formation of political 'counter publics' that contested power, in this case the bourgeoisie, led to the establishment of principles of liberal parliamentary debate and the formation of a bourgeois ideology. The bourgeoisie did not rule as such. Instead, their ideas infiltrated the principles of existing power. The bourgeois public sphere was only partly a political process. It was also the process by which the bourgeoisie developed its own identity, values and institutions by which it re-conceptualized society, for example with the idealization and transcendence value attached to the private sphere of the bourgeois family. Hence, the bourgeois public sphere for Habermas (1989:160) was totally separate from the state and was 'a realm of our social life in which something approaching public opinion can be formed'.

Social networks evolved around salons, techniques of critical discussion were honed via popular journals and a cycle of publishing and opinion formation began, hence, debate, as a critical reasoning of the public, constitutes an effective steering force in both society

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[38] His text traces the development of a concept of publicness as opposed to the private, in relation to the emergence of the modern liberal democratic state, for this he is debt to the writing of Hannah Arendt - *The Human Condition* (1958) Chicago: The University of Chicago
[39] His account then follows the rise of a mass urban society and with it the establishment of the social democratic state with universal welfare provision.

and policy. Habermas suggests how literature, associations, newspapers, material symbols, parades, or festivals—comprising aspects of the public sphere and civil society - forged links between experience and polity, and therefore how a broader political arena might be re-conceptualized. New modes of socialization, identity and self-representation established the characteristics of bourgeois life, which was itself set to become universal and hegemonic, as exemplified in Eagleton's (1994) description of bourgeois conceptions of art appreciation and social customs of the art gallery.

Habermas' ([1962] 1989:176) concept of the bourgeois public sphere is concerned with ideas of opinion formation in society, where public forums and arenas of collective intercourse produce discursive formations. These are critical forces, which come together with a collective interest. In his idealized 'blueprint' for a public sphere, opinion formation and rational critical debate are pursued without personal interest and partiality, with actors 'bracketing' social differences in favour of rational debate. Here Habermas emphasizes the impartiality of his enlightenment actors despite their interconnection with emergent economic markets.[40] By organizing themselves into interest groups and publishing their own ideas, Habermas (1996:28) believes that individuals can challenge the dominance of powerful groups in society and, in doing so, effect social, economic, governmental and legal change.

Habermas' public sphere is a virtual or imaginary community that does not exist in any specific location. However a portion of the public sphere comes into being in every conversation in which private individuals assemble to form a public body. Similarly, there is not a singular form of public sphere. For Habermas, contemporary opinion formation can occur through any number of means and can be a combination of processes, for example in correspondence via letters, printed media, the internet or phone technology, informal meetings in the street, in a public building, in the home, a local shop, park or street or organised as a more formal system of association such as a labour union or a political organization.

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[40] The public of the bourgeois public sphere were identified as property owners, having their own commercial interests and the bourgeois public sphere declared as a platform for lobbying against intrusive economic legislation by the state in favour of bourgeois privacy and personal freedoms.

In its ideal form, which Habermas (1998: 176) acknowledges as an ideal, it consists of 'private people gathered together as a public, articulating the needs of society with the state.' Public opinion is arrived at via the unrestricted assembly of citizens on matters of general interest. The communicative power of the public sphere translates via processes of opinion formation into the administrative power of the state that maintains its accessibility through the institutionalization of 'the public use of communicative freedom' even as it 'regulates the conversion of communication into administrative power.' Public discourse, or what Habermas (1987) was later to call 'communicative action', is a mode of co-ordination in human life as is the market economy and state controls. But according to Habermas money and power are non-discursive modes of communication giving us no 'intrinsic openings to the identification of reason and will, and they suffer from tendencies toward domination and reification.' (Habermas 1989:223) The state and economy are therefore essential points of discussion for the public sphere as they are its rivals and, without checks, would take it over.

His theory therefore proposes the emancipatory potential of democratic systems despite his gloomy prognosis on the demise and debasement of the bourgeois public sphere. Habermas' concept of this ideal democratic period is, he says, short lived as the public sphere was quickly debased. In his theoretical model, Habermas describes what he sees as the deleterious consequences for political deliberation with the rise of mass democracy and the blurring of the differences between state and society. He points to the subsequent control of power between mutual but rival party political organizations, with political debate lost in favour of forms of publicity and the winning of votes from the electorate. The bourgeois public sphere was undermined due to the professionalization of politics, the dilution of public opinion into opinion polling, and the commercialization of the media. As early as the 1870s, an expanding commercialized press saw public opinion influenced if not constructed by privately owned newspapers. Newspapers were owned by powerful media magnates with their own political leanings and the introduction of the new concept of advertising as early as the 1830s spelt the turning point for the independence of newspapers who were now influenced by the interests of advertisers.

Habermas called this a **'refeudalization'** of the press, meaning that the power of the press was held in a few hands. According to Habermas, these changes run in parallel with the rise of the Liberal Democratic constitutional state and the later formation of the social welfare system.[41]

Habermas conceives of the early function of media as being without bias or interest thereby enabling public sphere via transmission of open thought, communication and argumentation between citizens. Habermas (1992:242) is concerned with the power of 'non-public' contemporary mass media, asking how can we be public with limitations placed on public media that are increasingly privatized; producing distortions of what is public and what is private?

2.2.1   Habermas on contemporary politics

Habermas (1992:242) is critical of how public opinion is manipulated within contemporary politics. Public opinion 'is increasingly synonymous with the results of polling surveys (and now 'focus group' research and listening exercises) which politicians use and seek to manipulate for their own ends'. He says they are artificial because they solicit 'votes' for predetermined categories of opinion which may not reflect the categories that those polled would use themselves and often induce individuals to select opinions on issues they would not otherwise give thought to.

Habermas (1992:454) states that space between private interests and the state has become colonized by private interests and also that 'political parties are now fused to the state'. Therefore, he says, 'contemporary politics becomes a struggle among groups to advance their own private interests, in which citizens become spectators, via the media, of a political process in which they do not participate' (ibid.). He claims that the function of argument at the interface between politicians and their voters is to win votes rather than to engage the thoughts of voters, educating and cultivating them as earlier publics had done for their participants.

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[41] For Habermas, Liberal Democracy represented a shift to popularism in politics, with appeals to public opinion rather than reasoned concepts and deliberations leading to policy. With the formation of the welfare state citizens become clients or consumers of the state.

> From rational critical debate to negotiation… the process of the politically relevant exercise and equilibration of power takes place directly between the private bureaucracies, special-interest associations, parties, and public administration. The public as such is included only sporadically in this circuit of power, and even then it is brought in only to contribute its acclamation. Habermas ([1962] 1989:176)

Calhoun (1992:25) says that Habermas sees this as a loss of a notion of general interest and the rise of a consumption orientation, therefore creating a loss of common ground. Habermas ([1962] 1989:176) points to how culture is subject to a process of commodification that undermines culture's function in initiating public communication:

> 'When the laws of the market governing the sphere of commodity exchange and of social labour also pervaded the sphere reserved for private people as a public, rational critical debate had a tendency to be replaced by consumption, and the web of public communication unravelled into acts of individuated reception, however uniform in mode'.

He therefore points to how our associational lives lose communicative potential when communication becomes more regulated in a debased public sphere.

Habermas (1996: 359) later admits that 'the capacity of the public sphere to solve problems *on its own* is limited. He describes it instead as a 'warning system' that might 'amplify the pressures of problems, that is, not only detect and identify problems but also convincingly and *influentially* thematize them, furnish them with possible solutions, and dramatize them in such a way that they are taken up and dealt with by parliamentary complexes.' Habermas is looking for what might underpin a general interest in society, which at the end of *Structural Transformation* is for him not capitalism, the state or a transformation of civil society but becomes our communicative capacity.

Habermas asks: how is social order now possible within modern secular societies? He says what is important is how agents form social bonds and that this goes against individualist and instrumental reading of social order, the idea that humans are self-interested, of society comprised of individuals pursuing their own ends. Habermas points to how social order rests on communicative action (action coordinated by validity claims) and discourse which together help establish and maintain social integrity and binds society together. For Habermas, the best hope for democracy is to improve constitutions and law for a system of rights to protect individuals and their rights to participation in law making as a part of deliberative democracy.

In the *Theory of Communicative Action, Volume* 2, Habermas (1987) sets out his theory on the condition of contemporary society, founded on language that is composed of two basic spheres of sociality, what he calls 'lifeworld' and 'the system', where communicative action and instrumental and strategic action reside.[42] Communicative action is the recognition and acceptance of social scenarios through the understanding and interpretation of speech acts formed in the unregulated and domestic sphere of the lifeworld. Communicative action provides an alternative to money and power as a basis for societal integration. Habermas is idealizing the interpersonal relations of the lifeworld in contrast to the systemic integration with its dehumanization and reification. 'The system' refers to the opaque structures of the market economy and the state, with its mechanism and internal logic of money and power.

Habermas says it is this 'steering media' that funnels people into patterns of instrumental behaviour. 'The system' is in the hands of experts and administrators and operates away from public scrutiny and possible democratic control. He describes how the 'supervisory state' exerts influence on the system and its management systems (1996: 344), self enclosed systems in which (2006: 345):

> 'conversations are not about norms, values and interests, rather it is restricted to
> the cognitive goal of enhancing systemic self reflection, exchange among experts

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[42] According to Habermas instrumental action is when an individual does something as a way to effect something whereas strategic action is when an actor gets others to do something.

who instruct one another about the operation of their respective functional sectors is supposed to overcome the specific blindness of self enclosed systems'.

Habermas says 'the system' has colonized the lifeworld and 'brings in its wake a growing sense of meaninglessness and dwindling freedom' (1987: 255). He describes this as growing anomie, disintegration, alienation, leading to further social instability. What is there to be done in these circumstances? Habermas says we must 'erect a democratic dam against the colonizing encroachment of systems imperatives on areas of the lifeworld' (1992: 444).

2.3   The post-bourgeois public sphere: critiques and extensions of public sphere theory

Public sphere theory has proved to be an important source of ideas for critical and social theorists. More lately, theorists including Habermas himself, have extended conceptions of the public sphere and further interrogated the workings of Liberal Democracy. According to Roberts and Crossley (2004: 6), there are two main practical strands of criticism on Habermas' bourgeois public sphere that theorists have taken. One is that Habermas took an idealized and one-sided view of the mechanisms of the bourgeois public sphere and of civil society and secondly that his view of the early function of the media within his theory was too rosy.

2.3.1   Exclusions, violence and civil society

Society consists not of a singular public as Habermas described, but of *publics*, of opposing and sometimes overlapping spheres of discourse and action, with society splintering into various groups of interest. Critics such as Nancy Fraser have argued that the bourgeois public sphere represented the interests of a dominant social grouping and was not as open and equal as he imagines. Habermas is accused of ignoring any hierarchies and societal tensions when people gather: the perception is that his views do not take into account the 'interests' of those with power and the coercive pressure that the bourgeois class placed on other groups, and that this may have slowed or prevented the development of 'other' public spheres. Calhoun (1992: 34) suggests that in *Structural*

Transformation Habermas' view on actors' identity are too fixed. Habermas (1992: 425) has more lately recognized the importance of the 'plebian' public sphere in the writing of the philosopher Mikhail Bakhtin[43] and the Marxist historian E.P. Thompson, with his account of class attrition in 18th Century England.

Negt and Kluge ([1972] 1993: 79) also introduce new antagonisms to undermine the stable order of the bourgeois public sphere. They claim that the bourgeois public sphere existed alongside a range of counter public spheres that are 'blocked' from the usual arenas of public discourse: 'our lives and sense of publicness, individuality and community are heavily compartmentalized and fragmented into multiple (public) spheres or spaces that are dependent on different experiences, mainly in an antagonism between bourgeois ideals and proletarian realities.'

Similarly Fraser (1992: 112) claimed of the bourgeois public sphere that it is both gendered and exclusive in its constituents. Fraser points to the exclusivity of dominant groups in the bourgeois public sphere, the 'network of clubs, associations – philanthropic, civic, professional, and cultural that was anything but accessible to all.' On the contrary, she tells us, it was the arena, the training ground, of a 'universal class', who were preparing their fitness to govern.

Michael E. Gardiner (2004: 43) says Habermas is an idealist as he supposes that material conflict of a socio-economic nature can be effectively transcended or at least effectively sublimated into a rational discourse that can suspend ingrained power differentials. Gardiner claims that Habermas idealizes rational critical discourse in relation to the public, so ignoring 'the extent to which its institutions were founded on sectionalism, exclusiveness and repression', or, as in Hetherington (1997), that the bourgeois public sphere grew in strength and purpose as a reaction to other groups in society in its efforts to contain them. Hill and Montag (2000: 10) go further and accuse Habermas of a systematic denial and rationalization of the violence and barbarism of legal and

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[43] Habermas describes how Bakhtin introduces a 'culture of common people' in *Rabelais and His World* that is not just a 'passive echo', but 'the recurring violent revolt of a counter-project to the hierarchical world of domination' (1992: 427)

constitutional order, aguing that the public sphere is constituted on the basis of domination and exclusion.

Contemporary theorists thereby characterize the bourgeois public sphere, as a space for critical reasoning on common consensus, with any 'common good' largely dominated by the minority interests of bourgeois, male, economic priorities.

Civil society

Habermas' critics accuse him of placing too much emphasis on the effectiveness of an independent civil society in functioning to steer state power through opinion formation. Habermas admits that civil society has its limits. He says (1998: 359) 'public opinion is converted into political power ('a potential for rendering binding decisions') only when it affects the beliefs and decisions of authorized members of the political system (legislators, officials, administrators etc).' Habermas also maintains that 'civil society can directly transform only itself, and it can have at most an indirect effect on the self-transformation of the political systems' (1996: 372).

Lisa McLaughlin (2004: 169) says Habermas makes a 'strict differentiation between civil society, the state and the market economy – similarly now on his conceptions on a global level.' She says how Habermas offers an extremely benign formulation of the state's relationship to civil society and that he operates on a highly functionalist model in which there is a harmonious co-existence between money, power and a democratic civil society.[44] Perhaps Habermas' reference point is an older idea of state economy, the monolithic state sector of post-war Social Democratic Germany. This model of the state and economy is now unravelling with the new model of an increasingly privatized neo-liberal state economy.

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[44] Dryzek (2000: 95) says the state is produced through its relationship with the capitalist market economy - business and the state coalesced around the conditions for economic growth, hence liberal democracies take a keen interest in the maintenance of private property laws. Growth is promoted by the state for its own taxation needs or, as Marx described, the 'accumulation imperative' of the state. The state, whether located to the right of politics or the left, has key functions in order to maintain the capitalist economy and to create the most conducive conditions for capitalist enterprise (private property rights, enforcing laws, maintaining money supply). This is one reason why we see corporate leaders taking an active role in government.

Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri (2000: 328) argue that under neo-liberalism 'civil society no longer serves as an adequate point of mediation between capital and sovereignty. The structure and institutions that constitute it are progressively withering away'. According to Calhoun (1992: 454), not all players in civil society want to expand 'social equality and liberty'. Indeed, civil society was always composed of a majority of liberal institutions that tended toward the discipline of the social body and supported the authority of an economic rationality. Civil society was, and remains, composed of the private interests of charities, philanthropists, do-gooders, religious groups and cultural aesthetes. Such groups actively publish their ideas on the public good and contribute to hegemonic conceptions of public control, pacifying publics, and are therefore at odds with social change. They include bodies that are top down and undemocratic that do not have 'members' or membership. Such bodies hold economic power, supported either directly from the state (by tax allowance or by royal charter) which gives established liberal institutions economic advantages over emergent organizations and counter civil groups. Under the Third Way there was a proliferation of sponsored agencies and Quangos that have further colonized civil society with instrumental agendas to support the aims of the state.

Society in late modernity is under pressure from the affects of neo-liberalism and a trans-national global economy that moves people, employment, goods and capital. Contemporary civil society as a space for the 'process of individual opinion and will formation' is distorted - it always was and remains today colonized by the steering media of the state and the market. According to Mittleman (2000: 74), 'it becomes clear that civil society, the market, affect, and constitute one another but do so in a way that reinforces an increasingly common vision, in which the notion of human progress through democratic co-operation is linked to a distinct solution: a model of a world order based in a neo-liberal set of policies offering to generate levels of economic prosperity that will lift any person or nation out of poverty so long as they remain faithful to the principles of the beneficent market.' How, asks McLaughlin (2004: 170) in this scenario, can citizens pressure the state to adopt redistributive social polices?

2.3.2   The media, opinion formation and the public sphere

Critics also argue that Habermas' view of the bourgeois media in the eighteenth century is too affirmative despite his negative view of contemporary mass media, thereby overestimating the demise or debasement of the public sphere. Habermas was concerned about the take-over of public communication by private media corporations (as well as state-controlled media), which regulate and manipulate information. He believes that, as the interests of mass media are based on maintaining advertizing revenue, the production of entertainment media and the marketization of the media into products, has 'dumbed down' the potential of technologically advanced systems of communication.

Negt and Kluge ([1972]: 1993) accuse him of underplaying the role of communication as a tool for the powerful and that the media is, and always was, inscribed with a manipulating bias. Walter Lippman (1922) in *Public Opinion* claimed that the media is not simply a mirror but is influential in how it represents issues to its audience. His term was the 'manufacture of consent'. Edward Herman and Noam Chomsky's (1998) *Manufacturing Consent* discussed state propaganda, not as a conspiracy theory but as the analysis of routine operations of the media.

The emphasis on trade within media and communication policy-making has had enormous consequences for the public sphere. McChesney and Schiller (2002: 7) trace how increases in commercialization, concentration in media ownership and an unprecedented growth in large media corporations have been accompanied by an erosion of community and national control over media and a collapse in public expenditure that might otherwise be used to support non-commercial forms of media. Similarly, Peter Dahlgren (1991) says that citizens are unable to find and debate critical information about the world and that this would therefore affect the course of their actions in society.[45]

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[45] Peter Dahlgren, in his book *Communication and Citizenship* (1991), is concerned that public service broadcasting that offered *some* critical reporting was being restructured due to the commercialization of broadcasting and that the output of commercial media was without any serious or critical content.

John Keane (2010) proposes that the changes in communication systems as we undergo rapid technological transformations from singular state-structured media to multi-territory communication systems fragment the conventional spatially integrated unified public sphere of the nation state. Public life, he says, is then subject to "medievalization" in that it is developing a complex mosaic of differently sized, overlapping and interconnected public spheres. Keane sees that 'this restructuring of communicative space forces us to revise our understanding of public life and its "partner" terms, such as public opinion, the public good and the private/public distinction'. Keane longs for the monolithic forms of early broadcasting wherein publics were mass audiences and shared the same cultural events.

Whilst some agree with Habermas' downbeat view of the media, others believe the view he takes is too negative and there remains the potential to 'manufacture dissent' in mass and popular media. Habermas is criticized by Dahlgren (1995), McGuigan (1996) and Thompson (1995), for his assumption that the colonization of the public sphere inevitably leads toward a 'dumbing down' of society, when they point to the elitism and snobbery of much 'minority' publishing during the bourgeois period. Michael Billig (1991) describes how Habermas' idea of contemporary mass media does not accept how people use and manipulate the media for themselves, as people are not passive. Nicholas Garnham (1986: 56) says that the commercial interests of the mass media do not wholly undermine public debate in the media. He argues that the mass media wants to be popular, in order to maintain a market share, as a result, it does on occasion respond to peoples' concerns, which are then disseminated via the media to influence political leaders. Media corporations are also market-led so they produce a diverse range of products that mirror heterogeneous publics.

2.4 Politics, culture and multiple public spheres

Simon Sheikh (2005: 8) says that, according to post-modern critique of public sphere theory, there is no longer a unified, consensus based public sphere: 'a people can thus no longer be understood as one, as uniform, but as fragmented in terms of identity, ethnicity, class, gender and so on.' There is no 'closed totality' through which rigid social

categories such as 'class' are discoverable. Each social location is over-determined by a multitude of social processes. Only 'chains' of political activity stretching across society, binding different spheres and domains together, can achieve any success in articulating hegemonic projects.

Habermas is considered naïve by post-modernists and post-Marxist critics, who say his theories, such as those that seek a consensus, sound like that of 'reason' in history.[46] Post-modernism is against meta-narratives; perceived as repressive narratives, which are designed to serve the dominant order, such as those ideas of progress and rationality in the Enlightenment. Similarly, Michel Foucault (1979) rejects reason as an instrument of oppression, with its layers of hegemonic consent that control the power of knowledge.

Post-modernists de-stabilize what they see as universal and, in doing so, claim to support the perspectives of the oppressed or the marginalized. Diana Coole (1996: 238), for example, following Foucault, sees power interests in discourse, when the lifeworld of the pre-modern (or subaltern) is thematized or translated (via an economy of privilege and exclusion) and is subject to a 'transition to reason', 'wherein certain themes or persons are silenced, constituted, displaced, controlled, modified'.

Habermas (1996) defends the idea of social progress.[47] He sees social development as a learning process and that we can co-ordinate our actions better now than before in pre-modern societies. He perceives post-modernism as just a development within the larger modern framework.

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[46] After the publication of his "theory of communicative action' Habermas entered into a series of critical debates with theorists including Jean-Francois Lyotard (1984; 111) who derided Habermas for his belief in grand narratives, when for Lyotard, the 'modern project' was now 'liquidated'.

[47] In 'Modernity – an Unfinished Project' Habermas said Modernity was a project – as in the Enlightenment – not an historical period. It was a cultural movement that grew in response to the problems of modernization, trying to connect and harness the specialized knowledge from this process back into everyday life processes, the lifeworld and common interest. Habermas also said modernization was incomplete and he does not want regressive anti-modernity that he considers irrational. He thinks there have been gains such as the increase in knowledge, economic benefits, expansion of individual freedom but that efforts must be made to channel the best possibilities for a secular society.

The post-political landscape is shaped by both the cultural and the economic. Theories of counter-publics came out of the micro public spheres and identity politics of the 1970s, the newly formed civil rights, environmental and women's movements. Sheikh says (2005: 8) that the bourgeois public sphere tried to contain dissent, whereas 'counter public spheres' (same organizational features e.g. clubs, groupings, publications) bring new subjectivities which challenge existing power (counter culture and new social movements). Sheikh is inspired by Negt and Kluge ([1972] 1993) and their 'proletarian' public sphere, an analysis of different spaces as public spheres, i.e. the home and workplace as spaces of collective experience and the possibilities available here for rival behaviour, speech and action in opposition to dominant public spheres. Their view is that dominant public spheres block weaker public spheres but that weaker public spheres act as rival social organizations.[48] So, despite the official public sphere, rival publics and public spheres exist alongside or even within established more powerful ones forming counter ideas. New social movements bring not just issues but also new identities that can change the agenda of public discourse.

Publics define themselves as belonging to certain social worlds, lifeworlds, ideologies and languages. According to Michael Warner (2002: 29), 'publics exist only by virtue of their imaginary. They are a kind of fiction that has taken on life, and very potent life at that.' He says (2002: 121) counter-publics share characteristics of dominant notions of the public, in that they are both an address to an imaginary public, and that they are specific and locational publics, therefore as much relational as they are oppositional. According to Simon Sheikh (2005: 9), Warner's 'counter–publics are a conscious mirroring of the modalities and institutions of the normative publics, but in an effort to address other subjects and indeed other imaginaries'. This is Warner's (2002: 122) idea of counter publics as 'imagining stranger sociability', and that this is 'not just strategic but constitutive of membership'. He refers to public parks in the US that function in gay culture as spaces for cruising, thereby using existing spaces to support oppositional

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[48] Negt and Kluge viewed the existing bourgeois public as a 'pseudo-synthesis of society as a whole' that represented an obstacle to democratic change. To them, the bourgeois public sphere had an inadequate grasp on everyday life (including mass media) and they considered Habermas as having exaggerated the potential of the idealized bourgeois public sphere.

practices and counter identities: 'Movements around gender and sexuality seeks to transform fundamental styles of embodiment, identity and social relations' (2002: 51). Here, Warner's counter-publics show private lives that were previously hidden from public life thereby extending the public sphere. However, this is about private lives in a cultural public sphere and not private individuals being public about political matters. Hence Warner reproduces the idea of the rights of privacy of the free individual.

Nancy Fraser (1990: 132) points out that we have strong publics and weak publics. In her view, a weak public has discourse and opinion but no decision-making powers (parliament is strong). She has spoken of a 'subaltern' counter-public of American feminism, with its communicative networks that circulate counter-discourse and its cultural and political impact on the system (1995: 70). Fraser (1997: 81) says that: 'Within the context of a counter-public, subordinated groups are able to offer interpretations of their identities, needs, and interests in opposition to a comprehensive public sphere imbued with dominant interests and ideologies'. Fraser (1997: 4) says subalterns have different topics, needs and do not necessarily have common interests with the majority and that this challenges the 'no fixed boundaries' of a liberal view of common interest. She claims that minority groups may find it difficult to convince others via argument or 'bracketed deliberation' and that the bracketing or temporary concealment of systemic social inequalities and difference weakens the subaltern's position.

2.4.1   Difference democracy, Agonism and Deliberation

In a plural society with an expanded and multiplied conception of publics and public spheres, boundaries are less clearly delineated and must be negotiated through dialogue. Since the 1990s, theories of democracy on the left have shifted toward forms of 'difference democracy.' Seyla Benhabib (1996b: 3) claims that 'individuals and groups find their identity only in establishing differences with others who represent what they are not.' Supporters of difference democracy claim that *recognition* of difference, based on either culture, social class, nationality, ethnicity, sexuality or gender, is vital in achieving equality, and that this has been driven by developments in identity politics.

Difference democracy is concerned with expanding the democratic franchise and making the state more inclusive by contesting asymmetric power relations. Benhabib (1996c: 248) says, as a politics of identity and difference, deliberative democracy contests any attempts to impose universal identities, including supposedly 'rational' and 'neutral' ones advanced by Liberal Democratic political theorists such as John Rawls. Benhabib (1996a: 68) argues that these theories state that political decisions are best created and legitimized via a process of public reason formation and that the state's legitimacy depends upon the right, the opportunity and the capacity of those subject to a collective decision to participate in consequential deliberation about the content of the decision.

Benhabib (1996b: 69) says that the main line of division in difference democracy is between deliberative and agonistic models. The deliberative model is favoured by those who defend a proceduralist or deliberative model that anticipates the possibility of open political discourse, between often competing ideas, leading to political consensus. In contrast, those who hold the agonistic position view difference as inescapable and resolution as an impossible dream. They challenge liberal identity formation that blocks politics and encounters with others. This stems from a post-modern conception of identity politics, like that of William Connolly (1991), as an idea of resisting fixed and timeless identities, instead calling for democratic politics to be a continuous exploration and the creative questioning of identities through encounters with disparate others.

In agonism then, as Fraser (1992: 129) suggests, more stress is placed on the 'conflictual and contested nature of public communication', with common interest sought via dialogue. Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe (1985), in their post-Marxist concept, call for a radical and plural democracy comprised of a variety of struggles and movements in response to multiple oppressions from the dominant order. They say that a healthy democratic society needs antagonism as part of political society to sustain it. Mouffe (2000) argues, in her agonistic public space, for a 'conflictual consensus' and a multiplication of discourses, institutions and forms or democracy and the new forms of connection between them. Mouffe advocates a 'passionate' exchange in which

antagonisms become agonism, whereby enemies become respected adversaries and violence gives way to critical engagement. In this process, Mouffe (1999: 755) imagines how individuals come to accept the legitimacy of the identity of different others as a result of a conversion experience. This is via parliamentary politics, an engagement across difference that is energized and passionate, yet civil. Liberalism negates antagonism via its rationalism but to deny antagonism is to suppress it.[49] 'Consensus is no doubt necessary', Mouffe (2005) tells us, 'but must be accompanied by dissent.'

Mouffe's contribution is valuable, as she places an emphasis on contestation and resistance. It is therefore an important articulation of the politics of social conflict and identity positions in Liberal Democracy, although she does admit to the need for a certain amount of consensus. However Mouffe's critique does not amount to an alternative model of democracy.

Both Mouffe and Habermas are seeking a radicalization of Liberal Democracy; they want inclusive democratic institutions and to extend and deepen democratic participation without flattening socio-cultural difference and so endorsing injustice and intolerance. But according to Mouffe, Habermas' ideas on deliberation within difference democracy seek consensus and are too liberal.[50] She describes Habermas as like most liberals in that he seeks a politics of closure and hence he is too ready to find a consensus.

However, this is inaccurate. Habermas' politics are radical. He is a supporter of grass roots politics and for those societal processes of the production and transmission of values and norms against economic and administrative rationality. However, he is less focussed on social movements and what drives actors - his is a social theory and not a theory of revolution.

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[49] Chantal Mouffe speaking at the Goethe Institute, November 2007.
[50] Similarly, according to Dryzek (2000:26) Habermas accepts a combination of Liberal Democracy with a capitalist economy as the immutable condition of a well-ordered society. He claims, incorrectly, that Habermas' theory is no longer a contribution to critical theory because 'there is no sense that the administrative state, or economy, should be democratized any further.'

His later conception of the public sphere places stress on accessibility to information, eradicating privilege and the aim of establishing general norms through co-operation via just institutions as well as in daily life. In his theory, he provides original and insightful ideas on matters of contemporary society and he points to the negative aspects of capitalism and the state. Habermas describes the complexity of modern society, how opaque it can be for citizens and why this is a problem for democracy.

2.4.2 The economic critique of difference democracy

A major criticism of the processes of difference democracy via identity politics is that what promised to be an expansion of the political terrain ended up excising the economic. Diana Coole (1996: 19) has suggested that in some cases difference democracy can itself be hegemonic by allowing the economic to become 'bracketed'. Fraser (1997: 2) also points to 'a decoupling of cultural politics from social politics, and the relative eclipse of the latter by the former'. Phillips (2008: 113) says 'there is a discernible shift from the economic to the cultural, a movement away from the economic conditions that have been considered necessary to democratic equality and toward the discursive interaction between groups that differ in their cultural values or moral beliefs.' Phillips (2002: 112) says that the shift in the left's thinking over the past 15 years has seen 'the cultural displacing the material; identity politics displacing class; the politics of constitutional reform displacing the economic of equality.' Difference in particular, she says, seems to have displaced inequality as the 'central concern of political and social theory; we ask ourselves how can we achieve equality while still recognizing difference, rather than asking how we can eliminate inequality.'

During New Labour's administration came the further fragmentation of class-based oppositional movements but also the rise of identity politics. The modern plural state set out (informal) universal models of citizenship that propose identical rights and constitutional arrangements for all citizens to which they must conform. Class is replaced by the terms 'inclusion' and 'exclusion', with society 'as basically composed of middle classes; the only exception are a small elite of the very rich on one side and those 'excluded' on the other' (Mouffe 2005: 62). Warner (2002: 8) points to how discourses

can, and do, constitute social identities. He suggests that 'society, economy and citizenship have melded with the discourse of social inclusion.' Modern social identities are constructed on such universal modes of citizenship. The state is forceful in constructing conceptions of the public, as in the case of the rhetoric of Third Way citizenship - a combination of pluralism, ideas of meritocracy, the free market and of the citizen as consumer. However, as Hall (2002: 25) says, 'this does not mean that there are no centres of power or that great inequalities of power, resources, and privilege that used to pass under the general category of 'class' have ceased to exist.'

Iris Marion Young (2008: 61) is critical of this universalizing tendency in state policy, as she claims it can mask exclusion and lead to the repression of group difference. Young (2008: 101) says there must be a reconnection of issues of recognition with political economy. Fraser (1992: 140) says 'where societal inequalities persist, deliberative processes in public sphere will tend to operate to the advantage of dominant groups and to the disadvantage of subordinates'. Fraser wants to place the emphasis on the political economy over the cultural.

In response, Judith Butler (2008:48) asks how it is possible to make a distinction between material and cultural life? She says culture is no longer secondary despite what orthodox Marxists might say; Butler describes a trend to disparage the cultural, with identity politics becoming a derogatory term. Similarly, Harvey (2005: 205) says, that 'culture cannot be sloughed off as some unwelcome distraction (as some on the traditional left argue) from class politics'. According to Butler (2008: 46), the best way forward and the means to unity or at least to solidarity is to 'produce a mode of *sustaining conflict in politically productive ways*, a practice of contestation that demands that these movements articulate their goals under the pressure of each other without therefore exactly becoming each other.'

2.5 Counter hegemonic counter-publics

Which model of the public sphere model is best suited to our current conditions? Perhaps it is not one but a broad front of strategies and tactics for the resistance to steering media?

Simon Sheikh (2005) says we must not have 'a nostalgic return to outmoded notions of the public and its space, but an analysis of the relations between publicness, consumption and production, culminating in new formations where action can be taken.'

Warner (2002:124) describes the counter-public as the rallying and constitution of an active public. This gives the public agency when they are said to 'rise up, to speak, to reject false promises, to demand answers, to change sovereigns, to support troops, to give mandates for change, to be satisfied, to scrutinize public conduct, to take role models, to deride counterfeits'. In situations in which alternative publics are said to be social movements, they acquire agency in relation to the state. They enter the temporality of politics and adapt themselves to the performatives of rational-critical discourse.' Counter-publics are said to form their own just institutions in society based on co-operation - institutions that foster procedures of openness. In doing so, they would create social arrangements to arrive at collective social decisions.

It is therefore necessary to act against the irrational aspects of steering media that seek to demobilize democracy. Following a Habermasian model, this means entering into the process of making your ideas public. It requires the encouragement of opinion formation and of the everyday act of people communicating with each other. This involves people listening to others, developing opinion and sharing it - not keeping it to themselves. This is the process of being public, making one's opinion known and looking for others who might share the same views.

Political culture needs new channels of debate and dissensus, a multiplicity of public spheres that includes the marginal, subordinate, oppositional – what Habermas called those on the 'periphery' who challenge the interests of ruling elites. New social movements and anti-capitalist groups generate issues, form protests and plan campaigns in order to get issues on the agenda at the centre. This is evidence that the public are not just indifferent consumers but fight for what they believe in. An alliance of the Left and the broad cross-section of social actors and movements in civil society has strength in numbers. As Marta Harnecker (2007: 116) says, it is necessary to 'unite the growing but

scattered social opposition to form alternative solidarity filled society.' For Harnecker this *is* the role of the state. She says the state must, 'expose people to other experiences and sources of knowledge, that help them to change their world view, discover the underlying causes of their exploitation, and, as a result, find the path to liberation. (2007: 122)

This means calling forth publics (unlike Liberal Democracy), to embrace and even celebrate, as part of our democratic culture, the need to produce more argument, flux and negotiation to challenge dominant publics. A larger and more diverse active citizenry would transform the public sphere. Such a mobilization would call the system into question, as more publics undermine the official public sphere.

2.5.1 Habermasian social theory and Third Way cultural policy

Despite the criticism of Habermas' version of public sphere theory, my view is that it has real merit and it continues to be an important source of ideas for many on the left. Importantly, it deals with the pragmatics of political deliberation and provides a theory with which to examine the function of state institutions.

However, his theory is not a solution, it is only a social theory that proposes how to understand problems. Habermas sees this as a social task not a political task- a general social process that must come from civil society. He thinks that in order to move towards a post-capitalist society, actors must co-ordinate their actions and establish social order on the basis of universal moral principles and legitimate laws. His hope is that the social spaces that exist produce and influence motivated citizens toward that goal.

Following Habermas on his theory of steering media, cultural policy can be perceived as managing public opinion, aimed at directing the public and its self-perception. As I discussed in Chapter one, the rhetoric of Third Way cultural policy sets out the purpose for state-funded visual art. Its implementation became increasingly instrumentalized as part of Third Way administration, which held a positivist view of the potential of culture. Modern cultural policy aims to reflect a diverse and multi-cultural society, albeit through

a careful fostering of plurality, respect and cohesion. Cultural values were presented as shared and yet were top-down; cultural production as a specialist field was professionalized, managed and exclusive. Public sphere theories enable new ways to rethink or reframe cultural policy and their relation to opinion formation and democratic processes.

In public-private partnerships the steering media of state and capital fused to assign new function for cultural programming. The rhetoric of art as an economic driver in culture-led regeneration attributed to the visual arts a role in re-branding and marketing the regenerate city. The visual arts therefore functioned as part of the spectacle of urban cities' redevelopment for the purpose of stimulating consumption and increasing real estate values. The arts therefore became attached to the opaque processes of planning, in which citizen participation is negligible and in which public interest is undermined by creeping privatization.

In the Third Way rhetoric of art for social amelioration, we can again use Habermasian terms to understand the process of colonization in which official culture intrudes into the lifeworld of lower-class groups in a hegemonic manner, carrying system imperatives. Participation in cultural programmes as part of social inclusion aims to 'nurture' citizens but is a process to govern them. If colonization produces mobilization then, in later chapters, we can see how that might manifest itself in the form of practice from cultural workers, such as Freee in resisting steering media.

2.6 Conclusion

How then can citizens have their say when powerful interests and a political hegemony aim to maintain consensus? What can be done if debate is stifled through official channels and alternative social models are denigrated?

Theories of the public sphere analyze formations of opinion formation and political communication between citizens in relation to but also in competition with state apparatus and economic processes. Habermas provides a theory of the public sphere that

traces the development of Liberal Democratic parliamentary politics and the nation state: the expansion of the Liberal Democratic franchize under the pressure from those it excluded and the subsequent socio-political settlement with the introduction of the Welfare State.

A Habermasian model of society is one in which people debate, argue, publish and form opinion through discourse. His later theories describe those 'steering media' as the forces of a controlling state and of business capital that debase opinion formation in official public spheres in favour of private interests.

While Habermas' early text, *Structural Transformation,* is an important critical account, it does have flaws. His idealization of the early revolutionary phase of liberalism and civil society underestimates the oppositional counter forces and the agency of rival social actors. His bourgeois publics are exclusive and he flattens the violence by which the bourgeoisie maintained their interests over plebian groups. His theory is dependent upon a conception of civil society as balanced, but the institutions of civil society are partial and formed by asymmetrical economic interests. Society consists not of the singular public as Habermas imagined, but of multiple publics, of opposing and sometimes overlapping spheres of discourse and action with society splintering into various groups of interest. Cultural, political and material differences become the catalysts for social activism. Habermas was later to acknowledge the 'unfinished' aspect of these social processes of modernisation.

Does Liberal Democracy provide adequate channels for democratic political deliberation to challenge steering media? The rise of the Liberal left has led to the convergence of public and private interests that alter social values. Third Way political governance seeks social cohesion and the downplaying of economic difference played out in policy for inclusion and cultural recognition. Hence, Third way governance then manages marginalized publics for the benefit of the status quo.

Resistance to Third Way political ideology has been weakened by the demobilization and fragmentation of traditional oppositional groups in civil society. The radical centre denigrates alternative political ideas and society is said to be, led by the needs of the market based on unsustainable growth and the irrationalism of consumer orientated individualism.

Theories of counter or subaltern public spheres connect to contemporary problems in Liberal Democracy and the modern nation state which is under increasing pressure from the affects of neo-liberalism and trans-national global economies that move people, work, goods and capital. Theories of counter-publics provide ideas on forms of social organization, cultural difference and mechanisms for progressive politics that come from the 'bottom up', of people organizing against the state and capital through democratic association as new social movements.

An important contribution to the struggle for the democratic tradition comes from theorists who demand an open political process that immediately recognizes economic difference as the primary injustice but recognizes that it is open to the issues of cultural difference. What is needed are critical forms of deliberation that recognize the key prerequisite for discussion as the recognition of economic difference that demands social justice and not social inclusion.

Alternative political organization is not dead. New social movements, bottom up rebellions and alternative public spheres emerge on a daily basis, as social form groups in response to issues, which can then shock and undermine dominant public spheres with numerous smaller ones. Oppositional civil society and oppositional public spheres foster sources of democratic critique and renewal. This is a politics of publishing, of a grass roots form of political exchange that connects counter-publics to other counter-publics. Political deliberation can transform things, change our perspectives, and challenge our preconceptions. Therefore, it is necessary to fight hegemonic consensus with counter-public dissensus, developing new critical politics that fight hegemonic social order.

Politics cannot be consensual as it requires disagreement. The neutrality of Liberal politics seeks consensus and invariably produces reticence that maintains the ideology of the private. The Third Way state colonizes the lifeworld with steering media including that of cultural policy. In response, it is necessary for one to be public in the public sphere. Following a Habermasian model of the public sphere, discursive politics are about 'having it out'. The aim must be to find strategies to open up spaces for debate against the reticence of liberalism. For the multiple, peripheral and subordinate publics, counter public spheres, publishing to one another that then might challenge hegemony. These are forms of communication and the exchange of opinion that transforms individual citizens, whatever their background, into public publics.

Fig. 4. *Artists cannot bring integrity to your project unless they provide a full and candid critique of everything you do*, Norwich, For EAST 2006, Freee, 2006.

Chapter 3: Public art against the public: state funded art, participation and socially-engaged art

3.1   Introduction

3.1.1   Socially-engaged art

3.2   Competing theories of participation in social art practice

3.3   The Freee art collective and Third Way cultural policy

3.3.1   Artwork 1: *How to be Hospitable*

3.3.2   Characteristics of socially-engaged art in the One Mile project

3.3.3   A report on *How to Be Hospitable* by the Scottish Arts Council

3.4   Conclusion

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter I reflect upon 'participation' in art in the context of Third Way cultural policy; forms of practice, theories of participative art and the expectation of commissioners and policy makers. I propose, that, forms of participation and participative art, produced via Third Way cultural institutions, aim to promote affirmative social relations and hence operate as steering media for the state. Therefore, cultural policy colonizes the public sphere with official state culture in order to funnel citizens' behaviour and to limit dissenssus. I propose that such cultural production has negative repercussions for democracy.

Participation is a term commonly used in both cultural policy and in the theories and practice of socially engaged art. What do funders and commissioners want from socially engaged art practice and what forms of participation are produced?

I discuss the development of the art project, *How to Be Hospitable* by Freee (Beech, Hewitt and Jordan) in order to reflect upon the expectations of commissioners for participative processes in art. The project provides evidence of the competing ideas of participation. I utilise Nicolas Bourriaud, Claire Bishop and Grant Kester's theories in order to demonstrate a range of contested positions in relation to ideas of participation in

art practice. The making of the project *How to Be Hospitable* and the subsequent analysis reveals dominant conceptions of art and participation within the field. The examination of this project enables me to demonstrate the expectations of curators and funding agencies for the function of social art practice, particularly 'participation' as a form of audience development via processes that encourage interaction. Consequently, this discloses the constraints within the field that artists encounter when seeking to test alternatives to affirmative social practice. I assert that ideas of participation in Third Way cultural policy are directed at constructing publics (in the form of audience development and participation in cultural activities) as opposed to enabling the emergence of publics in their own terms.

Within the discourse of socially engaged art or 'arts social turn', Nicolas Bourriaud has provided conceptions of art and participation in his theory of Relational Aesthetics. More recently, there have been exchanges between Grant Kester and Claire Bishop that interrogate trends in didactic and participatory art. These three approaches articulate divergent ideas on art and social relations encompassing the convivial, the ethical and the agonistic. Recently, Kim Charnley has proposed a dissensual model of art practice that neither denies ethics nor relinquishes avant-garde modes of confrontation.[51]

I believe that cultural policy has been on a convergent path with arts social turn as the state sought policy solutions that turned down the 'cultural' path. According to Vickery (2007: 64), New Labour along with art advocates (this includes artists and curators) created the conditions for 'extension and re-evaluation of what used to be 'community arts' as an attempt to integrate the arts into central developmental mechanisms of an urban locale.' Sarah Carrington (2004: 27) claims that agencies and institutions in the cultural sector that follow New Labour's policy can depoliticize social art through its commissioning process. She says that 'deactivating or pacifying potentially radical or critical activity is most evident in the relationships of arts institutions to socially engaged artists.'

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[51] In Charnley, K., (2011) Dissensus and the politics of collaborative practice' *Art & the Public Sphere* 1:1, pp.37-53, doi:10.1386/aps.1.1.37_1

3.1.1. Socially-engaged art

Socially-engaged art practices connect with a tradition of avant-garde perspectives on art's potential for emancipatory change and for democratic politics. These have been variously named as socially-engaged art practice, community-based art, experimental communities, dialogical art, littoral art, and participatory art. Socially engaged art is associated with an impulse to democratize both art production and society. The artist as producer of deliberation and participation was born out of the radical counter-aesthetics of the 1960s and is evident in community arts and Suzanne Lacy's (1995) 'new genre public art', in which artists worked with specific social constituents. Miwon Kwon (2002) has been influential in describing the art historical trajectory from site to location, explaining how artists have explored ways to enter into deliberations with publics, with outcomes not defined in terms of material, but by ephemeral processes of interaction between context, local participants and the artist.

More recently, Bourriaud's concept of Relational Aesthetics (1998) has been widely recognized as an influential text for a generation of artists and art practice, in which the spectator of art becomes a participant in a new art of encounter. For Bourriaud (2002: 14), the artwork takes 'as its theoretical horizon the realm of human interactions and its social context, rather than the assertion of an independent and private symbolic space' (Bourriaud, 2002: 14). Relational art is often considered to be 'anti-collector' because the work is, materially, less able to be commodified and traded. Instead, the work is often made for specific contexts, commissioned by biennales or publicly funded galleries via state funding of the arts. In effect, the state has been a patron of this type of art practice over a period in which the state funding of culture was perceived as supportive and complementary to social and economic policy.

Bourriaud's emphasis on the relational as a criterion, has essentially meant that these Relational Aesthetic artworks are considered ethical, focussing on artist engagement and collaboration as opposed to aesthetic and antagonistic qualities. Bishop (2004: 24) criticizes this problem by stating that without artworks that force us to re-think our

positions we are left with 'innocuous art. Not non-art, just bland art-and art that easily compensates for inadequate government policies'. By articulating Relational Aesthetic's function as an affirmative way of engaging with the social (of convivial encounters framed by, for example, eating soup with strangers in the art gallery) Bourriaud inadvertently demonstrates how art could be used to achieve social inclusion outcomes, such as creating community cohesion and promote active citizenship via access to interactive art and culture.

Art theorist Claire Bishop (2006) has described the 'social turn' in art, the expanded field of relational practices, primarily in the globalized arena of art biennials supported by the public sector. Proponents of socially-engaged art practice have attempted to shift art from its traditional exclusive constituency to make it more inclusive and 'socially relevant'. This move belongs to a history of rethinking art's role and is meant, in most cases, as a radical transformation of art's purpose. One way in which artists have challenged art's function is to work in non-art contexts (outside of the gallery) and with non-art audiences. Although this move by artists is motivated by the desire to transform the nature of art practice, this new engagement with non-art publics has made art seemingly more useful and more likely to be instrumentalized by the Government in seeking solutions to urban socio-economic problems.[52] Arts advocates in arts institutions have long been making a case for art's social usefulness, particularly in relation to education and off-site programming (partly in order to justify their receipt of public funds), therefore the Third Way government has been quick to seize upon art for its wider policy agenda.

3.2 Competing theories of participation in social art practice

In the last ten years, theories of art and participation have centered on ideas by Bourriaud, Bishop and Kester. Bourriaud's Relational Aesthetics has been influential in advocating

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[52] Dialogical art and consulting methodologies have become a key form of art practice in culture-led regeneration. As Sophie Hope explains, 'these projects are based on the notion of the artist as an external agent, able to enter into a context with fresh eyes, offering ideas and solutions.' The artist Nils Norman takes on the role of a 'mole' in order to breach the opaque world of planning and governance. He describes a fashion for dialogism in art as becoming something of a prerequisite to gaining commissions. The artist must, he says, 'increasingly adopt a consultative rather than prescriptive methodology, or risk being sidelined.'

non-object based practices. His theory redefines the political as 'models of sociability' and 'micro-utopias' in the space provided by the art institution. Bishop (2006:180) is critical of Bourriaud's Relational Aesthetics, outlining three issues in relational aesthetic that she problematizes: activation, authorship and community. Firstly, she says, there is an emphasis on an active subject in which participation is seen as empowering. Secondly, co-authorship is presented as non-hierarchical production, and thirdly, a restoration of social bond is imagined due to a perceived crisis in community relations. Bishop (2006:182) is critical of arguments made for the virtues of Relational Aesthetics, claiming that the participant may not necessarily be an active subject (political). Instead, the art may produce a passive reception as the reader is not an author, nor a collaborator. The implication is that some forms of participation can be hegemonic. For example, she cites how 'participation is used by business as a tool for improving efficiency and workforce morale'.

Bishop (2006: 11) discusses two potential outcomes of participation. One is disruptive and interventionist, the other constructive and ameliorative. According to Bishop, Bourriaud's participation produces the latter outcome in its 'convivial' encounter with the other. She claims that whilst taking coffee or sharing a meal does reconfigure what art can be, his theory diminishes antagonism in favour of acts of sociability. This 'micro-utopian' togetherness is made frictionless as members identify with each other and have something in common. Relational aesthetics, she claims is not agonistic enough. She accuses Bourriaud of putting 'sociability' or 'conviviality' where dissent and critique should be.

Bishop therefore supports 'a tougher, more disruptive approach to 'relations' and 'our predicament'' than that proposed by Bourriaud, an art opposed to militancy which emphases sensitivity to the other. She wants an agonistic art, not art valued for its truthfulness and educational efficacy. Bishop seeks to distance herself from new genre public art with her demands for an agonistic participation, inspired by Laclau and Mouffe's (1985) 'antagonism' in 'as society's inability to fully constitute itself,'[53]

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[53] In LACLAU, E. and MOUFFE, C., (1985) Hegemony and Socialist Strategy, Verso.

(Bishop 2004: 67) and Mouffe's (2005: 20) model of agonistic public space. She sees, in Mouffe's conception, a true democratic process or political dialogue.

Bishop (2004: 67) is critical about ideas of participation and has entered into a series of debates with Grant Kester, an art theorist who advocates the dialogical as a form of art.[54] In her critique of social artworks, Bishop sets up a tension by contrasting ideas of the aesthetic versus activism. Bishop discusses the ethics of authorship in dialogic art practices. In Kester's theory of dialogic aesthetics she sees a 'trend toward identity politics – respect of the other, recognition of difference, protection of fundamental liberties, inflexible mode of political correctness – means a rejection of art that might offend or trouble its audience'. Bishop describes Kester as being against sophisticated art and theory, and his position undermines art's political potential.

Bishop says that the tradition of the avant-garde, in challenging and contesting dominant culture, is an integral feature of the political artwork. She makes reference to artists such as Superflex, Jeremy Deller and Atelier van Lieshout as art practitioners that engage with ideas of collectivity and collaboration. She claims, these practices are less to do with Bourriaud's text and more to do with the 'creative rewards of collective activity'. Bishop also supports artworks that create a tension, which becomes visible in the artwork. She wants the relationship or politics of encounter between the artist and others to be present formally in the work such as in the works of Santiago Sierra and Thomas Hirschhorn.

In his response, Kester accuses Bishop of policing art's boundaries, suggesting that her interests in art serve to maintain art as an elite space that undermines art's political potential. Kester wants dialogue between artists and non-art participants as an actual politics of collaborative work. For Kester, avant-garde confrontation is a smokescreen that disguises the privileged languages and codes of art, and this maintains arts separation from society. He thinks that artists must take responsibility for this gap, in what he describes as an ethical engagement with the 'other'.

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[54] Kester and Bishop exchanged several letters on the matter in *Artforum*.

Kester (1999: 4) argues for a 'movement away from the artwork as self-contained entity and toward a more dialogical relationship to the viewer'. The artwork should allow the viewer to 'speak back' - 'the reply becomes in effect part of the works.' Examples feature in the works of Stephen Willats or WochenKlauser, where the artist is active in facilitating dialogue and exchange.

Kester (1999: 3) wants 'art of conversation' to move fixed identities and undo entrenched positions, imagining an openness present in conversational exchange. He wants a straightforward form of communication that does away with what he thinks are the elitist 'insider' languages in art that assume 'universality', arguing 'that the anti-discursive tendency in modern art hypostatizes discourse and communication as inherently oppressive' (Kester 1999: 3). Kester is well aware of what might be a contradiction here, by calling for democracy from within what he criticizes as an elite formation. The artist in Kester's (2004: 110) dialogical aesthetics is therefore crucially aware of their own privileged insider status in any exchanges, thereby avoiding any subjugation of non-art participants. His open, listening and willing artist accepts a more flexible and vulnerable position in their negotiations with others. Kester calls on the artist to be extra vigilant, looking for hierarchies in language and status, in order to arrive at an egalitarian dialogical aesthetics. Kester's artist is then given 'extra' responsibility to be 'extra' egalitarian, raising the status and virtuousness of the social artist as someone more able than the rest. Whether this particular form of autonomous behaviour is possible in Third Way contexts is another question.

Importantly, Kester raises the spectre of socio-political issues in the production of art through engagement with non-art participants. This becomes an ethical and political question for the artist as they include those from outside art both within the art and within the framing and production of artworks. Kester sees this shift in art practice as not imposed by funders and institutions but an extension of post-minimalist, conceptualist and post-studio practices. Kester is influenced by Habermas' discursive communication, but this raises another contradiction as Habermas calls for bracketed speaking in which material or social status is flattened and this is again problematic in art spaces that Kester

himself labels as privileged. Kester's aim is to locate power differentials and bracket them. However, an art that distances itself from such differences invariably mollifies conflict.

Bishop identifies Kester's concerns as an ethics based on the renunciation of authorship, claiming that self-sacrifice is triumphant in socially engaged art practice, a form of activism somewhere between anti-capitalism and the Christian 'good soul'. John Reardon says that, according to socially engaged art practices, artists and the 'orthodoxy' of the field, their work never fails, with the artist constantly reassuring us of their integrity with 'anecdotal testimony' and almost religious overtones. He also points out that participants often have no choice but to submit to the artist, in what are claimed to be open-ended, non-hierarchical processes.[55] Reardon says that to aim to 'naturalize' a democratic process as the centre of art is a belligerent democratization of 'our' practice and is bad for art.[56]

Similarly, Bishop sees the ethical aspects of Kester's argument as threatening the authorial autonomy and complexity of art. Bishop counters ethical issues by placing an emphasis on arts aesthetic, as a universal and free space, that is best positioned to fight rationalizing and instrumental forces. This is why she wants to rid art of ethics, as she perceives this to weakens art's political potential by questioning art's role in challenging the sensibilities of the audience. Kester (1999: 3) is critical of the shock tactics or 'anti-discursive tradition' of the avant-garde, demonstrated in Dada that seek to 'aggressively transform the viewers consciousness', imagined as 'flawed or dulled'. He associates avant-gardism with art's privileged interiority. Bishop claims art is inherently political and thereby justifies her aim to suppress any problems that are raised by Kester's collaborative art.

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[55] Reardon discussed the work of Katherine Bohm and Public Works, suggesting that the participants she works with in vocational contexts (for example her work at a fire station in Germany), are duty-bound to work with artists as part of their employment contract regardless of their personal wishes.
[56] John Reardon, at Interrupt, Arts Council England SEAP symposium, Goldsmiths College, 27th-28th June 2003.

Bishop (2006: 182) draws on Rancière's emancipated spectator.[57] She prefers Rancière's critique of participation when he describes all actors as having an active interpretation of art and all being capable of translating, appropriating and using art for their own agenda. Rancière (2009) points to the aesthetic regime of art as predicated on a confusion between art's autonomy (its position at one remove from instrumental rationality) and heteronomy (its blurring of art and life). 'Untangling this is to miss the point', Rancière says, the ability to see contradiction: the productive contradiction of art's relationship to the social, characterized precisely, by that tension between faith in art's autonomy and belief in art as inextricably bound to the promise of a better world to come.' For him, the aesthetic does not need to be sacrificed for social change – it already inherently contains this ameliorative promise.

Both Bishop and Kester contest what is political in each other's positions and claim that the other is undermining the potential of politics in art. Bishop accuses Kester of producing a consensual art that can be absorbed by the state within liberal policies of social amelioration, whereas Kester says Bishop's policing of the boundaries of art maintains art as a privileged and de-worlded space. However both Kester and Bishop make joint claims on the function of art as resisting capital, and fighting for freedom and equality. Yet in Bishop's mind, ethics are repressive and this is her argument for disconnecting any socio-political realities from art.

Kim Charnley (2011: 49) sums up these two contradictory but overlapping positions most effectively when he says:

> 'Bishop denies the claims of 'ethics' and in doing so slides into an unsavory argument that naturalizes the economic power and social prestige associated with the arts. Kester on the other hand associates the autonomy of the artist with inequality and seeks to charge the artist with absolving it by ethical reflection and consensual dialogue. Both arguments are struggling with the contradiction that is created when arts autonomous criticality is superimposed onto art as a socio-economic nexus of power.'

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[57]Rancière, J., (2009) The Emancipated Spectator, Verso

Charnley proceeds to say that they both end up neutralizing the political despite their intentions not to do so. Bishop does this, he claims, by suggesting that critical collaborative art must be blind to the social relations that constitute it. Kester achieves this because, in his theory, the political becomes a generalized ethical claim on behalf of the 'other' that art excludes. He adds that both theorists are complicit in their attempts to erase contradiction in order to maintain a consistent account of the political. Any arguments like those of Kester and Bishop, that attempt to overcome this contradiction, result in polarizing or neutralizing the field.

Charnley supports dissensus as a method to re-evaluate collaborative art. He claims that artwork that explores and thrives on dissensus needs neither to abandon ethics nor should it relinquish the tradition of avant-garde confrontation. What the dissensus artist provides is a way to open up art's inside, one that challenges art's limited totality by exposing its inside to art's 'other', the outside. He refers to Beech and Roberts' (2002) *philistine* as providing a dissenting outsider. With the philistine in the art gallery we have the 'definitional other of art and aesthetics', a rival to the traditional onlooker of art, with Beech and Roberts seeking to reinstate the philistine with an equal claim to art and culture and 'to present the philistine's grievances as universal'. Beech (2004: 17) does not see the philistine as culturally superior. Instead, like the proletariat in the economy, this figure 'holds a unique place within the totality of cultural relations which means that it is the key to understanding culture and, potentially a powerful agent in transforming it.'

Charnley sets out the dominant theories in social art practices as dialogical aesthetics and agonistic practices, but he then proposes dissensual art as another position. This other position is an art that is not based on ethics and that maintains art's avant-garde approach to contestation. It is this theory that is closest to Freee's conception of participative counter-publics that I will discuss in chapter 4.

But where do these theories of participation meet art practice in the context of Third Way cultural policy? The Relational Aesthetic model of producing convivial, interactive (non-

political) subjects is common in the state funded art gallery. The theories set out by Kester and Bishop establish rival relations; Kester's ethical dialogic aesthetics finds a home in Third Way community art projects that seek to foster neutral power relations and share some degree of authorial control between artist and community; Bishop's shock art as a contemplative device is maintained within the 'high' cultural events such as biennials.[58] Is there a location for a dissensual counter-public art?

3.3 The Freee art collective and Third Way cultural policy

Is there a place for ideas of dissensual participative art as suggested by Charnely? What tactics and strategies do Freee use in their work?

Freee regularly work in the field of publicly funded art either working for state-funded art galleries or agencies working in culture-led regeneration encouraged by an agenda which is set by cultural policy. Curators (like artists) have varying degrees of criticality concerning the social function of art - some aim to extend existing discourse in the subject whilst others do not. Artists like Freee are commissioned to work in this context, often in connection to curators whose work relates to questions of 'publics', identity politics and urbanism.[59]

The majority of requests received by Freee come from curators or organizations interested in developing new and critical ideas about art in society. Freee look for opportunities to produce models of social art practice that set out to challenge what are in the main, liberal and hegemonic functions for art. Debates on participation are of particular interest to Freee, as we see participation as a crucial point of hegemony whereby dominant ideologies are able to legitimize the social order, in part by the management of official culture.

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[58] Forms of agonistic art do feature within art biennials where such controversies are framed and contained within art world discourse. The biennial is a feature of cities looking to create publicity as cultural (and economic) centres. 'Difficult political art' is accommodated in this context as part of a cultural public sphere wherein political debate, difference and even dissent is flagged as evidence of a mature democracy.
[59] Other artists and art groups working in this context include Public Works, Nils Norman and N55.

Freee aims to bring new ideas to the discourse on art and participation by interrogating the relationship between the art institution and the citizens subjected to 'public' policies. It is Freee's intention to initiate projects that produce dissensus and conceive of counter-publics. Our model of a counter-public aims to use the context of Third Way art as a venue for dissenting and protesting publics to produce political exchange as a public sphere. This envisions the opening up of the official public sphere of state-funded art to non – official publics. We aim to bring art's 'outside' into art's 'inside', to challenge the internal workings of art that exist on the basis of exclusions (publics and ideologies). Dissensus tends to be minimized in most state-funded art and this, I believe, exacerbates art's already existing social isolation and relevance for the majority of citizens.

Dissensus, according to Mouffe (1993: 151) is essential to politics and is that 'which does not deny the constitutive role of conflict and antagonism and the fact that division is irreducible.' Rancière (2010: 8) also uses dissensus in his criticism of Habermas' idea of argumentative exchange as a presupposition that interlocutors who are 'obliged to engage in a relation to mutual comprehension' are 'pre-established.' Instead, Rancière emphasizes that for genuine political speech the struggle is to have one's voice heard and for oneself to be recognized as a legitimate partner in debate.

3.3.1 Artwork 1: How to Be Hospitable

The commission for Freee's artworks produced as How to Be Hospitable came from The Collective Gallery as part of the project One Mile curated by Kate Gray and funded by the Scottish Arts Council.[60] The project was one of eight in the programme.[61] One Mile explored the 'neighbourhood of the gallery', an idea of 'community engagement' amongst the varied, 'fragmented' and 'fluid communities in reach of the gallery'. The project was described as a 'Three year programme introducing groups and individuals who live or work within a one mile radius of the Collective Gallery to artists to make

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[60] Lead artist (and later to become gallery director), Gray was our point of negotiation. She had developed the concept of the One Mile project, had appointed the artists and was involved in managing artists output in that she was eager that the works were in line with her ethos for the overall project

[61] Thematic projects are common within arts commissioning, in which several artists are invited to work on a common project over several months, thereby forming a season of events with a thematic link. In the case of this project it was the 'Grzewczy' or 'Polish season'.

work of mutual interest.' (The Collective Gallery 2009: 121) The project aimed to re-imagine the area by remapping it and for the artists to enter into processes of developing 'new encounters, relationships and strategies, entering negotiations and experimental partnerships, from which genuine collaborations could emerge only after a period of exposure and adjustment'. Writer Will Bradley (2009: 116) described the process as containing an 'idea of openness', and he suggests, somewhat hopefully, that it has 'a potential for disruption.'

The project aimed to develop 'new audiences' a common function of gallery programmes or outreach projects since Arts Council (and SCA) policy changes under New Labour. Audience development aims to bring communities or individuals who are non-users of art galleries into contact with the functions of the art gallery.[62] Outreach work extends the work of artists into non-art contexts in the city as well as using the gallery as a base and a workspace for contact with community representatives or individuals who volunteer to become a part of artists' projects. Hence the gallery has become a venue for the wider community as a resource for education. As a 'specialist advisor for visual art', Stephen Beddoe evaluated One Mile on behalf of the Scottish Arts Council. In a six-page document, Beddoe described how he thought the One Mile programme was a 'laudable attempt to engage new audiences and communities via innovative and experimental projects.' [see Appendix I.]

Freee's brief was to work with the 'Polish community' in Edinburgh, a long-established cultural sub-group formed initially by trading links between seaports and then bolstered by ex-service personnel choosing to settle in the city after the Second World War. Edinburgh is a popular city with new Polish émigrés, with the Scottish government

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[62] Third sector organizations and charities involved included: *Move On* a peer education project for people between 18 and 28 who have experiences of homelessness, care homes or housing problems; *DOSTI* a support group for ethnic minority women, particularly Muslim women, who live in the local area. *Working Together*: an agency that aims to reduce the number children being looked after by the council, being excluded from school, truanting from school and having to attend residential or special schools; and *The Ark Trust*: works with homeless people in and around the city of Edinburgh. They provide advocacy and outreach services and crisis assistance. Also the Cowgate Centre, a hostel for the homeless, Space 44 a women only drop-in centre, and the Women's circle from the Central Mosque. (The Collective Gallery 2009:120)

website proactively encouraging Poles to immigrate, extending what it considers the long-standing ties between Scotland and Poland. For our project we wanted to rethink ideas of cultural participation in order not to simply produce affirmative artworks. The artworks in *How to be Hospitable* were an attempt to *not* include specified 'communities' as participants and to use the platform provided by the gallery to discuss the bigger issues of immigration and multi-culturalism.

During the course of our negotiations with the curator we suggested several approaches to the project in order to find an agreeable process by which to work. However it became apparent that our methods ran counter to hers. Freee did not wish to follow the methods the curator proposed because we did not want to be instrumentalized or to instrumentalize others. These differences invariably led to some tension between Freee and the curator and, as negotiations faltered, our relationship with the gallery began to cool.

Freee's intention was to examine immigration in a way that did not resort to using participation as a means to produce depictions of Polish identity as a form of public relations.[63] As an eventual compromise we agreed to work with three volunteers - Freee consists of a trio and we thought it apt that our participants were equal to us in number. We wanted our volunteers to participate in the formation of public opinion through a discursive process in response to specific debates, in this instance immigration. Freee devised three text works that problematized aspects of immigration: as economic migration driven by capital such as the deregulation of labour laws; and as an historic norm; as a challenge to ideas of more located identity. The three texts works were:

> *Fight against multiculturalism commodifying your difference.*
> *Immigrants of the World Unite!*
> *I am a Local Outsider; I am a Foreign Citizen; I am a Migrant Worker.*

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[63] We did not want to represent Polish émigrés so we even went to the lengths of proposing that we worked in Poland to develop the artworks. We wanted to have text works manufactured in Poland that addressed émigrés living in Edinburgh that were then imported and displayed in Scotland. The text works would therefore discuss and enact the processes of emigration and capital that we thought would offer a beautiful elliptical exchange both economically and culturally.

In the exhibition, text works were presented on props and were photographed as Freee held them. The images were printed as billboard posters and presented in the gallery and at three locations in Edinburgh. (figs. 5, 6, 8, 9, 11.) The gallery also displayed the props emblazoned with slogans and a fourth slogan work, that read, *You can judge a culture by the way it treats its immigrants* (fig. 7).

In the exhibition phase of *How to be Hospitable*, we published the dialogue with our three Polish volunteers as a video work. The conversation was based upon their response or their 'talking back' to the three text works produced as billboard posters. (figs. 10, 13.) The volunteers were asked for their opinions on these works. This became a short video work in which our volunteers were filmed standing facing our billboard slogans with the voiceover providing their views on the slogans and the issues in general. The volunteers did not see any stigma attached to immigration across 'new Europe'. However, they did remark: *"We did not think we were immigrants until we came to Britain"*.

3.3.2 Characteristics of socially-engaged art in the One Mile project

There were some common organizational and formal aspects of curating social art practice that became apparent during the early development of the One Mile project. The process of negotiating and delivering a commission revealed the position of the curator Kate Gray with regard to the theories and practice of social art practice. In the One Mile project, the conceptions and models of art and participation that Gray wanted were closer to those of Kester's ethical position and Bourriaud's micro-utopian ideas, whereas Freee's position was closer to that of Charnley's conception of a dissensual art. The dispute that arose between Gray and Freee was due to our differences on the politics of social art. The manner of our approach and discussion exposed her perspective and it is unlikely that her position on these matters would have been revealed through any other means, for example via formal interview.

There are four characteristics of socially-engaged art in the One Mile project:
On the first characteristic, the aim for the curator was the representation and facilitation of a specified target group – in this case 'the Polish community'. It was thought that

Freee would forgo our own autonomy as authors of the work in order to become a conduit for a 'pre' imagined Polish community. The intention was that the work of the artists would be to make representations on behalf of or with this target group in order to make this group more visible to wider publics and thereby to celebrate cultural differences. For the most part, Freee was successful in avoiding the directions of the curator: the volunteers were only presented via a video interview in the gallery exhibition and we were able to proceed with our tactic of publishing our embodied text slogans (see Chapter 4).

We did not want to make thematic works about Polish experience. Rather, we wanted to open up a debate about the underlying issues of global capitalism that fuels immigration. Similarly, we did not want to reduce questions of integration, migration, etc to a convivial multi-cultural form of public relations. We wanted to rethink ideas of cultural participation in order to avoid simply producing affirmative artworks. The gallery was sensitive to our approach. The gallery board and Gray thought the content of one of the posters was inappropriate and barred its display at an outdoor advertising display venue. The poster carried the slogan *Fight Against Multiculturalism Commodifying Your Difference* (fig. 6) and was carried by Freee wearing various headgear including an Afro wig, a 'see-you Jimmy' Tam O'Shanter hat and a marsh Arab headdress. In response to the gallery blocking the publication of the work, Freee resorted to changing the artwork for the billboard poster and displaying only the slogan.

The second characterization was based on numbers of participants. The curator, Gray placed significant value on a greater mass of participants which for her added up to a more inclusive solution (and possibly greater value for money). The gallery were eager for Freee to follow a process of engagement with as many Polish groups and individuals as they could muster. There was an assumption that we would follow this model. We tried to resist this scheme but the curator insisted on our use of participants. We eventually succumbed to the demands of the curator but chose to work with only three volunteers who were willing to work with us.

A third characteristic was the insistence on social networking events. Again, for the curator, the more events, the better the project became. The curator began to programme a series of gallery events to coincide with the exhibition period of the project including food tasting and musical evenings - a compromise we were forced to accept, as 'events management' appeared a habitual process at the gallery.[64] Freee chose to maintain some distance from what were a series of convivial themed audience development events staged to coincide with our project.[65] It was not our aim to produce affirmative public relations events on behalf of the gallery.

The fourth characteristic is the duration of research activity and contact with the Polish community advocated by the gallery. The gallery's view was the longer the research period or time spent with the specified group the better. To the curator, this amounted to a more earnest and equal relationship between artist and participant to enable more understanding between the parties. The curator's methods required a particular work ethic of 'care' to maximise contact time with subjects to create links and networks. For us this 'care' for participants was less a genuine 'relationship' and was more a form of paternalism. Any individuals who volunteered were unpaid and giving up their free time, a situation common to participatory projects, whereby time rich volunteers tended to be retired people or those without jobs, hardly a representative group of Edinburgh citizens. We thought it was more considerate not to impose on peoples' free time. We did not want to be in a situation in which Freee received a fee and our volunteers did not, another underlying feature of the economics of participatory art.

3.3.3 A report on *How to be Hospitable* by the Scottish Arts Council

In his report, Stephen Beddoe [see Appendix I] provides a frank statement on what he thought the Freee project lacked, and in doing so he provided an insight into how the funding agency, the Scottish Arts Council (SAC) understands the purpose of social arts practice. Beddoe was negative about the Freee project, describing the exhibition as

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[64] The gallery devised a programme of events alongside the project, titled as the Grzewczy Season, which included a 'public feedback session with Mark Lazarowicz MP and Joanna Jarzymowska (poet), Polish food-tasting evening with Del Polonia, Edinburgh.'
[65] Freee organized a symposium with speakers Mark Hutchinson and David Burrows to discuss the ideas of art as a counter-public.

'failing on any number of levels; visual, critical and social' and 'lacking in quality, worth and (indeed) warmth.' His criticism was that the exhibition and the events were targeted towards 'artists and cultural theorists with an interest in this area of practice and theory rather than with the wider community'. Interestingly, he assumes here that 'the wider community' would not be concerned with these issues and accuses Freee of being an elite group with elite interests. The exhibition was, for him, not engaging enough, in fact 'depressingly lacking in engagement' and the resultant exhibition was 'rather dispiriting and distant'.

I do not want to defend the project against Beddoe's specific criticism, although I do think he fails to understand Freee's conception of the public sphere and rigorous approach to representation and identity politics. Referring to his evaluation it is possible to draw from it the expectations in functions and form that the project funders might prefer. Beddoe appeared to want a project that matches the aims of social inclusion policy. It is not clear if Beddoe's criticism is based on an understanding of current discourse on the theories of art and participation or on his own position on them. The report makes it clear that the anticipated event should have been more engaging than the one, which Freee presented and should have been of more 'appeal' to what he describes as a wider audience. Could this mean he wanted a more convivial and sociable event? One that he believes would have engaged with communities and built new audiences for the gallery?

What is evident from the feedback from both the curator and the representative of the funding council is that they had an expectation that the project would provide *particular* forms of participation for an audience. Formal and organizational characteristics came to the fore; and specified communities were targeted - social or convivial events were

Fig. 5. *I' m a Local Outsider, I'm a Migrant Worker, I'm a Foreign Citizen*, for 'How To Be Hospitable',
Collective Gallery, Edinburgh, billboard poster, Freee, 2008.

Fig. 6. Fight Against Multiculturalism Commodifying your Difference, for 'How To Be Hospitable',

Collective Gallery, billboard poster, Freee, 2008.

Fig. 7. You can judge a culture by the way it treats its immigrants, for 'How To Be Hospitable', Collective Gallery, Edinburgh, vinyl text, Freee, 2008.

Fig. 8. *Immigrants of the World Unite*, for 'How To Be Hospitable', Collective Gallery, Edinburgh, Freee, 2008.

Fig. 9. *Immigrants of the World Unite*, for 'How To Be Hospitable',
Brick Lane, London, Freee, 2008.

Fig. 10. Immigrants of the World Unite, for 'How To Be Hospitable', volunteers and
billboard poster, Edinburgh, Freee, 2008.

Fig. 11. I'm a Local Outsider, I'm a Migrant Worker, I'm a Foreign Citizen for
'How To Be Hospitable', volunteers and billboard poster, Edinburgh, Freee, 2008.
Fig.12. Volunteers for 'How To Be Hospitable', Edinburgh, Freee, 2008

Fig.12. Volunteers for 'How To Be Hospitable', Edinburgh, Freee, 2008

Fig. 13. *Fight Against Multiculturalism Commodifying your Difference,* for 'How To Be Hospitable', Collective Gallery, billboard poster, Freee, 2008.

considered to be important and value was given to forms of time rich consultation and research. What was evident in this example was an ethics of care. The artist is tasked with a process of audience development and is encouraged to arrive at convivial and affirmative approaches to working with publics. This, I can only assume, is the 'warm' and convivial model of participation that was missing from Freee's approach.

3.4 Conclusion:

This chapter has discussed the dominant conceptions of art and participation in the field of socially-engaged art, its inter-relationship with the economy of state-funded cultural policy and its application in this context. The art project *How to Be Hospitable* by Freee at the Collective Gallery provided evidence on the expectations of both the curator and funder as the commissioners. This enabled me to characterize some of the modes of practice and theory in the field.

Theories of socially-engaged art practice

Leading theorists on art and participation (Bourriaud, Kester and Bishop) have been engaged in a lively debate in recent years. The critique of Bourriaud's relational aesthetics is that it produces art which is convivial and which exists as micro-utopias within the comfort of the art world. Bishop, in her support of agonistic social art, is accused of denying the ethico-politico problems in the art world and therefore she inadvertently maintains a de-worlded autonomy of art. Kester's dialogical aesthetics provides a radical ethical model of participation. However, he is accused of handing over authorship to the marginalized 'other'. New positions have emerged including Charnley's view that a dissensus model of art practice need neither abandon ethics nor relinquish the tradition of avant-garde confrontation.

What this discussion shows is the range of positions that inform practice in the field of socially-engaged art. The most frequent models of art and participation in UK Third Way cultural production are variations of Bourriaud's convivial participation and Kester's ethics of participation. These dominant trends in socially-engaged art inform the expectation of curators in the state-funded sector, characterized as more care, more people, and more time spent with participants. This was the model for social art practice advocated at the Collective Gallery.

The funders' expectation for the role of socially-engaged art practice

The second expectation is that of the funders, such as the Scottish Arts Council. My research from the Collective Gallery goes some way to demonstrate how cultural policy wants forms of art participation that have a positive function as part of social inclusion policy. The funder sees advantages in using social art practice in 'developing new audiences': therefore participation means to bring particular communities or publics who are traditionally considered 'non-users' of art galleries into contact with the functions of the art gallery. The site of the gallery for outreach work extends the work of artists into non-art contexts in the city as well as using the gallery as a base, drop-in centre and workspace for contact with community representatives or individuals who volunteer to become part of artists' projects. The art gallery is thus seen as a venue for a wider community beyond that of the bourgeois art audience.

By embracing socially-engaged art practice, the state has funnelled it into supporting its agenda of education and community building as a 'public good'. This is Frayling's (2007) 'force for change', of the Arts Council's desire for 'civic pride' and building 'vibrant communities'. The function for art here is as a form of improvement for those without art in their lives. The recipients are those considered to be in need of change who will be assisted to become more middle-class. As I discussed in chapter 1, this is the Third Way rhetoric of art's social function as a cultural public sphere. Art policies aim to provide aspirations and opportunities via education for economically marginalized citizens in post-industrial contexts by increasing access to and promoting participation in cultural programmes. This is Holden's (2006) space of 'trust' and 'mutual respect', a cultural sphere for 'sociability and enjoyment of shared experiences'. However, as I have pointed out in earlier chapters, the cultural sector is not an ideal model for democracy and remains a contested space.

As an advisor to the national funding body Stephen Beddoe was clearly interpreting what he thinks are the appropriate parameters for public participation in art and what gives good public value. It is not possible to know exactly what Beddoe thinks is a public good,

but in this case neither experimental nor for that matter political art fit his criteria. In terms of theories of participation, Bishop's model of agonism would not be welcome, considered as shocking and exploitative, although such agonism would be fine within the boundaries of a high art biennale where transgression is managed and expected. Commissioners prefer forms of public cohesion so perhaps Bourriaud's convivial forms of social participation are apt. Certainly Beddoe wanted warmth.

The convergence of convivial socially-engaged art and Third Way cultural policy: two 'weak' conceptions of participation

When convivial and consensus forming theories of art and participation meet the instrumentalized conceptions and expectations for participation as seen in cultural policy, citizens get a very compromised and unpromising form of participation. The state's desire to improve citizens and *problem* 'communities' via its agencies served to produce and manage forms of participation, with a weak understanding of political and social forms of collectivity.

Models of art and participation in publicly funded art follow ideas of relational aesthetics, in which participation is convivial and social, or is an ethical activity concerned with ideas of community representation. As we have seen, the latter version is firmly co-opted within the agenda of institutional social inclusion policy, at which point 'open talk' became a managed process. Therefore dominant ideas of art and participation, via cultural institutions, provide participants with depoliticized social art, one that produces Third Way ideas of public service (non-critical, non-political) and aims to construct civic identities (Third Way citizenship models). Third Way cultural policy therefore tends to produce artistic social interventions but not artistic political interventions.

Based on the evidence from my art practice, 'participation' in socially-engaged art funded via UK cultural policy does not mean a collaborative process in which people have a say and their opinions can lead to collective action. Instead, participative art manages and prevents disagreement or dissent. Participation becomes a process for producing affirmative and compliant forms of engagement. Visual art produced via Third

Way cultural policy is instrumentalized and functions to manage relations between citizens. Modes of art and participation (representations/ processes) are articulated as convivial wherein antagonisms (economic/ social/ cultural/political) are omitted. My concern is that this process leads to debased public spheres.

Cultural policy that produces social cohesion as a priority is hegemonic, in that it supports and maintains the status quo by preventing open democratic discussion by attempting to produce a unified and acquiescent public. Art produced via Third Way cultural policy has economic and social aims: it carries dominant ideology, and it functions as a means of constructing public opinion via official state culture systems. Therefore it is a colonization of the public sphere.
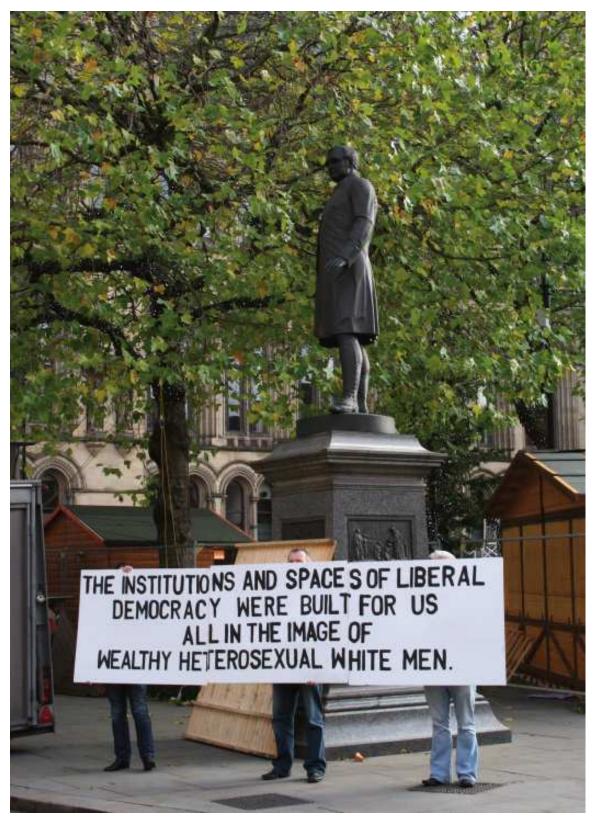
Fig. 14. The Institutions and Spaces of Liberal Democracy Were Built For Us All in the Image of Wealthy Heterosexual White Men, for 'How to Talk to Public Art', photograph, Manchester, Freee, 2007.

Chapter 4: Towards a counter-hegemonic art

4.1   Introduction

The thesis has so far demonstrated that the instrumental agenda of Third Way cultural policy, that requires cultural projects to carry out social inclusion policy and urban and cultural regeneration insists upon affirmative art practice. I claim that social art practices have become inculcated in this policy - the theories of social art practices, their interpretation and implementation by curators and artists, either in galleries or third sector agencies, in the main, lean toward convivial and affirmative models and outcomes sought in Third Way governance. Hence cultural production becomes a less promising space for critical and social art practices that seek alternative conceptions of art and publics. I use Habermasian theories and terminology, and propose that the administrative agenda of Third Way cultural policy can be understood as steering media, colonizing the lifeworld and that this leads to debased public spheres rather than open space for discussion.

In response to what is no less than a crisis for democracy, there is an urgent need for what Krzysztof Wodiczko calls 'fearless speaking' about matters of the public and publicness.[66] In the field of Third Way cultural production, what strategies can artists

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[66] Krzysztof Wodiczko is here quoting Michel Foucault's text *'Fearless Speech'* the title of which refers to

develop in response to these conditions? What sort of art can artists make that is able to engage the social and political yet sidesteps the preferred affirmative method of engagement with the public?

This chapter explores how the logic of public sphere theory has been employed in order to develop Freee's art practice and how public sphere theory is manifest in the tactics and processes used by Freee to form political public spheres. This takes place in the context of the steering media of Third Way cultural policy. I reflect upon what Freee's artworks do in specified Third Way commissioning contexts; how they question the role of art in relation to social inclusion and culture-led regeneration via their content and actions and how they propose alternative conceptions of participative art and its publics.
The two main questions I address in this chapter are:

1. What aspects of public sphere theory do Freee's artworks bring to Third Way cultural policy?

2. In what ways do Freee's artworks contribute to the discourse of contemporary theories and practice in social art?

To address these concerns I will examine two further art projects by Freee:

Artwork 2: *How To Talk to Public Art*, 2006, commissioned by BBC and Arts Council England;

Artwork 3: *How To Talk to Buildings*, 2005, commissioned by ARC, Hull, UK.

4.2   Art, opinion formation and dissensus

As I discussed in chapter two, the Habermasian conception of the public sphere perceives people publishing to other people as a means of collective opinion formation. Habermas believes this enables a way of being separate to, and potentially counter to steering media i.e. the state and those private interests that may control and debase official channels of

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the Greek term 'parrhesia' which translates as those who take a risk by telling, i.e. they take it as a moral duty and forget self-interest by being frank about their view on the matter of truth. Foucault, M., (2001) Fearless Speech, Semiotext(e)

opinion formation. Forms of publishing enable people to pass ideas to each other and in this way opinion formation is a process of deliberation amongst people to ask the most basic political question – "how are we going to live together?"

In this Habermasian conception, the public sphere is not public because of *its spaces* but because of *its activities*. Public spheres can occur in any social situation therefore negating the distinctions that exist between public and private space. Hence Freee, do not make a distinction between the interior spaces of the art gallery or the public realm as experienced in the high street, as public spheres can occur in either location.[67] Habermas believes that politics needs to become a part of an everyday discourse for the majority to upset those divisions between private thought and public deliberation. Philosophers like Rancière (2010) and Mouffe might disagree with Habermas about the politics of the public sphere but they all agree that the political is the subject of the public sphere. It is these aspects of the public sphere, of participation in collective political deliberation, that Freee is committed to enacting.

Opinion formation is a key aspect of art. By its very tradition in Western bourgeois culture, art is an expression of opinion and something to share opinions about. As Terry Eagleton (1984: 12) says, despite art's bourgeois conventions it is something that is published and addresses people and it therefore makes things public. However, when considering art's potential for social and political change we must abandon art's current formations (that maintain social and cultural division) in order to rethink the social horizon of art; both the false construct of artistic autonomy, and with it art's tendency for social isolation and economic exclusivity; and the cultural production informed by Third Way cultural policy.

We must bring to art what is external to art, to bring the totality of social relations to art, i.e. what is marginalized, denied or repudiated back into art's formations in order to stop

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[67] The public sphere can occur anywhere - on the street, in the café or on the bus. Neither can one differentiate between interior spaces of the gallery nor exterior spaces in the public realm as they can all function as a public sphere - as a place to discuss politics and to plan collective action. Although in both cases restrictions, limitations and regulations apply that require circumventing.

art's separateness from the social. This includes political ideas such as dissensus. According to Charnley (2011: 52), 'a collaborative art of dissensus requires that art is willing to use an engagement with its 'outside' to challenge itself, rather than to reproduce the hegemonic terms of its 'failed totality'. He quotes a text work by Freee [68] which he claims 'aptly summarizes this need for collaborative art to explore its own negation in order to seek a dissensual politics: "The function of public art for the gallery is to preserve the distinction between art and the rest of culture by establishing a legitimate form of exception in art's own terms." This is to both challenge and negate the tradition of bourgeois universality and the rationalizing impacts of capitalism. Referring to Freee's art projects Miles (2005: 904) says that Freee, 'do not adopt an activist position but one of seeking to change art rather than the world, as a possible means to change part of the way in which the idea of a world (distinct from the bio-realm of Earth) is constructed.' Freee believe that only then can art be counter-hegemonic.

4.2.1   The political and the univocal in art

Mark Hutchinson (2009: 51) traces the negation of art back to the avant-garde when he says:

> 'For the historical avant-garde, the divisions within art were conterminous with the divisions elsewhere in society. The merging of art and everyday life was not about overcoming a putative division between art and everything else but about seeing division within art as being the same as those in everyday life: divisions predicated upon, and reproducing, absences, lacks, ills, aporias, negations and so on. It was necessary to impugn the idea of art as something special and separate from everything else as a prerequisite for transforming the divisions and absences internal to art.'

As Hutchinson says, in the broadest sense, the work of the avant-garde is to simultaneously think through the social, the political and art itself. This is to think of art as political in terms both of its acts and the agency of artists, rather than simply in terms

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[68] An artwork, a vinyl wall text, 6m x 3m, in the solo exhibition 'How to Make a Difference', curated by Andrew Hunt at International Project Space, 27 September to 3 November 2007.

of either the form or the content of artworks. A politicized art is then concerned with art's social functions and aims to undo those negative aspects of art's institutionalism and to recognize when art functions as steering media. Hutchinson (2007) thinks that a politicized art immediately sets itself as a counter-public sphere to the dominant system. It constructs public spheres that go against liberal values such as the protection of the private (property and interests). Politicized art calls for debate and is ultimately against reticence.

Steve Klee (2009: 18) remarks upon the way that 'political art', which he terms as 'univocal', is criticized for being too explicit as it is said to impose upon the viewer 'one interpretive framework, through which to judge 'the world' framed by the artwork.' It is dismissed as authoritarian by Rancière (2007: 260) who 'is committed to the notion of the inherent instability of meaning, and he values those meaning-generating-processes that emphasize this instability.' For Rancière, art that provides ambiguity, with 'suggested' meanings whilst at the same time preventing any resolved meaning, is political. Therefore he considers the political resource in the artwork as the lack of fixed meaning.

Rancière's idea of the political stems from his concept of the police and the Demos; the police as those features that order society, government and economics but also as representing those general opinions, beliefs and power that run through civil society. The Demos on the other hand are the groups or communities who are subordinate to the dominant order and who do not fit into the order of the police. The Demos raise their demands using direct univocal statements. Klee suggests that what Rancière overlooks is that 'it is in this moment when the 'direct statement' is voiced by a marginal group – or more accurately when this marginal group comes into being by 'disagreeing' – that the partisan statement is precisely *not* univocal.' It produces 'clear speech acts' which create ambiguity by introducing an alternate reality.' Klee (2009: 24) goes on to say that 'if all art that incorporates clear political slogans and demands is dismissed as authoritarian because of its univocality, then we will misrecognize those moments when these slogans actually introduce ambiguity into the social by forcing a split in the distribution of the

sensible.' This idea connects with the sloganeering text works and tactics of Freee as we produce artworks that aim to divide opinion.

4.3 Artwork 2: *How to Talk to Public Art*

The artwork *How to Talk to Public Art* is an example of how Freee's practice attempts to generate and promote political public spheres in order to divide opinion. The artworks provide specific examples of these tactics, in this case slogan writing and publishing, that constitute what I think is a public spherian art practice.

The project *How To Talk to Public Art* was commissioned by ACE and the BBC as part of a larger project entitled the *Power of Art* and to accompany Simon Schama's BBC 2 television programme of the same name.[69] The project was said to be 'a series about the force, the need, the passion of art….the power of art.' ACE and the BBC commissioned 'ten exciting contemporary artists to create work for the Power of Art'.[70] Each artist was invited to create a walking tour that explored and documented the cultural power of a chosen UK city. The presentation of the artworks was to coincide with the screening of the TV series as part of a promotional strategy and was to be distributed over a variety of media, including Youtube, mobile networks, public screens and some live events. The works were therefore intended to feature as publicity for the BBC television programme in order to function as an audience development initiative for ACE.[71]

Paulette O'Brien and Lawrence Lane, directors of the 'International 3', Manchester, nominated Freee for the commission. In response to the BBC brief Freee developed the artwork *How to Talk to Public Art* in which we address public art in Manchester city centre. The artwork comprised of fourteen text works and slogans about public art and

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[69] The project was commissioned as part of BBC's *Power of Art* series. 2006. www.bbc.co.uk/arts/powerofart (last accessed 12.3.2011)

[70] The project was based on Schama's art historical perspective of the cultural significance of art production during 'moments of commotion'. Although Schama attempts to refute certain romantic myths, his account further romanticizes the artist's individualistic struggle to make 'astounding' art.

[71] The programming presented a seemingly radical view of culture and is an example of state funded art functioning as a cultural public sphere in which it presents liberal values of freedom and openness.

urban design. We made a series of props, placards and banners that displayed our slogan texts, which were then performed in front of camera adjacent to examples of public art in order to produce fourteen short film sequences. The edited films were shown on Youtube and the big screen in Manchester city centre and at several subsequent exhibitions.[72]

Freee wrote the slogans for *How to Talk to Public Art* in order to describe how public art and civic monuments reflect layers of hierarchical power and dominant cultural beliefs – that function as a process of opinion formation for the state and capital, economically, socially and culturally. We occupied key civic sites in order to change public spaces and targeted our words at those monuments that dominated these civic environments. Our slogans were written on speech bubbles, banners, large-scale placards and badges etc, For example *The institutions and spaces of liberal democracy were built for us all in the image of wealthy heterosexual white men'* (fig. 14) was presented to a series of statues of prominent civic leaders and entrepreneurs outside Manchester Town Hall, Princess Street. Also *Is it me, or do monarchs have an unfair advantage when it comes to being seen and heard* (fig. 15) was offered up to the statue of Queen Victoria in Piccadilly Gardens. Freee developed the slogans in terms of narratives, jokes, histories and hopes in order to highlight the *public life* that goes on around *public art*.

In the artwork *How To Talk to Public Art,* Freee present ourselves as a public in spatial terms, but also using a specific 'politicized' mode of address, with home-made, handwritten banners and placards. The artworks presented ideas of protest in the public realm, specifically in public spaces occupied by monuments and the performance became a specific form of temporary public sculpture with its own mode of address. In doing so, Freee propose an alternative narrative around existing officially sanctioned public artworks, urban design, regeneration schemes and civic monuments, with ideas and values that ran counter to those intended by the cultural and political institutions that produced them.

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[72] The exhibitions included *Protest is Beautiful*, 1000000mph gallery, London and *How to Make a Difference,* International Project Space Birmingham.

4.3.1 Sloganeering; fearless speaking in the public sphere

Freee's artworks comprise of slogans and can therefore be characterized as a form of 'text art'.[73] Text art or text as art is a term commonly used to describe art associated with the 'linguistic turn' in art since conceptualism.[74] The text in Freee's artwork aims to deliver spoken public statements in the public realm. Publishing our opinions in the public domain is Freee's way of contributing to a political public sphere. The slogans are public spherian in that they aim to produce opinion formation within arenas of collective intercourse by encouraging debate and proposing models, which question the way things are.

The 'sloganeering' artworks are concerned with the transformative potential of the slogan, i.e. that slogans can propose alternative realities and reverse hegemonic ideas. The artworks can produce dialectics by the testing of truths through discussion; demanding open disputation between opposing social forces. Freee write slogans that call for debate creating artworks which are triggers for discussion; revealing and generating public opinions that may usually remain hidden, thereby enabling discursive space for dissent and opinion formation. The content of Freee's sloganeering artworks is without compromise as our aim is for the message to be unequivocal. The use of language could be described as explicit, declaring Freee's beliefs and therefore it can be considered to be what Klee terms 'univocal'. In publishing our univocal opinion, Freee do not aim to make a consensus for other parties to agree with. Instead we seek to encourage a debate that

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[73] Fighting talk - Slogan: a short catchy phrase used in advertising etc. or a party cry; a watchword, guiding principle or motto – anglicised from the Gaelic *sluagh-ghairm – sluagh* army + *gairm* shout. *The Oxford Encyclopedic English Dictionary*, Oxford University Press (1991)

[74] It represents an increase in artists' use of dialogic and discursive mechanisms by which artists have extended arts protocols and boundaries. In the 1960s and 1970s artists investigated the use of language and problematizing where meaning resides. Nowadays artistic enquires concerned with text is seen as a conventional mode of art practice.

will encompass those who agree but also draw in those with oppositional ideas. Our aim is to divide opinion and create the conditions for discussion, debate, dispute and protest.

In *How to Talk to Public Art* the topic of Freee's slogans address the internal politics of art – art's function in society and its role in political governance. The content of this artwork brings political ideas to the discourse on public art commissioning – public art's function and its ideologies in representing ideas of power, hierarchy, nationalism and knowledge in society.[75] Freee's intention here is to problematize what is deemed to be official art or so called public art: in the short film, we encounter existing public artworks and symbolic design in the public realm and talk back to the objects. Through the publishing of our 'counter' artworks we make our opinion known to others: the work is then a publicly funded artwork on the issue of publicly funded art.

By confronting a monument or an example of public art, we changed our relationship to it; we declare that we recognize its presence but we deny its authority, undermining the revered status of cultural symbols elevated on 'plinths' with humour and 'counter' ideas. In engaging in this process we intend to recognize power but liberate ourselves by talking back to it. This is the emancipatory potential of a counter political public sphere - a tactic of encouraging talk on *alternatives*. Creating argument and division strengthens actors' opinion through rational discourse. Paul O'Neill (2007: 38) comments on Freee's conception of art's autonomy as a direct call for the political in art and beyond 'as individual responsibility, collective action and self determination within society' and what this then requires is the 'active engagement with a public made up of funders, commissioners, developers, administrators, curators, consultants and all those individuals who constitute an audience for art's production and its reception, regardless of how they may be implicated within its current state'

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[75] I have previously developed work that sought to open debate on aspects of instrumental 'public art'. At the Public Art Forum conference in 2003, Jordan and I developed the work *I Won An Artist In A Raffle* where we offered ourselves (i.e. our politicized artistic labour) as a prize to conference delegates, thereby turning the tables on commissioners at their annual conference.

The content of the slogans declares our position on politics. These are the views of socialists against the liberal and moderate opinion that dominates Third Way cultural policy. For Freee a social utopia is not about creating a harmonious consensus but is generating an urgently needed and passionately fought debate on social matters against the reticence of private self-interest and the privatizing state.

The 'How to…' work offers a way to act in 'public' that can be copied or translated by others and is a part of the artwork's public spherian character. The intention in *How To Talk to Public Art* is to make artwork about the act of publishing ideas. The artworks are templates for action to suggest to other people to say or write down their ideas, as slogans or statements and to present them in public space in order to recruit collaborators or dissenters and to contribute to a multiplication of opinion formation. Hence our artwork was simply designed and produced and so is easily copied or translated. However, the success of the artwork was not measured according to whether others did or did not make a similar act - to my knowledge this has only happened once. Shortly after the artworks were shown on Youtube the art group *The Hut Project* posted the group addressing public monuments in Trafalgar Square, London.

Through our engagement with public sphere theory, Freee bring ideas of embodied speech and performative speech acts to the work. Embodying the texts that are presented has become a regular feature of Freee's artworks: the collectives opinions appear with us, on us and despite us, through wearing sloganized T-shirts and badges, chanting manifestos or taking over advertising billboard spaces for the purposes of debate rather than for promotion and marketing. For example, in the artwork *How to Talk to Public Art*, Freee feature in the work appearing as protestors bearing banners and in the artwork *How to Be Hospitable*, Freee can be seen holding various props that carry slogans. In this way, Freee embody our beliefs as the authors of our slogans as we literally stand by our words.

Freee's relationship to performativity has not come from within a practice defined as performance, but rather a practice that identifies itself with engagement, collaboration

and participation. By performing language acts in social situations our practice has attempted to activate a debate that encourages the audience to take on the role of active agents rather than passive respondents.[76] Our tactic to use embodiment is necessary to support a public spherian function of the work; it is not about seeking celebrity neither is it informed by traditions in art such as self-portraiture but rather it is employed as a tactic to counter the idea of the nameless, the unsigned, the reticent and the anonymous. Freee decide to stand by our slogans, to reveal ourselves as the authors. In statements presented in the debased public sphere, whether messages from media advertising or the depersonalized rhetoric that emanates from Third Way governance, one does not *see* who made the statement or what informs their worldview.[77] Similarly, when celebrities endorse commercial products this is not the same as stating your beliefs and opinions.[78] The slogans we produce are clearly attributed to us.

4.3.2   Publishing and disseminating artworks in the public sphere

So far, Freee's public spherian artworks have been discussed in terms of how they are attempts to encourage debate and opinion formation via sloganeering and how, as embodied speech acts, they represent the views of their authors. Publishing and dissemination is at the nub of the public sphere therefore Freee consider the spectatorship of our artwork through the notion of publishing. As a key principle, we enact strategies for dissemination that go beyond formal methods or conventional material techniques for making artwork. We choose to employ media, processes and technology that accommodate the circulation of the slogan. The sloganeering artworks are reproduced and distributed via posters, postcards, web mail, essays and lectures, hence the artworks are outside the economy of rarefied, unique art objects and studio production. Similarly we use billboard posters and systems of outdoor advertising as we wish to occupy spaces,

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[76] J.L Austin's central idea of performativity in language theory is that the meaning of sentences is not located entirely within their logical structures but must engage with the social life of the utterances. Therefore the performative is, in the most rigorous sense, an act and not a representation of something else, at least not in the preferred constative sense of a representation.

[77] In the earlier 'Functions' artworks [for example fig i. and fig. ii], Freee's slogans appeared as text only and we came to see this anonymous aspect of the work as a problem.

[78] In Freee's video art work entitled *Have you Heard the One About the Public Sphere,* (2006) veteran comedian Norman Collier performs a script written by Freee, which outlines the debasement of the public sphere by processes such as celebrity endorsement.

albeit temporarily, in the public realm that are usually dominated by commercial and corporate agencies - in our case for debate, rather than promotion and commerce. We believe a strategy for a politicized art must include a challenge to the mass media monopolization on the power to form opinion.

Consequently, we think about both primary and secondary audiences when planning an artwork. While in the mainstream art world the 'secondary material' of catalogues, pamphlets and talks demand that the public go and see the original work, Freee's sloganeering works become a document of the event and are designed to dispense with a one-to-one encounter with an object or event. Insofar as the 'primary audience' typically encounters the work through these modes of documentation and dissemination, it is possible to consider the information surrounding the work in the form of its documentation as the primary experience of the work. Photographs of the slogans in situ, for instance, are not conceived as documentation of artworks as in Conceptual Art and Land Art. Rather, Freee understands the photographs as one of the means of dissemination of the slogans. In this respect, the photographic documentation of the slogans is the reason why the texts are produced and displayed in public spaces. The artworks operate literally as publishing - disseminating ideas to form opinion is fundamental to the logic of Freee's projects.

As a mean of publishing in the public realm and as templates for action, Freee's artworks are not site-specific in the customary sense.[79] Freee's public spherian artworks have more in common with Miwon Kwon's (2002: 8) idea of 'discursive site specificity': artworks no longer bound to a particular site, place or environment but as a discourse on knowledge and ideas. Kwon's notion of discursive site-specificity enables the work to be experienced in different physical sites therefore allowing further publishing of the same or similar idea. Discursive site-specificity addresses non-art spaces, wider institutions, and issues including 'social problems such as the ecological crisis, homelessness, AIDS,

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[79] Earlier modes of political art such as those in the work of Michael Asher, Hans Haacke and Mierle Laderman Ukeles were concerned with the social and political meaning of a site – in institutional critique using their work to examine the hidden intentions of the institutional framework in which artworks are displayed, marketed and sold.

homophobia, racism and sexism.' (Kwon 2002: 10) This is a useful expansion of how we might think about site-specificity, as it addresses the limitations of site in the physical sense.

Site-specific work only tends to be published in one place therefore limiting its ability to form opinion. Its meaning is usually intrinsically linked to the site of production and display and consequently cannot be transferred to other sites of reception. In contrast, Freee subvert site-specificity and community specificity by occupying the gallery and billboards with documentation of our performances and our slogans. Our slogans are designed to be passed on in a variety of ways, including by word of mouth, but more importantly they can be seen through the reproduction of documentary images, which Freee deems to be as genuine an experience of encountering the artwork as a conventional one-to-one mode of spectatorship.

Also, while Kwon's model of discursive site-specificity addresses the limitations of site-specificity, she does not discuss it in terms of antagonism and politics in art and culture. Our works aim to divide opinion and to foster political public spheres. Discursive site-specificity or didactic art has become a technical or formal type of practice within institutional commissioning, demonstrated by Third Way commissioning in projects such as the One Mile programme which function as public relations for the state. Art institutions recuperate techniques as part of their agenda to reach publics or selected communities. The absorption and nullification of political aspects of art is common. As Simon Sheikh (2005: 142) points out, institutional critique was first developed by artists but is now adopted by curators and directors not to 'oppose or destroy the institution, but rather to modify and solidify it.'

4.5   Artwork 3: *How to Talk to Buildings*

The second artwork, *How To Talk To Buildings* sets out the tactic and processes used by Freee when considering issues of participative art. *How To Talk To Buildings* was commissioned by ARC education officer Gillian Dyson for the official opening of the ARC building in Hull, which coincided with the national event 'Architecture Week' on

June 16th – 25th 2006. ARC is a purpose-built architecture centre dedicated to 'contributing toward great architecture and public space', with an extensive education programme working with local schools and events and exhibitions to promote good design.[80]

Freee were invited by Dyson to develop a new participative artwork. The project was set to coincide with Architecture Week, an annual national event to celebrate architecture.[81] The project brief demanded some form of participation: Freee wanted to explore ways of working with others that did not rely on the artists 'managing' other people in an affirmative process as is common (either made explicit or implicitly) in art projects attached to community cohesion projects. This would avoid the artists telling people how to behave, or acting as experts in order to educate them.

In *How to Talk to Buildings*, our aim was to reconfigure the participant as an active citizen, addressing the public sphere as a space for idiosyncrasy, dissidence and resistance. The project would allow a space in which a political public could emerge in discussion, debate, dispute or protest. As Anthony Iles (2009: 29) says in relation to artists working in regeneration and the built environment, 'Freee present alternatives – to counter the commercialization and the "the annexation of the public sphere", and 'the squeeze on 'free' spaces which people can occupy without being required to consume but also the colonization of our collective ideas of the future of the urban environment largely fabricated through virtualizations and mediation – a mode of Imagineering quite vulnerable to artistic and political distribution'. Hence Freee's participants were asked to address buildings in terms of personal memories, local knowledge and the everyday routines that surround examples of architecture. To achieve this, a small group of local

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[80] http://www.arc-online.co.uk/home/news?action=view&id=58 Since 2004, ARC has been the architecture and built environment centre for Hull and the Humber region, part of a national network of architecture centres across the UK. With the mission of 'working with people to make great places', our programme has been supported by CABE, Hull City Council, English Heritage, Heritage Lottery, Gateway and ACE. (last accessed 11.2.2011)

[81] Architecture Week ran from 1997 until 2007 when ACE withdrew its £600,000 funding when it sought a 'new policy for art, architecture and the built environment'. http://www.architectsjournal.co.uk/architecture-week-officially-shelved/1941205.article (last accessed 12.2.2011)

volunteers were led by Freee, in a day of 'workshops' that saw each individual participant develop their own short script, that responded to buildings or places in Hull. (figs. 21, 22) Our intention was not for the participants to become experts in architecture but to bring the architecture back into the daily experiences of ordinary people.

Our volunteers were time-rich, mostly retired and looking for interesting social daytime activity, these are common characteristics of the citizens who are engaged within participatory projects. Volunteers developed individual ten-minute scripts that were recorded and became the commentary for short video works. Each participant was filmed standing with their backs to camera in front of their chosen building, public statue or local landmark. The final short videos included the voiceover recording of the participant's script; the volunteers were in effect seen to be talking to buildings. The video, *How to Talk to Buildings* documents a frank encounter between local people and their local architecture. The project demonstrated that the buildings that were deemed to be important to our participants were those connected with their personal history as opposed to the design of the architecture.[82] These short monologues were presented in the ARC building and on Freee's website.

Freee's artworks bring alternative theories and practice to participative art in Third Way cultural policy. Our aim is to counter those debased and affirmative forms of participative art preferred in Third Way policy contexts as discussed in chapters 1 and 3. Third Way governance sought to 'revitalize' civil society through an expansion of access to state funded culture, the provision of more visual art and the 'benefits' the visual arts brings via the institutions of the cultural public sphere and by didactic and community building projects in social inclusion policy. Hence, participation in Third Way cultural projects is based on an ethics of inclusion, on an affirmative and positivist view of culture - being included becomes the objective of these processes.

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[82] The template was also used with former residents of Hoxton Square describing, through storytelling, the social significance of places and buildings in and around Hoxton Square, now a regenerated and gentrified area, partly due to the art galleries and studios, which have adopted it. (Ted Jordan, White Cube Gallery)

Modes of deliberation and participation in Third Way cultural policy are problematic: 'others' are given access to participate in cultural activity. However, this is not a space for strong deliberation or an opportunity to make demands on official institutions. Third Way state funded art production in art galleries and within education and community-based programmes has adopted discursive or didactic participatory artwork such as those at ARC and at The Collective Gallery. Participative and didactic processes suggest an open egalitarian society. However, these forms of deliberation and participation regularly set up uneven power relations and debased communication. It is a forum designed by institutions with the maintenance of the interests of institutions in mind.

Similarly, this also occurs within art projects attached to consultation processes in urban regeneration. In this context, legalistic or specialized technical languages and procedures can dominate speech, obscure interests and privilege the powerful. Listening exercises and consultation processes suggest open and deliberative public spheres but can be a technique to manage dissent in favour of dominant groups and their interests. To make things worse, artists have been drafted into the role of the intermediary in this process, for example in the work of Roman Vasseur who was appointed as Lead Artist to Harlow in Essex.[83] Sanctioned cultural activity can then both legitimize official business and obfuscate issues on public interest.

What is needed are critical forms of deliberation that recognise difference, including the economic, as a key prerequisite for discussion. In order to do this we have to understand politics not as the science of government or processes of governance but as questioning public life and political deliberations that tie directly to the legitimacy and authority of public institutions. Theories of the public sphere conceive of people discursively engaged in order to recognize difference and make collective political decisions on how to live alongside each other. This is not as *onlookers* to the political process but as *actively participating* politicized individuals, forming collective associations in the social world that become the foundations for public institutions. To return to the political idea of

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[83] Vasseur's work is discussed at length in Berry Slater & Iles, A. *No Room to Move: Radical Art and the Regenerate City*. Mute Culture and Politics after the Net, November 2009, pp.113-124.

citizenship means to return to encouraging participative processes of deliberation and disagreement.

The aim must be to find strategies to open up spaces for debate against the reticence of liberalism. Processes of deliberative democracy must include a strong critical theory of communicative action to place emphasis on oppositional civil society and oppositional public spheres as sources of democratic critique and renewal. Deliberation cannot be confined to official spaces but must be everyday – as a politics of publishing, of a grass roots form of political exchange that connects counter-publics to other counter-publics.

Freee believe, that politics cannot be consensual; that politics needs open disagreement in order to work towards agreed action. The neutrality of Liberal politics seeks consensus and invariably produces reticence to support its ideology of the private. Following a Habermasian model of the public sphere, discursive politics are about 'having it out' and 'naming names'. These are forms of communication and exchange of opinion that transform individual citizens into public publics. Therefore in our arena of contestation, it is the cultural institution that must radically alter to become more public and to find techniques to support active political publics. This means more dissensual processes and not managed deliberation. This is alongside developing alternative democratic political narratives against Third Way rhetoric, such as when Marta Harnecker (2007:75) says to 'expose people to other experiences and sources of knowledge that can help them change their world view, discover the underlying causes of the exploitation, and, as a result, find the path to liberation.' This is also to support all forms of self- organization by social actors across the left.

Freee want to encourage political dialogue including agonistic types of exchange. We attempt to do this in our projects by speaking, making demands, listening, developing opinion and sharing it with others. Hence we set up our discursive participatory projects, to create channels of political discussion amongst private individuals. Freee do not imagine a singular universal public in the past or in the present, nor do we wish to begin any process of unification, but instead, as Miles (2005: 903) says, we 'engage specific

publics for whom imaginative possibilities are opened'. We understand ideas of difference amongst fragmented and rival publics who are diverse and variable and who are difficult to define or fix with any certainty. Freee want others to participate in the public exchange of opinions but we do not believe in representing other people, as in professional politics or in media campaigns. We want people to do that for themselves. In the Habermasian conception of politics and the public sphere, the individual must contribute to debates and find ways and spaces to partake in public discourse.

The project *How to Talk to Buildings* was directed by Freee. We do not want to give up our authorial control as we aim to direct our tactics and strategies. We do not follow an ethical model of participative art that would see participants share the decision-making and direction of the project. We see the retention of authorial control as essential to maintain our political investment in the project. O'Neill (2007: 38) describes Freee's public spherian processes as 'a generative, degenerative, and regenerative work in progress' as 'a prototype for action rather than a hackneyed problem-solving endeavour' and one that is 'still thinking ideas through, keeping things open enough by asking how to make things more public.' It is a responsibility we take seriously as the point of the work is to construct agonistic works in the Third Way contexts to create schisms in the normal practice of those steering media. We aim to avoid being converted into managers through the contracts and commissioning processes.

ARC was established as a showcase for regeneration and the built environment in the city of Hull. As a form of social inclusion, the programme set out to *inform* people of some of the regeneration planning taking place in the city. Freee's project aimed to turn the tables on the relationship between the public and the spectacle of the colonized public sphere. In this instance this would be between architecture and the ordinary citizen as usually set out in Architecture Week, where citizens are subject to experts extolling the virtues of architectural design. Instead of being subject to the secret codes of architectural design via the educational prerogative of this national 'awareness' campaign, we turned it around to request that the volunteers say what they thought about the architecture they knew and used.

Fig. 15. *How To Talk to Public Art*, compilation of video stills, Freee, 2006.

Fig. 16. *How To Talk to Public Art*, documentation of production, 2006.

Fig. 17. *How To Talk to Public Art*, documentation of production, 2006.

Fig. 18. *How To Talk to Public Art*, documentation of production, 2006.

Fig. 19. *How To Talk to Public Art*, showing on the BBC big screen, Manchester City Centre, 2006.

Fig. 20. ARC building, Hull, UK. 2005.

Fig. 21. How To Talk To Buildings, documentation of a workshop, ARC, Hull, UK, 2005.

Fig. 22. Freee at a workshop meeting for *How To Talk To Buildings*, ARC, Hull, UK, 2005.

Fig. 23. How To Talk To Buildings, Hull Royal Infirmary, video still, Freee, 2005

Fig. 24. *How To Talk To Buildings,* White Cube gallery, formerly The London Electricity Board Building, Hoxton Square, video still, 2005

Fig. 25. Reading of *The Freee Manifesto for Guerrilla Advertizing (After the Revolution)*, with Freee billboard poster, *Advertizing For All, Or Nobody At All, Reclaim Public Opinion*, Institute of Contemporary Art, Freee, January 2009.

Fig. 26. Reading of the *Whistleblowers Pocket Guide to Dissent in the Public Sphere*, incorporating 'Let's Build' and 'Fuck Globalization', by Freee and volunteers at Eastside Projects, October 2010.

Freee have other techniques for activating 'political' publics. In our 'choir' readings, participants are given a copy of our text, for example the Freee Art Collective Manifesto for a Counter-Hegemonic Art (2007) (see Appendix II), which they are invited to read and to underline those sections that they agree with (if there are any!). When the choir meet we read the text together at which point participants only read those sections that they agree with (fig. 25, 26). In this way participants register their commitment to our ideas or their points of difference through a collective reading. This method of agonistic participation is a critical reworking of modes of affirmative participation in social art practice that seek consensus. This tactic produces points at which both consensus and dissensus occur. The extent to which individuals can articulate their opinion is restricted to their agreement or disagreement with Freee's text. In the manifesto readings Freee are interested in producing such awkward points of consensus and dissensus and not to make artworks that simply enable all participants to voice their individual opinions.

How to Talk to Buildings is an example of Freee's 'template' artworks that propose modes of opinion formation, action and dissent that can be followed, adapted or dismissed by people who see the artwork via its points of dissemination in the public sphere. As in the work *How to Talk to Public Art* the template for *How to Talk to Buildings* was disseminated via our website and on Youtube, where we encouraged others people to develop their own narratives.

4.6   Freee's artworks as a contribution to discourse in theories and practice in social art

In what ways do Freee's artworks contribute to discourse on contemporary theories and practice in social art?

Freee's art practice brings public spherian perspectives to social art practice and theory. We take ideas of the public sphere and extend them through our art practice; these works are published in the public domain. Freee uses our ideas of counter-publics to think of rival functions for cultural policy – for opinion formation and for counter-public participation. Freee's public spherian tactics and activities for dissenting opinion

formation and counter-public participation extend the traditions in contemporary art (minimalism and conceptualism). Public sphere theory informs how the artworks look and what the artworks attempt to do. The artworks function in the context of cultural policy to encourage political public spheres to make room for dissensus instead of relying wholly on consensus and affirmative exchange. The artworks in the study aim to contest Third Way ideas and values in cultural policy in which state funded art is held as a public good. Through its alternative 'publics' for art as counter-publics, Freee try to contest the administrative governance of Third Way by re-introducing ideas of social and cultural difference and division into the heart of state funded art production.

This chapter has featured two art projects: one premised on creating debate in the public sphere by dividing opinion and publishing, the other countering prevailing debased ideas of participative art currently used in cultural policy.
The artworks contribute to discourse on art by developing the following four tactics:

1. Freee's practice extends the use of slogans as a form of text art. Slogans are about saying something and we see them as triggers for debate, in that they ask for a response, i.e. agree, disagree or develop you own ideas. Freee produces critical slogans to promote or prompt opinion formation, such as in the works *How to Talk to Public Art* or *How to be Hospitable* (described in chapter three). The slogans are also used as a means to embody political ideas through performative speech acts. The slogans are examples of Freee authoring their collective views through fearless speaking.

2.Techniques of art production are used that best support the public spherian publishing and dissemination of artworks. Specific forms of media are used for publishing and dissemination, which appropriate a range of commercial or standard media methods and processes that are reproduce-able and not original art objects. Freee think of the artworks in terms of primary and secondary audiences – this is against the modernist idea of one-to-one experience of the artwork as being primary. The work can be experienced and function satisfactorily as documentation (usually considered as secondary material) or even as hearsay.

3. Freee develop forms of dissensus-based participation which contributes to current debates on participation in art practice. Freee's artworks propose new ideas for working with people in participative workshop processes or using public spheres for action and dissent. This sometimes produces an agonistic relationship with state funded commissioners as described in chapter three demonstrated in the project *How to Be Hospitable*.

4. Freee aim to extend the horizon of what art is in the context of what is described as public and in concerns with 'publicness', for example in cultural policy or public art. Freee refuse to manage people and to construct harmonious social relations. Freee try to bring politicized ideas of art to Third Way commissioning by encouraging critical public dialogues such as in *How to talk to Public Art* as well as active dissenting publics in *How to Talk to Buildings*. Our agenda therefore runs counter to the expectation that artistic practices produce aesthetic formal languages or forms of participation as convivial or affirmative pleasures. What better, than to re-establish art as a public sphere of opinion formation, not for bourgeois sensibilities, but as a more open space in society for counter ideas and counter art. I believe that art's role in opinion formation within the public sphere, especially that of art which engages directly with the formation of counter-publics, is to prepare a culture that is fit for a society that is no longer distorted by private commercial interests and colonized by power.

Fig. 27. *Protest is Beautiful*, Freee, 2007.

Conclusion:

5.1   Brief overview

5.2.   The findings and their implications:

        Freee's counter-public art - visual art practice and public sphere theory

5.2.1   A public spherian critique of Third Way cultural policy

5.2.2   Theories of socially engaged art versus Freee's counter-public art

5.3   Contribution

5.3.1   Discussion on counter arguments on the research

5.3.2   Further research

5.1   Brief overview

My research project addressed two questions:

 i. Can public sphere theory enable new theoretical conceptions of publics in the Third Way cultural policy?

 ii. What artistic strategies can be developed to counter the instrumental conception of publics and publicness in Third Way cultural policy?

The rhetoric of Third Way cultural policy suggested, that through cultural events and art projects, an open and democratic process of engagement with publics takes place. The use of the term 'public good', intimates that policy outcomes are responsive to the needs of the publics that it serves, i.e. that the policy is fully committed to the public and in the interest of the public with its multitude of concerns.

The research tested these claims against the conceptions of the public conceived through public sphere theory. It did so by working in cultural institutions in the field to ascertain how tolerant cultural policy was to rival ideas on participative art. The research proposed that the forms of participatory art practice, produced in Third Way cultural policy were actually 'closed systems' of engagement and, that cultural policy was tasked with constructing a Third Way conception of the public. Evidence suggested that Third Way cultural policy regularly failed to support those fora that allow for the expression of

dissensus. In fact, policy aimed to actively promote affirmative processes, and to construct a cohesive and therefore hegemonic social order.

This conclusion was reached by applying public sphere theory (a theory of discursive relations) to the rhetoric of Third Way cultural policy and the implementation of this policy in the field. Evidence to support this claim was produced via practice, by the artworks that Freee 'published' in this context, see *How to Be Hospitable*, Collective Gallery. The findings supported my claim that state-funded cultural production can and does function as a form of steering media, producing debased public spheres and colonizing the social world of citizens.

In the practice based research, Freee proposed a new model of 'public spherian art' practice that aimed to support forms of protest, dissensus and disagreement that are the basis of the political process. The public spherian strategies developed by Freee aimed to find ways to promote opinion formation and counter public spheres. I claimed that by using this combination of practice and theory, this new model of contemporary art not only revealed that Third Way cultural policy sought to manage publics as a form of steering media, but also where we could set out various strategies to call forth and enable counter publics to resist the administrative state.

5.2. The findings and their implications:

Freee's counter-public art - visual art practice & public sphere theory

In the practice-based research Freee's art practice connects theories of the public sphere to theories and practice in contemporary art production. This new mode of art practice, characterized as Freee's 'counter-public art', was the method for the research. In the thesis, I claimed that a post-bourgeois conception of public sphere theory remains a useful articulation of ideas of publics, communication and political legitimacy, despite the advance of neo-liberalism and global market. The public sphere as theorized by Habermas divides the social into three spheres – the market, the state and the public sphere. Hence, public sphere discourse helps to frame the social encounters and

interactions of citizen actors with the state and the market. The core theme of people involved in the everyday publishing of ideas to each other and producing opinion remains a vibrant idea for emergent and progressive forms of social and political organization. Open and uncoerced critical adjudication and deliberation is something that is fundamental to the Habermasian notion of citizenship. Hence public sphere theory is a tool for rational critical analysis to get to the point of what is public.

Habermas reflects upon mechanisms of domination and recuperation in society, and hence, his social theory contributes to discourse on modes of political resistance and struggle. He lays down a basis for imagining alternative forms of opinion formation by ordinary publics (not just elites), where groups form and institutionalize debate, sanction each other's actions and establish a commons of collective goods. Hence publishing and exchange of critical opinion can counter official publicity and domination and from this process democratic politics can flourish. However, the public sphere is constantly under pressure from the colonizing effects of the state and capital that demand conformity. The public sphere is under threat, and yet, many left-wing theorists do not defend it.

The research followed Habermas' differentiation between the public sphere, the state and the market, but asked questions of the relationship of each sphere to visual art. The focus of the research was on the sphere of the state, although as chapter 1 suggests, the Third Way state had increasingly merged with the sphere of the market. The study outlined how art is firmly attached to the state within Third Way cultural policy and in culture-led regeneration. This is underlined by Hans Abbing (2001) in his book, *Why are artists poor?* Abbing argues that all art is government art: the state has an interest in art to function for display and for social cohesion, and hence it is the key economic driver for art production.[84] Art is also central to the commercial world. A counter argument to Abbing comes from Julian Stallabrass (2004) who instead, claims that all art is corporate art. His critique of the contemporary art world describes how art and its mediation is market-led, by the contemporary art market, in tandem with a corporate global economy

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[84] Abbing argues that if the government were to interfere less in the arts, the economy of the arts would become less exceptional and, as a result, artists would not be nearly as poor. *Why are artists poor? The exceptional economy of the Arts*.

of dealers and collectors. The question then arises, is there another art, a third version – an art of the public sphere? If this is so, is the public sphere a stable place for art, or, is this art always threatened by colonization from either the state or the market?

Public sphere theory provides a critical framework to examine existing public institutions, their policy, their practical outcomes and the implications of this process. Public sphere theory has been discussed, in relation to art and cultural production, in particular by curator Simon Sheikh. However, the study is among the first to use public sphere theory, in relation to the agenda, directives, mechanisms and outcomes of art production via Third Way cultural policy and to test the ideology at work here using this method.

Public sphere theory is used to critique Third Way cultural policy, as well as operating as a critical frame in which to produce artworks. Hence, public sphere theory is used to examine and critique social relations produced by Third Way cultural policy and public sphere theory is applied to contemporary visual art production as a 'public spherian art', produced by Freee. The art practice was itself a method of critical enquiry and acted to extract information and extend discourse, in a way that made the study both unusual and insightful. In addition, a public spherian art is a method to intervene and propose alternative conceptions of art production and social relations in the context of cultural institutions. The framework for practice and theory – of art and the public sphere - provides a new paradigm on how to consider contemporary art production.[85]

Freee's practice sets out tactics and strategies to encourage counter political publics that are in contrast to the managed forms of participation and cultural representation commonly produced in this context. The interventionary art practice proposes tactics that counter steering media, and suggests alternatives with which to resist the debasement of public spheres. Freee practices connect to an avant-garde position on art and culture producing resistant and alternative cultural ideas and forming sites for resistance. Freee aimed to provide spaces in which new modes of participation could emerge. Therefore,

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[85] Dave Beech, Mel Jordan, Paul O'Neill, Gillian Whitely and I have recently established a new journal entitled 'Art and the Public Sphere', published by Intellect. www.intellectbooks.com

this attempt at an art of praxis constituted an important contribution to the field of critical and social art.

The findings support my claim that state-funded cultural production can and does function as a form of steering media, producing debased public spheres and colonizing the social world of citizens. Non-elected art experts and administrators devise schemes that funnel spectators and participants. Cultural topics or themes are presented and broadcast for consumption that connect to the cognitive goals of enhancing the 'system', rather than topics or themes arrived at through conversation that might provide an alternative to money and power as a basis for societal integration. The resulting artworks, in particular those from the project at the Collective Gallery, provide new evidence on how Third Way cultural policy intrumentalizes art to produce affirmative social relations to meet the agenda of social inclusion. However, the research also revealed that despite the problems Freee encountered during some projects, such as at the Collective gallery, it *was* possible to produce public spherian art in the context of state funded art production. Whether a critical approach for art practice is sustainable in the context remains to be seen. Freee's approach was driven by a determination to develop rival ideas for state funded artwork. There is no guarantee that the state would tolerate and sanction any further artwork of this kind. It has been difficult to ascertain whether Freee's approach was considered incompatible or detrimental to existing policy, as feedback from policy managers is rare. Freee's artworks received a negative evaluation from one reviewer in relation to the aims of cultural policy, however other projects have gone ahead with partners and have been well received by some in the sector. There is further research to do on this point, to test this concept for art production and its relationship to cultural policy.

While the study brought public sphere theory to visual art production it also brings new articulations of art to public sphere theory. The specifics of the practice-based research extend public sphere discourse on aspects of the politics of cultural production, on art history and art theory.

5.2.1   A public spherian critique of Third Way cultural policy

When applied to cultural policy, public sphere theory analysis becomes concerned with the function of 'public' cultural institutions, to examine how the state perceives its role in relation to citizens. Therefore, the research examines the state's policy agenda and suggests at what level ideology exists in this context. Hence, public sphere theory becomes a mechanism by which to look at, or even test, an existing 'public' institution in order to examine what are its operational values, its openness to public scrutiny, or its adaptability to meet public demands. It examines the responsiveness and openness of the institution, the modes of publicity it produces and how this might function as steering media.

The findings of the research, pointed to how the rhetoric of Third Way cultural policy can be articulated as a steering media that constructed dominant ideas of the public and of publicness. New Labour had further instrumentalized cultural policy to provide solutions for economic and social regeneration in post-Fordist cities in the UK. In Liberal arts management, visual art has been considered a 'public good', and to have universal public value. Art's advocates believed the visual arts to be a useful tool to turn around urban decline and to revitalize civil society. This optimistic 'belief' in art's social potential was manifest in anecdotes and rhetoric but with very little hard evidence. It remains difficult to determine to what degree this convergence was due to the financial self-interest of a sector dependent on state funding. Did arts professionals simply follow the money? Social inclusion policy was the Third Way solution to social injustice; social division was uncoupled from economic disparity, so that class became 'difference'. The rhetoric for the benefits of state-funded culture as a public good was part of New Labour's conception of a meritocracy, whereby social amelioration was via access to cultural education that provided aspirations for the economically marginalized.

The research discussed what were positivist claims for state-funded art and concluded that Third Way cultural policy was instrumental and complicit with a wider agenda of privatization and marketization, that would contribute to further social immobility and class ossification. Evidence was drawn from a review of policy documents and critiques

by theorists and academics; the examination of socially engaged art (commissioning, programming and subsequent art projects) over the period of New Labour cultural policy; and the results from Freee's art projects, for example, *How to Be Hospitable*. The general contexts and problems in the study were also informed by art practice, by an understanding of the context gained through several years of working in direct association with artists and curators in the field.

The research proposed a new articulation of New Labour's agenda for cultural policy as having three rhetorics: art as cultural democracy, art as an economic driver, and art providing solutions for social amelioration. The role of visual art and the visual artist, in Third Way cultural policy was tied to the economic agenda of the cultural industries, i.e., town planning, urban development, and culture-led regeneration. The research proposed how state-funded culture policy became a means to steer opinion by constructing and managing 'publics'. Cultural policy functioned as a form of top down administration of citizens as it precluded alternative ideas of public and publicness. Cultural policy did not encourage the formation of political publics and open public spheres.

The research examined a period in which socially engaged art grew as a field or practice, encouraged in part, by ACE policy, which sought to facilitate art activity for a wider demographic. In addition, community arts agencies were professionalized and new Third Way Quangos were developed to manage art and social inclusion projects. Artists commissioned in this context, were expected to develop practice that followed socially inclusive methods, for audience development, community building and to create positive public relations between citizens and cultural institutions.

The evidence produced via the study enabled a characterization of the ideology of contemporary state-funded cultural production as part of Third Way administrative governance. In the case of the art project *How to Be Hospitable* at the Collective gallery; four characteristics of social art practice (didactic, participative or performative) demanded by the curator (and common to the field) became evident during the project:

      1. The targeting of specific 'marginalized' communities

2. An emphasis on participative artworks that were thought to be a means to produce democratic relations between artist and participants

3. Social events to maintain convivial and affirmative relations

4. The artist acting as a bridge between community and the institution, with a requirement for long and deep processes of community engagement or research

When evaluated, Freee's project for the Collective Gallery was deemed as failing policy agenda. Freee's art practice revealed that policy demanded cultural institutions produce affirmative or 'warmer' social relations. Whilst there is a place for conviviality in our social relations this is evidence of the narrowing of the role of cultural programming for instrumental purposes and is of major concern.

The research connected the limited modes of participation in contemporary art (as steering media) to the limits of political participation in Liberal Democratic politics; that conceptions of politics and art were dominated by Liberal ideas of consensus. The shift toward Third Way centre politics meant that politics had diminished as less a space for social transformation, with professional politics looking for legitimization, rather than promoting open dialogue with the public. Meanwhile, the Third Way state was rolling back social welfare and branding socialist political ideas as redundant, whilst Liberal values that supports the 'private' sphere - individual rights, interests and property, gained ground. It was precisely this shift in public policy, of the setting out of new parameters and expectations in Third Way citizenship that informed social inclusion policy, and hence, the policy objectives for state-funded culture.

The research confirms the view of social and cultural theorists whose work examines cultural policy, such as: Malcolm Miles; Jim McGuigan; Deborah Stephenson; James Heartfield; and Jonathon Vickery. It also offers knowledge, on aspects of social order via culture that connects to existing work on class, cultural consumption and social division, such as in the work of: Pierre Bourdieu; Eleonora Belfiore; Paolo Merli and Sharon Zukin.

This study represents a new critique of Third Way cultural policy. It goes further than, for example, Malcolm Miles whose analysis follows the deployment of culture as part of culture-led regeneration. Miles takes an active interest in practitioners who either intervene or are complicit in cultural production. Mile's analysis is based on empirical evidence, whereas my practice-based research detects new ideas via practice that intervenes, bringing to the discourse more detail on the mechanisms of cultural policy and evidence on its impact on cultural production and on cultural production. This outcome of the research goes to show, that practice-based research can achieve things that other methods of study cannot.

My critique also extends ideas on cultural policy and visual art, as proposed, for example, by Jim McGuigan. McGuigan, a scholar on Habermas, theorizes the cultural field in his theory of the 'cultural public sphere'. However his analysis is without a close examination and the necessary understanding of the institutional mechanisms of art production. Whilst he follows the differences, in popular and high culture and in particular broadcast media, his analysis of visual art lacks nuance. His understanding of the politics of social art practices and his analysis of visual art leans toward traditional modes of art production.

Simon Sheikh comes closest as his theories, informed by the public sphere, examine the issues at stake for state funded institutions in a period of neo-liberal advance. His work as a curator is also practice based, in which he frames and mediates critical and social art practices. However, my method is to specifically use public spherian theory as the basis for the practice in the field. It is this approach that actively engages with the modes of publicness and publicity produced by the state via cultural policy.

5.2.1 Theories of socially engaged art versus Freee's counter public art in the context of Third Way cultural policy

The thesis examined the politics of those theories concerned with socially engaged art. My analysis on those theories, using public sphere theory, attempted to develop new ways to understand socially engaged art and to extend them. There has been a lot written

on the politics of socially engaged art but usually from an art historical perspective, i.e. the internal aesthetic issues and considerations in the artworks - what they stand for, mean or the technical aspects of participation. To view socially engaged art using public sphere theory, then enables a more critical analysis of the deliberative, dissensual, hence political potential of socially engaged art. Certainly it is the case, that theories of social art practice contend with issues of participation, however as my research discusses, most theory and most practice concerned with participative art, produce affirmative de-political manifestations of social relations.

In for example, Nicolas Bourriaud's theory of Relational Aesthetics, the spectator of art becomes a participant who completes the artwork. His theorizing of 'micro-utopias' (usually situated in the art gallery), produce an ethic of *sociable* relations between actors. Therefore in Bourriaud's theory for art is relations are premised on convivial encounter in the gallery.

Claire Bishop's ambition for participative art is tougher and more disruptive, with the consciousness of the viewer transformed by experiencing the social, via the artwork. She perceives her agonistic theory for art, as an antidote to the repressive ethics of socially engaged art and, a way to repel the instrumental agenda of the state. However, her analysis of an artwork falls short, when considering its agency in relation to the economic contexts in which it is produced, i.e., its relationship to the art market or to the context of the biennial, as a product of the state's social and economic policy. Art's autonomy is quite easily maintained in these circumstances, but at the expense of prolonging art's social separation.

Grant Kester's conception of social art practice is also incomplete; his ideas on participative art are based on an ethics of participation that denies the artist authorship, in an attempt to compensate for what he sees as uneven power relations between art specialists and a non-art public. This places too much emphasis and sensitivity on modes of participation, which aim to reform art.

However, new positions have emerged on how to re-evaluate collaborative art. In his critique, Kim Charnley (2011) describes, how both Kester and Bishop end up neutralizing the political despite their intentions not to do so. Bishop does this, he claims, by suggesting that critical collaborative art must be blind to the social relations that constitute it. Kester achieves this because, in his theory, the political becomes a generalized ethical claim on behalf of the 'other' that art excludes. Charnley claims that both theorists are complicit in their attempts to erase contradiction in order to maintain a consistent account of the political. He says that any arguments like those of Kester and Bishop, that attempt to overcome this contradiction, result in polarizing or neutralizing the field. I agreed with Charnely on his assertion that a dissensus model of art practice need neither abandon ethics nor should it relinquish the tradition of avant-garde confrontation.

Theoretical discourse on social art influences the work of art practitioners, art curators, commissioners and policy makers. Third Way commissioners have increasingly utilized forms of socially-engaged art practice. Politically 'weak' forms of social art, i.e., those producing affirmative and convivial participation, or driven by aesthetic considerations, may be useful to the state and more likely to be co-opted as steering media. Certainly, aesthetic art is less discursive or even non-discursive. Aesthetic art can, of course, be discussed; you can talk about it when you look at it. However, it does not aim to establish a discursive situation as a priority of the artwork. On the other hand, public spherian artworks are conceptually based on establishing discussion and opinion formation.

What is then largely missing from critical work in the field, are modes of practice that examine and tackle head on the hegemonic processes of interaction at work, at that point where social art practice meets Third Way governance. As a conceptual framework for the tactical production of *politcizing* participative artworks, Freee's counter-public artworks extend current theories of art and participation. Freee's art practice has been constituted upon aspects of public sphere theory, for example, in the 'sloganeering' artworks we configure art as a means for opinion formation, or in terms of participation we develop tactics for dissent and difference to emerge. Political relationships involve

disruptions and conflicts that require explicit negotiations. We want people publishing to other people. Freee did not hand over our right of authorship to participants; we think it crucial for people to publish their own ideas.

Freee supports the notion of art as a form of publishing and opinion formation, and that publics are political formations, based on conflicting perceptions of the social world. Therefore Freee's artworks have in mind a different conception of the spectatorship in art. Via our strategies for sloganeering and dissensual participation, we try to precipitate forms of publishing, and hence, artworks that create opinion formation, division and dissensus – the basis of political debate. We want to make art that encourages counter-publics; artworks for a political public, for discussion, debate, dispute and protest.

Freee's art projects question the functions of visual art and the systems and economies of its production in order to make this public. It aims to extend and politicize art, by publishing on the condition of the field of art. This is a means to focus on arts social, ethical and cultural role as a matter for public scrutiny.

In the research, the artworks tested the dominant ideological conditions in the contexts in which they were produced; Freee deliberately developed projects to produce alternative conceptions of art, publics and participation. Freee attempted this while in direct negotiation with commissioners who implement Third Way cultural policy. The artworks revealed aspects of the agenda of Third Way cultural policy; art was instrumentalized using its formal, spatial and material aspects but not its potential for critical questions or for encouraging political and social organization.

Freee's propositional artworks offer rival ideas against the steering media of Third Way cultural policy. In our artwork, Freee do not create consensus nor do we attempt to manage or co-opt people for the benefit of the Third Way state; to represent the views of the state, or for the artist to become the mouthpiece or public relations representative for other citizens or community groups. Nor, do we wish to instrumentalize citizens, in accordance with the prerogatives of the market economy. Freee reject the role of the artist

as set out in Third Way cultural policy, which tied art to an agenda of economic revival through the cultural industries, the rhetoric of town planning, urban development, and culture-led regeneration. In this formation we see publicly-funded art as pitted against the public.

Freee aim to challenge arts universality and isolation from the social world by bringing the 'outside', i.e. what is external or denied, ideas such as the philistine, of multiple publics, or of arts functions for neo-liberalism, back into the very fabric of the art we produce. The way the artworks politicize is twofold: firstly, the artworks are constituted through actual participation, collaboration, intervention and embodiment in political action; secondly, the artworks via art-making and documentation, articulate ideas of imaginary publics, of contesting, dissenting counter-publics. Hence, the artwork is politicizing, in terms of its content, as well as in its process or action; what Freee refers to as being 'twice political'. In a similar vein, Sheikh (2008) divides his notion of political art, as 'supporting ideas of change but also the mode of address that changes or alters or revolutionizes' what he calls a 'reconfiguration of both mental and material conditions in the work itself.'

Freee work in the spaces between the private and the public, where opinion is formed, but before it is taken up by professional politicians, bureaucrats and the advertising industry. Certainly Freee do not want to engage in activist art, which means accepting the Liberal Democratic shrinking and distortion of politics to reflect the interests of the private (that spreads hopelessness, powerlessness and apathy), and operate within the narrow, professionalized field of political campaigning.

Visual art holds the potential for critical communication and opinion formation – like Terry Eagleton suggests on the foundations of cultural criticism. Although, as a consequence of social division, visual art remains a minority culture, it is this arena, that Freee occupy and contest with rival ideas. A public spherian art points to the agency and power that art can hold despite the colonization and debasement of the field. A public spherian art, therefore, opens up art to processes of public scrutiny and deliberation.

The research offers new ideas about art in Third Way cultural policy and in this way it differs to the work of other artists, curators or theorists. My interpretation of the finding of the research, is that when the weak theories of art and participation meet the instrumentalized conceptions and expectations for participative art, as seen in Third Way cultural policy, then citizens get debased forms of participative art. In contrast Freee are operating to encourage counter-publics; our ideal publics are self-forming so we act against the state as it attempts to construct dominant ideas of public (values) and publicness (behaviours) such as those in cultural policy. Hegemony is always partial, social control is never absolute, permanent or fixed. Hence we seek to encourage antagonisms against existing political conditions that seek domination. Spaces must be constantly found to open up processes of negotiation and change via institutional frameworks, where social and political contestation can take place.

Democracy needs more open contestation to resolve practical problems on 'how we can live together' including critical deliberation on social issues and a recognition of economic difference - a social democracy not a Liberal Democracy. This means to establish political deliberation in everyday culture with the aim of constituting political institutions in reach of citizens. Politics needs conflict and dissent and it needs counter-publics who challenge the legitimacy of the centre. This is to prevent powerful interests from dominating political processes and managing the public.

5.3 Contribution

In making an argument for the research as a contribution, one of the significant aspects of the research has been the framework of topics the research has investigated, namely public sphere theory, Third Way cultural policy and socially engaged art practice. This sets out an important cultural as well as political field that intersects with various discourses, such as those close to art practice, i.e., in art theory and practice, art history and cultural policy, but also to a wider scope of discourses including social theory, political philosophy, cultural and urban geography. This range of discourse that now connects with art production is emblematic of the extent to which art is now integrated

with urban, economic and social issues. That said, the research makes the greater contribution to art related topics and art practice.

Art and public sphere as a critical method and a contextual framework sets out a new constellation that brings new ideas to each of the research contexts. The contextual framework for the research sets out the triangulation of topics for the research. It is the practice –based research that is then formed within this axis that provides the most significant contribution to discourse. Art and the public sphere is a fourth axis that interconnects with the others. This fourth axis is a new constellation of issues, of theories and practice. It sheds light on the field and the conditions for contemporary art practice. It brings critical ideas of the public to bear on the state to examine the relationship between cultural institutions and publics. Art and the public sphere extends both practically and theoretically the topics, adjusting and adding to each with new ideas and extensions.

This method for practice-based research produced evidence via practice and via a literature review. The method was distinctive as it was interventionary: as a form of praxis, Freee's practice produced counter-public artworks that revealed aspects of hegemonic cultural production - the ideology of Liberal state-funded culture in seeking political consensus and social cohesion. The artworks tested institutions and policy, the method produced evidence of the limits, negations and obscuration in this context that would be difficult to identify using other methods.

The practice-based research demonstrates that a practical engagement with making art under Third Way cultural policy is needed in order to reveal the actual conditions for cultural production today. This provides new and useful additions to current discourse on art production and cultural policy. The new ideas presented in the research will be of interest to curators and artists who work with publics and whose work is constituted on the idea of political communication and opinion formation.

5.3.1 **Discussion on counter arguments on the research**

Is this research still applicable in a post New Labour context?

The government has changed during the period of the study (the artworks were all produced in the context of New Labour policy), however the topics discussed in the thesis, remain pertinent to debates on current policy agenda. In fact, conceptions of arts public value to revitalize civil society, and to impact on a social and economic agenda, have so far remained relatively unchanged under the Liberal-Conservative coalition, and have instead, been absorbed within the 'flagship' policy directive called Big Society.[86] However, a significant ideological difference lies in the new governments desire to shrink the size, cost and influence of the state. While my research outlined serious problems associated with New Labour's Third Way instrumental and interventionary agenda for state cultural policy, what lies ahead is more problematic. The new administration is non-interventionary, and more likely to rationalize public provision in favour of what the market can provide. So the arts will still feature as part of the state's rhetoric on the social, but the lib-con state are likely to reduce funding in the belief that this should be the role of private firms and the third sector. The state is being rationalized and marketized and will revert to supporting the wealthy and the market but reduce support for ordinary citizens. The danger is that the sphere of the state will be diminished in favour of the sphere of the market, with the public sphere set to be colonized further, not by the state, but by the private interests of the market, of philanthropists, and in the third sector via non-elected (and in many instances elite-led) advocacy groups for various kinds of rights. This shift to centre-right of Liberal Democratic politics is again damaging for progressive politics.

With hindsight there are limits to the research. It can be argued that some of the assertions in the research are drawn from a small number of case studies and therefore, the research does not test my hypothesis against a wide range of art projects in the field. I

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[86] 'Big Society' is the policy title used by the Lib-Con Government. Although details of the policy are currently sketchy, the policy appears to look to Third Sector activity to revitalize aspects of civil society, although to opposition parties, this appears to be a replacement for funded public sector services. Cuts have been made to ACE, but institutions that are said to provide public value (economic, social and to a lesser degree cultural), remain funded and in some cases have seen a budgetary increase. In his keynote speech, Culture Secretary, Jeremy Hunt, emphasized the governments continued commitment to Chris Smith's drive for access to the 'arts for all', also suggesting at further cultural education initiatives within schools. The new Government is seeking to make cuts but also plans to encourage the US model of philanthropy, and donations to support the arts. 19th May 2010, Roundhouse London, http://www.culture.gov.uk/news/ministers_speeches/7069.aspx (last accessed 25th May 2010)

set out to establish a critical framework that included a critique of the context for cultural production, a theoretical basis for the practice and a subsequent reflection on the practice in relation to specific projects. The research did not set out to examine the whole field but to find evidence in the field via the art practice. It was my view that other practices did not use my theoretical framework and for this reason case studies would not have been useful. Further research might be developed to further test the conclusions in the thesis using more case studies.

Rival arguments on the proposed benefits of cultural participation via top-down processes in state funded cultural policy remain keenly contested. Despite the evidence that contradicts this view, including my own evidence in this research, critics will continue to argue that culture can provide positive outcomes in this field.

5.3.2   **Further research**

What new possibilities might the research open up for further research?

The implications of research may raise new questions on the agenda of cultural policy as a steering media. The research attempts to rethink cultural policy following a public spherian model; this would mean new priorities for arts policy with the idea of publicly funded art supporting ideas of counter-public art. This would envisage state art that supported and encouraged open discussion amongst citizens. This would open up space for people to participate in their own way, it would allow for participants to question every aspect of state institutions and policy and to openly encourage dissenting opinion. Whether this is feasible as policy could be the basis for further research. This remains an essential task due to the caustic effect neo-liberalism has on democratic institutions.

List of illustrations:

1. *The Economic Function of Public Art is to Increase the Value of Private Property*, Sheffield, Commissioned by Public Art Forum, Freee 2004.

2. *The Function of Public Art for Regeneration is to Sex Up the Control of the Under-class,* Homerton High Street, Hackney, London, August 2005. 'For Real Estate: Art in a Changing City', curated by B+B, as part of 'London in Six Easy Steps', Institute of Contemporary Art, London. Freee, 2005.

3. *The concept of the public space, public realm, and the public sphere,* script from the video, for 1,000,000mph Gallery, London, 1996 and produce as a text for the 'One Mile' Newspaper, Collective Gallery, Edinburgh. Freee, 2007.

4. *Artists cannot bring integrity to your project unless they provide a full and candid critique of everything you do*, Norwich, For EAST 2006, Freee, 2006.

5. *I' m a Local Outsider, I'm a Migrant Worker, I'm a Foreign Citizen*, for 'How To Be Hospitable', Collective Gallery, Edinburgh, billboard poster, Freee, 2008.

6. *Fight Against Multiculturalism Commodifying your Difference*, for 'How To Be Hospitable', Collective Gallery, billboard poster, Freee, 2008.

7. *You can judge a culture by the way it treats its immigrants*, for 'How To Be Hospitable', Collective Gallery, Edinburgh, vinyl text, Freee, 2008.

8. *Immigrants of the World Unite*, (props) for 'How To Be Hospitable', Collective Gallery, Edinburgh, Freee, 2008.

9. *Immigrants of the World Unite*, for 'How To Be Hospitable', Brick Lane, London, Freee, 2008.

10. *Immigrants of the World Unite*, for 'How To Be Hospitable', volunteers and billboard poster, Edinburgh, Freee, 2008.

11. *I'm a Local Outsider, I'm a Migrant Worker, I'm a Foreign Citizen* for 'How To Be Hospitable', volunteers and billboard poster, Edinburgh, Freee, 2008.

12. Volunteers for *How To Be Hospitable*, Edinburgh, Freee, 2008.

13. *Fight Against Multiculturalism Commodifying your Difference*, (censored version), for 'How To Be Hospitable', billboard poster with volunteers, Edinburgh, Freee, 2008.

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Appendix I.   Scottish Arts Council, Artistic Evaluation Report, Specialist Advisor
               Stephen Beddoe, dated 5th May 2008.

Appendix II.   Manifesto for a Counter-Hegemonic Art. Freee art collective 2007.

ARTISTIC EVALUATION

It should be noted the views expressed in this evaluation are intended to represent, as far as possible, an objective aesthetic judgement. Specialist advisors and officers should avoid making judgements based on their own personal tastes and preferences.

Artist/Company: Collective

Venue: Collective Gallery, Edinburgh

Title of Event: Freee – How to be Hospitable

Type of Event: Exhibition

Date of Visit: 11 April 2008

Overall Rating: 3 - Competent

(*Please rate the event overall, taking into account your ratings for each section. Please state the key reasons for your overall ratings – i.e. the particular strengths and weaknesses. If the management of the event affects the overall enjoyment of the event, please comment, but the overall rating should be based on the artistic merit of the event.*)

Name: Stephen Beddoe   Date:05/05/08

Specialist Advisor   Scottish Arts Council Officer   *Please circle the relevant title*

This report has been commissioned by the Scottish Arts Council to evaluate the artistic quality of the production named above. It has been prepared by either a specialist Advisor, or an officer of the Scottish Arts Council, as indicated at the end of the form. The report will be circulated to the organisation which produced the work and to the management of the venue, if the venue is core funded by the Scottish Arts Council.

The report will form evidence for the Artistic Leadership and Public Engagement sections of the Quality Framework and be taken into account in assessing the work of the producing company in relation to applications for funding to the Scottish Arts Council. It may also be used by the Joint Board to report on the overall performance of its funded organisations.

Evaluators should enter their rating under each section, explaining briefly their reason for the rating with reference to their comments under each section. Ratings should be given in accordance with the following:

> **1 - Very Poor** – standard falls well below what is acceptable.
> **2 - Poor** – not attaining acceptable standards of conception or presentation.
> **3 - Competent** – routine rather than especially interesting.
> **4 - Good** – well conceived and executed
> **5 - Excellent** – conceived and executed to a high standard.

1. Artistic Assessment

Please evaluate the artistic quality of the event, with particular reference to the strengths and weaknesses of the following:

Artform	Criteria	Rating	Comments and key reasons for rating
All	Vision and imagination of work - Quality of ideas, skills in execution; if you've seen the work of this artist(s)/ company before, please comment on the comparison.	3	FREEE: How to be Hospitable is a collaborative project commissioned as part of the Collective Gallery's One Mile programme. One Mile attempts to create exhibitions and off-site projects that engage new audiences and communities within a one-mile radius of the gallery. Artists Dave Beech, Andy Hewitt and Mel Jordan all have well established reputations as individual artists, academics and writers. FREEE (www.freee.org.uk) is an art collective that brings together their common areas of interest in the process and dialogue's that surround practice. Their previous work, which has included projects at the Venice Biennale, ICA and Guangzhou Triennial, uses sloganeering, mass media, performances, dialogue, narrative, writing and broadcasting. This exhibition and project purports to "create a project that responds to the recent wave of Polish immigrant workers in the UK and particularly in Edinburgh". It is a project that has indeed 'responded' to this change, but to what effect, and what real purpose? There's nothing that's apparent in the resultant Billboard works, audio visual work and other narratives that, to my mind has contributed any great deal to either artistic practice or social and cultural discussions in this area. The exhibition, as well as the related one-day symposium, Discussion Forum and Tasting Evening seem more targeted towards those artists and cultural theorists with an interest in this area of practice and theory than the wider community. For all its agenda to 'engage' with these new 'immigrant' communities I found the constituent parts of this project (exhibition, process and performance, collaboration, dialogue) to be depressingly lacking in engagement. I found the exhibition, the end product of the process, to be a rather dispiriting and distant experience. While recognising that the exhibition simply houses the 'props' used in the project, I think the project fails on any number of levels; visual, critical and social. I can't see how the billboards, for example, only shown for one week, would make any sort of difference or impact to the project other than offer an off-site 'presence'. It may be that the Symposium, organised by the artists as part of the project, could be regarded as a success, but with an audience of 25 (mainly artists and other cultural practitioners – information provided by the Programme Manager during my visit) again this could be considered and 'art event' rather than an event that was attempting an engagement with non-artists an 'community-facing'.

Artform	Criteria	Rating	Comments and key reasons for rating
			The Discussion Forum certainly appears to try to address some of the issues that have been raised through the project, although its unclear whether this was instigated as part of FREEE or whether this (and the Tasting Evening Event) were already programmed as part of the wider Grzewczy Season.
All (if relevant)	Curatorial/ programming vision/ selection Please indicate how the event originated eg from the exhibiting/ producing organisation, artist-led or commissioned. If the event is part of a Festival, please say how it contributes to the overall programme.	4	The FREEE exhibition, under the aegis of the One Mile programme, is a laudable attempt to engage new audiences and communities via innovative and experimental projects. I simply hope that the communities engaged and collaborated with gain as much out of the process as the curators and the artists. The reason for doing these projects must be clearly articulated to these new audiences, in order for the curatorial vision to be credible beyond the confines of the gallery and the insularity of the professional arts sector. As an arts professional who has seen numerous interesting and engaging initiatives such as this (nationally and internationally) that focus on a rigorous cultural and aesthetic position and stance, I personally found this project/exhibition lacking in quality, worth and (indeed) warmth. I can't see this project appealing to any artists and visitors other than the very small group of artists/cultural theorists with a special interest in this area of practice. However, this is not to say that this type of work and approach should not be supported via public funding. Indeed, this process-based practice can only usually be realised through public funding and experimental work, and should be supported.
All	Success of event against stated aims - in the programme or other printed material, including how well it communicated the artistic themes. Education events – see [1]below for guidance	3	Collective Gallery are "committed to supporting new visual artists through a programme of exhibitions and new commissions. Within this, the One-Mile project attempts to create exhibitions and off-site projects that engage new audiences and communities within a one-mile radius of the gallery. Within the context of the Gallery's remit and the projects aims and objectives the FREEE exhibition/project meets those aims and objectives. An A5 gatefold B&W leaflet was available in support of the exhibition. This listed the works and contained text about the exhibition and artists. The leaflet also included information about the FREEE collective and the related events as part of the Grzewczy Season.
All	Performers/tutors - technical standard, performance skills and ability to communicate and engage. Where performers are not trained, please reflect this in your	3	The premise of this exhibition was to engage with new audiences outside the gallery via debate and dialogue. The artists involved are experienced practitioners and have undertaken similar project approaches in the past. There is no doubting the rigour and professionalism of the project,

[1] Education is a bridge between artform excellence and increased access and participation, and it is people centred. Providing opportunities for learning and progressing in an artform or using an artform to address other, non-artistic, outcomes are equally valid; in either case a high quality strategic approach is required in order to benefit the participants and the organisation. Delivery can be through workshops, post/pre-show discussions, outreach work, etc aimed at any age group.

Artform	Criteria	Rating	Comments and key reasons for rating
	comments.		unfortunately the sum of the parts does not, in my opinion, succeed as an engaging, or even thought provoking, experience.
Dance, Theatre	Choreography/Use of choreography - originality, use of space, number and use of dancers, length of piece, etc		n/a
Theatre	Script — particularly in relation to new work or second productions. Relevant to classics where the original has been substantially changed.		n/a
Theatre, Dance	Direction - Concerns issues of interpretation, casting and presentation.		n/a
Dance, Theatre	Use of music — appropriateness and effect of sound or music (whole/part, live/recorded) to the production.		n/a
Dance, Theatre	Design — costume, set, lighting. Take into account how appropriate the design is in relation to the venue and, where appropriate, the touring schedule.		n/a
All	Quality of Presentation/Engagement Performing Arts - technical presentation of the production (eg lighting and sound cues, etc). Crafts/Visual Arts - Use of equipment, space and overall layout/hang Education events - relevance/ appropriateness of presentation and teaching methodology (one to one, group, child centred); details of participant group and activity, including genre.	4	The presentation of the work shown, in two adjacent galleries, was very professional, as should be expected from an established visual arts venue. The gallery pieces comprised a range of media, including vinyl lettering, an MDF faux 'proscenium-style' arch, digital prints on foamboard and billboard prints. Gallery 2 also had a TV monitor with headphones to show a 14 minute long DVD work. This work showed participants in front of the specially commissioned billboards, sited in 3 locations in Leith, accompanied by recorded conversational narratives with local Polish people.
All	Audience Performing Arts - appropriateness of the production for the audience/participants; estimate the size and reaction Crafts/Visual Arts — time spent, interest, activity, and visitors' books comments, number of visitors/ participants at the time of visit Education/learning – pre-event involvement, participants/ schoolteachers reaction,		I spent 45 minutes at the gallery, including watching the 14 minute DVD work. There were no other visitors during my time spent at the exhibition. During my visit I spoke to Programme Manager Kirsten Bodie, who informed me that the off-site billboard project had ended the day previously which meant that I could only view the billboard artworks via the DVD and working pieces in the gallery (I understand the billboard spaces had only been hired for one week due to budget constraints, during which time one was graffitied). A podcast and accompanying essay for the

Artform	Criteria	Rating	Comments and key reasons for rating
	understanding, commitment, enthusiasm, number involved, etc		exhibition is now available on the website (which also includes photographs), which brings added value and contextualisation to the processes and outcomes of the exhibition. The comments booked for the exhibition was prominently displayed and had a number of comments, a proportion of which were negative towards the exhibition. This exhibition included an off-site billboard project in three locations in Leith. When I phoned in advance of my visit, I was informed that there was no map available to help visitors to locate the billboards. I was also not informed that the billboards would only be shown for one week and that they were being taken down the day before my planned visit. If an arts organisation is engaging in off-site projects it should be simple to create maps showing the locations of artworks, both printed and on the website. There should also be clear information on the website informing potential visitors when and for how long these works can be seen.
All	Additional Interpretative activity – what activities were available to enhance the experience of the event eg workshops, artist's talks, discussion groups? Please indicate age-groups targeted.	4	The FREEE exhibition is taking place as part of Collective Gallery's Grzewczy Season, a 3-month project of participatory events with a Polish focus. This included a one-day Symposium entitled How to be Hospitable: Art & the Public Sphere Symposium. Speakers included the exhibiting artists, as well as two other artists and writers, Dave Beech and Mark Hutchinson. This was (according to the Programme Manager) attended by 25 people. Having not attended this weekend event, held on Saturday 5 April, I would be interested to hear the rationale for this public art event, in relation to a Polish season (no Polish artists or writers as speakers) and who exactly attended the event. This seems to have been a public art symposium with a specific academic/cultural theory focus and I would imagine was attended by artists and other arts professionals interested in this specialist area. Other events as part of the Grzewczy included a one hour discussion forum with a local Leith MP of Polish descent and a recent émigré, poet Joanna Jarzymowska. No details are available regarding how many people attended this event. A Tasting Evening was also held in April, whereby the gallery hosted an evening polish food tasting. No details are available regarding how many people attended this event. The Collective Gallery website is an area where this type of process based work is more successful. The conversations, processes and photographs of the project are available online, and the recorded narratives are available to download as MP3 files. One can also see the FREEE exhibition in the context of the wider One Mile rationale.

Artform	Criteria	Rating	Comments and key reasons for rating
All	Outcomes of education activity – what learning/skills development took place? What did participants take away with them? Are education resources being provided for follow up work? Is it strategically linked to the curriculum (formal or informal)?	3	The programme of events, as part of the Grzewczy Season, allowed for a deeper investigation into Polish life and culture in Edinburgh through a process-driven art project. I am not unconvinced that the exhibition, on its own, would stand up to scrutiny were it not for the related season of events.

2. Management of Event

Please evaluate the way the event was presented/organised by the organisation and the venue, with reference to the checklist below, including additional comments/observations. Please try to view the venue and the services, and interpretative material as though you had never visited it before eg if you did not know the venue's location, how easy would it be to find your way there, and to find your way around once you had arrived?

Criteria	Comment
Suitability of the venue for the event	The Collective Gallery is a dedicated small scale visual arts venue appropriate for exhibitions and events of this nature and scale.
Information/ interpretive material at venue - programmes, displays etc.	There was information and interpretive material at the gallery. This contextualised both the current exhibition and the related external events and initiatives, in particular the three-year One Mile programme which introduces groups and individuals who live or work within one mile of the gallery to its work.
Publicity/ pre-publicity –leaflets, posters, websites, etc. What is produced, is it easy to understand and where can you get the information? Please be alert to the publicity available prior to your visit to the event and comment on the company/organisation's website.	There was clear and informative information on the website in advance of my visit. I did notice promotional leaflets and posters in other visual arts and non-visual arts venue in the city during my visit. I do not know if, whether or how the exhibition was promoted to the Polish community in Leith/Edinburgh. There was no information available regarding the exact location of the billboards or for how long they were to be displayed.
Ease of booking and payment	n/a
Location of venue – eg is it easy to find? Is it on a main transport route?	The gallery, located centrally on Edinburgh's busy Cockburn Street, is easy to locate and access.
External signage and signposting	The gallery is well signed and has information about current and future exhibitions and events on window vinyl.
Internal directional signage	This small scale venue has all the necessary internal signage.
Access and provision for disabled people – what can you see?	The Collective Gallery is fully accessible to disabled people. However, the current website lacks legibility for web visitors with visual impairments (it is noted that the website mentions that a new site is currently under construction which will hopefully address this issue).
Timing of the event – was the length appropriate? Did the start and finish time seem to be appropriate for the audience?	The exhibition was open at the advertised time of visiting. The timing of the billboard element was not highlighted online.
Customer service - quality and efficiency of staff (e.g. box office, front of house, bar and/or catering)	Staff were helpful and knowledgeable during my visit.
Acknowledgement of Scottish Arts Council Funding [2]	Scottish Arts Council was acknowledged on the available exhibition leaflet and on the Collective Gallery website. Vinyl lettering on the gallery window also acknowledged SAC support.

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[2] In press releases, at launches, on all published materials (including leaflets, brochures, programmes, posters, company's website, notices display, exhibition materials, websites and advertising, recordings, publications, video, broadcasts, computer programmes etc.) Where the event is publicised in the programme brochure of another organisation (eg venue, gallery, etc) then SAC acknowledgement should appear against the particular programme entry for this event.

3. Organisation's Comments (optional)
This is the organisation's opportunity to respond to points raised within this assessment. Please do not feel obliged to fill this section in. In the spirit of the Quality Framework, we would ask that any comments are self-evaluating, providing an insight as to why, if there is, a major disagreement of response between the organisation and the evaluation, in a constructive way.

This will not alter the rating given by the assessment, but will allow the organisation the opportunity to give their opinion/feedback. The Scottish Arts Council reserves the right to edit comments if they are deemed to be libellous or defamatory.

As the Scottish Arts Council implements the Quality Framework internally, we intend to publish artistic evaluations on organisations that we support regularly on our website. The final artistic evaluation, including the organisation's response will be published on a quarterly basis on our website.

Please keep your response to max **500 words**. If we do not hear from you in 15 days, we will assume that you do not want to respond.

Freee Art Collective Manifesto for a Counter-Hegemonic Art

A spectre is haunting Culture - the spectre of philistinism (of culture with a small 'C'). All the powers of old Culture have entered into a holy alliance to exorcise this spectre: academy and market, nostalgic modernists and elitist educationalists, French theorists and British anti-intellectuals.

Where is the art in opposition that has not been decried as philistine by its opponents in power? Where the Opposition that has not hurled back the branding reproach of philistinism, against the more advanced opposition art, as well as against its reactionary adversaries?

Two things result from this fact: I. Philistinism is already acknowledged by all European powers to be itself a power.

II. It is high time that philistines should openly, in the face of the cultural hegemony, publish their views, their aims, their tendencies, and meet this nursery tale of the spectre of philistinism with a manifesto of its opposition to cultural hegemony - a manifesto for a counter-hegemonic art.

PART I: ART AND THE BOURGEOIS PUBLIC SPHERE

The history of all hitherto existing culture is the history of hegemonic struggles. High and Low culture, folk art and courtly culture, avantgarde and kitsch, mass culture and autonomous art, popular and elite culture, connoisseur and philistine, in a word, oppressor and oppressed, stood in constant opposition to one another, carried on an uninterrupted, now hidden, now open fight, a fight that each time ended, either in a revolutionary reconstitution of culture at large, or in the common ruin of the contending rivals within cultural division.

In pre-modern epochs of cultural history, we find almost everywhere a complicated arrangement of culture into various orders, a manifold gradation of cultural rank. As well as the division separating Fine Art from Craft and Popular entertainments like the circus, within the academy itself we have the hierarchy of genres; in almost all of these genres, again, subordinate gradations. Modern bourgeois society has sprouted from the ruins of courtly culture and Romanticism, to produce autonomous art and the public sphere but it has not done away with cultural hegemony or cultural antagonisms. It has but established a new hegemony, new conditions of distinction, new forms of struggle in place of the old ones.

Our epoch, the epoch of art as big business, however has this distinctive feature: it has simplified cultural antagonisms. Culture as a whole, while it is riven with a cornucopia of fissures, from race to gender and sexuality, is more and more splitting up into two great hostile camps, into two great cultural formations directly facing each other – art and everything else.

The culture industry, including both popular and minority forms, the spectacle of mass culture and the spectacle of the biennial, has transformed information technologies, took hold of the press and communications, and commodified opinion. The present cultural hegemony, therefore, cannot be separated from the social domination of big business and has pushed into the background every cultural

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distinction handed down from the Middle Ages.

We see, therefore, how the current cultural hegemony has converted culture into business: the debased bourgeois public sphere.

The bourgeois public sphere cannot exist without novelty, constantly revolutionizing the products for sale and thereby producing constantly shifting cultural relations, and with them the whole relations of society. Constant revolutionizing of form and style, uninterrupted disturbance of all cultural conditions, everlasting uncertainty and agitation distinguish the culture of the debased bourgeois public sphere from all earlier ones.

The need of constantly expanding market for its products chases the art bourgeois public sphere over the entire surface of the globe. Through its exploitation of the world market it has given a cosmopolitan character to art's production and consumption in every country . All old-established national cultures are dislodged by new global cultures, whose introduction becomes a life and death question for all competing nations, by cultures that no longer work up indigenous publics, but cultures whose products are consumed in every quarter of the globe.

In place of the old local and national seclusion and self-sufficiency, we have the universal inter-dependence of nations. The cultures of individual nations become common property: a world culture. The bourgeois public sphere, by the rapid improvement of all instruments of cultural distribution, by the immensely facilitated means of digital communication, draws all, even the most under-developed, nations into globalization.

The vast rewards of the contemporary art market are the heavy artillery with which it forces all cultures to capitulate. It compels all nations, on pain of extinction, to enter in the art market and by that fact enter into the bourgeois public sphere.

Desktop publishing, peer to peer global communications, myspace, facebook, twitter, home video editing, ipods, skype, mobile phone talking and instant messaging, mobile phone photography and video, chat rooms and Wikipedia – what earlier century had even a presentiment that such productive forces of cultural exchange would be placed in the hand of the ordinary consumer?

We see then: the means of production and of exchange, on whose foundation the bourgeois public sphere extends itself, were generated within the consumer market.

But not only has the cultural hegemony of the bourgeois public sphere forged the weapons that bring death to itself; it has also called into existence the social forces that are to wield those weapons, the philistines.

PART II: ART WITHIN AND AGAINST CULTURAL HEGEMONY

What else does the history of art prove, than that intellectual production changes its character in proportion as material production is changed? The hegemonic culture of each age.

The philistine challenge to the cultural hegemony of art is the most radical rupture with traditional cultural distinctions and traditional cultivated prejudices of the nature of art and aesthetics.

Let us have done with the cultivated objections to philistinism. The philistine will use its cultural supremacy to wrest, by degree, all cultural capital from the aesthete and the bureaucrat, to decentralize all instruments of cultural power and prestige from the hands of the state and market; and to increase the total cultural and aesthetic range of pleasures and positions as freely as possible.

Of course, in the beginning, this cannot be effected except by means of despotic inroads on the privileges of aesthetic taste and established cultural distinctions, and on the conditions of the debased bourgeois public sphere.

These measures will, of course, be different in different countries, different cultures and different subcultures. Nevertheless, in most instances, the following will be pretty generally applicable.

1. Abolition of cultural distinction and subjection of all cultural privileges to the scrutiny of counter-public spheres.

2. A corrective inversion of all existing cultural values.

3. Abolition of the institutionalized forgetting of the acquisition of cultural capital.

4. Secularization and demystification of the privileges of all aesthetes and elitists.

5. Abolition of the centralization of cultural authority and cultural capital in the universities, galleries, and other institutions of legitimation, by means of a national network of self-organized institutions with state capital. The state must fund art and culture against the state.

6. Decentralization of the means of cultural transmission, intellectual communication and self-education out of the hands of the state and market.

7. Extension of universities and galleries run by ordinary people; the recognition of cultural and intellectual legitimacy to people and pleasures excluded or denigrated by the cultural hegemony of the bourgeois public sphere, and the improvement of the culture generally in accordance with the abolition of cultural division.

8. Equal obligation of all to establish, maintain and participate in the counter-public sphere. Establishment of cultural forums, especially for self-education.

9. Combination of bodily with intellectual pleasures; gradual abolition of all the distinction between body and mind by a more equable distribution of the pleasures over culture.

10. Free self-education for all children and citizens in counter-public schools, galleries and critical forums. Abolition of the education industry and the culture industry in their present form. Combination of self-education with counter-public cultural production, etc.

When, in the course of development, cultural distinctions have disappeared, and all cultural and intellectual debate has been dispersed in the hands of a vast, unhierarchized association of the whole culture, the counter-public sphere will lose its oppositional and marginalized character. Cultural hegemony, properly so called, is merely the organized power of one section of culture for dominating and denigrating another.

The philistine during its contest with the aesthete, bureaucrat, profiteer and intellectual authority is compelled, by the force of circumstances, to wage a war against the cultural hegemony of the debased public sphere; and universalizes the position of the culturally excluded. In place of the old bourgeois public sphere, with its false universalism and hegemonic distortion of the concept and functioning of the public, we shall have a counter-hegemonic culture in which the free development of each counter-public sphere is the condition for the development of a universal public sphere.

III - RADICAL AND OPPOSITIONAL ART AND CULTURE

1. REACTIONARY RADICALISM

a. New Aestheticism

Looking to aesthetics as a political practice in its own right, a serious political critique of postmodernism was altogether out of the question. A philosophical battle alone remained possible.
The new aesthete took their revenge on postmodernism by singing lampoons on their new masters and whispering in their ears Adornian formulas for the preference for the epistemology of aesthetic judgement over the pleasures of popular culture. In this way arose the new aestheticism: half lamentation, half lampoon; half an echo of the past, half menace of the future, but always ludicrous in its effect, through total incapacity to comprehend the march of cultural history.
The new aesthete, in order to rally the philosophical world to them, waved the political promise of a full, genuine happiness in front for a banner. But the new aestheticism forgets that their defence of art and aesthetics takes sides with cultural hegemony.

In showing that, within the pleasures of the culture industry, real happiness doesn't stand a chance, they forget that modern autonomy is the necessary offspring of the now debased bourgeois public sphere.

For the rest, so little do they conceal the reactionary character of their criticism of popular culture that their chief accusation against the culture industry amounts to this: that a culture is being developed which is destined to cut up, root and branch, the old cultural distinctions. What they upbraid popular culture with is not so much that it creates a mass audience as that it creates a revolutionary philistine.

In cultural practice, therefore, they join in all corrective measures against everything popular and philistine; and in ordinary life; to barter truth, love, and honour, for traffic in paintings, symphonies, and opera.

Nothing is easier than to give Adornian asceticism a radical tinge. Has not aesthetic philosophy declaimed against instrumental reason, against heteronomy, against the political functions of art? New aestheticism is but the holy water with which the priest consecrates the heart-burnings of the culturally privileged.

b. Art's Debunkers

The debunkers of art were the radical precursors, and cultural obverse, of the new aestheticism. In cultural thinking where the Marxist sociological analysis of art's elitism has become fully developed, a cultural position of debunking art has developed, fluctuating between philistine and aesthete.

This school of critical thinking has dissected with great acuteness the contradictions in the conditions of contemporary art. It laid bare the hypocritical apologies of aestheticians. It proved, incontrovertibly, the disastrous effects of cultural distinction and cultural division; the concentration of cultural capital in a few educated hands; it pointed out the inevitable ruin of the art's elevation and separation from ordinary life, the misery of asceticism, the anarchy in the art market, the crying inequalities in the distribution of cultural capital, the cultural war of prestige between nations, the dissolution of old craft skills, of the old school tie snobbism, of the old elitism.

This form of Marxist cultural criticism confines our cultural choice to restoring the old cultural relations and the old society, or to abolishing art altogether. Art cannot be negated on the basis of a false dilemma that preserves art in aspic as a precondition for abolishing it. In either case, it is both reactionary and Utopian. Its last words are: elitism or nothing.

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c. Art Activism

Militants, politicos, and subversives struggle against power within and without art by direct means, through political activism as art, or art as political activism, or activism under art as a flag of convenience. Radicals, would-be radicals, and members of revolutionary parties, eagerly seize on activism as a form or source of art, only forgetting that when these tactics immigrated from politics into art, social conditions for action had not immigrated along with them.

The work of the art activists consists largely in bringing political ideas and processes into art, or rather, in annexing art without deserting their own political point of view. They insert their political activities into the gap left by the critique of (non-activist) art. For instance, the familiar format of the political poster is used to propagate ecological politics, and the conventions of the political campaign are used to build consciousness about torture, and so forth. The introduction of these political projects on the back of art is utterly conventional despite its subversive content.

Thus, both politics and art are completely neutralized in art activism. In the hands of the art activists, art is not a terrain of struggle, but merely a convenient forum for existing struggles.

Art activism forgets, in the nick of time, that the public sphere, whose silly echo it is, presupposes the existence of modern bourgeois society, with its corresponding economic conditions of existence, and the political constitution adapted thereto, the very things whose attainment was the object of the art activist's critique.

2. CULTURE-LED REGENERATION

A part of the middle-class is desirous of redressing social grievances in order to secure the continued existence of bourgeois democratic society.

To this section belong New Labour politicians, 'big society' advocates, economists, town-planners, educationalists, quangocrats, philanthropists, humanitarians, improvers of the condition of the inner city, organizers of charity, nosey neighbours, hole-and-corner reformers of every imaginable kind. This form of social reform has, moreover, been worked into policies and institutions.

We may cite Charles Landry's 'The Creative City' as an example of

this. The middle-class social reformers want all the advantages of modern social conditions without the struggles and dangers necessarily resulting therefrom. They desire the existing state of society, minus its revolutionary and disintegrating elements. They wish for a bourgeoisie without a proletariat. The middle-class naturally conceives the world that it has created for its own interests to be the best; and middle-class social reform develops this comfortable conception into all manner of social projects. In requiring workers and the poor to be subjected to such 'improvements', and thereby to march straightaway into the social New Jerusalem, it but requires in reality that the proletariat should remain within the bounds of existing society, but should cast away all its hateful ideas concerning the bourgeoisie and its society.

A version of middle-class social reform, practical and systematic, is culture-led regeneration. Since the 1990s and in light of the effects of advanced global capital, the arts via arts and cultural policy have been increasingly used by the liberal democratic nation state as a means for intervention within social and economic development.

This type of reformism, however, by no means understands abolition of the existing relations of production, an abolition that can be affected only by a revolution, not administrative and educational reforms, based on the continued existence of these relations; reforms, therefore, that in no respect affect the relations between capital and labour, but, at the best, lessen the cost, and simplify the administrative work of government by using culture as a form of social control.

Culture-led regeneration attains adequate expression when, and only when, it neutralizes the threat of working class youth by inculcating the aspirations of the good worker. Thus, culture-led regeneration puts art's cultural hegemony into the service of social hegemony pure and simple.

Middle-class values: for the benefit of the working class. Social control: for the benefit of the working class. Crime prevention: for the benefit of the working class. This is the last word and the only seriously meant word of culture-led regeneration. It is summed up in the phrase: the middle-class is middle-class *for the benefit of the working class*.

IV - POSITION OF THE PHILISTINES IN RELATION TO THE VARIOUS EXISTING OPPOSITION ARTISTS

Part III has made clear the relations of the philistines to the existing

critical and oppositional cultural positions within contemporary thinking on art, such as the New Aestheticism, Art Activism, art's debunkers, culture-led regeneration, Cultural Studies and critical postmodernism. A counter-hegemonic art – art that counters art's cultural hegemony – fights for the attainment of the immediate aims of the culturally dispossessed, for the enforcement of the momentary interests of the philistine; but in the movement of the present, it also represents and takes care of the future of that movement.

Counter-hegemonic art supports cultural radicals in all fields, without losing sight of the fact that they invariably consist of antagonistic elements, partly of reformist, partly of radical tendencies.

Counter-hegemonic art supports rural cultural transformation as the prime condition for the reconfiguration of the divisive relations between town and country, a division which cuts through each, and therefore through all.

Counter-hegemonic art fights with cultural hegemony whenever it acts in a revolutionary way, against the absolutes of aesthetics, the feudal hierarchy of culture, and the bourgeois public sphere.

But counter-hegemonic art never ceases, for a single instant, to instill into the militantly philistine working class the clearest possible recognition of the hostile antagonism between cultural hegemony and spectacle, in order that the philistines may straightway use, as so many weapons against the bourgeois public sphere, the social and political conditions that cultural hegemony must necessarily introduce along with its supremacy, and in order that, after the fall of the reactionary culture, the fight against the social hegemony itself may immediately begin.

Counter-hegemonic art turns its attention chiefly to the bourgeois public sphere because it is deeply debased and bound to be carried off under more advanced conditions of cultural participation and with a much more developed and confident philistine, and because the counter-public sphere will be but the prelude to an immediately following social revolution.

In short, counter-hegemonic art everywhere supports every revolutionary movement against the existing social, political and cultural order of things. In all these movements, it brings to the front, as the leading question in each, the hegemony question, no matter what its degree of development at the time.

The philistines disdain to conceal their views and aims. They openly declare that their ends can be attained only by the forcible overthrow of all existing cultural conditions. Let the cultural hegemon tremble at a philistine revolution. The philistines have nothing to lose but their shame. They have a world to win. Philistines of the artworld, arise!