

Creating the ‘Ordinary’ City:

The Making of Place and the Role of
Middleground Cultural Producers in the Build-
Up to Coventry, UK City of Culture 2021

Emily Jo Hopkins


Thesis submitted to the Department of Geography at Royal Holloway,
University of London for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

November 2022



Declaration of Authorship

I, Emily Jo Hopkins, hereby declare that this thesis and the work presented in it is entirely my own. Where I have consulted the work of others, this is always clearly stated.

Signed: 

Date: 24/02/2022

Acknowledgements

This PhD has taken a village and there are many people I want to take the opportunity to recognise. Firstly, my supervisor, Dr. Oli Mould. Thank you for your enduring support over the last four years, both professionally and personally, and through every high and every low. I will always be grateful for your patience, pep talks and above all, your consistent kindness.

Thanks also go to the many staff members in the Department of Geography at Royal Holloway, who I have had the pleasure of working with (and being taught by!) over the years. To Professor Harriet Hawkins, for her feedback as the Advisor for this thesis. I would like to thank my colleagues from the AHRC Cities of Culture Network - particularly our Postgraduate Group, for the many hours of thought-provoking conversation. I would also like to give space to thank my original geography and art mentors, Miss Smart and Mrs Green at Coundon Court school.

Additionally, to all of the participants of this research who took me under their wing during my time back in Coventry. Through them, I have learnt so much more about where I (now proudly) come from. I hope this thesis does justice to your generous contributions.

Thirdly, to all of my friends and family – I know I cannot possibly name you all in this section, but I will give it my best shot. To the most incredible Mum and Dad, thank you for everything you have done for me. Most of all, for always telling me how much life there is to live and reminding me of my worth beyond work. You are the most caring people on the planet, and I love you, Beth and Nathan so much. To Grandma Dot, Grandad Dave and Grandad Mick – thank you for all of your Coventry books, newspaper cuttings and phone updates! In memory of Grandma Teresa, who sparked my love for all things artistic. And to Stanley and Bertie, who have been the ultimate therapy dogs during long days of writing.

A massive shout out goes to all of my immensely talented and hilarious PhD peers, who I will now only ever refer to in full title: Dr. Katy Lawn, Dr. Nick Robinson, Dr. Ed Brookes, Dr. Anna Jackman, Dr. James Bowles and the soon-to-be Dr. Laura Shipp

and Dr. Alice Reynolds. A particularly special thanks goes to Dr. Nina Willment, the funniest and kindest person to have shared this crazy journey with - my thesis would not be finished if it wasn't for our many hours of voice noting and gin drinking. And of course, to the best friends a girl could ask for: Emma, Chrissie, Ally and Sophie. Thank you for all of the listening, dancing and much needed pints over the years, I would be totally lost without you all. A special mention also goes to Mercedes Alonté - our three months together in Brooklyn changed how I see the world.

And finally, to Tom Leader, who turned up at just the right time. There are too many things to possibly begin to thank you for, but I am eternally grateful for it all. Life is always fun with you by my side!

This PhD was supported by the Economic and Social Research Council.

Abstract

Using the case study of my home city of Coventry, this research analyses lived experiences of the DCMS UK City of Culture (UKCoC) competition. Place-based cultural regeneration approaches allow for locally sensitive, embedded interventions which attend to site-specific issues and inequalities (Northall, 2017). As these cultural competitions become more frequent, ‘off-the-map’ places are applying similar styles of urban entrepreneurial tactics (Robinson, 2006; Harvey, 1989, 2002). However, ‘fast policy’ approaches (van Heur, 2010: 190) and the neoliberal agenda of the creative city (Peck, 2005; Mould, 2015) create tensions through governance issues and the (in)attainability of their socioeconomic objectives (O’Brien and Oakley, 2015).

This thesis attends to the people, places and processes within the cultural ecosystem of an emerging UKCoC. A year-long ethnography alongside the local cultural sector network built a rich picture of the build-up period from the perspective of those foregrounded as some of the key beneficiaries of the competition (Boland, 2010; Boland et al., 2017). The immersive, everyday nature of the methods exposed the vernacular and amateur creativities which can be lost in evaluations (Mould, 2015, 2018), and reflected on community involvement with - or exclusion from – decision-making within a socially engaged programme framed as empowering local voices (Courage, 2017; Coventry 2021, 2018).

This research was undertaken during a period often overshadowed by the year of celebration and post-megaevent evaluation. In-depth qualitative analysis of the dynamics of local inclusion within culture-led regeneration hopes to encourage further multi-dimensional narratives which are not afraid to confront the tensions which may be encountered throughout the UKCoC process. This hopes to deepen understandings on the opportunities and obstacles which were faced in Coventry during a turbulent time of cultural activity, governance shifts and identity evolution, and add to the discourse of whose values are considered within wider creative regeneration.

Contents

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	III
ABSTRACT	I
CONTENTS	II
LIST OF PLATES	V
LIST OF FIGURES	X
LIST OF TABLES	X
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS	XI
PROLOGUE	12
CHAPTER 1 – INTRODUCTION	17
1.1. INTRODUCTION	17
1.2. CONTEXT AND OVERARCHING AIMS	17
1.3. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES	19
1.4. APPROACH TO THE RESEARCH	20
1.5. THESIS OUTLINE	22
CHAPTER 2 – BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT	25
2.1. INTRODUCTION TO THE CONTEXTS	25
2.2. COVENTRY CONTEXT	25
2.3. CULTURAL COVENTRY CONTEXT	27
2.4. COVENTRY UKCoC2021 CONTEXT	30
2.5. CONTEXTS: CONCLUSION	35
CHAPTER 3 – LITERATURE REVIEW	36
3.1. INTRODUCTION	36
3.2. URBAN GEOGRAPHICAL FOUNDATIONS: THE GLOBAL, THE ORDINARY, THE CREATIVE 37	
3.2.1. Global Cities.....	38
3.2.2. Ordinary Cities	39
3.2.3. Creative Cities	42
3.2.4. The Global, the Ordinary and the Creative City: Summary	47
3.3. POWER	47
3.4. CITIES OF CULTURE – HISTORIES AND CONTESTATIONS	50
3.5. CREATIVE NETWORKS	54
3.5.1. Creative Class	54
3.5.2. Creative Networks	56
3.5.3. Inclusion and Exclusion	58
3.6. ARTWASHING AND CREATIVE CITY RESISTANCE	60
3.6.1. Artwashing, Co-option and Resistance	61
3.6.2. Looking Beyond Consumption.....	66
3.7. CULTURAL ECOSYSTEM AND ANATOMICAL FRAMEWORKS	68
3.8. CONCLUSION	71
CHAPTER 4 – METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCH DESIGN	73
4.1. INTRODUCTION	73
4.2. THEORETICAL AND ANALYTICAL FRAME	74
4.2.1. Research Philosophy	74
4.2.2. Theoretical Framework	76
4.2.3. Theoretical Influences on Research Question Development	80

4.3. METHODOLOGICAL DISCUSSION: ETHNOGRAPHIC METHODS	85
4.3.1. The Case for Embedded Ethnography.....	85
4.3.2. Autoethnography and Reflexivity.....	87
4.3.3. Ethnographic Methods Summary.....	89
4.4. RESEARCH DESIGN: METHODS AND DELIVERY	90
4.4.1. Ethnographic Observation.....	90
4.4.2. Semi-Structured Interviews.....	94
4.4.3. Ephemera Analysis.....	96
4.4.4. Sampling Technique.....	98
4.4.5. Analysis and Coding.....	100
4.4.6. Research Delivery.....	102
4.4.7. Ethical Considerations.....	104
4.4.8. Audit Trail.....	105
4.5. METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCH DESIGN: SUMMARY	107
CHAPTER 5 – ‘IT’S UP TO YOU’ PEOPLE OF CREATIVE COVENTRY	108
5.1. INTRODUCTION	108
5.2. INCLUSION AND EXCLUSION OF COVENTRY’S CULTURAL PRODUCERS	109
5.2.1. Context.....	109
5.2.2. UKCoC2021: Co-Production and Diversity Commitments.....	112
5.3. ETHNICITY	115
5.3.1. Context.....	115
5.3.2. Case Study A: Coventry Caribbean Association (CCA).....	118
5.3.3. Case Study B: Venice Biennale.....	123
5.3.4. Case Study C: Positive Images Festival.....	125
5.3.5. Ethnicity: Summary.....	131
5.4. AGE	133
5.4.1. Context.....	133
5.4.2. Age: Young Creatives and the Established Cultural Sector.....	137
5.4.3. Age: Summary.....	143
5.5. CLASS	145
5.5.1. Context.....	145
5.5.2. Class and the Established Cultural Sector.....	146
5.5.3. Class: Summary.....	151
5.6. PEOPLE: CONCLUSIONS	152
CHAPTER 6 – ‘CONCRETE JUNGLE’ PLACES OF CREATIVE COVENTRY	154
6.1. INTRODUCTION	154
6.2. TERRITORIAL STIGMATISATION	156
6.2.1. Territorial Stigma.....	156
6.2.2. Modernist Architecture.....	164
6.2.3. Territorial Stigmatisation: Summary.....	170
6.3. CULTURAL INFRASTRUCTURE AND THE ANATOMY OF CREATIVE COVENTRY	170
6.4. UPPERGROUND SPACES OF CREATIVITY	171
6.4.1. Case Study D: Herbert Art Gallery & Museum.....	172
6.4.2. Case Study E: Coventry Cathedral.....	173
6.5. MIDDLEGROUND SPACES OF CREATIVITY	179
6.5.1. Case Study F: Canal Basin.....	181
6.5.2. Case Study G: Shop Front Theatre.....	187
6.5.3. Case Study H: Coventry Evening Telegraph Pop-Up (CETPOP-UP).....	195
6.5.4. Case Study I: FarGo Creative Village.....	200
6.6. UNDERGROUND AND VERNACULAR SPACES OF CREATIVITY	211
6.6.1. Libraries.....	212
6.6.2. Domestic and the Street.....	217
6.6.3. Third Spaces.....	220
6.7. PLACES: CONCLUSIONS	222

CHAPTER 7 - 'STOP YOUR MESSING AROUND, BETTER THINK OF YOUR FUTURE'

PROCESSES OF CREATIVE COVENTRY 225

7.1. INTRODUCTION	225
7.2. FROM BID TO BUILD-UP: TIMINGS, LANGUAGE, CONNECTIONS	226
7.2.1. Timings and Temporalities.....	226
7.2.2. Language of the Bid: Promises and Politics	232
7.2.3. Local Involvement with Decision-making	234
7.3. NEOLIBERAL GOVERNANCE OF UKCoC2021	243
7.3.1. Funding and Precarity in Cultural Labour	244
7.3.2. Role of the CCoCT in Funding	247
7.3.3. Public and Private Partnerships.....	257
7.3.4. Neoliberal Governance: Summary	262
7.4. RESISTANCE	263
7.4.1. Graffiti.....	264
7.4.2. Digital Parodying	269
7.5. PROCESSES: CONCLUSIONS	275

CHAPTER 8 – CONCLUSION 277

8.1. INTRODUCING THE CONCLUSION: RESEARCH STATEMENT	277
8.2. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND LIMITATIONS	279
8.2.1. Findings of the Research Questions.....	279
8.2.2. LIMITATIONS OF THE RESEARCH	286
8.3. CONTRIBUTION TO KNOWLEDGE	288
8.4. FUTURE IMPLICATIONS OF THE RESEARCH	290
8.4.1. Influence on Future Academic Research.....	290
8.4.2. Recommendations to Policymakers	292
8.5. MY CREATIVE COV	295

BIBLIOGRAPHY..... 298

APPENDICES 330

A – DCMS UK CITY OF CULTURE BIDDING GUIDE INFORMATION 2017	330
B – SCORES FROM THE DCMS UKCoC BIDDING GUIDANCE 2017	332
C – TABLE SHOWING COVENTRY 2021'S BID GUIDE MAPPED ONTO DCMS UKCoC BIDDING GUIDANCE 2017	333
D – DCMS UKCoC2021 JUDGING PANEL BIOGRAPHIES	336
E – FULL LIST OF INITIAL COVENTRY 2021 PARTNERS	337
TAKEN FROM COVENTRY 2021, 2018: 16)	337
F – STAKEHOLDERS IDENTIFIED WITHIN THE COVENTRY 2021 PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT AND EVALUATION STRATEGY	338
G – AN OVERVIEW OF THE COVENTRY 2021 LOGIC MODEL	339
H – CONSENT FORM FOR INTERVIEW PARTICIPANTS	341
I – A SUMMARY OF EVENTS AND ACTIVITIES ATTENDED FOR ETHNOGRAPHIC OBSERVATION IN COVENTRY, 2018-2019	342
J - A SUMMARY OF CORE VOLUNTEERING DAYS WITH PHOTO ARCHIVE MINERS AND POSITIVE IMAGES FESTIVAL ACROSS 2019	345
K - A SUMMARY OF THE SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS UNDERTAKEN IN COVENTRY DURING 2019	346
L – INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR THE SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS	347

List of Plates

Plate 1. Neville and Christine Staple with their sign backstage at Godiva Festival 2018 (Source: Facebook)

Plate 2. Map of Coventry's location in the UK and a map of the city and its neighbourhoods (Source: Google Maps)

Plate 3. The Audience Finder 'Audience Spectrum Segments' (Source: Audience Agency)

Plate 4. Programme timeline for UKCoC2021, as detailed in the post-win bid summary file (Source: Coventry 2021, 2017)

Plate 5. Definition of the Creative Industries (Source: Creative Industries Federation, 2019)

Plate 6. An excerpt from the Summary Bid document (Source: [Coventry City of Culture Trust](#))

Plate 7. The Foleshill Mile Map (Source: Coventry 2021)

Plate 8 and 9. Images taken at the Positive Images Festival Multicultural Craft and Food Fair 2018, held in Coventry City Centre (Source: Positive Images Festival)

Plate 10. Designs for the Positive Images Festival poster. Left: Original design, Right: Final design. (Source: own image)

Plate 11. Screenshot from the exchange between Native and their Facebook audience (Source: own image)

Plate 12. Postcard produced by local arts organisation to celebrate everyday Coventry (Source: The Caravan Gallery)

Plate 13. Twitter posts highlighting the spatial denigration of Coventry by insider and outsider communities (Source: Twitter)

Plate 14. Screenshots taken from Coventry Culture Show Facebook page (Source: Facebook)

Plate 15. Front cover of Secret Knock, Volume 1, Issue 2. (Source: own image)

Plate 16. Craft Council roundtable mapping exercise including a crocheted perception of the ring road, which the map was mainly focused upon (Source: own image)

Plate 17. Coventry Cathedral (Source: Own image)

Plate 18. Promotional picture of The Specials concert from the spire of Coventry Cathedral (Source: Twitter)

Plate 19. View from inside Coventry Cathedral during The Specials concert, November 2019 (Source: Own image)

Plate 20. An image showing the protest sign being held by a local resident at The Specials concert (Source: Twitter)

Plate 21. Canal Basin included in the Creative Spaces of the Creative Enterprise documentation (Source: University of Warwick)

Plate 22. The Canal Basin (Source: Google Images)

Plate 23. Promotional image of Brindley Place, Birmingham (Source: Google Images)

Plate 24. A review of the Canal Basin left on a popular tourism site (Source: TripAdvisor, 2020)

Plate 25. The ‘wobbly bridge’ connecting the Canal Basin with the City Centre. The ‘C’ of the signage has regularly been graffitied so that the traffic below reads ‘ANAL BASIN’ (Source: Coventry Evening Telegraph)

Plate 26. The view from the top of The Burges (Source: Coventry Evening Telegraph)

Plate 27. Renders of the restoration plans for retail storefronts on The Burges as part of the Future High Streets Fund (Source: Corstorphine & Wright Architects)

Plate 28. Fishy Moores restaurant in The Precinct (Source: Coventry Evening Telegraph)

Plate 29. The Precinct on the edge of Coventry city centre (Source: Google Maps)

Plate 30. Shop Front Theatre in the unit previously occupied by Fishy Moores (Source: Google Images)

Plate 31. Promotional pictures of the interior of Shop Front Theatre (Source: Theatre Absolute)

Plate 32. Exhibition held inside the CETPOP-UP, January 2019 (Source: Own Image)

Plate 33. Exhibition held inside the CETPOP-UP, January 2019 (Source: Own Image)

Plate 34. Disused printing mills from the Coventry Evening Telegraph production located inside the CETPOP-UP (Source: Own Image)

Plate 35. Pop Brixton, a creative village based in South London (Source: [The Resident](#))

Plate 36. Inside the main warehouse space of FarGo Village (Source: Own Image)

Plate 37. A promotional picture of the shipping container segment of FarGo Village (Source: FarGo Village)

Plate 38. A wide view of the FarGo site, which also occupies surrounding warehouses (Source: FarGo Village)

Plate 39. Ian Harrabin presenting on Coventry to MIPIM in 2019 (Source: Twitter)

Plate 40. A weaving workshop hosted by The Making Project at Stoke Library in March 2019 (Source: Own Image)

Plate 41. The final tapestry of Coventry's skyline co-created by participants in The Making Project, displayed in Coventry Cathedral following its journey to various libraries and events around the city (Source: [The Making Project](#))

Plate 42. Crochet map of Coventry completed by participants at the Crafts Council/CCoCT Crafts roundtable (Source: Own Image)

Plate 43. Participants creating the map at the Crafts Council/CCoCT Crafts roundtable (Source: Own Image)

Plate 44. Front covers of Secret Knock Zine, Volume 1 : Issue 1 and Issue 2 (Source: Own Image)

Plate 45. Willenhall residents interacting with the Imagine Willenhall project by Photo Archive Miners (Source: Own Image)

Plate 46. Founding Presidents of Coventry UKCoC2021 (Source: CCoCT website)

Plate 47. Permanent marker message appeared in the city centre and shared on the 'covisok' Instagram account, both anonymous but the account was featured as a project within the original bid document (Source: Instagram)

Plate 48. A sticker subverting the Coventry 2021 logo and claiming Coventry to be 'absent' of culture (Source: Own image)

Plate 49. Sticker in Coventry city centre using the Only Fools and Horses logo to share the message that only fools live 'here', assumedly referring to Coventry (Source: Own image)

Plate 50. The 'About' information for the Coventry 2021 Culture City page on Facebook, particularly emphasising associations with London and young people (Source: Facebook)

Plate 51. A spoof profile page on the Coventry 2021 Culture City Facebook page (Source: Facebook)

Plate 52. A spoof event on the Coventry 2021 Culture City Facebook page (Source: Facebook)

Plate 53. A spoof event on the Coventry 2021 Culture City Facebook page (Source: Facebook)

Plate 54. Promotional materials on an electricity box in Coventry City Centre (Source: own image)

List of Figures

Figure 1. Core positions within the official CCoCT SDV team (Source: Coventry City of Culture Trust for WM Funders Network Briefing: Birmingham Commonwealth Games and Coventry City of Culture, 2019)

Figure 2. Median gross annual pay of employees by residence for Coventry and England (Coventry City Council, 2020)

Figure 3. A map of Coventry's public libraries (Source: Coventry City Council)

List of Tables

Table 1. A summary of events and activities attended for ethnographic observation in Coventry, 2018-2019

Table 2. A summary of core volunteering days with Photo Archive Miners and Positive Images Festival across 2019

Table 3. A summary of the semi-structured interviews undertaken in Coventry during 2019

List of Abbreviations

ACE	Arts Council England
CCC	Coventry City Council
CoC	City of Culture / Cities of Culture
CCoCT	Coventry City of Culture Trust
CETPOP-UP	Coventry Evening Telegraph Pop-Up
CWLEP	Coventry and Warwickshire Local Enterprise Partnership
DCMS	Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport
ECoC	European Capital of Culture
FD	Field diary
F13	Friday the 13 th
HoECF	Heart of England Community Foundation
PAM	Photo Archive Miners
PIF	Positive Images Festival
SDV	Special Delivery Vehicle
SFT	Shop Front Theatre
SKZ	Secret Knock Zine
UKCoC	UK City of Culture
WMCA	West Midland Combined Authority

Prologue

The year of 2018 marked the 20th anniversary of the Coventry Godiva Festival, drawing in 115,000 people from the West Midlands and further afield. It also marked the first year of the festival occurring within an officially named UK City of Culture – while the formal celebrations were three years away, the council were eager to promote their success, and especially at an event that guaranteed a large, local crowd. I planned to use the festival as a site for piloting my research methods, but I also wanted to join my parents, who had seen the 2Tone scene explode in the city during the 1980s. Together, we planned to watch Neville Staple – an original member of the Specials – take to the stage on Sunday afternoon. He is considered to be a founding father of 2Tone and a certified ‘rude boy’.

However, on Saturday morning, Coventry awoke to the news that there had been a fatal stabbing at Club M in the city centre. Over the morning, the identity of the victim was confirmed: Fidel Glasgow, Neville Staple’s 21-year-old grandson, who had been visiting the city. The mood of the festival seemed to shift, and social media was in uproar about how this could happen in Coventry city, let alone to such an iconic figure. Crowds still appeared, but there was a citywide tension; Saturday’s news had laid bare the realities of violent crime in the city.

Fans awaited the news that Staple had withdrawn his band from the line-up. But, through an announcement on their Facebook page, Staple wrote an emotional post to tell the city that they would still be playing at the festival, and that the performance would ‘be dedicated to our grandson Fidel and daughter Melanie (who asked that we still perform)’. In exchange for the performance, the band asked ‘the best fans in the world’ to ‘help us turn our pain into a message. Let’s show the young people that this knife trend has to stop! It has to STOP!!’. Residents of the city and 2Tone fans responded to the post with messages of support, and a communal promise to join the conversation and attend the emotional performance.

The whole situation had a cruel sense of irony. The Specials had been pioneers in spreading messages of anti-violence based on their experiences growing up in and

around Coventry, and one of the bands most successful songs - Concrete Jungle - consisted of lyrics that had narrated the thoughts of a knife carrier in the city during the 1980's:

‘I'm going out tonight,
I don't know if I'll be alright,
Everyone wants to hurt me,
Baby, danger in the city.
I have to carry a knife,
Because there's people threatening my life,
I can't dress just the way I want,
I'm being chased by the National Front’

Not only was a key member of their group witnessing first-hand the devastating effects of knife crime, but the situation had not changed: knife crime and racism were still regular occurrences in their city.

On Sunday afternoon, the park was full of people who had come to support Staple and his band. The murderer had not been caught (this would end up taking months of investigative work) and emotions were running high. The festival presenter introduced the band by noting that the performance would be paused in the middle of the set, so the band and Staple could pay tribute to Fidel. Staple entered the stage to chants of ‘Rude Boy’ filling the park. The band went straight into performing the Specials’ hit song, ‘Gangsters’, with enthusiastic singing and dancing by all on stage. For somebody unaware, the energy of the band and the continuous stream of ska classics being played was convincingly veiling the tragic loss that the Staple family had endured just a day before.

Mid-way through the set, however, the tribute began. Two people entered the stage with a large, homemade sign on a piece of wooden board, showing ‘Lets STOP knife crime NOW’ and ‘Nuff love xxx’ in large black lettering. They remained on stage as Staple stopped the music alongside his wife, Christine, and began his tribute by saying, “I’m sure you know, or heard, my grandson...”. Cutting off mid-sentence, Staple

walked away to the back of the stage, unable to continue his speech and stumbling into the speakers - he was clearly distressed, overcome with emotion and grief.



Plate 1. Neville and Christine Staple with their sign backstage at Godiva Festival 2018
(Source: Facebook)

His wife continued to talk into the microphone on his behalf, whilst members of his band rushed to his side to steady him and offer him support – both physically and emotionally. Christine addressed the crowd, asking them, “What’s going on? Young people need to learn to give more love and stop the knife crime...knives take lives”. Staple returned from the back of the stage, leaning on his wife’s shoulder. Christine passionately delivered the message of a communal, not individual, responsibility for what is happening on our streets.

The crowd clapped throughout the tribute, some making heart-shaped signs with their hands or displaying banners with messages of support. The speech ended, and the band invited the audience to join them in singing a ‘Coventry anthem’. The famous

harmonica tune filled the air, and the audience cheered as ‘A Message to You Rudy’ began to play. Neville regained his strength and called out to the crowd, “Help me sing this one, to my daughter, to my grandson!”. There was a sad tinge to the song and as the crowd digested the message that had just been delivered, the first verse of the song rang in everybody’s ears:

‘Stop your messing around,
Better think of your future,
Time you straighten right out,
Creating problems in town’

The set finished with Staple dedicating the last and most famous song by The Specials, ‘Ghost Town’, to Fidel. Again, the lyrics of the chorus seemed to garner a new meaning as he sang ‘...too much fighting on the dance floor’. In the crowd, I couldn’t help thinking about how difficult it must have been for him to sing these poignant lyrics, which already had such a personal meaning, and that now lead him to relive his own experience of such traumatic loss.

As the song finished, the band *tried* to begin another. Staple had already began singing the first line, when the music was inexplicably cut by the festival organisers. The set was overrunning for the headline act, Irish pop singer Ronan Keating. There was a collective sense of disappointment and anger at the organisers for halting such an emotive moment that was connecting the crowd. Staple shrugged his shoulders at the crowd, who were unanimously booing at the decision. As calls of ‘rude boy’ closed the set, Neville announced “I’m gonna go back to cry my eyes out for my grandson, and because we’re chucked off stage”. Walking into the arms of his daughter, the two embraced as he left the stage and bid farewell to the Coventry audience.

This moment has always stuck in my mind. Throughout the weekend, the festival presenters had repeatedly announced the city’s position as UK City of Culture on stage. Promotional videos were streamed on screens, showcasing our cultural assets and local community. At the FarGo Village tent, the Coventry City of Culture Trust team were fastening Glastonbury-style fabric wristbands, woven with their logo as a tactile, tangible reminder of the 2021 celebrations – the fastening required scissors to be removed, leaving the wearers emblazoned with the marketing campaign of the Trust

until they decided to remove the band. The intense promotions seemed to address the entrepreneurial nature of the City of Culture competition, rather than the social landscape in which it was taking place.

Mostly for me, however, it seems contradictory to cut the set of such a key figure in Coventry's cultural landscape. The 2Tone scene is one of the city's most famous cultural assets: Staple plays a role in a band that continues to deliver musical messages which correspond to Coventry's role as the City of Peace and Reconciliation¹. It was also this performance that made me think about the obdurate immutability of the contemporary creative city: as Staple dedicated one last song to his murdered grandson as part of an encore, the music was stopped, and the organisers said there was no more time in their slot. They needed to make sure that the headliner, Ronan Keating, had his full set. It was one of the most striking moments of my research, when locality and emotional connections to place were seemingly overlooked in favour of ensuring that a vague notion of faceless 'consumers' were provided with the cultural services that they had been promised: the creative city moves for no-one.

¹ An unofficial title promoted by city governors after World World II
<https://www.internationalcitiesofpeace.org/cities-listing/coventry-england/>

Chapter 1 – Introduction

This is a love story to Coventry.

1.1 Introduction

This thesis explores the build-up period to Coventry's year as the DCMS UK City of Culture (UKCoC) 2021, from the perspective of grassroots cultural producers (or, as referred to in this thesis, the 'middleground' (Cohendet et al., 2010) based in the city. By addressing this network of artists and cultural practitioners who, oftentimes, are also residents and embedded in the local community, the thesis captures how a local sense of *place* – with all its rich relational characteristics (Massey, 2005) – begins to be curated and performed during the build-up period to the UKCoC title.

This time period of the research is key, capturing actions and emotions during a critical developmental phase of the UKCoC journey. The early build-up can be overlooked in formal analysis but is arguably the optimal time to capture the evolution of the bid and, most importantly, to document how local communities are adapting to the pervasive presence of a national cultural title. Focusing on the build-up contributes towards longitudinal evidence building within cultural policy, but also addresses a time which can be overshadowed by the bidding, the year of celebrations and the immediate legacy periods. The build-up period, however, is a time of intensive cultural production for local cultural producers, who are also witnessing rapid changes to the city's identity and cultural governance. It is critical that their voices are not lost in the evaluation process, and that piecemeal elements which can often be missed are captured within the creative city narrative.

1.2 Context and Overarching Aims

The UKCoC competition was launched by DCMS in 2009 to emulate the impact of the European Capital of Culture (ECOC) title held in Glasgow during 1990 and Liverpool in 2008. Applicant cities for the UKCoC title create their bids to host the cultural megaevent around four years prior to the upcoming title year before five cities are

shortlisted, and an eventual winner is chosen by a select committee. The winner then undertakes three years of planning before hosting their year of celebrations, with the build-up period consisting of team and partnership development, programme curation and fundraising from public and private sources.

The UKCoC competition is framed as an opportunity to celebrate local people and places whilst forging partnerships across the city, country and internationally. This also encourages local authorities and other stakeholders to seek inventive financial investments from beyond central government, highlighting the increasing role of the privatised neoliberal agenda in largely post-industrial economies. The symbolic and financial value of the title has led to many cities submitting bids for UKCoC, stimulating a branding and consultancy landscape around the topic of cultural regeneration bids. This thesis hence provides honest feedback from on the ground in a winning city, speaking directly to the opportunities and challenges faced by the middleground creative practitioners in the city who are often labelled as key beneficiaries within such creative city development strategies.

Furthermore, as cultural megaevents become leading conduits for creative city regeneration, in-depth impact evaluations are undertaken to justify the spending on large sums of public money, but also to measure the social, economic and cultural impact of activities. Economic evaluations, such as value for money studies, have often been the dominating method, but there has been a growing shift to studying the value gained from the ‘soft’ impacts of investing in culture – including image change, evolutions of place perception and city narratives, effects on local identities and the extent of civic involvement (Evans and Shaw, 2004).

Coventry 2021 committed to platforming and investing in locally based, independent artists, who were described as “already driving a grassroots revolution” in the city (Bhathena, 2020: online). These claims are crucial to examine over the UKCoC period, with this thesis seeking to contribute towards a focus on the impacts felt by members of the independent artist network during the build-up. The research hopes to inform future UKCoC titleholders about expectation management for the local middleground cultural community. This is essential within a cultural policy structure which has been

criticised of overpromising positive impacts which may under deliver for those it is assumed to benefit (Pratt, 2010; Boland et al., 2019).

This research also holds personal importance. As a Coventrian, it has been an exhilarating experience to see my home city celebrated on a national scale. Watching the bid unfold and develop, there has been keen interest in seeing which elements of our home are chosen to represent the city through this process. To attract emotional investment and attachment to the programme, the production teams must arguably speak to our personal attachments to place. Whether this is achieved with a sense of authenticity or not is primarily judged by the local communities, including the local artists, and so their voices needed to be heard throughout this research.

For me, this is especially important in a city which often receives territorial stigma (Butler et al., 2018), both internally and externally. The UKCoC title recognises Coventry for its cultural contribution within the region, country and internationally, positioning the city as a global and economic force. However, a locally led narrative grounds the city's communities in the official evaluation through rich, in-depth insights into how middleground creative producers establish their identity and sense of place in this evolving city.

1.3. Research Objectives

My research contributes new knowledge on independent cultural communities (or, as they will be referred to, the 'middleground' (Cohendet et al., 2010) cultural producers in Coventry during the early build-up period to the UKCoC2021 title. Looking beyond economic regeneration, this thesis observes the *people*, *places* and *processes* of creative Coventry during the year of 2019. The narratives collected from the middleground are compared with top-down visions gathered through primary and secondary data collection to provide a critical perspective into the opportunities and challenges of being an independent arts practitioner in an emerging UK City of Culture. The following research questions are addressed:

- **RQ1:** How are the local middleground arts network becoming involved with the staging and development of 'creative Coventry' during 2019? How do

these artists perceive the UKCoC title during the build-up period?

- **RQ2:** Which places are being identified as the key sites in ‘creative Coventry’? Why are these places justified as creative and by who?
- **RQ3:** What types of social, cultural and economic processes are shaping the cultural ecosystem of ‘creative Coventry’ throughout the build-up period to UKCoC2021?

The theoretical development of the research questions will be discussed in more depth in Section 4.2.3. (page 80).

1.4. Approach to the Research

Theoretically, this research is grounded in three main strands of geographical and cultural policy literature: urban geography (specifically the role of global, ordinary and creative city discourses), cultural networks and ecosystems, and resistive creativity. Overall, this thesis questions how these global and creative processes map onto smaller, ‘ordinary’ places which function culturally, socially and economically differently to larger cities? This leads us to consider the phenomenon of Cities of Culture competitions and their role in helping to address such a question.

The urban geographical foundations are key to understanding the paradigm shift from post-industrial regeneration to the creative city. Global cities - heralded as the urban ‘superstars’ of contemporary capitalism - have led to competitive city governance, fuelled by urban entrepreneurial techniques and resulting in a hierarchy of urban centres which utilise their symbolic value (Sassen, 2005; Taylor and Derudder, 2016). On the other hand, ordinary city theory adopts a post-colonial lens which refocuses attention on “off the map” sites rather than wealthy, typically Western global cities – highlighting the supporting role those smaller cities play in the success of places like London, New York and Tokyo, but also the unique attributes which make seemingly ordinary places worthy of study in their own right (Robinson, 2002; McCann, 2004; Bryson et al., 2021). Bringing ordinary city theory into the discussion is critical for understanding the why overshadowed places are turning to urban regeneration

strategies – such as creative city development – which were previously associated with global city sites.

‘Creativity’ is traditionally a deeply humanistic trait but is now often defined in economic terms as the intellectual property of an individual which transcends the bounds of what is presumed to be ordinary thought and practice (Edensor et al, 2009: 8). Creative city theory builds on this to argue that contemporary urban development is driven by a creative class whose intellectual property drives the knowledge economy, which is then particularly strong in places where these people can live, work and play in cities brimming with cultural activity (Landry, 2000; Florida, 2002).

Despite critics tying these strategies to gentrification, artwashing, neoliberal agendas and a ‘blueprint’ style of homogenous cultural developments (Peck, 2005; Mould, 2015; Pritchard, 2019), the creative city model remains as an important urban redevelopment style. Within the UK and beyond, creative city strategies increase and reach seemingly ordinary places which are typically overlooked in the face of superstar cultural centres such as London. Peripheral cities are arguably seduced by the values attached to cultural policies, which are seen as ready-made formulas to remedy post-industrial economies (O’Brien and Miles, 2010; Mommaas, 2004).

However, the role of local culture and heritage within cultural regeneration can be lost in favour of spectacles or capital-led infrastructure developments (Oakley, 2015), which are accused of “papering over urban decay” and “adding a glossy veneer” (Rantisi and Leslie, 2013: 85) rather than addressing cultural histories, inequalities and inclusions. A deeper understanding about a place is arguably necessary to avoid a staged authenticity (MacCannell, 1973), which may not attend to the specific experiences of a place and its community.

The creative and arts-led focus of the UKCoC programme subsequently draws cultural policy literature into the mix. In the context of place-based culture-led regeneration, geographical and cultural theories often overlap to explain the phenomenon ongoing on the ground. The creative networks and cultural ecosystems in which these urban regeneration processes take place are essential for the delivery of policies like the UKCoC title. Also key is how such cultural events arguably need to be sensitive to both

the local communities *and* the local economy to avoid being viewed as a ‘parachuted in’ art, a critique used to describe public art that does not connect with the local community (Sharp, Pollock and Paddison, 2005).

This leads to a brief synopsis of the embedded ethnographic approach to analysing creative city policies, as adopted in this research and discussed in more detail in Chapter 4. A *relational* analysis has been instilled to consider the social, emotional and spatial narratives which help to describe the interrelation of economic and non-economic happenings (Crang, 1997; Massey, 2005; Sunley, 2009; Comunian, 2012). Using this approach can suitably represent a cultural programme with many socioeconomic objectives. Like the place-based strategy being studied, my method was intrinsically local – however, it also tried to look beyond the façade of spectacular cultural programming. The ‘small stories epistemology’ (Lorimer, 2003; Cameron, 2012) was useful as it asks geographers to look beyond institutional narratives whereas the influential work on vernacular creativity encouraged the research to attend to the mundane and back stages of creative practice (Edensor et al. 2009; Goffman, 1956).

Adopting a qualitative methodology which borrows heavily from cultural geography, my ethnography included semi-structured interviews with cultural stakeholders, participant observation of over forty local cultural events alongside ephemera analysis, which documented the evolution of the sense of place and community during the UKCoC build-up period. It was also partially autoethnographic as I utilised my resident positionality through ‘insider moments’ (May, 2014) with other Coventry communities, but adopted an ‘outsider within’ (Collins, 1986) positionality as I entered the cultural ecosystem.

1.5. Thesis Outline

This thesis provides a deliberately omnivorous exploration of the messiness of Coventry’s UKCoC journey, which is tackled through a multi-theoretical and multi-method approach. By looking at the research in this way, I aim to showcase the multitude of people, places and processes at play throughout the build-up period in 2019, rather than focusing specifically on one approach or perspective (and in a loving

nod to Coventry, each title of the analytical chapters borrows lyrics taken from songs by The Specials).

The journey of this thesis will commence as follows. Chapter 2 covers the **contextual background** of Coventry and the DCMS UKCoC competition, giving important information on the history of the city and the national cultural policy to set the scene for the thesis. Relevant academic and policy **literature** is reviewed throughout Chapter 3, justifying why the theories have chosen to be applied when researching the people (creative network theory), places (urban geographical theories) and processes (neoliberal governance and resistive creativity) ongoing in cities like Coventry which adopt culture-led regeneration. It also uses cultural policy literature to discuss the cultural policy and anatomical frameworks which are used to place order on the literature and UKCoC phenomenon.

This feeds into Chapter 4, which details the **methodology** of the thesis: sharing details on the relational and ethnographic approaches which allowed me to look at, listen to and feel the independent arts network in creative Coventry. It details the research design and specific methods which led to me becoming an embedded researcher in the middleground cultural network in Coventry, as well as detailing the research process through various guides and audits.

The analysis is split into three chapters: Chapter 5 maps the intangible connections and relationships of the **people** involved in the city's middleground cultural sector. Not only does it provide insight into how the artistic stakeholders on the ground interacted, but it also documents how connections began to develop between local producers and the governing special delivery vehicle throughout 2019. These encounters highlight the various emotions felt throughout the build-up period which are not often discussed in official evaluations: excitement, hopefulness, and enthusiasm alongside confusion and often, frustration. Emulating the structure of the original UKCoC2021 bid, the chapter is structured to look at specific demographic groups – covering ethnicity, age and class – to further address the sense of involvement, inclusion and exclusion within local decision-making.

Moving onto **places**, Chapter 6 maps the material sites and landscapes of the cultural ecosystem and aims to understand which places are given value by the middleground cultural community. Starting with the reporting of accounts of territorial stigma, the chapter dissects the denigration of Coventry's urban landscape – particularly its modernist architecture, which featured heavily in the UKCoC2021 bid. It then looks more specifically at individual sites to build on earlier anatomical studies on the upper-, middle- and underground sites considered to be creative in Coventry. The chapter replicates this structure to compare and contrast the places which are deemed as important by the cultural middleground during the early build-up period. Importantly, this covers sites of vernacular creativity - such as the libraries, cafes, and community centres – which may not traditionally be associated with culture-led regeneration and creativity.

Finally, Chapter 7 provides critical insight into the wider social, economic and cultural **processes** at play during cultural megaevents: ultimately, the overarching processes which shape the experiences of the people and places in Coventry UKCoC2021. This chapter covers processes impacting the middleground cultural producers such as the governance structures of cultural megaevents, the influence of neoliberal economics on the cultural funding landscape, and the resistive activities which seek to subvert creative city narratives. The thesis **concludes** with Chapter 8, which summarises the key findings from each chapter, the limitations of the methodology, possible directions for future research and finishes by addressing possible policy opportunities for future UKCoC competitions to take into account the experiences of middleground cultural producers during turbulent build-up periods.

By foregrounding the untold and underrepresented people, places and processes of Coventry's UK City of Culture 2021 build-up, I bring an intimate sensibility to the study of otherwise institutionalised and hierarchical overviews to place-based mega-events: as I said at the opening of this chapter, it is a love story to Coventry.

Chapter 2 – Background and Context

2.1 Introduction to the Contexts

Before sharing relational accounts of Coventry, it is important to cover some contextual information which helps to provide a picture of the place where the research was undertaken. It also further explains Coventry’s decision to apply for the DCMS UKCoC2021 title. This chapter will provide contextualising information on the city and its cultural sector, before providing historical context on the City of Culture policy approach to embed the journey of Coventry’s UKCoC2021 title.

2.2 Coventry Context

Coventry is a mid-sized city located in the West Midlands County of England. The Centre for Cities defines a mid-sized city as one with a population between 250,000 and 500,000 (Bolton and Hildreth, 2013), and in mid-2019, Coventry had a population of 371,521. This made it the ninth largest city and the third largest local authority area in the UK (Coventry City Council, no date).

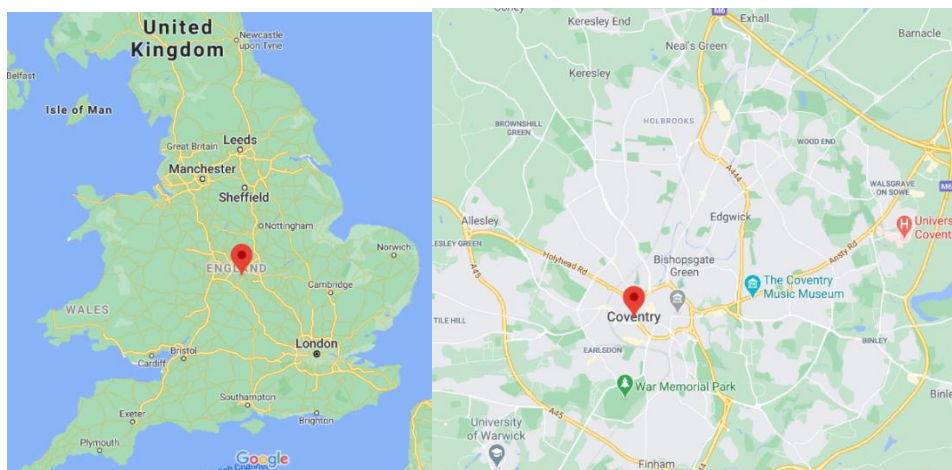


Plate 2. Map of Coventry’s location in the UK and a map of the city and its neighbourhoods (Source: Google Maps)

Coventry was a religious centre before two parishes were given city status in the mid-fifteenth century. Industrialisation in the nineteenth century saw Coventry's population grow as it became a prosperous manufacturing centre for ribbons, watches and eventually bicycles and automobiles (Stephens, 1969). This industrial legacy continued into the twentieth century, with large corporations including Jaguar, General Motors and Daimler based in the city. There were also numerous collieries on the outskirts of the city.

Coventry was later targeted by Nazi bombers as it was a centre of wartime production. On November 14th, 1940, the Coventry Blitz saw 500 tonnes of explosives kill 554 people and flatten its medieval centre, destroying over 43,000 homes (Fletcher, 2020). St Michael's Cathedral was severely damaged, with the medieval structure remaining roofless in the city centre. Contemporary Coventry is typically associated with modernist architecture: often wrongfully associated with the damage caused by the Blitz, but the city's post-war regeneration followed architectural plans conceived prior to the war.

Bolton and Hildreth (2013) define Coventry's contemporary city status as an independent economic centre, including self-contained travel to work areas with a strong labour market and a developing post-industrial service economy. These centres are also likely to play a complementary economic role to larger neighbouring cities (ibid.), as Coventry does with nearby Birmingham. However, recent studies also showed that in 2019, 14.4% of Coventry's neighbourhoods were among the 20% most deprived in England (Munro, 2020). The city's local authority has also been stripped financially, with Coventry City Council absorbing a 49% cut to its central government grant between 2010 and 2019, despite increasing demand for public resources and halting investments into non-statutory services (ibid.).

Coventry's population is also incredibly diverse in comparison to other UK cities. Only 66.6% of the city identifies as White British, compared to 79.2% of the population in the West Midlands and 79.8% of people across the UK (Coventry City Council, no date). The second largest ethnic population in Coventry is Asian, at 16.3% (ibid.). Furthermore, 21% of Coventry residents were born outside of the UK, highlighting migrant populations who relocated to the city following the second world war and

more recently. There is a transient population of students who make up almost 10% of the city's population (QS, 2020), with 18,155 overseas students attending one of the two universities in 2016 (Coventry City Council and Coventry Refugee and Migrant Centre, 2018). This student population contributes towards the younger demographic of the city in comparison to other cities across the UK.

2.3 Cultural Coventry Context

During its industrial height of the mid- to late-twentieth century, Coventry was historically a centre for craftspeople, including weavers, ribbon weavers and watchmakers who congregated in the city (Stephens, 1969). So, it is perhaps should be of little surprise that today 8.6% of jobs in the wider West Midlands region are considered to be in the cultural or creative industries – the highest of all combined authorities in the UK and a figure that is only expected to grow alongside the recent regional investment (West Midlands Combined Authority², 2018).

Arts Council England findings state that 305 of the total 1,725 businesses in the Coventry and Warwickshire area are within the arts and cultural sector, drawn from analysis of Business Counts and Employments using Standard Industrial Classification (Arts Council England³, 2020). Within this, the most common business types were artistic creation (140 businesses) and the performing arts (90 businesses). However, a study undertaken by the Royal Society of Arts (2016) found Coventry to be in the bottom 34% of cultural heritage provision in the UK.

Furthermore, national data on cultural consumption from the research organisation Audience Finder has determined the Audience Spectrum segments (see Plate 3), which detail types of cultural engagement in UK regions.

² Hereafter WMCA

³ Hereafter ACE

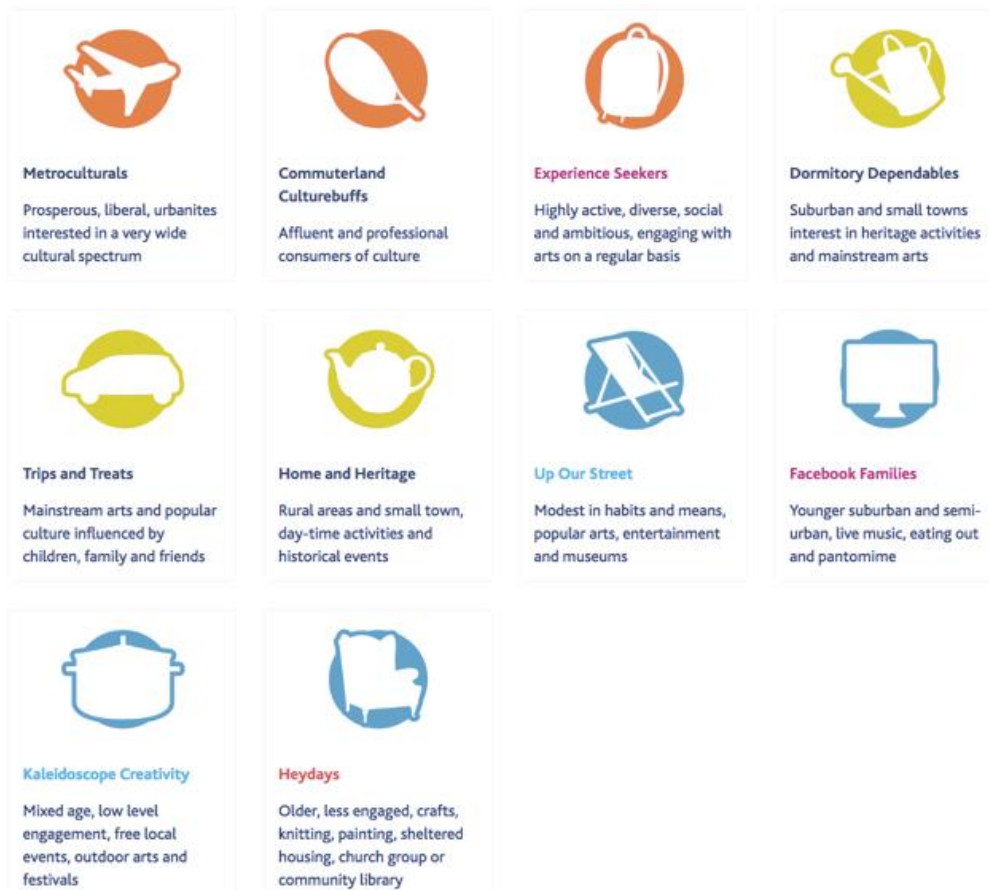


Plate 3. The Audience Finder ‘Audience Spectrum Segments’ (Source: Audience Agency)

Audiences in the West Midlands are more likely to come from the following groups (Audience Finder, no date):

- The ‘Trips and Treats’ segment: Suburban households, often with children, who attend cultural activities for a day out or treat
- The ‘Facebook Families’ segment: ‘Harder-pressed’ households for whom arts and culture play a small role
- And ‘Dormitory Dependable’: Regular but not frequent cultural attendees living in city suburbs

This contextualises the CCoCT step changes, implemented within a region which has been found to be attracting visitors from a less culturally engaged ‘segment’ of the population, which the UKCoC competition aims to remedy.

Moving beyond cultural consumption, there are two key cultural production networks in Coventry: Friday the 13th (hereafter F13) and CW8. The latter is a strategic arts partnership created in 2014, involving a group of flagship arts and cultural organisations in the Coventry and Warwickshire area. Within Coventry, these include The Belgrade Theatre, Coventry Cathedral, Culture Coventry and Warwick Arts Centre. This network was created for large-scale and National Portfolio Organisations (NPOs) to showcase their key role in the local cultural economy, reflecting on their combined turnover of £88m a year (Coventry City Council, 2014). The research of this thesis, however, mostly addresses the F13 network. Formed in December 2013 by a small group of cross-artform practitioners, F13 was created by the grassroots cultural community as a conversational network to represent the voice of the independent arts sector in Coventry:

‘We talked at that first meeting about Coventry perpetually being poised on the edge of greatness (yet never quite making it); a place where the people at the grassroots are really active, making all kinds of things happen; that it is the grass-roots initiatives that are most successful; that it is the grassroots that actually lead...’

(Words from the Birds⁴, 2018)

The network has a horizontal structure which places value on multiple voices to share their experiences of the local cultural sector and the development of arts and culture governance structures in the city. Furthermore, F13 is important in analysing the ‘middleground’ (Cohendet et al., 2010) (to be discussed further in Chapter 3) communities of the cultural sector, as it prioritises the more informal, everyday voices of cultural practitioners who can use this platform to share their expertise. Many of the participants and events examined as part of this research include members of the F13 network, including Theatre Absolute, Ludic Rooms, Photo Archive Miners and Artspace.

⁴ [Talking Birds blog](#)

Importantly, this network shares emotional encounters of working in the cultural sector. On the one hand, this is a space for excitement and celebration, and a place to provide support and morale boosts for independent organisations who are regularly burdened with financial and administrative strain. The bonds between the F13 groups are strengthened by the shared identity of the groups as ‘independents’ who do not receive NPO funding like the CW8 network and share similar lived experiences of success and hardship from their grassroots positionality. As F13 has roots in the infancy of the UKCoC bid, the network is intrinsically involved in the arts and cultural activity that takes place in the city. While the histories and contestations around CoC competitions will be discussed in Chapter 3, the logistical background of Coventry’s UKCoC2021 title will now be provided to further contextualise the Coventry journey.

2.4 Coventry UKCoC2021 Context

While the histories and contestations around CoC competitions will be discussed in Chapter 3, the logistical background of Coventry’s UKCoC2021 title will now be provided to further contextualise the Coventry journey.

Applicant cities for the UKCoC title begin to create their bids around four years prior to the upcoming title year, initially creating written applications influenced by the bidding information provided by DCMS. This ‘vision creation’ process relates heavily to Part B of the DCMS (2017) bidding guidance (found in Appendix A), with the ‘vision’ capturing shared insights from various stakeholders to explain why the bid matters to them and the hopeful impacts of the win. This overview includes a trajectory of the place, including elements of its past, present and future, whilst affirming the core values and aspirations of the bid (Richards and Duif, 2019).

Coventry submitted a bid to be the DCMS UKCoC2021 in 2017 after being shortlisted alongside teams from Swansea, Paisley, Stoke-on-Trent and Sunderland. A judging panel made up of key cultural decision makers visited each shortlisted city to assess the on-the-ground reality of their applications. The UKCoC2021 panel included representatives of different regions of the UK for geographical variety but has since been criticised for its lack of ethnic and gender diversity (official panel biographies can be found in Appendix D).

More specifically, the UKCoC 2021 bids were scored in relation to the categories of ‘Your Area’, ‘Overall Vision’, ‘Cultural and Artistic Strengths’, ‘Social Impacts’, ‘Economic Impacts’ and ‘Tourism Impacts’ (see Appendix A). The cultural and economic elements of the bid were of higher value within the scoring system (see Appendix B for detail breakdown). This highlights where the bids may have placed emphasis. Quotes and figures from the Coventry 2021 Bid Guide (Coventry 2021, 2018) are mapped onto the DCMS UKCoC Bidding Guidelines in Appendix C, to expand upon the vision of the bid and highlight the city’s ‘DNA’ (Richards and Duif, 2019).

For Coventry, emphasis was placed on overcoming territorial stigma both internally and externally. A leading quote from the original bid was, “We weren’t sent to Coventry, we chose to come” (Coventry 2021, 2017: 12), building on the original phrase of being sent to Coventry which stemmed during the 17th century English Civil War as a term meaning to deliberately ostracise, avoid completely or act if somebody does not exist (Rodger, 2016). This positionality is also arguably designed to redress the stigma that Coventry has of being a ‘concrete jungle’ (Gibbons, 2017).

Coventry was declared the winner, with the subsequent planning for the UKCoC title following the typical temporal distinctions: a bidding period, a build-up period, a year of celebrations, and an immediate legacy period. Plate 4 below indicates the timeline submitted as part of the Coventry 2021 bid. My research was undertaken during 2019, a midpoint of the build-up period which was described by the CCoCT as “a carefully co-designed build-up to 2021 to ensure that all citizens benefit, are represented and participate in the year” (Coventry 2021, 2019: 7).

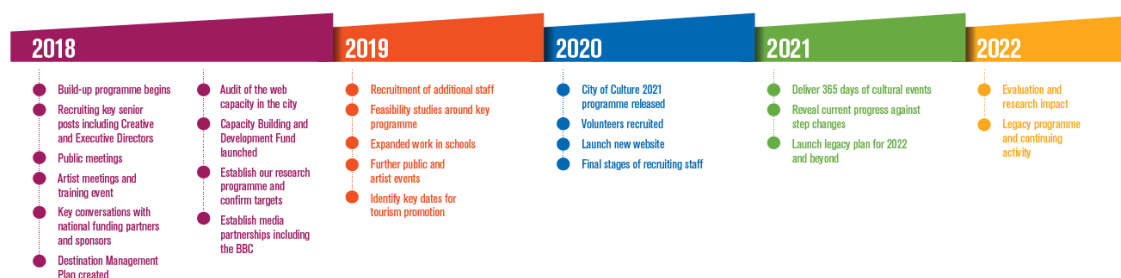


Plate 4. Programme timeline for UKCoC2021, as detailed in the post-win bid summary file (Source: Coventry 2021, 2017)

Early bid teams tend to involve a mixture of representatives from across the cultural, academic, business and policy sectors of the place. For example, the original bidding document noted that the governance would involve representatives from the City Council, two universities, local cultural sector, wider region, philanthropists and the business community (Coventry 2021, 2017). This team has now evolved into the Coventry City of Culture Trust (CCoCT), a charitable Special Delivery Vehicle (SDV) appointed with the responsibility to govern, administrate and produce the cultural programme for a four-to-five-year duration.

The structure of the Trust is based around a Chief Executive, who reports to a Board of Trustees from the local and regional vicinity, and who is supported by a Creative Director (Coventry 2021, 2019). During the research in 2019, the positions shown in Figure 1 below were recruited:

CITY OF CULTURE TRUST TEAM

Jan 18 – March 19	Apr – Jun 2019	Jul – Sep 2019	Oct - Dec 2019	Jan 2020+
Chief Executive Creative Director Director of Operations and Legacy Production Director Head of Fundraising 2021 Club Manager Head of Marketing Marketing Officer City Visits Coordinator Great Places Project Manager and Team Creative Assistant Head of Trusts and Foundations Finance Manager Senior Finance Officer Monitoring and Evaluation Officer	Senior Producer – Collaborative City 3x Collaborative City Producers Senior Producer – Dynamic City Caring City Producer Programme Manager Young People & Youthfulness Programme Manager Culture & the Environment Place Curator Digital Curator Commercial Manager Executive Assistant Management Accountant	Head of Communications Head of Ticketing Head of Production Training and Team Development Lead Senior Producer – Caring City 2x Caring City Producers Marketing Assistant Graphic Designer	Accounts and Finance Apprentices HR Coordinator Training and Apprenticeship Coordinator Fundraising Support Data Analyst Digital Content Producer Communications Officer CRM Assistant	Volunteer Coordinator Programme Apprentices Executive Apprentices

Figure 1. Core positions within the official CCoCT SDV team (Source: Coventry City of Culture Trust, 2019)

The programming teams are further split into three subdivisions: The Caring City, Collaborative City and Dynamic City teams. The former’s creative production team were recruited later in 2019, with a producer based within four social community organisations to work on a key theme: Grapevine (disability and loneliness), Positive

Youth Foundation (young people), Coventry Refugee and Migrants Centre (refuge and sanctuary) and the Coventry Law Centre (homelessness).

The Collaborative City production team had geographical producers based in each quarter of the city for hyper-local interaction with the local community. Finally, the Dynamic City team looked at themes such as digital and environmental futures. The final set of core stakeholders involved the external partners and wider sponsoring team, can be found in Appendix E and F. Coventry City Council also established a 'City Readiness Board', working with working groups in the local authority on the themes of infrastructure, engagement and evaluation, logistics, events planning and security for Coventry UKCoC (Coventry City Council, 2019).

Another key step in 2019 was the development of the programme narrative. Richards and Duif (ibid: 71) outline the following as the elements which are typically included in cultural bids and programmes by smaller cities and increasingly, small towns (Ward, 2018):

- What the city is (its 'DNA')
- What it wants to be (the big dream)
- What it will provide (aspiration)
- Different audiences the vision encompasses (who the dream is for)
- Often a goal of improved quality of life (e.g., healthy, prosperous community that provides opportunities while protecting the environment and community values)
- Using a distinctive and inspiring story through the history of the city as inspiration (e.g., important former citizens, events, products)

These elements featured regularly throughout Coventry's bid and build-up period, with official communications stating that the title would "be inspired by citizens and reflect what matters today, showcasing different and new voices. We will seek to embed creativity and culture into the DNA of the city, to show the power of the arts to heal, transform, excite and delight" (Bhathena 2020: online).

Finally, an official evaluation partnership was confirmed between the CCoCT, Coventry University and University of Warwick, uniting researchers from the Russell group and post-1992 institution. Coventry University has a large arts and design department, focused on more practical and vocational training, whereas the University of Warwick has a notable Centre for Cultural and Media Policy studies which has previously produced key cultural sector research such as the Warwick Commission (Neelands et al., 2015). The partnership also included an Insight Team based at Coventry City Council and external contractors, as well as a Technical Reference group (Coventry 2021, 2019).

This partnership emulated the monitoring and evaluation structure implemented between Absolutely Cultured and the University of Hull for the previous iteration of the competition. The learning from each competition is shared through various reports, conferences and networks. The universities hold responsibility to track the progress of the programming as well as preparing the written reports. The official Performance Measurement and Evaluation Strategy was published by the partners in October 2019, including details on the logic model, Theory of Change and Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) applied to monitor the social, cultural and economic impact of Coventry's UKCoC process (see Appendix G). My research attends primarily to one core group of stakeholders (or beneficiaries), the local cultural sector, for the duration of one build-up year in 2019.

Within the official evaluation strategy, the local cultural network was referred to multiple times. Within the context of the Theory of Change, it was written that Coventry “can lay claim to a diverse, but fragile, community-based independent cultural sector of great potential” (Coventry 2021, 2019: 7). This provided the foundation for the objective to “strengthen and extend the cultural sector and its sphere of influence” (ibid: 7). To achieve this, the Trust said they would produce a high-quality artistic programme and sector development plan which would create a sustainable legacy for the city's cultural infrastructure and assets. More specifically, it would include “a transfer of power to local communities to allow local people to be part of ideas development, co-creation and decision making” and a “focus on sector development so that existing cultural organisations become more resilient and sustainable” (ibid: 8).

In relation to this thesis, there were parallels and differences with the official evaluation. One of the guiding principles of the strategy was that the data collection would give “value to the lived experience and voices of citizens, visitors and stakeholders” (ibid: 3). First-hand accounts would be featured to highlight how UKCoC had impacted the lives and work of partners, local communities and individuals. This would reflect the extent at which arts and cultural activity had been driven by locally agreed outcomes alongside the social and cultural value created over the programme.

Comunian (2012) argues that collecting data from practitioners involved with formal or informal creative networks is key within an area experiencing cultural regeneration. This thesis will hence add to the accounts collected in the official evaluation by attending to the build-up period of 2019, which may provide further supplementary materials and context and contribute towards a more longitudinal in-depth study of the city’ local cultural sector. It also hopes to capture the messiness and complexities which may be missing in official reports.

2.5 Contexts: Conclusion

This chapter has covered the contextual background of the surface levels of Coventry’s geography, population and cultural identity to create a foundation of knowledge for Coventry’s successful bid. While it touched on some core elements of the UKCoC administration, the histories and wider geographical theories will all be built on throughout the remainder of this thesis, particularly in the upcoming literature review.

Chapter 3 – Literature Review

3.1 Introduction

This chapter will outline the key literature and theories applied throughout the thesis, which will be applied to consider the people, places and processes of creative Coventry. It grounds the concept of urban development strategies into the phenomenon of arts-led cultural policies in mid-sized cities. These conceptual themes interact and crossover, covering bodies of geographical and cultural policy literature.

It starts with an overview of three core theories drawn from urban geography: the global city, the ordinary city and the creative city. Global city theory (i.e., Sassen, 1991) discusses superstar megacities and their role as the command-and-control centres of contemporary capitalism. Conversely, ordinary city theory (i.e., Robinson, 2002) critiques the global city argument by looking to ‘off the map’ cities that contribute to economic globalisation – socially, financially and culturally – but which are often not the centre of urban research. As this thesis argues, smaller cities can also be ‘off the map’, and as such, they are increasingly adopting global city style regeneration strategies without necessarily having the infrastructure or population to support such endeavours.

This then ties into the creative city: an amorphous set of theories which bring together ideas of innovation, diversity, tolerance, and creativity – often brought to cities through a specific creative class of knowledge workers who utilise their technological and cultural talent (Florida, 2000). Critiques of this regeneration style often pinpoint its contribution towards gentrification, meritocracy, and over-generalised homogenous plans (Mould, 2015). Despite this, the creative city phenomenon continues to sweep the globe with its message that everyone and everywhere can be ‘creative’ (Landry, 2000; Florida, 2002).

The review will then build on the background to the UKCoC as started in Chapter 2, using further academic research to discuss the history, politics and contestations of cultural city competitions (Garcia, 2005). As a qualitative and ethnographic study, this

review will then take a further ‘deep dive’ into the creative class ideas to focus on the networks and relationships required to fuel the innovative, creative growth so desired by urban decision makers. However, when considering the people of the creative city, the literature must also take into consideration the exclusionary processes that take place within creative networks (Malik, 2013; Brook et al., 2018).

Building on the theme of inclusion and exclusion, the review then turns to support the arguments that these competitions have a difficult tension with the processes of art washing and subsequent resistance to the creative city (Pritchard, 2017; Mould, 2015, 2018). While these activities may provide thorny methodological discussions, which are largely avoided in formal evaluation processes, this thesis hopes to reinstate their importance.

Finally, to consider such a messy and multi-faceted landscape, the review concludes by introducing two perspectives from cultural studies to act as a framework for understanding the foundational concepts of the research - namely cultural ecosystem theory (Gross and Wilson, 2019) and the anatomical framework of the creative city (Cohendet et al., 2010). These help to identify the layers and specificities of each creative city, leading onto the methodological considerations on how to capture this in Chapter 4.

3.2 Urban Geographical Foundations: The Global, the Ordinary, the Creative

In this first section of the literature review, I will dissect the relevant ideas from three cross-cutting geographical theories to explain how creative city thinking - with its focus on intensely networked societies and profitable cultural activity - has evolved from associations with global superstar cities and increasingly applied to seemingly ordinary places. Furthermore, it highlights the infiltration of neoliberal ideals beyond the global city, discussing how cultural taste and creative practice have become central elements to such processes.

3.2.1 Global Cities

In the early twentieth century, urban researchers at the Chicago School recognised strategic urban sites as gateways for global flows of products and information (Park and Burgess, 1921; Park, Burgess and McKenzie, 1925). Since then, urban scholars have continued to dedicate research to these ‘global cities’ and what makes them notable. The importance of these flows to economic production has arguably led to no single global city, but a deeply embedded network of global cities that are increasingly disconnected from their surrounding hinterlands (Sassen, 2005; Taylor and Derruder, 2017).

Today, a dependence on city-to-city networks continues the historical practice of spreading innovative knowledge to increase economic productivity (Taylor, 2012). From the late 1970s, neoliberal ideals such as economic privatisation, free trade, deregulation and outsourcing became far easier to apply in what Castells (1996) called the ‘informational age’. In this neoliberal system, government spending is reduced, and previously centralised responsibilities are allocated to private sectors (Brown, 2015). This placed further importance on the geographical bases of these corporations, which tended to be within urban centres. Massey (2007: 9) described global cities as a ‘key spatial manifestation of capitalism’ that secure the dominating actors with a ‘spatial fix’ in a networked world of flows.

Harvey (1989) later observed that the neoliberal shift of urban governance meant a gradual dismissal of provisions for local services and facilities and instead focused on facilitating urban centres for private capital; hence the onset of what he called ‘urban entrepreneurialism’, which made cities rife for the uptake of neoliberal practices. Neoliberal governance fuels public-private partnerships and inter-urban competition, by encouraging actors in the network to harness their individual thoughts and actions in order to pursue profit – much like what is being seen in creative policies. Harvey (ibid.) continues to pinpoint deindustrialisation as one of the foundations of the process, and thus the transition into an informational society (Castells, 1996). It is arguably this transition that is responsible for cities competing for resources, jobs and capital in a ‘new economy’.

Despite its ground-breaking work theoretically, global city theory was critiqued for lacking the empirical ground that recognised the complicated sets of relationships within individual cities (Smith, 2002). Importantly, global cities are held together by a ‘cultural glue’ (Taylor, 2012: 434), highlighting the influential social contributions of communities within these spaces. Another leading critique of the global city concept is that it is heavily economic-centric: as Bourdieu (1985: 723) commented, the spotlight is arguably ‘...leading one to reduce the social field, a multi-dimensional space, solely to the economic field’. Critics extend this argument to say that the city is a cultural and social text as much as it is an economic reality.

In what Jazeel (2017) views as the naturalization of concept-metaphors, it is crucial for today’s critical urban scholars to render global cities as vast, heterogenous socio-spatial formations and processes. There is analytical importance to looking at the global city from the outside of an economic-centric and hierarchical perspective (ibid.), instead attending to the foundations: the socio-cultural and relational happenings of the non-elite, the majority, who form the daily underpinnings of order for these world-stage cities.

Social interactions also provide a dialogue between the metropolis and the individual, making the global city a socially transformative milieu (Acuto, 2011). Turok (2009: 14) summarises this neatly, stating that ‘[global] cities are complex advance systems comprising multitudes of actors, firms, and other organisations forming diverse relationships and evolving together...other places cannot easily replicate these conditions’. Some global city theorists agree, with Sassen (1991, 2005) and Massey (2005) arguing that too much research focuses on hypermobile capital rather than the embedded places and people providing these resources for the global economy. This prompts us to seek more understanding about the localised and societal processes of globalization beyond global cities themselves: in a word, to focus on the ‘ordinary’.

3.2.2 Ordinary Cities

Academic research had a preoccupation with paradigmatic cities at the centre of globalisation processes. Scholars including Amin and Graham (1997) and Robinson (2002) argued instead for the importance of ordinary city theory, with its potential to

advance post-colonial urban studies. This also hoped to move beyond the idea that global cities were an idealised urban site of development that other cities needed to reach for. By restricting the focus of urban studies to a limited number of global cities leads to ‘...millions of people and hundreds of cities...[being] dropped off the map’ (ibid: 535). Robinson argued that existing research was encouraging ambitions for all cities to become ‘world cities’, with the idea of modernising development leading to the designation of some - particularly non-Western - cities as ‘not-modern’ (Robinson 2006: 4).

In a capitalist system, there is an obvious importance regarding the understanding of flows of money, power, and knowledge. However, McCann (2004) argues that the resulting studies can be argued to be archetypal, paradigmatic and hierarchal, which risks generalising the processes as globally applicable to achieve similar results in less economically productive urban spaces (Robinson, 2006). As such, ordinary city theory attends to the diversity and complexity of all cities, rather than focusing on relations to transnational capital flows.

Other cultural geographers have long championed the importance of the ordinary, with Jackson et al. (1979: 6) encouraging the attendance to ordinary landscapes as sites under continuous creation and alteration from the ‘unconscious processes of daily living’ which includes ‘expressions of cultural values, social behaviour, and individual actions [in] particular localities over a span of time’. Using this perspective, even the most ordinary landscape is an accumulation of codes to be unpacked. Amin and Graham (1997) combined these cultural geographical views with an analysis of urban spaces to provide a research framework with which to analyse the ordinary cities as a co-presence of spaces, times and webs of relations. Taking the time to address the diversity of the sites, subjects and fragments in a place can facilitate a more multi-dimensional analysis, rather than one that imposes a monological narrative of what a city should deliver (Shields, 1995).

Hall (1993) also emphasises the importance of studying the contact and contexts between diverse individuals, in an era of globalisation and heightened flows of people and place. It is this ‘small’ politics of everyday life that heralds the continued importance of ordinary city space and our understanding of vernacular sociality.

Furthermore, Parnreiter (2017) acknowledges that it is unfair and indeed incorrect to simply assume that smaller cities across the world have little input in the global economy: the producer service firms in these smaller sites strategically contribute to global production networks, guiding and diverting wealth flows through less notable locations on their way to the key urban centres. The broad range of spatialities that are involved in the global economy is what allows it to function, with wealth and knowledge transfers supporting centre-periphery relations on a regional, national and international scale. Therefore, the attendance to cities that are not well-known on the world platform is essential for understanding the complexity of our urban age and information society (Bryson et al, 2021).

The concept of ordinary cities has also inspired research attending to everyday, smaller cities in Westernised countries. McCann (2004) was an economic geographer to encourage the application of ordinary city theory within leading economic states such as the United States, in order to assess post-industrial economies and in an attempt to connect cities of various scales across urbanised America rather than overlook smaller places. McCann (ibid.) used ordinary city theory influenced by both Robinson (2006) and Amin and Graham (1997) to highlight the diverse range of urban contexts that exist and intersect across urbanised areas, but also uses the concept to highlight the complex uneven geographies of development. The key example used to discuss this idea was the decline of the tobacco industry which had dominated in Lexington, Kentucky, and the eventual emergence of a knowledge economy based around universities and research in the city which had altered local social, political and economic dynamics.

To ignore smaller, often overlooked cities would also be to overlook the contribution of variety and heterogeneity to urban geography due to the ignorance of the presumed blandness of 'unexceptional' cities. Within the UK context, scholars have also applied the concept of ordinariness and existing 'off the map' to small cities or even neighbourhoods to discuss the importance of the seemingly unspectacular. Long (2013) argues that geographical research should return to Massey's (1994) idea of a progressive sense of place to capture the variety of cities more accurately, to recognise

individual character alongside the global forces shaping a place, to retain a sense of legitimacy.

For example, Hall's (2012) exemplary study of Walworth Road in London studies what she terms as the ordinary orientations of urban change in a diversely complex, yet seemingly everyday street space. She used the site of the street itself and the independently owned retail spaces that line the road to understand the interrelations of an 'ordinary' space that had retained a diverse identity while facing urban regeneration and gentrification in Central London. As Hall (2012: 5) highlights in relation to Walworth Road in London, it is within these every day and 'ordinary' spaces that researchers can witness the merging of 'processes of industrialisation and urbanisation; colonisation and immigration; Second World War devastation and clearance; Welfarism and large-scale social housing delivery'; and de-industrialisation and globalisation'.

Whilst some scholars critique the ordinary city idea for misconstruing previous geographical research on global cities (Smith, 2013), the literature supports the importance of moving beyond the centrality of restrictive economic systems and binding spatial scales in urban theory. Finding worth in everyday urban webs of social, cultural and vernacular processes allows urban theorists to discuss place alongside hierarchies of economic and political categorisation. There is something extraordinary about the ordinariness of every city (Taylor, 2012): these unique places should not be overlooked as mundane, but rather as important, individualised, and personalised.

3.2.3 Creative Cities

One term that has been increasingly used to convey the extraordinariness of the ordinary is the 'creative city'. Yencken (1988) was one of the first to define the creative city as a place that mobilises the talent and inner creativity of its citizens, to facilitate a city which is an emotionally satisfying place to live in. Citizens can be creatively stimulated through experiences that encourage innovative and imaginative actions alongside increasing the efficiency of wider urban processes (ibid.). In contemporary urbanism, this has further been applied to the transformative power of artistic and cultural activity within the city.

The framing of art and culture as enriching forces within cities is not a new concept (Taylor, 2012), but the scale at which this theory has been applied over the past four decades has seen the concept become used interchangeably alongside the terminology of urban redevelopment. The ‘creative city’ was popularised during a period of mass change in technology, workforces, and economic governance (Castells, 1996). This technological shift coincided with the publication of urban creative blueprints for establishing and evolving knowledge economies – oftentimes originating in global cities - for maximum productivity and success (Landry and Bianchini, 1995). This work pre-empted the seminal text on the ‘creative city’: Richard Florida’s (2002) ‘The Rise of the Creative Class’ (discussed in more detail in the next section).

Terms like ‘diversity’, ‘innovation’ and of course, ‘creativity’ were framed as drivers of Florida’s pro-growth model, which he stated could be applied at all urban scales. His work also addressed the global and virtual spatiality of the new economy, the success of cultural knowledge clusters and the need for human capital in a successful city (Florida, 2004). Florida (2002) argued that scientific research and business creation also requires the creative flair that is traditionally situated within the arts sector, leading to creativity becoming more widely applied and synonymous with innovative practice.

Creativity has since become redefined as a source of innovation to be harnessed (Lazzerretti, 2013). The term was increasingly popularised as a pro-growth strategy for cities, following the outsourcing of industry and the increased desire for wider urban spaces to act as anchors for global capital to counteract the economic decline associated with deindustrialisation. Florida’s (ibid.) idea of attracting creative workers to cities suggested that the success of the creative classes would kickstart a similar trickle-down process to the overarching neoliberal agenda, arguing that the surplus capital generated will eventually spread and benefit the less prosperous city residents and services.

However, this work has been heavily critiqued. In relation to the wider creative sectors, Olah (2019) argues that the arts have become associated with the metrics of purchase and profit whereby everything can be bought (in) and sold (out). Pratt (2008: 109)

refers to creativity as the ‘...mobile fairy dust of the modern city’, critiquing how the term has become oversaturated in urban regeneration policy and not necessarily fulfilling its objectives. Regarding Florida’s style of creativity, Mould (2015: 81) describes it as a ‘prescriptive urbanity’, whereby urban governance actors enact policies that actualise the class divisions inherent to the segregating impact of the ‘creative class’: the result is social disparity, sterile urban centres and a lack of cultural history and locality (which the UKCoC title is framed as remedying through its intensely local focus).

Peck (2005: 748) additionally argues that the proliferation of the creative do-it-yourself method is leading to the replication of a ‘diagnostic testing and treatment regimen’ which – upheld by urbanists like Florida (2002) - reinforces a mantra that any place can become ‘creative’, despite the multiplicity of the term and the difficulties in delivering this successfully. He builds on this by arguing that the cosmopolitan elitism of the creative city has been mixed with ‘...the grain of extant ‘neoliberal’ development agendas’ (Peck, 2005: 740), as discussed before in relation to global cities. This has been seen to generate deep wealth divides and socioeconomic inequality within cities. Similarly, Schlesinger (2007: 377) describes creativity as a ‘hegemonic term’ which has become engrained into cultural policies which are driving economic and social growth but argues that the creativity discourse has become ‘extraordinarily banal’ and applied to disparate objects and processes. In addition, Markusen and Gadwa (2010) state the key failures as a reliance on ‘fuzzy’ theory that is non-specific and attempts to materialise a term with many meanings.

However, the creative city concept perseveres and is still used by global institutions such as the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization¹ (2017) and the World Bank (2017). It allows places to label their cultural prestige and symbolic economic value, with the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development defining the following industries as ‘the lifeblood of the creative economy’ (Henderson, 2021): advertising, architecture, arts and crafts, design, fashion, film, video, photography, music, performing arts, publishing, research and development, software, computer games, electronic publishing, TV and radio. The

¹ Hereafter UNESCO

UNESCO Creative Cities Network furthers this definition, by allocating each of their member cities with a ‘creative’ place label – whether it be design, film, gastronomy, literature, media arts, music, or crafts and folk art (UNESCO, 2017). Even global-scale institutions have difficulty narrowing down the concept of creativity to a concrete, singular meaning – the term is subjective, evolving with different individuals and communities.

Within the UK, the creative industries have dominated policy conversations since the 1990s. The development of the Department for Culture, Media and Sport firmly cemented the cultural and creative sector in the UK’s post-industrial knowledge economy. The DCMS Mapping Document (1998: 3) defined the creative industries as:

“Those industries which have their origin in individual creativity, skill and talent and which have a potential for wealth and job creation through the generation and exploitation of intellectual property”

A further dissection of the sub-sectors is provided below in Plate 5. In 2018, 88.3% of UK creative industries were made up by micro enterprises with fewer than ten employees (DCMS, 2020). Latest economic estimates released state that within the 5.5 million jobs in the DCMS sectors, 2.2 million were within the Creative Industries and 1.7 million were within the Digital Sector (DCMS, 2021).



Plate 5. Definition of the Creative Industries (Source: Creative Industries Federation, 2019)

Hesmondhalgh and Saha (2013) argue that ultimately cultural production is distinctive due to its symbolic, expressive, and informational nature. The emphasis on ideas, knowledge, values, and beliefs means that cultural work can influence society (ibid.), making the sectors particularly suited for the overarching knowledge economy context. The increase in both the marketisation of culture and the consumption of cultural capital has allowed success in industries such as advertising, marketing, publishing and design, leading to an industrialization of culture (Moore, 2014) that has also seeped into the consumption realm. Bell (1973) argued that the post-industrial shift led to consumer culture being led by artistic avant-gardes, rather than the media or large corporations; however, contemporary discussions on the urban condition disagree, as the media, corporations and now the government actively strive for the implementation of creativity in city labour and cultural provisioning (Mould, 2015).

Miles (1997) argues that all forms of art have the potential to provoke societal response, producing insights into the social life of the city. Hawkins (2014), who works on the geographies of art, also posits that the gritty, social problems of the city help to condition the existence of urban art by engaging audiences with debates regarding social justice in the city: art thus produces a site to produce politics, which can be both antagonistic and cohesive. However, when entwined with the impacts of the creative industries, the arts and overall creativity can become marketed and monetized – with Mould (2015: 133) terming this ‘dogmatic creativity’.

Therefore, public bodies frame the arts sector and cultural production as the root of economic and employment growth within the creative industries, despite ongoing crossover with the ‘software’ industries (Hesmondhalgh, 2007). Furthermore, non-economically productive creativity is lost within most formal definitions: vernacular acts of creativity, including amateurs, hobbyists or non-profit groups, are often discounted from official policies and definitions due to the invisibility of their creative labour to financially driven decisionmakers, especially as it often takes place at the individual or small scale (Gilmore, 2013; Edensor et al., 2009).

3.2.4 The Global, the Ordinary and the Creative City: Summary

In summary, by recognising the competitiveness and economic focus encouraged through global city processes, we can see the pervasive influence of such development agendas on cities worldwide. Adopting an ordinary lens can help research to appreciate the multidimensionality and everyday nature of cities, putting places back on the map and celebrating the vernacular processes which can be overlooked.

Furthermore, the ways in which the knowledge economy originally associated with the early global cities has evolved into creative city theory can allow us to understand how entrepreneurial notions trickled down into wider urban governance practices. For cities experiencing less economic productivity, the idea of creative-led regeneration can be sold as quick fix to put them ‘on the map’.

As Amin and Graham (1997) celebrated in their paper, the ordinary city provides a research framework to celebrate the city as the co-presence of multiple spaces, times and webs of relations. Using ordinary city theory, creativity can be framed through a vernacular lens that uses the everyday occurrences of local culture to nurture its city (Edensor et al., 2009). As Markusen and Gadwa (2010) highlight, organically formed cultural practices and the involvement of engaged local communities are crucial to sustain a truly creative city.

3.3 Power

An all-encompassing concept which connects all the literature in this review is that of power. This thesis adopts Cresswell’s (2015: 19) view that a place is “space invested with meaning in the context of power”. When understanding a place through this lens, it is crucial to consider the context of power relations and structures: after all, a place is a product of social conditions, and our senses of place and lived environments are shaped by historic actions (Bourdieu, 1985; Massey, 2005).

Bourdieu’s (1986) theorisation of a social field adds a conceptual layer to studying cities, which compliments cultural geographical perspectives and adds an emphasis on the social practices, rules and roles played out by actors within a specific context.

Within this, power and capital are intrinsic elements of these intersubjectivities. He describes the concept of ‘symbolic power’ (Bourdieu, 1991), which considers the individuals within these places who legitimise and authorise cultural representations and the forms in which they will take.

In addition to symbolic power, importance is placed on the possessing and showcasing of ‘social and cultural capital’ (Bourdieu, 1986), which can be tangible or intangible, taking the form of practices, languages and habits alongside material and aesthetic goods (ibid). Therefore, discussions around power inherently take on a sociopolitical form, as questions of who and where has power and value are entangled with existing inequalities within society. Using this conceptual lens means that we as urban researchers (and this thesis more specifically) avoid the mistaken view that we live in a post-racial or classless age (Hesmondhalgh, and Saha, 2013; considered further in section 3.5.3). Particularly in capitalist systems, power relations infiltrate all aspects of society as capital – whether financial or symbolic – and it is never evenly distributed.

In the context of a place-based cultural regeneration, applying Bourdieu’s theorisations of power are key to deconstructing and understanding the power dynamics of a cultural scene. It allows us to address head on the unequal structures of social fields within a system or network, and explains how people ‘further up’ a social and economic hierarchy can acquire greater levels of cultural and social capital to elevate their power within a space (Flemmen, 2013).

Specifically, within the cultural sector, symbolic capital takes the form of social networks, experiences, expected behaviours and recognised qualifications (Randle et al., 2015). Via a Bourdieuan lens, the unequal hierarchies existing within a cultural ecosystem can be unpacked, placing further importance on understanding how the actions and representations produced by overarching power structures are ‘consumed’ by local communities on the ground. Hence, a spatial-cultural lens analyses who owns and disperses the cultural power, but also, who recognises this power as legitimate (Bourdieu, 1991).

For the UKCoC, the developers of the vision and the programme itself can be viewed as the authorised keepers of symbolic power at the ‘top’ of the hierarchy (Bourdieu,

1991). Creative placemaking utilises symbolic marketing practices instilled largely by the top-down forces, which relies upon (and then exploits (Mould, 2015)) the emotional support and artistic contribution of communities on the ground. So when researching the small-scale grassroots cultural producers within artistic environments, by extension this covers their social relationships, skillsets, intellectual contributions, and political responsibilities (Hawkins, 2012), particularly in relation to how these are utilised by the governing structures. This is useful for two main reasons.

First, the inter-scale nature of the social field allows power relations to be studied within a broader sphere (i.e. a wider industry or society) and within individual groups (Randle et al., 2015) – such as the middleground cultural producers (Cohendet, 2010). This allows us to observe from *within* the cultural network, where social and power relations occur both in relation to and beyond the governing bodies who tend to hold the most power. Situating the research and the data produced within a specific group can also show where value is placed in regard to seemingly mundane sociological practices, such as dress codes and dialect (Moi, 1991; Friedman and Laurison, 2019).

Second, using a Bourdieuan (1986) approach, social capital can hence be viewed as a resource which enhances a sense of trust and solidarity amongst a network, which is important for generating connections. When power is not shared or trust is not generated, there is a danger of disconnect. Therefore, in a City of Culture, while the creative network may have high levels of interest in the cultural activities emerging in their city, they may hold less social capital than the governing bodies and thus less power in a phenomenon (Bayfield, 2015).

Particularly during early stages of programme development, local interest can be lost when these less powerful stakeholders feel that they have little influence (ibid). This reiterates the importance of taking the opportunity to research both the overlooked build-up period and the middleground cultural network members who play a key role in the programme, as well as understanding where power is perceived to be held and distributed in such megaevents.

3.4 Cities of Culture – Histories and Contestations

City competitions like the European Union’s European Capital of Culture (ECoC) and DCMS UK City of Culture (UKCoC), put bluntly, use generic creative city discourses via symbolic titles with an overall aim to stimulate economic regeneration and social cohesion. These competitions have recognisable approaches: they leverage private investment, ‘improve’ the landscape through physical regeneration and create a distinctive brand for the city (Oakley, 2015).

Garcia (2020) applies the term mega-event (Müller, 2015) to describe the size, symbolism, and significance of the city competition phenomenon. Parallels can be drawn to branded cultural city marketing campaigns that have exploded following the success of the ‘I Heart NYC’ branding in the 1980s, with the majority of cities now jumping on the ‘brandwagon’ (Boland and McKay, 2020). And the emphasis on place-based hallmark events also draws influence from the traditions of World Fairs, Biennales and the modern reinstatement of the Olympic Games.

The UKCoC competition was launched by the DCMS in 2009 to emulate the impact of the ECoC competition. ECoC itself began in 1985 as an initiative to celebrate cultural diversity, social cohesion and to ‘foster the contribution of culture to the development of cities’ (Creative Europe, no date: online). It has since been awarded to over fifty cities across the continent, with EU member states submitting applications before a shortlisting process and formal title designation (ibid.). The first ECoC recipient was Athens in 1985, followed by other notable cultural centres including Florence, Amsterdam, Berlin and Paris (Bianchini and Parkinson, 1993).

However, the competition was later used as a vehicle for a ‘renaissance’ narrative of urban reconstruction and rebranding – as seen through the awarding of the title to Glasgow in 1990, despite its second city status and ‘image problems’ around crime and socioeconomic decline (Garcia, 2005). This was a pivotal point for the competition and altered the symbolism of the title, shifting the focus beyond superstar cities and reframing cultural regeneration as a transformative urban policy. This pattern repeated with the awarding of the ECoC title to Liverpool in 2008, with cultural mega-

events becoming labelled as ‘catalysts for change’ (DCMS, 2014: 4) and influencing the launch of UKCoC in 2009.

DCMS (ibid.) state that the UKCoC competition differs to the ECoC as the latter focuses on the shared cultures (and cultural differences) between European member states, whereas the UKCoC aims to encourage cultural innovation and excellence alongside the promotion of new development partnerships in a specific place. However, there is crossover, as both competitions also hope to regenerate cities, boost media interest and tourism alongside positively influencing place identity and imaginations. The infiltration of global city and neoliberal ideology is present, with the aims to achieve notoriety and a place ‘on the map’ through the cultural title – quite literally in the case of Hull, where the UKCoC2017 award led to the inclusion of the city on the BBC’s televised weather maps (The Guardian, 2016).

However, the UKCoC has also been championed for its socio-political role, cited as a peacebuilding tool for places mired with stories of negativity (Garcia, 2020): for example, Derry-Londonderry’s UKCoC2013 title saw cultural strategies applied in the hope of repairing divisions caused by The Troubles. More often, however, the titles are framed as economic recovery vehicles which will draw in income through cultural tourism and inward investments. However, megaevents in general also have negative economic connotations, such as the near bankruptcy caused in Olympic cities like Montreal (1976) and Athens (2004).

While the ECoC and UKCoC are typically less expensive than events like the Olympics, the symbolism of the titles has led to cities spending up to £4mil on bidding and the associated marketing and consultancy, leading to extensive financial losses of public and private money if the title is not won (Green, 2021). Indeed, there was no financial support for the costs of bidding to UKCoC2021, with DCMS (2014: 6) advising that “it is the responsibility of each area to develop its own bid using its own resources and those of its partners” - referring to the local authorities and universities or the external consultants often involved in the bid. This highlights the necessarily entrepreneurial nature of the city competition, where resource intensive bids are constructed despite the risk of failure. Later suggestions of an entry fee for bidding cities were dismissed by DCMS as they were seen as a potential deterrent to cities which already face high

costs through bidding, as well as suggestions that a fee may disrupt the 'level playing field' conditions to entry (DCMS, 2015: 5).

This all arguably builds on Florida (2002: para. 44) deeming that almost all cities '...can turn it around' unless they are deemed 'hopeless...small places with huge working-class backgrounds, or places that are service-class centers that aren't tourist destinations'. Not only does this expose the classist undertones of the creative city script, but these circumstances map onto many cities that pursue such tactics. Despite this, numerous 'ordinary' cities are continuing to adopt strategies that can apply homogenous and nondescript 'creative' strategies, in pursuit of the economic gains they supposedly bring. Scott (2014: 566) critiques prescriptive branding techniques, arguing that they ultimately leave cities with a 'caricature' of the cultural landscapes seen in global cities. Similarly, Pratt (2008) argues that cities are relying on easily deployed, yet structurally unsound, ideas of creativity that are unrealistic, idealised and largely unattainable without existing cultural and financial foundations.

Some argue that the success of cultural city competitions can emanate from their scarcity, with Garcia (2020) suggesting that more frequent competitions could diminish the value of the title through reoccurrences of the same conversation on a regular basis. Also, the titles have a further important economic role by selling private media rights in the process, in order to relieve the burden of public spending (ibid.).

Suffice to say then, these competitions have caused a split in intellectual opinion: some refer to applicant cities as recipients of a 'prestigious nomination' (Hansen and Laursen, 2015: 715), whereas others declare the continued application of urban creativity to 'disparate' places as 'extraordinarily banal' (Schlesinger, 2007: 377). Despite these conflicted debates, the competition remains successful in attracting places to bid for the title and undertake a culture-led regeneration programme, with many cities continuing to apply.

Furthermore, there is a wider national policy context which is important for situating the UKCoC competition, namely the now politically expedient idea of 'levelling up'. This emphasises the importance of attending to 'left behind' places, with the idea that redistributing financial resources and infrastructure will result in a more even

landscape of regional and urban development beyond London (Talbot and Talbot, 2020).

It also ties to the national Industrial Strategy white paper released in 2017, which focused on the '5 foundations of productivity' (HM Government, 2017: 10). Emphasis on terms like 'Ideas' and 'People' and 'Innovation' inherently tied the strategy back to the creative class agenda (Florida, 2002), whereas the focus on 'Places' highlights the emerging popularity of place-based development strategies. In a cultural context, this is important as national arts bodies have identified cultural 'cold spots' beyond the iconic cultural sites of the UK (typically based in London or the Southeast region (Clifton, 2008)), where much of the human and financial resources of the cultural sector are based (Gilmore, 2013).

In relation to diverting economic resources through cultural programming, evidence is mixed. Booth and Boyle (1992: 45) found that, in Glasgow, there was little evidence of the programme contributing to job creation, skills building or wider local economic development. Interestingly, corporate evaluators from Palmer/Rae Associates (2004: 103) also found that 'very few' cities adopting cultural development strategies had submitted evidence of "...following through in any meaningful way on genuine economic targets". Furthermore, the economic impacts associated with Hull UKCoC2017 were largely related to increases in tourism visits (up by 9.7% from levels in 2016); jobs in the visitor economy (increasing by 27% between 2012 and 2017); and visitor spends (up by 12.4% compared to levels in 2016) (Hull Culture, Place and Policy Institute, 2021: 49). The economic impact on the local cultural sector, however, was limited: although £676mil of new public and private investment was attributed with the UKCoC, jobs in the cultural sector actually fell between 2016 and 2017 (ibid.).

In relation to the how the competitions are managed, and the core players involved, these titles have tended to follow an 'Anglo-governance model' (Ball, 2008: 747), which sees a core team responsible for the production, administration and steering of the programme. Early bid teams have largely involved representatives from local authorities, universities, the local cultural sector, philanthropists and the business community (e.g., Coventry 2021, 2017). This quintuple helix approach (Richards and

Duif, 2019) is also commonly applied in ECoC contexts, highlighting the ‘local globalness’ of tourism policy transfer (McCann, 2011).

This reflects on what O’Brien (2011) terms as a transition from cultural government (i.e., centrality of local authority in cultural policy decision-making) to cultural governance (i.e., cultural policy emerging from a fragmented network whereby decision-making is shared). This structure was popularised in Liverpool during the ECoC2008, when inter-sector stakeholders were brought into advisory boards and early bidding structures before reducing these representatives down to a smaller board to oversee the artistic programming of the celebratory year (ibid.).

Whilst consideration of the decisionmakers is important when studying such competitions, the local places and communities are central to this thesis - especially as these are usually framed as the key beneficiaries of the UKCoC process. After this covering of research on the history, policies and governance around cultural city competitions, the next section will dissect literature that has guided my attendance to the people (including Florida’s (2002) ‘creative class’) on the ground who are expected to contribute to cultural regeneration within creative Coventry.

3.5 Creative Networks

This third section of the literature review delves further into the sociocultural aspects of the creative city, particularly the people that act as the lifeblood of this theory. The *people* on the ground help to form the building blocks of creative city style regeneration and feature heavily as the key producers and consumers within CoC competitions. Importantly, when discussing the social context of the creative city, this also touches upon the social inequalities that subsequently exist within cultural policies, passed down as the polarising by-products of inherent discrimination processes (such as racism, ableism and sexism).

3.5.1 Creative Class

Conceptions of creative ‘people’ in cities vary widely. Often it is the nebulous notion of the artist that comes to the fore (Sennett, 2009). For others, it includes references to

bohemians (Currid, 2009). There is also the image of subversive and subcultural people creating a city 'outside' of official narratives (Mould, 2015). For Gross and Wilson (2019), the cultural ecosystem involves individuals and groups such as networks of artists and creatives, self-organising cultural groups and emerging local decisionmakers.

These all draw on what is perhaps most influential in terms of urban policy - Florida's (2002) definition of the 'creative class', a term referring to the socioeconomically productive inhabitants that he argues form the undercurrent of a successfully creative place. Florida (ibid.) categorised the attributes of his 'creative class' as the '3 Ts': tolerance (open, inclusive, diverse); talent (holding a bachelor's degree or above); and technology (innovative and high-tech usage). Typifying the artistic occupations within the creative class, he includes "authors, designers, musicians and composers, actors and directors, craft-artists, painters ,sculptors, artist printmakers, photographers, dancers, artists, performers and related workers" (ibid: 59) – notably, those usually associated with the cultural industries in contemporary policy.

Quantifying his classifications, Florida then devised an analysis of the creative class populations within different cities to rank places based on their success rates within sociocultural categories - such as the Gay, Bohemia, and Melting Pot indexes (ibid.). But in so doing, these individual people become pure socioeconomic measures, producing further competition within the urban hierarchy of cities (Harvey, 1989). The neoliberal tendencies of the tactic are exemplified through the indexing of artistic labour: a profession traditionally linked to bohemianism and low income, now rebranded as an opportunity to turn activities of self-expression and passion into self-derived profit – despite risks of burn out, economic failure and the continued associations with precarious working conditions (Gill and Pratt, 2008).

Places now often strive to attract the 'creative class' to live and work in their cities and nurture their brand, with Coventry's current regeneration strategy emphasising the need to attract 'creative' people to live and work in the city in way that is often applied to urban development policies in larger cities (Florida, 2002; Landry, 2000). Peck (2005) criticises this approach, arguing that Florida's (2002) promotion of this group as the primary drivers of urban economic prosperity has increasingly encouraged cities

to ‘...pamper a mobile and finicky class of ‘creatives’ (Peck, 2005: 740) at the expense of other social groups. Wilson and Keil (2008) support this notion, suggesting that the pragmatism of cultivating spaces for the group is further supporting the notion that places have no decision but to ‘...find these creative people and manufacture these spaces or die’ (ibid: 841).

Spatially, Florida (2002) then identified a checklist of what these classes require including cultural assets to capitalise on an ‘experience economy’ (Pine and Gilmore, 1999), fuelling investment in large-scale cultural events and infrastructures to attract creative consumers. Florida (2004: 15) encouraged cities to provide high-quality experiences and spaces which are a ‘...center for experience, lifestyle, amenities, and entertainment’. Often, these investments favour ‘ephemeral tourists’ with high levels of disposable income (Markusen and Gadwa, 2010: 388) over less socially mobile city residents, highlighting the exclusivity of the creative city experience. The weighted focus on the creative classes disregards the less privileged members of urban society who will not often be the beneficiaries of the resulting profits.

This pervasive influence of Florida’s (2002) creative class thesis is explicitly referenced in cultural policies and strategies, with Liverpool First defining its ‘creative core’ during ECoCo8 activities. However, even Florida (2017) has now recognised the ill effects of this style of urban governance and the high levels of socioeconomic inequality occurring in cities, both global and ordinary: within his book *The New Urban Crisis*, he pinpoints that ‘winner-take-all-urbanism’ has resulted in social segregation, gentrification and the ‘colonization’ of the city by the affluent (ibid: 28), the impacts of policies that he has continually prescribed. With creative policies increasingly concerned about spatially specific applications, how people interact with these places is of utmost importance. (Brown et al., 2000). So, when considering the role of the ‘creative class’ (with all its problematic definitions) and how they shape the ‘places’ of the urban realm around them, it is important to discuss the wider role of networks within the creative city.

3.5.2 Creative Networks

Much of the creative city and creative industries literatures have a large focus on the role of networks: networks of institutions, companies and people (Oakley, 2015; Pratt, 2008; Fuller-Love, 2009; Comunian, 2012; Mateos-Garcia and Bakhshi, 2016). O'Connor (2004) describes creative networks as being underpinned by 'soft' (i.e. social and cultural) infrastructures of knowledge and expertise alongside the physical infrastructures of the city. While these may include formal, institutional dimensions, they also include informal networks, place specific cultural dispositions and 'structures of feeling' which are crucial for how people create and curate urban regional milieus (ibid.). A 'scene' emerges as networks of independent and individual producers actively participate (and often collaborate) within a landscape of dynamic cultural production and consumption, creating a container of cultural and symbolic value (Hauge and Hrac, 2010). Creative networks thus play an integral role in the creative industries, providing communication opportunities which can then increase the concentration and growth of productive creative class activity (Silver and Clark, 2015).

The economic outputs of a creative network – such as supply chain development, product innovations and access to knowledge resources and labour markets – are nurtured through the spatial co-location of businesses and organisations, but this process is arguably more strongly developed through the networks and interactions which emerge (ibid.). These collaborative communities can shape the dynamics of a creative place, through their business relations and their knowledge, tastes and practices. The Warwick Commission (Neelands et al., 2015) describes the importance of flows between commercial and cultural people and institutions - as generators of economic value, increased audiences and cultural consumers. In turn, this can create an integrated and flourishing ecosystem.

Essential knowledge exchange often takes place within defined circuits of the networks (Cohendet et al., 2010). Despite often being intangible, Comunian (2012) highlights that these exchanges still 'take place', creating spatially embedded social networks within the cultural ecosystem. Exchanges often take place in shared spaces (Comunian et al., 2015): these can be physical sites, such as formal facilities or places of leisure, or they can be online through virtual platforms. The material sites of sociality and informal labour are known as third spaces, like cafes, galleries and bars, which

Crossick (2006) deems as vital for embedding creative people and communities (and their knowledge) within a local cultural industry.

Furthermore, DCMS (2016) found that 94% of the UK's creative industries are micro-businesses with less than ten members of staff, highlighting the importance of social networking to connect these groups and people. Networking is key for accessing work in a highly precarious sector typified by part-time, freelance and contracted work (Blair, 2001). These networked dynamics help to share trends, values and exchanges through the pluralistic role of the cultural producer as consumer and intermediary (Comunian, 2012; Fleming, 2015). Cultural intermediaries perform the role of both the producer and consumer of cultural content whilst acting as gatekeepers who provide access to and across the network (Adkins, 2011; Virani and Pratt, 2016).

Markusen and Gadwa (2010) believe it is the involvement of local contexts and communities that is crucial to sustaining a truly organic creative city. Place-based strategies like the UKCoC competition have a foundational reliance on the existing creative networks as the gateway into local networks, importantly utilising insider knowledge and expertise to grow the city's cultural offering and ecosystem. However, when analysing a process so reliant on sociality, it is critical to consider which individuals and groups disproportionately gain the benefits, and who is afforded fewer of these economic and cultural opportunities.

3.5.3 Inclusion and Exclusion

Florida's (2002) pro-growth strategy suggests that successful 'creatives' will kickstart a trickle-down process, spreading their surplus capital to benefit less prosperous city residents and services. However, his later research found that "...talent clustering provides little in the way of trickle-down benefits", with the benefits flowing disproportionately to creative workers with higher wages (Florida, 2013: online). Service and blue-collar workers were found to earn a higher wage in knowledge-based metros, but higher housing and living costs quickly deplete their income (ibid.).

Acs et al. (2008: 5) argue that 'talented people are more creative than the rest of the population' as they are "more entrepreneurial". But this approach fails to consider

inequal access to entrepreneurialism, such as prior income levels (Li, 2002), prior relevant experience (Rae and Carswell, 2001), and pre-existing wealth (Blaug, 2000). It also reduces 'talent' to a highly neoliberal and socially reductive definition. In what Sassen (1991, 2005) sees as the competition between super profits and survival, the workers in corporate sectors are on unusually high levels of income in comparison to those in low- and medium-skilled employment.

Furthermore, in the context of the United Kingdom, Brook, O'Brien and Taylor (2018) found that less than 19% of workers in the British music, performing and visual arts sectors have working-class origins and only 4.8% of these workers are from a Black or minority ethnic background – a statistic that drops further to 2.7% in the museums, galleries and libraries sector. Carey, O'Brien and Gable (2021) also used DCMS statistics to conduct an analysis of what they term as the 'class crisis' in the UK's creative industries on behalf of the Creative Industries Policy & Evidence Centre. They conclude that 250,000 more workers with working class origins would need to be recruited for the sector to be as socio-economically diverse as the other industrial sectors in the UK. Moreover, they argue that class-based exclusion in the creative sectors is worse than in any other sector, and that the intersections of class with other characteristics such as race, disability and gender can lead to multiple disadvantages.

Beyond cultural production and employment, this entrenched trend of inequality is also apparent in reference to cultural consumption. Taylor (2016) analysed the DCMS Taking Part survey, which asks participants to provide details on the cultural activities that they are involved with. He found that a small minority - only 8.7% - of the population of England is most often engaging with publicly funded cultural activity (e.g. gallery exhibitions), and that this disproportionately made up of white, formally educated and wealthy people (ibid.). This further highlights the unequal opportunities in the UK's cultural sectors that need to be included within ongoing research, especially as strategies like the UKCoC competition have often committed to addressing this at a local scale through their place-based work.

Malik (2013) further argues how multiculturalism was initially promoted through contemporary cultural policy, but it is now more common to see the term 'cultural diversity' being applied, which he goes on to argue is a broader and less culturally

specific paradigm which removes notions of diversity from the lived experience of racial or ethnic difference. Diversity is arguably now conceptualised alongside buzz terms like innovation, a product of neoliberal policy which rejects multiculturalism in favour of marketisation and “issues of discrimination, exclusion, and social justice are marginalized in favour of a raceless, commodified version of (multi)cultural difference” (Hesmondhalgh and Saha, 2013: 193; Malik, 2013).

While noting the importance of people, relationships and networks as part of the social fabric of these sites, this section ends by noting the inherited inequalities that must be addressed both within and beyond the cultural sector. The impact of locally insensitive planning can be damaging for local communities, creating hostility and scepticism around culture-led regeneration, which the next section of this literature review will now turn to.

3.6. Artwashing and Creative City Resistance

Smaller-scale, place-based arts organisations can work alongside committed governance structures to implement localised regeneration strategies – importantly, with a focus on sustainable production rather than high-growth or consumption driven economies (Oakley, 2015). This also helps to avoid toolkit approaches which can lead to homogenous ‘bumper sticker’ strategies that can lose legitimacy, trust, and engagement (ibid.).

Place-based regeneration, it is argued, must avoid the undermining of certain viewpoints and communities (such as the middleground producers of the creative network (Cohendet et al., 2010)) if it is to stave off gentrification and the social deleteriousness associated with it (Mould and Comunian, 2014). The implementation of the UKCoC programme must be sensitive to both the local communities *and* the local economy in order to avoid being viewed as a ‘parachuted in’ festival (Sharp, Pollock and Paddison, 2005) that does not connect to existing communities, which may lead to claims of an arts-led gentrification strategy focused on profit rather than achieving a sociocultural legacy for local communities.

A shift to considering local production rather than consumption is argued to reduce the impacts of gentrification and displacement (Comunian and Mould, 2015), but a commitment to equal access and inclusivity is crucial in achieving this. It also helps to reduce the power disparities discussed earlier in section 3.3. Crucially, when the top-down institutions share agency, it can help to disperse its power and cultural capital more evenly with middle- and underground groups to generate more trusting connections (Bourdieu, 1991).

This section connects to conversations around power in section 3.3. through the context of creative resistance, which can challenge hierarchical authorities and the unequal distribution of agency and capital in regeneration programmes. It will briefly introduce the concept of ‘artwashing’ before it covers the resistive activity to such processes – aligning with the subversive anatomical underground of the creative city (Cohendet et al., 2010).

3.6.1. Artwashing, Co-option and Resistance

The visual, linguistic and atmospheric practices of creative regeneration can impact the overall sense of a place (Massey, 2005) – with varying degrees of authenticity. O’Sullivan (2014) defines artwashing as when truly creative residents, importantly artists, begin the regenerative process, before property developers view creative districts as investment targets and aim for a new class of customer.

Some scholars, such as Pritchard (2017), are critical of the role of artists in urban regeneration, arguing that all creative placemaking is underpinned with wealth and enterprise. Ley (1996: 665) labels artists as the ‘colonizing arm’ for the middle-classes, by opening spaces that provide a specific lifestyle vibe, which is in turn claimed by real estate markets. Others, including O’Sullivan (2014), state that artists are not always predatory, due to their low wages and thus the need for affordable workspace: in contrast to Pritchard’s view, O’Sullivan defends the displaced residents and the co-opted artists, instead targeting the intentions of the developers.

As an economic layer to Bourdieu’s (1991) sociological concept of symbolic power, Zukin’s (1995) work on symbolic economies discusses how those with power in an

urban place make the key decisions regarding what and who should be visible in representations of the city: 'Like the status of art in its market, a city's status depends on value judgements among cultural and marketing intermediaries' (ibid: 79). Symbolic economies produce space through capital investment and cultural meanings and symbols, as the currency for commercial exchange and social identity construction.

To add to this, Harvey (2002) argues that the key qualities of cultural commodification are uniqueness and particularity, without being unique enough to not be beyond monetary trade – this highlights the contradictory nature of cultural economies, whereby mass-marketed goods become less special. Miles (2007: 8) goes further, stating that these symbolic representations can make '...the image of the city float over the city's streets and the life taking place therein, yet perhaps not in an altogether way', suggesting that place imaginations promoted through marketing strategies can be socially detached from the lived experience of the city itself.

As discussed in the review of 'Power' in section 3.3, a place is a result of social conditions, power relations and historic actions (Bourdieu, 1985; Massey, 2005). Therefore, the inclusion of local contexts and voices in decision-making can articulate and communicate messages and stories from the grassroots to distribute power more evenly across a place and reduce feelings of detachment, disassociation and tension. However, even with good intentions, it is more often than not that the upperground networks retain power and influence in the urban landscape.

Furthermore, subcultural activities can be co-opted financially and symbolically by powerful corporations, exploiting the symbolism and practices of underground networks (Cohendet et al., 2010) and reconstructing them to secure profitable gains (Mould, 2015). The financial focus of the creative city can absorb ordinary and subversive activities, without giving credibility or agency to the communities who were using creativity without a profiteering goal. The co-option and commodification of culture often creates alienation and resentment for the cultural producers whose creativity is appropriated for the economic benefit of other actors without compensation or the redistribution of power (ibid.). This leads to aspects of the city feeling 'in/ out of place' within a geographic environment (Cresswell, 1996), as the

powerful and symbolic forces that effect and manipulate everyday life are tolerated or rejected.

Through a critical lens, these appropriative practices can be associated with the UKCoC competition: translating cultural production into nationwide advertisements, performing the city's identity in rivalry with other bidding teams, and the use of artistic work as an attraction for visitors (and their associated disposable income). Such intense competition can often catalyse the systemisation of art as power within governing structures grows (Mould, 2015), alongside the neutralisation of subversive messages. Others from the middle- and underground networks, however, choose to creatively subvert such symbolism and commodification, such as subvertisers (i.e., subverting advertising (Dery, 1991)) who intervene with urban advertising spaces to replace narratives and symbols of conformity with temporary forms of alternative messaging (Dekeyser, 2020).

Cultural production is a potential avenue through which artists can attempt to instigate political and social change (Kelly, 1984; Hadley and Belfiore, 2018). There are numerous ongoing examples of resistive activity to arts-led regeneration, with one of the most notable being the Boyle Heights Alliance Against Artwashing (BHAAAD) and Displacement in Los Angeles, USA. Their protests and pickets against gentrification in the Boyle Heights neighbourhood have targeted galleries, going as far as to adopt shock tactics such as throwing faeces at windows of new developments (Mould, 2018). However, their overall message is one of social justice: they demand that any new site opening in Boyle Heights, whether it be a gallery or new residential block, must have a social, cultural or economic benefit for the existing local communities (BHAAAD, no date).

Other campaigns have also mobilised resistance for the protection of cultural activities facing erasure through regeneration processes, though often with less extreme strategies. The Long Live Southbank campaign was led by local skateboarders and a team of supporting advocates, whose collective action – which included petitions, political campaigning, and creative showcases - successfully protected the Undercroft skate park from being developed into retail space along the London South Bank (Mould, 2015, 2018). In these circumstances, local resistance has successfully

preserved sociocultural practices which have immense value for individuals and communities in the face of developer's desire for more economically productive outputs within these spaces.

However, resistance as a concept can also be incorporated within City/Capital of Culture plans, adopted as a way to attach value to the activist – or sometimes extremist – roots of a place through cultural programming. On the other hand, this theme can arguably become co-opted for political and economic gain. A key example in CoC history is when Damascus was recognised as the Arab Capital of Culture (ACoC) in 2008, as part of the UNESCO Cultural Capitals programme: Arab countries had only been able to be included in the UNESCO scheme in 1998, and the title was seen by Syrian President Bashar Assad to be an opportunity to showcase the 'resistance culture' and 'the culture of freedom and defending freedom' in the city (Boms and Spyer, 2008: online).

Alongside its ancient cultural heritage as one of the oldest cities in the world, Damascus and the ACoC2008 title were used symbolically as a representation of Arab and Islamic culture, which Assad said was facing 'unprecedented challenges' (Al Jazeera, 2008), especially during a time of war, violence and upheaval. However, there was uproar around the world regarding the title due to the use of the city as operational headquarters for major terrorist organisations such as Hamas and Islamic Jihad (Boms and Spyer, 2008). This example highlights the difficult political-cultural territory that cultural programmes can tread when adopting a theme of resistance.

More recently within Europe, Marseille programmed an Art and Resistance strand as part of its European Capital of Culture 2013 activity, curating a 'Create to Resist' exhibition of sixty works produced by prisoners about their lived experiences of the Nazi history in the city, all of which were shown at the concentration camp, Camp de Milles (Hyams, 2013). Derry-Londonderry also used its identity as a contested city of contradictory narratives in its successful bid to be the first UKCoC in 2013, hoping cultural participation activities would help to reconcile communities following the legacy and long-term impacts of resistive conflict between Irish nationalists and unionists (Doak, 2014) (although this programme had varied levels of success for the local communities (Boland, 2010; Boland et al., 2017; Boland et al., 2019)).

The arguments and examples presented so far lay the foundations as to why the appropriation of local communities and politics of representation in UKCoC programming – and the possible tensions that may arise from this – must be addressed. There are obvious difficulties when decisionmakers utilise historic narratives and stories as part of cultural programming, and the fine line of ensuring that these are applied in a sensitive, inclusive, and tactful manner to avoid exclusion, offense, or discrimination.

Furthermore, Gross and Wilson (2019) write about the need for cultural governors to recognise ‘full’ diversity through their policies to address the ‘intractable problem of democratic legitimacy facing cultural policy and practice’, to ensure that a wider proportion of the UK population – i.e. those beyond white, middle-class communities – can (co-)produce and access culture. This is further supported by the work discussed earlier in this review on the unequal opportunities to enter England’s creative workforce, particularly for those from working class and/or minoritised origins, and the lack of diversity of the most engaged cultural consumers within the UK (Brook et al., 2018; Taylor, 2016).

Whilst UKCoC competitions are promoted as a route to getting the entire city involved with cultural production and participation, it is crucial to apply a critical lens to the language and claims of the policy. For example, Malik (2013) argues that a new paradigm of creative diversity has moved beyond a preoccupation with multiculturalism yet does not effectively attend to the lived experience of ethnic or racial difference – instead, it is reconceptualised as way to produce innovation and marketization of the cultural industries and is complicit in the reproduction of culture in the language of neoliberalism. Therefore, emerging discourses around cultural governance and power must avoid sensationalism and ingenuity, which has a damaging effect on the politics of representation. The commodification of difference can be favoured over the admittance and overcoming of discriminatory and exclusionary practices towards marginalized peoples (ibid; Brook et al., 2018, 2020).

The arts can be used as important tools of social activism vehicles to resist discrimination or campaigns, but even these must be viewed critically, as some groups

remain largely white and middle-class rather than providing a platform for the lived narratives of marginalised groups (Buser et al., 2013) – which can be poorly addressed through official evaluations and metrics. Resistance and tensions should be captured during research which commits to honesty and admitting failure (Jancovich and Stevenson, 2021), especially at the scale of the UKCoC competition where the scale of the aims can become unattainable. By attending to lived experiences and realities, honest reflections can be captured and the focus on economic productivity can be overlooked.

3.6.2. Looking Beyond Consumption

There remains a contradiction at the heart of many place-based ‘creative’ initiatives: to regenerate a place creatively, it requires attempting to ‘fix’ intrinsically mobile people. As such cultural and creative place-based regeneration projects are difficult to successfully implement when the creative classes they seek to attract are idealised for their mobility and flexibility. As Allen and Hollingworth (2013) describe, being rooted to a place is antithetical for a group who are celebrated for their willingness to move for work and their dismissal of ‘traditional’ values (ibid.; Nava, 2007).

Furthermore, Comunian and Mould (2015) argue that place-based flagship developments are often limited from a cultural or social perspective, as the impact of infrastructural investments on local creative industries (often SMEs or freelancers) is considered less than economic gains. Also, as has already been discussed above, the creation of any jobs within the creative and cultural industries through these strategies could recruit workers into the unstable, precarious environments which characterise the sector and possibly worsen socioeconomic stability (Gill and Pratt, 2008; Banks and Hesmondhalgh, 2009; Campbell, 2011).

It is made even harder for a ‘small city’ like Coventry to be successful in this, because prior winners - such as Liverpool ECoCo8 - had an advantage of existing cultural infrastructure and an existing tradition of civic engagement with cultural activities (Campbell, 2011). Stevenson et al. (2010: 168) argue that the authorities initiating these policies have limited numbers of locations as reference points for their bid, with the exceptional examples of large European cultural centres which are ‘taken as the

typical'. As the UKCoC competition was only on its third round of winners at the point of writing, this is even further limited for entrants bidding for the DCMS title.

Campbell (2011) argues that the vacuity of 'creativity' is the natural bedfellow to CoC cultural programming. Whilst supporters of the CoC process will argue that there is a positive relationship between staging a cultural festival and the growth of a places creative sector, these claims are based on unstable justifications which apply the term 'creativity' uncritically to multiple industries and objects simultaneously. Oakley (2015) agrees that the insertion of cultural value and assets into the existing discourse of urban economic development is dangerous, as it may encourage a single model approach which assumes high quality results. Gibson and Connell (2012) states that a pluralistic view of development is crucial for developing a balanced cultural economy, with value drawn from local communities to ensure that each strategy attends to specific contexts.

The cultural offer of CoC bids then circumnavigates this contradiction by reframing the cultural production as consumption, namely from internal and external visitors to the city, with *who* consuming *what*, and *where* shaping the places character (O'Brien and Oakley, 2015). Existing evaluation systems have attempted to measure this by ranking cities on their cultural offer and how it is consumed. For example, the EU Cultural and Creative Cities Monitor (European Union, 2019) uses spatial themes as measurements: 'Cultural Vibrancy' assesses the tangible cultural infrastructure of a city alongside the intangible 'pulse', and the 'Enabling Environment' documents the assets which attract talent and stimulate cultural engagement. While there is much to debate about the measurement of such factors, this example highlights the leverage which is placed on the physical landscape of the city and what it can provide for creative consumers.

However, the cultural specificity of an area – including its myths, narratives and memories – *can* be used to make a cultural strategy or programme become more connected to local cultural networks and institutions (Long, 2013; Massey, 1994; Oakley, 2015), but the sociocultural impacts of this are notoriously difficult to measure and capture. Adopting this holistic focus may help to combat the off-the-shelf fast policies discussed by van Heur (2010) – instead, taking the time to understand the

complex realities and embedded value chains on the ground rather than transferring existing strategies (Stevenson et al., 2010). As Massey fittingly summarises, if the cosmology of only one narrative survived, it would obliterate the multiplicities and heterogeneities of space, diminishing the true simultaneous coexistence of people in place (Massey, 2005).

Furthermore, it may create the opportunity for localised strategies which broaden the understanding of what culture is and open the space for more vernacular, subcultural or experimental art forms to be socially and culturally valued, rather than excluded or co-opted by the neoliberal creative city model (Boren and Young, 2012; Edensor et al., 2009; Mould, 2015). This may decrease the effects of gentrification and commercialisation but instil positive changes by giving local arts organisations and communities a platform (Stern and Siefert, 2002; Markusen and Gadwa, 2010; Oakley, 2015). From 'ordinary' community craft groups to volunteer-led celebrations and festivals, this thesis argues that reframing the CoC programmes beyond formal cultural infrastructures and networks (which also face their own inequalities and imbalances) could promote a place-based regeneration strategy based on what people value, rather than what they simply consume.

How to capture the messiness of such people, places and processes in an ever-evolving cultural place is difficult to capture, and so it is to this topic that I now turn for the final section of the literature review.

3.7 Cultural Ecosystem and Anatomical Frameworks

While Chapter 4 will cover the methodological approaches in more depth, the upcoming section of this review will cover two perspectives from cultural policy studies on how to deconstruct the complex landscape of creative and cultural cities. Their focus on specificity and the spatial elements of such places will marry with the geographical theories that form the undercurrent of this thesis.

The cultural ecological and anatomical perspectives have become popular theories with which to recognise the people and places acting as key features in a specific cultural landscape. These two similar but contrasting perspectives ground the

epistemological thinking from cultural policy studies and intersects with the geographical approach of this thesis to research Coventry's changing landscape as UKCoC. Alongside physical sites and economic productivity, this focus on the social and cultural relations puts into practice the multi-dimensional analysis encouraged by ordinary city theorists (Amin and Graham, 1997).

Gross and Wilson (2017) champion the *ecological* perspective as a way in which to consider the cultural opportunities which exist within a place. Ecology is primarily used as the term to describe the study of relationships between organisms and their environment; *cultural* ecology is applied as an epistemological framework with which to study the complex interdependencies that shape the demand for, and the production of, offerings within the arts and culture sector (Holden, 2015). Gross and Wilson (2019) further define a singular 'cultural ecosystem' as the diversity of resources and networks within a place, which can operate at a range of scales (e.g., neighbourhood, city or nation). In line with Florida's (2002) emphasis on densely networked and diverse societies for a successful creative city theory, a 'flourishing' cultural ecosystem is said to be highly connected, heterogenous and open to emergence, with the latter referring to the idea of 'holding open' space for experiences, skills and diverse creative practices to be shared (Gross and Wilson, 2019: 4).

Overall, cultural ecosystem analysis dissects the tangible and intangible assets within a place and considers these as a set of interconnected and interdependent resources, all of which allow for cultural opportunities to occur in a place (Gross and Pitts, 2016; Gross and Wilson, 2018, 2019). As part of their analysis of *Creative People and Places*, the place-based Arts Council England programme, Gross and Wilson (2019: 21) highlighted 54 cultural resources that may help to build a cultural ecosystem. These included typical cultural resources such as artists/arts organisations, civic buildings, local authorities and existing festivals, parades or annual events.

However, it also included atypical resources that may not be immediately associated with the cultural landscape of a place, such as car parks, bingo halls, transport systems and public health systems – highlighting the importance of vernacular creativities (Edensor et al., 2009) and wider urban systems in 'nurturing' a cultural place. Similarly, in earlier discussions of ordinary city theory within this chapter, the

acknowledgement of informal or non-typical cultural assets can empower the everyday creativity and amateur activity that plays a key role in the cultural landscape of the UK (Neelands et al., 2015; Gross and Wilson, 2017).

Furthermore, referring to the tangible assets and physical infrastructures within a cultural ecosystem brings a spatial element to the study. The identification of specific places and communities within a cultural ecosystem arguably aligns with the work on the ‘anatomy’ of the creative city (Cohendet et al., 2010). Applying further metaphorical boundaries on a cultural place, the anatomical perspective divides the creative city into the upper-, middle- and underground, each having its own set of characteristics and milieus:

- *Upperground* layers are associated with the most formalised institutions, such as governments, large-scale galleries and corporations that often bring creative ideas to the market
- The *middleground* refers to the people and spaces where cultural and creative industries are economically viable but also retain a focus on the creative practices and processes that take place on an individual level. This ‘cornerstone’ layer includes smaller arts organisations and third spaces, where common cultural platforms and grammars of use are established.
- The *underground* is the subcultural space that lies outside of corporate logic and standardization (ibid.), such as amateur groups and graffiti artists.

Together, the cultural ecosystem and anatomical theories can help the academic researcher to uncover the individual aspects of the cultural landscape that exist alongside the formal, top-down creative markets and narratives of where value is to be placed – leading to more emphasis on the invisible or overlooked aspects of a cultural place which includes the subcultural, informal, and vernacular spaces.

Building on the geographical roots of the thesis, this arguably leads to the construction of a more unique sense of place (Massey, 2005). Building an honest portrayal of a place's creative identity is even more crucial when the aims and objectives of cultural policies/programmes are tailored for specific sites, with cultural ecosystems not all made equally (Gross and Wilson, 2019). Therefore, to understand these ecosystems,

one must be ‘in the middle of things’ (ibid: 19), a viewpoint which has influenced the embedded approach of this thesis.

3.8. Conclusion

This review has outlined a number of core concepts which drive the thesis. From urban geography, it borrows from global, ordinary and creative city theory to showcase how the CoC competitions involve socioeconomic aspects from each to form their globally influenced but locally focused cultural regeneration strategies. These large-scale city competitions conceptually align with the broader neoliberal processes of superstar global cities, including their pervasive influence on both the economy and symbolic place status. Creative city theory further consolidates the post-industrial knowledge economy through the notions of innovation and diversity. Focusing on the barriers and inequalities which can result from such urban development strategies, ‘ordinary’ cities aim to put themselves back on the map by nurturing their own cultural ecosystems and using place-based regeneration strategies as a boost to their symbolic reputation and local economies.

Furthermore, research from within the discipline of cultural studies has helped to provide further historical and political context to the rise of CoC competitions, as well as providing theories which marry with the spatial lens of geography to dissect the messy landscapes of evolving cultural sites. From economic geography, this cultural geography thesis attends to the more relational aspects of the creative classes and networks which are deemed as the productive core of the creative city. Finally, urban geography informed the discussions around gentrification, artwashing, and resistive creativity, as a means to encourage research to look beyond the city solely through a consumption lens.

While each section of this review is distinct for analytical purposes, it is clear that there is massive overlap between each theory when considering a UKCoC. As stated previously, this creates theoretical ‘messiness’ on the ground. However, the cultural geographic thinking that provides the basis of this research accentuates the relational understandings of place and a nuanced approach to the multitude of creativities that constitute Coventry’s UKCoC title. Overall, this ‘messiness’ is embraced.

On a sociocultural level, this thesis aims to connect the everyday lived experience of such strategies to the promotional and marketing materials which envision the successes and wealth that such activity will bring. Beyond an economic analysis, it ascribes to the cultural turn in the social sciences and situates the work in an ethnographic approach, with an interest in connecting the lived experience of everyday communities with the evolving sense of place that such strategies can create - which Chapter 4 will now cover.

Chapter 4 – Methodology and Research Design

4.1 Introduction

To decipher the complex and messy landscape of the build-up to UKCo2021, I adopted ethnographic methods inspired by cultural geographical research to document the places, spaces, atmospheres and relationships I encountered across Coventry. In taking an ethnographic approach to this cultural ecosystem, the research hence further understands the *who*, *where* and *why* of UKCoC21 and creative Coventry more broadly.

The anatomical framework discussed in Section 3.7 of the literature review will play an important role in how I frame the various participants of this research (Cohendet et al., 2010). Hence, a year-long embedded ethnography within Coventry's *middleground* creative network (but also with regular contact and observation of *upper-* and *underground* aspects) included a combination of semi-structured interviews, observations and ephemera analysis to document the evolution of place and community during the build-up period to UKCoC 2021.

This partially involved semi-autobiographical reflections as I returned to my home city: my resident positionality applied site-specific knowledge and unearthed data through 'insider moments' (May, 2014) with other Coventrian's, whilst I studied the cultural network as an 'outsider within' (Collins, 1986) a community that I had little prior experience in. As such, this methodology was curated as a 'love story' to my home city, as Coventry struggled with a redefinition of itself as a site of urban creativity.

The chapter is structured as follows. Sections in 4.2. and 4.3. highlight how theoretical and methodological literature shaped the research philosophy, questions and analysis. Then, I cover the specific research design and dissect each of the methods undertaken during this embedded ethnography – which includes interviews, participant

observation and ephemera analysis. Finally, I provide a brief discussion on the ethical considerations before concluding with an audit trail of the research undertaken.

4.2. Theoretical and Analytical Frame

4.2.1. Research Philosophy

The research philosophy for this thesis has been moulded by the frameworks, approaches and concepts championed within cultural geography. To contextualise this, it is important to discuss the ‘cultural turn’, which was an epistemological shift in the late 1980s which prioritised the analysis of subjectivities, to connect meanings and representations in the physical world (Claval et al., 2003). It also led to the emergence of the ‘relational turn’: a concept focused on going beyond the study of only the visible and material aspects of human culture to shift attention to the feelings, understandings, relations and co-constitutions between human and non-human actors (Cook et al., 2000; Philo, 2009). Both the non-material and relational notions of this conceptual framework are useful, and perhaps now, essential for studying a city rebranding competition whereby the emerging representations of a place are arguably as impactful as the altered physical landscapes.

Importantly, the cultural turn signalled a detachment from positivist research philosophies which focus on generating proven facts, mostly through quantitative methods that prove causation through hypothesis tests (Flowerdew and Martin, 2005). Instead, the cultural turn moved towards *interpretivism* within the geographical discipline, focusing on the subjective, embodied and empathetic ways of understanding the complexity of individuals, communities and places (ibid.). The interpretivist frame also gives participants a platform with which to self-reflect, giving validity to their worldview rather than focusing on data which is strictly representative and statistically reliable. Interpretivist research is often achieved using in-depth qualitative data collection methods, as adopted in this research.

Using Coventry as the case study, an embedded ethnography grounded me in the heart of the city’s creative network and sourced key sites and institutions to exemplify ongoing processes within a specific context (Baxter and Jack, 2008). Positivist

approaches, such as closed response surveys gathering statistical information, were decided against early into the research process. While surveys and closed questionnaires could have generated more sizeable and statistical results, these are arguably prescriptive and do not adequately produce a nuanced understanding of the social relationships, multi-sensory materials or embodied cultural practices which occur within the field (Price, 2016). As the focus of this research was around giving voice to the middleground network in the context of an evolving place identity, the subject matter in question was more concerned with reflexivity and meaning making, which would not align well with more objective styles of work. A relational and interpretive conceptual framework, then, is key to deciphering the discourse and representations around Coventry as an upcoming creative city.

The research also adopts a constructionist approach, borrowed from Hall (1997) and the cultural studies discipline. Through this perspective, meanings are seen to be *constructed* by people as they invent and create signs and symbols which represent their understandings of the world (Rojek, 2009). Most importantly, these meanings and representations are influenced by unique contexts and are invented by social actors who then share their individualised meanings through the signs and symbols (Hall, 2003; Davis, 2004).

In the context of the UKCoC, the constructionist approach gives validity to the differing layers of meaning and attachment given to Coventry, which can be perceived opposingly by the under-, middle- and upperground actors in the field. The constructionist approach marries well with the aims of this thesis to understand the lived experiences and the sense of place of individuals in the middleground network, which are subjective and situated in the unique context of creative Coventry. It also allows for reflections around the tensions which can arise when overarching representations of a place are contested.

Placing the research within a post-positivist and constructionist framework also shaped the analysis of the qualitative data: a thematic analysis was undertaken of the material in search for repeated themes due to the textual and visual nature (or, the signs and symbols (Hall, 2003) drawn from the field notes and photographs which served as representations of conversations, interactions and observations. The

practicalities of the analysis will be discussed further in section 4.4 (from page 90), but thematic analysis helps to decipher information which is relational and not fixed (Flowerdew and Martin, 2005). It unpicks the language and representations used to showcase Coventry as an emerging creative place and as a base for creative communities. Thematic analysis can also help to break down the dominant and hidden meanings in the specific context of the UKCoC build-up process, which suits the anatomical framework and can enliven the contribution of middle- and underground networks (Cohendet et al., 2010).

My embedded ethnographic approach is thus guided by these relational, interpretivist and constructionist philosophies. However, it was further shaped by broader theoretical literature, which the next section will dissect further.

4.2.2. Theoretical Framework

The broader theoretical framework adopted in the research relates to the literatures reviewed in Chapter 3, which were built around a cultural geographical approach to creative cities. The expansive literature and theories reviewed in this thesis have influenced the methodological framework and the research questions.

A cultural geography approach instinctively turns from the developmental and economic geography frameworks often adopted within the global, ordinary and creative city theories which emerged in the early millennium (Sassen, 1991, 2001; Florida, 2004; Landry, 2000; Robinson, 2006; Bryson et al., 2021). As previously mentioned, the research instead uses the relational conceptual framework from the cultural turn to mirror the deeply human nature of creativity and cultural networks.

Importantly, this allows me to foreground the concept of culture, which is understood deliberately in a myriad of forms throughout the research. As covered in section 3.2.3, in economic terms, it refers to the cultural industries which primarily involve the visual arts, performance, music and photography and are often the centre of programming in UKCoC competitions. However, as Raymond Williams (1958) alluded, culture is an amorphous term which expands across all levels of society rather than only with the elite: this shaped the framework to also understand culture as

reference to the everyday “way of life” which is unique in specific spaces and contexts (Gibson and Waitt, 2009: 411). It also speaks to the ownership of cultural capital (Bourdieu (1986), which will be discussed later in reflections around power).

Methodologically then, researching culture in this myriad way *requires* a situated and relational approach. An important example of such a method can be found with Miles and Sullivan (2012), which inspired the overarching methodological framework of this thesis due to the successful implementation of their relational strategy to understanding creative regeneration in cities. Their approach considers the ‘contexts, mechanisms and consequences of participation’ in cultural policy (ibid: 320) by combining interviews, ethnographic research, and secondary source analysis to allow for a rich reflection of the diverse social processes involved. As such, a similar combination of research methods was adopted in this research, as well as the usage of coded thematic analysis to decipher the qualitative data gathered through such means.

Structurally, Cohendet et al. (2010) and the anatomical theory for dissecting the creative city has heavily shaped the methodology, from guiding the choice of the sample to the objectives of the research questions. The distinctions of the upper-, middle- and underground were immensely helpful for ordering the UKCoC stakeholders: the upperground referring to the formal decisionmakers, primarily the Coventry City of Culture Trust (the special delivery vehicle running the UKCoC2021 programme), the larger scale cultural organisations and top-down stakeholders from local and national government. Studying the UKCoC build-up period captured initial reactions to the upcoming cultural event during a time when numerous overarching decisions were made by upperground governors – for example, the development of the core governance team, and the curation of official scene-setting events.

Conversely, the underground characteristics were applied to subversive groups, such as the anonymous artists who resisted the formal narratives and were seeking to stimulate social and political discourse rather than financial gain from their cultural production. Most importantly, however, was the milieu of the middleground, which is Cohendet et al.’s (2010) concept of a network that is simultaneously made up of cultural consumers and producers. This seemed to ideally capture the dual role of the independent cultural producers in Coventry, who were the primary focus of this

research from the outset. It recognised the sociocultural role of the group in establishing the grammar and atmosphere of Coventry as a creative place (*ibid.*), whilst their use of cultural platforms and physical spaces was critical for navigating the online and offline spaces which defined the landscape of creative Coventry.

Furthermore, the economic aspect of middleground cultural production – including involvement with funding bids and commercialisation - was key in a phenomenon like UKCoC, which acts as a major economic catalyst for winning cities. The growing presence of official governance structures further prompted the epistemological foundations of this methodology: to privilege the knowledge emerging within the local network of middle- and underground cultural producers and to document their honest responses to top-down decision-making during the early stages of programme development. Therefore, the anatomical theory provided the ideal framework to distinguish the middleground as those in the city who would be best placed to discuss the cultural, social and economic processes from a local perspective during the build-up to Coventry UKCoC2021.

Inherent in this hierarchy of anatomical distinction is the guiding concept of power, and its corollary, resistance. As Bayfield (2015) posits, cultural event studies offer opportunities to understand how city representations are developed, combining aspects of place identity and image alongside power structures associated with differing levels of social and cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1986). This work also centred a need to analyse who owns and disperses overarching representations and crucially, who recognises this power as legitimate. The relational methodological framework places subjective material at the heart of the research, aiming to gather honest and multi-faceted reflections which would uncover alternative narratives to the dominant representations of creative Coventry often dispersed by the upperground.

The anatomical framework of Cohendet et al. (2010) can be critically assessed from the viewpoint of the literature around social exclusions from the cultural sector including class and ethnicity (see Malik, 2013; Hesmondhalgh and Saha, 2013; Brook et al., 2013; O'Brien and Gable, 2021). This may help to address the unequal structures of social fields in the cultural sector – whereby people from privileged backgrounds are further up the hierarchy and as such acquire greater levels of cultural and social

capital to further their positionality (Flemmen, 2013). This theoretical guidance prioritised the gathering of an array of perspectives from participants ranging from different social, professional and geographical backgrounds, which was even more important given the diverse context of Coventry's population (see Chapter 2).

Furthermore, the interpretivist nature of the methodological framework meant the consideration of opposing perspectives to gain a fuller understanding. The context of resistance to overarching power structures is helpful to account for alternative and oftentimes hidden representations of the creative city which digress from dominant narratives from upperground sources. It highlights the co-option and socially deleterious nature of poorly delivered creative city strategies which can alienate local people and focus solely on generating economic gain (Mould, 2015).

Resistance more broadly is applied within this theoretical framework as a social concept to redirect focus onto the motivations for producing alternative representations of the creative city, as well as embedding subjective opinions into what can be a largely economic field of UKCoC evaluations. For example, the concept of artwashing shaped the framework as a theoretical resistance to profit-driven creative city economics (Mould, 2018). Artwashing considers possible criticisms of middle-class artists or cultural events themselves as the drivers of negative impacts associated with creative urban regeneration and gentrification (Ley, 1996; Pritchard, 2017). Alternatively, it can focus on the predatory intentions of developers and investors in regeneration projects shrouded as cultural programmes (O'Sullivan, 2013). These viewpoints were important for understanding how resistive activity was framed in creative Coventry.

Overall, the multi-faceted concepts of culture, power, resistance and artwashing used in this thesis have been drawn from theory to act as guiding principles for the theoretical framework of the thesis, to decipher the relational context of the Coventry UKCoC2021 build-up period. In particular, the anatomical framework drawn from Cohendet et al. (2010) is used to narrow the research and primarily consider the symbols and representations of creative Coventry from the perspective of the middleground cultural network, including their interactions with under- and upperground stakeholders in the process. This led to the emergence of the three

distinct research questions (stated in Section 1.3, page 19), to which the next section will now turn.

4.2.3. Theoretical Influences on Research Question Development

The theoretical and methodological frameworks shaped the three research questions. The objective is for these research questions to enliven understandings around what and where is valued by middleground creative network members in the Coventry UKCoC2021 setting, and the extent to which these perceptions are accepted or contested by the wider creative community during the critical build-up period. It involves the complex simultaneous roles of being consumers and producers of the city's cultural identity, which the middleground network characterise (Cohendet et al., 2010). How theoretical concepts influenced the three research questions will now be discussed, with each question focusing separately on the people, places or processes in creative Coventry.

First, I attend to the theoretical framings around the **people** involved with the creative city: the residents, the creative class, the producers and the consumers of cultural practices. I chose to incorporate a focus on everyday ways of life from the perspective of the middle- and underground networks of cultural producers. Moving beyond economic indicators, attending to narratives gathered from communities in situ can address diverse voices and express these lived and told stories of individuals (Creswell and Poth, 2018). This represents understandings of the world from subjective positionings, reflecting upon the socially constructed nature of knowledge (Dyck, 2001).

The approach borrows from Lorimer's (2003) small stories approach due to its encouragement against the epistemological bias of seeking metanarratives – for example, from the spectacular aspects of cultural megaevents - and instead focuses upon the micro-level social and spatial subjectivities which are drawn from conversations and interactions with other individuals. In a close knit middleground network, as seen in Coventry, this seemed like an achievable and empathetic approach to capture the often-unheard voices and contexts. Cameron (2012) encourages geographers to ask what information could be expressed or revealed through small,

local stories, which otherwise may easily be lost. The small stories epistemology also looks beyond institutional narratives (Lorimer, 2003), encouraging a research design which highlights the intricacies and individualities drawn from the middleground network in question.

Ultimately, a question was needed to act as a platform for the small stories emerging from people who may feel excluded from typical evaluation strategies, which can focus on headline statistics. By examining the micro-processes of the various networks through ethnographic methods, researchers can constructively critique branding activities and reorient evaluations to capture the human elements of feelings, emotion and cultural value which shape place identity (Bayfield, 2015).

The relational aspect of the methodological framework also provided the opportunity to discuss aspects of social exclusion from the cultural sector: particularly, the context of an individual's identity to further understand how class, ethnicity, age and other protected characteristics can shape a person's experience of UKCoC processes (see Malik, 2013; Hesmondhalgh and Saha, 2013; Brook et al., 2013; O'Brien and Gable, 2021). Focusing on the connections between people also emphasised the need to question the additional labour that middleground communities provide as they act as critical gatekeepers who provide entryways to the network for the newly formed UKCoC governance structure, the Coventry City of Culture Trust.

Together, these theoretical focuses encouraged me to engage with the less documented - but not no less important - stakeholders, with a stakeholder defined as 'any group or individual who can affect or is affected by the achievement of [a] firm's objectives' (Freeman, 1984: 25). The middleground context narrowed a focus onto a group who may not normally be central in cultural evaluations. It purposefully prioritised a group beyond those with direct involvement and power with the UKCoC governance to reflect the 'ordinary' people who live and work in the middleground and who may be on the periphery of formal institutions. This led to the development of the first research question:

- 1) *How are the local middleground arts network becoming involved with the staging and development of 'creative Coventry' during 2019? How do these artists perceive the UKCoC title during the build-up period?*

Second, we move onto the **places** within the creative city to consider the representations and experiences of the sites, landscapes and spaces involved with UKCoC. The interpretivist nature of the cultural geographical discipline (Nelson, 2018; Massey, 2004) is mirrored in cultural ecosystem theories (as discussed in Section 3.7, page 68 - Holden, 2015; Gross and Wilson, 2017): both aim to understand the physical landscape through the interconnections between the material, symbolic and relational attributes of a place, as well as considering the existence of power and social relations which affect the site.

Hence, designing methods with a sociospatial lens to connect people and their emotions with their tangible landscape was critical for achieving a deeper insight into creative Coventry. This is particularly important for the UKCoC title, which attempts to positively influence feelings of civic pride in order to overcome 'image problems' and territorial stigma (Garcia, 2005). Territorial stigma will form an important part of discussions in Chapter 6, where I analyse the perspectives on the cultural places of creative Coventry (the perennial stigma discussed within these place-focused conversations will be addressed in more depth in Section 6.2).

What is key for consideration here, however, is the theoretical influence that argues stigma is generated within social and political contexts (Tyler and Slater, 2018). Geographers like Slater (2017) have called for greater understandings around territorial stigma, particularly in relation to the production of such narratives within a place and how this affects somebody's lived experiences of changes to their place's identity. As such, addressing the relational nature of such stigma is key.

As Boggs and Rantisi (2003) noted, the relational turn has also been embraced within economic geography to study the social and spatial dimensions of growth and innovation, which oftentimes uses qualitative research methods to further understand the contexts in which such processes take place. The thesis borrows from relational economic studies of Coventry previously conducted by Granger and Hamilton (2010),

which studied nodes (i.e. key individuals/organisations) of the art-based network to further understand the local cultural economy, particularly focusing on mapping the incidences and breadths of relations between people, places and events in the city. The focus not only on sites but the relational connections between these material places inspired the research of this thesis. These wider theorisations of place led to the second research question:

2) Which places are being identified as the key sites in 'creative Coventry'? Why are these places justified as creative and by who?

The final objective of the research was to understand the **processes** which lead to the production of cultural identities, experiences and representations. Beyond the embodied and tangible landscape, wider socioeconomic forces guide the structures of the creative city and impact the ways in which middleground networks exist.

Creative city theories have conflicting views on the economic potential of creative city regeneration. Florida's (2004) original claims of growth, innovation and profit through creative means were later withdrawn, citing the negative impacts of gentrification and the uneven socioeconomic distribution of wealth in creative cities (Florida, 2017). Critics like Peck (2005) and Mould (2015; 2018) argue that neoliberal processes lie at the heart of most creative city processes, highlighting the social, cultural and economic detriment which results, including mass gentrification, privatisation and poorly designed strategies which don't account for local histories and contexts.

A large guiding force in the daily lives of middleground networks is the financial climate within which they are functioning, highlighting their dual role as economically viable producers *and* as cultural consumers (Cohendet et al., 2010). This is further complicated in cultural policy literature, which acknowledges the unstable precarity that middleground producers face in their roles, further limited by the availability of funding (Comunian, 2012). Through relational approaches concerned with understanding subjective experiences, these economic processes can be captured from non-economic angles to highlight the emotional labour of navigating culture-led regeneration processes.

The financial and cultural capital held by upperground decisionmakers further builds on the concepts of power and exclusion (Cohendet et al., 2010; Bourdieu, 1986), and inherently brings in questions around cultural governance processes and the extent to which local cultural producers feel involved and valued throughout delivery (Oakley, 2015). This also brings into question theories around resistive activity and how creativity can be used as a form of symbolic power against dominant governance and narratives (Bourdieu, 1986; Mould, 2015, 2018; Dekeyser, 2020).

Finally, the emphasis on small stories from the first research question links to the theoretical influence of vernacular creativity, as discussed by Edensor et al. (2009). Vernacular theory inspired the research design by encouraging me to witness and take part in the piecemeal, everyday practices that help to facilitate spectacular events, which can be overlooked due to their misconceived imagination as unspectacular and mundane processes. Seemingly mundane aspects of cultural production and consumption were centred to acknowledge the key role such processes play, an approach which led to the embedded ethnography alongside middleground producers in their studios, or during their lunch breaks and routine meetings.

Together, these literatures shaped the third and final research question:

3) What types of social, cultural and economic processes are shaping the cultural ecosystem of 'creative Coventry' throughout the build-up period to UKCoC2021?

The questions posed hope to generate a multi-faceted picture of the people, places and processes in creative Coventry to further understand the lived experiences of the build-up period. Bringing together a plethora of theories and disciplines, this summary highlights how the literature has helped to create order for thinking about the middleground experience of Coventry's build-up to its time as UKCoC2021 from a relational and cultural geographical lens. While this has defined how the research questions were developed, detail on the methods design and the delivery of the research questions will be discussed throughout Section 4.4 . First, however, the next

section will summarise the methodological thinking specifically behind the ethnographic research design.

4.3 Methodological Discussion: Ethnographic Methods

4.3.1. The Case for Embedded Ethnography

Qualitative research allows for a flexible and spontaneous approach that reacts to unexpected experiences and developments (Katz, 2012), which is valuable when observing the sociospatial complexities within the creative economy (Granger and Hamilton, 2010). Qualitative research is not without problems of course. The researcher must construct knowledge from complex intersubjective relations, whilst retaining an awareness of how their interpretation is sensitized by concepts from theory and their own subjectivity (Dyck, 2001).

Till (2009) defines ethnographers as examiners of the processes of meaning-making and materiality, including everyday spatial practices and social becoming's – perfect for documenting the people, places and processes of creative Coventry and capturing the tangible and intangible elements of the multi-layered ecosystem. Crang and Cook (2007) state that ethnographies aim to know the world as others do, reminding researchers to be 'ethically generous' (Price, 2016: 76), particularly when considering cultural practices and expertise (Pain, 2004; Hawkins, 2015).

The intangible features of cultural ecosystems can be particularly difficult to grasp (O'Connor, 2004; Gross and Wilson, 2019). Ethnographic research develops a social understanding of phenomena from the perspectives of individuals who have experienced it *and* as a collective group with shared experiences. Cresswell and Poth (2018: 90) describe this 'culture-sharing group' as having 'shared patterns of behaviour, beliefs and language'. In this case, the 'culture-sharing' group is the middleground cultural network which exists in Coventry's UKCoC build-up period. By embedding myself into this group, ethnographic data collection allowed me to see how a network operates and provided insight into their actions and interactions (Padgett, 2008).

Ethnography incorporates the places and atmospheres in which communities' dwell, attending to the interactions between built environments, bodies and multisensory elements (Jones and Ham, 2016). This builds upon the traditions of fieldwork within geographical research, often bounded with elements of anthropological ethnography. Shifting beyond imaginations of the 'field' as a site far removed from the institution, post-colonial theory revises the field as a site of relational and mobile encounters (Clifford, 1997; Price, 2016). Ethnography can uncover spaces encoded with symbols and meanings, encountering a physical site as temporal and place-bound actions unravel within (Herbert, 2000).

Furthermore, by analysing a place-based middleground network and the individual participants within this, the scale of the individual experience connects the research with specific sites and locational processes (Lees et al., 2008). The ethnographic field is spatially situated in a specific urban case study which attends to the nuances of the relations and connections within the city's local creative ecosystem (Comunian and Mould, 2014; Bayfield, 2015). However, the 'field' is also seen as the numerous spaces and venues where cultural production and consumption occurs (Bourdieu, 1994).

In relation to cultural ecosystems, Comunian (2012) advises an ethnographic approach due to the interconnectedness of the network, so a researcher can capture snapshots of the fluctuating dynamics of local creative practitioners alongside the shifting nature of project-based (or here, place-based) creative work. With all this in mind, it was clear that ethnographic methods were the best route to gaining access to and documenting these narratives.

The prioritisation of personal and emotive content from the middleground contributes to the redefinition of the value of qualitative reflections within cultural programme evaluations (Bayfield, 2015). Garcia (2020) argues that qualitative methodologies should not be dismissed as partial, anecdotal or overly subjective within cultural megaevent studies, but as a way to capture significant changes in community perception. Furthermore, when considering artistic environments, Kester (2011) argues that incorporating qualitative methods traditionally associated with the social sciences – such as participant observation, ethnography and in-depth interviews – redirects attention to dialogical processes of object-based and performative

components of cultural work. This aspect is critical for the cultural producer status held by many of the middleground network.

With such artistic practice, Hall (2007) argues a need to adopt methods which map understandings of the multiple ways in which diverse audiences engage with art. When an entire city hosts a year-long cultural programme, there are many audiences and engagements to interact with as Coventry's identity shifts from a post-industrial city to "the place as an event" (Massey, 2005: 140). It is also helpful to adapt the principles of Bresler's (2006) tri-directional relationship analysis to qualitative art studies. These cover connections to the artwork(s); the dialogic connection to oneself (i.e. researcher perspective); and how the artwork connects to the audiences (i.e. local communities). Here, the cultural programme as a whole is in question rather than a specific artwork, and the focus on the audience rather than the decisionmakers invites a broader remit of communities into the question.

4.3.2. Autoethnography and Reflexivity

As I stated when opening the thesis, it is ultimately a love story to Coventry. An ethnographic framework allows for some *autoethnographic* connotations to be included in the data collection, utilising my positionality as a Coventry resident and creative network member to connect on an emotional level. An autoethnographic approach uses the self and my experiences, knowledges and representations of everyday life as a data capturing device. Hence, by utilising autoethnographic techniques, I was able to incorporate my own lived experiences and emotions into the data collection process to provide an intimate and self-reflexive response to surroundings and social settings (Butz, 2009).

This adds another layer to the creative evolution of Coventry, including personal experiences of the dominating sociohistorical relations in the city (Clifford, 1983). While my voice is less apparent in the data, the research is still elevated by me incorporating my own understandings and contexts into the ethnographic process. This further cemented this research as my love story to Coventry, as the place in which I grew up and encountered my early interests in culture and creativity.

However, autoethnographic, and qualitative researchers more broadly, must be reflective about the participants, data, analytical processes and the emerging results. To be reflexive is to think about your own cultural-historical and onto-epistemological values, ethical stances, and social positionalities (Alejandro, 2021). The work required me to reflect upon the wider UK cultural megaevent context through the experiences documented within Glasgow, Liverpool, Hull and Derry-Londonderry (Boland et al., 2019; Garcia, 2005, Umney, 2020); but reflexive about the entanglement of my personal and professional identity, which required me to perform different elements of my identity in different spaces (Price, 2016).

A binary that frequently arose was the ‘insider/outsider’ identity. I avoided binding myself to one defining role in the network – an ‘insider’ is inseparable from the community being researched, whilst an ‘outsider’ struggles to grasp a true understanding of the phenomena in question (Rose, 1997). This is crucial considering my auto-ethnographic practice and resident status, which add additional contextual layers to the notion of the “researcher-as-instrument” (Padgett, 2008: 17). I was reflexive about my role as both a researcher *and* a Coventrian, both of which afforded me a number of privileges and longstanding knowledges about academic research and the place of study, including an awareness of everyday life and key locations within the city. I continually questioned my pre-conceived ideas about the city and how these may influence my data collection and analysis.

May (2002) encourages an awareness of the ways your own biography becomes fundamentally included in the research process, thus prompting a constant awareness of how my lived experience shapes my cultural values, experiences and beliefs in ways which differ to my participants. Furthermore, it is crucial to attend to both the opportunities *and* the discomfort or contradictions that these various positions create, (e.g., sometimes gaining access to conversations due to my researcher status despite other network members being excluded). Data was analysed with a constant awareness of how my experiences and wider cultural relations influenced the knowledge extraction process, to avoid an overly self-focused set of data which ignores the conditions of social production (Besio, 2009).

When considering myself alongside participants in the research context, power relations again became a key concern within the knowledge production process. Ethnographies therefore *must* be reflexive in order to stop the unbeknown reproduction of power struggles (ibid.). When researching the ‘elite’ (or upperground (Cohendet et al., 2010), the researcher must further dissect the authority and power that is held (e.g., scrutinising the content of the monologues which are provided when difficult questions are asked) as core individuals defend their organisation to external stakeholders (Mikecz, 2012). By providing a platform for middleground cultural workers in the city, I ensured that power was more equally balanced and that there was a space for ‘off-the-map’, less heard voices to respond to the overarching decisions being made.

I also questioned my own authority, influenced by institutional dynamics from within the university, which also privileged me access to different sources of information. However, the exclusivity of Coventry’s creative network itself must be considered as a limitation and should not be taken as a finite reflection of the cultural activity ongoing in the city, particularly in spaces outside of the city centre where the majority of the data was collected, or the presence of many informal community groups who exist beyond the dominant collectives.

4.3.3. Ethnographic Methods Summary

In summary then, the benefit to this ethnographic framework is the ability to attend to the subjectivity of unheard voices from beyond traditional cultural evaluation formats. The qualitative methodology allows for a deeper analysis of the feelings, emotions and lived experiences. Embedding myself into the cultural ecosystem not only allowed me to become part of the middle- and underground network (Cohendet et al., 2010) but gave me the opportunity to encounter the material landscape with all of its affectual atmospheres.

By combining the generative theories of urban geography with an embedded ethnographic approach, the researcher can analyse the city *and* the artistic world in ways which are oriented “towards embodied and practice-based doings” (Hawkins, 2015: 248). This combination of approaches is thus ideal for researching cultural

producers within a creative city, whose labour is typically practice-based. It is well positioned to attend to sociocultural processes such as identity making, place sensing, creative production and consumption: crucially, this allows me to consider the physical existence of place in direct relation to the representation and lived experiences of the city (including my own). Applying a situated focus on social networks, spaces and conversations enabled me to capture the ongoing social and cultural exchanges across the ecosystem (Crossick, 2009; Sunley et al., 2011), building a richer picture of the ecosystem during a period of UKCoC identity and programme evolution in 2019.

4.4 Research Design: Methods and Delivery

What follows is an overview of the research design which will discuss the specifics of how data was accessed, collected, and recorded through the triangulation of three ethnographic methods: ethnographic observation, semi-structured interviews, and ephemera analysis (i.e., primary visual data collection and secondary sources and materials). Yin (2009) also discusses interviews, observations and artifact analysis as the key triangulation of methods for reliable case study development.

First, this section will cover the opportunities and limitations of each method, alongside a summary of the sampling strategies. It will finish with the research delivery plan and ethical considerations before providing an audit trail to serve as a directory of the research undertaken.

4.4.1 Ethnographic Observation

Participant and event observations enable the social, spatial, and tactile elements of the cultural ecosystem to be documented. This contextualises the information provided by interviews and ephemera (discussed later) with first-hand experiences, adding depth to the relational mapping of developments within the local creative practitioner network (Comunian and Mould, 2014). Visits to physical spaces and institutions were enhanced by the interactions, dialogues and atmospheres encountered within, deepening the critical insights of the research (Granger and Hamilton, 2010). This helped me to understand the lived experiences of the

middleground cultural network in “full sensuality – the sights, sounds, smells, tastes and tactile sensations” (Herbert, 2000; 552).

Marshall and Rossman (1999: 106) state that, “immersion in the setting allows the researcher to hear, see, and begin to experience reality as the participants do”. However, the aim was to document representations of experiences and intersubjectivities (Cloke et al., 2004), rather than claim that the data accurately depicted reality. Alongside interviews, Till (2009) advises ethnographic observers to partake in conversations in social settings, make field notes, and gather visual/material evidence. I attended events including creative workshops, performances, network meetings and official UKCoC sessions, and took notes, photographs, and artefacts whilst participating in activities and conversations.

Creative geographers have encouraged embodied methodologies which build upon personal interests and gain affectual insight through making methods within the arts (Longhurst, 2009; Hawkins, 2015). This hands-on approach allows the researcher to be flexible with their positionality, sometimes acting as what Hoggart et al. (2002) term as the participant-as-observer (standing back to take in the phenomena from a distance) or sometimes as the observer-as-participant (embedding oneself into a participatory or everyday activity with a group). Price (2016) further highlights the apprentice-like role that geographers can take alongside creative practitioners, learning from their expertise while reflecting on process and practice.

Following events, I would expand on initial observations by typing up the field notes taken by hand and inserting visual materials into a digital field diary. This was essential to also build upon mentally recorded ‘scratch notes’ (Sanjek, 1990: 97), from when notetaking was not achievable and/or comfortable. Field diaries provide an intimate resource to document key quotes or intangible affects: a challenging aspect of ethnographic observation is capturing a sometimes-ungraspable atmosphere, and its effect on myself or the participants (McNally, 2015).

Diaries are also spaces within which to critique power relations and notes help to document the dominating characteristics of the users of a space (Silverman, 2006). Cook (2005) highlights how field notes can document:

“...how you were able to access the community which you ended up studying; how your understandings have been affected by your developing role in the community; what power relations can be discerned in this; how your expectations and motives are played out as the research progresses; what you divulge, why and to who, and how they appear to react to this; how various aspects of the research encounter make you ‘feel’ and how this affects what you do...”

(ibid:180)

Within the middleground cultural network, I purposefully sought to attend to the variables and protected characteristics of class, age, gender, educational background and ethnicity in order to account for a diversity of cultural taste, participation and consumption (Bennett et al., 2009; Bourdieu, 1984; Chan & Goldthorpe, 2007). Furthermore, building on the ‘ordinariness’ discussed above, it seemed important to attend to the value created by vernacular acts of creativity alongside the formalised sub-sectors highlighted above (Gilmore, 2013; Edensor et al., 2009). This involved interactions with amateur, hobbyist groups from the underground network who also contributed their embodied creative acts to the cultural ecosystem of Coventry.

These considerations were particularly key to my personal involvement with organisations as a volunteer and intern, where I wanted deeper understandings of how the UKCoC was impacting everyday creative labour. For example, I would note the number of attendees at events, including how many women/men, how many appeared to be Caucasian and note any known stakeholders from key organisations. However, these details must not be misconstrued as definite; these were very rough estimates which attempted not to make claims on behalf of others, but ultimately brought to the data my own biases about identifying gender and social characteristics.

The build-up period allowed me to witness emerging UKCoC processes. The early development of the programme meant I had to practice what Ocejo (2013: 10) terms as “getting in” with middleground participants, maintaining and managing relationships in both the established creative network alongside the emerging

upperground governance structure. However, beyond formal activity, I was keen to 'get in' (ibid.) the everyday lives of the local cultural producers and organisations: the seemingly mundane, unspectacular activity, labour and relationships behind-the-scenes which were shaping the large-scale, spectacular events. These piecemeal, ordinary activities and dialogues within the professional lives of the city's middleground producers were equally noteworthy (Laurier, 2009; Edensor et al., 2009).

To fully immerse myself into the middleground network and the wider cultural ecosystem, I relocated to Coventry and returned to my childhood home during 2019. My ethnographic observations were thus layered with an emotional attachment to place, with my familiarity allowing me to access certain geographies and communities (Price, 2016). Whilst this familiarity was sometimes conditioned by negative experiences, my visits to other mid-sized cities undergoing cultural regeneration (e.g. Hull and Stoke-on-Trent) increased my awareness of how my personal ties to Coventry enhanced my connection to the research.

Hall (2014) highlights the methodological issues of ethnographically researching home, with a heightened need to be reflexive due to the proximity and intimacy that the research can generate. However, in agreement with Price (2016) and Jupp (2007), I believe that the strong connections and local knowledge made via the research contributed to the depth and social richness of my data. Whilst studying 'off the map' places (Robinson, 2002), these 'off the map' and unexpected relationships allowed me to access a genuine perspective of the network.

Beyond the self as a resident, the self as an autoethnographic participant provided additional small stories for the research (Lorimer, 2003). Aware of my multiple positionalities within the research, I wanted to include my individual sensibilities in the data to capture my own experiences and reactions to the changing identity of home. However, as my involvement with the network developed, I realised that the voices and experiences of my participants should be foregrounded over my own conceptions of the UKCoC competition. Whilst we could collectively discuss the impact of territorial stigma or our sense of place and civic pride (Butler et al. 2018; Howcroft,

forthcoming), the direct impact of the UKCoC on their livelihoods and labour was equally important.

4.4.2 Semi-Structured Interviews

Semi-structured interviews were undertaken with key stakeholders, primarily from within the middleground cultural network (Cohendet et al., 2010). Cloke et al. (2004: 155) define semi-structured interviews as “intersubjective conversations with a purpose”, which aid the reflexive and dialogical approach implemented through ethnographic methods. Interviews are a collaborative process, inviting participants to co-construct meanings through conversation (ibid.).

As social encounters, interviews provide insight into subjectivities such as emotion and meaning (McDowell, 2010) which is crucial when discussing large-scale cultural regeneration projects with real-life consequences. The overarching aim of the interviewing was to uncover “insights into people’s biographies, experiences, opinions, values, aspirations, attitudes and feelings” (May, 2001: 120), from those who produce and consume cultural content in Coventry. However, other stakeholders beyond the middleground network (including a local councillor) were also invited to share their perspectives following interest at various events.

Structured interviews with rigid questions were dismissed for more personalised approaches, to avoid excess direction generating biased answers (Gray and Malins, 2004). Alternatively, while studying Liverpool ECoC2008, Campbell (2011) undertook unstructured interviews with creative business owners, which he argued allowed the participants to highlight the influential factors on their cultural labour on their own terms. My interviews were semi-structured, to encourage the discussion of key topics whilst providing space for participants to contribute ideas and directions which had not been considered (Longhurst, 2009; Kitchin and Tate, 2001).

As interview conversations can take “surprising turns” (Esterberg, 2002: 87), an interview guide leads discussions back to relevancy. I produced a guide (see Appendix L, page 347) with introductory questions and possible ideas to discuss if conversation faltered or was interrupted (Dunn, 2010). The questions were adapted from Comunian

(2012), regarding the experience and management of the participants cultural production. These addressed: past and present roles of the participant; their relations with the network and other local cultural organisations; their relations with place and its importance in their practice; how they were involved with (UKCoC) projects; and their opinions of/interactions with the governance structure (ibid.). The UKCoC context was a foundational element of the conversation, but interactions with other policies, places and decisionmakers – both within and beyond the city - were seen as essential contextual elements.

Predetermined questions ensured topical conversation, but flexibility was essential to encourage a conversational tone and to allow the exploration of issues which were of significance to the participants (Longhurst, 2009). Semi-structured interviews highlight the collaborative nature of meaning-making through interviewing (Cloke et al., 2004), and thus the reflexive and dialogical character of semi-structured interviewing, creating a more achievable equilibrium of representation and participation (Burgess, 1984, in Nowicki, 2017).

Most interviews were pre-arranged following introductions online or at cultural events. The opportunity to build rapport in advance, through emailing or in-person interactions, was beneficial. Interviews took place in the participants workplace or at a third space location (e.g. café/gallery) which was popular with under- and middleground members. These conversations averaged an hour in length and were relatively informal and colloquial, reflecting the familiarity produced by my immersion into the network and my positionality as a lifelong Coventrian.

Each participant confirmed that they were comfortable being audio recorded via my voice-recording mobile application (Beddall-Hill et al., 2011 in McNally, 2015). Audio recordings captured authentic detail of the discussion whilst avoiding selective recall during the transcription process (May, 2001). Simultaneously taking notes meant I had constructed a second copy in case of technical failures, while allowing me to document visual and intangible encounters or unplanned follow up questions (Price, 2016). Spontaneous conversations in situ were recorded through written notes to document key quotes and body language in shorthand. All transcriptions were typed as soon as possible following the interaction. Table 3 in the upcoming Audit Trail

section (*p.100 onwards*) provides further contextual information about the participants involved with the interviews, who will be referenced on a first name basis throughout this thesis.

4.4.3 Ephemera Analysis

Ephemera analysis combines content, artefact and document analysis, drawing out knowledge about a phenomenon from (mostly) secondary qualitative data. Policy documents, promotional materials, media content and objects were gathered either online or during ethnographic observation, allowing for an unobtrusive analysis without disturbing the research site (Marshall and Rossman, 1999). This method borrows from archival theory, referring to the analysis of material (and increasingly virtual) ephemera which is consumed by individuals. This contains and transmits messages from their surroundings and collective memories (Daly, 2016). It also utilises my own cultural understandings and position in the social world which shapes how I consume and engage with the meanings produced, situating the socio-political context of the phenomena (May, 2001; Price, 2016).

Objects and documents help to construct meaning for audiences whilst being embedded with power and symbols. Some meanings are intended by the creator of the ephemera, whereas other meanings are derived by the audience (Scott, 1990). Crucially, May (2001: 183) highlights how ephemera are “interesting for what they leave out, as well as what they contain”, encouraging in-depth analysis of the wider context in which the knowledge was created. For example, contextualising the UKCoC title using policy documents produced by local and national authorities was key to understanding the symbolism and knowledges produced by official bid materials.

Scott (1990) advises the researcher to assess the quality of the secondary data by considering the authenticity, credibility, representativeness and meaning of the document/object. Therefore, this research sought background information on the creator(s), their affiliation with the UKCoC title and the location where the ephemera was found/accessed. This is essential when much of the UKCoC activity involves public-facing promotional materials which is less critical than press coverage, independent evaluations, or public commentaries (Bayfield, 2015).

Finally, ephemera can capture the everyday nature of creative labour in Coventry. Leaflets, flyers and events booklets act as tangible objects and social memories of the network (DeLyser, 2015). Price (2016) discusses the intimacy that such collecting can bring to the research experience, especially when family members and colleagues contribute - something I experienced with newspaper cuttings or old books about Coventry gifted by grandparents, or when friends would share online coverage of the UKCoC competition.

Often, the content of the ephemera was textual. Discourse analysis methods deconstructed the content alongside the language and rhetoric, reflecting on the power structures and ideologies of its production (Meer et al., 2010 in Nowicki, 2017). The analysis of texts like speeches and policy documents allowed for a deeper consideration of the socio-political processes and the multiple stakeholders involved with the UKCoC competition.

I also took around two hundred photos in-situ to visually supplement my ethnographic observations. Other secondary images were sourced from various media sources, such as Twitter, Instagram and local newspaper coverage. These were primarily illustrative, to enliven the data with a visual sense of place for the reader. Rose and Tolia-Kelly (2012) applaud the ability of photographic materials to incorporate the rhythms, forms and textures of the world – especially everyday sites and textures, like the changing city centre I passed through on my walk to the internship, which can seem more significant once it is the subject of a photograph (Hunt, 2014).

Alongside the ephemera collection, the images contributed towards an archive to document the multi-sensory ethnographic experience (Latham and McCormack, 2009 in Price, 2016). This does not aim to provide a fixed view of the world but invites the audience to encounter the setting to enhance their own perspective. It also allowed me to re-immense myself into the field, acting as visual scratch notes (Sanjek, 1990) to recall a specific event or landscape.

4.4.4 Sampling Technique

To access middleground participants specifically related to the UKCoC subject, a convenience approach to sampling was applied (Lo, 2009). Kearns (2010: 250) explains how gaining entry to social networks and settings can be ‘a fundamental challenge’ for researchers. Early into the research, I followed the guidance of Comunian and Mould (2014) and produced a directory with an extensive list of regional and local contacts. Rather than sourcing this from a physical directory such as the Yellow Pages (*ibid.*), it was compiled through web searches on the local and regional creative sector. The final product included representatives from the upper-, middle- and underground networks including regional arts bodies and local authorities, non-profit cultural organisation managers/producers, independent practitioners, and early-stage SDV recruits.

Following successful web searches, I searched social media for digital cultural networks. Social media has become an integral part of academic networking and provides entry into timely conversations and debates (Kitchin et al., 2013). It became crucial for sampling whilst also introducing me to offline opportunities. Search features on websites like Twitter allowed me to source past and present information directly related to Coventry and UKCoC, leading me to lively discussions amongst local residents and cultural producers (many of whom I ‘followed’ and began to digitally interact with). Furthermore, representatives from the upper-, middle- and underground (Cohendet et al., 2010) each used social media platforms to interact, providing insight into the different anatomies of the creative city.

Monthly communal chats through online networks created a sense of collegiality, which attracted local artists and producers whilst broadening my recruitment pool. The online directory and social media accounts were used to contact potential participants via email or direct messaging. These online spaces also informed my findings beyond recruitment (Bayfield, 2015), as social media was used by the cultural network for everyday discussions, critical debates, and marketing purposes. Social media helpfully directed me to various event listings which shaped ethnographic observations, where subsequent in-person interactions allowed me to recruit further.

Granger and Hamilton (2010) discuss the important role of initial contacts for snowballing, which introduces the researcher to other potential participants (Valentine, 2008). Contact is often granted via gatekeepers who hold an official position within an organisation or hold power within a particular group (Cloke et al. 2004). The methodological process of snowballing is advantageous, as it allows the researcher to become involved in the dynamics of organic social networks (Noy, 2008). This was essential for my embedded ethnographic approach, grounding me further into the middleground network but also allowing the participants to play a directional role in the knowledge production. Connecting with Coventry's creative gatekeepers formed a more complete view of the cultural ecosystem through suggestions of the best events and places for creativity.

Snowballing is also a trust-building exercise for bottom-up networks, with some participants becoming comfortable enough to introduce me to other professional or personal contacts. This rapport was essential when middleground participants discussed (or sometimes criticised) a large-scale event like the UKCoC. Furthermore, the sampling strategy provided first-hand insight into the social linkages and deep interconnections within Coventry's independent arts network. The longstanding nature of the network became evident, forming a tight knit community with various histories and entanglements in relation to (and beyond) the UKCoC title.

It was crucial to reflect on the contrasting positionalities, identities and presumed subject knowledge of both participants *and* I (Longhurst, 2009). The researcher may hold more power than the participant (Cloke et al., 2004), placing emphasis on the need for sensitive approaches that do not further unbalance power relations. As gatekeepers are in a position where they must consider issues of privacy and protection for their contact (ibid.), the researcher must support the process.

The snowballing strategy can be argued to be inherently biased, providing connections through familiarity which could lead to an over-representation of similar sociocultural, economic and political backgrounds (Beauchemin and Gonzalez-Ferrer, 2011) – or, in the case of the UKCoC title, participants with overly similar biases about cultural megaevent activity. Sampling can also expose the wider inequalities of a creative network. Despite the multicultural and multi-ethnic emphasis of the UKCoC

bid, the core middleground cultural network members were largely White British. I attempted to mitigate the biases by seeking wider connections from beyond the core group, or by discussing the UKCoC title with individuals who had positive involvement with the bid and build-up activity.

Similar concerns can be drawn from social media, which Pickerill (2013) explains as having exclusionary networks and highly curated content. For those who do become included in the digital network, the ease of access to the online content can make it difficult to feel as if you have left the field (Price, 2016), which can become dangerously all-consuming. I managed this by trying to only use my account during typical working hours and/or during events which encouraged online dialogue.

Attending to multivalent cultural work helps to contribute towards a more complete view of Coventry's creative field from beyond restrictive formalised definitions (Granger and Hamilton, 2010). Whilst the UKCoC programme may celebrate or incorporate each of the formally defined creative sub-sectors (as covered in the literature review), this research largely encountered middleground practitioners producing cultural content for musical, performing and/or visual arts. Some producers were also partially involved with film, photography, animation, and crafts.

4.4.5 Analysis and Coding

The triangulation of the three research methods had epistemological value for the data analysis, as this uses multiple and independent sources of evidence to gain a more comprehensive understanding of a phenomenon (Campbell and Fiske, 1959). In this instance, the triangulation of data is committed to approaching the UKCoC phenomenon from a diversity of perspectives which have been gathered from separate methods, in order to account for the errors and biases which may occur from using a stand-alone method (Heesen et al., 2019). Triangulation also arguably maximises the validity of the field data (Denzin, 1978). The result is a mixture of textual, visual and audio data, with each recognised as an individual source of robust knowledge which captures a different aspect of the research issue (Flick, 2004). However, collectively, the methods were guided by a common rationale to capture the middleground

experience of the people, places and processes involved in the build-up period (Cohendet et al., 2010; Kuorikoski and Marchionni, 2016).

As with other cultural megaevent studies, the data captured from these triangulated qualitative methods uses illustrative extracts which are a narrow portion of the wider data collected (Campbell, 2011). However, all collected data was thematically analysed: Kings and Horrocks (2010) define themes as recurrent, distinctive features within the data which characterise particular experiences/perspectives deemed important to answering the research questions. Data is thematically grouped to refine content into key categories (Guest et al., 2014) - e.g., organising data by creative subsector for cross-comparison (Campbell, 2011).

May (2001: 154) states that ‘the continual interpretation and application of new knowledge by people in their social environments [is] an ongoing process to which the researcher is central’. Analysis sometimes took place during the data collection process, or whilst writing up field notes following the encounter. Eventually, all digital transcripts were printed and manually coded through a multi-stage process. Descriptive codes were firstly sought by highlighting interesting information within the transcript, before interpretive coding refined the first-stage codes into more specific groups to correlate with aspects of the foundational theories. Eventually, overarching codes were identified and used to develop the key analytical themes including (but not limited to) individual/group capacity building, civic pride/shame, organisational finance and SDV governance. Categorisation narrows down the analysis but must allow room to inductively reinterpret the data, if necessary (Silverman, 2006), especially as ideas continue to emerge.

Rapley (2001) argues that analysis should be seen as a collaborative conversation between the researcher and participant, seeking commonalities and contradictions within the data. However, analysis must also be sensitive to the subjectivities within the data, with the researcher aiming to balance the socio-political representations which emerge (Nowicki, 2017). Furthermore, the first-person perspective of autoethnographic field notes must be considered in relation to personal values and beliefs.

This is essential when analysing data from ‘inside’ a network (Labaree, 2002 in Bayfield, 2015; May, 2014), which is entrenched with personal investment or an organisational ethos. Therefore, perspectives drawn directly from the middleground network were foregrounded as the core examples within the analysis rather than prioritising the self, due to my dualistic role as researcher and network member. However, Bayfield (2015) argues that no data is an accurate representation of an event/encounter and is instead an account of an interaction/identification with cultural activity.

As a way to order the messy process of mapping creative landscape of Coventry, I applied a case study approach. This helped me to pick out key threads of data which had the most coherence and structure, to use as effective examples for discussing the overarching themes. While it may initially seem like a linear way of ordering data, it actually aligns effectively with the iterative process of ethnography: as more data is collected and analysed, case studies can be reviewed and re-examined in the context of emerging conversations and themes (Aberdeen, 2013).

Importantly, Yin (2009) states how a case study can platform data within a stand-alone section, whilst also intrinsically linking the work to wider theoretical discussions. This helps to add to the reader experience by constructing knowledge and addressing multiple perspectives on specific sites or encounters within one section (Stake, 1995). As will be seen later on in the analytical chapters of the thesis, I have applied the case study approach most often within Chapter 5 and 6, where data was most easily grouped together in relation to specific networks and places.

4.4.6 Research Delivery

In this section, I will discuss how the research questions were to be treated in the research delivery – including details around data capture, data analysis and the triangulated data. Ethnographic observations were used heavily to capture data for each of the three research questions: the experiences, conversations and reflective notes gathered through the observational process spoke equally to the social connections, physical landscape and impacts of wider processes in creative Coventry. The immersive nature of the observations, however, often physically situated me in a

place and encouraged further autoethnographic reflections around the appearance and usage of creative sites in the city.

Semi-structured interviews largely captured data around the people and processes ongoing in the middleground network, opening opportunities for self-reflective narratives to explain the social relationships ongoing across the city, as well as putting into words the often-intangible processes which were shaping the build-up period. However, interviews did also involve personal anecdotes around the usage of places and spaces in the city for cultural purposes, providing supporting context for my direct observational experiences of such sites.

Ephemera analysis accounted for data capture across all three research questions. Obtaining ethnographic observations supported this artefact-based data capture, as being on site often provided the opportunity to gather relevant materials. However, other ephemera were gifted or temporarily shared by participants. Furthermore, the digital nature of some materials – often social media posts, PDF documents or information hosted on websites – also blurred the boundaries between online and offline communities. Digital ephemera represented a different form of governance, social/professional networking and was considered as a place in itself to explore (Pickerill, 2013). Ephemera analysis was also critical for capturing anonymous resistance activities for the process-based research questions, where interviews would have been difficult to secure with anonymous sources.

Thematic analysis was used to analyse the data captured for each research question. As discussed in the previous section, three methods were triangulated to answer the three research questions. This pluralism helped to derive shared truths and knowledges from the subjective pool of qualitative information provided (Flick, 2004). Interviews produced audio data later transcribed into textual accounts; observations were written as notes but were supported by hundreds of pieces of visual data and documents from the ephemera data collection to support the observational reflections and narratives. As encouraged by Flick (2004), each form of data capture was recognised as individual in capturing different aspects of the UKCoC phenomenon.

For the data captured through interviews and note taking, the textual nature of the data required the construction of lingual codes to summarise recurring themes (Schmidt, 2004). Audio data from interviews was transcribed to generate a textual response to further feed into such analysis. For ephemera such as photographs, visual analysis was undertaken alongside thematic note taking to construct complementary textual data with which to summarise the themes emerging which could then be coded. Once all of the data was captured and printed, the material was colour coded and then manually divided in relation to which research question the data supported. Cross-cutting data was duplicated and used to support multiple questions, with sub-themes within this leading to the structuring of the three analytical chapters.

4.4.7. Ethical Considerations

As the objective of this research was to provide a voice for the middleground independent producers in Coventry and ensure they were heard in the UKCoC2021 build-up, ethical considerations were critical to consider due to the exposure of the middleground artists involved. Research should foremost avoid participants from being put at risk or harm (Flick, 2006) and such socially engaged qualitative research requires confidentiality and options for anonymity to ensure participants feel secure and protected (Longhurst, 2009). Each interviewee received a consent form outlining the research objectives and data usage (given in Appendix H). Consent forms do not ensure that participants are fully aware of the nature of the research and their participation in it (King and Horrocks, 2010), but they do highlight how the researcher has accounted for ethical considerations, such as the choice for anonymity, confidentiality agreements and the right for participants to withdraw their involvement or contributions (ibid.).

All participants said that they were happy for their name to be used within the research, and thus I respected their decision, and their names are mentioned throughout this thesis – this also aligns with the hope for this thesis to give voice to the middleground network, empowering their involvement by respecting their want to be identified and therefore positioning them as active players in the cultural development of Coventry. This was important as it adds to the authenticity of the thesis and invokes the transparency needed to fully account for the ‘messiness’.

The central role of the participant within interviewing makes informed consent a vital part of the process and it was made clear that participants could decline any questions that they did not feel comfortable answering. However, in ethnographic observations, formal approval requests are complicated – especially as this could influence the conversations and activities which take place (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007). Any quotes gathered from participants beyond interviews or publicly accessible materials were thus anonymised, protecting the identity of uninformed members of the public. Furthermore, following the guidance of GDPR and digital ethics, usernames and identifying features of social media users are not used in this research.

Ethical concerns also stem from the positionality of the researcher within qualitative research. Johnson et al. (2004, own emphasis) argue that the cultural sector is a setting *of* and *for* power, and thus cannot be untangled from power relations. The power held by me as the researcher unintentionally influences my view on the world (Longhurst, 2009), and how I translate my views to those involved. If participants express discriminatory views, the researcher must remain non-judgemental and avoid legitimising the views through the research (ibid.).

Acknowledging power imbalances in the knowledge production process is the responsibility of the researcher and not something to be dismissed. I became aware of these positionality concerns through my role as a participating network member (Flick, 2006: 220 in Bayfield, 2015), simultaneously acting as researcher, volunteer, and attendee and becoming involved with producing multiple forms of knowledge. All autoethnographic work was discussed as a co-produced form of knowledge due to the involvement of others through content and interactions (Besio, 2009).

4.4.8. Audit Trail

A more detailed insight into the research activity is provided through this audit trail. Data was collected from thirty-seven ethnographic observations, nine semi-structured interviews with twelve interviewees, and sixteen core voluntary days alongside one day a week of volunteering between March and September 2019. Pilot projects were undertaken to test the methods, including the ‘Emerging Art, Emerging Place’ event shown in Table 1 and the interview with Jess Pinson in Table 3 . The pilot studies

highlighted issues such as the need to audio record interviews rather than solely rely on notetaking, or the necessity of having a brief summary of my research project ready to explain to possible participants when attempting to recruit at events.

Appendix I, J, K and L provide further information on the ethnographic research undertaken:

- Appendix I shows a summary of the events and activities I attended for ethnographic observation in Coventry between 2018-2019
- Appendix J shows a summary of my core volunteering days with Photo Archive Miners and Positive Images Festival across 2019
- Appendix K shows a summary of the semi-structured interviews undertaken in Coventry during 2019
- Appendix L shows the interview guide I used for the semi-structured interviews

Internet-based/social media-based research and ephemera collection were too extensive to be recorded in this manner but involved over one-hundred documents and over two hundred images and screenshots.

Within the text, the primary and secondary data sources will be referenced in a number of ways:

- Interview data will be referenced using a brackets system that includes ([*First name of participant*], Interview, [*Date of interview*]) – for example, (Mark, Interview, 28/10/2019)
- Ethnographic data will be referenced using a bracket system that includes ([Last name of participant OR Anon where name is not known], FD extract, [date of observation]). FD refers here to ‘Field Diary’ – for example, (Anon, FD extract, 03/04/2019)
- Academic literature and online resources will be referenced using the standard Harvard referencing system

4.5. Methodology and Research Design: Summary

To conclude, this chapter detailed how I looked at, listened to, and felt the cultural ecosystem, becoming embedded in Coventry's middle- and underground creative communities (Cohendet et al., 2010) during its seismic governance and identity shift. The ethnographic toolkit I adopted moves beyond the framing of people and landscapes as simply 'tangible resources' within the creative city (Richards and Duif, 2019), whilst drawing meanings from intangible features and atmospheres. It prioritises the marginal, grassroots and less formalised voices within the build-up process of UKCoC21. Furthermore, from an evaluative perspective, it moves beyond the framing of UKCoC as an economically productive phenomena and instead focuses on the social and cultural impact.

This thesis highlights what can be documented when an embedded ethnographic approach is applied to UKCoC studies. By showcasing small stories (Lorimer, 2003), researchers can better our understanding of the lived experience of cultural producers and thus attend to the complexities of everyday life in a UKCoC. These personal accounts hope to highlight the observed realities and politics within cultural ecosystems during a UKCoC period, seeking the bigger narrative emerging from 'small' stories and highlighting the value of qualitative methodologies in cultural evaluation strategies.

Chapter 5 – ‘It’s Up to You’

People of Creative Coventry

5.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines how Coventry’s culture-led regeneration practices impacted the everyday lived experiences of middleground cultural producers in Coventry during 2019. It discusses the inclusion and exclusion of this community in UKCoC planning, tensions between the top-down and bottom-up cultural players in the city and, most importantly, it addresses how the middleground organisations and individuals navigate structural changes to the local cultural sector.

This chapter uses interview and participant observation data captured from and with conversations with middleground players in Coventry’s cultural ecosystem to mostly analyse the intermediaries who perform dual roles as both cultural producer and consumer (Adkins, 2011; Virani and Pratt, 2016). Whilst the main group which are primarily attended to throughout this chapter is the middleground independent cultural producers, the chapter is titled ‘people’ because the data collection often involved wider groups in the city – from local residents to the participants taking part in local cultural activity, as well as those individuals forming part of the upperground governance of the UKCoC title. In many ways these people help to ‘produce’ the UKCoC bid, but to cast them as ‘producers’ in line with the literature would be a disservice to not only their everydayness, but also to the skills, expertise and qualifications that active producers have obtained over their years of training. Therefore, the ‘people’ title reflects the multi-faceted connections across the middleground producer network.

As Markusen and Gadwa (2010) highlight, the involvement of local contexts and communities is crucial to sustaining a truly organic creative city. The UKCoC relies on the existing cultural sector as the foundation of existing artistic activity, as well as being a gateway into networks of local people and institutions – importantly, utilising insider knowledge and expertise to grow the city’s cultural offering. Rather than material resources, the relational elements of the network and ecosystem are

imperative (Comunian, 2012) and these will be discussed in this chapter by applying an ethnographic understanding as discussed in the previous chapter (*Methodological discussion* section).

During the bid, the Trust committed to a holistic programme that will ‘...encourage every citizen to be creative’ (Coventry 2021, 2018: 7). In broad terms, the original bid stated that the programme would be focused on the theme of ‘being human’, whereby ‘...everyone will have access to an artistic and cultural programme that speaks to them personally’ (ibid.). However, the simultaneous existence of the national and global vision for Coventry exists alongside more internalised local vision on the ground. It is the involvement of subjective, local voices which make place-based approaches matter – particularly the more marginal voices which can be lost in formal evaluations. It is also important to give space to critical voices, especially within longitudinal evaluations which track the evolution of these perspectives over time.

This chapter involves ethnographic data which not only includes the formal events of the UKCoC, but also the informal, every day and backstage activities of the middleground cultural network (Goffman, 1956; Cohendet et al., 2010). This will build a wider picture of the people of creative Coventry during 2019. The chapter will cover how Coventry’s cultural producers felt included and/or excluded during the build-up period, focusing on the protected characteristics of ethnicity, class and age.

5.2 Inclusion and Exclusion of Coventry’s Cultural Producers

5.2.1 Context

‘Our cultural identity is made up of the fusion of ideas, creativity and traditions that have long been part of the British identity together with those of people who have come from across the world and have become part of our culturally rich, diverse and multicultural society. Despite commitment to the inclusion of the whole population, diversity of the creative workforce, leadership and consumers remains a key challenge’

(Neelands et al., 2015: 14)

As the quote above from the Warwick Commission (2015) highlights, it has been well versed that the cultural industries are largely composed of people who are less ethnically diverse, more male and have higher socio-economic backgrounds than other parts of the economy (O'Brien and Oakley, 2015). The inequalities of social factors such as class, gender, ethnicity, disability, and geography are deeply embedded into the creative economy, where these categories intersect and reinforce further disparities. The exclusion of certain social groupings from cultural production and consumption has increasingly become the focus of research, as inequalities in the sector continue to persist.

As UKCoC2021 bids began developing in 2013, the Warwick Commission (Neelands et al., 2015) stated that the representation of women, ethnic minorities, and people with a disability in the cultural workforce had not significantly improved since 2010. This was further recognised in national cultural policy, with the ACE 2020-2030 strategy committing to strategies to tackle the “widespread socio-economic and geographical variances in levels of engagement with publicly funded culture”, aiming to utilise culture to create socially cohesive communities in which ethnicity, class and disability no longer present a barrier to participation in creativity (Arts Council England, 2019: 9).

Furthermore, Stevenson (2019: online) argues that the rhetoric around the importance of diversity in the cultural sector has ‘...tended to focus on diversifying the audiences for certain types of cultural activity rather than diversifying the types of cultural experience that are recognized, celebrated, and supported as being of value’. He argues that calls to diversify cultural production must reflect the right of individuals to undertake their practice as legitimate and culturally valuable forms, even if it is not valued in other social spheres. This expression of value indicates freedom and power for an individual, which can provide agency and in turn help to address social injustices whilst, importantly, avoiding the reinforcement of existing inequities and barriers to entry in the cultural world (ibid).

However, cities are arguably continuing to pursue creative regeneration strategies that emulate Florida’s (2002) narrow vision of the creative class, which even Florida now

recognises as an outlook that encourages practices which deepen societal inequalities (Florida, 2013, 2017). Peck (2005) argues that this ‘creative class’ focus of regeneration can result in the prescriptive prioritising of privileged actors rather than wider urban communities. This can produce cultural networks which do not allocate for what Straw (2002) sees as a vital attribute of a creative sector: multi-dimensionality, which can thus create more relatable content. Some academics argue that thinking of cities as being made up of fragmented social groups is not relevant or constructive (Buck et al., 2005), whereas others place importance on having the opportunity to platform and celebrate differences within a community (Courage, 2017).

Decisionmakers must move beyond the emphasis on young, highly educated cultural consumers and producers to instead celebrate a ‘melting pot’ of cultural values which allows creativity to be defined by different groups (Markusen and Gadwa, 2010). Thus, cultural producers from various social groups in Coventry play a crucial role by showcasing cultural practices which are representative of the heterogeneity of the city’s residents. It also touches upon the repeated narrative within UKCoC2021 promotional material of how the programme would showcase Coventry’s ‘DNA’ and the spirit of the people who live there, building on the notion of a city having unique genetics within vision-making strategies (Richards and Duif (2019: 71). This chapter will hear ‘who the city is’ from communities on the ground.



**Plate 6. An excerpt from the Summary Bid document
(Source: Coventry City of Culture Trust)**

At events during the build-up period, the Trust claimed that Hull UKCoC2017 ‘...didn’t speak to the nation’ (Bhathena, FD extract, 28/05/2019) in terms of its diversity or spatial focus. Coventry UKCoC2021 was arguably framed as an opportunity to provide an alternative and anti-hierarchical system and a space for previously marginalised producers (Milestone, 2015). By legitimising and celebrating cultural practices that are largely alienated from dominant narratives - such as vernacular activities or practices from minority groups - there could be more opportunities to diversify UKCoC2021 activity with events that represent a wider variety of producers. However, publicly committing to creating change within specific sociocultural groups comes with caution, particularly regarding the terminology being applied. There is a danger for broad terms to be interpreted as reductive, tokenistic, and not attentive to the separate personalities and communities that exist within each of these specific social subcategories (Courage, 2019).

5.2.2 UKCoC2021: Co-Production and Diversity Commitments

The term co-production emerged in the 1970’s, with Ostrom and Ostrom (1978) arguing that when users are not engaged in the production of a service, services begin to deteriorate, and poor value is attached. The co-production – or co-creation (Gross and Wilson, 2017) - of cultural programmes and services is an interactive process which, in theory, allows for different social and/or cultural practices and experiences (Palumbo and Trocciola, 2015) to be incorporated into the development of a more relatable and usable cultural output. Gross and Wilson (2017) see this as essential to the development of democratic cultural ecosystems. However, others argue that co-production frameworks are often aspirational rather than successful and are at danger of reinforcing the unequal power divisions between producers and users, which halts any possibility of empowerment or societal transformation (Turnhout et al., 2020).

Co-production was central to the Coventry UKCoC2021 bid. The CCoCT wanted local communities at the forefront of the decision-making process through ‘...community-led creative programming reflecting the diversity, youth and aspiration of the city’ (Coventry 2021, 2018: 5). This spoke to the aims of increasing the representation and involvement of marginalised communities with UKCoC activities, reflecting nationwide discussions about the lack of diversity in the arts and cultural sectors (ACE,

2019; Brook et al, 2018; Brook et al., 2020). This strategy adopts the idea that the scale and density of urban spaces means diverse groups come into contact and opportunities arise for mutual and positive cultural exchange (Courage, 2017).

The UKCoC2021 programme was positioned as focusing on social issues and partnerships, evolving traditional perceptions of cultural programming as primarily artistic events. However, the involvement of artists from within and beyond Coventry was still expected, as summarised by Jacob Gough (Production Director, CCoCT) during a panel discussion on flagship cultural regeneration:

“We will be community led, rather than artist led. But of course, we will value the role that artists can play. We are inviting them to bring their great creativity to find creative solutions, help tell our stories, empower our citizens and create action”

(Gough, FD extract, 18/09/2019)

As part of this commitment to community-led programming, the CCoCT’s Caring City producing team collaborated with four local organisations working specifically on social inequalities: Coventry Refugee and Migrant Centre (‘New Communities and Social Inclusion’ focus); Positive Youth Foundation (‘Vulnerable Young People and Exploitation’ focus); Grapevine (‘Mental Health, Isolation and Social Prescribing’ focus); and Central England Law Centre (‘Homelessness and Poverty’ focus). Working with groups tackling structural social, economic and cultural inequalities in Coventry should be celebrated for its commitment to tackling place-based issues, especially in a city where 18.5% of residents are living in the 10% most deprived wards in England (Coventry City Council, no date).

The broader socially engaged placemaking approach foregrounds local dialogue and involvement (Courage, 2017) – a process which lies at the heart of co-production/co-creation. Bhathena said programming would be ‘curated and led’ by Coventry residents, as “...[the Trust] don’t want to come in and say, “OK, we’re going to do this and you’re all going to come in and help me do it”” (Bhathena, FD extract, 22/02/2019). As is commonplace within contemporary cultural policy, the local cultural sector is increasingly integrated into administrative and decision-making

networks in the city (O'Brien, 2011). Furthermore, integrating local sectors into decision-making roles disperses agency outside the core governing structure.

Many conversations were had regarding the Trust's commitment to diversity, as captured in the quote below:

“[We are] thinking about the diversity of the city, all the different communities that live here, all the different perspectives and cultural offerings that all those different people can offer to a city of culture. And how do we embrace that?”

(Bhathena, FD extract, 22/02/2019)

The Trust used the term diversity ‘in its broadest sense’ (Coventry 2021, 2018: 9), referring to protected social characteristics like age, gender, ethnicity, accessibility, and sexuality. In this city of cultures, there was commitment to further involve people of colour in UKCoC2021 – or ‘British, Asian and Minority Ethnic communities’, as used in the official documentations (ibid.). It was said that ‘...the cultures of diverse communities in the UK go unheard – [UKCoC2021] can change that’ (Coventry 2021, 2017: 4). Another focus was young people - as Coventry's population is seven to eight years younger than the national average, there was the desire to capture the “attitude of youthfulness” (Bhathena, FD extract, 22/02/2019). There were also references to the need to ‘promote [Coventry's] working-class roots’ and ‘everyday heroes’, defined as the parents, the homeless, and those who feed the hungry (Gough, FD extract, 18/09/2019). Finally, in the official bid, subcultural Coventry was highlighted as a community of interest, citing Lady Godiva, George Eliot and the 2Tone movement as key examples.

Co-creating a programme with marginalised groups in a place-based cultural development strategy provides the advantage of connecting with local networks and communities, which should in theory provide the opportunity to utilise shared cultures and knowledge to implement successful local co-operation (Gross and Wilson, 2017) . However, collaborations with local players can be impacted by the tendency for top-down stakeholders to prioritise their own agendas, such as facilitating non-local partnerships or attracting tourists at the expense of on-the-

ground groups (Cohendet et al., 2010). This can weaken the ties with local communities, and even reduce the appeal for groups to be involved in events.

Using primary and secondary data, the rest of this chapter reflects on narratives collected from an array of producers and representatives within Coventry's cultural sector and community groups to illustrate individual and collective feelings about how represented and involved local players had felt in the planning and delivery of UKCoC2021 throughout the build-up period. This chapter will then address the wider topic of diversity by focusing on three social categories which were repeatedly mentioned by the CCoCT: ethnicity, age and class. While I firmly believe in the need for intersectional thinking, the division of these sections is intentional and aims to reflect the ways in which specific social characteristics were divided into separate objectives within official UKCoC bid documentation. Quotes have been selected where social categories were implicitly and explicitly discussed.

5.3 Ethnicity

5.3.1 Context

Cities are sites of dynamic interplay between different ethnic groups (Keith, 2005), with Coventry having a rich range of cultures with over 100 languages spoken. Census data from 2011 stated that the population is 66.6% White British, compared to an average of 79.2% in the West Midlands and 79.8% nationwide (Coventry City Council, no date). The second largest ethnic background in the city is Asian, at 16.3% of the population (ibid.). Reflecting international migration throughout the last century, 21% of Coventry's residents were born outside of the UK (Coventry City Council and Coventry Refugee and Migrant Centre, 2018). This number has increased due to international students, refugees and migrants settling recently, securing Coventry's identity as a home for new communities entering the UK. These figures informed local cultural policy, with the Coventry Cultural Strategy stating:

‘It is also vital that BAME communities are fully represented at all levels in cultural organisations and that the city strives to

identify, develop and support potential BAME artists, creatives
and organisations’

(Coventry City Council, 2015: online)

Following the UKCoC win, the CCoCT committed to increasing audiences of colour by 20% and the further representation of BAME individuals on the Trust’s panels and boards (Coventry 2021, 2018). However, cultural *producers* of colour are not directly mentioned by the CCoCT aside from a general reference to ‘under-represented groups’ being included in the delivery of the programme. This was, for me, a glaring omission in the official cultural policy documentation, as less than 5% of workers in the UK’s cultural and creative industries are from a BAME background (Brook et al., 2020).

The arts are inherently exclusionary and hierarchical and can carry an elitist image which can deter minority communities (Jermyn and Desai, 2002), due to entrenched struggles about whose culture holds value. As O’Brien and Oakley (2015) argue, racial and ethnic inequalities in British society are highlighted by the cultural products/events which are deemed as reflective of wider societal value. Hence, this inherently carries elements of racial inequalities. Hesmondhalgh and Saha (2013) add that cultural production cannot be adequately understood without taking account of race, ethnicity, and their relation to oppression. As evaluation agendas become driven by business and managerial concerns, there is a danger that uncomfortable reflections about racialization may become overlooked (ibid.).

And so, narratives emerging in the UKCoC21 build-up regard feelings of exclusion and rejection from the activities. As the following discussions will show, some of the more critical opinions emerged from communities of colour. Tension was evident between some minority communities and the overarching sense of white British entitlement. There was discontent about the under-representation of Coventry’s ethnic communities in official positions and project commissions. However, some people discussed the opportunities provided by UKCoC2021 to educate others on the multicultural landscape and the ways that ethnic diversity has shaped Coventry’s sense of place.

During 2019, some CCoCT-led projects focused on representing minoritised communities, such as the Foleshill Mile Map co-created with Asian community groups to celebrate ‘one of the most vibrant and multicultural roads in Coventry’ (Coventry 2021, 2019) (see Plate 7). The examples in my research, however, were collected from ethnographies with independent arts organisations producing project-based cultural work, and local community groups overseeing grassroot and vernacular creative practices.



Plate 7. The Foleshill Mile Map (Source: Coventry 2021)

This data adds to discussions on whether cultural and creatives industries fail to create adequate platforms for the experiences, concerns and artistic work of racialized communities (Hesmondhalgh and Saha, 2013). It attends to voices on-the-ground which may be undocumented by official records, using the following examples: a private meeting with the CCoCT and the Coventry Caribbean Association (CCA) to discuss inclusion and engagement of Black communities; public meetings with the City Voices writing group; conversations from ArtSpace tenants about selection processes for a funded trip to the Venice Biennale; and interactions with Positive Images

Festival, a long-term grassroots festival celebrating Coventry's diversity. Each of these will now be looked at in turn.

5.3.2 Case Study A: Coventry Caribbean Association (CCA)

The Coventry Caribbean Association (CCA) arranged a private meeting at the Coventry West Indian Community Centre & Social Club on May 28th, 2019, inviting the CCoCT to meet with individuals and organisations from African Caribbean communities to discuss UKCoC projects and the barriers to engagement. Established in 1977 and managed by a voluntary committee (CWICC, no date), the Centre hosts community events, youth clubs, training sessions and dancehall nights, supporting cultural production and consumption for Caribbean communities in Coventry.

I was forwarded the details of the event and was granted permission to attend by an elder from the CCA. This meeting was organised after individuals expressed a sense of exclusion from UKCoC planning, despite their involvement with consultations in 2016 and 2017. 25 people attended, with the majority of attendees from a Black or African Caribbean background. Representatives from the CCoCT joined the CCA Chairman, with Bhathena presenting an update of the work undertaken since the UKCoC win. The presentation followed the typical UKCoC2021 script: the DNA of Coventry and the spirit of its people were cited as important elements of the programme, with a focus on community engagement and a large events programme.

The attendees heard that the spotlight on Coventry was an opportunity to showcase cultural, generational and ability diversities. Bhathena noted, "What was missing [in Hull] was a real engagement with people...how do we work better together?" (Bhathena, FD extract, 28/05/2019). Official evaluations of Hull UKCoC2017 highlighted the need for more diverse project delivery teams and commissioned artists in future UKCoC's. Consultancy reports on UKCoC2017 stated that engagement with marginal audiences "could be improved" (University of Hull and Regeneris, 2018), with Hull having more success with representing disability and LGBT issues than producing work from local minoritised ethnic communities. This laid the foundations for UKCoC2021's diversity commitment.

Bhathena mentioned that 33% of the team were from a BAME background, which led to a discussion about how many Black people were on the CCoCT's board. The team could not recall, and a colleague answered six. This did not reflect the individuals on the Trustee Board at the time of writing, when only two board members from an Asian background were listed (Charity Commission for England and Wales, no date). The meeting provided the opportunity for the community to emphasise the lack of top-down representation. This builds on Brooks et al. (2020), whose research into inequalities in cultural workforces shows that some people of colour feel that they have been given opportunities to 'fill gaps in the market', rather than primarily due to their creative talents (O'Brien, 2020).

Another comment about funding bodies supported by the Trust highlighted the 'very white' boards of trustees and directors (Anon, FD extract, 28/05/2019), using the Heart of England Community Foundation (HoECF) who were responsible for the Road to 2021 build-up funding as an example. A high number of the proposals for this fund were rejected because of the oversaturation of applicants. Due to the affiliation between the Trust and HoECF, rejections were arguably being inferred as a direct decision by CCoCT officials to not fund certain cultural events, including proposals from Black and African Caribbean communities in the city. This added to the general sense of exclusion from official planning.

An attendee then asked, "What is your definition of Coventry as a UKCoC? Because Londonderry and Hull were not very cultural" (Anon, FD extract, 28/05/2019). This implicitly associates the notion of a 'cultural place' with an ethnically diverse population. White populations had dominated in the previous winning cities, shown through 2011 census data: the white ethnic population of Londonderry was recorded to be 98.11% in 2015 (NISRA, 2015), and in Hull, the population was recorded to be 89.7% White British (Kingston upon Hull Data Observatory, no date). Bhathena paused before replying, "Everything we're doing in this city is cultural. Personally, I don't think multiculturalism is a thing", suggesting instead that she thinks of the "...diversity of different people" (Bhathena, FD extract, 28/05/2019). This answer did not satisfy the attendee, who replied with his own definition of culture as others clapped as he spoke. He said:

“The history of Coventry is the bombing, the Blitz, the war. Then, they invited people like my parents, and lots of other people’s parents in this room, from the Commonwealth to help rebuild and restart this county. This year is the 71st anniversary of the Windrush, and I am really disappointed with Coventry City Council and their lack of support of events to celebrate this”

(Anon, FD extract, 28/05/2019)

This impassioned speech touched on local and national narratives of Commonwealth identity in the UK. Claims that the local authorities were not celebrating minority narratives reinforced the argument that the ethnic domination of whiteness in British culture is reflected in state funding, leading to overarching cultural narratives having little relevance or connection to communities of colour (O’Brien and Oakley, 2015). What is culturally valuable for one ethnic community can be rejected or marginalised by others, with concern on-the-ground that the UKCoC programming would contribute to this process.

Nostalgic discussions of diversity were discussed by white residents at other events. During a City Voices creative writing workshop, held by Theatre Absolute in partnership with the Trust, Coventry-based writers met at locations around the city for a two-hour storytelling workshop, aimed at uncovering the experiences of the diverse communities of Coventry. The workshop was introduced as a way of seeking ‘authentic voices’ to help create a grassroots programme, as Bhathena was not from Coventry (FD extract, 23/04/2019). The workshops were free, with conversational English required but with further support provisions available. I attended a workshop in April 2019 alongside 11 participants who were mostly white British.

After writing and prose activities, the session concluded by asking us to reflect on our thoughts on what the culture of Coventry is and how we would like this to be explored during UKCoC2021. Two elderly women spoke about their migration to the city from Cardiff and Ireland: the woman from Cardiff said she “wasn’t fazed” about the ethnic diversity of Coventry’s post-war population, as she had grown up alongside Black communities (Anon, FD extract, 23/04/2019). The other woman, however, said she remembers her ‘shock’ when students from Uganda and Kenya joined her school in

Coventry (Anon, FD extract, 23/04/2019). Both women remembered signs saying ‘No Blacks, no dogs, no Irish’ in houses around the city, and agreed that their parents had held racist views and used derogatory language.

The women agreed that they wanted to read the perspectives of younger people who had grown up in Coventry more recently, to understand the generational experiences of growing up in a diverse city. This exemplified to me how these white participants felt that they did not currently access minority cultural representations, suggesting that the majority of their cultural consumption was representative of their own experiences.

However, the discussions at the CCA meeting highlight just how difficult it felt for diverse communities to get support for their cultural production. An example used was the Coventry Caribbean Festival: it had relied on decreasing amounts of external funding (including local authority grants) before self-funding and eventually ending after 24 years. The dedication of the community who had continued to produce and manage the event using their own resources was applauded, with an audience member saying:

“Our people give up their time and money to help create these events for our African and Caribbean communities and Coventry City Council do not do enough for our community, we don’t feel like we get supported. Irish and Asian communities still hold their events despite these funding cuts, but we’re put to the background”

(Anon, FD extract, 28/05/2019)

Here, other minority ethnic groups are highlighted to argue that more support was provided for non-Black communities. Minority cultural production can be reduced by official narratives to ‘niche’ interests, further confirming the marginalisation of individuals and groups and adding to the distance between state-led culture and BAME lives (Saha, 2015; Appignanesi, 2010; Malik, 2013). The Coventry Caribbean Festival exemplifies the difficulty for so-called ‘niche’ events to survive, especially alongside larger, financially supported events such as Godiva Festival. This can create

hostility, with the CCA audience stating that a lack of Black representation at Godiva Festival meant less of the community attended, cultivating a collective feeling of direct exclusion from events.

The CCA example shows how existing tensions can create hostility when top-down players attempt to (re-)establish connections with communities, which is especially difficult when previous partnerships have been damaged. Bhathena responded by discussing her positionality as a member of the South Asian community to express her awareness of inequalities within governing bodies. This was poignant as similar frustrations had been aired within South Asian communities in Coventry, who also often hold self-funded events. Bhathena suggested that the city needed to “...come together to define what culture can look like”, with the audience member replying, “That is exactly what I’d like to hear” (FD extract, 28/05/2019).

One attendee wanted to be part of the UKCoC activities but said, “We’ve been kept in the dark and pushed aside” (Anon, FD extract, 28/05/2019). Other audience members aired their grievances, specifically in relation to their Black identity. Here is a selection those comments:

“You’ll see Black faces...it’s always the problem. By the time they realise we’re not the problem, we’re pushed to the side again”

“When Black people are involved in it, you know it’s something about crime or something about ‘let’s get bidding’”

“You’re a culture club that’s all sticking together”

“People like us were helping you to win the bid. Now, we can volunteer as leaders, but why don’t we get paid? It’s freebies from the Black community”

“There’s history on your doorstep but it’s [only] great for the award”

(FD extracts, 28/05/2019)

These responses highlight the deeply embedded feelings of exclusion experienced by the Caribbean community of Coventry. The Trust apologised for not being ‘visible’, which further highlights the crucial need for decisionmakers to connect with marginalised communities as early as possible into UKCoC build-up periods. The highly emotional exchanges at this meeting show how previous inaction, combined with a systemically unequal landscape for cultural producers of colour, has led to detrimental impacts on the grassroots/top-down relationship.

5.3.3 Case Study B: Venice Biennale

Within the F13 network, independent artists also found themselves complicit in the lack of ethnic diversity in local cultural production. Interviewees sometimes reflected upon their own ethnic identities, yet despite my efforts to push them onwards, these discussions were infrequent in semi-structured discussions. Participants mostly orientated the conversation towards specific organisational activity and projects.

However, a small number of non-interview conversations directly acknowledged the lack of ethnic representation in the F13 cultural network. The most pertinent example was a discussion that took place in Artspace in July 2019. Local cultural producers had the opportunity to be invited on an international trip to the Venice Biennale, organised and expensed by the CCoCT. This visit was for visual artists to draw inspiration from one of the most globally iconic events in their sector, with local musicians similarly visiting South by South West Festival. The following extract documents a discussion on the selection process for the Venice trip after Artspace representatives were asked to submit a list of suggested attendees for consideration. A draft list was compiled, and this conversation ensued:

1: “I’m really not happy with the diversity here”

2: “It’s a dreadful pool, but that’s what we have to work with unfortunately”

1: [sighs, looks at the list] “If this isn’t an opportunity to make a tiny change, then what is? Chenine isn’t going to be happy. [Black artist] could be put on this list, but [they’ve] already been given so many jobs to do – [they’ve] said before, ‘Because I’m a Black artist, I feel more is expected from me’ [shaking head]”

(Anon, FD extract, 14/03/2019)

Bottom-up players had been given a decision-making role but were struggling with meeting the diversity step changes set out by the CCoCT. Despite their base in an ethnically diverse city, this particular network was not representative of minority ethnic artists. There was concern about submitting a list of people who were from similar socioeconomic backgrounds as this would not deliver the CCoCT’s vision for a diverse UKCoC. A genuine sense of frustration could be heard during this conversation and hopes were expressed that the UKCoC competition would lead to a more diverse arts community.

Moreover, a specific artist is feeling pressured by the amount of work directed to them, which they felt was due to their positionality as a Black cultural producer. The emotional and mental strain of marginalised artists is exemplified, who may feel inundated with requests as the cultural governors adopt practices hoping to address inequalities. This can lead to negative impacts such as fatigue and burn out for the minority ethnic artists within the small cultural ecosystem. In their research into inequality in the cultural industries, Brook et al. (2020) found that some artists feel that they are given opportunities to discuss their race rather than to showcase their creative talents, with one artist describing their experience as an artist of colour as ‘...a continuing battle to be acknowledged for the quality of the work that we do’ (O’Brien, 2020).

Later in the conversation about the Biennale, it was highlighted that the list mainly consisted of local producers in more senior curatorial positions, with diversity within this even smaller pool being described as ‘particularly difficult’ (Anon, FD extract, 14/03/2019). This observation acknowledges that positions further up the

professional hierarchy, with higher levels of power and authority, are even less diverse than the (already limited) wider sector. This claim is supported by Brook et al. (2018) who found that senior and managerial positions in the creative industries are likely to be less diverse. Furthermore, when researching major museums, Davies et al. (2015) found that curators and exhibition staff in the related cultural sector of museums and galleries appear to be significantly less diverse - with many of the organisations attributing this exclusivity to a low number of applicants for these specialist roles coming from diverse backgrounds.

There is a danger for selections like the Venice visit and other cultural inclusion activities to be perceived as tokenistic (Hylton, 2007). Whilst these invitations can provide well-meaning and valuable opportunities for marginalised producers within the sector, deliberations over who to involve in key UKCoC activities highlight the issues with these possibly turning into box ticking exercises – reflected here by artists trying to decide who should be given the opportunity to represent Coventry whilst showing clear anxiety about how the top-down decision makers will react to the list of names. However, this also justifies the possibility for UKCoC to have a positive impact on the sector if the remaining time following 2019 built on these conversations constructively.

5.3.4 Case Study C: Positive Images Festival

The final example explores a longstanding cultural event in Coventry. Positive Images Festival (PIF) defines itself as a festival to ‘celebrate Coventry’s heritage, traditions and diversity’ (PIF, no date), with images from the festival shown below in Plate 8 and 9. The festival hosts annual events and activities for two weeks each summer, including: a multicultural fayre showcasing local community groups; a community fayre highlighting the work of local organisations and charities; and a communal Big Lunch event in a park.

Before creating PIF, the founders had worked together at Central Library. In 1995, they organised the first Coventry Multicultural Festival: a one-day event with free activities including painting, dancing, music and performances, and a performance

from the now renowned Birmingham-born poet Benjamin Zephaniah. Celebrating its twenty-fifth anniversary in 2019, the festival is still run entirely by volunteers and has limited income sources. However, it has gained national recognition for its services to the city and received a Queen's Award for Voluntary Service in 2016.

PIF highlights a critical mass of community and cultural producers arising from a co-presence of diverse communities, and the subsequent interactions of these webs of relations (Amin and Graham, 1997). It documents activity from within a long-term festival of diversity in Coventry, as it now functions alongside a larger UKCoC programme adopting similar values. What could decisionmakers learn from the experiences of this local grassroots festival?

PIF attends to themes covered in the CoC2021 bid: diversity, migration, 'meet the neighbours', and 'this is for you' (Coventry 2021, 2017). The festival is co-created with local organisations and cultural groups, with the majority of the PIF programme hosted in vernacular locations, such as the library and community centres. Events focus on introducing people to different cultures than their own, alongside wider health and wellbeing activities. During 2019, the festival received a small amount of CCoCT funding to host workshops alongside its typical core programme.



Plate 8. Images taken at the Positive Images Festival Multicultural Craft and Food Fair 2018, held in Coventry City Centre (Source: Positive Images Festival)



Plate 9. Image taken at the Positive Images Festival Multicultural Craft and Food Fair 2018, held in Coventry City Centre (Source: Positive Images Festival)

Monthly meetings saw around thirty people gathering at Coventry's Central Library to plan the PIF programme. I attended meetings between February and May 2019 and documented festival activity during the summer, alongside undertaking voluntary work for the committee including website updates, promotional material design and researching funding avenues. I also undertook one interview with Mehru, co-founder of the festival, who discussed its history and the various obstacles and opportunities over the years.

The chaired meetings had a formal feel with minutes and announcements. However, the longevity of the festival and the recurring input from local cultural community groups fostered a friendly, warm atmosphere, as noted in the following extract from the first meeting of 2019:

‘The location of the meeting in the city centre’s public library only adds to the sense of community, with local services also sharing the space: we are often amongst mother and baby singing groups or greeted by a sexual health stand in the main reception area. Then, as the attendees begin to arrive, there is a warm welcome

and enthusiastic greeting to start each session. Just before the first Positive Images meeting of 2019, two attendees saw each other and embraced, with the man saying, ‘It’s my family!’

(FD extract, 28/01/2019)

As Markusen and Gadwa (2010) highlight, it is these organically formed cultural practices and the involvement of engaged local communities that is crucial to sustain the functioning of a truly creative city. The diversity of sites, subjects and fragments that coincide and collaborate during PIF meetings can facilitate a more multi-dimensional approach to cultural production, rather than imposing a monolithic narrative of what a ‘creative’ city should deliver (Shields, 1995).

This was highlighted during my task of designing a promotional poster. Mehru presented a folder of pamphlets and other promotional ephemera from over 25 years. Many of these materials were designed by volunteers, often arts students based at Coventry University. One example showed a design for the 20th anniversary event: Mehru described how the initial design incorporated photographs of people from different cultural backgrounds, but she declined the design as some followers of Islamic faith may believe that image-making and photography is prohibited. The student created a second design including pictograms of drums, but when the design was shown at the following planning meeting, an individual from an African background argued that this made the festival look as if it were exclusively for Black communities. The designer settled on a festival mask design in order to be inclusive and satisfy multiple communities.

Similar conversations occurred when I submitted my own poster design. I used the symbolic Coventry Cathedral as a locally iconic central image, surrounded by world flags representing many different countries. Mehru stated that the use of the cathedral was ‘exclusive’ and not faith sensitive: rather, flowers and natural images were suggested as “neutral [images] that can be used by all cultures” (Mehru, FD extract, 02/05/2019). Ethnic identities are grounded in ordinary and everyday symbols, experiences and encounters (Hesmondhalgh and Saha, 2013), as much as they are in festivals and spectacle. This design process reflected the overall commitment to

diversity, requiring a highly sensitive approach in order to be inclusive of different perspectives. Decision-making practices like this may seem minor, but inclusive cultural production recognises the importance of reflecting wider communities so they too can find agency through cultural. It also taught me to question my own unconscious biases and sense of Coventry in the process.



Plate 10. Designs for the Positive Images Festival poster. Left: Original design, Right: Final design. (Source: own image)

Furthermore, PIF meetings provided informal opportunities for different cultural communities to share experiences. These were the most ethnically diverse gatherings I documented throughout the research, with newcomers welcomed alongside longstanding members of the group. Attendees exchanged their own cultural content whilst consuming and learning from the contributions of others. One meeting saw a white, middle-class group of park stewards from an affluent area of the city request a donation of board games for a ‘Retro Sports Day’, to ensure there were options for attendees who may be immobile. This led to an impassioned conversation around the room about the board games that had been most popular in their own home country, turning a planning meeting into a space to share stories of international culture.

The familiarity and intimacy of the group also allowed this space of exchange to platform frustrations about the wider cultural sector in the city. One attendee used the meeting as an opportunity to discuss the CCoCT's first 'Meet the Funders' event, expressing her feelings that the event had been biased towards certain cultural projects: specifically, large events with a history of secure funding, and events from white cultural producers in the city. The Meet the Funders event was referred to as 'Dragons Den', and there was annoyance that it had been mostly advertised on Twitter when 'not all people look at social media'. She ended by saying, "There are Black people in the city...who feel completely excluded from the funding" (Anon, FD extract, 02/05/2019). Another attendee supported this opinion and said, "Slavery is not the only history that Black people have... Black people brought the sunshine into a very cold climate after the war. And others don't remember that Black culture is not necessarily just for Black people" (Anon, FD extract, 02/05/2019). She then thanked the PIF committee for being the only festival to support her as a migrant performer when she first arrived in Coventry.

The PIF committee shared tips about how to ensure proposals engaged with the specific aims of funding bodies to ensure a higher likelihood of funding success. Whilst the committee did not actively address the feelings of exclusion, the meeting had provided a space for members of local community groups to air their concerns and receive support from other attendees, empowering their voices within this small-scale network of cultural producers.

PIF's commitment to diversity is also reflected in its governance, including a number of name changes over the last decade. In our interview, Mehru spoke about how in 2012, the festival was renamed from the Coventry Multicultural Festival to 'Celebrating Coventry's Diversity' after feedback expressed that the festival was 'too focused' on minority communities rather than the 'host' community (Mehru, FD extract, 09/04/2019). Mehru stated that using the word 'diversity' included multiple faiths, ethnicities and backgrounds, whilst also being inclusive of any impairments. This change arguably aligns with wider cultural policy shifts: Malik (2013) identified a change in the language used to promote the work of ethnic minorities in the cultural industries from an approach originally rooted in the term multiculturalism, to the

usage of ‘cultural diversity’ as a way to cover a broader, and less culturally specific, policy.

Malik (ibid.) also argues that the recent shifts in language apply the term ‘creative diversity’, allowing diversity to be uncoupled with the experience of ethnic and racial difference and reconceptualising the term as an economic quality allowing innovation, originality, and quality in cultural production. Thus, it becomes engulfed by neoliberal terminology. Foregrounding the term culture over creativity may allow a politics of representation to be empowered, allowing processes of exclusion, discrimination, and social justice to be acknowledged. This can also be noted in the UKCoC title itself – a programme that has traditionally captured stereotypically creative city strategies through the platforming of the culture of a place to highlight sociocultural individuality.

Overall, PIF explicitly incorporates local people from different backgrounds into Coventry’s wider cultural narrative. The PIF team focus on local culture with transnational origins, reflecting upon Coventry’s history as a refuge for migrants and combines both the local and global. Its modest outputs serve the local community rather than seeking recognition or profit, and its voluntary practices showcase the extraordinary input of ordinary citizens. As the values of the festival are incorporated into a large-scale UKCoC programme, decisionmakers could learn from this grassroots group to understand the ways in which diversity has successfully been celebrated and performed on a citywide stage for 25 years.

The festival values diversity and intersectionality, attempting to cater for multiple sociocultural backgrounds and abilities. However, the aged population included in the planning of the festival reflects an element of the cultural ecosystem that the CCoCT have foregrounded as a key step change: the inclusion of a more youthful population of cultural producers in Coventry, which will be discussed in the following section.

5.3.5 Ethnicity: Summary

This section identifies how more action was needed about feelings of ethnic discrimination and exclusion within the local cultural sector during the build-up to UKCoC2021. In the creative city, minority cultural production can be inaccurately defined as ‘niche’ in the face of more commercially palatable activities which are seen to have more appeal to the typical Floridian creative class, which in turn further marginalises communities already categorised as having limited engagement in state-led cultural activity (Florida, 2004; Saha, 2015; Appignanesi, 2010; Malik, 2013).

Invites from the CCoCT and representatives from cultural networks in Coventry seem genuine in their bid to enlist practices that overcome embedded race inequalities within their sector, but embedded feelings of hostility can complicate relations with both existing and emerging governing bodies in the city. For some artists of colour, there are assumptions that diversity funding was not being used to facilitate real partnerships, which can create a hostile working environment (Davies et al., 2015).

As Markusen and Gadwa (2010) argue, the engagement and empowerment of local communities helps to facilitate a sense of authentic creativity in a place – as seen through the legacy of the Coventry Caribbean Festival and the ongoing work of the Positive Images Festival. Importantly, these events also weave everyday cultural practices which can oftentimes be overlooked into cultural production, ensuring that multi-dimensional perspectives are considered in events which are at danger of becoming monolithic in the modern creative city (Shields, 1995).

Conversations throughout 2019 alluded that despite the UKCoC2021 diversity objectives, to some individuals on the ground, it felt like there was a continued prioritisation of White British culture which would lead to irrelevant cultural narratives for communities of colour (O’Brien and Oakley, 2015). In relation to employment and those leading on cultural production in the city, Coventry showed similar trends to the UK-wide findings of Brook et al. (2018), with limited diversity within the cultural production sector and even more limited diversity the higher up the professional ladder. This may lead to further feelings of detachment from UKCoC narratives, but also posed the risk of burn out for those minoritised artists who were overburdened (Brook et al., 2020) – as reflected in the Venice Biennale example.

Conversations around inclusion and ethnic representation could arguably have been implemented much sooner than eighteen months into the build-up period to avoid the emotional fatigue that delayed communication can cause. As reflected upon by the majority of participants *and* the Trust itself, the lack of communication throughout the first 18 months may have unintentionally created more tensions with local cultural producers, as invitations for work (both paid and unpaid) are arriving later than expected during the UKCoC build-up period. This only exacerbates a sense of disconnection and detachment from official planning and decision-making for cultural producers on the ground.

While UKCoC2021 and the broader cultural strategy claim seemingly genuine commitments to supporting minority groups in local activities (and participants of this research have since gone on to receive financial support from the CCoCT during 2020 and 2021), the data shows that the decision makers needed to build relationships, capacity and funding opportunities as early as the bidding process to ensure that these communities feel genuinely connected to the co-production process by the time of the build-up.

5.4 Age

5.4.1 Context

Since the inaugural title held by Londonderry in 2013, young people have been framed as ‘cultural assets’ and the ‘ultimate beneficiaries’ of UKCoC programming (Boland et al, 2017). Similarities have been drawn with ECoC activity, where programmes centred on youth engagement and participation have become equally commonplace (Garcia and Cox, 2013): Griffiths (2006) found that the bids submitted by Bristol, Cardiff, and Liverpool for the ECoC 2008 competition saw each place identify themselves as a ‘young city’. This arguably became one of the most celebrated features of the so-called ‘Liverpool model’ (Cox and O’Brien, 2012) and has since been heavily adopted into UKCoC bids; for example, early bid documents claimed that the 2021 programme would ‘...surface the undercurrent of youth culture’ in Coventry (Coventry 2021, 2018: 7).

Allen and Hollingworth (2013) argue that young people are seen to personify key attributes that cultural cities aim to nurture: creativity and talent. There are a number of valuable experiences associated with cultural engagement, such as learning key socialisation skills and peer engagement (Boland et al., 2018). These can allow young people to interact with different perspectives, by producing and consuming cultural content which can influence their individual worldviews (Brake, 2013).

However, alongside the social values placed on the involvement of youthful audiences, there is arguably an expectation for UKCoC activities to aid the development of economic activity through avenues such as tourism and employment (Garcia and Cox, 2013). This adds to the foregrounding of young people as an important demographic as emerging workers within the 'creative class' (Florida, 2004) (though, Peck (2005) notably criticises this for becoming a 'global obsession' through governance processes that arguably continues today).

Within UKCoC bid guidance, DCMS explicitly notes that the competition is '...seeking bids that ... engage a wide range of audiences and participants, especially children and young people' (DCMS 2017: 4), with a particular focus on education, training and employment. This showcases the vibrant, energetic atmosphere of the city and situates the bid with a forward-facing focus on the future of the city, which is ultimately crucial to the development of the local economy (Boland et al, 2018).

Hull UKCoC2017 aimed to include every child and young person of school age with the learning and participation programmes across the city, framed by a central ambition of the programme '...to use the power of culture to generate a new population of thinkers and thinking in Hull...placing creativity at the core of young people's life experiences would be the tool to unlock their future potential' (Hull Culture Place and Policy Institute, 2021). Similar patterns are unsurprisingly reflected in Coventry and young people appear to be central to the CCoCT's objectives.

As part of the aim to 'release everyone's creative energy', there is often a call within Coventry's bid to '...empower young people to create the city and take their place as city leaders' (ibid: 7). At various events across the city, this was framed in relation to wider issues of intersectionality, as Bhatena told a largely elderly population at the

Crafts Council event that UKCoC2021 was addressing, "...a diversity of communities, perspectives, cultural offerings...how shall we embrace these alongside an attitude of youthfulness?" (Bhathena, FD extract, 22/02/2019). The Trust framed the attributes of being young, youthful, and playful as crucial elements of the successful implementation of the programme principles. These claims were often legitimised by repeating the '7 years younger' mantra, highlighting how Coventry's population is significantly younger than the national average.

The Trust had already begun to deliver on this aim and successfully established partnerships with two key youth organisations as part of the Caring City programming: Positive Youth Foundation (PYF) and Grapevine. Both organisations aim to overcome social issues alongside local young people, with Positive Youth Foundation delivering skills building sessions for youth communities, and Grapevine tackling loneliness and disability. These organisations have hosted a number of events with a cultural or creativity focus, such as the CCoCT-funded 'Changing Trax' creative development programme at PYF. These partnerships highlight the wider commitment of the Trust to work '... with key non-cultural organizations and services in the city, who are well placed to access and energise protected groups and other vulnerable communities' (Coventry 2021, 2019: 10), rather than more traditional cultural sector organisations with an artistic focus.

However, the concept of 'young' or 'youthful' is somewhat problematic when used in the UKCoC context, due to the highly ambiguous usage of the term. Boland et al. (2018) used application documents from Derry/Londonderry (UKCoC2013) to argue that the term 'young people' is not sufficiently unpacked and is instead used as a coherent category for all age groups considered to be 'young', but often lacks clarification that 'young people' are not a unified entity. The complex ontology of the term could be applied to a variety of age groups at various stages of education (ibid.). This is further entangled when considering important social differences within youthful communities through the perspective of class, religion, gender and education (ibid.; Allen and Hollingworth, 2013): these should all be considered with intersectional conceptual nuance and distinctions to avoid sweeping statements about all young people.

Creative and cultural sectors are known for being ‘socially and spatially restrictive’ (ibid: 500). This situation is further complicated when young people are encouraged to idealise themselves (and their creative talent) as a ‘neoliberal subject’ (Allen et al., 2013: 431), and are motivated to pursue a career within labour markets which are implicitly exclusive and arguably continues a deficit construction of aspiration – holding young people responsible for their own ‘ambition’ and social mobility (Allen and Hollingworth, 2013). How do the independent arts sector in Coventry interact with the dominating, yet vaguely defined theme of ‘young people’ and ‘youthfulness’ in UKCoC planning?

Age was discussed in various ways by members of F13 and the wider cultural sector. For PIF, which is run by two elderly community members and has an older network of organisers, it was often flagged that there was a lack of younger people involved with the planning and delivery of the festival. PIF had received funding for a rebrand and M&C Saatchi were hired to create the PIF pictogram in a contemporary style and on the theme of inclusivity by not depicting skin colour, bodily features or cultural objects. Mehru stated that the rebranding had been purposefully briefed to create “...something that attracts the younger generation” (Mehru, FD extract, 09/04/2019), highlighting a longstanding aim for some organisations to increase their interactions with young people.

Discussions at the CCA meeting also turned to the theme of young people. Various attendees pressed Bhathena to further explain the topic of youthfulness by raising points about the lack of social space for youths in the city. In response, the attendee was encouraged to contact their local CCoCT geographical producer to find out more information about opportunities. Another attendee argued that the lack of space for social and leisure activities in the city meant that a lot of creative activity amongst young people was taking place ‘...in their bedroom, or their friend’s bedroom’ (Anon, FD extract, 28/05/2019), and asked how the Trust was going to access networks from these vernacular spaces (Edensor et al., 2009).

The audience also asked for support for the CCA youth club night, which often had difficulties with hosting regular sessions due to the location of the club and parental reluctance to allow children into the city centre at night-time (these spatial difficulties

will be discussed in more depth in relation in the next chapter on places but highlights the importance of unlocking local knowledge on how to access youth networks).

Beyond school aged children, older students at college or university and graduates in the early stage of their careers were being considered as a specific ‘youthful’ group to interact with. This ties into the arguments made by Allen and Hollingworth (2013), regarding the early conditioning of young people to think about creative careers and their own creative potential during school years. In ‘ordinary’ cities (Robinson, 2002; Bryson et al., 2021), young people can additionally be burdened by the invisibility of the local creative sector, which Allen and Hollingworth (2013) found in interviews with sixth form students in Nottingham and Stoke-on-Trent. The lack of awareness about the cultural offer in their locale led many students to hold aspirations to move away from their home city to gain a role in the creative industries (ibid).

Therefore, when discussing ‘young people’ in a UKCoC, it is important to consider the opinions and perspectives of young adults who have recently finished the higher education process and entered the local creative labour market in various guises.

5.4.2 Age: Young Creatives and the Established Cultural Sector

Young creatives undertaking artistic roles arguably play a crucial role in fostering growth within the sector, despite the fact that the labour market does not always reward them financially (Comunian, et al., 2010). Within Coventry, emerging groups like Secret Knock Zine (SKZ) and the Native collective provide valuable lessons about expectations and experience within the cultural sector and allow younger people to realise the opportunities – and challenges – within their home city.

Both SKZ and Native used print publications and social media channels to support and promote local creative talent emerging from a variety of artforms, including visual art and music. During 2019, neither SKZ nor Native had any official ties with the CCoCT. Both, however, promoted cultural content that celebrated youth culture and aimed to draw interest from younger target audiences (namely teenage and early adult), which they felt were being left out of the current network.

When interviewing the SKZ founders, they said:

“Other ‘What’s On’ guides for the city tend to include everything, whereas I did spot this sort of age range where I didn’t really feel like anything was particularly aimed at them...there didn’t seem to be any advertising that was directly aimed at [young adults]. There seemed to be a family focus...what we were trying to do the most was the age range. It’s the skaters in the city who feel disconnected, it’s any kind of young person – I feel like in this format it feels a little more accessible”

(Lewis, Interview, 30/04/2019)

These groups encouraged other young adults to consume cultural content in Coventry, which may help audiences to see the city in a more positive light as a legitimate creative location.

Both SKZ and Native arguably benefitted from having connections to established cultural organisations in the city, such as The Empire, Coventry Cathedral and Ludic Rooms. Existing members of a cultural network can play an important role as gatekeepers who socialise newcomers and share art world conventions (Frenette, 2019). Collins (1998:6) argues that creativity ‘...builds up in intergenerational chains’, which I argue need to be nurtured within the cultural ecosystem. The value of socialisation from involvement with cultural activities can be mapped onto children engaging in events at a school age (Boland et al., 2018;) *and*, in a different context, onto emerging graduates from creative degree programmes who are entering the sector in a professional capacity.

These interactions with older members of the creative community provided an enabling and mentoring role for emerging creative professionals. SKZ highlighted the role that Ludic Rooms had played in the evolution of their small organisation, saying:

L: “Dom has been really supportive of us as well and we share studio space”

S: “That’s been another really nice thing too, is having other people in the arts community who have been nothing but supportive of us. And I think that’s a great thing about the smallness of Coventry”

(Lewis and Susan, Interview, 30/04/2019)

Bourdieu (1993: 53) also highlighted the fundamental role of “artistic generations” but notes how the inclusion of newcomers into existing cultural production networks can be implicated by the difficulty for emerging artists to gain legitimacy alongside established members. This is where connections with older members of the network can be beneficial for groups like SKZ.

These ‘soft’ skills can be helpful for emerging creative professionals. When studying recent employees in the record industry, Frenette (2019) noted that access to socialisation experiences can help newcomers benefit from an upward trajectory in career mobility, especially if a mentor has been present. Farrell (2001) previously noted that newcomers with mentor relationships can be more comfortable with authority so conversely then, aspirants without this access and support have a higher chance of forming ‘rebellious’ collaborative circles with other likeminded young peers in a similar position (ibid).

However, deviation from conventions can often be criticised by existing, older members. These emerging artists can be labelled as incompetent or inexperienced, even when some groups purposefully deviate from accepted conventions for ‘creative’ reasons. This could be argued to be the case with Native, whose connections with the existing cultural sector were limited. Native have disbanded since this research was undertaken, following multiple disagreements within the established independent network.

Native Coventry emerged in 2016 as a Facebook page created by an owner of a local music venue but facilitated by a larger group of young adults from the city who practiced various artforms. Before their move to print publication and other social media platforms, the Facebook page was used to share artworks by local practitioners.

Soon after the page started, the group began to define itself as a collective network for 'creatives' in Coventry who were under the age of 30. The long-term anonymity of the page and the exclusivity of membership began disruption within the established network, especially in relation to age.

The local artists who had 'liked' the original Native Coventry page on Facebook were from a range of ages, including students and established artists with a long history of working in the city. Hostility began between the group and its online audience, the atmosphere changing to one of exclusivity, with the collective accused of favouring younger artists. Tensions erupted in a series of comments between the anonymous Native Magazine profile and John Yeadon, one of Coventry's most famous visual artists. This encounter further aggravated other middleground producers.

As seen in the screenshot below (Plate 11), the replies posted by Native were curt, and the group seemingly admitted to their ageist prejudice. Shocked, other artists came forward with stories about their treatment by the group. What was constructed through this comment reel was a narrative of the collective being biased and they increasingly became disassociated with the city.

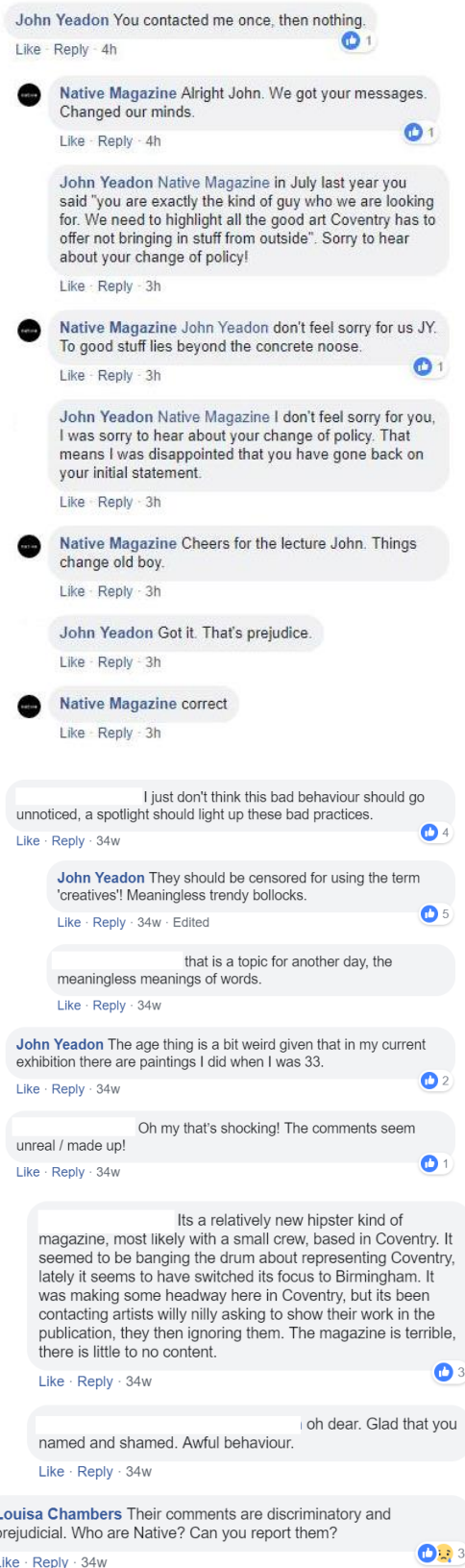


Plate 11. Screenshot from the exchange between Native and their Facebook audience (Source: own image, names blanked for anonymisation)

Becker (1982:287) highlights how intergenerational tensions emerge as newcomers can feel as though their new conventions are important for “...getting rid of some fuddy-duddies” whose presence thwarts their own artistic progress, despite the long-term role that these members may have played in setting conventions. Newcomers can challenge and adapt taken-for-granted norms and practices and aesthetic styles, which may inherently be perceived as an attack on an art world’s system of stratification by long-standing members (ibid.).

This was reflected in the interview with SKZ. The connections that they had with the established network arguably influenced their reaction and bias regarding this online disagreement, as shown in the following extract:

L: “That [conversation] was the final straw for me. I was with John last night ...being openly prejudice to somebody? [shakes head]. We felt that, especially when we started Secret Knock, a lot of people just went ‘OK, but not like Native’.

S: “One thing I kind of didn’t like about [Native] had to do with a spat with an aforementioned artist. I felt that they were really, kind of, ageist? In a way that they had these events that were like ‘under 30’ and you know, come on? The [founder] guy himself isn’t under 30...and I’m not under 30! So, we [at SKZ] need to come up with a better word than emerging, but what we were trying to say is it’s not just only people who are young that can be at the start of their arts career. We want it to be amplifying people who are doing creative things, regardless of how old they are, regardless of how long they’ve been doing it.”

(Lewis and Susan, Interview, 30/04/2019)

Native’s focus on the younger generation reinforces Florida’s (2004) prescription that older communities are restrictive, whereas younger generations are celebrated as being socially diverse and inclusive. Following the online commentary, the collective was labelled as ‘hipsters’, ‘imposters’ and ‘unprofessional’, showcasing some of the

stereotypical terms used to describe younger artists who pursue different practices and conventions. Furthermore, this series of events created an atmosphere of distrust and dismissal.

When volunteering with PAM, the mention of the Native magazine would often result in laughter, or reference to the ‘Native boys’ (FD extract, 13/06/2019) seeming to comment on the immaturity of the group and a sense that they were not taken seriously within the established network. The ‘meet-up’ events held by Native in the months following these comments tended to be promoted to students at Coventry University, who formed the majority of the audience of the talks, rather than individuals from the longstanding cultural sector groups. This further added to the sense that there was detachment across the middleground sector in Coventry.

5.4.3 Age: Summary

Like the problems raised around the reductive nature of the term ‘cultural diversity’ in the previous section (Malik, 2013), the emphasis on the concepts of ‘young people’ and ‘youthfulness’ within UKCoC competitions is complicated. Cultural engagement at a young age is seen to develop key socialisation skills (Boland et al., 2018) and encourage the consideration of different perspectives (Brake, 2013): which, as highlighted in Section 5.3, is further limited when minoritised individuals face an unfair entryway into state-funded cultural production and participation.

In relation to the middleground network, this section looked at the various ways in which Coventry’s cultural sector aimed to involve young people or youthful activities into their remit for the UKCoC. Across the ECoC and UKCoC bidding process, many cities are championing their identity as young cities with a lower-than-average age range and youthful tendencies (Griffiths, 2006; Garcia and Cox, 2013). The ambiguous nature of the term makes it subjectively hard to define, lacking coherent categories and instead applying the term to a variety of age groups at different stages of education and development (Boland et al. , 2018). Regardless, young people are now framed as assets within a cultural ecosystem, and as the ultimate beneficiaries of UKCoC programming (Boland et al, 2017).

Rather than focus on school-aged children, this section largely attended to young people interacting with middleground networks. The average age of people living in cities is often lowered when a place holds university city status, which brings with it a cyclical influx of younger people. In relation to young adults who are beginning to plan their entrance to the workplace, Allen and Hollingworth (2013) argue that this group hold two key attributes which cultural places seek to retain and nurture: creativity and talent. As seen through the Secret Knock Zine and Native examples, young people in Coventry are choosing to locate in their home city and contribute to place-based culture-led regeneration through their creative work. SKZ and Native play a key role in knowledge exchange: as recent graduates acting as intermediaries, with experience of entering the creative labour market within Coventry and with a combined audience of local youths *and* university students.

The section highlighted the importance of mentorship and connections within the middleground network, as young artists discussed how relationships with established cultural players within a small-scale network allowed them to make a role for themselves in a sector which was not as densely populated with other groups of competing creative graduates. As Farrell (2001) has previously argued, newcomers with mentor relationships (i.e. such as Secret Knock Zine) can be more comfortable navigating authority and existing power relations.

However, as shown through the Native example, intergenerational tensions can emerge when conventions set by longstanding network players are overlooked and actively thwarted (Becker, 1982). In a UKCoC setting, these longstanding middleground players are also adapting to emerging governance systems where they too are learning and navigating new power relations, which can further complicate the emergence and acceptance of younger artists into what is already a competitive build-up period.

Overall, there is a need for further expansion and clarification of the definition of 'young people' (Boland et al., 2018) in UKCoC narratives and documentation – particularly to recognise the needs of young people at different age ranges. Rather than focus on school aged children, this section argues the need to not overlook the young adults who are beginning interactions with middleground networks and governance

structures who hold the power to accept them into the local cultural sector in a professional format - during a time framed as a once in a lifetime cultural opportunity for a place. However, encouraging young workers with cultural aspirations into the 'creative class' (Florida, 2004) and precarious creative work highlights the continued economisation of the creative city (Peck, 2005), which has the possibility to override the playfulness and fun that the youthful focus is framed upon.

5.5 Class

5.5.1 Context

Discussions on higher education and the aspirations of young people are inextricably linked to the lived experience of intersectional complexities. Following the previous sections on ethnicity and age, this final subsection will explore class identity to conclude the reflections gathered on social factors which impact cultural production networks within the city's independent arts sector. This discussion involves how class difference impacts the social norms of the sector. Culture can be viewed critically as a resource used by those from different status groups (Chan and Goldthorpe, 2007), or a type of capital related to class positions (Bennett et al., 2009). Practices within the cultural sector can often reinforce the importance of possessing and showcasing social and cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1986), which can be tangible or intangible, taking the form of practices, languages and habits alongside material and aesthetic goods (ibid). Within CCIs, this capital takes the form of social networks, experiences, expected behaviours and recognised qualifications (Randle et al., 2015).

The UKCoC intervention is predicated on broadening interest and involvement with creative and cultural activity within the host city, as it is typically assumed that middle class, educated and wealthier people have more access to and experience with culture (Boland et al, 2018; DCMS, 2015; Garcia and Cox, 2013), and thus, higher levels of social and cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1986). Allen and Hollingsworth (2013) argue that the appropriation of a place alongside the pursuit of cosmopolitan sensibilities is dependent on the social, economic and cultural capital of the subjects encountered throughout the process. Some individuals from a higher-class background have the

social means to accumulate both knowledge and experience, which leads to them ‘...enhancing their own reservoir of cultural capital’ (Binnie and Skeggs, 2004: 57). However, this is not an equal process for those with a ‘lower’ social class or status.

Class has increasingly become a topic of discussion within cultural policy research but is more difficult to record statistically, as data on the socio-economic background of workers in the UK CCIs is less readily available, leading to education and qualification often used as proxy measurements (Eikhof, 2017). Some studies have addressed the topic of class using educational indicators, including the Creative Skillset (2016) report which found that 78% of the creative media workforce held an undergraduate degree-level qualification in 2014, compared to 32% of the United Kingdom’s overall workforce. This was reflected further at a parental level, where it was found that almost half of the CCIs workforce had at least one parent who had attended university (ibid.). Furthermore, 14% of these CCIs workers had attended an independent or fee-paying school, which is twice the national average for the general workforce (ibid.). These numbers show how the CCIs workforce of the UK have a higher possibility of coming from an elite background.

Place is important for shaping the habits and practices of its residents, and thus social class can produce a ‘stickiness’ which plays a role in how subjects inhabit place and which practices and forms they place value in (Allen and Hollingworth, 2013). As highlighted in Chapter 2 (*Cultural Coventry* section), Coventry has a strong identity as a working-class city, with its history of manufacturing (particularly automobile) and colliery work still reinforced in the present day: and this narrative of working-class life has been readily adopted by the top-down stakeholders at the CCoCT.

5.5.2 Class and the Established Cultural Sector

When speaking to a regional audience at a promotional conference event, Jacob Gough (Production Director ,CCoCT) read out a statement written by Bhathena, which referred to the ways in which CoC2021 would aid the overcoming of class distinction in the city, including: “We [CCoCT] will continue to evolve the concept that the UKCoC offers, tackling elitism and ensuring that arts and culture is owned and enjoyed by everyone” (Gough, FD extract, 18/09/2019). This builds on debates within academic

research, which critique the framing of culture through policies upholding a ‘deficit model’ whereby cultural interventions begin with a premise that people who do not attend cultural activities and events are therefore ‘missing out’ - a process which arguably undervalues the importance of more vernacular forms of cultural activity such as amateur arts groups or watching television (O’Brien and Oakley, 2015).

Further examples from within the data support the notion that social class and class-based identity were a key element to Coventry’s UKCoC programming. In the same conference speech, Jacob Gough told the audience how UKCoC2021 was the chance “...promote our working-class roots and the DNA of our great city” (Gough, FD extract, 18/09/2019). This ties back again to the work of Richards and Duif (2019) who argue that reference to the DNA of a city is a useful strategy for places to showcase their individuality and uniqueness within the wider placemaking vision; as we see here, repeated reference to the working-class legacy of the city sees the CCoCT identify lower social class as a defining and core part of Coventry’s identity.

When talking to representatives of the city’s Caribbean communities at the CCA event, Bhathena told the audience that Coventry’s identity as a working-class city meant it was also a ‘caring city’ (Bhathena, FD extract, 28/05/2019), but provided little explanation as the casual mechanics of this link. Personifying the city through this dual identity potentially alludes to the strong interpersonal connections between its residents, or possibly refers to a city with limited and stretched resources which leads to communities looking out for one another. This romanticised idea of the city’s social class is ambiguous but highlights the wider connection of the UKCoC activities with the class-based identity of the city and the way that Coventry is being framed by top-down stakeholders.

Alternatively, in bottom-up discussions with representatives from the independent cultural sector, class was brought up in relation to their creative work in a number of ways. One participant discussed how, as a cultural producer from a marginalised background, they felt that they had been told “You don’t fit the bill”, as the UKCoC2021 narrative felt like a “narrowly defined expression of what [decisionmakers] see as culture. It’s a very white, middle-class view” (Anon, FD extract, 02/05/2019). For others, class was identified through labour divisions and job roles. Jason from PAM

had been raised in the city and summarised his view to the history of work by saying, “Culture in Coventry is something that we do when we're not doing our day jobs. It's still a working-class culture, isn't it?” (Jason, Interview, 28/10/2019).

This comment was later built on by his colleague Mark, who had moved to the city as a teenager to study at university, who said, “One of the things that always struck me about Coventry is how much the day-to-day culture of the city is actually about work, in whatever format. And actually, absence of work as well as the presence of work” (Mark, Interview, 28/10/2019). These views mimic similar narratives drawn from other post-industrial cities with a strong manufacturing history, such as Detroit, whose legacy as a site of manual (and especially automobile) production is continued in the present day despite regeneration strategies attempting to rebrand the city as a space of knowledge and creativity (Peck and Whiteside, 2016).

Florida (2002) categorised Detroit as an ‘organizational age community’, with average social capital and low levels of innovation, Detroit’s corporate-dominated community scored highly on the Working Class Index and low on creativity (ibid). This highlights how, as part of the creative city agenda, forms of labour and economic activity are valued differently: financial and cultural rewards are typically given to ‘elite’ forms of labour, leading to deeply set inequalities (O’Brien and Oakley, 2015).

Alternatively, Jiminez and Walkerdine (2011) researched a small town in South Wales, where lived effects of the closure of the steel works – the town’s central employer – were discussed in interview data as a form of ‘social trauma’ which was transmitted between generations. Allen and Hollingworth (2013) found similar patterns of generational loss discussed in their own research. This ties back to how prevailing working-class identities influence a collective sense of place. Site-specific experiences form a ‘habit-memory’ (Connerton, 1989, in Sen and Silverman, 2014:4) which results in a place becoming a cultural entity with identities, memories, languages and material cultures representing the people living within (Magnaghi, 2005) – a process which can be identified in Coventry’s post-industrial transition.

Contemporary Coventry is a city with multiple deprivations, but also multiple opportunities framed as remedies for economic decline. As manufacturing plants

decreased, manual labour has increasingly been replaced by a focus on knowledge economy sectors such as IT, design, and engineering: this is highlighted by the evolution and continued presence of Jaguar Land Rover as one of the leading employers in the city, and the heavy promotion of the city’s universities. However, Allen and Hollingworth (2013) found that overarching narratives of the manufacturing industry can lead to local CCIs being perceived as small-scale, causing a lack of recognition of the sector as a visible and viable option for people from outside the sector (ibid.), or for those without the typical forms of capital deemed valuable in these sectors (Bourdieu, 1986).

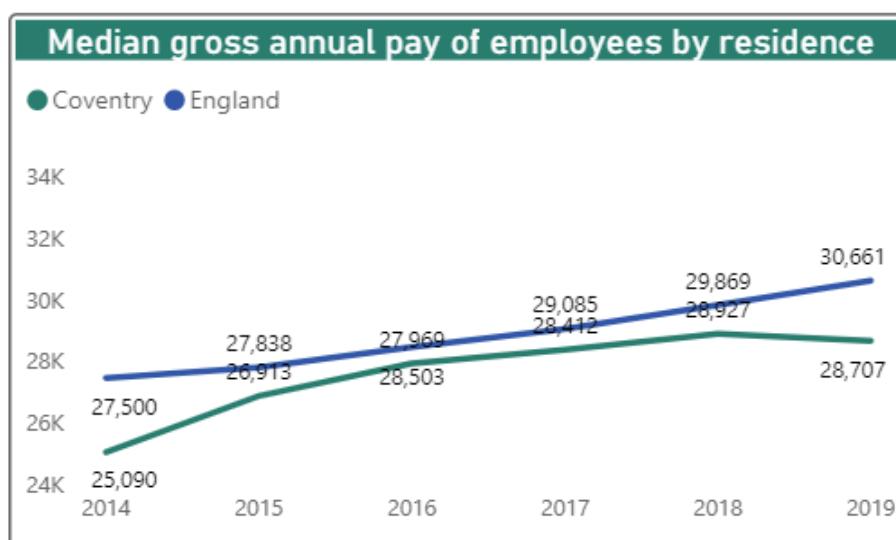


Figure 2. Median gross annual pay of employees by residence for Coventry and England (Coventry City Council, 2020)

Nowadays, most enterprises in Coventry are classified as ‘professional, scientific and technical’ (1795 companies), followed by construction enterprises (1015) and information and communication companies (955) (Coventry City Council, 2020), thus highlighting the current prevalence of labourers which Florida (2002) would define as a ‘super-creative core’. Manufacturing enterprises still play a key role in the local economy, with 705 companies in the city (ibid.). In relation to the cultural sector, enterprises considered to fall within the arts, entertainment and recreation category were in the mid-range, with 590 companies (ibid.).

Interestingly, when interviewing Mark and Jason from Photo Archive Miners, their own positionality as cultural labourers was not brought into discussion in regard to

their class. However, there were overt suggestions that the two men defined themselves as working-class. Mark went as far as to claim that Coventry “...doesn’t have a middle class, because the middle-class [people] live in Warwickshire” (Mark, Interview, 28/10/2019). This generalised identity of the city as devoid of middle-class communities was interesting to hear from a university-educated cultural producer working in the visual arts, who in other circumstances would be typified as a member of the ‘creative class’ (Florida, 2002).

Alternative approaches to studying social class argue that determinations of class should include factors such as earnings and education alongside forms of economic, cultural and social capital (Friedman et al., 2017). These factors were discussed more by the younger members of the cultural ecosystem, particularly in relation to education. The founders of SKZ were reflective of their own education attainments, or lack thereof. Susan raised this by saying:

“I don’t have a fine arts degree and a lot of my friends do. And I feel that, like, there’s sometimes this kind of old-fashioned way of thinking about who can be an artist and who can apply for an Arts Council grant and who can be considered to be an artist. I think you’re an artist if you make art and that’s it – I don’t care about the backgrounds of the people who are putting art in our zines because it’s not about putting verified...they’re in an exclusive art world”

(Susan, Interview, 30/04/2019)

Here, Susan refers to a fine arts degree as an educational achievement which holds high cultural value within the creative world, using it to exemplify a symbolic form of social capital which she does not own despite her career in the arts. This form of educational/social/cultural capital may be seen as advantageous or prestigious when entering the arts industry, which may open up the possibility for workers to gain further capital and allow them to retain and advance their careers (Randle et al., 2015). Higher education is arguably seen as a potential path to securing value in the CCIs, through the accrual of different forms of social and cultural capital (Loveday, 2015; Bourdieu, 1986). However, overarching perceptions and fears stemming from social

class can determine the type of institution students apply to or attend (Oakley and O'Brien, 2016).

For example, fine arts programmes traditionally recruit students from privileged social backgrounds (Oakley and Banks, 2016), and students entering these programmes from a working-class background may find themselves in spaces whereby middle-class norms and values are routinely privileged (Oakley and O'Brien, 2016). This recurrent positioning of certain forms of capital as prestigious (such as the fine arts degree used in Susan's example) can reinforce the assumed advantage of individuals from specific backgrounds and arguably fuel exclusionary mechanisms – both actual and symbolic - which decrease the perceived value of those without these abilities and capabilities (Bourdieu, 1986; Randle et al., 2015). This begins a cycle of reinforcing norms through a 'self-perpetuating habitus' (ibid: 604), allowing existing presumptions about the value of certain forms of capital to persist.

However, Susan frames SKZ's form of cultural production as a format which aims to overcome ideas of who can be an artist in Coventry, through a free zine which does not judge artists on their 'verified' social status or cultural value within the 'exclusive art world' (Susan, Interview, 30/04/2019). SKZ began by including the work of friends and acquaintances within this emerging creative network. This process has its own social limitations, but the ethos of inclusivity connects to the objective of the CCoCT: to use cultural production in Coventry to overcome elitism, and in turn working towards breaking the cycle of reinforced norms within CCIs.

5.5.3 Class: Summary

Randle et al. (2015) argue that class, however it is defined, is seen by CCIs workers as salient in mediating their occupational chances and success within their industry. As this subsection covers, class was discussed in various forms by both the top-down and bottom-up stakeholders during the CoC2021 build-up year and identified through factors such as educational background, domestic circumstances, occupation choices and network access to individuals from similar social positionalities – this reflects on the continued importance of noting forms of economic, social and cultural capital

(Bourdieu, 1986) and how these can influence perceptions of self and the sector as it evolves in a stereotypically working class city.

5.6 People: Conclusions

As O'Brien and Oakley (2015) argue, inequality is grounded in an individual's access to certain resources (e.g., wealth, connections, education) as well as being embodied in characteristics such as an individual's ethnicity or gender. It is a multi-dimensional issue which intersects between economic, social and cultural exclusion. This section has discussed how cultural players on the ground in the city felt that the cultural narration of the city either supported or alienated their experience in relation to specific social characteristics, with an overall message of the need for further communication and relationship development during the build-up period for top-down players to immerse themselves into the network and understand the lived experiences of the communities they seek to support.

In relation to the perspectives of the people – the cultural producers and communities of creative Coventry - and how they were involved with the development of the UKCoC build-up period, the research has found that pre-existing connections (both online and offline) provided critical cultural networks during 2019. The grassroots, 'middleground' (Cohendet et al. 2010) members of the sector in Coventry had purposefully developed support networks that were removed from the 'mainstream' (e.g., local NPOs) and these proved to be useful vehicles for utilising the knowledge and relationships within Coventry's independent cultural ecosystem. The members of the established network were longstanding with relatively few new entries, despite being located in a university city. Some participants discussed the focus on 'young people' within the Trust as an exclusive feature of the programme development, highlighting the difficulty of balancing multiple groups as key beneficiaries within the programme (Boland et al., 2018).

While established groups are a good foundation for UKCoC research, broader ethnographic practices allow researchers to discover the hidden, vernacular and sometimes temporary networks which also shape a creative place (Comunian, 2012). The existing sector is inherently exclusive, reflecting the largely white, middle-class

nature of the national cultural sector (Brook et al., 2020), which is not representative of the wider network of cultural producers in the city. Chapter 5 provided reflections from minority communities within the network who felt unsupported or alienated their experience in relation to specific social characteristics. Inequalities are embodied in somebody's access to resources and their particular characteristics (O'Brien and Oakley, 2015).

In the context of UKCoC2021 as a platform for a more diverse creative sector in Coventry, and when hearing from minority communities during 2019, there were feelings that diversity funding was not being used to facilitate genuine or legitimate partnerships beyond the 'usual suspects', which created a hostile working environment (Davies et al., 2015), especially for the SDV.

I conclude Chapter 5 by arguing that there is need for further communication and relationship development from top-down players and a need to further embed themselves into the ecosystem at an earlier stage in the build-up period to understand the lived experiences of the communities they seek to support. Following an emotionally intense bidding process, which also required consultation and support work from members of the creative network, the build-up period lacked the continued sense of collectiveness particularly for those from marginalised communities.

Most participants *and* the Trust itself discussed the lack of communication as one of the factors that had halted the involvement of local people during the build-up period, which unintentionally heightened tensions with the communities. This aligns with Campbell's (2011) findings that ECoC2008 largely operated in a separate field to the one occupied by the creative industry practitioners within Liverpool, challenging Florida's (2002) posit that creativity leads to a more interlinked city.

Chapter 6 – ‘Concrete Jungle’

Places of Creative Coventry

6.1 Introduction

This second chapter attends to the *places* of UKCoC21. Such mega-events are intrinsically spatial, relying upon the surrounding landscape of a place (Silver and Clark, 2015). The materials, arrangements and uses of physical infrastructure in the city can also shape how people think about place: as Sack (1992) argues, place is personally defined and cannot be understood without connecting it to personal awareness and experiences. Cultural practices are layered and anchored within the material form (Richards and Duif, 2019), and everyday experiences of the physical landscape affect the wider sense of place (Massey, 2005). Beyond present day understandings, history can be seen as place-bound within the material structures and subjective relations that have passed through a space (Nayak, 2006: 828).

Extracting memories and reflections from communities can unearth a deeper understanding to a changing landscape as Coventry becomes symbolised as a cultural city, and as the purpose and existence of tangible assets adapts alongside new visions for the city. This process may generate resistance, as the new reality differs from the perceived order which has sustained a long-term place identity – which arguably has parallels with the restructuring processes of deindustrialisation (Richards and Duif, 2019).

Furthermore, O’Brien and Oakley (2015) argue that much literature on the topic of culture and place often concludes that culture-led developments are implicated in the production of further socio-economic inequality through urban processes such as arts-led gentrification (Oakley, 2015; Pritchard, 2017). As ‘fast’ cultural policies (Van Heur, 2010) often have a stated aim of growing local cultural ecosystems, this thesis aids the sociocultural mapping of Coventry as the UKCoC2021 during the early stages of the title from the perspectives of the grassroots creative communities who are based either

personally or professionally in Coventry and rely on local spaces for their cultural labour.

In work published during 2019, the CCoCT defined the city's tangible assets as the '...cultural institutions, medieval heritage, cathedral, modernist architecture, motor, and cycle heritage...' (Coventry 2021, 2019: 2). However, gathering the perspectives of those within the network and its bottom-up networks adds another layer of understanding to creative Coventry, including vernacular and 'off the map' spaces (Robinson, 2002). Previous work has attended to the formal and semi-formal tangible assets of Coventry's cultural sector: Granger and Hamilton (2010) surveyed the city using the upper-, middle- and underground framework from the anatomical approach to the creative city (Cohendet et al., 2010), noting the importance of informal and hidden spaces which contribute toward 'underground' activity. Cafes, bars, and meeting spaces were noted as important physical attributes, with reference to the Artspace studios and communal areas for visual artists, and the Herbert Art Gallery café (which now hosts the CCoCT offices).

How these spaces in Coventry have evolved over the last decade is important to document in relation to recent developments in the cultural strategy, and how the UKCoC2021 bid took shape. Some places are well established for cultural purposes: using the example of Liverpool as a leading model for UK cultural policy, O'Brien (2010) states that some cities benefit from a disproportionately large set of cultural assets - including galleries and museums - alongside a long-standing tradition of local civic engagement and participation with culture. Other cities, such as Coventry, may not have these attributes for similar success.

In order to assess the places of creative Coventry during 2019, this chapter will also apply the anatomical way of thinking, using the framework of: the upperground, to define the spaces linked to formal creative firms and institutions; the middleground, as the spaces acting as platforms for smaller-scale and more community focused artistic practices; and the underground, as the spaces in which informal, subversive or non-economically productive creativity takes places in Coventry (Cohendet et al., 2010; Granger and Hamilton, 2010).

The chapter will begin by analysing the role of territorial stigma and its impact on the reputation of Coventry, both internally and externally, to uncover how the city was framed as a place ‘in need’ of cultural regeneration. It will then discuss in turn the upper-, middle- and underground places of Coventry’s cultural ecosystem from the perspective of middleground players (i.e., small-scale, independent, community based) within the local creative network (Cohendet et al., 2010). This is applied in comparison to the spatial narratives being promoted by upperground players within official decision-making and governance roles and hopes to provide further layers of meaning to the landscape of UKCoC2021.

6.2 Territorial Stigmatisation

6.2.1 Territorial Stigma

As the opening section of the contextual chapter 2 detailed, Coventry is a small to medium sized city in the UK, with a recent past rooted in post-war development caused by extensive WWII damage. Given the broader narratives that stigmatise post-war modernist architecture (see Lees, 2014), Coventry carries with it a great deal of cultural and aesthetic ‘baggage’, as shown in Plate 12 - a mock postcard of Coventry produced by the Caravan Gallery¹ to highlight the city’s ordinariness and unspectacular identity.



Plate 12. Postcard produced by local arts organisation to celebrate everyday Coventry
(Source: The Caravan Gallery)

¹ [The Caravan Gallery](#) are a visual arts group using photography to document the reality/surreality of the way we live in the modern world

Moreover, Miles and Paddison (2005) argue that cultural policies tend to overemphasise the centrality of large, metropolitan cities as principal sites for creative production/consumption, which in turn denigrates the importance of smaller peripheral, marginal regional cities. While Coventry's size appeals to some, negativity often permeates the wider creative network and shapes how the local cultural sector evolves. Historic place identities also shape present-day perceptions, with the medieval phrase of a person being 'sent to Coventry' as a form of punishment still acting as a metaphor which reinforces the city's negative reputation. This subsection assesses the experiences of territorial stigma on the ground, and how this has shaped the sense of place of creative Coventry.

The localism championed by the UKCoC award aims to entice civic pride, encouraging residents to detach from reinforced negative reputations. Territorial stigmatization (Wacquant, 2007, 2008) describes the process whereby an area receives place-based stigma (i.e. linguistic denigration) from internal and/or external commentators. Place-based stigma often occurs within post-industrial sites, with densely populated urban areas susceptible to gaining negative reputations (Butler et al., 2018).

The stigmatising process is bound up with spaces and forces of power: negative perceptions are mobilised and normalised by the dominating social and political power dynamics described in Section 3.3 of the literature review (pages 47 - 49), which can frame certain places as less appealing and opportune. Stigmatisation is also linked to Bourdieu's concepts of symbolic power (1991) and social/cultural capital (1986), as how people use their perceived ownership of such power and capital reinforces a hierarchy of what and where should be valued in the world. The denigration process is further connected to theorisations of power when considering inclusion and exclusion in the cultural sector, which is inextricably linked to who holds the power to decide what culture, narratives or practices are to be valued and which are dismissed as not worthy of interest (Flemmen, 2013; Randle et al., 2015).

In a region stereotyped by top-down narratives as a 'cultural desert' (Gilmore, 2013: 86), Coventry has seemingly defied expectations by achieving nationwide recognition as the UKCoC. This is a further problematic in a diverse city like Coventry: marginalised groups typically have less engagement and participation in what is

defined as culture, due to longstanding exclusionary practices from those holding power (Hesmondhalgh and Saha, 2013; Brook et al., 2020). To label a place as a 'desert' despite the depth and richness of various cultures coexisting in one city highlights the problematic nature of defining culture while highlighting the impact of forces whose capital and perceptions has, over time, decided where in the world is given symbolic power and value.

Another core purpose of creative rebranding is to regain economic dynamism for a place following deindustrialisation, with socioeconomic narratives of decline potentially fuelling perceptions of a city as lacking economic value (McCann, 2004). Scott (2014) notes how post-industrial places can be deemed as culturally deficient, lacking the physical 'places' of culture (museums, art galleries, networks etc.). Categorising areas as cultural 'cold spots' (Gilmore, 2013; House of Commons Culture, Media and Sport Committee, 2017) further normalises a discourse of denigration by labelling a place as unexciting.

Such territorial stigma can legitimise economic plans implemented by policymakers and investors (Slater, 2017). Initial bid documents argued that the UKCoC win was crucial as '...Coventry needs to change its reputation – it is undervalued, underrated and misunderstood. The city needs regeneration – new hotels, retail and physical improvements" (Coventry 2021, 2017: 4). This quote highlights the spatial attributes of the city which are perceived as restricting growth: emotionally, through negative perceptions, and tangibly, with its material landscape described as needing improvement. These top-down narratives seek to overcome a sense of immobility whereby a city is unable to 'move on' and recover from its industrial past (Allen and Hollingworth, 2013). However, this language used by bid authors – the most dominant voices in the process - enables territorial stigmatisation as a form of social practice (Fairclough, 1995: 7), further attaching reputations to a specific geography and who lives there.



Plate 13. Twitter posts highlighting the spatial denigration of Coventry by insider and outsider communities (Source: Twitter)

Thus, the post-industrial city narrative of loss and failure can overtly characterise a place (Bennett, 2009; Quinn, 2004). Other nearby mid-sized cities like Stoke-on-Trent have also adopted creative strategies after framing the city as needing ‘new narratives’ which were not ‘wallowing in nostalgia’ (Burns Collet, 2008: 3 in Allen and Hollingworth, 2013), with the creative industries seen as drivers of mobility and modernity (Allen and Hollingworth, 2013). Coventry has adopted similar tactics but is further challenged by its spatial proximity to Birmingham and ease of access to London, leading to the city being overlooked as a destination in favour of larger global cities.

As the data shows, narratives instilling a negative reputation of place were often apparent when discussing the cultural regeneration of the city. Territorial stigma literature has not often extended to consider ‘ordinary’ places and their perception as ‘shitholes’, which Butler et al. (2018) studied via social media posts within the UK (and

can be seen clearly in relation to Coventry in Plate 13). This research contributes towards the discussion through the example of Coventry, using ethnographic practices to allow individualised stories on stigma to be documented, including long-term residents of the city and those who have recently moved to Coventry.

People do not only denigrate other places, but also self-inflict stigma onto their own area as a way to cope with living in a place, or to abject and distance the self from the locale (ibid). In Plate 14 below, screenshots from an unofficial Facebook page used to celebrate Coventry's culture show a mixture of responses from the online audience, most of whom listed their location as Coventry on their profiles.

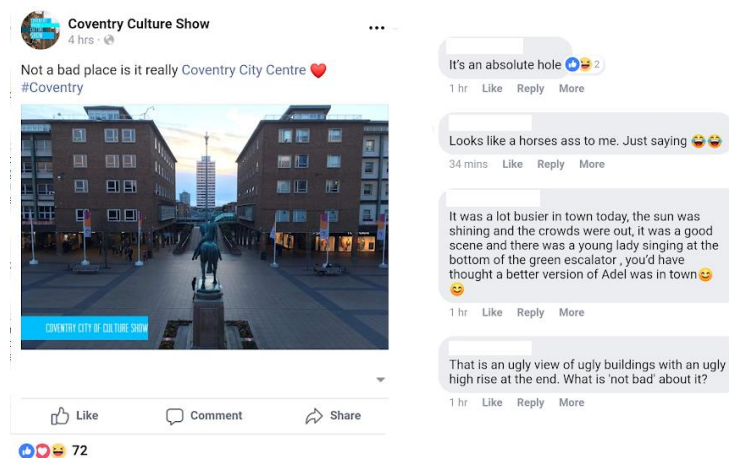


Plate 14. Screenshots taken from Coventry Culture Show Facebook page (Source: Facebook, names blanked for anonymisation)

Some participants used stigmatising language to describe specific neighbourhoods, further embedding negative reputations into the lived experience of place. As part of their 'Imagine' series, PAM worked with local communities in Willenhall, a neighbourhood in Southeast Coventry, to document the evolution of the post-war public housing estate. This neighbourhood won a national architectural design award in the 1960s but had since been poorly maintained and was now stigmatised as being a 'rough' area. Located in one of Coventry's last community centres, PAM used archival resources and co-created photography with local residents to narrate the estate. Casually discussing the project, two members of PAM said:

1: "I think this project reaffirms that Willenhall is a shithole"

2: “No, I think people will look at it and think it was a shithole *then*”

(Anon, FD extract, 16/07/2019)

Commonly used as a spatial insult within the UK, Butler et al. (2018.) define the use of the term ‘shithole’ as referring to either:

- the type of people living in a place
- a religious/racial/minority presence in an area
- the area’s socioeconomic factors
- the area’s physical attributes
- or a lack of amenities in the area

The points around minority presence connects back to Hesmondhalgh and Saha’s (2013) points on how cultural difference can be denigrated due to racialized power dynamics. In the context of Willenhall, however, denigration was discussed more in relation to socioeconomic factors: when debating which temporal version of the neighbourhood was more appealing, the PAM members casually used a derogatory term to spatially denigrate the area. Final evaluations of the project found that the local community were very positive about ‘old’ Willenhall, referring to the ‘good old days’ of the brand-new estate and its close communities. Furthermore, the positive reception of the exhibition’s opening day and the enthusiasm of the local community further highlighted how the lived experience of the neighbourhood differed between the cultural producers and those based in the neighbourhood.

When I volunteered with the local YMCA youth club in Willenhall to create photographic work, one teenager said, “It’s not Willenhall, it’s Tile Hill you have to worry about now” (Anon, FD extract, 17/06/2019). Referring to another neighbourhood in the city highlights how a different neighbourhood was positioned as facing more issues with crime and lack of investment. Spatially denigrating another area has been argued to be a bonding mechanism between young people, creating spatial identity and commonality between groups dwelling in the same perceived ‘shithole’ (Butler et al., 2018). Within the data, young people often held a bleaker

perception of their local spaces, commonly using terms such as “rubbish”, “boring” and “crap” to describe their locale and emphasising the crime, unemployment and lack of social activities and spaces available, which have been often linked to austerity cuts (see also Dawson and Gilmore, 2009). This highlights why cultural regeneration often focuses on engaging younger audiences, who increasingly find that youth clubs and community centres are closing.

The lived reality of stigma arose during discussions with younger network members too, showcasing how negative reputations of place are attached to personal geographies (ibid). Lewis had moved to the city during his school years but found himself stigmatising the city:

“When I was growing up, I had very negative ideas of Coventry and I was like, ‘This place is shit I can’t wait to go’....I grew up skateboarding in the city and there isn’t many skate parks in Cov, and I was travelling quite a long way to go to other cities to go to skateparks. And then it was like ‘Oh, I’ve got to go back to Coventry now’. I didn’t think it had a music scene, either”

(Lewis, Interview, 30/04/2019)

Lewis decided against leaving the city as he enrolled at Coventry University and stayed following his graduation after positive place attachments emerged during adulthood. The denigration process arguably compensates for when a physical separation is not possible, instead using language to create a division between self and place. Furthermore, Lewis used spatial comparisons with other cities to define Coventry as lacking in cultural amenities and experiences (see also Gilmore, 2013; Scott, 2014), finding that Coventry did not satisfy his subcultural interests like skateboarding and alternative music. Travelling elsewhere allowed him to satisfy these consumption desires.

This sense of unfulfillment was also showcased by Native, exemplifying the often-strained relationship between a Coventry resident and their emerging ‘creative class’ identity (Florida, 2002). After showcasing work from Birmingham on their social

media channels, Native began to refocus on Coventry-based content, possibly to harness the socioeconomic revenue which was destined for the city as UKCoC (Garcia, 2005). As Birmingham adopted a sport-centric regeneration strategy in preparation for the Commonwealth Games in 2022, Coventry arguably became more appealing as the West Midlands destination for arts and culture. The following comment was extracted from the first print issue of their zine in 2019:

“We can’t escape the fact that our city still needs buckets of TLC but it’s impossible to deny that there’s a beacon of optimism shining extremely brightly, bringing with it a lorry load of pride, spirit and respect”

(Native Magazine Issue 1: 15)

Insiders are assumed to hold a more positive view about where they live (Permentier et al., 2008). Native’s return to Coventry-based content is linked here with an optimistic mentality that the city will be changing its landscape and reputation. Similar to the language used by bid authors, Coventry is referenced as somewhere which needs attention. However, the UKCoC title is framed as a ‘beacon of optimism’, attaching the regeneration strategy to an increasingly positive perception of place (Slater, 2017). This intertwines negative perceptions of Coventry with the anticipated effects of creative placemaking, which appears to have a positive impact on the civic pride of some cultural labourers who hope to benefit from the influx of opportunities.

With negative views largely held by outsiders (Christensen and Jensen, 2012), Susan discussed her perceptions of Coventry when she first arrived from America and how she felt she could discuss the city as an outsider within. Susan said:

“Coming as an outsider that’s moved to the city and adopted it as *my* city, I feel like there’s maybe a bit of a, like, chip on the shoulder kind of thing? ... People who live here might be willing to criticise Coventry, but people from the outside aren’t allowed to. I didn’t realise that people had negative thoughts and jokes about Coventry, like ‘Oh what a shithole, what a terrible place’, and I’m like - it’s actually really not”

(Susan, Interview, 30/04/2019)

This comment shows the impact of internalised stigma on newcomers: Susan's point highlights how those moving to the city may be unaware of the stigma until they have arrived, and how these perceptions can affect initial judgements of place.

Wacquant (2007) argues that the powerful stigma attached to place is often due to post-Fordist reorganisation of the economy, which alters social structures and can make long-term residents feel marginalised or relegated from emerging opportunities. As newcomers who did not witness the economic transition or have not encountered locals who did feel the effects, the embedded territorial stigma of existing residents may seem unwarranted. This deeply ingrained stigma highlights the aim for reinstated civic pride in local communities via the UKCoC title (DCMS, 2017).

6.2.2 Modernist Architecture

Alongside the Medieval 'three spires', Coventry is also heavily 'recognised' for its post-war architecture, most of which was produced in a modernist style. The city was a test bed for architecture via plans deemed to be radical in the 1960s (*How to Rebuild a City*, 2021). Furthermore, some of the city's most iconic cultural institutions reflect the post-war style, including Basil Spence's post-war 'new' Cathedral. Some participants held the opinion that the city's architecture is not aesthetically pleasing and not functional within the contemporary city. Other participants, however, were highly protective of the buildings within the city, including the Coventry Society who regularly 'push' for the listing of local buildings and features. Physical regeneration of city centres is also a key feature of UKCoC winners, utilising the high scale of investment that previously had not reached the city.

Emerging cultural groups have adopted a more celebratory vision of the local area, including Secret Knock Zine, who regularly used site-specific aesthetics which frame the city as having an edgy urban 'coolness' through its modernist buildings. This is exemplified by the front cover of Issue 2 (see Plate 15), which used an image of Coventry Point produced by a local photographer: listed for demolition, Coventry Point was designed by John Madin, the same architect who designed Birmingham's

previous Central Library in Paradise Circus (Carlon, 2018), which was also recently demolished.

Local media reported on the plans to destroy Coventry Point, referring to the concrete building as a ‘city centre landmark’ (Sandford, 2019). The building had reportedly housed forty local charities, who were told to find new leases at the end of 2018 so that the building could be removed as part of the regeneration plans for the city centre. Choosing this image for the front cover of the zine is a symbolic gesture to the life and legacy of an iconic piece of the city, and speaks directly to the modernist, post-war architecture that the city’s residents have a love/hate relationship with (Hubbard et al., 2003). Publishing this cover is arguably the zine’s way of commemorating the modernist city and highlighting the intrinsically local feel to the cultural product.



Plate 15. Front cover of Secret Knock, Volume 1, Issue 2. (Source: own image)

Speaking further about the demolition of long-standing buildings around the city, Susan expressed her interest in post-war history and how she felt ‘so angry’ that buildings such as Coventry Point disappear. Referring to the iconic Coventry Sports Centre building, she said, “If they do not get that fucking elephant listed, I now know that what we have to do is super glue ourselves to it if that is ever in danger” (Susan, Interview, 30/04/2019). Lewis agreed, seeing the building as an intrinsic feature of the Coventry cityscape which has regularly been used in promotional materials. He said:

“You get off the train and they have a line drawing of the elephant building as you come into the city, so it’s obviously something that you’re proud of - otherwise you wouldn’t have put it there. But then they’re threatening to knock it down...you can’t have your cake and eat it”.

(Lewis, Interview, 30/04/2019)

This vocalised pride and celebration of the city’s architecture by younger audiences arguably reflects a specific set of niche cultural tastes which could arguably be linked to the wider commodification of Brutalism as a genre (Mould, 2017). These opinions were in sharp contrast to that of the councillor, who reflected on the sports centre as a local authority owned property:

“Have they actually been in it? The badminton courts are completely waterlogged. People need to get in the real world of how much would you invest in this building to keep it operational. That was one of the reasons that, we as a council, had to pull out of it. We were throwing public money [at it]...It was two grand a day that we were spending...why don’t we invest this money into a new facility? And that’s what we’ve done...I know when we said we were going to have to close, everybody was like [gasps], ‘You can’t do that!’. But there’s netting on the inside of the roof because tiles potentially can fall down”

(Ed, Interview, 07/06/2019)

From this perspective, a financially strained local council have had to make logistical and financial decisions regarding the modernist architecture in their ownership. Here, demolition/closure is seen as an opportunity rather than a loss.

Another creative space that was frequently discussed as an important modernist space was, perhaps surprisingly, the ring road. Designed by Donald Gibson in the 1960s, the ring road was part of the post-war planning, with a radial system to divert traffic away from the city centre. Now, it is a symbolic piece of Coventry’s mobility landscape, but

has been criticised for how it has bounded the central business and shopping district and prevented the expansion seen in similarly sized cities. But, the concrete walls of the ring road have provided an arena for cultural performances, including a projected poetry piece (Coventry 2021, 2017).



Plate 16. Craft Council roundtable mapping exercise including a crocheted perception of the ring road, which the map was mainly focused upon (Source: Author's Own)

For cultural producers in Coventry, the ring road was perceived as the boundary of the city centre. This supports the notion of inclusion and exclusion raised previously in Chapter 5, bringing the conversation into the context of physical barriers to inclusion with the UKCoC activity. Furthermore, the exclusion of residents - and with this, the more everyday life of Coventry that takes place beyond the boundaries of the city centre – nods to the argument that city centres are the central area of focus for UKCoC activity due to the regeneration potential for the economic core (Evans, 2011). The ring road then can be seen to intensify the typical focus on the city centre as the main 'arena' of creativity, limiting the recognition of creative activity in peripheral areas (Edensor et al., 2009).

During a Coventry 2021 and Craft Council workshop in February 2019, local crafters were asked to crochet a flower to put onto a crafted map of the city, to pin the key locations for their creative practice (see Plate 16 above). The ring road was crocheted as the key identifying feature of the map of Coventry, with the spaces identified outside of the ring road often referring to more middle- or underground sites of creativity such as libraries, community centres and people's homes (these vernacular sites will be discussed later on in this chapter). Inside the crochet ring road, the flowers represented upperground sites like galleries and theatres, alongside middleground sites like knitting shops.

Other participants in the research described the ring road as a 'compass' which made the city centre more mentally navigable. Others, however, found it to be a limiting spatial feature which restricted the consideration of other neighbourhoods and creative sites around Coventry. One participant, who wished for this comment to be anonymised, reflected on the early UKCoC bid and how local creative communities were concerned about its spatially centralised focus:

“There was a lot of criticism of the UKCoC bid, in that they weren't really focusing on anything outside of the ring road. It was ring road, plus maybe off down towards Far Gosford Street, that's where they were...when there are really thriving neighbourhoods and cultures that exist beyond the ring road which were not so much focused on for the bid. I hope that's a thing that they're working on”

(Anon, Interview)

Oakley (2015) argues that regeneration policies that focus on the inner city can obscure evidence on how vernacular, everyday cultural practices can fit into the narrative of regeneration, whereas looking at a greater variety of places within the city is more useful and looks beyond the exclusionary perspective of spectacular and 'high' art spaces as the drivers of regeneration. When the Trust visited an F13 meeting in October 2019, a local artist asked about where in the city would be the focus for UKCoC2021. Martin Sutherland discussed the complications caused by the ring road, but committed to ensuring that other spaces in the city received attention:

“There's a geographical distinction...in that Hull was very much felt like a city centre regen project and we're absolutely determined [UKCoC2021] happens across everyone in the city. It's not ringfenced by the ring road, and we absolutely have to be across the patch...And that's quite a challenge, in terms of how we think about tourism in the city, as well...And that's a balance we've got to strike. But we would hope this reaches across the city”

(Sutherland, FD transcript, 18/09/2019)

Emphasising tourists to the local cultural producers may detract local attachment from the UKCoC programme, as participants expressed their disapproval of a programme which appeared to be “...focusing a lot on middle-class white people who come into the city centre and do things in the city centre” (Anon, Interview). The commitment to reach beyond the ring road was promising, yet the reference to tourists highlights how the role of consumer demand is stressed as an equally important factor when considering spatial investments (Ley, 1986; Oakley, 2015).

Some producers were concerned about how to attach value to sites just beyond the city centre. Dom was aware of the critical perceptions of the ring road and how it also impacted public access to his studio in the Canal Basin, which requires people to cross the ‘wobbly bridge’ over a section of the ring road. He described the overarching narrative as, “People don't wanna cross the ring road, you know. The ring road is this concrete collar, the invisible barrier” (Dom, Interview, 12/04/2019). Both the tangible and intangible features are embedded in the landscape and the psyche of local communities: the material, concrete road itself alongside the ‘invisible’, more metaphorical role as an imagined spatial boundary.

Mould and Comunian (2015) argue that concentrating cultural investment and increasing the appeal of specific areas within a city can increase the prices of real estate to the point where smaller producers are displaced, creating an investment vacuum which can deprive surrounding areas of access to cultural opportunities. Coventry’s tangible and intangible spatial barriers arguably encourage the continuation of

clustering within a limited city centre, placing further spatial restrictions on the expansion of cultural networks (Edensor et al., 2009). The development of cultural sites both within and beyond the ring road is important to document and evaluate as the UKCoC evolves.

6.2.3 Territorial Stigmatisation: Summary

Territorial stigma can shape a sense of place, which is (re)produced by both internal and external voices with varying lived experiences and imaginations. The UKCoC title directly aims to increase levels of civic pride within the winning city, as it is assumed that communities within applicant cities lack a positive attachment to the place in which they live. For Coventry, this has been directly commented on within official bid documents, confronting the territorial stigma impacting the reputation of the city.

Local cultural producers frequently discussed the role of Coventry's reputation within the data in relation to spatial comparisons with wider areas, their individual perceptions of the city and perceived experiences of internal communities. How this stigma shaped their own work was not often discussed in depth and could provide interesting discussions in future research. However, this section plays a key role in discussions of place, as it lays the foundations of an overarching sense of place within Coventry; one which is sometimes fractured and difficult to frame positively, both within and beyond local audiences who are sought to engage with the place-based cultural activities throughout 2021. This has been an important process to cover before discussing more specific spatial elements of the city, in order to cover the wider sense of place of the city and the opportunities/barriers this presents.

6.3 Cultural Infrastructure and the Anatomy of Creative Coventry

To overcome this embedded territorial stigma, Coventry has turned to its cultural infrastructure as an essential element of a thriving creative ecosystem (Gross and Wilson, 2019). The visibility and provision of creative industrial space has increased in recent decades as symbolic features expected in the contemporary urban economy (Oakley, 2015). However, the quality of the provision is a critical element for the

success of the local cultural *production*. Furthermore, infrastructure also provides space for cultural *consumption*, with post-industrial economies placing value in experiential and amenity-rich locations with numerous opportunities for cultural entertainment (Florida, 2002). For Turok (2009), cultural consumption is facilitated through the built environment and amenities, but also through spatial image and identity: these aesthetic exteriors are more easily amendable than physical structures, explaining why cities often engage in (re)branding campaigns to highlight distinctiveness rather than altering tangible aspects of the city (Richards and Duif, 2019).

The physical places of a creative city include formal spaces, which Cohendet et al. (2010) define as ‘upperground’, including theatres, galleries and offices of knowledge-intensive industries. These exist alongside informal ‘underground’ spaces (ibid.), such as bars and cafes utilised as popular meeting places, which may not be formally recognised as local cultural assets due to their subversive or less visible operations. The ‘middleground’ exists between the two, referring to spaces with a focus on cultural production and consumption but usually with a smaller-scale, less formal and community generated approach, including studios and independent galleries. These material structures spatially organise the cultural milieu of the city as the tangible sites of a creative network (Sacco and Blessi, 2007) and are important in understanding the relationship between place and cultural labour (O’Brien and Oakley, 2015) – capturing the interactions occurring within, and the meanings attached to, the sites which form the creative playground of the city.

6.4 Upperground Spaces of Creativity

Granger and Hamilton (2010) identified the existing cultural infrastructure across Coventry in 2010, which included ‘upperground’ spaces (Cohendet et al., 2010) such as: the publicly funded sector (Belgrade Theatre, The Herbert Art Gallery and Museum/Archives, Coventry Transport Museum, Warwick Arts Centre); knowledge and research institutions (Coventry University School of Arts and Design, Coventry Technology Park with the Institute for Creative Enterprise); Coventry Cathedral; and the Ricoh Arena stadium. These operate on a larger scale in the city, often receiving sustained funding from central government and other major trusts, and also have a

dual purpose as cultural consumption outlets for local communities alongside operating as key tourist attractions in Coventry. Two upperground locations were used by middleground players and discussed frequently during interviews and general conversations – the Herbert Art Gallery & Museum and Coventry Cathedral. That is why these upperground, more formal sites are included in this chapter, before moving on to focus on the middle- and underground sites in more detail. It briefly addresses how the middleground perceive the upperground cultural infrastructures as part of the city’s cultural ecosystem, in the context of understanding how this may have changed since Granger and Hamilton’s (2010) earlier study.

6.4.1 Case Study D: Herbert Art Gallery & Museum

A local gallery can play an essential role within a cultural ecosystem: for Coventry, this is the Herbert Art Gallery and Museum, which has held National Portfolio Organisation status since 2018 and thus receives annual funding from ACE (The Herbert, no date). Comunian and Mould (2014) view galleries as important local hubs for creative/cultural industry networks, with the public nature of the space supporting socialisation, but they also note how galleries are not often seen as key networking spaces within policy (ibid). The Herbert Art Gallery is now a key logistical site for the UKCoC2021, as the location of the operational offices for Culture Coventry and, since late 2019, the CCoCT. Alongside its role as a formal space for exhibition and cultural consumption, the Herbert is considered to be an upperground site due to its dual role as the location for the administrative, corporate and operational work of some of the city’s core cultural governance teams.

However, Granger and Hamilton (2010) also highlighted the Herbert café as an important site for sector interaction, with informal spaces tending to be more comfortable settings for discussion (Comunian, 2012). This space was still noted by multiple participants in the research during 2019 and was often suggested as a meeting point to discuss ongoing work. This exemplifies the importance of informal spaces within an upperground location, with the social role of the Herbert Café acknowledged by the Trust after making this the location for the monthly ‘Culture Conversations’ established in 2019, whereby members of the public join decisionmakers and artists to discuss key themes in relation to UKCoC programming.

Interestingly though, the gallery was not often discussed by the independent arts organisations in relation to its formal activity. Furthermore, from the perspective of PAM who heavily relied on the Herbert's archival resources for their artworks, the gallery was a source of contestation. Insider knowledge from these frequent users of the space appeared to highlight tensions with the formalised and administrative governing of the space, such as improper cataloguing and storage of archival material and miscommunication between workers and users. PAM argued that these factors had a negative impact on their own creative work, especially as their participants are also encouraged to self-organise and navigate visits to the archive. Other difficulties included charges for the scanning of archival resources, and inconsistent opening hours which limited accessibility for visitors. PAM have embedded bias here, as there have long been talks of the organisation playing a role in the restructuring of the city archives. However, other participants also commented on the hours, including the local councillor who said, "Our art gallery closes at 4'o'clock in the afternoon and we're trying to tell everybody that we're open for business?" (Ed, Interview, 07/06/2019).

These points highlight difficulties faced by formal upperground spaces within cultural ecosystems. Brabazon (2015) argues that mid-sized cities are supported by GLAMS (galleries, libraries, archives, museums) but the quality and accessibility of these spaces is complicated by local governance structures and funding. Restricted opening times and charging for basic services highlight the wider problem with secure funding, with local authority cuts of 50% in 2015 leading to discussions about job cuts and possible closure of the gallery prior to the UKCoC win (Gilbert, 2015). While these economic processes will be discussed more in the following chapter, the lived experience of these constraints featured in the identification of the city's creative locations.

6.4.2 Case Study E: Coventry Cathedral

Coventry Cathedral (Plate 17) is not only an iconic symbol of the Blitz, but a tourist destination and increasingly a cultural venue. Its unique architecture offers an alternative stage for artistic events, alongside its own small art collection, stained glass windows and iconic tapestries. Granger and Hamilton (2010) recognised the

upperground nature of the Cathedral due to its role as a highly visible layer of the city and its formal, bounded space. Whilst it is less strictly governed than the Coventry City Council offices or spaces linked to Coventry University, the Cathedral still operates in a more formal manner than the semi-organised creative networks and communities of practice that exist in the city's middleground. Furthermore, its higher amounts of regular public funding in comparison to other cultural locations around the city, Coventry Cathedral is a landmark which is larger in both scale and influence in Coventry's cultural ecosystem.



Plate 17. Coventry Cathedral (Source: Own image)

Woodward (2004) argues that cultural tourism within religious sites provides opportunities for additional sources of income, serving as a catalyst for wider economic growth in an area. This route was publicly advocated by The Reverend Canon, Kathryn Fleming at the Vortex Creates Intersect #3 event, who supports the mixed use of the Cathedral site. Discussing the use of the grounds as the site of the Knife Angel sculpture, she explained the positionality of the Cathedral's leadership team by saying, "We want to be the Cathedral that says yes" (Fleming, FD extract, 14/05/2019). Andrew Walster, a Coventry City Council representative working with venues, then described the Cathedral as 'Coventry's Fourth Plinth' (Walster, FD extract, 14/05/2019), drawing comparisons with the global city site of Trafalgar Square in London as a site of ephemeral and experimental artworks.

However, despite being a recipient of regular public funding, limited finances dictate the cultural opportunities offered. Referring again to the audiences attracted to visit the Knife Angel sculpture, the Reverend cautioned that the Cathedral had been unprepared for the increase in footfall and needs more toilets and facilities to cater for audiences - especially as predictions for 2021 were as high as 2,100 visitors per day. Citing the importance of the tangible features and the affective atmosphere (Anderson, 2009), she said it was key for "...visitors to feel at home in the Cathedral, not herded in" (Fleming, FD extract, 14/05/2019). Even upperground spaces that are in a less precarious financial position than middleground and underground players are struggling to put on formal activities due to funding cuts.

There were also further signs of the marketization of the Cathedral ruins, which hosted a street food pop-up festival and various performances during 2019. Walster argued for further spontaneous and unexpected uses of the space around the Cathedral, saying, "We need to show that this is land for public use" (Walster, FD extract, 14/05/2019), exemplifying the desire for the Cathedral to be an accessible asset for local people through associations with more public, informal activities.

Amin (2008: 9) highlights how every public space has a unique rhythm, with the use and regulation of an area changing temporally through different space-times. Public space importantly provides areas where city users can meet and interact freely and there are close links between placemaking and improving the quality of public space (Richards and Duif, 2019), as these sites become utilised for cultural activities with specific functions and schedules.

However, public use may also come at a cost, as the site is opened up to more ticketed events and activities that generate the capital needed to sustain the venue. More critically, Smith (2015) argues that public spending cuts lead to increased commercial usage of public spaces, as income is generated from concessions and licenses which ultimately favour commercial exploitation over public access (this increased privatization and commercialization of creative cities will be discussed further in the following chapter). The commercial and corporate focus of such activity contributes to the identification of these sites as upperground spaces, tied to bringing creativity to the market (Cohendet et al., 2010).

An example of this repurposing of the Cathedral for both creative usage and to generate capital includes when the ruins of the Old Cathedral staged the homecoming tour of The Specials, the iconic local 2Tone band, who released new music in 2019 (see Plate 18 and 19).



Plate 18. Promotional picture of The Specials concert from the spire of Coventry Cathedral (Source: Twitter)



Plate 19. View from inside Coventry Cathedral during The Specials concert, November 2019 (Source: Own image)

There were signs of local resistance to the use of the Cathedral as an artistic venue, highlighting the tensions that arise from hosting cultural activities in a formal space with ties to religion and spirituality. This was documented in my field diary, which I wrote after I attended the event:

“A local resident had brought her own placard [see Plate 20] to greet the audiences with, claiming that the Cathedral was a sacred site and should not be used for entertainment events. A member of the Specials had tweeted in return, asking the crowds to respect her opinions and not give her a hard time. It made me think more about the ruins and their role in the city.”

(FD extract, 10/07/2019)



Plate 20. An image showing the protest sign being held by a local resident at The Specials concert (Source: Twitter)

As creative regeneration across the city continues, the Cathedral is increasingly used as a venue to diversify its outreach, to attract tourists and visitors to Coventry and ultimately, to generate financial income. Cities are finding new purposes for existing buildings, and boundaries are blurred – it seems that as every person can ‘unleash their creativity’, so can every building. Therefore, alongside its role as a publicly funded tourist destination in the city, the increasingly commercial and corporate activities at the site further affirm the Cathedral as an underground space, with a focus on marketizing the cultural offers of the city (Cohendet et al., 2010).

This is not to say that the Cathedral does not overlook the spiritual service or the beautiful, unique, and locally meaningful backdrop that the site provides as part of the cultural ecosystem but is instead a reflection on how commercial creativity is porous and finds its way into every crack and crevice of the city. Furthermore, the less

formalised aspects of these upperground spaces – such as the Herbert Café – often have more relaxed access for communities and less rigid behavioural expectations (Granger and Hamilton, 2010). These semi- and informal spaces were most frequently addressed in my research, and so it is to those sites that I now turn.

6.5 Middleground Spaces of Creativity

The ‘middleground’ spaces of the creative city act as the critical intermediate structure between the upper- and underground, playing a brokerage position that involves smaller-scale, less formalised and more community generated cultural production and consumption (Cohendet et al., 2010). This is seen as a balancing act of creative exploration *and* exploitation, due to the cultural production generating income and markets but on a smaller scale (ibid.). Spaces used by the middleground include semi-formal sites of cultural production and consumption, such as studios and independent galleries or venues. These material structures spatially organise the cultural milieu of the city as the tangible sites of a creative network (Sacco and Blessi, 2007) and are important in understanding the relationship between places and cultural labour (O’Brien and Oakley, 2015) – capturing the interactions occurring between members of the independent creative network and the meanings they have attached to the sites which form the creative playground of the city.

What became apparent during the research was how many of the current places identified as the most used by the middleground creative players were repurposed for cultural usage. These sites were largely developed from the bottom-up, utilising empty – and thus often far cheaper - retail or ex-manufacturing spaces across the city. However, there were some examples of how these repurposed sites were being developed by formal decisionmakers. The process of repurposing spaces that have alternate functionalities highlights what Cohendet et al. (2010) view the defining elements of the creative middleground as: exploration (i.e., discovering new and innovative uses for unused space) and exploitation (i.e., taking advantage of the cheaper prices *or* using the lower market price to generate profits).

The importance of reusing urban space, specifically empty high street stores, entered UKCoC conversations through the ‘Vortex Creates Intersect #2’ event in February

2019, where artist and author of 'Pop-Up Businesses for Dummies', Dan Thompson, was commissioned by the CCoCT to speak to an audience of local artists and business leaders. Thompson's work includes a toolkit for artists to develop empty shops, providing information on premise licenses, insurance advice and inspiration for 'transforming underused spaces' (Thompson, 2012). Thompson can be seen as a key intermediary between the middle- and upperground of the creative sector, connecting different players from within and beyond the cultural ecosystem (Pratt, 2008; Cohendet et al., 2010; Gross and Wilson, 2019).

During Intersect #2, Thompson noted how revitalising underused space is '...just part of our normal everyday practices as artists' (Thompson, FD extract, 27/02/2019), highlighting tensions between the creative community and Clay's (1979) Stages 1 and 2 of the four stages of gentrification, where renovations of properties by small-scale and non-corporate groups are popular. Thompson suggested that empty spaces in Coventry should be utilised as galleries, installation, exhibitions, and co-working spaces in preparation for 2021. He then argued that the city was lacking, reinforcing denigrating comments about the city's cultural offer by saying, "10 years ago, it felt like an exciting place. Today, there is none of that". Hence, cultural and creative activity was framed as an injector of dynamism for a lacklustre city centre.

But what exactly are the mechanics of this 'dynamism'? What does this repurposing look like during a megaevent like UKCoC? And how do they ferment a 'middleground' of creative city provision (if at all?). After all, the research participants mostly placed value into the middleground, semi-formal spaces across the city (Cohendet et al., 2010; Granger and Hamilton, 2010). These were largely sites of cultural production, such as shared studio spaces or grassroots venues, aligning the identity of the creative city with the locations associated with the creative self.

The examples I will use in this section include empty shop fronts, office spaces or even an old newspaper mill which had been converted for temporary creative usage. These spaces were (roughly) divided into sites of cultural production (Canal Basin and Shop Front Theatre) and spaces for cultural consumption (Coventry Evening Telegraph (CET) Pop-Up and FarGo Creative Village), which will be used to structure this section

as it explores the sense of place attachment and authenticity in middleground creative Coventry.

6.5.1 Case Study F: Canal Basin

The Canal Basin is increasingly primed as a cultural district in Coventry. Located a short distance across from the ring road, the site is in close proximity to the city centre. Alongside narrowboats and towpath walkways, there are cultural venues including Studio 19 (a series of warehouses converted into spaces for independent artists like Ludic Rooms), and The Tin Music and Arts centre. The Canal Basin has been used as a key example of Coventry's creative space by both the UKCoC2021 bid and Creative Futures (shown below in Plate 21), an enterprise programme ran by University of Warwick to highlight the creative potential of Coventry and Warwickshire (Spivey, 2019). It is also an area earmarked for regeneration, building on its representation as a site of creative production.



Plate 21. Canal Basin included in the Creative Spaces of the Creative Enterprise documentation (Source: University of Warwick)



Plate 22. The Canal Basin (Source: Google Images)

Dom has been working from a studio in the Canal Basin for many years and had a positive reception to the current regeneration proposals, which include multiple student housing and residential blocks:

“I'm really positive about it, change is good... the Canal Basin specifically. We've got a block opposite that's mostly vulnerable adults and older people. The Whitefriars [public housing] block around the corner. And then you've got Drapers Fields, which is mostly young professionals and small families.... And then you've got some very traditional...terraced houses...there's a really broad mix, weird mix, living around the canal...

And now, we've got 800 new [student] neighbours, ten seconds away...we're gonna have a thirteen-storey [student] block. There's another ten-storey block going up on the hill. And so, we're thinking a lot about how that's going to transform the communities around here...it's going to change the physical and visible landscape of the environment, but it's going to change the population density quite dramatically as well, just people milling about”

(Dom, Interview, 12/04/2019)

The regeneration will encourage visitors to use the Canal Basin as a destination in its own right, as well as a through-fare to the city centre. With emphasis increasingly being placed on the space by top-down decisionmakers, the Canal Basin is being rebranded as a live-work-play site - inspired by the development of Birmingham's Brindley Place (Plate 23), which has residential flats and office spaces along a canal side with many bars and eateries. However, there was evidence that visitors to the area during 2019 did not share the vision of the site as a place for cultural consumption, as shown in Plate 24.



Plate 23. Promotional image of Brindley Place, Birmingham (Source: Google Images)

●○○○○

Desolate

We were the only visitors to the canal basin on bank Holiday Monday, with just a hairdresser and Latvian supermarket open. No little outlets, nowhere to get lunch. Just 5 narrow boats refilling water and emptying septic tanks. The toilets also locked
What a waste of a really valuable space. Bonus we didn't pay for the car park. Fortunate to get one star!

[Read less](#) ▲

Date of experience: August 2019

Trip type: Travelled as a couple

Plate 24. A review of the Canal Basin left on a popular tourism site (Source: TripAdvisor, 2020)

For many local residents, the Canal Basin is primarily known for the wobbly bridge (Plate 25) which gets you into town from Radford. It connects to the city centre at the Burges (Plate 26), a street with a number of warehouses leading to a row of shops that connect to the main retail destinations (e.g., Primark, West Orchards shopping centre and Broadgate). The Burges is bustling with both people and motor traffic due to the proximity to Pool Meadow station and has also been the location of multiple stabbings – including my own Grandfather’s cousin - and more recently, a shooting.

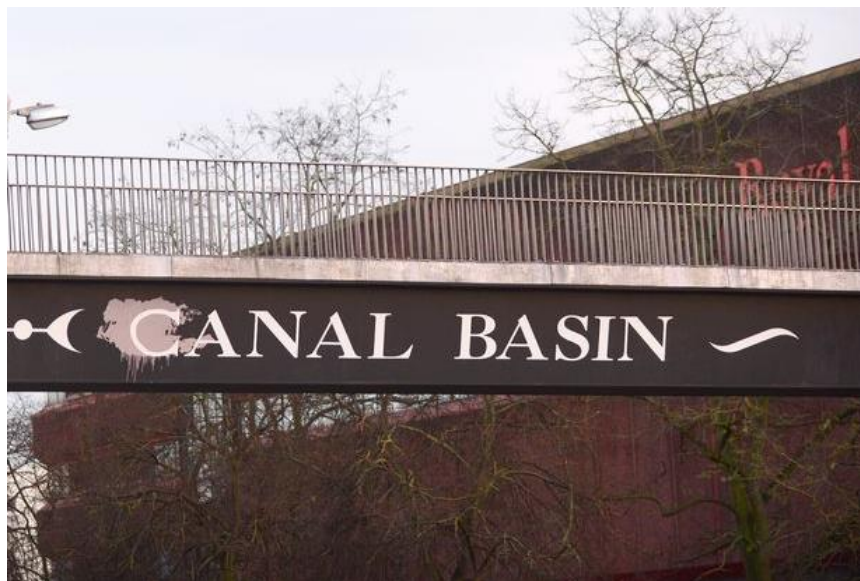


Plate 25. The ‘wobbly bridge’ connecting the Canal Basin with the City Centre. The ‘C’ of the signage has regularly been graffitied so that the traffic below reads ‘ANAL BASIN’
(Source: Coventry Evening Telegraph)



Plate 26. The view from the top of The Burges (Source: Coventry Evening Telegraph)

Multiple participants mentioned the Basin space and the stigma it faces as a ‘rough’ part of town. Mark discussed the potential of the Basin being a focus for 2021, saying how the CCoCT have seemingly “...all come here, come to Canal Basin and been like, 'What on earth is this abandoned, usable space so near the city centre?!', and it's not abandoned, we know that” (Mark, Interview, 28/10/2019). Jason also supported this reflection by saying the basin has ‘dodgy places’ and is ‘a bit run down’ (Jason, Interview, 28/10/2019), highlighting the perspectives of local users of the space and the recurrence of place-based stigmatization. Dom was also aware of the negativity, discussing the ‘wobbly bridge’ entryway into the Basin in relation to the first time Martin Reeves visited following his appointment as CEO of Coventry City Council:

“I met him and walked from the Burges up to the Canal Basin to talk to him about [it]. And the thing that I said then is still true now, but it is getting better: it’s that the challenge for getting people to the Canal Basin is not just the bridge. It's often cited that the wobbly bridge is the main reason, people don't like having to go over that...also, it's just a physical barrier...

But for me, it was if you stand and look at the first bit of the walk that you've got to do [laughs] to get from the city centre...You've

got to walk down the Burges, which has its fair share of challenges and 10 years ago, had a lot more of them. Then you've got to walk up...hoarded up wasteland, basically. Why would anyone?

And that's the challenge that we're seeing here with the Canal Basin is the fight - you've got to get people, it's not just about it being too far from the city centre, [it's] what you've got to walk through or pass through in order to get there. And that's just probably a bit of a metaphor for everything with Coventry at the moment is, ultimately, it doesn't really matter how good the pot of gold is at the end if people aren't willing to make the journey to get there. And if you don't make some pretty massive changes to that road to get there. And [if you don't] do it in time [for 2021]"

(Dom, Interview, 12/04/2019)

This consideration of lived experiences is key for a deeper understanding of the sociospatial barriers that can restrict access to middleground sites and thus limit how frequently local people use the space. The Canal Basin could be framed as an intersection between Coventry as an 'ordinary', creative and student city and as such, a site where urban change should be monitored in future research. The physical landscape was set to change in late 2019, after The Burges was named as one of fourteen areas across the UK to receive financial support from national government as part of the Future High Streets Fund. £2mil was designated to Coventry from Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government, the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport and the National Lottery Heritage Fund.

Shop facades have since been refreshed during 2020 (Plate 27), with further plans to create a new public square which opens up a section of the city's underground River Sherbourne (CWLEP, 2020). This has begun to connect the entryway to the Canal Basin and its 'wobbly bridge' to a redeveloped section of the city centre, with hopes of the improvements having a beneficial knock-on effect to how local people perceive and use the area.



Plate 27. Renders of the restoration plans for retail storefronts on The Burges as part of the Future High Streets Fund (Source: Corstorphine & Wright Architects)

6.5.2 Case Study G: Shop Front Theatre

Other locations in Coventry have evolved the typical usage of retail spaces into creative sites, most notably Shop Front Theatre (SFT) – an old chip shop which was converted by Theatre Absolute. The theatre runs on a long-term but temporary lease managed by the local authority. Repurposing a vacant third space, SFT offers an arena for creative production and consumption whilst offering a community space which is used by a number of other local organisations including Grapevine, the Coventry Society, and Coventry University’s School of Media & Performing Arts.

Julia and Chris from Theatre Absolute said they were aware of the locally renowned status of the Fishy Moores chippy (Plate 28), (“Its name had a legacy” (Julia, Interview, 21/05/2019)) and had kept the original signs as symbolic reminders that the site “...was another place for some people”. Aware of the social importance of the site, they noted how some users visited the space due to curiosity about how it had changed since its previous functionality. The familial connections that some audience members had with the chip shop were reflected in the artist’s decision to locate in the premises,

choosing Coventry as a permanent location as it was 'home', with family and friends in the area. After touring for many years, they were also attracted to the central base that the city offered through its regional Midlands location.



Plate 28. Fishy Moores restaurant in The Precinct (Source: Coventry Evening Telegraph)

Located at the end of The Precinct on the westward edge of the city centre (Plate 29), SFT interrupts the predominantly under-developed retail use of the shopping precinct (Harris, 2015; Brighenti, 2013). The Precinct has increasingly become vacant, and footfall decreased, becoming 'leftover' space where the potential for dynamic urban processes is overlooked. Positioned on the spatial and temporal margins of the city, Theatre Absolute run SFT – seen in Plate 30 - as an alternative imaginary of the space, whilst the de-commodified storefront is in stark contrast to a landscape where dominant economic systems have broken down (Harris, 2015).



Plate 29. The Precinct on the edge of Coventry city centre (Source: Google Maps)



Plate 30. Shop Front Theatre in the unit previously occupied by Fishy Moores (Source: Google Images)

During an interview, the owners of the theatre described how the space originally began after a visit to Chicago:

“They were performing in a storefront, sort of theatre space. So, it was basically just retail shops, no kind of obvious sort of theatre space. And that just seemed like a really interesting and radical idea for us, in terms of where we were at in terms of...becoming so bored with the touring. So, we came back with the idea...why don't we try and find a space, find like a third space...maybe like a shop?

But we had to sort of think about whether it be local authority, whether it be sort of private... But it was just a revolutionary sort

of point where we just thought that could be really interesting if we were to work in a shop, or in a space, where we can just make our work and not be touring, but actually be static...and build a relationship with an audience over a longer period of time rather than touring around and not really knowing who the audience was...”

(Chris, Interview, 21/05/2019)

Rather than the ephemeral experience of touring, the artists saw potential in pursuing what Bromberg (2009) terms as a possibility space where different ideas, life experiences and worldviews are brought together through encounters with others. The shop front façade has the potential to interact with the visual politics of a space, disrupting both the rhythms and aesthetics of the city (Harris, 2015; McCormack, 2002). International ideas have inspired the space. SFT is aware of its attraction as a unique creative site (“We’re the only one in the country” (Chris, Interview, 21/05/2019)), but its emergence has been reliant on global flows of creative exchange (i.e., via Chicago). This network of ideas has also inspired others to develop creative sites in The Precinct, with FabLab Coventry and Artspace’s Arcadia Gallery locating in nearby vacant lots.

Similar to Mess Hall in Chicago (Bromberg, 2009), SFT was provided with a rent-free tenancy by Coventry City Council. Beyond the social clauses of the agreement, such as the involvement of local communities and audiences, this tenancy also supported the local authority’s real-estate interests. With a number of vacant shops in The Precinct following the 2008 recession, Theatre Absolute marketed SFT as a solution. They summarised their proposal as, “We've got this idea, but we've got no money. Really trust us, we've got quite a good history...Do you want to be first, or do you want to be the last? So, we were cheeky” (Julia, Interview, 21/05/2019). Chris also reflected on the political landscape of the time, describing a “New Labour heyday when everything was all rosy” (Chris, Interview, 21/05/2019), highlighting the importance of political landscapes when the New Labour government had heavily emphasised the economically generative nature of the creative economy (Oakley, 2015).

The middleground nature of this space is also highlighted through this process (Cohendet et al., 2010), exploiting existing contacts and their personal knowledge of the council to secure themselves a low-cost alternative to other studio spaces. It also allowed them to further explore their creative production in a physical space *and* offer a site for cultural consumption. Developing the space required a grassroots effort from within the local community, with the owners recollecting:

“We had eight chairs, and we got those chairs from another organisation who had some patio sets... it was like guys, we've got this idea. But we need a few tables. And then, “I've got two sofas, do you want them?”. I think people were genuinely, sort of, right in the heart of the second recession. Like, yeah, we just need that local thing. That genuine community spirit of helping people. That isn't cliché. That is genuinely what happened. That goodwill, all that sort of supporting each other happened in the early days of the company but has kind of continued with the Shop Front and the other organisations who use it”

(Julia, Interview, 21/05/2019)

The material elements of the space play a key role in disrupting the aesthetics of The Precinct (Harris, 2015). The site was decorated with ad hoc materials and furnishings more traditionally associated with domestic spaces (below in Plate 31). This tangible ‘...placing of one world in another’ (Ranciere, 2010: 38) offers new alternatives in a space traditionally associated with consumption and the spending of disposable income. A sense of fantasy and discovery is denoted through the décor, transforming the shopfront into a site for serious play (Pratt and San Juan, 2014), whereby urban social issues can be addressed through imaginative creative production and theatre-making. Again, the middleground nature of the space is highlighted through the reliance on community generated resources to overcome the financial precarity that comes with existing beyond the formalised, regularly funded cultural ecosystem.



Plate 31. Promotional pictures of the interior of Shop Front Theatre (Source: Theatre Absolute)

Sharing is an intrinsic part of SFT, which views itself as a democratic space for all people in the city to use. The owners were keen to uncouple SFT from ‘traditional’, definitions regarding the purpose of a theatre, defining themselves as a ‘non-institutionalised’ place. They expanded on this point, saying:

“[We are] just trying not to define it too much. Because we certainly don't like to be called a venue here. We don't like to be called a space...otherwise, you will then get defined into a certain type of arts culture...[we host] a range of activities of which we're

the resident theatre company. [But] we're none of those mainstream things”

(Julia, Interview, 21/05/2019)

Not defining the purpose of SFT was a tactical response to the boundaries often placed around art forms and venues, thus removing limitations of their creative potential. SFT can be seen to offer ‘...a more inclusive alternative to the spectacular spaces of urban creativity’ (Bain, 2010:74). This can be seen through the owner’s strategic dismissal of the space as ‘mainstream’, which they feel limits the discourse and potential of creativity (Hracs, 2010). This was also discussed in relation to the physical structure of SFT:

“It's the perception of what theatre is – is [it] a building, an art form? This, sort of, perception of how culture is propped up by perceived ideas of what culture is. We want to try and challenge that as much as possible. By sort of saying, you know, that one end of the street is the mainstream offer - which is fine, because we need big stages, we need that kind of access. But you walk down the street, there's a different approach...which is still professional, it's still valid, but it's not the same”

(Chris, Interview, 21/05/2019)

The vernacular space provided by the old fish and chip shop is seen as an experimental move away from traditional conceptions of theatre (where audiences can “...just go to a normal black box studio for that experience” (Julia, Interview, 21/05/2019)). Theatre Absolute say that their users find the space to be non-institutionalised, describing it as ‘a safe space’ where difficult issues can be explored by users, “...rather than thinking, ‘I'm being watched, or I can't be open’” (Julia, Interview, 21/05/2019).

Spatial limitations, such as only having access to six lights, were used to frame how the space itself affected their creativity. This alternative and ‘authentic’ energy of a space is regarded to be a natural site for creative processes, and thus creative people (Hracs

and Jakob, 2015). This spatial distinction is arguably emulated by the wider UKCoC process: where the location, landscape and identity of a city like Coventry alters perceptions regarding the creative potential of a place. Successful bidders offer an alternative reality of culture, in comparison to overarching policy presumptions of creative potential being locked in larger cities. Therefore, these alternative spatialities can imaginatively critique dominating narratives of creativity (Pratt and San Juan, 2014).

However, SFT face challenges to their creative production, mostly relating to financial uncertainty. Despite being rent-free, Theatre Absolute rely on project-to-project funding as an organisation. The SFT houses the projects, but the artistic output does not often generate income beyond operational costs. Pop-ups and alternative creative spaces can camouflage the lack of infrastructural support for small-scale organisations (Harvie, 2013), in comparison to the more regular resources provided to upperground institutions with formalised, steady incomes.

Utilising vacant lots can thus be seen as a practice which highlights the spatialities of austerity urbanism (Ferreri, 2015; Peck et al., 2013): whereby third spaces are seen as economically redundant and are gifted to organisations who lack the financial resources to secure long-term leases. The 'borrowed' nature of the theatre highlights the precarity of both place and labour within the creative sector, as (often temporary) spaces can undermine the need for long-term and permanent resources (Harris, 2015).

This can embed middleground spaces into an overarching narrative of economic justification, framed as a process which may re-attract long-term commercial investment to vacant areas. This process arguably undermines the artists own position and increases the chance of long-term displacement following the economic revival of the site (Harris, 2015). This process is highlighted through original conversations with the local authority representative who managed the shop, which Julia recalls:

“He did say at first, ‘Look, I’m a commercial properties manager, I need to make money for the city’...when our designers and actors and audience come here, they also go off and have coffee,

they go to other places. They do the car park again. So, there's also the secondary spend”

(Julia, Interview, 21/05/2019)

During early proposals, the artists had to frame the economic incentives that SFT would provide within The Precinct. As will be discussed in Chapter 7, Chris and Julia highlighted the process of learning the language of the local authority . They studied property policies and used Empty Property Tax as a route to propose the costs saved by providing SFT with a tenancy – a tempting offer for a local authority who often face budget cuts. The perceived need for local authorities and developers to fill ‘urban voids’ (Colomb, 2012: 135 in Harris, 2015) leads to the support of developments with temporary uses, as a way to distract from vacancies and the flight of local capital (Deslandes, 2013). It can also sanitise spaces by allowing intermediary organisations to monitor a space and prevent illegal uses, through what Harris (2015) identifies as a hierarchy of temporary usage whereby homeless and marginalized groups have the least accessibility.

However, the process has provided a space which encourages sociocultural (and often non-economic) interaction in the city. Invaluable social relations can be released from private domains through interactions which occur in spaces without a quantified payment expected (Bromberg, 2009). Grapevine often use SFT and have compared it to “...a sitting room in the middle of the city centre”. This aligns with the argument for more public usage of high street and shopping areas as places of leisure and rest alongside spending, with Millington (2019: online) proposing that the town centre should be ‘...almost like the front room of the town’. This can also be attempted at a larger scale using unexpected environments, as the next example will discuss.

6.5.3 Case Study H: Coventry Evening Telegraph Pop-Up (CETPOP-UP)

An overarching narrative amongst local producers was the legacy of the CETPOP-UP art space (see Plates 32, 33 and 34) which repurposed a disused newspaper mill in the city centre before its development into a 1950s-themed hotel complex during 2020/2021 (Hartley, 2018). A 12-month ‘culture takeover’ was facilitated by Alan

Denyer, owner of local company AWD Restorations, and attracted 25,000 people throughout 2017 whilst providing opportunities for over 500 local arts & heritage practitioners (AWD, no date).

The middleground nature of the site is showcased through its brokerage between local business (i.e., AWD Restorations) and the independent artist networks; undertaken by Denyer as a stakeholder with enough financial capital to facilitate the renovating, but also with the aim of providing a space for creative exploration. It was a key site for events during the bidding period, including the first Coventry Biennial and a theatre performance produced by the Belgrade Theatre for UKCoC stakeholders. This example addresses the de-industrialisation of the city, the importance of a seemingly vernacular disused space, and the impact created by ephemeral cultural spaces (Hall, 2012; Edensor et al., 2009).

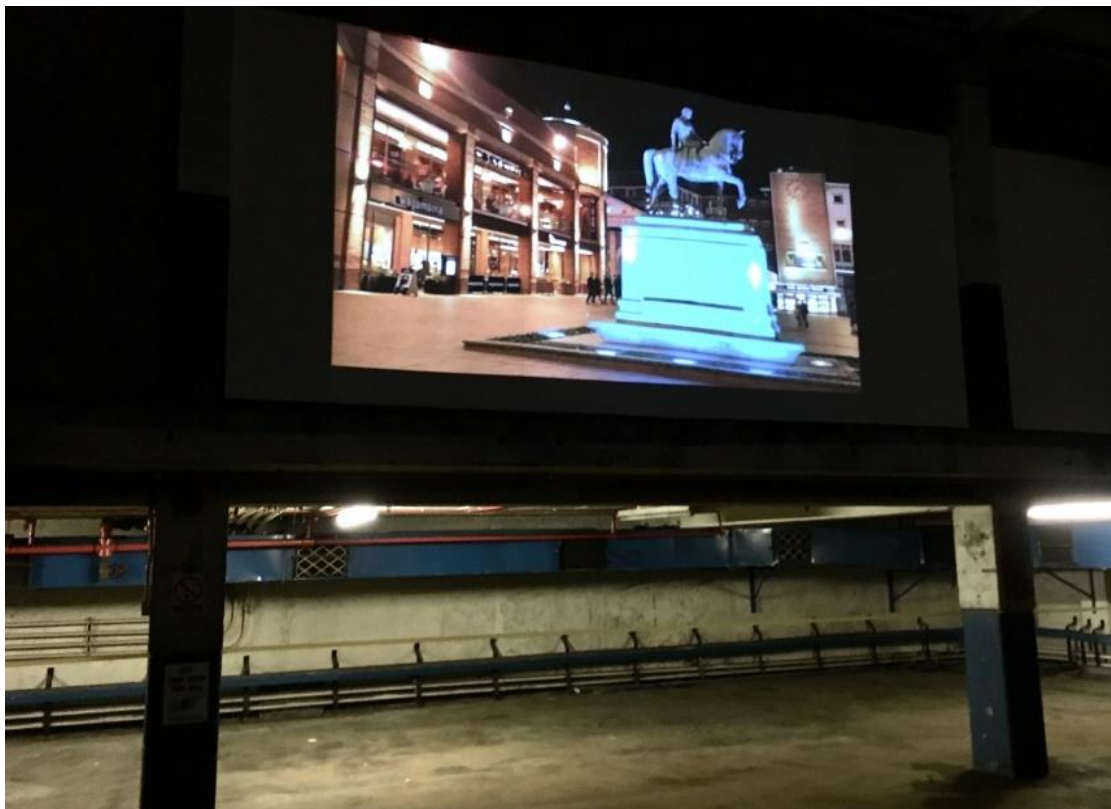


Plate 32. Exhibition held inside the CETPOP-UP, January 2019 (Source: Own Image)



Plate 33. Exhibition held inside the CETPOP-UP, January 2019 (Source: Own Image)



Plate 34. Disused printing mills from the Coventry Evening Telegraph production located inside the CETPOP-UP (Source: Own Image)

Mark (PAM) discussed the CETPOP-UP in relation to Coventry's 'specific barrier' of having few unused post-industrial buildings in comparison to other cities, who have seemingly repurposed more of their industrial sites for creative, artistic usage (such as the Baltic Gallery in Newcastle). He argued that these spaces could facilitate the work of "...artistic people who don't mind, basically, almost squatting in an old factory" (Mark, Interview, 28/10/2019) (see Zukin, 1982). However, the CETPOP-UP was framed as "one of the few opportunities" for how this 'barrier' had been successfully overcome in the city, if only temporarily.

In a conversation after his panel discussion, Dan Thompson (Empty Shops Network, discussed in the introduction of this section) suggested that he had played a role in consulting the CETPOP-UP, where he advised Denyer to "...say yes to every event" in order to create a snowball effect and increase the exposure of the space to a wider cultural network (Thompson, FD extract, 27/02/2019). This seemingly paid off, as the legacy of the site remains strong following its closure. When asking participants to exemplify a key cultural venue in the city, many still pinpointed the CET building. Lewis from SKZ said:

"A good example [of a local cultural venue] would be the CET building. And you know, there could have been some monitoring, and it could have been programmed a bit better. But, you know, you give someone space and they'll do something with it. If you say to any artist, here's a wall, do what you want, something good will come of it"

(Lewis, Interview, 30/04/2019)

Lewis is aware of the limitations with the space, but overall sees the artistic usage as productive and valuable for the city's scene. Susan agreed with this perspective, adding:

"[It was] such a fantastic space to have, so many cool things...like, really site-specific stuff - that sort of mirrored bit where it was

really grotty and there was water on the floor, and there was a walkway around between the space out the back. Really cool”

(Susan, Interview, 30/04/2019)

The perspective from an artist highlights the aesthetic role that the space played in contributing to an ‘authentic’, site-specific experience within a post-industrial space. Consuming art within a ‘really grotty’ space can be seen as a romanticised view of converting manufacturing sites into a place for leisure. This also provides supporting details for how some of the middleground players felt more comfortable in creative sites that had a more semi-formal or informal feel, in comparison to the upperground spaces such as the Herbert Art Gallery.

Mark also suggested that the CETPOP-UP had provided a rare chance for a space to “...be colonised by people with other ideas” (Mark, Interview, 28/10/2019) – highlighting the alternative practices of artists within a landscape focused on retail, but also framing this influx of the creative community as colonisers. Pop-ups cater for the Floridian creative class and can implicitly add to the gentrification process, where real estate forces utilise ‘coolness’ and further redevelop sites into expensive and profit-generating residential complexes (Zukin, 1982), or as seen here, into themed hotels to house temporary tourists – and their visitor spend - in the city. The intermediary position of the middleground is exemplified, with Mark framing the independent artists as those who can provide alternative ideas to a site before it becomes ‘colonised’, co-opted and commodified into an upperground space by formal decisionmakers.

Other cultural producers in the city were more critical: when discussing the CETPOP-UP, Jess (Culture Coventry) said, “Can you really say you’ve made an exhibition space when it’s not accessible?” (Jess, Interview, 14/02/2019), in reference to the same damp floors that Susan had discussed as a key factor of the affective atmosphere of the space (Anderson, 2009). In the process, this feature excludes differently abled bodies from the space, who may have encountered a more negative experience in this inaccessible space.

Questions were raised about how this space can be replicated following its closure, with Denyer proposing a takeover of the disused 'Elephant building': an iconic feature of the city's architectural landscape. Mark said how local cultural producers collectively felt "a little bit surprised" that there had not been a second or similar CET development since winning the bid. He framed this in relation to the short time period between the bid win and the year of celebration:

"[It's] a year and a half on...if you said that to me in December '17 - that by November '19, there still wouldn't be a CET 2 - I'd have been really surprised. I would have expected both the people who have those abilities to create CET 1, to be carrying on, to identify and do that stuff. And for some of those agencies we work with, to have either bought into the concept - and/or been embarrassed into buying into the concept - by the imminence of City of Culture".

(Mark, Interview, 28/10/2019)

Aware of the time pressures created by the UKCoC process, Mark wonders why local decision makers had not developed a similar space following the role that CETPOP-UP played in the UKCoC2021 journey. This highlights the voids which ephemeral middleground sites can leave behind following their short-term repurposing – leading to questions around what barriers exist to halt similar developments from appearing in Coventry. It also shows a sense of loss for middleground spaces within the independent cultural community, whilst other spaces such as FarGo Creative Village were rejected.

6.5.4 Case Study I: FarGo Creative Village

A common criticism of the contemporary creative city is how decision makers tend to ignore practices and forms which are non-commodifiable (Edensor et al., 2009). Middleground spaces are increasingly positioned as infrastructures in which to house economically generative creative classes, balancing on a fine line between independent, semi-formal spaces and formalised, upperground sites with a more

commercial and standardised nature. The ‘creative village’ style of developments - including Boxpark and Pop Brixton (see Plate 35) - has become solidified in regeneration policies (Mould, 2015). Within Coventry, FarGo Village was developed in 2014 as a partnership between Coventry City Council and local company Complex Development Projects, describing itself as ‘...an artistically re-purposed industrial space in Coventry City Centre, designed exclusively for creative, independent businesses and like-minded visitors...’ (FarGo Village, no date).

Located in the Lower Stoke neighbourhood on Far Gosford Street, a historic road with a mixture of medieval and modern buildings once housing silk and ribbon weavers (FarGo Village, no date), the project builds on local creative history. The symbolic importance and heritage of the street has been recognised through local authority conservation action, leading to the FarGo Village creative ‘hub’/anchor project supported by £3.4m of European Regional Development Funds. Fifty units are provided for creative producers to sell their products, whilst inviting ‘like-minded’ cultural consumers to visit. Despite this formal investment and governing, FarGo is arguably framed as a community-based middleground site for cultural production.

On the periphery of the city centre, the development includes a repurposed Victorian cycle factory and shipping container installations to create an indoor/outdoor marketplace (see Plates 36, 37 and 38). Shipping containers have become a regular feature of the creative city, providing mobile and adjustable urban architecture with flexible usage as a remedy for ‘wasted’ space (Harris, 2015). Furthermore, the casual industrial aesthetics of the shipping containers can arguably perform as informal spaces, despite the large-scale investment and meticulous curation of such sites by upperground forces.

At the time of research, a number of occupiers were located in the space alongside street art murals and sculptures, including: a craft brewery; a second-hand bookstore also used as a performance venue; a Vespa moped retailer; a vegan ‘soul food’ eatery; and vintage clothes, vinyl and furniture stalls.



Plate 35. Pop Brixton, a creative village based in South London (Source: [The Resident](#))

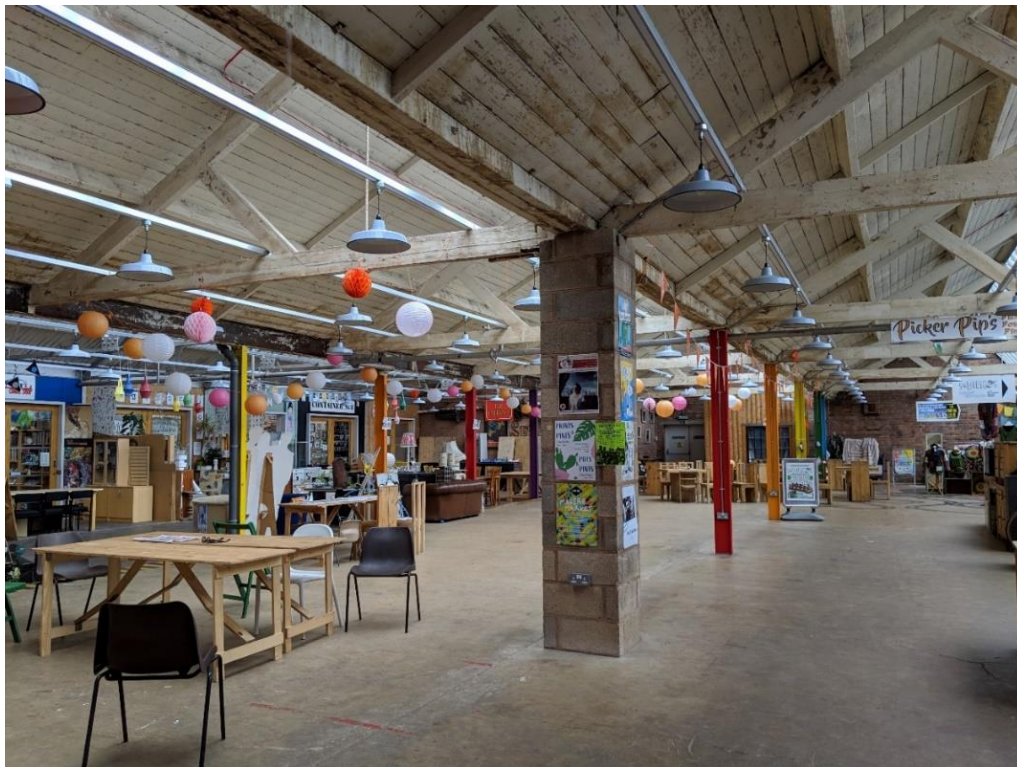


Plate 36. Inside the main warehouse space of FarGo Village (Source: Own Image)



Plate 37. A promotional picture of the shipping container segment of FarGo Village
(Source: FarGo Village)



Plate 38. A wide view of the FarGo site, which also occupies surrounding warehouses
(Source: FarGo Village)

Despite being positioned as a middleground site of cultural production for creative people, FarGo was identified as a 'sell out' space of consumerism by many research participants. The pop-up style development arguably provides a faux – or, perhaps, curated - middleground stage for the materialisation of capitalist flows in Coventry (Bishop and Williams, 2012; Pinder, 2011 in Harris, 2015). As creative places enter the 'mainstream', niche interests or practices become highly susceptible to what Mould (2015) discusses as the co-option of creativity by corporate (i.e., upperground) forces, which can reduce 'indie' symbols and products (i.e., the assets of the under- and middleground) into fashionable commodities. Despite best intentions to develop a meaningful and genuine site of creativity, these processes of over-curation can end up leading to what Hauge and Hraacs (2010) term as the erosion of individuality which can thus dilute the motive to uphold the claim of authenticity (Hauge and Hraacs, 2010).

Peck (2005) also argues that creative-led regeneration can result in prescriptive strategies that prioritise privileged actors rather than the wider urban community, here highlighted by FarGo defining itself as 'exclusively for creative' people and products. Despite hopes to become a leading fixture in Coventry's cultural infrastructure, the dismissal of FarGo by some of the middleground creative network it hoped to attract is of particular interest to my research. Dom discussed how plans emerged a decade ago, when another local arts company used a warehouse as a test site:

“There was a big furniture unit, which is now the Market Hall. And that was all still open and busy...it was in this weird limbo period where everyone knew that it was being cleared out. And Ian Harrabin [Complex Development Projects] was doing all these...let's call them, consultation events [sarcastic tone].

Talking Birds got this space for a year because it was already empty and had been empty for some time...they got a little bit of money; I think from the council. And [Talking Birds] just went - right. It's open to applications. We're going to give it out for a month. We'll give you 100 quid, or 50 quid - it was an almost meaningless amount of money - and the keys for a month. And all

we ask of you is at the end of the month you share something, like, what you've done with it”

(Dom, Interview, 12/04/2019)

Local authorities appear to have prompted the development process by investing into small-scale artistic activity within post-industrial sites, priming the area for adaptive use as a creative site. Empty warehouses became ‘meanwhile’ spaces with temporary experimental usage as potential art spaces (Chung et al., 2018). Local independent artists managed the space and its purpose, encouraging individual creative responses and fuelling further cultural production through micro-funding.

The apparent success of this process led to full state-led investment into the development plans, hoping to build a cultural ‘anchor project’ to stimulate more creative labour and activity. Throughout 2019, however, local cultural producers were largely sceptical when discussing FarGo. Dom wondered about the twelve micro-funded artists and their long-term connections with FarGo in the present day, saying, “I would suggest fuck all [laughs]. Like us” (Dom, Interview, 12/04/2019). Overall, a sense of communal rejection of the space emerged during interviews, with a sense of FarGo aligning with upperground processes rather than serving the middleground of Coventry’s cultural ecosystem.

Artists often consider themselves to be authentic and original, and typically avoid association with commerciality. This was reflected on by Julia, who discussed FarGo in relation to Shop Front Theatre:

“The difference is that we had no real plan...because we're artists. It was an organic approach. Those wonderful original ideas are the ones that usually mean something...they're organic, whereas perhaps a development space, it turns into a village, right? A pop up – a lot of those in London have that that kind of thing. They're kind of pre-determined, prescribed...the craft, that kind of niche, bespoke-y feel of it. It's all pre-planned. It's all part of an advertising, branding thing”

(Julia, Interview, 21/05/2019)

Using cultural ecosystem terminology to describe their process, this producer positions FarGo as a space which is *inorganic* and fuelled by economic imperatives. The creative practices at FarGo are defined as ‘prescribed’, rather than emerging from fortuitous lived experiences seen as distinct to genuine artistic practice, creating an imagined geography of inauthenticity and synthetic practice. Furthermore, some cultural producers scrutinised the purpose of the site as governed by top-down decisionmakers, rather than identifying the needs of local artists:

“I think there’s this thing with tick boxing where you go, ‘Oh, we’ve got a cultural quarter now – tick that box’. But actually, I think a warehouse space with really cheap, accessible studios and you could have a café and a bar and a sort of, workshop space. That kind of needs to exist”

(Anon, Interview)

On the developer’s website, FarGo is defined as a ‘bohemian quarter’ in the city which has ‘...similarities to the early regeneration of the Camden Lock area of London’ (Complex Development Projects, no date). Other early marketing promotions described the space as ‘Coventry’s answer to Camden Lock Market’ (Rodger, 2014), highlighting Ian Harrabin’s (owner of Complex Development Projects) early career links with the Camden Market redevelopment project. Replicating a popular tourist destination from the capital city within Coventry arguably showcases the homogeneity in urban creative policy facilitated by the popular prescriptive strategies (Florida, 2002; Landry, 2000), and the wannabe ‘global city’ nature of these places. The limited porosity for under- and middleground users, alongside a spatial identity based on specific existing sites, can create a lack of openness which unintentionally excludes ideas and involvement from wider creative communities (Edensor et al., 2009).

Comparisons also impacted the perspectives of prospective users, with multiple participants discussing this without prompts. Aaron (Etch & Pin), a local creative business owner, said that FarGo is not somewhere he frequents regularly as “...there’s

no one there...it should have the bustling Camden Market effect” (Aaron, Interview, 19/03/2019). By attaching FarGo to an existing space with a distinct spatial identity, the potential for individuality of the site and its unique affective atmosphere is arguably constrained. Ryan (Coventry Biennial) was more critical of the site, saying that FarGo had tried to create an ‘East London effect’ which he believed would be considerably less successful in Coventry (Ryan, Interview, 14/03/2019). This perspective on the regeneration style was supported through tweets by Harrabin, who can be seen in Plate 39 to be championing the importance of clusters and the ‘Shoreditch effect’ in Coventry and Warwickshire’s redevelopment to MIPIM , a premier real estate company.



Plate 39. Ian Harrabin presenting on Coventry to MIPIM in 2019 (Source: Twitter)

Replicating these global city regeneration blueprints is arguably counterproductive: the wider UKCoC programme boasts a strategy which is sensitive to the differing social and spatial contexts in Coventry, an approach which is arguably not reflected in this cultural infrastructure development. The process of replication can also be seen regionally, as Complex Development Projects have now been given approval to work with Warwickshire District Council to develop a similar marketplace in Leamington Spa, building on its reputation as a video game industry hub (Mateos-Garcia and Bakhshi, 2016). The cookie cutter process of cultural quarter development in the region could be seen as stifling creativity, rather than celebrating the locale.

Finally, FarGo's location slightly outside of the assumed city centre boundary was mentioned by multiple participants. Aaron justified his avoidance of FarGo by saying, "[FarGo is] that little bit out of the way, you have to make a conscious decision to go there. It's commitment to go up" (Aaron, Interview, 19/03/2019). Lewis related this back to the central business district and the physical restriction by the concrete ring road: "I think everyone's focused more on the ring road than spending outside of the city centre - bar FarGo, which people didn't even know about" (Lewis, Interview, 30/04/2019).

The perceived distance of the site is positioned as a spatial barrier and impacts people's decisions to visit the space, despite it being 0.7 miles from the main square in the city centre. Ed (local councillor) also reflected on how this would affect potential visitors from outside the city, saying "Well, if you're not from Coventry, how would you know that's it's even there? That's the truth" (Ed, Interview, 07/06/2019). The cultural producers within the ecosystem benefitted from insider knowledge and local awareness which would make FarGo seem more accessible, yet still framed the site as too distant from the city centre – some even calling it 'a dead end' (Jason, Interview, 28/10/2019).

Other participants were less critical of the location, but instead referred to the wider impact of the creative regeneration on the surrounding area. Mark defended the locational choices, saying:

"Personally, I think it's in the right location... The problem is, if you over-police something, that you end up taking something away from it. So, you know, some of Ian Harrabin's work with the buildings is lovely... But I'm wondering whether he's actually cleaned up some of the spaces too much. And whether some of those might have been better being, sort of, more colonised by people who are then perhaps not making as good a job, but that would have made something slightly more, sort of, authentic or something like that"

(Mark, Interview, 28/10/2019)

Here, Mark adds to the narrative of FarGo as an inauthentic middleground space by arguing that the space is over-policed – once again highlighting the blurred boundary between the semi-formal identity of the space and the formalised governance of the activity by upperground stakeholders. This makes him feel that an authentic sense of place has been removed (Zukin, 1995; Massey, 2005).

Furthermore, the use of the term ‘colonise’ highlights how certain groups have been given the power to claim space, particularly creative consumers, which have been argued to demonstrate parallels with the practices of settler-colonisers through their pioneering actions which can lead to displacement (Myambo, 2018). This can lead to places not having what Straw (2002) identifies as one of the vital attributes of a scene: multi-dimensionality, with contributions from a mixture of people from different ethnic, age, class, gender and occupational backgrounds. Exclusivity can lead to hierarchical structures which diminish the important informal and spontaneous interactions that come from interconnected nodes in the cultural ecosystem (ibid.). As Edensor et al. (2009: 16) argue, the ‘...spatially limited notion of the cluster is unable to ascertain the spread and complexity of many more extensively distributed and dynamic creative processes’, leading to a sociospatial boundedness.

Other producers spoke more frankly about how they found the Far Gosford Street area had evolved. Dom pinpoints FarGo Village and wider regeneration on the street as having a negative impact on the long-term usage and atmosphere of the area:

“What Ian was trying to flush out through a lot of the heritage work that took place along Far Gosford Street - to diversify, as he put it, the businesses that went up Far Gosford Street. And of course, in order to diversify [sarcasm], you also have to kick some people out and bring other people in, right? ...Habibis, 15 years ago, was the only place you could buy a cup of coffee at midnight. There was just zero other options in Coventry. Like, an actual cup of coffee as opposed to Nescafe in the pub, right? Barber shops open late into the night, late night shopping, pizza places and

chicken places or the pubs and bars that were up there as well...[but] during the day, it always just kind of felt a bit grimy and lifeless. And so, I get that.”

(Dom, Interview, 12/04/2019)

This quote openly discusses the importance of diverse businesses which cater for varying tastes during temporal periods which differ to standard retail outlets and the possibility of sites around FarGo being displaced through regeneration developments. The term ‘diverse’ is arguably redefined by developers to cater for exclusive communities with high levels of cultural capital and hence are seen to be more economically productive. However, this reflection is also paralleled by Dom’s own perception that the area was ‘grimy and lifeless’ during the daytime. Gentrification processes can be present in both the physical built environment and the mental space of individuals, as culture becomes associated with new flagship developments and downgrades the cultural value produced in less glamorous contexts (Comunian and Mould, 2014).

Small-scale creative districts have the power to connect cultural consumption and production with upmarket housing and retail (O’Connor, 2014), especially via consumers who generate knowledge on the trends, styles and tastes, which in turn attracts more cultural consumers (and often developers) to the area (Oakley, 2015). This can be seen through the location of the original Coventry 2021 offices, within a redeveloped historic house on the street and a few metres from FarGo – both of which are linked to Complex Development Projects. This decision symbolically links the upperground UKCoC decisionmakers with Coventry’s developing cultural district, attaching the team to the main company which is redeveloping a number of post-industrial and heritage sites around the city for cultural and tourism uses.

Interview data from the local independent arts sector highlights how some cultural producers actively avoid the area and do not see it as a site which upholds the middleground creative values found at the Canal Basin, Shop Front Theatre or the CETPOP-UP. Instead, it largely attracts cultural consumers who may believe that they are consuming in an authentic ‘creative’ place - one that naturally transformed from a warehouse into a creative retail village without overarching upperground guidance,

neoliberal ideals, and prescriptive urban policy strategies (Florida, 2002; Peck, 2005; Zukin, 1995). As Zukin and Braslow (2011: 132) argue, the life cycle of creative districts like FarGo highlight a 'cautionary tale of spatialization followed by re-commodification', with the informality existing at the opposite side of the creative anatomy spectrum will be discussed in the upcoming section.

6.6 Underground and Vernacular Spaces of Creativity

Contrasting against the highly programmed nature of the upperground, and the organic but over-curated sites of the middleground, vernacular spaces of creativity play a crucial role in generating, maintaining and shaping the underground values of the milieu of cultural production – that being the creativity that takes place outside of the corporate and formalised realm, with a specific focus on creative production and diffusion that emerges from deep interests in various arts and culture practice (Cohendet et al., 2010).

Whilst this is typically associated with subversive practitioners, such as skateboarders and graffiti artists who generate trends, this thesis will apply the underground attributes of invisibility (i.e., practicing beyond the economic markets), proximity and frequent interaction (ibid.) to include vernacular and amateur artists within Coventry. Underground processes are aided by these spaces often being diverse, open and affordable (Leslie and Rantisi, 2011), with the informality and accessibility creating opportunities to encounter different groups and opinions that can enrich creative activity. They perform a deeply social role in the creative city, especially as urban developers continue to construct landscapes around the 'needs' of the creative class (Florida, 2002).

Edensor et al. (2009) argue against contemporary creative quarters being framed as housing dynamic creativity, when vernacular spaces should be acknowledged as sites of everyday activity which continually uncover new possibilities for communities, rather than being seen as bereft of creative activity. However, funding cuts have since severely limited community-led arts activities, but rather than waiting for state-delivered income, everyday users of vernacular cultural spaces have continued to adapt the sites to serve their social and collective needs (ibid.) or relied on project-to-

project funding opportunities. Vernacular spaces were frequently discussed as sites of activity and interaction around Coventry. This included cafés, pubs, libraries, community centres and the street – all of which are imprinted with social identities and create affective, expressive values within the material landscape (ibid.). It is to some of these underground spaces that I now turn.

6.6.1 Libraries

Coventry's public libraries acted as key underground nodes in the cultural ecosystem. There are currently seventeen community libraries around Coventry (see Figure 3), with the main Central Library in the city centre. These locations are used for a number of socially inclusive - often free - activities, including parent-toddler groups, computer skills sessions and creative workshops. The public nature of these sites arguably detaches the space from economic instrumentality, hosting creative practices which ‘...distract the producer from the travails of everyday’ (ibid: 10).

As mentioned in the Chapter 5, Positive Images Festival (PIF) used Central Library for planning meetings, with the public facing and inclusive nature of the community-focused institution aligning with the ethos of the festival. Relationships developed within the library facilitated the establishment of PIF, after the core team met whilst working at the site during the 1990s. Library representatives who attended meetings expressed their desire to hold more exhibitions, using the example of their self-curated LGBT+ month display to highlight their commitment to inclusivity (FD extract, 27/02/2019). While small-scale, these exhibitions can inform and impact the daily users of the space in a free and accessible manner.



Figure 3. A map of Coventry's public libraries (Source: Coventry City Council)

The libraries were also used for the Making Project, a travelling weaving workshop throughout 2019 funded by various stakeholders including the CCoCT (see Plate 40). Stopping at various public spaces and festivals, the workshops invited visitors to learn weaving whilst co-creating a tapestry of Coventry's skyline. After attending the workshop at Stoke Library, it was clear to me that these events provided a creative outlet for a mostly elderly demographic, but also engaged with children visiting the library.

By visiting vernacular spaces across the city such as public libraries, the work was exposed to audiences with rich cultural and socio-economic diversity (Leslie and Rantisi, 2011), and provided a free-to-access and informal opportunity to learn and share creative skills with no booking required. The final location of the tapestry was the upperground location of Coventry Cathedral, where the formal settings of the site were utilised to exhibit the tapestry within a renown and symbolic cultural institution, with Graham Sutherland's iconic 'Christ in Glory in the Tetramorph' (1962) tapestry providing a backdrop to this locally produced artwork (see Plate 41).



Plate 40. A weaving workshop hosted by The Making Project at Stoke Library in March 2019 (Source: Own Image)



Plate 41. The final tapestry of Coventry’s skyline co-created by participants in The Making Project, displayed in Coventry Cathedral (Source: [The Making Project](#))

Libraries were also overtly identified as key underground sites through a mapping exercise during a roundtable hosted by the Trust and the Craft Council, which invited local craft groups to discuss the role of ‘making’ within a UKCoC at FarGo Village. This was a positive sign that upperground decisionmakers were seeking to understand and legitimise vernacular sites of artistic activity and the event drew a largely elderly and feminine population of knitters, weavers, and makers. As mentioned in the previous section, attendees were invited to use their crochet skills to artistically map the key locations of crafting in Coventry (seen below in Plates 42 and 43).



Plate 42. Crochet map of Coventry completed by participants at the Crafts Council/CCoCT Crafts roundtable (Source: Own Image)



Plate 43. Participants creating the map at the Crafts Council/CCoCT Crafts roundtable (Source: Own Image)

It became evident that crafting practices were often embedded within community spaces (Markusen, 2004), rather than upper- or middleground spaces with clear identities as arts centres (although some were included, including the Belgrade Theatre, which regularly hosted a crafts afternoon). However, many groups used public libraries as their base - for example, in the neighbourhoods of Finham and Foleshill. Crafters also mapped local stockists for their materials, such as the independent Busy Fingers wool shop in The Precinct (a site I visited often during my childhood, as my Great-Aunty worked on the tills there for many years).

Other vernacular locations included community centres, such as the Hagar Centre in Willenhall. The map clearly depicted the importance of everyday places as essential cultural sites, noting the invisibility of many of the upperground and middleground spaces that had featured heavily in creative regeneration planning. Vernacular spaces with underground attributes can provide a more accurate representation of Coventry's creative communities, due to the social, inclusive and community-based nature of these activities (Evans, 2005: 976). When asked which locations were missing from the map at the end of the session, the group replied that there were other craft sites within hospitals and care homes in the city, reflecting the elderly community in attendance.

Alternatively, younger participants in the research also mentioned the importance of vernacular spaces for their creative production. SKZ often foregrounded 'ordinary' and underground locations of Coventry on their covers (Plate 44), including unremarkable electricity boxes as the cover for Issue 1 and featuring Coventry Point (as discussed earlier in the Territorial Stigma section) in Issue 2. As Markusen and Gadwa (2010) highlight, involving local contexts is crucial for achieving an authentic creative city. Focusing on themes of ordinariness within the city can be seen as more inclusive and relatable than using the 'creative' sites often circumscribed by top-down or consumption-oriented stakeholders (Pratt, 2008; Peck, 2005). Furthermore, the gritty images aligned with the underground nature of the artists featured, who were often also long-term members of Coventry's skateboarding scene.



Plate 44. Front covers of Secret Knock Zine, Volume 1 : Issue 1 and Issue 2 (Source: Own Image)

However, Lewis also mentioned the library as a key site for the zine – but as a site for marketing and distribution rather than cultural production (Leslie and Rantisi, 2011), performing his middleground positionality to explore and exploit the resources available to him through brokerage with this underground site:

“This is also kind of a trade secret that we’re gonna expose and maybe the library don’t want people to know this, but they have pigeonholes in the [Central] library that get sent out to all libraries in the city. So, if they allow you to put something in the pigeonholes then it means that it goes out to every library... I took about 60 [zines]. Now I can kind of say they’re distributed citywide because they’re in all the libraries”

(Lewis, Interview, 30/04/2019)

Lewis seems to show self-awareness regarding the spatial limitations of SKZ, which can lead to (un)intentional selectivity of audiences, especially if distribution practices focus only on places which are considered in relation to personal perceptions of where is suitably ‘competent’ for creativity within the city (Lawler, 2005) – for example, the typical middle- and upperground spaces previously discussed. It also highlights the key role of public library workers as cultural intermediaries (Virani and Pratt, 2016), and the importance of these vernacular spaces as underground sites to distribute knowledge to a wider audience. However, other vernacular sites are more valuable to encounter in person, which the next section will discuss.

6.6.2 Domestic and the Street

Other everyday locations of creativity included the home and the street (Edensor et al., 2009), with domestic spaces often discussed in this research rather than the scale of an entire street. During the Crafts Roundtable map-making (Plate 42 and 43), crochet markers had labelled ‘my house’ onto the base map, indicating the creative production undertaken – often invisibly - within the home (FD extract, 22/02/2019). Discussions during the Coventry Caribbean Association meeting also recognised the important role of the bedroom as a ‘base’ for creativity, where young people were making music due

to the lack of accessible or affordable communal spaces for those interested in sound production. An attendee questioned how the Trust was planning to access this important domestic network of intimate spaces; Bhathena replied that the local community should inform their neighbourhood producer, in order to ‘unlock’ this space (FD extracts, 28/05/2019).

Initial bid documents discussed the opportunity for the programme to include an official event called ‘Streets of Culture’ (now ‘21 Streets’), which aimed to showcase ‘culture for all, on your doorstep’, through street-based, community-led celebrations. Previous cultural events have framed the home as inspirational sites of domestic creativity, such as the ‘Festival in My House’ micro-programme funded by Manchester International Festival 2018 (MIF, 2018). ‘Streets of Culture’ in Coventry was framed as an opportunity for members of the public to visit ‘previously undiscovered areas of the city to meet the residents and share in their cultural celebration’, encouraging an audience which is civically minded and spatially aware of local cultural practices. Furthermore, this emphasis on the domestic aligns with the underground values of creativity that do not involve corporate logic (Cohendet et al., 2010).

A key example of this domestic and street-based approach was PAM’s ‘Imagine Willenhall’ project. Community engagement workshops took place within the Hagar Centre, with the final exhibition presented within/around the community centre during the annual resident led ‘Willen’All 2Gether’ event in August 2019. Located parallel to the retail precinct in Willenhall, many audience members diverted from their shopping trip or walk from the bus stop to cross over and view the photograph panels.

The visual images triggered many personal stories that would have otherwise been invisible, including: a couple who had been married on the morning that the photograph of the same local church was taken; a woman viewing an image of three children atop of a burnt out car and recognising the boy she used to babysit; two strangers observing an image of the precinct together to identify the name of the now closed sweet shop; and a retired domestic worker from the local hostel telling stories about scandalous antics from their annual party.

While the images were not recent, they drew in an inter-generational audience (FD extracts, 17/08/2019) (see Plate 45). Older people spoke fondly of their homes on the estate, which had been brand new. Younger families with pushchairs stopped to look, with the parents often born and raised in Willenhall and telling the children about the area from the perspective of their own childhood. These deeply personal encounters combine the physical landscape with a visual creative practice to uncover local narratives whilst creating new knowledge within a specific neighbourhood. As Edensor et al. (2009: 10) argue, vernacular creativity ‘...possesses power to transform space and the everyday lives of ordinary people to reveal and illuminate the mundane as a site of assurance, resistance, affect and potentialities’.



Plate 45. Willenhall residents interacting with the Imagine Willenhall project by Photo Archive Miners (Source: Own Image)

The potent social impact of these encounters arguably cannot be measured economically but can produce feelings of civic identity and unity (Burgess, 2006), within vernacular spaces which may not be typically identified as cultural. The positive response to the Imagine Willenhall exhibition highlights how creative content which is locally sensitive and includes overlooked sites of everyday interaction may have a greater chance of connecting with communities, who feel included in the narrative of

place. As Lefebvre (2006 [1991]: 362) states, ‘the user’s space is lived, not represented’. Inclusion of vernacular spaces, such as the Hagard Centre and the wider Willenhall landscape, as key sites of cultural production and consumption may allow local residents to attach their lived experience to artistic content which is truly socially engaged (Courage, 2017), rather than feel the work has been ‘parachuted’ in as *for them* rather than *with them*.

6.6.3 Third Spaces

Furthermore, artists working in these areas can expand their own understanding of place and recognise locally important sites of underground or vernacular culture. In an interview with Jess (Culture Coventry), she discussed her role within the local council during the 1980s where she ran events such as ‘cultural crawls’ in pub gardens, after recognising the importance of delivering culture in unconventional sites across Coventry to access different cultural audiences (Jess, Interview, 14/02/2019). ‘Third spaces’ - such as cafes, restaurants and pubs - provide opportunities for casual sociability, often between people from different demographic and socioeconomic backgrounds (Oldenburg and Brissett, 1982; Leslie and Rantisi, 2011). This differs from the functional interactions based around work that can take place in more economically centred middle- or upperground sites.

Mark (PAM) also noted the Willenhall Social Club as a key site for accessing local networks, especially during weekly events with large audiences: “Sunday and Friday, the bingo was packed. And I kind of think, some people don't really realise that they're actually taking part in culture” (Mark, Interview, 28/10/2019). While it may not have the economically productive function of the stereotypical creative city, the bingo event is recognised here as a key cultural activity within Willenhall, as it plays a key role in shaping the social experiences and interactions of a community.

Mark built on this to suggest the working men’s club as other key vernacular locations of culture, with many located around Coventry following its industrial past. Mark viewed these as essential pieces of cultural infrastructure and important sites of working-class recognition. Discussing the role of Friday dances and weekend social

events at the GEC (General Electric Company) club, Mark discussed the embedded and often overlooked cultural role in the city in relation to both labour and leisure:

“[Coventry] had this...irony. All that [cultural] infrastructure, was actually - effectively - provided by people's own work... those ballrooms came out of the profits of the company. So, they were generated by the workforce that worked there. They were sort of community-generated resources, but they were massive resources. And that's the journey that Coventry's been on over the last 40 years is, what replaces that? I think what Coventry does do is people do things on their own and get things done with very little support because we've had that history of it. But that doesn't mean you shouldn't be supporting and nurturing and developing those things”.

(Mark, Interview, 28/10/2019)

Noting the various levels of private and independent financial support which allowed these spaces to function, Mark questions the role of future cultural spaces in very different funding environment. Furthermore, globalization and outsourcing has altered the relationship between workers and their companies, who may now function transnationally and be less embedded as providers of work and leisure opportunities in a local area (Raikhan et al., 2014). Florida (2002) is somewhat dismissive of ‘blue-collar’ leisure activities, instead prioritising the tastes of the ‘new’ middle class who are seen to be culturally omnivorous and cosmopolitan, and thus free from ties to specific places or traditions - especially when older audiences tend to frequent these sites, rather than younger audiences who are framed as key UKCoC beneficiaries (Boland et al., 2018). The contemporary social environment of the creative city has altered the material urban landscape for both work and leisure, as co-workspaces and trendy middleground bars become the preferred sites of creative interaction and replace the industrial, underground roots of the city.

This evolution of post-work drinks was noted in conversations with the SKZ founders (Interview, 30/04/2019), who positioned Draper’s – a local bar – as one of their

favoured cultural spots in the city. With wooden booths, craft beer taps and a balcony overlooking the Cathedral, Draper's was framed as an important and informal location for middleground cultural producers to exchange ideas and hang out (Markusen, 2004). Post-work drinking strongly appeals to creative workers, especially those without regular employment or with solitary working conditions; the after-work drink provides an opportunity to unwind and socialise, whilst also finding contacts and new projects (Oakley and O'Brien, 2016). Third spaces also become sites of informal exhibition and display for local artists (Leslie and Rantisi, 2011), which Lewis noted through a ledge halfway down the staircase with a windowsill which was casually used as a space to leave listings, posters and other creative content to the wider middleground community – thus a key location for distributing their zine.

Susan discussed how much she liked the 'vibe' of the place (Susan, Interview, 30/04/2019), noting the affective atmosphere created by the interior décor (Anderson, 2009) and the punters it attracted. Cultural work is often imagined as being non-routine and flexible, allowing producers to adopt to the 'drop in any time' mentality of third spaces (Banks, 2007; Rantisi and Leslie, 2009). The location of the bar is in the city centre, opposite to iconic cultural sites such as the Herbert Art Gallery and Coventry Cathedral, and a short walk from the main Coventry University campus and School of Art and Design – making it a prime location for capturing a young, creative population. However, the emphasis placed on these fashionable middleground spaces by the research participants highlights how vernacular, underground sites can be overlooked for their critical role as a cultural outlet within the wider ecosystem, which can lead to a dangerous path to homogeneity in the creative city.

6.7 Places: Conclusions

This chapter has attempted to summarise how local artists perceive the cultural infrastructure available within Coventry, using the anatomical concepts of the upper-, middle- and underground (Cohendet et al., 2010) to explore where is identified as a useful and/or desirable site in the cultural ecosystem. These spatial associations noted by the middleground community allows us to document which places were valued by independent artists as sites for cultural production, consumption and/or networking

during the build-up period in 2019. This in-depth and personal narration of sites of cultural labour – both formal and informal – expands the relational mapping of Coventry’s cultural ecosystem and foregrounds the lived experiences of independent artists (Oakley and O’Brien, 2016; Granger and Hamilton, 2010).

The data collected highlights how the sites discussed have encapsulated the past whilst attending to the evolution of present-day creative Coventry. The perceptions shared often reflected on the place-bound nature of cultural narratives within material structures, where previous inscriptions are encountered and generated by various generations (Allen and Hollingworth, 2013; Nayak, 2006). It also highlights the penetrative role that territorial stigma can play in shaping a sense of place based on generational lived experiences and pervasive imaginations of a city. A continuing negative reputation of Coventry is reinforced in official documents as well as comments collected on the ground, showing how a negative sense of place can shape cultural programming. However, these baseline narratives captured from producers during the build-up period could be important for assessing improvements in civic pride over the longitudinal period of the UKCoC2021 title.

Alongside the wider sense of place, the personal identity of the research participants featured within discussions of sites which held individual importance and had shaped their wider cultural practice. However, this personification and emotional nature of place is also tactically co-opted during the UKCoC bidding process, as an attempt to overcome the spatial identity of cities like Coventry as sites of urban decline or cultural ‘cold spots’ of the UK (House of Commons Culture, Media and Sport Committee, 2017; Gilmore, 2013). What these promotional materials often overlook are the everyday, vernacular locations which are deeply valued by the local communities, such as the pub, the library or domestic space.

These underground sites (here referring to the notion of invisibility (Cohendet et al., 2010)) of creativity are replaced by images of well-attended events in middle- and upperground spaces, which function under more formal governance. This builds on findings from previous research into the creative spaces of Coventry, which concluded that these formalised middleground and upperground sites were ‘out of sync’ with the places frequented by the underground, grassroots cultural producers (Granger and

Hamilton, 2010: 58). Similar conclusions have been drawn from this current research, which caused concern about the embedded upperground/middleground/underground divisions within the build-up to UKCoC2021.

Beyond providing amenities for temporary visitors or developing spaces which attract firm location or external investment (Florida, 2002; Landry, 2000; Richards and Duif, 2019), a sustainable cultural development strategy arguably requires the support of creative spaces which strengthen the social fabric of the sector (Chang and Rubin, 2020). Existing spaces of value should be considered as viable investment opportunities throughout the UKCoC process, leading to facilities which allow for further production and participation rather than focusing efforts on new upperground developments which are out of touch with the needs and ambitions of cultural producers in the middle- and underground (Evans, 2005; Granger and Hamilton, 2010).

Evans and van Heur (2013) argue that creative spaces used by independent artists should resist the attention of cultural policy makers where strategies are seen as instrumental for exposing the socioeconomic value systems provided by the arts, especially those involving contested measurements and evaluations based around concepts such as 'inclusion' and 'cohesion'. This is difficult in a city like Coventry: where financial support and sector capacity building is needed for the small but growing cultural sector but is usually diverted to a small number of upperground cultural institutions – such as the Herbert Art Gallery, Belgrade Theatre and Coventry Cathedral - which are framed as leading sites of creative activity. Furthermore, the transformative role of the UKCoC competition is difficult to dilute following years of promotional materials which have arguably set expectations high for the middleground cultural sector in these cities. Exposing the socially embedded role of non-profitable cultural activity – in vernacular spaces like the Central Library and the Hagar Centre, or middleground sites like the Shop Front Theatre - this chapter supports the notion that the value of creative spaces equally lies in their sociocultural impact.

Chapter 7 - 'Stop Your Messing Around, Better Think of Your Future' Processes of Creative Coventry

7.1 Introduction

This chapter integrates the observations made within Chapter 6 and 7, which have addressed the complex networks of exchange which 'take place' through spatially embedded interactions in key locations (Brown et al., 2000: 446). Rather than focusing solely on the tangible features of the creative city – i.e., the actors (producers, consumers, volunteers and decisionmakers) and facilities (hard infrastructure and visual appearance of the city) (Richards and Duif, 2019) - this chapter will address the cultural ecosystem in relation to wider socioeconomic forces, to deepen understandings on the structures and processes ongoing in Coventry during the build-up period. This includes the *governance*, *neoliberal forces*, and *resistive creativity* around the UKCoC title during 2019.

It hopes to understand how bottom-up creative communities feel that the structures of their sector have been shifted by these intangible forces and decisions, and which imperatives they believe to be guiding the sector changes. The research captured the evolving nature of creative networks (Comunian, 2012), but also the unstable nature of the business models and governance practices within the local cultural sector (for example, the reliance on precarious work and temporary project funding). This is increasingly important to address within a UKCoC - not only as the competition is a relatively recent development in national and local cultural policy, but due to the seismic shift that the programming creates in a place over an intense (but ultimately short) temporal period.

In doing so, this research attends to the everchanging social, spatial and cultural specificities of a place and how this shapes local cultural production (Massey, 1994; Long, 2013). Importantly, it also attends to the criticisms of and resistance to the changing processes within the cultural sector during a tumultuous time of UKCoC

programme development. This adds to the argument that place-based cultural regeneration should continually consider what the local communities value, rather than what is expected to be valued following evaluations of previous competitions and events (Oakley, 2015).

Further analysis of the ethnographic data will discuss a number of issues. Firstly, it will start by examining the evolution of the original bid, discussing the narrative, language and how this evolved in the build-up period. Second, it discusses the economic governance and financial implications of the build-up period, including the labour conditions which resulted for local producers – both directly and indirectly - from the UKCoC funding model. It then examines the resistance to the emerging top-down narratives throughout the build-up.

7.2 From Bid to Build-Up: Timings, Language, Connections

7.2.1 Timings and Temporalities

Everyday life is made of movements, expressions and rhythms, and changes in these can shape our individual sense of place (Massey, 1994; McCormack, 2002). These cultural geographical perspectives can be applied to what van Heur (2010: 190) terms as ‘fast policy’ - whereby policy makers want rapid results from the adoption of largely replicable cultural regeneration techniques. The UKCoC competition is a temporary title but also a forceful phenomenon.

Furthermore, these competitions and tactics are entangled with intangible forces which guide the rhythms of society and economy. McCormack reflects on the importance of analysing the ‘fragments, footnotes and moments drawn from event-full encounters’ (2002: 483), involving various speeds, intensities and affects. This subsection analyses two sets of rhythms: firstly, the official timings which structure the wider UKCoC process and secondly, the temporal identities of the city which are foregrounded by various groups during the early programming.

Firstly, the temporal period of the UKCoC process involves many hours of consultation and bid development. The upcoming winner is announced during the penultimate month of the current titleholder's programme, with Coventry awarded the title in December 2017 while Hull concluded their year of events. Following the award, a three-year planning period commences before hosting the programme throughout the fourth year, within which the next winner is announced. Finally, the city enters an immediate legacy year, where various events and governance structures evolve in order to facilitate sustainable impacts for the cultural sector.

Whilst on a panel to discuss flagship cultural projects in Birmingham, Martin Green (Creative Director of Hull UKCoC2017) argued that the cycle of the UKCoC competition over a four-year period is 'useful', allowing trust-building and partnerships to take place. However, he also stated that this "...depends on what city you're in", using Hull as an example of a city which required more effort during the planning period for UKCoC in comparison to Birmingham, which was seen as 'culturally rich' and 'culturally grown up' in preparation for the Commonwealth Games 2022 programming (Green, FD extract, 18/09/2019). Less culturally experienced cities, however, would require more guidance during this short space of time.

Green later claimed that bids were 'the most problematic thing' during this temporal period, saying, "They make you write a programme five years before you deliver it. And everyone who was consulted in that programme, think they've been commissioned, right?" (Green, FD extract, 18/09/2019). Complexities arise from lengthy development periods, as original plans evolve alongside the special delivery team. Including hypothetical events in the bid promotes the capacity of a place to host an imaginative programme – however, even core stakeholders like Green refer to the negative impact of these plans. It raises the expectations of local cultural producers who may have inputted ideas or contributed to early projects which are later not followed through.

Critiquing the support offer during the first year of the build-up period, Mark (PAM) was doubtful of his organisations capability to provide artwork for the earlier stages of the 2021 programme.

The Trust addressed concerns over the limited time at the F13 network meeting, saying:

“I know some of you are very keen and time is running by and people are getting busy. I'm really aware of that. But we have to do things properly. So, we have to build strong foundations, and make sure that we're ready to take things forward - that we have budgets, that we know what we're doing. So do bear with us, you know, we're trying our hardest to go as fast as we can, but it takes a bit of time”

(Bhathena, FD extract, 18/09/2019)

Here, Bhathena seems aware of the concerns over the delivery of support and capacity building, but in turn highlights the prioritisation of organisational development during the early build-up period. Later in the meeting, Bhathena referred to the following year in 2020 as the ‘pinch point’ for the SDV. The Trust had achieved their aims for internal recruitment, fundraising and programme development but warned that 2020 would require intensive labour – for example, the rebranding of the Trust and relaunch of their website, the recruitment of citywide volunteers and the release of early programming activities. Bhathena referred to Phil Redmond as ‘the elite judge’ who had been happy with the SDV progress but warned that there was still “...a heap of work to do” (Bhathena, FD extract, 18/09/2019).

This pre-warning for another busy year – before it was entirely refigured due to the pandemic – was nerve-wracking for local arts producers, with some who already felt ‘in the dark’ about their potential involvement with the UKCoC plans. It was inferred by some participants that the Trust were going to continue their current approach to capacity building or become even more hands off with organisations that they were not directly partnered with by that point. This infers the importance of a more solid capacity building programme specifically for the build-up period as part of the official bid, to ensure there is an effective plan which allows the development of the SDV and the local cultural sector simultaneously.

Mark reflected on the overall rhythm of the build-up by asking:

“Will any of it happen fast enough? Will everyone else and everything else have caught up...the reality is, we're in 2019. We're already planning things that we know that it's likely will be happening in 2022, which is great. So, we're already thinking about our own legacy and making sure we [avoid what] we've seen with Hull, where the feeling is a little bit like there was a cliff edge”.

(Mark, Interview, 28/10/2019)

The fast-approaching realities of the 2021 year itself were creating a sense of uncertainty for those reliant on concrete decisions to successfully deliver their projects, much of which were being self-managed and self-organised.

A second temporal factor to consider is the period of the city's identity which will be focused on within the programming. As a post-war and post-industrial city, Coventry has strong characteristic identities associated to both the Blitz and the numerous manufacturing trades which took place in the city. Similar patterns were drawn from Hull, which also experienced heavy bombing during WWII and had a strong legacy as a maritime city. Now, these cities are evolving their identities to overcome associations with decline, often foregrounding their universities and knowledge economies instead (Florida, 2002). Within Coventry's bid, heavy emphasis was placed on its multiculturalism, citing the influx of migrating communities following the war.

When discussing Hull UKCoC207, Green mentioned the idea of 'dominant narratives' existing in cities which each UKCoC team will have to 'go through'. Green argued that previous narratives should be spoken about and celebrated but were so dominant that they were “...drowning out new stories or other stories” – which he mentioned did not necessarily have to be true to be included in the programme. For example, in relation to the bombing of Hull in WWII, Green quipped, “There were 25-year-old men in Hull who spoke about the Blitz as if they lived through it! So, there was something odd going on” (Green, FD extract, 18/09/2019).

Some research participants were critical of the continued reinforcement of historic narratives in contemporary Coventry. When asked to describe the current identity of Coventry's culture, the local councillor responded by suggesting a need to move beyond past representations and instead look to the future – emulating similar themes to those provided by UKCoC decisionmakers. Ed (local councillor) summarised this by suggesting that the identity is represented by:

“...things that most people will associate [with], like the car industry. And then I always look at the Transport Museum and think, is that just reinforcing a negative image of ‘This was how great Coventry was in its heyday, when we used to make lots of cars and used to have lots of car factories’... ‘this is when we were great’?

I go and meet people from Coventry, and they go on about The Specials...[rolls eyes]. And I'm thinking, ‘Yeah, but what's the *next* thing?’. Don't just repeat the past. I want to know what the new young kid from Coventry [is] doing [to] create that new culture. The danger is, you have this melancholy approach [which] indirectly keeps repeating the message of ‘This is when we did this’ - a trip down memory lane. That's not relevant to people who are now living and working in Coventry”.

(Ed, Interview, 07/06/2019)

It is clear that some decisionmakers are viewing nostalgia as a mechanism which holds people back from understanding their present identity and experience. However, when asked for ideas of what the future identity of Coventry would be, the councillor replied saying, “Tech and digital are the way forward”. But when pressed, specifics were not forthcoming. Not only does this denote the influence of national industrial strategies, but it is also difficult to associate site-specific emotions and experiences with such a broad sector which currently has had a limited impact on the city as a whole.

‘Top-down’ decisionmakers actively sought the ‘uncovering’ of newer stories which reflected the UKCoC in the present day, rather than relying on historic narratives.

Later, during the same event, Jacob Gough from the CCoCT also cited the importance of playful and imaginative practice through the 2021 programming, in order to ‘create new histories’. This is one example of multiple times that the future identity of Coventry was discussed. Other examples include Bhatena telling makers at the Crafts roundtable that they could help the Trust with storytelling which:

“...cement[s] what we will be doing as part of our future history - creating new histories, telling some new stories. What I’m mindful of is that there’s a lot of history and heritage here. But, actually, we want to focus on now: what’s going on now, what’s going to happen in the future, and start thinking about how we celebrate that”

(Bhatena, FD extract, 22/02/2019)

Other examples included a representative from the Heart of England Community Fund – the outsourced provider of build-up project funding – telling an audience at a Meet the Funders event that, “City of Culture is not what has happened, it’s about what Coventry will look like in the future...this isn’t the programme for heritage trails” (Anon, FD extract, 30/04/2019).

Some groups, like PAM, were aware of the future-focused narrative and how this needed to be incorporated into their current project plans in the hope of securing funding or inclusion into the official programme. One project aimed to focus on the industrial past of Coventry’s factories, but Mark was concerned that this was ‘looking back’ and had not yet found a way of ‘looking forward’, asking “How do we bring this to the present?” (Mark, FD extract, 27/07/2019). This focus could be argued to be playing a creative role in local artistic practice, challenging organisations to reconsider the perspectives of their work to attend to a different temporal vision. More critically though, these narratives of the future were also potentially complicating works which primarily considered historic or archival material and was asking them (perhaps unfairly) to find ways to remain ‘relevant’.

This tension between the past and the future formed a key part of PAM’s rebrand, which emerged during 2019 in order to consider how they could involve more

contemporary photography within their work. By dropping the 'Archive' in their organisations name, they hoped to shift the focus from historic materials and instead emphasise their partnerships with photographers in the present day. Mark and Jason explained that this hoped to give space for '...telling stories that haven't been told yet' but argued that the 'storytelling needs to be rooted in people's lives and experiences' in order to capture a genuine sense of place (Massey, 2005).

Here, a small organisation has evolved their practice in relation to the dominating narrative of the Trust, who are trying to curate a future-facing programme that reimagines the contemporary narrative of a post-industrial city with the lived experience of local communities remaining as a central focus of this organisations practice. This exemplifies effect of the terms and buzzwords used by the Trust permeated into the activity and programming of small-scale organisations across the city who wanted to align with the wider vision, which the next short section will build upon.

7.2.2 Language of the Bid: Promises and Politics

One of the main terms that litters the bid documents is 'creativity'. Schlesinger (2007: 377) sees creativity as a 'hegemonic term' which is now heavily associated with cultural policies and therefore economic and social growth but argues that this is now 'extraordinarily banal', as creativity is associated with multiple, disparate objects. The language adopted in cultural megaevent planning often relates to terms like the centuries-old tradition of carnivals and festivals, as an opportunity for civilians to unwind from the stresses of everyday life and find gratification from events beyond work (Ehrenreich, 2006).

This is further complicated when festivals become defined as creative and cultural, which in contemporary economics then attaches these events to creating value - the dominant discourse of the CCIs (Campbell, 2011). Viewing this development of the term 'creativity' from the perspectives of festivals and carnivals - as megaevents traditionally associated with stimulating joyous activity to free people from their labour and daily duties - events like the UKCoC can then associate creative festivities with consumption, metrics and wider socioeconomic aims.

However, despite the official and ‘top down’ nature of the bid, much of the language used to discuss the programming revolved around ‘cultural democracy’, ‘activism’ and even ‘revolution’ (Wilson et al., 2017). A Trust employee delivered a presentation at a seminar, where she described Coventry as a ‘...city of pioneers, activism, revolution’. When asked by a local audience member about what the Trust wanted to achieve from the programming, she replied, “We want to create disruption”. This was immediately challenged, with the audience member asking how the UKCoC was revolutionary. To this, she said, “It is revolutionary because it is positive change” (Anon, FD extract, 26/10/2019). When looking at the ‘pure’ definition of revolution, as the forcible overthrowing of social orders in favour of a new system, it was difficult to understand how a state-led competition could achieve such an impact.

This was also framed in wider relation to the identity of the city, with Jacob Gough (CCoCT) telling a regional audience that Coventry represents:

“...a city of democracy and free speech, a city of welcome and sanctuary, a city not afraid to have its own opinion. Built by craftsmen, we invented a trade union movement, the Green Party, [inaudible]...the Arts Council was conceived in a factory in Coventry...”

(Gough, FD extract, 18/09/2019)

The arts can be seen as a route in which to facilitate social and cultural activism, by disrupting social understandings and bringing together histories and lived experiences of radical practice in a particular place (Buser et al., 2013); for example, the use of murals in anti-corporate campaigns against Tesco in Stokes Croft, Bristol (ibid; Mould, 2015). However, whilst some partnerships with local organisations had been developed, governance was still locked into vertical hierarchies of power. By reporting to various public bodies and private sector investors, cultural events can be seen more like a ‘bumper sticker than movements’ (Long, 2013: 63), whereby the adoption of a ‘toolkit’ approach with various stakeholders situates place-based cultural activism –

which may be genuine rather than boosterism - at risk of commodification (ibid; Oakley, 2015).

This ‘cultural revolution’ posited by the Trust, however, was ultimately reliant on investors and business partnerships, which led to a need to provide returns on investment. Furthermore, there was recurring emphasis that creative practitioners in the city were expected to self-organise their own programming and activity alongside official works, leading to a feeling of exclusion from this wider social ‘revolution’ which was being promoted. Bhathena described how the Trust were hoping for local arts organisations to produce work for an unofficial ‘umbrella programme of all great things’ during 2021, and without the ‘permission’ of the SDV:

“...get on and do stuff, like you would normally. We start to really think about what those big projects are going to be and how you might work with us, we will talk to you. There’s no deadline”

(Bhathena, FD extract, 22/02/2019)

Here, the idea of building a radical cultural movement in the city is reliant on the free labour of individuals and groups who are expected to gain momentum from adopting a ‘business as usual’ manner. This also highlights the creation of a feeling of exclusivity of who gets chosen to join the official ‘revolution’ (i.e., programming) and who doesn’t, which fuelled a sense of competitiveness pushing the creative communities apart rather than bring them together in a movement across the city.

7.2.3 Local Involvement with Decision-making

The assumed ephemerality of not only the title, but the delivery team reflects on criticisms emerging from Hull’s programme, where the SDV transitioned to charity status but has greatly reduced their events offer and sector support (Howcroft, forthcoming). Whilst the long-term role of the SDV should be a critical point of consideration, so should its short-term impact during a rapid-fire period of UKCoC delivery.

Discussing with people on the ground highlighted the confusion and limited guidance provided to the independent arts sector. The lack of blueprint for UKCoC development is liberating but also difficult to communicate with local communities; for example, the unforeseen duration of recruiting and initiating the SDV, or the change in direction from previous UKCoC iterations to instead pursue a ‘community-led, not artist-led’ (Gough, FD extract, 18/09/2019) programme based in social organisations.

However, the Trust remained reliant on the labour of local artists as part of the official programme, highlighting the need for future UKCoC programmes to manage expectations more effectively during the build-up period and establish crucial communication and relationship building with wider groups beyond their key partnerships, to continue momentum and build knowledge about the UKCoC process. These findings are critical, as previous evaluations such as Liverpool ECoC found that the year of celebrations did not leave a sense that there had been a special impact upon, or interaction with, creative industries in the city beyond an ‘improved external image of Liverpool’ (Impacts 08, 2009: 66).

When asking interviewees if they felt involved with the development of the official programme, some cultural producers replied that they had left out of the process. Dom from Ludic Rooms said he felt ‘...very much in the dark’ about the official plans. He perceived there to be a lack of involvement of the independent arts sector with the SDV, saying, “For the most part, since getting the [UKCoC2021] decision, we’ve just all been left to our own devices”. Furthermore, he argued that organisations and individuals who had been pre-involved with the top-down stakeholders through the bidding had varying levels of continued involvement:

“It’s weird, actually, because obviously the bid was won on the basis of a programme. And I know various people through various different means that were involved in things that were in that programme. But yet, absolutely nothing has progressed on any of that at all.”

(Dom, Interview, 12/04/2019)

These findings are comparable with previous studies of cultural interventions, such as the ECoC programme held by Stavanger 2008 (Bergsgard and Vassenden, 2011). Research on their local cultural sector following the competition had uncovered that some arts organisations found that the ECoC title had created unrealistically high expectations in the city – particularly during the build-up years to Stavanger2008, where there was arguably an idealised *perception* of the ECoC ‘opportunity structure’ in comparison to the reality which came to be (ibid.). Whilst expectations could stimulate idea generation, there is also a degree of exhaustion which comes from high expectations which are not met and disappointment from unfulfilled ideas (ibid.; Scott, 2014).

Some voices on the ground perceived the Trust to be interacting within an insular community rather than the wider cultural sector. The local councillor reflected on his concerns about the number of relationships being built during the build-up period, stating:

“One of the things I’m seeing at the moment is that they’re still engaging with a very small circle of people. Because you’ll go to some of the events and you’ll see exactly the same faces at each one, and that’s quite telling”

(Ed, Interview, 07/06/2019)

Arguably, the ‘same faces’ being seen at each event may highlight the small-scale of the creative network rather than reflecting intentional decisions by the Trust. Other participants related their involvement with UKCoC back to the long-term relationship that they had formed with the SDV since the bidding began. Julia described Theatre Absolute as “...part of the wheel” of the initial bid process (Julia, Interview, 21/05/2019), which led to them holding a position on the steering committee where they informed other stakeholders about the independent arts sector. This highlights how they were in a position of privilege which may result in continued relations and insider access to the governing team – even as the Trust expands and evolves.

A role on the steering committee may also provide access to a deeper understanding on the UKCoC competition, which other organisations may not have access to. Theatre

Absolute had already built a relationship with the governing body. However, despite this positionality, the organisation was not sure about their future role in the upcoming years of the programme:

“We’re delivering stuff on their behalf... the [Trust] producers are all in connection with each other and they're just settling in now. And then, we'll get to sort of develop the relationship with them. So, we're around as an organisation, and we will have a presence in 2021. What that will look like with regard to the 2021 official programme...are they going to commission us? Or are we going to be delivering work on their behalf? That's still to be determined”

(Julia, Interview, 21/05/2019)

Despite formal relationships and previous involvement, this quote did not seem to ascertain any definite ties to the official programme, highlighting how further ‘vision building’ work was required of the group. As a project-led theatre group, Julia and Chris mentioned that a pre-established funded project external to UKCoC2021 was their key priority for three years. However, the fact that connections with the SDV had already been established may provide the organisation with a certain degree of security to continue with their own work, as they are now on the ‘radar’ of the Trust. This example shows the important role of long-term relationships affording beneficial opportunities for organisations, which is advantageous within a time-limited intervention.

Alternatively, PAM reflected on their different style of long-term relationship with the UKCoC2021 team, after judges visited their visual arts exhibition as part of the bid in 2017. In comparison to Theatre Absolute, the group seemed more critical of the continuation of their existing relationship with the Trust:

“The difficulty is, we've been kind to City of Culture - in the sense that we haven't been at them like a terrier. We haven't been demanding, I don't think. We've understood that they've got a massive infrastructure to build themselves...I knew a little bit

about what Hull went through...doing things like developing the volunteer programme...So, we've been trying to make sure that we're not getting in the way of people who've got, like, a bigger job to do? But it's been difficult to...have a discussion about what it is that we might actually even do [and] where does what we've done already go to?"

(Mark, Interview, 28/10/2019)

Another network is brought into consideration here: the connections with individuals or organisations in Hull, who have recently been impacted by the UKCoC process and can share perspectives. This insider knowledge is both useful and problematic: it may be valuable to hear the lived experiences of organisations who have similar experiences with this unique cultural intervention, but the uniqueness of the programme poses a key difficulty for outsiders, who may not fully understand the shared knowledge due to the site-specific nature of the events.

However, similar to the steering committee position, it may provide PAM with more awareness about the wider UKCoC process - which other organisations may not be able to obtain to the same level, or as early into the intervention. This broader understanding of the competition may lead to a more positive reception and fair judgement of the SDV - as PAM show through their awareness of the intensive task of recruiting and infrastructure building – and perhaps neutralise high expectations about programme involvement (Bergsgard and Vassenden, 2011).

An awareness of the scale of the UKCoC task is highlighted (i.e., 'bigger job to do'), and the statement highlights how the organisations are adjusting to a new hierarchy of leadership within their cultural ecosystem. However, the organisation face uncertainty around their own positionality and purpose during the build-up period:

"We've not badgered them with massive projects that we've said, "You need to fund this!"...To a certain extent, we've let them come to us rather than going to them which, I don't know, might be a mistake. But the danger is, we have been involved in quite a few

projects. And it's one of those classics where sometimes, we feel a little bit like they start doing something. And then they go, "Oh, wait. We're going to need to get Photo Miners to help with this. And it's a little bit like, we feel sometimes a little bit indispensable, which is slightly...unnerving"

(Mark, 28/10/2019)

Here, there is a sense that the Trust have provided opportunities for the group to be involved with projects, despite PAM feeling that they have been 'hands off' and 'not badgered them' – however, involvement sometimes appears to be offered by the SDV without ample time for PAM to prepare. PAM state that they are undertaking activities which "...make sure that we're not getting in the way" of the Trust, showing an awareness of the governance hierarchy and scale of the SDV. However, describing themselves as feeling 'indispensable' highlights unequal power relations and a potentially unsustainable model of working. There appears to be a difficulty for balancing involvement and expectations, which leads to discussions on how the SDV relationship building activities have been perceived by the bottom-up groups.

Social capital can be viewed as a resource that enhances this sense of trust and solidarity, which is important for connecting networks with dominating groups (Bourdieu, 1986). Top-down behaviour perceived to be exclusive was noted by individuals within the local cultural sector, despite it likely being unintentional. Overt reactions included a member at the Phoenix City Convergence event as part of Coventry Biennial responding to a CoC2021 panel and referring to the Trust as '...an inside mob that thinks they own culture' (Anon, FD extract, 26/10/2019). More covert reactions, however, referred to a lack of guidance about paths to involvement during the build-up period. If communications and actions do not inform others in the network that there is a sense of trust and solidarity, tensions can arise, and power dynamics can come to be seen as unequal or unfair.

At the First Thursday Drop-In session at Artspace, a group of artists with studios in the building reflected on the increasing UKCoC2021 activity throughout 2019, with one member saying, "I'm not sure what ways there are to get involved...I struggle to

navigate it” (Anon, FD extract, 07/03/2019). Other examples include the group of older crafters who attended the Crafts Council roundtable to learn more about UKCoC2021 and share their knowledge on amateur craft groups in the city, with one woman saying:

“I’m here to find out how me and my [craft] group can fit into the City of Culture as at the minute, we feel isolated. We have a lot to offer but don’t see how we can fit in with what’s to offer. We have lots of goodwill, but don’t know where to direct it”

(Anon, FD extract, 22/02/2019)

There appeared to be a lack of attachment to the UKCoC2021 programme, especially for amateur groups who may not be as familiar with standard procedure within the cultural sector such as funding bids, project management and budgeting. The woman expressed her feelings of isolation from the planning process and said that groups like hers needed more concrete information as “...it seems very airy fairy...we don’t know where to channel our enthusiasm” (Anon, FD extract, 22/02/2019). Further explanation from Bhatena pointed toward the future months, as the Trust had been concentrating on recruitment until the summer but would soon have a larger team with locally based producers. She assured the craft groups by saying, “You haven’t missed the boat”, but insinuated the need for local groups to take charge of their own activity by saying:

“What I would say is that you don’t need our permission to do stuff – get on and do stuff, like you would normally, and when we start to really think about what those big projects are going to be and how you might work with us, we will talk to you. There’s no deadline”

(Bhatena, FD extract, 2019)

Unlike professional members of the cultural network, groups supporting vernacular creativity may not have the dispositions (Bourdieu, 1986) to understand the wider requirements for cultural programming and project-led work. PAM benefit from

access to insider knowledge but reflected on the wider sense of confusion on the ground by arguing for a need for the Trust to adopt a more hands-on role within the local sector, as, “Part of the City of Culture [Trust]’s job is telling people the obvious, because people don’t know anything!” (Mark, FD extract, 10/04/2019).

This highlights the importance of establishing contact and providing guidance as early as possible into the build-up period, as it is a key temporal period for project development and capacity building for cultural groups who may have little to no experience with being involved in a megaevent programme. Intangible forms of knowledge learnt through interactions and experiences are particularly useful during the build-up period, as they can deepen understandings on the UKCoC process and thus shape perceptions on feasible roles within the programme delivery. Therefore, the SDV needs to insert itself as a supportive and accessible member of the network. However, this arguably appears too late into the build-up period: nine months into the first year of the official build-up period and almost two years after the win, whereby months of crucial relationship building have not been realised to their full potential.

For other participants, interactions with the Trust had left them feeling excluded from top-down planning. Dom discussed when newly recruited members of the Trust visited sites across Coventry alongside local authority representatives in the spring of 2019. He said:

“I had a meeting with Chenine just after she started...And we said, “Well, you know, what's the opportunities for getting money for Random String?” And she said no. Basically, she said, 'What I'm not gonna do is I'm not just going to suddenly start piling money into every festival in Coventry'. And I thought...that's an interesting decision, isn't it? Because actually, if I had your job, that's probably exactly what I would do. Take things that already have momentum and increase their capacity. Don't try and build everything from scratch. Don't try and, like, build a kingdom or an empire. Invite people in, show support and help people grow. Because that's sustainable, right?”

(Dom, Interview, 12/04/2019)

While Random String did go on to receive funding during 2021, this earlier statement shows how initial unfulfilled expectations led to individuals perceiving the Trust to be exclusive and dominating, (i.e., metaphors describing the SDV as a ‘kingdom’ or ‘empire’) despite the programme being positioned as co-produced and driven by residents of the city. Mark reflected on this with another local artist during a day at the studio, saying, “You can see the building of a static hierarchy, but we need a fluidity of power” (Mark, FD extract, 10/04/2019). The Trust have repeatedly used language with socio-political undertones to establish their presence as democratic, a programme of activism and revolution, and a ‘movement, not a moment’ in the city’s cultural trajectory. However, the independent arts sector may become disillusioned to this language of alliance and begin to perceive the SDV as an exclusive oligarchy, with secrecy and barriers to knowledge, governed by a small number of non-locals with power to influence cultural activity.

Effective cultural policy arguably relies on the continual upholding of the needs of the cultural sector and positively affecting the locality in which it operates, rather than prioritising the needs of the ‘rhetorical’ city in a formulaic manner (O’Brien and Miles, 2010). Information on the programme arguably drew criticism from the independent arts sector due to its definition as not being artist-led - yet still expecting their artistic and cultural labour. Towards the end of 2019, support which reflected the needs of the artistic sector began to appear with more legitimacy. Addressing the F13 group in September, Bhatena reflected on how the recruitment process was slowing down and attention was turning to facilitating relationships between the Trust and the local cultural sector. She said:

“There's a lot of us in the team now, and we're all having conversations with similar, or the same organisations...so, what we're trying to do is look at letting you know who your point person is going to be, like who your relationship manager is going to be in the team. Let's call it that, there must be better way...who your buddy's gonna be in our team, so that there's someone that you know you can pick up the phone to or drop an email to.”

(Bhatena, FD extract, 18/09/2019)

Recruiting within the SDV had unintentionally led to a neglect of providing wider support and relationship management on the ground. Despite further clarification, some individuals were struggling to understand who their main contact was to be within the Trust. There was a sense of frustration within the room, as many appeared to feel under strain to deliver a project and secure funding but possibly without key guidance and support from members within the Trust. Although the Trust repeatedly mentioned the ‘umbrella programme’ in meetings, some organisations within the local cultural sector seemed to lack the resources (e.g. financial, knowledge, contacts) or confidence to pursue projects without further guidance from the Trust.

The intensive recruitment period within the Trust during 2019 may lead to difficulties for the development of relationships on the ground, as employees acclimatise to their new role within a continuously expanding SDV. However, this arguably provides further support for the creation of a stronger build-up period delivery programme, to ensure that trust building exercises do not appear too late into the process – halting possible assumptions that social goals are being overlooked for economic growth.

7.3 Neoliberal Governance of UKCoC2021

Another leading narrative from conversations with participants was that the local creative networks had made significant logistical developments prior to the bid for UKCoC, which had laid a strong foundation for the evolving ecosystem. Dom (Ludic Rooms) argued that there had been a ‘crucible moment of governance’ in the cultural sector over the last decade (Dom, Interview, 12/04/2019), with increased involvement from the local authority, Coventry and Warwickshire LEP, Coventry University and the University of Warwick. Specifically, he noted the development of the local authority’s Coventry Cultural Strategy, which had begun in 2015 as a pre-cursor to the UKCoC2021 win.

Influential reports such as the Warwick Commission advise creative SMEs and arts/heritage/cultural organisations to work in new partnerships with larger businesses in order to ‘...take advantage of the new investment landscape’ which relies on private funding sources, rather than the decreasing public funding available

(Neelands et al., 2015: 24). However, the same report notes that cultural organisations are still restricted by the significant challenges of limited funding sources, both public and private. This can limit the capacity for some cultural organisations (particularly of a smaller scale) to play a role as strategic partners in place-shaping and local community development practices, which can lead to place-based strategies that lack local distinctiveness of cultural expression (ibid).

This section analyses some of the economic factors discussed during the build-up period by both the local cultural sector and the SDV. It covers the precarity of both funding and cultural labour in Coventry during 2019. It then discusses the role of the SDV in funding cultural activity throughout the early build-up period, before highlighting the increasing reliance on public-private partnerships to facilitate cultural production. In sum, it analyses how the UKCoC is a neoliberal vehicle of urban economic growth first, and a nurturer of local cultural production second.

7.3.1 Funding and Precarity in Cultural Labour

Throughout the build-up period, there appeared to be a distinction between long-term, existing programmes and new, emerging events, with the latter often being celebrated for the risk-taking mentality they adopted. The focus on the future rather than the past (highlighted earlier in this chapter) was engrained within investment decisions as well as the overarching narrative, leaving some participants feeling that their existing or nostalgic events were overlooked. This mindset also became tainted with entrepreneurial and neoliberal narratives, with Emma Harrabin (CCoCT) explaining the Trust's priority to attendees of the Intersect #3 event: "If people have been sitting on an idea for 10 to 15 years, we're not going to take it on for you...there needs to be fire in your belly" (Harrabin, FD extract, 27/02/2019).

However, adopting a risk-taking mentality is a complicated task for cultural producers and organisations who are working within precarious labour conditions. UKCoC competitions are often applauded for creating jobs for local residents, however, job creation within the culture-related sectors of the creative industries is more likely to be characterized by jobs with unstable working patterns and financial precarity (Gill and Pratt, 2008; Banks and Hesmondhalgh, 2009). Discussing Liverpool ECoC2008,

Campbell (2011) argues that increasing these types of jobs does not necessarily tackle multiple deprivations in the city.

The precarity of cultural production was frequently discussed as a common denominator which connected independent artists and organisations. Theatre Absolute described their cultural labour as doing “the jobs of 10 people” without any core funding. They defined their project work as having ‘fragility’, as “...we never know kind of what cash is coming in” (Julia, Interview, 21/05/2019). This was reflected in Dom’s summary of the general manager at Ludic Rooms, who worked part-time, but was expected to cover day-to-day operations, finances, artist agreements, business development, fundraising and marketing roles. Dom was acutely aware that this is “...way more than she has time to do in two days” (Dom, Interview, 12/04/2019), highlighting the precarious positions which those within the cultural sector can take on.

The short-term, cash-poor basis of project funding though was seen to open up opportunities as well as challenges. Julia and Chris spoke about how they enjoyed that the timings of project funding allowed them to become more responsive to existing issues, an element of their work that they believed would be quashed under more prescriptive funding programmes with specific delivery remits. However, Julia said this had had a long-term impact on their work and after just a few years of operating, Shop Front Theatre had faced closure due to funding constraints and only local crowdsourcing kept them afloat. They were proud of their financial contribution to the site (“We pay all our bills, we pay the business rates, we pay absolutely everything” (Julia, Interview, 21/05/2019)) and their role in ensuring the site was not left empty, but their reliance on project-to-project funding had certainly tested their capacities.

Dom also discussed how Ludic Rooms had relied on “...something like 15 back-to-back commissions over three years, just bouncing all around the country” (Dom, Interview, 12/04/2019). Taking opportunities beyond Coventry was seen as necessary in order to receive funding and continue cultural production but left organisations with a desire for more permanency and stability “...rather than just chasing down commissions”. Precarity had led to long periods of providing “reactionary” work to commissions

which were opened beyond the city, with Dom reflecting on how organisations saw themselves as “desperately underfunded” by government and public funding.

Others passed comment on specific forms of precarity, such as reliance on voluntary labour. When Mark discussed the difficulty of recruiting volunteers – a necessary move to evenly distribute work. He said, “I thought that was the definition of being a volunteer, hard work for no money?”. Jason quipped back, “I thought that was the definition of being an artist?”. We all laughed, but this led to an emotive discussion about the limits of PAM’s small budget and their reliance on outdated, donated equipment (FD extract, 13/06/2019).

Alternatively, artists and creative communities bemoaned that they themselves had been asked to provide free labour despite their own financial limitations. An attendee of the CCA meeting summarised this to the Trust in relation to the Black community, saying:

“Instead of funding, we get ‘Can you do it for nothing?’. There is always a lot of volunteering, but when does it become a job? It’s not about always doing things for free. [You’ve had] people helping you to win the bid and now they have been forgotten. We can volunteer as leaders, but why don’t we get paid? ...Freebies from the Black community...”

(Anon, FD extract, 28/05/2019)

This quote again highlights the difficult position that cultural producers are left in when their creative practice is freely used for promotional processes (such as events for the bid) and their frustration at subsequent labour being expected without payment, framed as exposure that contributes to the wider atmosphere of the UKCoC. This impacts communities who statistically are less likely to apply for/receive funding from typical grant providing bodies and who feel ‘forgotten’ by decisionmakers when the opportunity for paid activity arises.

With a limited number of NPOs within the city, many of Coventry’s cultural sector producers and organisations were functioning without guaranteed financial support

and in highly precarious ways. However, when asked to reflect on the current funding landscape operating within Coventry, Mark stated, “There is a low level of capacity, ability or achievement...we’re one of the cities that doesn’t get grants compared to Leicester, probably half the amount of funding as we are not good enough or don’t have the support or strategy to do it”. As was often the case, comparisons to other cities within the Midlands were used to frame Coventry as the underdog (or perhaps, more ‘ordinary’) in terms of financial support for the cultural sector. This highlights a sense of embedded distrust in the existing governance structures who deliver funding– both locally and nationally.

Participants also seemed cautious about the sustainability of opportunities following UKCoC2021. Julia summarised this by saying:

“The danger for us the year after is it being very hard to get funding because, actually, it could come to, ‘You’ve been well served’. We’re very mindful of that, because we’ve been around for 25 years, and we’ve got more organisations and more interest than just one year. So, everybody’s tentatively thinking about 2021”.

(Julia, Interview, 21/05/2019)

This exemplifies the worries about UKCoC2021 as what one participant described as “flash in the pan” funding (Anon, Interview): temporarily offering opportunities but doing little for long-term change. This is ever more concerning within a UKCoC - as funds are raised with the celebratory year in mind, the maintenance of a funding wave following 2021 is another enormous task for cultural governors to encourage.

7.3.2 Role of the CCoCT in Funding

The chapter thus far highlights how many cultural organisations are facing a state of neoliberal governance and often criticise the funders and decisionmakers for instrumentalising their creative practices as a way to “fix” socioeconomic issues in the city. Yet, Stevenson (2019) argues that cultural producers can be seen to be sustaining

the 'status quo' by applying for competitive funding rounds to maintain and advance their careers, rather than finding alternative routes.

The UKCoC title and accompanying SDV arguably opens up, yet simultaneously complicates this process. The CCoCT are not acting solely as grant providers and the influx of external representatives makes it difficult to have long-term connections with decisionmakers who are not always deeply rooted within the local network. This can create further labour in negotiating networks and building the trust to secure funding (Comunian and Mould, 2014). While this set-up could positively provide more opportunities for emerging artists, who may be interacting with cultural governance bodies for the first time after being influenced by the UKCoC title. However, there are also complications for the process for existing organisations and individuals, who were knowledgeable of existing avenues and slower to adapt to new ones.

Furthermore, the SDV frequently reminded artists that their primary role was not as funding providers. Other national bodies, like ACE, also wanted potential funding applicants from Coventry to understand that their grants for the city were limited, with Simon Fitch (ACE Midlands) telling F13 members:

“There isn't a specific standalone programme which is just for you - for the people and the creators and the artists of Coventry...what we found in Hull is that the number and the quality of applications to the Arts Council funding programmes went up. I'm slightly nervous because I think that will happen in Coventry. But I'm also aware that we've made some quite substantial project grants awards already this year. So, in kind of, in preparation - so I'm going, oh, have we peaked too soon? But we'll see about that”

(Fitch, FD extract, 18/09/2019)

This announcement was concerning for organisations who were still constructing ideas and proposals, emitting a sense of warning that 'substantial' funding had already been delivered within the city by September 2019 and that the regional representative

himself was 'slightly nervous' that the core funding body many have 'peaked too soon'. For cultural producers in already precarious positions, this arguably led to further disillusion with the UKCoC process. Suggestions that there was tough competition and limited opportunities to secure funding as part of the UKCoC competition was difficult for producers with unstable financial assets to hear on the ground, especially after so much emphasis had been placed by top-down decisionmakers on the importance of taking risks.

A specific round of funding during the build-up period was outsourced by the Trust, who appointed the Heart of England Community Foundation (HoECF) to manage the 'Capacity Building and Development Fund' on their behalf. This was split into 'The Get Ready Fund' (business development and skills building grants up to £2,000) and 'The Road to 2021 Fund' (grants for trial projects up to £10,000) (HoECF, online). In relation to this research, many organisations had their applications rejected. However, PAM received a portion of this funding for their Imagine Willenhall co-creation project, which they discuss below:

“There have been some real positives: we got a Road to 2021 project. So, we obviously felt slightly uncomfortable, everyone muttering that they hadn't...it seemed that everyone we met had had a project that wasn't funded by that...it was almost like - that gives you a little bit more inner confidence...you think, well, that's because it's out there in Willenhall - we're doing something nice, we're doing something that's engaging people”

(Mark, Interview, 28/10/2019)

It was warming to hear a participant discuss an opportunity as a confidence boost, recognising their own abilities and value by delivering work which engaged local communities with cultural activity. The funding also gave them the confidence and 'foresight' to consider how the project would be developed on a longer-term basis, after feeling that the project had had beneficial outcomes.

However, the competitive nature of the UKCoC funding rounds is highlighted when Mark discusses how he and the team felt ‘slightly uncomfortable’ to receive funding in the face of many other within their network facing rejections, with the emphasis on ‘everyone we met’ being less fortunate as an indicator of the scale of applications which were submitted within the city. Bergsgard and Vassenden (2011) argue that evidence from Slazenger ECoC2008 shows how medium-sized organisations receiving funding associated with the ECoC had highlighted the positive impact of ECoC grants, including increased professionalism and improvements in application writing, but also noted disheartenments caused by the limited reach of this funding on the wider cultural sector in general.

One artist from Slazenger said, “When you spend this kind of money on culture...there are few employers in this region, and there are few artists. Therefore, it is a shame that so few regional artists actually got the chance...our institution has had this opportunity, but hardly anyone else within our art form” (ibid: 314). Within close middleground networks (Cohendet et al., 2010), a communal feeling – even from recipients – was that few can afford to take the economic risks championed throughout the megaevent, leading to some on the ground viewing the programming as a missed opportunity to increase competence in the region. Similar feelings were felt during discussions with PAM, who sometimes viewed their funding as at the expense of their close friends and colleagues within the cultural ecosystem.

Increased funding opportunities can benefit a number of organisations within a UKCoC, but the money available remains limited. The expectation that every cultural producer will be given an opportunity is something which could be sensitively communicated much earlier within the process: not only to manage expectations, but also to reduce discomfort within existing cultural networks which may not experience such tense competition. Mark discussed how initial positivity dwindled towards the end of the funded project in 2019, when financial limitations once again arose:

“It’s amazing how little money it covers...the ‘basic’ ten grand. And we’ve, again, spent way over our own time on that [project] in terms of the time...when we put the bid in, there were things

we were expecting to be in place that weren't, that we then had to spend extra time [doing]”

(Mark, Interview, 28/10/2019)

Multiple points are raised with this excerpt: firstly, how little the funding stretched to cover all aspects of the project (e.g., development, engagement, marketing, evaluation). Secondly, how being less financially secure did not alleviate the pressure or scale of the task, with many artists taking on multiple roles within a project and still remaining time poor due. This additional labour is the kind of cost which would not be considered within a UKCoC funding application, which would cover a highly efficient and best-case scenario of a hypothetical project. Furthermore, it shows how opportunities for one group within the sector can be complicated by obstacles faced within other areas of the ecosystem. In this instance, the lack of scanning undertaken by the Herbert Art Gallery and Archive team (who, as discussed in Chapter 6, also face precarious working conditions despite being an NPO) had led to PAM members working overtime during the limited opening hours and subsequently having less time to develop other areas of the project.

Finally, PAM were also concerned by a number of late payments from the CCoCT for work that was undertaken for their commissioned ‘Humans of Cov’ photography campaign. In September 2019, Mark told me:

“We haven't been paid by them - this really is important...why are they five or six months behind paying us for a job that we've already done? That we need as an organisation to keep going, so we exist until January! [Annoyance in voice]...that's important to us because that's £3000 that we won't get paid”

(Mark, Interview, 28/10/2019)

This highlights the tensions between invoices not being paid whilst media and communication outlets report on the high levels of investment being generated through fundraising. While this example may be a one-off case, the impact of this

payment delay further reinforces negative feelings towards the top-down decision makers; even from an organisation who have largely benefitted from their involvement within the bidding process and receiving subsequent funding.

Collectively, concerns around the role of the CCoCT in funding led to a consideration of the role of the SDV as fundraisers, and as those with primary access to the economic resources of the competition. As the UKCoC is not a cash prize, the money raised is sourced from a number of stakeholders: national government to local authorities, and local businesses and philanthropists. While the direct revenue sources will not be scrutinised here, it will instead focus on the messages provided by the Trust to the local cultural network and how opportunities for funding were communicated during the build-up period. This can be a 'sticky' process to understand, especially if one is unaware of the multi-faceted governance structure of the UKCoC competition.

Comunian (2012) argues that networks themselves act as funding structures and can open up opportunities, especially when public sector or private funding agencies are closely interlinked with local production networks in order to deliver information and support beyond the individual scale. Public policy makers and funders must consider strategic ways to support and sustain local networks through their funding distribution, ideally by communicating through different networks within a place to deliver an effective and equal structure for possible financial support (ibid.).

However, the scale and ephemerality of the UKCoC title arguably makes this process difficult, as the intensive programming involves numerous networks both within and beyond the city, each requiring attention – therefore, it is easy for speculative participants or unconfirmed programme contributors to be overlooked whilst support is delivered to those with a larger or confirmed role in the programming (ibid.), and others face feeling withdrawn or excluded from the possibilities of further interaction.

Towards the end of 2019, during a meeting between the Trust and the F13 network, the topic was discussed in depth, largely driven by comments from artists on the ground who expressed confusion as to who they should approach for funding. The reply given proceeded as follows:

Attendee: You said, 'we're not a funder'. So, could you expand in a really simple way how UKCoC funding money will work to pay for things?

Martin Sutherland: We're a co-investor, really...there'll be projects which we put money into, and we'd expect our people to bring money into or resources. Rather than being a grant body where there are arduous application processes ...[we are a] commissioning-and-investing rather than a grant-making body...We will convene it, rather than run it'

Attendee: You just mean you don't make funding applications, it's more 'we give it to you and off you go'?

Chenine Bhatena: I think the money we're putting in is where we genuinely see an opportunity to support development, rather than just to keep funding stuff. Because a company is continually churning stuff, that doesn't mean it's where the funding we put in can really make a difference...

Attendee: ...I'm still unclear - when you say when you see something you might want to invest in, how do we get to the process where you see something that you might want to invest in?

CB: It just comes out of the conversations we've been having... And I hope that you talk to us if there's something you need or want or a sticky point or whatever, and we see how we can help. So, I think it's more a conversation, more than anything else

Attendee: Who takes the next step? Because we've had conversations. Do we come back to you and say, can we follow this idea up? Or...do you come to us and say?

CB: Hopefully it comes out of a conversation you have. If there's an idea that we both like - oh, let's do a little bit more work or a bit more thinking on, that might be the way that it goes, really.

Attendee: So, basically, if you don't think you're at that point, you need to go back again?

CB: [Pauses]...If it's like cold pitching, it's just difficult

(FD extract, 18/09/2019, emphasis added)

Nine months into the first build-up year, producers on the ground were unsure how the UKCoC funding process worked and were still attempting to follow up conversations with the decisionmakers. The response seems non-committed and vague, suggesting that certain projects have already heard from the Trust regarding financial support. Some producers were left in a funding limbo, unsure of who was the best producer within the Trust to speak to and feeling dismissed by those at the top of the governance hierarchy. As was often the case, local artists were encouraged to get in touch with specific programme producers hired by the Trust (i.e., the Caring/Collaborative/Dynamic city teams) or their geographically based producer for further information, maintaining opinions that those at the top were inaccessible. This arguably led to an us-and-them dynamic (something which was already a regular feature between members of Coventry's society (e.g., town-gown)).

Later in the conversation, an artist asked whether organisations who were developing a project but did not yet know if it would feature in the official programming could use a UKCoC 'strapline' or request assistance from the CCoFCT in funding applications. The artist argued that this was important, so "... we're not saying, 'This is a not-City-of-Culture-project, as we don't know if it is yet or not'" (Anon, FD extract, 18/09/2019). This relates back to findings from previous CoC events, where artists have felt that they have lost collaborating partners due to an assumed preference of working with organisations receiving official funding from the SDV (Bergsgard and Vassenden, 2011). Furthermore, the sense of legitimacy that arises from association with the formal decisionmakers is pertinent. Bhatena's reply, however, was sharp:

"Can I just say that the UKCoC isn't just us - Like, it's a whole year in a city? So, there's a programme that we will develop with many of you, but Historic Coventry are doing programmes as

well - Belgrade are doing programmes, Warwick Arts Centre will be doing programmes, and many of you will continue to do your festivals and events in that year. So, you would be in that year...”

(Bhathena, FD extract, 18/09/2019)

The abruptness and wording of this reply appears to insinuate an over-reliance on the Trust for guidance, instead offering suggestions for alternative routes for programming opportunities. The SDV were sharing agency with other key cultural institutions in the city and appeared keen to disperse communications beyond the CCoCT, a necessary element to ensure the wider cultural sector was involved. However, I would argue that this can be very problematic; each of the alternative routes suggested are demonstrable of communications with ‘upperground’ institutions (Cohendet et al., 2010), rather than grassroots networks. Furthermore, so much of the activity throughout 2019 had, and continues to, revolve around the Trust, as the focus was on SDV development and generating large amounts of revenue for cultural purposes in the city.

Issues with funding were discussed at other events, such as the CCA meeting in Chapter 5. Here, an audience member highlighted that his business was visited and had played a role in the bid, but his funding application for a possible project was rejected. He asked the Trust why this had been the case, before answering, “Because a private organisation said no. You’re asking for my ideas...our intellectual property...But instead you give one or two opportunities and then you’re gone” (Anon, FD extract, 28/05/2019). There is a clear sense of frustration with the power held by top-down decision makers and the governance of funding streams. The emphasis on the SDV as a ‘private organisation’ further highlights the misunderstanding within the local cultural network, as it is a charitable body. Information on the budget and spend of the SDV was not transparent, and knowledge of the scale of investment was tense on the ground as many organisations were being told to pursue funding beyond the CCoCT.

The confusion on the ground about the Trust’s governance and finances sought to be remedied by the development of the CCoCT’s Meet the Funders events. During 2019,

there were two free ticketed events, with both selling out for over one hundred attendees. I noted how the first event, which I secured a ticket for, was mostly attended by a white audience. Booklets filled with information of potential funding partners were provided on the door, with a helpful summary of the institutions and bodies beyond the Trust which were providing grants for cultural projects – again, signalling the alternative routes the cultural organisations could pursue.

Alongside information stalls hosted by various funding organisations, there were a number of presentations from core funding bodies. Simon Fitch (ACE Midlands) discussed in his session how funding would be delivered to ‘...events supporting work ongoing in the city’ (Fitch, FD extract, 18/09/2010), relating back to comments made during the F13 meeting about relating projects to the wider UKCoC vision. Fitch warned that there was a 40% applicant success rate, highlighting again the risks that are taken with the hope of temporarily overcoming financial precarity. However, in contrast with his comments to F13, Fitch suggested that the UKCoC title would generate, “...a greater presence [of funding] in Coventry than others would have”. The 2021 title was cited as providing an advantageous financial position for artists located in the city, despite the cautious manner adopted when discussing in more informal ‘middleground’ meetings (Cohendet et al., 2010).

Furthermore, a representative from the Heart of England Community Foundation spoke to a room of prospective applicants at the CCoCT Meet the Funders event, discussing the launch of a funding stream focused specifically on arts projects based in Coventry, Warwickshire and Solihull. They argued that the grants had purposefully been designed to ensure applicants felt that they were not ‘jumping through hoops’ (Anon, FD extract, 30/04/2019), highlighting the complexity of typical funding applications with multiple forms and stages of approval. However, the positivity generated was followed up with a warning that only 1 in 6 applicants would receive funding. Providing numerous routes through which public, private and not-for-profit cultural producers can access support and funding can put them in competition, rather than facilitating cooperation (Mould and Comunian, 2015). With the limited opportunities available, private funding was positioned as an alternative source for funding, as the next section will discuss.

7.3.3 Public and Private Partnerships

Interactions between the public and private sectors within the cultural world are often framed as positive exchanges of experimentation and an innovative adaptation of typical business models. However, the role of the SDV then includes the overseeing of numerous players with contrasting organisational styles (Hewison et al., 2010), such as universities, policy departments (from local to international), public bodies, philanthropists, grassroots organisations and private corporations (Richards and Duif, 2019).

Those within the local creative network also felt overwhelmed by the number of stakeholders they were now encountering, with Mark saying:

“A company of our size having to work with three massive institutions, or four...City of Culture Trust, two universities, large organisations...it's hard to penetrate that even though we are three quite well-known individuals.”

(Mark, Interview, 28/10/2019)

Middleground creative communities may have to quickly learn the skills to exploit the access and associations with various partners involved with the UKCoC programme. In previous studies, researchers found that only one tenth of smaller-scale cultural producers in S2008 reported that no new relations had been made throughout the year (Bergsgard and Vassenden, 2011). Some directly cited the UKCoC process as providing opportunities to establish networks and collaborations with public institutions, however, most of these were local rather than national or international, and rarely included private or corporate interaction.

However, the role of businesses was crucial to the underpinning of the SDV and had played a key role since the bidding period. A number of private sector partnerships were made to launch the initial bid, including Coventry Building Society, the Ricoh Arena and PET-XI (a local youth training provider). The ‘Founding Presidents’ (Plate 46) included a board of mostly white, elderly local businessmen who had supported the UKCoC bid as an act of philanthropy and continued as core partners.

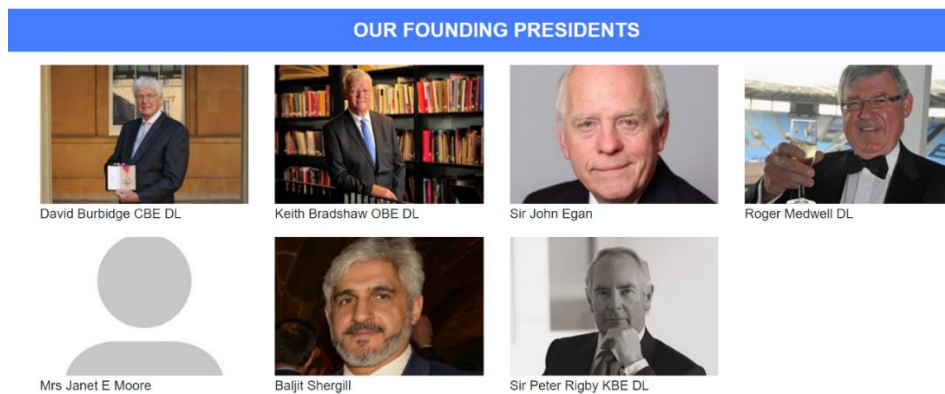


Plate 46. Founding Presidents of Coventry UKCoC2021 (Source: CCoCT website)

Liz Draper, Head of Sponsorship for the CCoCT during 2019, had worked in a similar position for Hull UKCoC2017, highlighting the transfer of experienced staff between UKCoC titles. Speaking about her focus on maintaining corporate sponsorships throughout the build-up period, Draper told an audience at the CCoCT Meet the Funders event “how [the Trust] can unlock some new cash for the city”:

“Once you've got the programme in place, that gives us a chance to talk to major national brands who haven't to date invested in any UKCoC activity, either in Hull or Londonderry...”.

(Draper, FD extract, 30/04/2019)

By involving stakeholders with a financial focus as stakeholders within the UKCoC process, the economic imperative arguably becomes more deeply set into the governance and social networks of the cities involved. This governance style arguably highlights the organisational challenges provided by a new political economy which shifts the boundaries between public, private and voluntary sectors’ (O’Brien, 2014; Bevir and Rhodes, 2003). Alongside these larger partners was the 2021 Club, a number of local and regional businesses who provide both financial and moral support from within the private sector for the UKCoC, with the Trust describing them as:

‘...instrumental to our ambitious plans for Coventry’s year in the spotlight, enabling us to engage national audiences, attract new visitors, and empower every Coventry resident – regardless of

age, background or postcode – to reap the benefits of cultural participation...’

(Coventry 2021: no date, online)

The 150 members of the 2021 Club were interviewed as a recurring feature at the bottom of the Trust’s newsletters throughout 2019, showcasing their support for the UKCoC programme whilst getting free promotional marketing for the local readers subscribed to the mailing list. Ed (local councillor) supported the notion that the UKCoC event had input from businesses, saying:

“It’s the private sector that are gonna drive some of this. Obviously, the huge wodge of public money that we’re getting helps generate and kickstart all of this. That then kickstarts private companies to do the same, hopefully”.

(Ed, Interview, 07/06/2019)

The private sector is framed as supplementing investment made by public bodies (Richards and Duif, 2019), most of which tends to appear following the successful bid. However, the councillor continued to scrutinise certain practices occurring between the SDV and private sector, discussing their frustration about the gifting of Coventry 2021 badges to businesses who had donated:

“[There] is a hierarchy of which coloured badge you get: if you give them x amount of money, you get a silver badge, and you can get a gold badge. I was in a meeting with [local businessperson] a few weeks ago, and a person from 2021 came in and they were gifting her the badge. I joked and said, ‘Oh, is this the Blue Peter badge?’, and then realised that these people take it seriously. It’s like a black UKCoC badge, and it’s all about status. And you’re thinking, this isn’t really connecting to the people that it should be connecting to. Just look at the Priory Visitor Centre”

(Ed, Interview, 07/06/2019)

The distribution of symbolic awards for certain degrees of financial investment highlights the tangible output of an urban entrepreneurialism process where investment from private actors is acknowledged in a colour-coded status hierarchy, stimulating competition between businesses and inspiring them to reach the top tier of recognition. However, the councillor juxtaposes this in relation to the lived experience of cultural sector workers in the city, some of which have faced venue closures due to a lack of financial revenue, creating an uncomfortable insight into the winners and losers of the UKCoC process.

The corporate relationships built by the UKCoC were further scrutinised at the F13 meeting in September 2019, as artists had heard that the Trust had facilitated a networking event between the 2021 Club members and local voluntary organisations rather than arts and cultural organisations in the city. One audience member asked directly about how arts organisations could be connected with the 2021 Club in the future, arguing:

“One of the things that's difficult is what the businesses are interested in now is being part of City of Culture. And that's you guys. Which actually makes it harder for us to make those partnerships... it might be we really need this, have you got anyone in your club that can help, you know? Some kind of system that makes that easy to connect people up”

(Anon, FD extract, 18/09/2019)

This artist suggests the need to bring together established networks from the different sectors, highlighting how the drive for sustainable activity is foregrounded by various actors involved with the UKCoC process. Sutherland's response seemed to agree with the concerns over sustainability, but also referred to the chance for further connections to be made between the three groups during the build-up period 'as a result of using [the Trust's] convening power' (Sutherland, FD extract, 18/09/2019). This example shows the important role of the CCoCT as intermediaries (Virani and Pratt, 2016), acting as brokers and connectors between sectors. However, the effectiveness of these

connections has real positive financial implications for cultural organisations who may receive funding as a result.

Hence, those within the cultural sector were divided. Some were disinterested in pursuing business partnerships due to the social or non-profit ethics of their work. Others gave themselves the task of facilitating cross-sector partnerships between the cultural and businesses communities within Coventry. The most prominent of these was the 'Intersect' events programme, hosted by Vortex Creates – a Coventry-based arts organisation with a specialisation in immersive event production and costume design. These networking events were organised to provide a space 'where business and creative industries meet', promoting an opportunity for attendees to '...make new connections across sectors for mutual benefit and prosperity that lives past 2021' (Vortex Creates, 2019: online). An aim for sustainable partnerships was highlighted, as a way to stimulate long-term support following the departure of the UKCoC title.

I attended each of these events at a number of locations across the city, each one seeming to attract a large audience of familiar faces from within the cultural network and less familiar faces from various locally based businesses. The first event, on the 20th September 2018, was held at The Tin arts venue located in the Canal Basin. The event's promotional details described a space where businesses and cultural organisations could find '...exciting and profitable opportunities to collaborate outside of the usual constraints' (Vortex Creates, 2019: online). On walking into the venue, a member of Vortex Creates asked you to select a pin badge for the evening – the choice being either half of a yin yang symbol, with one badge saying 'arts' and the other saying 'business'. The badges slotted together as a way to visualise the connected relationship that could emerge between the two sectors.

The second event took place in February 2019, held at the Old Grammar School in the city centre. There was a slideshow presenting previous arts-business collaborations from around the world – from Coca Cola to Selfridges and British Airways, all of which had partnered with arts organisations for various campaigns. At the start of the presentations, the Vortex Creates artists made it clear that the events had no direct affiliation with the CCoCT, the programming or any funding opportunities ("This is not about what UKCoC will do - we don't know" (Anon, FD extract, 27/02/2019)).

Positioning themselves as outsiders may have been a strategic trust building move, especially for SMEs to feel that the room was reflective of a level playing field in what had become a competitive ecosystem. It was reiterated that the event was “...about cross-sector collaborations and how we can be prosperous” – although they did not indicate whether this meant financially or socially. Emulating previous conversations during 2019, the Vortex Creates representative promoted the need for risk-taking, adopting a similar corporate-style language which suggested that those on the ground needed to accept the challenges of the risks to obtain the reward.

The final event was held at the main Coventry City Council offices in May 2019, focusing on the Knife Angel sculpture. Again, the sustainability of the UKCoC process was highlighted by those running the event, who described the session as a ‘catalyst for conversation...to get us thinking, how might I contribute to legacy?’ (Anon, FD extract, 14/05/2019). A member of the council discussed how 4.5 tonnes of metal, 20 tonnes of concrete and £20k worth of installation costs were donated to the Knife Angel project from local businesses, with the CCoCT also providing an interpretation board. This encouraged artists to consider the financial implications of large-scale cultural projects which would be coming to the city, and the importance of finding private sector support to stretch their budget. Alongside the Meet the Funders event, these Intersect events highlight how top-down governors of the UKCoC2021 often reverted narratives back to the ways in which private sector partners could increasingly fund cultural activity within the programme.

While a core task for the SDV is managing a variety of upperground stakeholders and their contrasting organisational styles (Hewison et al., 2010; Cohendet et al., 2010; Richards and Duif, 2019), the realities for those in the middle- and underground cultural communities often involved confusion regarding how to generate connections with these new players within an environment that still did not ensure guarantee for funding.

7.3.4 Neoliberal Governance: Summary

Overall, this section has highlighted the increase in activities with a private sponsorship emphasis, and the complexities that arose whilst connecting the cultural

sector with the entrepreneurial mindset of local businesses. While these encounters may be the developer of innovative business models, it was clear that the differing management styles across the sectors needed further work to create successful partnerships and brokerage, especially with the short time span of the programme development. It also highlights a key lesson of the UKCoC competition: local arts and cultural practitioners should expect to enter a neoliberal funding model rather than receiving guaranteed funds from the charitable SDV, with top-down governors encouraging interactions with the private sector. However, for some, this atmosphere of instrumentalising cultural activity led to overt resistive activities through the build-up period, which I will discuss next.

7.4 Resistance

So far, I have analysed those companies, charities, groups, and individuals that were involved in the bid and invested in its success. However, other members of the local community were highly expressive in their out-right resistance to the UKCoC competition. These voices (which, as will be highlighted, were often anonymous) provided a critical take on the city branding and commercialisation practices (Papen, 2012) seen within the bidding and programming and, that I have detailed above, were portrayed as unrealistic and reductive.

Mould (2015, 2018) argues that creative activities which do not conform to 'official' creative strategies are more likely to be marginalised, giving way to creatively activist groups and people who subvert the top-down narrative in order to contest the prevailing hegemonies that can contain, compartmentalise, co-opt, and circumscribe existing creative practices. By creating alternative visions and functions, another layer is added to the cultural city, creating new forms and knowledges which champion subjectivity. This will be discussed through two main examples: graffiti and digital parodying.

7.4.1 Graffiti

Graffiti is an urban visual phenomenon, built on a subculture of illegality and ephemerality which generates creative and resistive politics (Merrill, 2014; Mould, 2015, 2018). Increasingly popular in contemporary creative cities, this artistic form has become popularised by notable figures such as Banksy (Dickens, 2008), which has thus exposed graffiti art to commercialisation and co-option. Throughout 2019, Trust representatives repeatedly mentioned how ‘street festivals, street art, graffiti’ would feature as part of Coventry 2021’s ‘big public art programme...to throw a spotlight onto local creativity’ (Bhathena, FD extract, 18/09/2019). However, the arrival of the UKCoC title also encouraged subversive and protest-based graffiti to appear as an antagonistic response to the elite governance of the neoliberal city.

Each piece of graffiti or resistance art across the city expresses an agenda and allows for the construction, development, and maintenance of a specific power structure, either by providing anti-hegemonic narratives, or by continually reproducing the Creative city narrative (Mould, 2015).



Plate 47. Permanent marker message appeared in the city centre and shared on the ‘covisok’ Instagram account, both anonymous but the account was featured as a project within the original bid document (Source: Instagram)

Graffiti artists often nurture their individualised subversive subjectivity through their artwork – like Michael, a Coventry-based artist who had been producing graffiti and street art across the world for twenty-six years. Michael made multiple appearances across the network throughout 2019, but most notably as a panellist at the third Native meet-up. His discussions about graffiti and street art to a network of young ‘creatives’ highlights the dual positionality that many artists find themselves in - wanting to uphold the subversive nature of their artwork, whilst also becoming part of the commercialised system in order to make money through precarious creative labour within the creative city.

Michael discussed how he had previously turned down corporate street art jobs as he did not want to advertise products through his medium, instead wanting to retain a ‘fringe’ element to his work (The Boar, 2018). He spoke at length about the usage of graffiti to aestheticize and perform the cultural identity of the city:

“Most cities have a quarter with some kind of street art...[to] gentrify an area with a splash of colour but with a plan of putting in high price housing. Artists start renting there for fuck all, then come the coffee places, and you’re eventually left with housing. [Sarcastic tone] A good place for a start-up company!”

(Michael, FD extract, 28/02/2019)

He is aware of the gentrification process which often occurs alongside creative placemaking practices, with an influx of creative industries and a desire to make the inner city become a more desirable location with cultural attractions (Hamnett, 2003). The application of street art murals can signify a sense of aesthetic power, seeking value judgement from the creative classes and utilising subversive practices as financial and social currency (Zukin, 1995). However, the role of the artist as self-made entrepreneur had also become intrinsic to his practice, as he warned, “If you can’t sell yourself, you’re gonna struggle”.

His reliance on commissions (organised mainly by a street art agency) had led to his small role within the UKCoC, where he had created some murals to create a visual

symbol of support for the bid. One involved a piece in Broadgate for a payment of £50 from the council, which he described as “a Christmas present for the city”. The low paid nature of this work highlights the financial precarity which is coupled with much freelance creative labour, where jobs are justified for their exposure (Gill and Pratt, 2008). Michael later became more heated, discussing how he later heard that the CCoCT had contacted a friend’s London-based street art agency to find an artist to supply artwork situated in Coventry. He said, “If they’re gonna bring people in, they’re gonna pay [somebody]...share work with locals! And give work experience for Coventry artists!” (Michael, FD extract, 28/02/2019).

Lewis (SKZ) shared similar concerns, reflecting his own experience of graffitiing walls as a teenager and struggling to find opportunities to create. Post-graduation, Lewis had wanted to create a commissions wall in the city centre, using local talent and attracting other artists to paint there – comparative to the work of Bankside Gallery in Hull, whose success of showcasing graffiti/street art talent from within and beyond Hull during 2017 had eventually attracted Banksy to spray at the site.

He asked, “How do you go about commissioning murals here? How do you need to ask for permission?” (Lewis, Interview, 30/04/2019) – showing a lack of knowledge and information about the bureaucracies and legality placed by authorities, who would eradicate the permanence of the work if it had broken regulation. Mould (2015) considers how underground creativity is policed by the proliferation of security in urban places, which can marginalise activities like graffiti as it does not comply with the desired functionality of a space

While Lewis’ desire for static art challenges the inherent ephemerality of truly subversive graffiti art (Merrill, 2015), it highlights the desire for artwork to be witnessed within a UKCoC. Interestingly, Lewis concluded by arguing, “You don’t have that problem in Digbeth!” – placing a highly designed creative quarter in Birmingham as an example of a place where graffiti difficulties had been overcome, but not noting the deeply commercial nature of the site as a CCIs cluster with large scale investment and top-down led aestheticization.

On a much smaller scale, anonymous stickers appeared as resistive micro-art around the city during 2019 (Plate 48 and 49). Importantly, this showcases members of the local community who do not subscribe to the messages of transformation which are attached to the competition. Most likely produced and distributed at the cost of the artist, these pieces are small opportunities to share anti-establishment messages to the emerging hegemony of cultural governance in the city.

Awcock (2021) argues that protest stickers are a ubiquitous but overlooked tool of political participation: expressing ones right to both the city and public space through a creative practice which helps to express a desire for change. Dekeyser (2020) also discusses the act of subvertising (i.e., subverting advertising (Dery, 1991)) as an intervention with urban advertising spaces, replacing overarching narratives of conformity with highly temporary forms of communication with which to share alternative perspectives.

These stickers enact two of the core subvertising interactions noted by Dekeyser (2020) – supplementation and reversal. Plate 48 shows a sticker which has altered the official UKCoC2021 bid logo, using the same blue text reading ‘Cov – entry’ and the rectangular coloured shapes representing John Piper’s stained-glass window in Coventry Cathedral. However, they have reversed the slogan and supplemented the message to read ‘UK City Absent of Any Culture’, as an act of defiance to the cultural messages being promoted around the city. Furthermore, this example is placed on a digital information board on The Burges which provides information for both local residents and visitors to the city, showing a purposeful intervention into hegemonically managed public space (ibid.).

The second sticker (Plate 49) uses the logo of the popular British television shown ‘Only Fools and Horses’, replacing it with the message of ‘Only Fools Live Here’, which arguably reinforces the previous discussions in Chapter 6 on narratives of territorial stigma (Butler et al., 2018). These micro-artworks add to the surface of the city, as a multi-layered palimpsest to document anachronistic narratives from different corners of culture and the economy (Mould, 2015). Furthermore, it challenges who controls the textual, affective and aesthetic landscape of the city (Dekeyser, 2020; Anderson, 2009), especially as these critical messages are likely to be limited within official

commissions which instead focus on aestheticization to create an attractive atmosphere for the creative class (Florida, 2002).



Plate 48. A sticker subverting the Coventry 2021 logo and claiming Coventry to be ‘absent’ of culture (Source: Own image)



Plate 49. Sticker in Coventry city centre using the Only Fools and Horses logo to share the message that only fools live ‘here’, assumedly referring to Coventry (Source: Own image)

The creative nature of the subversive commentary highlights the different arenas of cultural production within the city, where various texts and artworks are ‘involved and entangled, intricately interwoven, interrupting, and inhabiting each other’ (Dillion, 2007: 4). The pieces arising from beyond the ordered UKCoC system highlights the continuation of creative practices which actively critique the consuming programming but offer a platform for alternative perspectives to the top-down vision.

7.4.2 Digital Parodying

Resistive tactics can be viewed as ways in which something ‘...insinuates itself into the other’s place, fragmentarily, without taking over in its entirety, without being able to keep it at a distance...it constantly manipulates events in order to turn them into ‘opportunities’” (De Certeau, 1984: pxix). This can be seen from a top-down perspective (i.e., using the UKCoC bid to provide socioeconomic opportunities), and from the bottom-up through resistive practices which utilise the specificities of the UKCoC title in order to pointedly critique.

The latter form can be highlighted through the Coventry 2021 Culture City page – an anonymous account created on Facebook as a parody to the official Coventry 2021 UKCoC marketing page. A form of digital hacking (Dekeyser, 2020), the page includes a series of spoof events through a fake programme which would easily be accessed through a digital search for the UKCoC on social media. This example highlights a form of resistive creativity which purposefully infiltrates a system (here, the Trust) and subverts it from within by utilising existing infrastructures (i.e., digital marketing pages) via a separate space (i.e., Facebook page) which allows the group to engage on their own terms (Mould, 2015).



Coventry 2021 Culture City

Celebrating Cov, London style.

23 JULY

Led by famous Londoner Chamomile Glockenspiel-Beirut and her team of experts drawn from the capital, the Coventry 2021 Culture City team will be bringing the bestest ever arty farty cultural happenings to Coventry in 2021 when the city is UK Culture City. These will all be exclusively for young humans (and those who don't identify as human) aged under 20.

Where possible we'll also appropriate existing celebrations within the city and re-imagine them as only Londoners can do. It's going to be an beautiful journey and we want you to be part of it, especially if you are under 20. We'll be listing all our events on this page so it will be your one-stop culture city guide so do stop by regularly.

Plate 50. The 'About' information for the Coventry 2021 Culture City page on Facebook, particularly emphasising associations with London and young people (Source: Facebook)



Plate 51. A spoof profile page on the Coventry 2021 Culture City Facebook page (Source: Facebook)

As Plates 50 and 51 display, there are a string of factors which the page has chosen to focus on. Firstly, relations with London: using the City of London coat of arms as the page logo, referring to previous London-based positions held by certain members of the CCoCT producing teams and insinuating a reliance on the financial and cultural sectors located within the capital. It also mocks the accreditation of cultural taste to London-based communities, who are framed to be graciously sharing their cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1986) in less privileged places via the UKCoC competition. Secondly, it satirises the emphasis that is placed on young people, reflecting the objectives of the Trust but reframing these as at the expense of older communities in the city. Thirdly, the governance of the UKCoC title is mocked with multiple references to ‘a team of experts’ headed by a ‘culture guru’ whose parody profile proclaims, ‘There’s nothing I don’t know about culture’. All of these elements mock the power structures and tensions which have emerged between local people and the SDV.

The pages offer an alternative reality and hopes to engage local residents with a subverted version of the existing and established functionalities of the UKCoC win (Mould, 2015). Spoof programme events were posted via the page, each based around a recognisable location in the city but drew on the programme themes through their event information. In Plate 52 below, the ‘Festival of Wood’ event was said to be organised in Wood End, a neighbourhood in the city with a high rating on the Index of Multiple Deprivations. Mocking the ephemerality of the UKCoC process, the summary is written from the perspective of a CCoCT producing team member who is based in London but has undertaken a quick visit to the area, which is said to have given them ‘full insight’ into the city. Drawing again on the involvement of young people in the city, it states that a group will be ‘turned into trees for the day’ – suggesting the ineffectiveness and unmeaningful nature of a cultural spectacle which uses a deprived neighbourhood as a stage.

Other events included a vegan festival with free admission for anybody under the age of twenty; a weekend event which required the removal of all non-student residents in order to accommodate 200,000 students from around the world; and a vintage event at ‘NoGo village’, highlighting the tensions which have arisen around FarGo Creative vision.



Coventry 2021 Culture City

26 July at 20:25 · 🌐

...

Heyyyyy! I spent 30 minutes exploring Coventry when I came up from London and this gave me a full insight into the cultural vibes of the city and what makes it's young people so special. One place I didn't visit was Wood End but I got a lot of positive guidance energy vibrations just from repeating its name 100 times when I was doing some yogic flying and it inspired me to create this amazing event. Young people will be turned into trees for the day by the incredible team at ImagineEar. We'll have trees from Africa such as the Baobab and Sausage, from Asia we'll have Acacia eatechu and from the UK a great selection including Oak, Elm and Rowan. A great line-up of top grime artists will provide music. It's going to be a stormer so put the date in your calendar now! Ciao! Chamy 🍷



SAT, 13 FEB 2021 AT 10:00

Wood End Festival of Wood

Milverton Road, Coventry, CV2 1, United Kingdom

INTERESTED

You like Coventry 2021 Culture City

**Plate 52. A spoof event on the Coventry 2021 Culture City Facebook page
(Source: Facebook)**

Another example trivialised the diversity objectives of the Trust by pretending to host a Caribbean food festival whereby the organisers “...couldn’t find any decent foodies in Coventry so we’ve hired leading Caribbean-fusion food technicians from London”, serving ‘quad-baked chips’ alongside Jerk chicken, mocking triple-cooked chips and using them as a symbol of middle class taste. Plate 53 highlights a critique of the traditional hosting of the Turner Prize, reframing it as a ‘flagship event’ called ‘London at The Herb’ which has ‘secured 16 top London artists’ to exhibit in Coventry, rather than supporting local or regional talent.



Coventry 2021 Culture City

1 August at 11:57 · 🌐



Positively delighted to announce this major exhibition at The Herb. We have secured 16 top London artists and this will be a flagship event for Culture City 2021 🤗



London at The Herb

Jordan Well, Coventry, CV1 5, United Kingdom

Plate 53. A spoof event on the Coventry 2021 Culture City Facebook page (Source: Facebook)

A final example was an evening solely for attendees who are over the age of twenty, ‘organised [to] refute the widely held belief that we don’t give a monkeys about old people in the city’. This also pointed criticism at the city centre focus of the official events, whilst also mentioning the belief that the programme is facilitated around the appeasement of top-down decisionmakers, saying, “...we are not allowed to stage any events for over 20’s WITHIN the City Boundary – if we do Phil Redmond will be very cross and we’ll lose £10,000,000 of funding”.

These parodies exemplified an alternative perception of the UKCoC title – beyond the grandiose of step changes and aims, instead highlighting the uneven structures of power within the SDV and the wider UKCoC system. The anonymous source has exercised their ‘citizenship contract’ (Elden, 2004: 231), whereby everybody has the right to freedom of expression and the right to culture - to enjoy art and explore the world – whether these expressions and explorations of the artistic word are less palatable than the scripts provided by top-down forces.

The anonymous source has pulled apart the buzz terms of the competition to expose the negative elements of the competition and highlighting how members of the community (quite possibly from within the cultural network with their in-depth knowledge of the sector) are deeply sceptical of the transformative change the competition can bring. Creating profiles of the key SDV figureheads can be viewed as a harsh move, but it may also reflect the wider process of profile creation on a spatial scale, whereby a caricature version of the city is sold to judges and a national audience.

Most of all, this page purposefully highlights the less appealing factors of the process rather than focusing solely on the positive. Official cultural governance structures like the SDV and DCMS should confront these challenges to the hegemony rather than ignore them or criticise them, as they expose the elements of the competition which are disregarded by pockets of the local community. This also adds to the emerging narrative of accepting honesty and critical reflection in cultural policy evaluations, whereby failure is more openly acknowledged (Jancovich and Stevenson, 2021).

The acts of rebellious creativity covered in this subchapter highlight how some forms of artistic practice are fleeting, not lingering enough or concealing their identity in order to evade commodification. However, these acts are purposefully visible so as to publicly express their artistic critical message (Mould, 2015), directed at a national policy and local cultural governance structure which appears to be largely critically averse. The anonymity and ephemerality of these pieces uphold their subversive nature, to avoid appropriation within a neoliberal form of governance which captures marginalised and alternative content in order to rebrand it as a 'cool' experience in which to gather cultural capital within the creative city.

When alternative functions emerge within the urban landscape, Mould (ibid.) argues that the capitalist mantra will offer contracts and wages in return for a subjective cultural work which can then maintain a city's competitive edge, marketed to the world as a must-see piece. Whilst organisations working within the sector are reliant on project grants and top-down support to continue their work in the sector, these subversive and resistive works offer an opportunity to confront the injustices and inequalities of the creative city through a recontextualization of the UKCoC practice.

7.5 Processes: Conclusions

After attending to the people and the places of creative Coventry in 2019, this final chapter attempts to stitch together a fuller analysis of the cultural ecosystem by covering the often-intangible processes which guide and shape a UKCoC title. Analysing a number of visions and actions instilled by the top-down governance team throughout 2019, the chapter highlighted how these effected the everyday realities of decision-making on-the-ground. This analysis captured the evolving sense of place in Coventry (Massey, 1994; Long, 2013) as its cultural identity develops. However, dissecting *whose* version of this supposedly collective spatial identity is crucial; documenting the impact of these processes on locally based artists to continually discuss what these cultural producers' value (Oakley, 2015). By touching on the economic and social processes of the UKCoC spectacle, this chapter has aimed to balance the '...unbridled belief in the potential of culture and the prosaic reality' (O'Brien and Miles, 2010).

A CoC title is positioned as influencing the business and cultural practices alongside the general operation of creative industries within a place, which has had varying success over the last four decades (Campbell, 2011). Relating to cultural ecosystem theory (Gross and Wilson, 2019), which emphasises the strength of interrelated networks and communities within the creative economy, the build-up period is a critical temporal period whereby governors can influence the extent to which a city change programme operates in a separate field to the local practitioners within a place (ibid.). Furthermore, the conflicting existence of the promises for direct economic impact and for improved sociocultural connections in a UKCoC leads to a turbulent decision-making climate, which directly impacts the precarious middle- and upperground cultural communities in the city (Cohendet et al., 2010).

Feelings of exclusion from internal decision-making and the arrival of external governors to oversee the competition arguably led to feelings of encroachment for some producers. Concerns arose over the lack of communication and support provided to the local arts and cultural sector during the build-up of 2019, leading to accusations that the programme decisionmakers would instead potentially use the large sums of investment to "...start throwing pancakes" (Mark, Interview, 28/10/2019) over the

socioeconomic cracks of the city rather than utilising the knowledge from local communities to make real changes. Furthermore, this distrust can lead to local communities actively distancing themselves from the initiative, or furthermore, using their own creative practices to openly resist the programme and its mission (Mould, 2015).

Chapter 8 – Conclusion

8.1 Introducing the Conclusion: Research Statement

This thesis aimed to critically attend to culture-led, place-based regeneration processes by analysing a recent yet leading example of this phenomenon: the UK City of Culture (UKCoC) competition, ran by the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport. Using the case study of my home city of Coventry, this thesis studies the UKCoC competition through the lens of a mid-sized, ‘ordinary’ city in the UK. This critically situates the research within ordinary city theory, which dissects how and why cities are deemed as requiring further development to make them extraordinary (Robinson, 2006; Bryson et al., 2021).

The research aimed to further understand how and why smaller cities are choosing to deliver regeneration plans influenced by creative city theory (Florida, 2004; Landry, 2000). The analysis presented in this thesis builds upon previous research on the creative city by moving beyond the global superstar narratives (Sassen, 2005; Taylor and Derudder, 2016) and analysing ‘off-the-map’ places (Robinson, 2006), which are now applying a similar style of development tactic (Cox and O’Brien, 2012). These often commercial and competitive approaches highlight the wider influence of urban entrepreneurialism, whereby activity is governed by forces largely interested in facilitating neoliberal imperatives (Harvey, 1989; 2002).

While the economic and urban development processes enacted through such regeneration styles is of importance, this thesis has explored the topic from within the cultural geographical discipline. This involved the adoption of a relational approach to examine the social and cultural impacts of such urban decision-making. An embedded ethnography captured the lived experiences of the middleground cultural network in Coventry throughout the build-up period to UKCoC2021. Influenced by my own positionality as a Coventrian, the objective was to document internal narratives from communities within the city to capture local knowledge and, arguably, a more accurate sense of place (Massey, 1994). Shaped by the epistemological guidance of the ‘small

stories' methodology (Lorimer, 2003; Cameron, 2012), emotional data was captured from local people to provide a unique lens for considering the UKCoC competition.

Structurally, it dissected this cultural phenomenon using Cohendet et al.'s (2010) anatomical framework for creative cities, which splits the city into three distinct networks: the upper-, the middle- and the underground. This thesis aimed to purposefully capture data from the perspective of the middleground network, who play a dual role as cultural producers and consumers with longstanding connections with the city (ibid.). This was deemed essential for understanding how a local sense of place (Massey, 2005) was transmitted through the early UKCoC processes enacted by upperground decisionmakers such as the Coventry City of Culture Trust (the UKCoC2021 special delivery vehicle).

A year-long embedded ethnography within the middleground cultural network aimed to form a relational picture of the build-up period from the perspective of those foregrounded as some of the key beneficiaries of the competition (Boland et al., 2017). This involved interviews, participant observation and ephemera analysis to enact a relational and interpretivist methodology which sought to understand the subjectivities, meanings and representations emerging throughout the 2019 build-up period. The immersive nature of the methods also hoped to capture the underground network of 'invisible' cultural producers involved with vernacular or subversive cultural production (Cohendet et al., 2010), which can be co-opted *or* used as resistance tools within commercially oriented regeneration (Mould, 2015).

The distinction of the anatomical layers also incorporates theorisations of power which are entwined with UKCoC competitions, enlivening Cresswell's (2015: 19) argument that a place is "space invested with meaning in the context of power". An ethnography inherently considers the social conditions of a place which influence where power is held, valued, and validated. In the context of the UKCoC competition, Cohendet et al's (2010) anatomical framework helps to examine Bourdieu's (1986, 1991) concepts of symbolic power and cultural capital: firstly, to understand *by who, where, and how* (i.e. people, places and processes) cultural representations are legitimised and authorised in the creative city, but also to see which players possess and showcase the cultural forms, practices and languages which display such power.

Thus, three distinct research questions were devised to explore the build-up to the UKCoC phenomenon in Coventry:

- **RQ1:** How are the local middleground arts network becoming involved with the staging and development of ‘creative Coventry’ during 2019? How do these artists perceive the UKCoC title during the build-up period?
- **RQ2:** Which places are being identified as the key sites in ‘creative Coventry’? Why are these places justified as creative and by who?
- **RQ3:** What types of social, cultural and economic processes are shaping the cultural ecosystem of ‘creative Coventry’ throughout the build-up period to UKCoC2021?

8.2 Summary of Findings and Limitations

To shed light onto the people, places and processes of creative Coventry throughout 2019, these concluding remarks will summarise the main findings in relation to each research question before detailing some of the limitations faced. The binary of inclusion and exclusion became central to the experience of middleground network members throughout the build-up period to UKCoC2021, with emotion-led narratives capturing how participants had experienced being included or excluded in the staging and development of the programme.

8.2.1. Findings of the Research Questions

- 1) *How are the local middleground arts network becoming involved with the staging and development of ‘creative Coventry’ during 2019? How do these artists perceive the UKCoC title during the build-up period?*

Coventry’s middleground network had an online and offline presence, acting as a vehicle for accessing knowledge from within the local cultural ecosystem. This longstanding community self-defined - or perhaps, self-excluded - themselves as

distinct from the '*mainstream*'; a term which could be translated in anatomical terms as the underground network of more formalised cultural organisations (Cohendet et al., 2010). The small-scale and independent nature of their cultural production was often held as the most important defining feature of their collective network.

The middleground was largely composed of white and middle-class artists, which mirrored the social inequalities seen across the national cultural sector by Brook et al. (2020) and was largely unrepresentative of Coventry's diverse population. There were signs of even more limited diversity higher up the professional ladder, even in the smaller middleground organisations (Brook et al., 2018; Davies et al., 2015). A key aim of the UKCoC2021 programme was to represent a more diverse pool of cultural producers and encourage engagement with multicultural creative activity in Coventry (UKCoC, 2017). This aim was difficult to legitimise in a landscape where minority cultural production had previously been overlooked in the face of cultural activities which may be deemed as irrelevant cultural narratives for communities of colour (O'Brien and Oakley, 2015; Saha, 2015; Appignanesi, 2010; Malik, 2013).

The UKCoC programme also prioritised a focus on young people, representing Coventry's claim as having a population whose average age was seven years younger than that across the rest of the country (UKCoC, 2017, 2018; Griffiths, 2006; Garcia and Cox, 2013). However, as Boland et al. (2018) highlight, the nature of the term 'young people' was often ambiguous and ill-defined within the UKCoC programme.

The data captured in Coventry shows how empowering young people had led to some positive relationships forming; for example, through mentorship opportunities which took advantage of the UKCoC platform, where younger cultural producers learned how to navigate the existing authority and power structures of the sector (Farrell, 2001). However, it also led to intergenerational tensions when younger artists actively rebelled against the existing conventions upheld by the longstanding middleground network (Becker, 1982; Cohendet et al., 2010), making older artists feel excluded with the focus on a younger creative class who were typically praised for bringing their fresh creative perspectives and talent into existing networks (Florida, 2004).

The upperground had also publicly committed to representing Coventry's working-class roots through the programme. As Randle et al. (2015) argues, class distinctions were proposed by cultural producers as being salient in mediating their occupational chances and success within their industry; while the upperground network members were often labelled as middle-class with more formal cultural tastes, which led to the assumed ownership of more cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1986). Oftentimes, this perception of the upperground decisionmakers by those within the middleground led to a sense that those holding the power in the UKCoC phenomenon did not fully understand the social, cultural and economic pressures or experiences of those from different class backgrounds.

Despite well intended commitments from the upperground to address issues around ethnicity, age and class-based representation in Coventry's cultural sector, tensions arose around calls for diversity during the build-up period. Oftentimes, this reflected longstanding feelings of exclusion from governing structures such as the Coventry City Council and the newly emerging Coventry City of Culture Trust. Some participants felt that funding was not being diverted to legitimate partnerships with diverse cultural producers during the build-up period – which was then assumed to be pre-emptively setting a tone that diversity funding would not be used to facilitate real change throughout the UKCoC programme. At times, this sense of disingenuity and tokenism led to hostile working environments between the upper- and middleground cultural networks (Davies et al., 2015; Cohendet et al., 2010).

Later developments in the build-up were genuine in their bid to enact practices that overcome embedded racism, ageism, and classism within their sector, and some participants ended up receiving financial support or cultural opportunities from the Trust. However, the early build-up period during 2019 arguably set the programme off on unstable footing. Further communication and relationship development was required from upperground network members far earlier into the build-up period, something which was actively reflected on by members of the Trust themselves in the data. This aligns with previous findings that City of Culture competitions and their governance bodies have often operated in a separate field to local creative industry practitioners (Campbell, 2011), which is at odds with Florida's (2002) theory that creativity leads to a more interlinked city.

2) *Which places are being identified as the key sites in 'creative Coventry'? Why are these places justified as creative and by who?*

Chapter 6 expanded the relational mapping of Coventry's cultural ecosystem previously undertaken by Granger and Hamilton (2010), gathering perspectives from the middleground network on the spaces and places they associated with creative Coventry. It focused on personal narrations of the sites of cultural labour and consumption to renew the relational mapping of Coventry's cultural ecosystem in the UKCoC2021 setting. Importantly, this answers Oakley and O'Brien (2016), who called for further research on the relationship between cultural labourers and the physical places in which they dwell. To complement the previous research question, this chapter also applied the anatomical framework of the upper-, middle- and underground (Cohendet et al., 2010), this time to the physical landscape of creative Coventry to distinguish between formal, semi-formal and informal locations.

Firstly, the data captured emotional discussions around the territorial stigmatisation faced in Coventry, which was reinforced by both internal and external voices (Wacquant, 2007; Tyler and Slater, 2018). As Wacquant (2007) argues, the most powerful stigma can arise in places which have seen a post-Fordist reorganisation of the economy, which changes social structures and can make long-term residents feel excluded from emerging opportunities. The negative reputation of Coventry's urban landscape was captured in social media posts, interview data and even in official documents and was pervasive in how participants described their city (for example, regularly using denigrating phrases such as 'shithole' to describe the city as a whole or specific neighbourhoods (Butler et al., 2018)).

Investment into improved cultural infrastructure and city centre facades were seen as symbolic responses to the negative perceptions of the city, highlighting a process by which physical changes to the city aimed to generate a more positive image of Coventry (Turok, 2009) – a particularly important process in a post-war city where modernist developments were oftentimes more denigrated than celebrated by decisionmakers. These material attempts at reversing negative perceptions of Coventry's spatial identity aligned with wider political desires to avoid being labelled as a cultural 'cold

spot' of the UK (House of Commons Culture, Media and Sport Committee, 2017; Gilmore, 2013).

One tangible site discussed in particular was the constricting concrete ring road surrounding the city centre, which the raised issues about limiting UKCoC activity within the central business district rather than reaching suburban neighbourhoods with lower levels of cultural engagement. During the build-up, the distribution of the UKCoC activity was largely limited to city centre locations, creating worries about the development of a main arena of creativity which overlooked peripheral spaces (Edensor et al., 2009). Residents shared similar concerns to those expressed by Oakley (2015), who stated that regeneration strategies focused only on the inner city can obscure the involvement of everyday cultural practices and uphold the exclusionary perspective of the arts only taking place in 'high' arts spaces such as large galleries and theatres.

Considering further sites discussed in this renewed relational mapping of creative Coventry during 2019, Granger and Hamilton's (2010) earlier findings largely remained. Like the definitions of the social networks covered in the previous research question, underground spaces were defined as being 'mainstream'. The underground locations were often framed as less appealing to local middleground network members due to these locations being divorced from small-scale cultural activity and generally overly touristic. This builds on previous findings that these formalised sites were 'out of sync' with the places frequented by the underground, grassroots cultural producers (Granger and Hamilton, 2010: 58).

The majority of participants placed the most value onto middleground sites functioning across the city, as spaces of semi-formal, community generated cultural production. These included studios and independent galleries or venues which cultural producers also frequented as consumers. A large number of the middleground sites identified were in sites repurposed from the bottom-up to have alternate functionalities which interrupted the typical city landscape (Harris, 2015; Brighenti, 2013) – for example, turning retail spaces into cultural venues.

This highlights what Cohendet et al. (2010) identify as the defining elements of the creative middleground: exploration (i.e., discovering new and innovative uses for

unused space) and exploitation (i.e., taking advantage of the cheaper or less used resources). The common argument attached to such middleground sites was how the network were helping to open ‘... more inclusive alternative[s] to the spectacular spaces of urban creativity’ (Bain, 2010:74). However, it was not often that participants would reflect upon the ways in which such spaces could be seen as exclusive or comfortable for a particular type of middleground user rather than wider local communities.

Value was also attached to third space sites, which were seen as more diverse, open, affordable and everyday – often serving wider social and collective needs (Leslie and Rantisi, 2011; Edensor et al., 2009). This included cafés and pubs which, while being consumption focused, allowed opportunities for the casual sociability deemed important for middleground freelancers (Leslie and Rantisi, 2011). Other vernacular sites include libraries, community centres, working men’s clubs and the street. Longstanding community-led groups and amateur hobbyists from the underground cultural network were encountered in such spaces, oftentimes offering free creative activities, or planning events which incorporated social support as well as access to cultural works (Evans, 2005).

Issues were raised in relation to top-down spaces which had been purpose built for cultural consumption, such as FarGo Village. Common criticisms from participants included the prioritisation of external visitors, London-focused regeneration agendas and creative city aesthetics over supporting sites for affordable local cultural production (O’Connor, 2014; Mould and Comunian, 2014). Participants often referred to sites such as FarGo as inauthentic, aligning with Zukin and Braslow’s (2011: 132) argument that creative districts can come to represent a ‘cautionary tale of spatialization followed by re-commodification’, leading to associations with the commercialised, upperground end of the creative anatomy spectrum.

3) *What types of social, cultural and economic processes are shaping the cultural ecosystem of ‘creative Coventry’ throughout the build-up period to UKCoC2021?*

The final research question explored the often-intangible processes which guide and shape a UKCoC title and the wider cultural ecosystem of Coventry – such as language,

governance and resistance. Capturing honest reflections on the challenging issues faced in the UKCoC build-up period is essential for covering the ‘...unbridled belief in the potential of culture and the prosaic reality’ (O’Brien and Miles, 2010).

While largely positive about the UKCoC as an opportunity, the majority of the middleground participants expressed feelings of disconnect, detachment and confusion in relation to the upperground governance. Throughout the early build-up period, tasks for the Coventry City of Culture Trust involved the recruitment of their team and the management of numerous upperground stakeholders with contrasting organisational styles (Hewison et al., 2010; Cohendet et al., 2010; Richards and Duif, 2019). This inward focus led to middleground network members feeling excluded from the decision-making processes that they had been involved with to a greater degree during the bidding period, through stakeholder consultations and advisory boards.

The arrival of external governors to oversee the competition also led to feelings of distrust, which can lead to local communities actively distancing themselves from an initiative (Mould and Comunian, 2014). Participants cited an overall lack of guidance provided to the middleground network and the wider cultural ecosystem, despite the Coventry City of Culture Trust remaining reliant on the (sometimes unfunded) labour of local artists as part of the programme development.

Given the fundraising aspect of the UKCoC competition, substantial financial investment into local artistic and cultural activity is often assumed as part of the process. However, this process takes place in a financial climate where cultural organisations are recommended to explore private investment routes instead of relying on public funding (Neelands et al., 2015: 24), with the Trust developing networks of private businesses to encourage partnerships with cultural organisations.

All of the middleground cultural organisations involved said they were restricted by project-to-project funding and precarious working conditions. Therefore, there was a collective sense of disappointment as early build-up funding opportunities facilitated by the upperground were still based on a process of bids and applications, which put the middleground in competition rather than facilitating cooperation (Mould and Comunian, 2015). A small number of participants discussed how they had been

successful with applications for build-up funds which had enabled experimental cultural production in time for the UKCoC2021 programme. However, reflections from those receiving funding highlighted similar feelings as those captured by Bergsgard and Vassenden (2011) in relation to ECoC programmes, where successful applications felt a sense of guilt due to the limited reach of this funding for their wider network members (ibid.).

This complex mixture of emotions regarding the UKCoC process also took a cultural form, with resistive creativity emerging across the city throughout 2019. This research wanted to legitimise these pieces by considering them as evidence of the lived experience of the UKCoC, rather than hide or ignore such practices. A common theme of the resistance pieces was to subvert the visual branding used in the official documents to reject the commercialisation of the city (Papen, 2012), or to mock the cultural capital possessed by upperground forces as a rejection of the power such decisionmakers had over what kinds of culture should be represented and invested in (Bourdieu, 1986).

The anonymity and ephemerality of this work highlighted the important role of this underground creative production in Coventry: to be purposefully visible and subversive, inviting other city residents to consider critical messaging (Mould, 2015). The graffiti, stickers and parody accounts captured the tensions on the ground in a visual and political format, providing further perspectives into what some Coventrian's wanted to see achieved or avoided through locally sensitive placemaking.

8.2.2. Limitations of the Research

While this thesis has provided the findings of an extensive, embedded ethnography within the cultural ecosystem of Coventry, it does not come without limitations. This section will cover five key limitations but does not set out to be a definitive list.

When beginning the data collection, it became clear that the ethnographic approach would develop into focusing on the artistic and cultural producers in the city (i.e., those from the middleground, who had various links to the decision-making groups in the city but were largely producing on an amateur or independent position). Other than

one local councillor, this research did not directly interview any of the top-down players in cultural governance positions in the city – particularly employees of the SDV, but also further local authority workers or academics involved with the development of the cultural strategy and UKCoC2021 evaluation. This was partly in order to firmly sit with the reflections of middleground players, but partly due to the difficulty of accessing those in more official or formal roles during the research. Therefore, the resulting findings cannot and will not claim to be representative of the lived experiences of the players involved with cultural decision making at a local, regional or national scale.

Secondly, the sample of participants taken from the existing cultural ecosystem, as reflected in this research, could be seen as limited due to my early reliance on snowball sampling. This may have excluded other network members from beyond the core networks that I encountered – particularly, the more informal, amateur communities in the city. If more capacity had been available to me, I would have liked to have attended a wider variety of cultural events across the city to broaden my pool of participants and to also provide a more accurate representation of Coventry's population.

Thirdly, in a thesis based on lived experiences, I am aware of my position as a white British, able bodied and emerging middle-class researcher. Acknowledging my privilege and the problematic ways in which it may have influenced the interpretation of the data, I am aware that this can place further limitations on my research. This reflexivity is especially essential in the context of a UKCoC programme which is committed to themes of multiculturalism, diversity, and equality. While I have aimed to relay information and encounters as accurately as possible, I would never expect to fully make any claims on behalf of the minoritized communities involved in this research and I am aware that this limits my subjective interpretations of the data that I did collect.

Fourthly, the rapid pace of the UKCoC process means that since data collection in 2019, some research participants have successfully gone on to receive funding, support and employment from stakeholders such as the council and the Trust. While accurate at the time of writing, more recent involvement with the programming may have

changed participants perspectives in comparison to the views that are documented within this research. However, recording these perceptions at various stages of the programme builds a multi-faceted viewpoint of the wider process and highlights the fluctuation of emotions over the UKCoC period. It also supports the notion of longitudinal cultural evaluations in order to capture these ever-evolving feelings.

Finally, the data collection for this thesis was undertaken during 2019 and was thus not impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic. Thus, I am aware that this thesis represents a specific temporal moment when the UKCoC2021 programme was going to be delivered in a pandemic free world. The restrictions placed across the UK from March 2020 completely altered Coventry's UKCoC title, with social distancing requirements meaning that the largely in-person nature of the celebrations and programmes were either cancelled, moved online or scaled down. The restrictions also limited my ability to visit the city regularly and safely during 2020 and 2021, changing my sense of place of Coventry as a UKCoC.

8.3. Contribution to Knowledge

This research adds to what is already known about the social and cultural impacts of hosting the DCMS UKCoC competition. However, it is the first in-depth ethnographic study of the early build-up period to a UKCoC competition, rather than focusing on the year of celebrations itself or the immediate legacy period (Garcia, 2005; Mooney, 2004; Boland et al., 2019). Instead of overlooking the build-up as a limbo period, it validates the build-up an intense stage of the UKCoC phenomenon which is worthy of study.

Theoretically, this research brings together a novel mixture of existing knowledge from geographical and cultural policy literature. From urban geography, it combines global, ordinary and creative city theories to understand how creative city thinking is increasingly applied in smaller cities (Florida, 2000; Robinson, 2006; Sassen, 2005; Taylor and Derruder, 2017). However, rather than studying the UKCoC phenomenon from an overtly economic or developmental perspective, the cultural geographical origins of the work shift the focus onto the spatial and social connections within a place (Cook et al., 2000; Philo, 2009).

Beyond geography, concepts from cultural policy studies were utilised including cultural megaevents (Evans, 2011; Bianchini and Parkinson, 1993; Garcia, 2005; Boland et al., 2018), cultural ecosystem theory (Gross and Wilson, 2017; Holden, 2015) and creative networks (Oakley, 2015; Pratt, 2008; Fuller-Love, 2009; Comunian, 2012). Bourdieu's (1986, 1991) concepts of symbolic power and cultural capital considered who owns, develops and authorises culture within the phenomenon. Given the diverse population of Coventry, the research ensured to add to local knowledge and reflect local experiences by involving theories on the marginalisation of communities within cultural governance structures (Hesmondhalgh and Saha, 2013; Brook et al., 2018, 2020). Together, these theories provided a new theoretical map for UKCoC studies, with the people, places and processes framework emerging as one of the key contributions of this thesis.

Methodologically, the triangulation of qualitative methods (semi-structured interviews, ethnographic observations, and secondary source analysis) was influenced by Miles and Sullivan's (2012) relational strategy but added to knowledge by applying this approach to a UKCoC. Furthermore, the relational strategy was uniquely combined with Cohendet et al's (2010) anatomical approach to compartmentalise the social and material aspects of the local cultural ecosystem into a distinct hierarchy of formality. Finally, it renewed the relational mapping of Coventry previously undertaken by Granger and Hamilton (2010) to add another layer of knowledge to previous studies on creative Coventry but from a UKCoC angle.

The overarching binary emerging from the research was the inclusion – or often, exclusion – of the middleground network from upperground sites, networks and decision-making processes within a programme which was framed as socially engaged to elevate and empower local voices (Coventry City of Culture Trust, 2018; Courage, 2017). Importantly, this research champions an approach which is not averse to collecting criticisms or negative representations of the UKCoC process. It attended to honest reflections and resistive creative practices which actively sought to subvert and reject the dominant cultural narratives developed by the upperground (Mould, 2015, 2018; Dekeyser, 2020).

This study demonstrates the value of undertaking deeply emotional ethnographic research which empowers the small stories which can be lost within spectacles (Lorimer, 2003). Emotionally charged data is essential to collect in order to understand the multi-faceted lived experiences of the UKCoC process more fully, with the relational approach allowing me to attend to the individuality of the people and places within Coventry rather than adopting a one-size-fits-all approach to monitoring (Belfiore and Bennett, 2010).

The learnings drawn from this embedded ethnography show how upperground network members may prioritise the immersion of decisionmakers into middleground networks and wider cultural ecosystems at earlier stages of the build-up period in order to understand – and in turn, more accurately represent - the communities cited as beneficiaries of an upcoming UKCoC programme. The hope of this thesis is for it to encourage future UKCoC bidders and titleholders to learn from these lived experiences which can be overlooked in fast-paced programme delivery. Furthermore, it emphasises the critical temporality of the early build-up period as a time for relationship building, communication and boundary setting between the special delivery vehicle and local cultural sector.

8.4. Future Implications of the Research

8.4.1. Influence on Future Academic Research

Moving forward, I encourage future researchers to undertake embedded ethnographic methods to further understand place-based cultural strategies. As discussed throughout this conclusion, ethnographic methods which combine interviews, observations and ephemera analysis can capture emotional narratives around the deeper meanings attached to our unique understandings of culture, value and place (Bayfield, 2015). Small stories from overlooked groups can be seen as ‘hidden transcripts’, which highlight the power imbalance in whose perspectives are typically more readily available in evaluations (Newsinger and Green, 2016).

Further relational research would continue to highlight the importance of tacit understandings which do not lend themselves to quantifiable data collection

techniques. In the UK Government, the Treasury produce the core guidance documents on undertaking policy appraisals and evaluations: the Green Book¹ and the Magenta Book². The reliance on econometric methods and statistically reliable data means there is currently little opportunity for qualitative data to be recognised as rigorous or reliable in the government setting. The continued emphasis on ‘hard’ measures has been critiqued in previous UKCoC contexts, with some researchers going as far as to suggest that few cities submit evidence which shows economic targets being met (Palmer/Rae Associates, 2004 in Campbell, 2011).

However, more relational studies will and should be undertaken to cover the social and cultural impacts of policies which feed into core government policy areas, helping to generate an evidence base on topics such as pride in place and wellbeing. The future undertaking of relational research by academics could encourage evaluators and policymakers to open their methodological gaze and possibly lead to evaluations which develop innovative ways to present and disseminate qualitative narratives.

If future embedded ethnographies were enacted to gather such evidence, a key recommendation would be the undertaking of longitudinal data collection to gather extensive contextual data where possible. This addresses one of the limitations of this data: the constricted time of only one year for data collection. Due to the schedule of the PhD funding and the limited mobility caused by the global pandemic, my data only covers one year of the build-up period. This is a relatively short-term period in relation to the official UKCoC governance period, which can last over five years when considering the bid process too.

The opportunity for routine ethnographies or interviews to be undertaken in a repeated time series (Frees, 2004), alongside the middleground networks throughout the duration of the UKCoC process, would enrich the depth of data collected and generate a multi-layered picture on whether such relationships and opportunities improve over the course of the title. Crucially, this would feed into the legacy evaluations which have become ever popular in such competitions. However, with longitudinal research, there are issues with time, financial costs and researcher

¹ [HM Treasury. The Green Book. Central Government Guidance on Appraisal and Evaluation.](#)

² [HM Treasury. The Magenta Book. Central Government Guidance on Evaluation.](#)

wellbeing to consider which may not prove realistic over an extended amount of time (Wond and Macaulay, 2011).

Empirically, this study was located solely in Coventry due to the existing connections I had with the city as a resident-researcher. There would be value in emulating the research methods applied in this thesis within a new context or location. Most obviously, this could involve new relational research being undertaken in Bradford, the upcoming UKCoC2025, to understand how the experiences of their middleground network differ in comparison to those documented in Coventry through this research. Alternatively, it could seek to understand the lived experiences of a middleground network in an unsuccessful bidding city to see the ways in which the loss of the UKCoC title does or does not go on to generate social, cultural or economic impacts within the local cultural sector. Furthermore, it could be applied in a European Capital of Culture context or even further afield to account for the different policy contexts, funding structures and cultural norms in an international creative city (Bergsgard and Vassenden, 2011; Bicakci, 2012; Ooi et al., 2014) .

An aspect which could be altered in future research, however, is the anatomical layer of the city which is being explored. This would expand the methodological framework of this thesis and broaden the evidence collected to support the anatomical perspective (Cohendet et al., 2010). Looking beyond the middleground cultural network, there would be value in addressing similar research questions but from the perspective of the upper- or underground networks, which played more of a supporting role within this research. Embedding ethnographic methods into special delivery vehicle groups could improve understandings on how top-down decisions are made or working alongside underground producers could share the thought processes on how and why some communities choose to subvert dominant narratives. Either pursuit would present an alternative perspective on the UKCoC process which would only add to a more well-rounded understanding of the phenomenon.

8.4.2. Recommendations to Policymakers

Beyond academic research, the findings of this research hope to feed into areas of research interest for local, regional, and national cultural policymakers. The increased

focus on place-based strategies and the ‘levelling up’ agenda within the UK means that insights captured during the real time application of such policies will be valuable for future iterations of the UKCoC title and beyond. Furthermore, it may be of use for arms-length and funding bodies who want an awareness of what their investments into cultural production can achieve. Finally, it hopes to be most valuable for future bidding teams and the special delivery vehicles put in place as a result of UKCoC competitions, who may apply learnings from these recommendations within their bid documents or early programme delivery.

Bergsgard and Vassenden (2011) highlight that the monumental expectations and pressures of a cultural megaevent can have an unintended positive effect by encouraging brainstorming and networking which can leave organisations with reserve pools of ideas. However, in less stable cultural ecosystems, the capacity to deliver tangible outputs from these ideas is limited. The affective impact and influence of the UKCoC title may generate inspiration, yet the practical skills required by producers may be limited without additional support from governors. Risk-taking is encouraged for its innovation generation, but decisionmakers should be hyper-aware of the stress and labour this will create for cultural producers – especially those who have not received funding as part of the official programme. Furthermore, expectation management and the possibility of ‘failure’/rejection should become commonplace (Jancovich and Stevenson, 2021).

I recommend that future UKCoC bidding periods should commit more focus on the identification of where support may be required in the local cultural sector. This would be most effectively designed alongside middleground network members, to address skill gaps through a co-designed capacity building programme. A pre-commitment to this process as part of the bid could dedicate time for the local cultural producers to develop their creative practice and organisational skills during the early build-up, whilst the special delivery vehicle focuses on internal recruitment and programme development.

The new funding streams and partnership opportunities provided by the megaevent are designed to increase social capital across the network, but the risk is that dominating agents (typically larger institutions) have typically gained more through

the process (Bergsgard and Vassenden, 2011). Tailoring support for smaller organisations may help to avoid this, whilst also satisfying the sector step changes set out by the CCoCT (i.e., to ‘strengthen and extend the cultural sector and its sphere of influence’ (Coventry 2021, 2019: 7), and the focus on ‘human resources capacity development in the cultural sector’ as a key output (ibid: 9)). Overall, this hands-on work with the middleground players could have contributed towards ‘...the opportunity to invest in, strengthen and extend the local cultural sectors and expand the sector’s future role and recognition in the city and region’ (ibid: 12).

Another route to generating more middleground connections could involve a survey with the local cultural production networks as part of the UKCoC bid application – to identify the infrastructure, both social and material, needed within the ecosystem as early as possible. Mark (Photo Archive Miners) argued that this would have allowed his organisation and others “...to be able to get the business to the position where we're able to have the administration that the organisation we've created deserves” (Mark, Interview, 28/10/2019), as these opportunities are currently limited for small organisations at varying levels of development. It also signals a commitment from local governance to their cultural sector.

Resources on the UKCoC process could also be provided to all local organisations as soon as possible after winning the title, in the form of information packs which cater to different languages and accessibilities and include basic information on the UKCoC programme; its structure and core team members; timelines of what to expect; and when and how to contact top-down decisionmakers. This basic level of communication and explanation could save months of confusion and misinterpretation during the build-up (as was evidenced in Section 5.2. on co-production commitments (page 109) and Section 7.2. on local involvement with governance (page 226)).

Experienced grant writers and producers with proficient reading and writing skills were framed as being in an advantageous position, which resonated personally with some artists who were open about their struggles with writing. Not only does this highlight the competitive nature of project grants, but how these experiences can emotionally impact hopeful producers within UKCoC’s – where grant opportunities

may increase, but support for application writing is often limited – particularly to those without alliances within the existing network.

This would continue to drive the social and cultural objectives of the programme whilst upholding the intrinsic notion of care which is often embedded in the cultural sector (McRobbie, 2015). The arrival of the pandemic was an unpredictable force but highlights how capacity building exercises can be further diluted if not implemented at an early stage of the programming.

8.5. My Creative Cov

It was a privilege to join my city on part of its journey to being recognised as a centre of culture. As with any large-scale regeneration project, the undercurrent of economic justification and narratives of growth led to the danger of obscuring the small creative acts and social encounters birthed from the title, which have the possibility to leave a mark on somebody's life.

I will savour the interactions I had with fellow Coventrian's over the course of 2019, which in turn helped to restore my own sense of place attachment – something that has often waned in the face of stigma and ridicule from those who do not understand my city's landscape, which is studded with stories and memories for those who pass through. This elevation of pride made me optimistic about the possible impact of UKCoC titles, at least for those who are lucky enough to become involved with the whirlwind of activities. For others on the periphery, I began to understand the small joys that arise from the subsequent changes to the city. For my mum, it was something as small as seeing the new fountain in the precinct, changing a space she has used for over fifty years.

However, as the competition grows and as the financialisation of the scoring criteria tightens, the burden to deliver change on a local, regional, and even international scale persists. The strength of the social and cultural connections must remain as the central focus of the process, as the avenue with which to share lived experiences and attach new meaning to place. The City of Culture title – with all its tensions, challenges, and barriers as key parts of the process - helped me to reflect on the cultural acts and spaces

that have shaped my life and have ultimately led to me creating this thesis as my honest love story to Coventry. I can only hope that many others have this opportunity too.



**Plate 54. Promotional materials on an electricity box in Coventry City Centre
(Source: own image)**

Bibliography

Aberdeen, T. (2013) 'Review Essay. 'Case study research: Design and Methods'', *Canadian Journal of Action Research*, 14(1), 69-71.

Acs, Z.J. and Desai, S. and Hessels, J. (2008) 'Entrepreneurship, economic development and institutions', *Small Business Economics*, 31, 219-234.

Acuto, M. (2011) 'Finding the Global City: An Analytical Journey through the 'Invisible College'', *Urban Studies*, 48(14), 2953-2973.

Adkins, L. (2011) 'Cultural intermediaries' in Southerton, D. (ed.) *Encyclopaedia of Consumer Culture*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 388-390.

Al Jazeera (2008) 'Damascus: The Arab cultural capital', *Al Jazeera*, 2 February [Online]. Available at: <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2008/2/2/damascus-the-arab-cultural-capital> (Accessed: 15 October 2021).

Alejandro, A. (2021) 'Reflexive discourse analysis: A methodology for the practice of reflexivity', *European Journal of International Relations*, 27(1), 150-174.

Allen, K. and Quinn, J. and Hollingworth, S. and Rose, A., (2013) 'Becoming employable students and "ideal" creative workers: exclusion and inequality in higher education work placements', *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 34(3), 431-452.

Allen, K. and Hollingworth, S. (2013) "Sticky Subjects" or 'Cosmopolitan Creatives'? Social Class, Place and Urban Young People's Aspirations for Work in the Knowledge Economy', *Urban Studies*, 50(3), 499-517.

Amin, A. (2002) 'Ethnicity and the multicultural city', *Environment and Planning A*, 34(6), 959-980.

Amin, A. (2008) 'Collective culture and urban public space', *City*, 12(1), 5-24.

Amin, A. and Graham, S. (1997) 'The Ordinary City', *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, 22(4), 411-429.

Amin, A. and Thrift, N. (2002) *Cities: Reimagining the Urban*. Cambridge: Polity.

Anderson, B. (2009) 'Affective atmospheres', *Emotion, Space and Society*, 2(2), 77-81.

Appignanesi, L. (2010) 'Words without Borders', *Index on Censorship*, 39(4), 66-71.

Arts Council England (2019) *Let's Create. Strategy 2020-2030* [Online]. Available at: https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/sites/default/files/download-file/Strategy%202020_2030%20Arts%20Council%20England.pdf (Accessed: 3 January 2020).

Arts Council England (2020) *Research Dashboards* [Online]. Available at: <https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/our-research/research-dashboards> (Accessed: 3 March 2020).

Audience Finder (no date) *Audience Spectrum* [Online]. Available at: <https://www.theaudienceagency.org/audience-spectrum> (Accessed: 25 March 2020).

Awcock, H. (2021) 'Stickin' it to the man: The geographies of protest stickers', *Area*, 53(3), 522-530.

AWD (no date) *Recent AWD Culture Projects*. AWD Restorations. Available at: <http://www.awd-restorations.com/projects> (Accessed: 25 October 2021).

Bain, A. (2009) 'Creativ* suburbs: cultural 'popcorn' pioneering in multi-purpose spaces' in Edensor, T. and Leslie, D. and Millington, S. and Rantisi, N. (eds) *Spaces of Vernacular Creativity: Rethinking the Cultural Economy*. Abingdon: Routledge, 63-74.

Ball, S.J. (2008) 'New Philanthropy, New Networks and New Governance in Education', *Political Studies*, 56(4), 747-765.

Banks, M. (2007) *The Politics of Cultural Work*. Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke.

Banks, M and Hesmondhalgh, D. (2009) 'Looking for work in creative industries policy', *International Journal of Cultural Policy*, 15(4), 415-430.

Banks, M. and O'Connor, J. (2009) 'After the creative industries', *International Journal of Cultural Policy*, 15(4), 365-373.

Barnes, T.J. (2004) 'Rethorizing Economic Geography: From the Quantitative Revolution to the 'Cultural Turn'', *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 91(3), 546-565.

Bayfield, H. (2015) *Mobilising Manchester through the Manchester International Festival: Whose city, whose culture? An exploration of the representation of cities through cultural events*. PhD thesis. University of Sheffield.

Baxter, P. and Jack, S. (2008) 'Qualitative Case Study Methodology: Study Design and Implementation for Novice Researchers', *TQR*, 13(4), 544-559.

Beauchemin, C. and González-Ferrer, A. (2011) "Sampling International Migrants with Origin-Based Snowballing Method: New Evidence on Biases and Limitations", *Demographic Research*, 25(3), 103-134.

Becker, H.S. (1982) *Art Worlds*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Beddall-Hill, N. L., Jabbar, A. and Al Sherhi, S. (2011) 'Social Mobile Devices as Tools for Qualitative Research in Education: iPhones and iPads in Ethnography, Interviewing, and Design-Based Research', *Journal of the Research Centre for Educational Technology*, 7(1), 67-89.

Belfiore, E. (2009) 'On bullshit in cultural policy and practice and research: notes from the British case', *International Journal of Cultural Policy*, 15(3), 343-359.

Belfiore, E. and Bennett, O. (2010) 'Beyond the "Toolkit Approach": Arts Impact Evaluation Research and the Realities of Cultural Policy-Making', *Journal for Cultural Research*, 14(2), 121-142.

Bell, D. (1973) *The Coming of Post-Industrial Society*. London: Heinemann.

Bennett, K. (2009) *Identities and regeneration in the former coalfields of east Durham*. Swindon: Economic and Social Research Council.

Bennett, T. and Savage, M. and Bortolaia Silva, E. and Warde, A. and Gayo-Cal, M. and Wright, D. (eds) (2009) *Culture, Class, Distinction*. Abingdon: Routledge.

Bergsgard, N. A. and Vassenden, A. (2011) 'The legacy of Stavanger as Capital of Culture in Europe 2008: watershed or puff of wind?', *International Journal of Cultural Policy*, 17(3), 301-320.

Besio, K. (2009) 'Autoethnography' in Thrift, N. and Kitchin, R. (eds) *International Encyclopedia of Human Geography*. London: Elsevier Limited, 240-243.

Bevir, M. and Rhodes, R. A. W. (2003) *Interpreting British Governance*. London: Routledge.

BHAAAD (no date) *BHAAAD*. Available at: <https://www.facebook.com/BHAAADCoalition/> (Accessed: 22 October 2021).

Bhathena, C. (2020) 'Moving with Joy, Heart and Conscience...', *Coventry 2021*, 27 July [Online]. Available at: <https://coventry2021.co.uk/blogs/moving-with-joy-heart-and-conscience-chenine-bhathena-blog/> (Accessed: 28 July 2020).

Bianchini, F. and Parkinson, M. (eds) (1993) *Cultural Policy and Urban Regeneration: the West European Experience*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.

Bicakci, A.B. (2012) 'Branding the city through culture: Istanbul, European Capital of Culture 2010', *International Journal of Human Sciences*, 9(1), 993-1006.

Bille, M. and Bjerregaard, P. and Sorenson, T.F. (2015) 'Staging atmospheres: Materiality, culture, and the texture of the in-between', *Emotion, Space and Society*, 15, 31-38.

Binnie, J. and Skeggs, B. (2004) 'Cosmopolitan Knowledge and the Production and Consumption of Sexualized Space: Manchester's Gay Village', *The Sociological Review*, 52(1), 39-61.

Bishop, P. and Williams, L. (2012) *The temporary city*. Oxon: Routledge.

Blair, H. (2001) 'You're Only as Good as Your Last Job': the Labour Process and Labour Market in the British Film Industry', *Work, Employment and Society*, 15(1), 149-169.

Blaug, M. (2000) 'Entrepreneurship Before and After Schumpeter' in Swedberg, R. (ed.) *Entrepreneurship: The Social Science View*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

- Bohme, G. (2013) 'Atmosphere as Mindful Physical Presence in Space', *OASE*, 91, 21-32.
- Boland, P. (2010) ' 'Capital of Culture – you must be having a laugh!' Challenging the official rhetoric of Liverpool at the 2008 European cultural capital', *Social and Cultural Geography*, 11(7), 627-645.
- Boland, P. and Mullan, L. and Murtagh, B. (2017) 'Young people in a city of culture: 'Ultimate beneficiaries' or 'Economic migrants'?', *Journal of Youth Studies*, 21(2), 178-202.
- Boland, P. and Murtagh, B. and Shirlow, P. (2019) 'Fashioning a city of culture: 'life and place changing' or '12 month party'?', *International Journal of Cultural Policy*, 25(2), 246-265.
- Boland, P. and McKay, S. (2021) 'All Aboard Belfast's 'Brandwagon': From 'Pariah City' to 'Energised City'', *Town Planning Review*, Ahead of print, 1-31.
- Bolton, T. and Hildreth, P. (2013) Mid-sized cities: Their role in England's economy [online]. *Centre for Cities*. Available at: <https://www.centreforcities.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/13-06-18-Mid-Sized-Cities.pdf> (Accessed: 2 May 2021).
- Boms, N. and Spyer, J. (2008) *Damascus uses UNESCO designation to claim title as "capital of resistance culture"* [Online]. UN Watch. Available at: <https://unwatch.org/damascus-uses-unesco-designation-to-claim-title-as-capital-of-resistance-culture-2/> (Accessed: 13 October 2021).
- Booth, R.D. and Boyle, R. (1993) 'See Glasgow, See Culture' in Bianchini, F. and Parkinson, M. (eds) *Cultural Policy and Urban Regeneration: the West European Experience*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 21-47.
- Boren, T. and Young, C. (2012) 'Getting Creative with the 'Creative City'? Towards New Perspectives on Creativity in Urban Policy', *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 37(5), 1799-1815.
- Bourdieu, P. (1984) *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*. Translated by Nice, R. Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.
- Bourdieu, P. (1985) 'The Social Space and the Genesis of Groups', *Theory and Society*, 14(6), 723-744.
- Bourdieu, P. (1986) 'The forms of capital' in Richardson, J. (ed) *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education*. New York: Greenwood, 15-29.
- Bourdieu, P. (1991) *Language and Symbolic Power*. Translated by Raymond, G. and Adamson, M. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Bourdieu, P. (1994) *The Field of Cultural Production. Essays on Art and Literature*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Brabazon, T. (2015) *Unique Urbanity? Rethinking Third Tier Cities, Degeneration, Regeneration and Mobility*. Singapore: Springer Briefs in Geography.

- Brake, M. (2013) *The Sociology of Youth Culture and Youth Subcultures*. London: Routledge.
- Bresler, L. (2006) 'Towards Connectedness: Aesthetically Based Research', *Studies in Art Education*, 48(1), 52-69.
- Brighenti, A. M. (2013) *Urban Interstices: The Aesthetics and the Politics of the In-between*. Farnham, Burlington: Ashgate.
- Bromberg, A. (2009) 'Creativity unbound: cultivating the generative power of non-economic neighborhood spaces' in Edensor, T. and Leslie, D. and Millington, S. and Rantisi, N. (eds) *Spaces of Vernacular Creativity: Rethinking the Cultural Economy*. Abingdon: Routledge, 214-225.
- Brook, O. and O'Brien, D. and Taylor, M. (2018) *Panic! It's an Arts Emergency. Panic! Social Class, Taste and Inequalities in the Creative Industries* [Online]. Available at: <http://createlondon.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/Panic-Social-Class-Taste-and-Inequalities-in-the-Creative-Industries1.pdf> (Accessed: 7 January 2019).
- Brook, O. and O'Brien, D. and Taylor, M. (2020) *Culture is Bad for You: Inequality in the Cultural and Creative Industries*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- Brown, A., O'Connor, J. and Cohen, S. (2000) 'Local music policies within a global music industry: cultural quarters in Manchester and Sheffield', *Geoforum*, 31, 437-451.
- Brown, W. (2015) *Undoing the Demos: Neoliberalism's Stealth Revolution*. Brooklyn, NY: Zone Books.
- Bryson, J.R. and Kalafsky, R.V. and Vanchan, V. (2021) *Ordinary Cities, Extraordinary Geographies. People, Place and Space*. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing.
- Buck, N. and Gordon, I. and Harding, A. and Turok, I. (2005) *Changing Cities: Rethinking Urban Competitiveness, Cohesion and Governance*. Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan in association with ESRC Cities Programme.
- Burgess, R.G. (1984) *In the Field: An Introduction to Field Research*. London: Allen and Unwin.
- Burgess, J. (2006) 'Hearing Ordinary Voices: Cultural Studies, Vernacular Creativity and Digital Storytelling', *Continuum: Journal of Media & Cultural Studies*, 20 (2), 201-214.
- Burns Collett Consultancy (2008) *North Staffordshire creative industry strategy and development programme. Report to the City of Stoke on Trent, North Staffordshire Regeneration Partnership*. Manchester: Arts Council England.
- Buser, M. and Bonura, C. and Fannin, M. and Boyer, K. (2013) 'Cultural activism and the politics of place-making', *City*, 17(5), 606-627.

Butler, A. and Schafran, A. and Carpenter, G. (2018) 'What does it mean when people call a place a shithole? Understanding a discourse of denigration in the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland', *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, 43(3), 496-510.

Butz, D. (2009) 'Autoethnography as Sensibility' in Delyser, D. and Herbert, S. and Aitken, S.C. and Crang, M.A. and McDowell, L. (eds) *SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Geography*. London: SAGE Publications Ltd, 138-155.

Cameron, E. (2012) 'New geographies of story and storytelling', *Progress in Human Geography*, 336(5), 573-592.

Campbell, D. T. and Fiske, D. W. (1959) "Convergent and Discriminant Validation by Multitrait-Multimethod Matrix.", *Psychological Bulletin*, 56, 81–105.

Campbell, P. (2011) 'Creative industries in a European Capital of Culture', *International Journal of Cultural Policy*, 17(5), 510-522.

Carey, H. and O'Brien, D. and Gable, O. (2021) Social mobility in the creative economy: Rebuilding and levelling up? [Online]. *Creative Industries Policy & Evidence Centre*. Available at: <https://www.pec.ac.uk/research-reports/social-mobility-in-the-creative-economy-rebuilding-and-levelling-up> (Accessed: 22 October 2021).

Carlton, J. (2018) 'Amazing views from derelict tower block set for demolition', *Coventry Evening Telegraph*, 4 January [Online]. Available at: <https://www.coventrytelegraph.net/news/coventry-news/urban-explorer-coventry-point-demolition-15569371> (Accessed: 19 February 2019).

Castells, M. (1996) *The Rise of the Network Society. (The Information Age: Economy, Society and Culture, Volume 1)*. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, Inc.

Chan, T.W. and Goldthorpe, J.H. (2007) 'Class and Status: The Conceptual Distinction and its Empirical Relevance', *American Sociological Review*, 72(4), 512-532.

Chang, L. and Rubin, V. (2020) *Strengthening and Connecting to the Social Fabric of Communities*. PolicyLink [Online]. Available at: https://communitydevelopment.art/sites/default/files/CDI_Social_Fabric_12-21-20b.pdf (Accessed: 23 July 2021).

Charity Commission for England and Wales (no date) *Coventry City of Culture Trust* [Online]. Available at: <https://register-of-charities.charitycommission.gov.uk/charity-details/?regid=1165639&subid=0> (Accessed: 18 October 2019).

Christensen, A., and Jensen, S.Q. (2012) 'Doing Intersectional Analysis: Methodological Implications for Qualitative Research', *Nordic Journal of Feminist and Gender Research*, 20(2), 109-125.

Chung, C. and Yang, L. and Cauldwell-French, E. (2018) Growing the UK's Creative Industries. What creative enterprises need to thrive and grow [online]. *Creative Industries Federation*. Available at: <https://www.creativeindustriesfederation.com/sites/default/files/2018->

[12/Creative%20Industries%20Federation%20-%20Growing%20the%20UK's%20Creative%20Industries.pdf](#) (Accessed: 30 July 2021).

Claval, P. and Pagnini, M.P. and Scaini, M. (2003) 'THE CULTURAL TURN IN GEOGRAPHY'. *Proceedings of the International Geographic Union Conference*, 18-20 September. Gorizia Campus, University of Trieste. Available at: <https://www.openstarts.units.it/bitstream/10077/828/1/intro.pdf> (Accessed: 17 September 2022).

Clay, P.L. (1979) *Neighborhood Renewal. Middle-class Resettlement and Incumbent Upgrading in American Neighborhoods*. Lexington: D.C. Heath.

Clifford, J. (1983) 'On Ethnographic Authority', *Representations*, 2, 118-146.

Clifford, J. (1997) 'Spatial practices: fieldwork, travel and the disciplining of anthropology', in *Routes. Travel and translation in the late twentieth century*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 52-90.

Clifton, N. (2008) "'The creative class' in the UK: an initial analysis", *Geografiska Annaler, Series B: Human Geography*, 90, 63-82.

Cloke, P. and Cook, I. and Crang, P. and Goodwin, M. and Painter, J. and Philo C. (2004) (eds) *Practising Human Geography*. London: SAGE Publications Ltd.

Cohendet, P. and Grandadam, D. and Simon, L. (2010) 'The Anatomy of the Creative City', *Industry and Innovation*, 17(1), 91-111.

Cook, I. and Crouch, D. and Naylor, S. and Ryan, J.R. (2000) *Cultural Turns/Geographical Turns: Perspectives on Cultural Geography*. London: Routledge.

Collins, P.H. (1986) 'Learning from the Outsider Within: The Sociological Significance of Black Feminist Thought', *Social Problems*, 33(6), 14-32.

Collins, R. (1998) *The Sociology of Philosophies: A Global Theory of Intellectual Change*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Colomb, C. (2012) 'Pushing the Urban Frontier: Temporary Uses of Space, City Marketing and the Creative City Discourse in 2000s Berlin', *Journal of Urban Affairs*, 34(2), 131-152.

Complex Development Projects (no date) *FarGo Village*. Available at: <https://complexdevelopmentprojects.co.uk/project/fargo-village/> (Accessed: 15 August 2020).

Comunian, R. (2012) 'Exploring the Role of Networks in the Creative Economy of North East England: Economic and Cultural Dynamics' in Warf, B. (ed) *Encounters and engagements between economic and cultural geography*. 1 edn. Dordrecht: Springer Netherlands, 143-157.

Comunian, R. and Chapain, C. and Clifton, N. (2010) 'Location, location, location: exploring the complex relationship between creative industries and place', *Creative Industries Journal*, 3(1), 5–10.

Comunian, R. and Mould, O. (2014) 'The weakest link: Creative industries, flagship cultural projects and regeneration', *City, Culture and Society*, 5(2), 65-74.

Comunian, R. and Gilmore, A. and Jacobi, S. (2015) 'Higher Education and the Creative Economy: Creative Graduates, Knowledge Transfer and Regional Impact Debates', *Geography Compass*, 9(7), 371-383.

Connerton, P. (1989) *How Society Remembers*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press in Sen, A. and Silverman, L. (2013) *Making Place: Space and Embodiment in the City*. Indiana, USA: Indiana University Press.

Cook, I. (2005) 'Participant observation' in Flowerdew, R. and Martin, D. (eds) *Methods in human geography* (Second Edition) London: Pearson Prentice Hall, 181-205).

Courage, C. (2017) *Arts in Place: The Arts, the Urban and Social Practice*. Abingdon: Routledge.

Courage, C. (2019) 'Socially Engaged Placemaking', *Phoenix City Convergence*. Coventry Biennial, 26 October.

Coventry 2021 (2017) Coventry. UK City of Cultures 2021 Bid.

Coventry 2021 (2018) Your Guide to Coventry's UK City of Culture Bid [online]. *Coventry 2021*. Available at: https://warwick.ac.uk/about/cityofculture/researchresources/city_of_culture_public_bid_2018.pdf (Accessed: 15 March 2018).

Coventry 2021 (2019) Performance Measurement and Evaluation Strategy 2019-2024 [Online]. *Coventry 2021*. Available at: <https://warwick.ac.uk/about/cityofculture/researchresources/2021-pme-strategy-oct19-online.pdf> (Accessed: 7 January 2020).

Coventry 2021 (no date) *The 2021 Club* [Online]. Available at: <https://coventry2021.co.uk/about/the-2021-club/> (Accessed: 12 October 2020).

Coventry City Council (no date) *About Coventry*. Available at: https://www.coventry.gov.uk/info/195/facts_about_coventry/3549/about_coventry (Accessed: 9 August 2021).

Coventry City Council (2014) *Council Plan 2013/14 End of Year Performance Report* [Online]. Available at: https://www.coventry.gov.uk/download/downloads/id/13667/council_plan_201314_end_of_year_performance_report_8_july_2014.pdf (Accessed: 15 November 2020).

Coventry City Council (2015) *Coventry Cultural Strategy 2017-2027* [Online]. Available at: https://www.coventry.gov.uk/info/97/arts_and_culture/3565/coventry_cultural_strategy_2017-2027 (Accessed: 18 September 2017).

Coventry City Council (2019) *Coventry City Council Scrutiny Meeting* [Online]. Coventry City Council and Coventry City of Culture Trust. Available at: <https://edemocracy.coventry.gov.uk/documents/s42900/Coventry%20City%20of%20Culture%202021%20-%20Appendix.pdf> (Accessed: 29 February 2019).

Coventry City Council (2020) *Economy and Employment* [Online]. Available at: https://www.coventry.gov.uk/info/195/facts_about_coventry/2436/economy_and_employment (Accessed: 28 October 2020).

Coventry City Council and Coventry Refugee and Migrant Centre (2018) *Coventry – a welcoming City. Migrant Needs Assessment 2018. Coventry City Council*. Available at: https://www.coventry.gov.uk/downloads/download/5281/migrant_needs_assessment (Accessed: 9 August 2021).

Cox, T. and O'Brien D. (2012) 'The "scouse wedding" and other myths: reflections on the evolution of a "Liverpool model" for culture-led urban regeneration', *Cultural Trends*, 21(2), 93-101.

Crang, M. (1997) 'Picturing practices: research through the tourist gaze', *Progress in Human Geography*, 21(3), 359-373.

Crang, M. (2003) 'Qualitative methods: touchy, feely, look-see?', *Progress in Human Geography*, 27 (4), 494-504.

Crang, M. and Cook, I. (2007) *Doing ethnographies*. London: Sage.

Creative Europe (no date) *European Capitals of Culture*. Available at: <https://ec.europa.eu/culture/policies/culture-cities-and-regions/european-capitals-culture> (Accessed: 1 October 2017).

Creative Skillset (2016) *2015 Employment Survey. Creative Media Industries* [Online]. Available at: https://www.screenskills.com/media/1562/2015_creative_skillset_employment_survey_-_march_2016_summary.pdf (Accessed: 31 July 2020).

Cresswell, T. (1996) *In Place/Out of Place: Geography, Ideology, and Transgression*. Minnesota, USA: University of Minnesota Press.

Cresswell, T. (2015) *Place: An Introduction*. 2nd edn. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell.

Creswell, J.W. and Poth, C.N. (2018) *Qualitative inquiry and research design: choosing among five approaches*. 5th ed. Thousand Oaks: Sage.

Crossick, G. (2006) 'Knowledge Transfer Without Widgets: The Challenge of the Creative Economy', *Lecture to the Royal Society of Arts*. London, 31 May. Goldsmiths, University of London, 1-20.

Crossick, G. (2009) *So who now believes in the transfer of widgets?* Available at: <http://theculturecapitalexchange.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/Who-Now-Believes-in-the-Transfer-of-Widgets.pdf> (Accessed: 13 September 2021).

Currid, E. (2009) 'Bohemia as Subculture: "Bohemia" as Industry: Art, Culture and Economic Development', *Journal of Planning Literature*, 23(4), 368-382.

CWLEP (2020) '£2m funding for regeneration of The Burges confirmed as Coventry announced as a national demonstrator project for High Streets Heritage Action Zone programme', *CWLEP Growth Hub*, 21 May [Online]. Available at: <https://www.cwgrowthhub.co.uk/news/%C2%A32m-funding-regeneration-burges-confirmed-coventry-announced-national-demonstrator-project-high> (Accessed: 5 July 2020).

Daly, D.P. (2016) *Community, Ephemera and Archives*. PhD thesis [Online]. The University of Arizona. Available at: https://repository.arizona.edu/bitstream/handle/10150/620850/azu_etd_14908_sip1_m.pdf?sequence=1 (Accessed: 28 January 2019).

Davies, G. and Dwyer, C. (2007) 'Qualitative methods: are you enchanted or are you alienated?', *Progress in Human Geography*, 31(2), 257-266.

Davies, M. and Griffiths, C. and Wilkinson, H. (2015) *Diversity in the workforce and governance of Art Council England's Major Partner Museums: research project*. Arts Council England [Online]. Available at: http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/sites/default/files/downloadfile/Diversity_in_the_workforce_and_governance_of_Arts_Council_Englands_Major_partner_museums_Research_project.pdf (Accessed: 22 October 2021).

Davis, H. (2004) *Understanding Stuart Hall*. Sage: London.

Dawson, J. and Gilmore, A. (2009) *Shared Interest: developing collaborations, partnerships and research relationships between higher education, museums, galleries and visual arts organisations in the North West*. Manchester: Arts Council England.

Department of Culture, Media and Sport (1998) *Creative Industries Mapping Document* [Online]. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/creative-industries-mapping-documents-1998> (Accessed: 11 January 2019).

DCMS (2014) *UK City of Culture consultation document* [Online]. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/uk-city-of-culture-consultation> (Accessed: 23 August 2021).

DCMS (2015) *UK City of Culture Consultation Response* [Online]. Available at: *** (Accessed: 23 August 2021).

DCMS (2016) *DCMS Sectors Economic Estimates 2016: Business Demographics* [Online]. Available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data

/file/681528/DCMS_Sectors_Economic_Estimates_2016_Business_Demographics.pdf

(Accessed: 19 September 2017).

DCMS (2017) *UK City of Culture 2021. Guidance for Bidding Cities* [Online]. Available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/582973/UKCITYOFCULTURE2021guidance.docx (Accessed: 23 August 2021).

DCMS (2020) *DCMS Sectors Economic Estimates (2018 provisional): Business Demographics* [Online]. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/dcms-sectors-economic-estimates-2018-business-demographics/dcms-sectors-economic-estimates-2018-provisional-business-demographics> (Accessed: 22 October 2021).

DCMS (2021) *DCMS Sector Economic Estimates: Employment Oct 2019 - Sep 2020* [Online]. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/dcms-sector-economic-estimates-employment-oct-2019-sep-2020> (Accessed: 21 October 2021).

De Certeau, M. (1984) *The Practice of Everyday Life*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Dekeyser, T. (2020) 'Dismantling the advertising city: Subvertising and the urban commons to come', *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 39(2), 309-327.

DeLyser, D. (2015) 'Collecting, kitsch and the intimate geographies of social memory: a story of archival autoethnography', *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*. 40 (2), 209-222.

Denzin, N. (1978) *Sociological Methods: A Sourcebook*. New York, McGraw Hill.

Dery, M (1991) 'Subvertising: The Billboard Bandit as Cultural Jammer', *Adbusters*, 2(1), 43-46.

Deslandes, A. (2013) 'Exemplary Amateurism: Thoughts on DIY Urbanism', *Cultural Studies Review*, 19(1), 216.

Dickens, L. (2008) 'Placing post-graffiti: the journey of the Peckham Rock', *Cultural Geographies*, 15, 471-496.

Dillon, S. (2007) 'Palimpsesting', *Critical Survey*, 19(1), 29-39.

Doak, P. (2014) 'Beyond Derry or Londonderry: Towards a framework for understanding the emerging spatial contradictions of Derry-Londonderry—UK City of Culture 2013', *City*, 18(4-5), 488-496.

Donald, B. and Glasmeier, A. and Gray, M. and Lobao, L. (2014) 'Austerity in the city: economic crisis and urban service decline?', *Cambridge Journal of Regions, Economy and Society*, 7, 3-15.

Doucet, B. (2014) 'A Process of Change and a Changing Process: Introduction to the Special Issue on Contemporary Gentrification', *Tijdschrift voor Economische en Sociale Geografie*, 105(2), 125-139.

- Dunn, K. (2010) 'Interviewing', in I. Hay (ed) *Qualitative Research Methods in Human Geography*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 101-138.
- Dyck, I. (2001) 'Qualitative methods in geography' in Smelser, N.J and Wright, J. and Baltes, P.B. (eds) *International Encyclopedia of Social & Behavioral Sciences*. London: Pergamon, 12618-12620.
- Dyck, I. (2005) 'Feminist geography, the 'everyday', and local–global relations: hidden spaces of place-making', *The Canadian Geographer / Le Géographe canadien*, 49(3), 233-243.
- Edensor, T. and Leslie, D. and Millington, S. and Rantisi, N. (2009) *Spaces of Vernacular Creativity: Rethinking the Cultural Economy*. Abingdon: Routledge.
- Ehrenreich, B. (2006) *Dancing in the streets: A history of collective joy*. New York City, USA: Metropolitan Books/Henry Holt and Company.
- Eikhof, R.D. (2017) "Analysing decisions on diversity and opportunity in the cultural and creative industries: A new framework", *Organization*, 24(3), 289-307.
- Elden, S. (2004) *Understanding Henri Lefebvre*. London: Bloomsbury.
- Esterberg, K. G. (2002) *Qualitative Methods in Social Research* (International Edition). Boston: McGraw-Hill.
- European Union (2019) *Cultural and Creative Cities Monitor*. Available at: <https://composite-indicators.jrc.ec.europa.eu/cultural-creative-cities-monitor> (no date) (Accessed: 13 September 2021).
- Evans, G. (2005) 'Measure for Measure: Evaluating the Evidence of Culture's Contribution to Regeneration', *Urban Studies*, 42(5-6), 959-983.
- Evans, G. (2011) 'Cities of Culture and the regeneration game', *Journal of Tourism, Sport and Creatives Industries*, 6, 5-18.
- Evans, G. and van Heur, B. (2013) 'European Capital of Culture – emancipatory practices and Euregional strategies: the case of Maastrichy Via 2018' in Richards, G. and de Brito, M. and Wilks, L. (eds) *Exploring the Social Impacts of Events*. London: Routledge.
- Evans, G. and Shaw, P. (2004) The Contribution of Culture to Regeneration in the UK: A Review of Evidence [online]. DCMS. Available at: <http://www.scholars-on-bilbao.info/fichas/EvansShaw2004.pdf> (Accessed: 9 August 2021).
- Fairclough, N. (1995) *Critical discourse analysis: The critical study of language*. Longman: London.
- Far Gosford Street (no date) *Development of a Street*. Available at: <https://www.fargosfordstreet.com/yesterday/development-of-a-street/> (Accessed: 23 August 2021).

- Farrell, M.P. (2001) *Collaborative Circles: Friendship Dynamics and Creative Work*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Ferreri, M. (2015) 'The seductions of temporary urbanism', *Ephemera*, 15(1), 181-191.
- Fleming, T. (2015) *Cultural and creative spillovers in Europe: Report on a preliminary evidence review* [Online]. Tom Fleming Creative Consultancy and Arts Council England. Available at: https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/sites/default/files/Cultural_creative_spillovers_in_Europe_full_report.pdf (Accessed: 21 October 2021).
- Flemmen, M. P. (2013) 'Putting Bourdieu to work for class analysis: Reflections on some recent contributions', *British Journal of Sociology*, 64(2), 325-343.
- Fletcher, C. (2020) Coventry Blitz: 80th Anniversary. *Hansard, UK Parliament*. Available at: <https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/2020-11-11/debates/A6E6B23B-3856-4834-BC2A-A6577DAC6DB4/CoventryBlitz80ThAnniversary> (Accessed: 2 March 2021).
- Flick, U. (2006) *An introduction to qualitative research*. 3rd edn. London: SAGE Publications Ltd.
- Flick, W. (2004) 'Triangulation in Qualitative Research' in Flick, U. and von Kardorff, E. and Steinke, I. (eds) *A Companion to Qualitative Research*. London: SAGE Publications, pp. 178-183.
- Florida, R. (2000) *Competing in the Age of Talent: Quality of Place and the New Economy*. Pittsburgh, PA: R.K. Mellon Foundation.
- Florida, R. (2002) *The Rise of the Creative Class: And How it's Transforming Work, Leisure, Community and Everyday Life*. 1st edn. New York: Basic Books.
- Florida, R. (2004) *Cities and the Creative Class*. New York, USA: Routledge.
- Florida, R. (2013) *More Losers Than Winners in America's New Economic Geography*. Bloomberg CityLab [Online]. Available at: <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2013-01-30/more-losers-than-winners-in-america-s-new-economic-geography> (Accessed: 10 September 2021).
- Florida, R. (2017) *The New Urban Crisis: Gentrification, Housing Bubbles, Growing Inequality, and What We Can Do About It*. London: Oneworld Publications.
- Flowerdew, R. and Martin, D.M. (2005) *Methods in Human Geography. A guide for students doing a research project*. 2nd edn. London: Routledge.
- Freeman, R. E. (1984) *Strategic management: A stakeholder approach*. Boston: Pitman.
- Frees, E. W (2004) *Longitudinal and Panel Data: Analysis and Applications in the Social Sciences*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

- Frenette, A. (2019) 'Leveraging Youth: Overcoming Intergenerational Tensions in Creative Production', *Social Psychology Quarterly*, 82(4), 386-406.
- Friedman, S. and Laurison, D. (2019) *The Class Ceiling: Why It Pays to be Privileged*. Bristol: Bristol University Press.
- Fuller-Love, N. (2009) 'Formal and informal networks in small businesses in the media industry', *International Entrepreneurship and Management Journal*, 5, 271–28.
- Garcia, B. (2005) 'Deconstructing the city of culture: The long-term cultural legacies of Glasgow 1990', *Urban Studies*, 42(5-6), 841-868.
- Garcia, B. and Cox, T. (2013) *European Capitals of Culture: Success Strategies and Long-Term Effects*. European Parliament [Online]. Available at: https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/etudes/join/2013/513985/IPOL-CULT_ET%282013%29513985_EN.pdf (Accessed: 22 October 2021).
- Garcia, B. (2020) 'Can we Live Without Mega-events?' [Online], *University of Liverpool*, 26 November 2020. Available at: <https://www.liverpool.ac.uk/communication-and-media/news/stories/title,1237256,en.html> (Accessed: 23 August 2021).
- Gibbons, D. (2017) '32 reasons why 'Coventry's a post-war concrete jungle' is the most ridiculous untruth', *Coventry Evening Telegraph*, 26 February [Online]. Available at: <https://www.coventrytelegraph.net/lifestyle/nostalgia/32-amazing-pictures-of-coventry--12652306> (Accessed: 6 June 2019).
- Gibson, C. and Waitt, G. (2009) 'Cultural Geography' in Thrift, N. and Kitchin, R. (eds) *International Encyclopedia of Human Geography*. London: Elsevier Limited, 411-424.
- Gibson, C. and Connell, J. (2012) *Music Festivals and Regional Development in Australia*. Farnham: Ashgate Publishing.
- Gilbert, S. (2015) 'Herbert Art Gallery faces permanent closure in wake of council cuts', *Coventry Evening Telegraph*, 23 October [Online]. Available at: <https://www.coventrytelegraph.net/news/coventry-news/herbert-art-gallery-faces-permanent-10313190> (Accessed: 14 August 2020).
- Gill, R. and Pratt, A.C. (2008) 'In the social factory? Immaterial labour, precariousness and cultural work', *Theory, Culture & Society*, 25(7-8), 1-30.
- Gilmore, A. (2013) 'Cold spots, crap towns and cultural deserts: The role of place and geography in cultural participation and creative place-making', *Cultural Trends*, 22(2), 86-96.
- Goffman, E. (1956) *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*. Edinburgh: University of Edinburgh Social Sciences Research Centre.
- Granger, R.C. and Hamilton, C. (2010) 'Re-spatializing the creative industries: a relational examination of underground scenes, and professional and organizational lock-in', *Creative Industries Journal*, 3(1), 47-60.

Gray, B. (1985) 'Conditions facilitating interorganizational collaboration', *Human Relations*, 38(10), 911-936.

Gray, C. and Malins, J. (2004) *Visualizing Research: A Guide to the Research Process in Art and Design*. Aldershot: Ashgate.

Green, S. (2021) 'Selecting the European Capital of Culture: with added transparency', *Prasino*, 18 January. Available at: <http://prasino.eu/2021/01/18/selecting-the-european-capital-of-culture-with-added-transparency/> (Accessed: 23 August 2021).

Griffiths, R. (2006) 'City/culture discourses: Evidence from the competition to select the European capital of culture 2008', *European Planning Studies*, 14(4), 415-430.

Gross, J. and Pitts, S. (2016) "Audiences for the Contemporary Arts: Exploring Varieties of Participation across Art Forms in Birmingham, UK.", *Participations: Journal of Audience and Reception Studies*, 13 (1), 4-23.

Gross, J. and Wilson, N. (2017) 'Cultural democracy: an ecological and capabilities approach', *International Journal of Cultural Policy*, 26(3), 328-343.

Gross, J. D. and Wilson, N. C. (2019) *Creating the Environment: The Cultural Eco-Systems of Creative People and Places* [Online]. Available at: <http://www.creativepeopleplaces.org.uk/our-learning/creatingenvironment> (Accessed 6 January 2020).

Guest, G. and MacQueen, K.M. and Namey, E.E. (2014) *Applied Thematic Analysis*. Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications Ltd.

Hackworth, J. and Smith, N. (2002) 'The changing state of gentrification', *Tijdschrift voor Economische en Sociale Geografie*, 92(4), 464-477.

Hadley, S. and Belfiore, E. (2018) 'Cultural democracy and cultural policy', *Cultural Trends*, 27(3), 218-223.

Hall, S. (1993) 'Culture, community, nation', *Cultural Studies*, 7, 349-363.

Hall, S. (2003) *Representation: cultural representation and signifying practices*. London: Sage.

Hall, S. (2007) "Afterword: The Legacies of Anglo-Caribbean Culture—A Diasporic Perspective," in Forrester, G. and Barringer, T. and Martinez-Ruiz, B. (eds.) *Art and Emancipation in Jamaica: Isaac Mendes Belisario and His Worlds*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 179-95.

Hall, S. (2012) *City, Street and Citizen: The measure of the ordinary*. London: Routledge.

Hall, S. M. (2014). 'Ethics of ethnography with families: a geographical perspective', *Environment and Planning A*, 46 (9), 2175-2194.

Hammersley, M. and Atkinson, P. (2007). *Ethnography: principles into practice*. 3rd edn. London: Routledge.

Hamnett, C. (2003) 'Gentrification and the Middle-Class Remaking of Inner London, 1961-2001', *Urban Studies*, 40(12), 2401-2426.

Hansen, L. E. and Laursen, M. (2015) 'From applicant to designated European Capital of Culture', *International Journal of Managing Projects in Business*, 8(4), 715-731.

Harris, E. (2015) 'Navigating Pop-up Geographies: Urban Space-Times of Flexibility, Interstitiality and Immersion', *Geography Compass*, 9(11), 592-603.

Hartley, L. (2018) 'Exclusive: What Coventry's new 1950s hotel will look like inside', *Coventry Evening Telegraph*, 18 December [Online]. Available at: <https://www.coventrytelegraph.net/news/coventry-news/coventry-news-telegraph-hotel-coventry-15564281> (Accessed: 21 February 2019).

Harvey, D. (1989) 'From Managerialism to Entrepreneurialism: The Transformation in Urban Governance in Late Capitalism', *Geografiska Annaler. Series B, Human Geography*, 71(1), pp. 3-17.

Harvey, D. (2002) 'The Art of Rent: Globalization, Monopoly and the Commodification of Culture', *Socialist Register*, 38, 93-110.

Harvey, D. (2009) 'The 'New Imperialism: Accumulation by Dispossession'', *Socialist Register*, 40, 63-87.

Harvie, J. (2013) *Fair Play – Art, Performance and Neoliberalism*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Hauge, A. and Hracs, B.J. (2010) 'See the Sound, Hear the Style: Collaborative Linkages between Indie Musicians and Fashion Designers in Local Scenes', *Industry and Innovation*, 17(1), 113-129.

Hawkins, H. (2012) 'Geography and art. An expanding field: Site, the body and practice', *Progress in Human Geography*, 37(1), 52-71.

Hawkins, H. (2014) *For Creative Geographies. Geography, Visual Arts and the Making of Worlds*. London: Routledge.

Hawkins, H. (2015) 'Creative geographic methods: knowing, representing, intervening. On composing place and page', *Cultural Geographies*, 22(2), 247-268.

Hawkins, H. (2019) 'Geography's creative (re)turn: Towards a critical framework', *Progress in Human Geography*, 43(6), 963-984.

Heesen, R. and Bright, L.K. and Zucker, A. (2019) 'Vindicating methodological triangulation', *Synthese*, 196, 3067-3081.

- Henderson, M. (2021) 'Creativity is the answer we've been looking for – now is the time to embrace and invest it', *United Nations Conference on Trade and Development*. Available at: <https://unctad.org/news/creativity-answer-weve-been-looking-now-time-embrace-and-invest-it> (Accessed: 3 September 2021).
- Herbert, S. (2000) 'For ethnography', *Progress in Human Geography*, 24 (4), 550-568.
- Hesmondhalgh, D. (2007) *The Cultural Industries*. 2nd edn. London: SAGE.
- Hesmondhalgh, D. and Saha, A. (2013) 'Race, Ethnicity, and Cultural Production', *Popular Communication: The International Journal of Media and Culture*, 11(3), 179-195.
- Hewison, R. and Holden, J. and Jones, S. (2010) All Together. A Creative Approach to Organisational Change. *Nesta and Demos* [Online]. Available at: https://media.nesta.org.uk/documents/royal_shakespeare.pdf (Accessed: 29 October 2020).
- Hoggart, K., Lees, L. and Davies, A. (2002) *Researching Human Geography*. London: Arnold Publishers.
- Holden, J. (2015) *The Ecology of Culture*. Swindon: Arts & Humanities Research Council.
- House of Commons Culture, Media and Sport Committee (2017) *Countries of Culture: Funding and support for the arts outside London* [online]. Available at: <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201617/cmselect/cmcumeds/114/114.pdf> (Accessed: 23 October 2021).
- Howcroft, M. (forthcoming) *Pride, Shame and the Hull Civic Imaginary: UK City of Culture and Brexit*. PhD thesis. University of Hull.
- How to Rebuild a City* (2021) BBC Radio 3, 26 September. Available at: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/m0010155> (Accessed: 25 October 2021).
- HM Government (2017) *Industrial Strategy. Building a Britain fit for the future* [Online]. Available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/664563/industrial-strategy-white-paper-web-ready-version.pdf (Accessed: 7 March 2020).
- Gracs, B.J. (2010) *Working in the creative economy: the spatial dynamics of employment risk for musicians in Toronto*. PhD thesis. University of Toronto.
- Gracs, B.J. and Jakob, D. (2015) 'Selling the stage: exploring the spatial and temporal dimensions of interactive cultural experiences' in, Lorentzen, A. and Larsen, K.T. (eds) *Spatial Dynamics of the Experience Economy*. Abingdon: Taylor & Francis.
- Hubbard, P. and Faire, L. and Lilley, K. (2003) 'Contesting the modern city: Reconstruction and everyday life in post-war Coventry', *Planning Perspectives*, 18(4), 377-397.
- Hull Culture Place and Policy Unit (2021) *Cultural Transformations. The Impacts of Hull UK City of Culture 2017. Main Evaluation Findings and Reflections* [Online]. Available at:

<https://citiesofculture.co.uk/2021/07/08/cultural-transformations-the-impacts-of-hull-uk-city-of-culture-2017-main-evaluation-findings-and-reflections/> (Accessed: May 1 2021).

Hunt, M. (2014) 'Urban photography/cultural geography: spaces, objects and events', *Geography Compass*, 8 (3), 151–168.

Hyams, R. (2013) 'Art and resistance in European Capital of Culture', *rfi*, 13 October [Online]. Available at: <https://www.rfi.fr/en/culture/20131013-art-and-resistance-le-camp-des-milles> (Accessed: 15 October 2021).

Hylton, R. (2007) *The Nature of the Beast: Cultural Diversity and the Visual Arts Sector. A Study of Policies, Initiatives and Attitudes 1976-2006*. Bath: ICIA.

Impacts 08 (2009) *Liverpool's creative industries: understanding the impacts of the European Capital of Culture on the region's creative industries* [online]. Available from: <https://www.liverpool.ac.uk/media/livacuk/impacts08/publications/liverpools-creative-industries.pdf> (Accessed: 29 October 2021).

Jackson, J.B. and Lewis, P.F. and Lowenthal, D. and Meinig, D.W. and Samuels, M.S. and Sopher, D.E. and Tuan, Y. (1979) *The Interpretation of Ordinary Landscapes. Geographical Essays*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Jager, M. (1986) "Class definition and the aesthetics of gentrification: Victoriana in Melbourne" in Smith, N. and Williams, P. (eds) *Gentrification of the City*. Hemel Hempstead, Herts: Allen and Unwin, 78-91.

Jancovich, L. and Stevenson, D. (2021) 'Failure seems to be the hardest word to say', *International Journal of Cultural Policy*, 27(7), 967-981.

Jazeel, T. (2017) 'Mainstreaming geography's decolonial imperative', *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, 42(3), 334-337.

Jermyn, H. and Desai, P. (2002) *Arts – What's in a Word? Ethnic Minorities and the Arts*. London: Arts Council England.

Jimenez, L. and Walkerdine, V. (2011) 'A psychosocial approach to shame, embarrassment and melancholia amongst unemployed young men and their fathers', *Gender and Education*, 23(2), 185-199.

Johnson, R. and Chambers, D. and Raghuram, P and Tincknell, E. (2004) *The practice of cultural studies*. London: Sage.

Jupp, E. (2007) 'Participation, Local Knowledge and Empowerment: Researching Public Space with Young People', *Environment and Planning A*, 39(12), 2932-2844.

Katz, J. (2012) 'Ethnography's Expanding Warrants', *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 642(1), 258-275.

Kearns, R. A. (2010) 'Seeing with Clarity: Undertaking Observational Research', in I. Hay

(ed) *Qualitative Research Methods in Human Geography*. Oxford University Press: Oxford, 241-258.

Keith, M. (2005) *After the cosmopolitan? Multicultural cities and the future of racism*. London: Routledge.

Kelly, O. (1984) *Community Art and the State. Storming the Citadels*. London: Comedia.

Kester, G. H. (2011) *The One and the Many: Contemporary Collaborative Art in a Global Context*. Durham and London: Duke University Press.

King, N. and Horrocks, C. (2010) *Interviews in qualitative research*. London: Sage.

Kingston upon Hull Data Observatory (no date) *Population* [Online]. Available at: <https://data.hull.gov.uk/population/#/view-report/f067fa9f6ad840008507427e844d538f/iaFirstFeature> (Accessed: 22 October 2021).

Kitchin, R., Gleeson, J., & Dodge, M. (2013) 'Unfolding mapping practices: A new epistemology for cartography', *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, 38(3), 480-496.

Kitchin, R. and Tate, N.J. (2000) *Conducting Research into Human Geography*. Edinburgh Gate: Pearson.

Kuorikiski, J. and Marchionni, C. (2016) 'Evidential Diversity and the Triangulation Phenomena', *Philosophy of Science*, 83, 227-247.

Labaree, R.V. (2002) 'The rise of 'going observationalist': negotiating the hidden dilemmas of being an insider participant observer', *Qualitative Research*, 2(1), 97-122.

Landry, C. (2000) *The Creative City: A toolkit for Urban Innovators*. London: Earthscan.

Landry, C. and Bianchini, F. (1995) *The creative city*. London: Demos.

Latham, A. and McCormack, D. P. (2009) 'Thinking with images in non-representational cities: vignettes from Berlin', *Area*, 41 (3), 252-262.

Laurier, E. (2009) 'Ethnomethodology/Ethnomethodological Geography' in Thrift, N. and

Kitchin, R. (eds) *International Encyclopedia of Human Geography*. London: Elsevier Limited, 623-637.

Lawler, S. (2005) 'Disgusted subjects: the making of middle-class identities', *The Sociological Review*, 53(3), 429-446.

Lazzeretti, L. (2013) (ed) *Creative Industries and Innovation in Europe: Concepts, Measures and Comparative Case Studies*. London: Routledge.

Lees, L. (2014) 'The urban injustices of new Labour's "New Urban Renewal": The case of the Aylesbury Estate in London', *Antipode*, 46(4), 921-947.

- Lees, L. and Slater, T. and Wyly, E. (2008) *Gentrification*. New York: Routledge.
- Lees, L. and Melhuish, C. (2013) 'Arts-led regeneration in the UK: The rhetoric and the evidence on urban social inclusion', *European Urban and Regional Studies*, 22(3), 242-260.
- Lees, L. and Phillips, M. (2018) (eds) *Handbook of Gentrification Studies*. London: Edward Elgar Publishing Ltd.
- Lefebvre, H. (2006 [1991]) in Mould, O. (2015) *Urban Subversion and the Creative City*. London: Routledge, 96.
- Leslie, D. and Rantisi, N.M. (2011) 'Creativity and Place in Evolution of a Cultural Industry: the Case of Cirque du Soleil', *Urban Studies*, 48(9), 1771-1787.
- Ley, D. (1986) 'Alternative Explanations for Inner-City Gentrification: A Canadian Assessment', *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 76(4), 521-535.
- Ley, D. (1996) *The New Middle Class and the Remaking of the Central City*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Li, W. (2002) 'Entrepreneurship and government subsidies: A general equilibrium analysis', *Journal of Economic Dynamics and Control*, 26(11), 1815-1844.
- Lo, L. (2009) 'Sampling' in Thrift, N. and Kitchin, R. (eds) *International Encyclopedia of Human Geography*. London: Elsevier Limited, 1-10.
- Long, J. (2013) 'Sense of place and place-based activism in the neoliberal city', *City*, 17(1), 52-67.
- Longhurst, R. (2009) 'Interviews: In-Depth, Semi-Structured' in Thrift, N. and Kitchin, R. (eds) *International Encyclopedia of Human Geography*. London: Elsevier Limited, 580-584.
- Lorimer, H. (2003) 'Telling small stories: Spaces of knowledge and the practice of geography', *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, 28(2), 197-217.
- Loveday, V. (2015) 'Working-Class Participation, Middle-Class Aspiration? Value, Upward Mobility and Symbolic Indebtedness in Higher Education', *The Sociological Review*, 63(3), 570-588.
- MacCannell, D. (1973) 'Staged Authenticity: Arrangements of Social Space in Tourist Settings', *American Journal of Sociology*, 79(3), 589-603.
- Magnaghi, A. (2005) *The Urban Village: A Charter for Democracy and Local Self-Sustainable Development*. London: Zed Books.
- Malik, S. (2013) 'Creative Diversity: UK Public Service Broadcasting After Multiculturalism', *Popular Communication: The International Journal of Media and Culture*, 11(3), 227-241.

- MIF (2018) *Festival in my House*. Manchester International Festival [Online]. Available at: <https://www.actiontogether.org.uk/festival-my-house> (Accessed: 23 April 2021).
- Markusen, A. and Gadwa, A. (2010) 'Arts and Culture in Urban or Regional Planning: A Review and Research Agenda', *Journal of Planning Education and Research*, 29(3), pp. 379-391.
- Markusen, A. (2004) "Targeting occupations in regional and community economic development", *Journal of the American Planning Association*, 70, 253–268.
- Marshall, C. and Rossman, G.B. (1999) *Designing Qualitative Research*. 3rd edn. Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications Ltd.
- Massey, D. (1994) *Space place and gender*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Massey, D. (2005) *For Space*. London: SAGE.
- Massey, D. (2007) *World city*. UK: Polity Press.
- Mateos-Garcia, J. and Bakhshi, H. (2016) The Geography of the Creativity in the UK. Creative clusters, creative people and creative networks. *Nesta and Creative England* [Online]. Available at: https://media.nesta.org.uk/documents/the_geography_of_creativity_in_the_uk.pdf (Accessed: 23 October 2020).
- May, T. (2001) *Social research: issues, methods and process*. 3rd edn. Maidenhead, England: Open University Press.
- May, T. (2002) *Qualitative Research in Action*. London: SAGE Publications Ltd.
- May, R. A. B. (2014) 'When the Methodological Shoe is on the Other Foot: African American Interviewer and White Interviewees', *Qualitative Sociology*, 37(1), 117-136.
- McCann, E. (2004) ' 'Best Places': Inter-Urban Competition, Quality of Life, and Popular Media Discourse', *Urban Studies*, 41(10), 1909-1929.
- McCann, E. (2011) 'Urban Policy Mobilities and Global Circuits of Knowledge: Toward a Research Agenda', *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 101(1), 107-130.
- McCormack, D.P. (2002) 'A paper with an interest in rhythm', *Geoforum*, 33(4), 469-485.
- McDowell, L. (2010) 'Interviewing: Fear and Liking in the Field' in DeLyser, D. and Herbert, S. and Aitken, S. and Crang, M. and McDowell, L. (eds) *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Geography*. London: SAGE Publications Ltd, 156-171.
- McNally, D. (2015) *Participatory art and the cultural geographies of encounter*. PhD thesis. Royal Holloway, University of London.
- McRobbie, A. (2015) *Be Creative: Making a Living in the New Culture Industries*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

- Meer, N., Dwyer, C. and Modood, T. (2010) 'Embodying Nationhood? Conceptions of British National Identity, Citizenship and Gender in the 'Veil Affair'', *The Sociological Review* 58 (1), 84-111.
- Merrill, S. (2013) 'Keeping it real? Subcultural graffiti, street art, heritage and authenticity', *International Journal of Heritage Studies*, 21(4), 369-389.
- Mikecz, R. (2012) 'Interviewing Elites: Addressing Methodological Issues', *Qualitative Inquiry*, 18(6), 482-493.
- Miles, M. (1997) *Art, Space and the City*. London: Routledge.
- Miles, M. (2007) *Cities & Cultures*. London: Routledge.
- Miles, M. and Paddison, R. (2005) 'Introduction: The Rise and Rise of Culture-led Urban Regeneration', *Urban Studies*, 42(5/6), 833-839.
- Miles, A. and Sullivan, A. (2012) 'Understanding participation in culture and sport: Mixing methods, reordering knowledges', *Cultural Trends*, 21(4), 311-324.
- Milestone, K. (2015) 'Gender and the cultural industries' in Oakley, K. and O'Connor, J. (eds) *The Routledge Companion to the Cultural Industries*. Oxon: Routledge, 517-527.
- Millington, S. (2019) in Preskey, N. (2019) 'A love letter to my hometown high street', *BBC 3*, 19 August [Online]. Available at: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/bbcthree/article/ceb1b635-8864-4f0d-abb9-38870e1b2ee6> (Accessed: 21 August 2019).
- Moi, T. (1991) 'Appropriating Bourdieu: Feminist Theory and Pierre Bourdieu's Sociology of Culture', *New Literary History*, 22(4), 1017-1049.
- Mommaas, H. (2004) 'Cultural Clusters and the Post-Industrial City: Towards the Remapping of Urban Cultural Policy', *Urban Studies*, 41(3), 507-532.
- Mooney, G. (2004) 'Cultural Policy as Urban Transformation? Critical Reflections on Glasgow, European Capital of Culture 1990', *Local Economy*, 19(4), 327-340.
- Moore, I. (2014) 'Cultural and Creative Industries concept – a historical perspective', *Procedia – Social and Behavioural Sciences*, 110, 738-746.
- Mould, O. and Comunian, R. (2015) 'Hung, Drawn and Cultural Quartered: Rethinking Cultural Quarter Development Policy in the UK', *European Planning Studies*, 23(12), 1-14.
- Mould, O. (2015) *Urban Subversion and the Creative City*. Abingdon: Routledge.
- Mould, O. (2017) 'Brutalism Redux: Relational Monumentality and the Urban Politics of Brutalist Architecture', *Antipode*, 49(3), 701-20.
- Mould, O. (2018) *Against Creativity*. London: Verso Books.

- Müller, M. (2015) 'What makes an event a mega-event? Definitions and sizes', *Leisure Studies*, 6(34), 627-642.
- Munro, A. (2020) Coventry Marmot City Evaluation 2020. *Institute of Health Equity*. Available at: <https://www.instituteofhealthequity.org/resources-reports/coventry-marmot-city-evaluation-2020> (Accessed: 4 April 2021).
- Myambo, M.T. (2018) 'Why hipsters could be seen as modern-day colonisers', *The Conversation*, November 4 [Online]. Available at: <https://theconversation.com/why-hipsters-could-be-seen-as-modern-day-colonisers-105419> (Accessed: 19 January 2019).
- Nava, M. (2007) *Visceral Cosmopolitanism: Gender, Culture and the Normalisation of Difference*. Oxford: Oxford Berg.
- Nayak, A. (2006) 'Displaced Masculinities: Chavs, Youth and Class in the Post-industrial City', *Sociology*, 40(5), 813-831.
- Neelands, J., Belfiore, E., Firth, C., Hart, N., Perrin, L., Brock, S. and Woddis, J. (2015) *The Warwick Commission. Enriching Britain: Culture, Creativity and Growth* [Online]. University of Warwick. Available at: <https://warwick.ac.uk/research/warwickcommission/futureculture/finalreport/> (Accessed: 12 October 2017).
- Nelson, G.D. (2018) 'Mosaic and tapestry: Metaphors as geographical concept generators', *Progress in Human Geography*, 43(5), 853-870.
- Newsinger, J. and Green, W. (2016) 'The infrapolitics of cultural value: cultural policy, evaluation and the marginalisation of practitioner perspectives', *Journal of Cultural Economy*, 9(4), 382-395.
- NISRA (2015) *Census 2011 Population Statistics for Derry City Settlement*. Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency [Online]. Available at: <https://www.ninis2.nisra.gov.uk/public/AreaProfileReportViewer.aspx?FromAPAddressMultipleRecords=Derry+City%40Exact+match+of+location+name%3A+%40Exact+Match+Of+Location+Name%3A+Derry+City%4023%3F> (Accessed: 22 October 2021).
- Northall, P. (2017) *Culture Led Regeneration & Local Art Communities* [online]. Centre for Local Economic Strategies, available at: <https://www.cles.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2011/01/LW79-Culture-Regen.pdf> (Accessed: 29 September 2020).
- Nowicki, M. (2017) *Bringing Home the Housing Crisis: Domicide and Precarity in Inner London*. PhD thesis. Royal Holloway, University of London.
- Noy, C. (2008) 'Sampling Knowledge: The Hermeneutics of Snowball Sampling in Qualitative Research', *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, 11(4), 327-344.
- O'Brien, D. (2010) 'No cultural policy to speak of' – Liverpool 2008', *Journal of Policy Research in Tourism, Leisure and Events*, 2(2), 113-128.

- O'Brien, D. (2011) 'Who is in charge? Liverpool, European Capital of Culture 2008 and the governance of cultural planning', *The Town Planning Review*, 82(1), 45-59.
- O'Brien, D. (2014) *Cultural Policy: Management, Value and Modernity*. London, Routledge.
- O'Brien, D. (2020) 'Culture is Bad for You: Inequality in the Cultural and Creative industries', *Edinburgh Centre for Data, Culture & Society lecture*, 7 October.
- O'Brien, D. and Miles, S. (2010) 'Cultural policy as rhetoric and reality: a comparative analysis of policy making in the peripheral north of England', *Cultural Trends*, 19, 3–13.
- O'Brien, D. and Oakley, K. (2015) *Cultural Value and Inequality: A Critical Literature Review* [online]. Arts and Humanities Research Council, available at: <https://ahrc.ukri.org/documents/project-reports-and-reviews/cultural-value-and-inequality-a-critical-literature-review/> (Accessed 28 September 2020).
- O'Connor, J. (2004) "'A Special Kind of City Knowledge": Innovative clusters, tacit knowledge and the "Creative City"', *Media International Australia*, 112, 131-149.
- O'Connor, J. (2014) 'Regeneration Redux: Hobart and MONA' in Ashton, P. Gibson, C. and Gibson, R. (eds) *Bi-roads and Hidden Treasures: Mapping Cultural Assets in Regional Australia*. Perth: University of Western Australia Press, 169-183.
- O'Sullivan, F. (2014) *The Pernicious Realities of 'Artwashing'*. Bloomberg CityLab [Online]. Available at: <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2014-06-24/the-pernicious-realities-of-artwashing> (Accessed: 10 September 2021).
- Oakley, K. (2015) *Creating Space: A re-evaluation of the role of culture in regeneration*. [online]. Arts and Humanities Research Council, available at: https://eprints.whiterose.ac.uk/88559/3/AHRC_Cultural_Value_KO%20Final.pdf (Accessed 28 September 2020).
- Oakley, K. and Banks, M. (2016) 'The dance goes on forever? Art schools, class and UK higher Education', *International Journal of Cultural Policy*, 22(1), 41-57.
- Oakley, K. and O'Brien, D. (2016) 'Learning to labour unequally: understanding the relationship between cultural production, cultural consumption and inequality', *Social Identities*, 22 (5), 471-486.
- Ocejo, R. (2013) *Ethnography and the City: Readings on Doing Urban Fieldwork*. New York: Routledge.
- Olah, N. (2019) *Steal as much as you can: How to win the culture wars in an age of austerity*. London: Repeater Books.
- Oldenburg, R. and Brissett, D. (1982) 'The third place', *Qualitative Sociology*, 5, 265-284.
- Ooi, C.S. and Hakanson, L. and LaCava, L. (2014) 'Poetics and Politics of the European Capital of Culture Project', *Procedia*, 148, pp. 420-427.

- Ostrom, V. and Ostrom, E. (1978) "Public Goods and Public Choices" in Savas, E. (Ed.) *Alternatives for Delivering Public Services. Toward Improved Performance*. Westview, Boulder, CO: 7-49.
- Padgett, D. K. (2008) *Qualitative Methods in Social Work Research* (2nd ed). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Pain, R. (2004) 'Social geography: participatory research', *Progress in Human Geography*, 28(5), 652 - 663.
- Palmer/Rae Associates (2004) *European cities and capitals of culture*. Brussels: Palmer/Rae.
- Palumbo, R. and Trocciola, G. (2015) 'Co-producing services to enhance cultural heritage. The role of co-production in improving the quality of tourism services', *XXVII Convegno annuale di Sinergie*, 9 – 10 July. Available at: <https://art.torvergata.it/retrieve/handle/2108/223207/434826/29..pdf>
- Papen, U. (2012) 'Commercial discourses, gentrification and citizens' protest: The linguistic landscape of Prenzlauer Berg, Berlin', *Journal of Sociolinguistics*, 16(1),
- Park, R. and Burgess, E.W. (1921) *Introduction to the Science of Sociology*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Park, R. and Burgess, E.W. and McKenzie, R.D. (1925) *The City*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Parkinson, P. and Engeli, A. and Marshall, T. and Burgess, A. and Gallagher, P. and Lang, M. (2019) *The Values of Arts and Culture in Place-shaping* [online]. Wavehill Social and Economic Research, available at: <https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/sites/default/files/download-file/Value%20of%20Arts%20and%20Culture%20in%20Place-Shaping.pdf> (Accessed: 29 September 2020).
- Parnreiter, C. (2017) 'Global cities and the geographical transfer of value', *Urban Studies*, 56(1), 81-96.
- Peck, J. (2005) 'Struggling with the Creative Class', *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 29(4), 740-770.
- Peck, J. and Theodore, N. and Brenner, N. (2013) 'Neoliberal Urbanism Redux?', *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 37(3), 1091-1099.
- Peck, J. and Whiteside, H. (2016) 'Financializing Detroit', *Economic Geography*, 92(3), 235-268.
- Permentier, M. and van Ham, M. and Bolt, G. (2008) 'Same Neighbourhood ... Different Views? A Confrontation of Internal and External Neighbourhood Reputations', *Housing Studies*, 23, 833-855.

- Philo, C. (2009) 'Cultural Turn' in Thrift, N. and Kitchin, R. (eds) *International Encyclopedia of Human Geography*. London: Elsevier Limited, 442-450.
- Pickerill, J. (2013) 'Academics' diverse online communications', *Dialogues in Human Geography*, 3(1), 85-86.
- Pinder, D. (2011) 'Cities: Moving, Plugging In, Floating, Dissolving' in Cresswell, T. and Merriman, P. (eds) *Geographies of Mobilities: Practices, Spaces, Subjects*. Farnham and Burlington: Ashgate, 167– 189.
- Pine, B. and Gilmore, J. (1999) *The Experience Economy*. Boston, MA: Harvard Business School Press.
- Pratt, A.C. (2008) 'Creative Cities: The Cultural Industries and the Creative Class', *Geografiska Annaler: Series B, Human Geography*, 90(2), 107-117.
- Pratt, G. and San Juan, R.M. (2014) 'Film and Urban Space: Critical Possibilities', *Screen*, 59(3), 394-397.
- Price, L. (2016) *Knitted Geographies: Materials, Making, and Creativity*. PhD thesis. Royal Holloway, University of London.
- Pritchard, S. (2017) 'Artwashing: Social Capital & Anti-Gentrification Activism', *Colouring in Culture*, 29 March [Online]. Available at: <https://colouringinculture.org/uncategorized/artwashingsocialcapitalantigentrification/> (Accessed: 22 June 2017).
- Pritchard, S. (2019) 'Neoliberalism and the Arts', *Colouring in Culture*, 8 February [Online]. Available at: <https://colouringinculture.org/uncategorized/2019-2-8-neoliberalism-and-the-arts/> (Accessed: 9 February 2019).
- QS Top Universities (2021) *Study in Coventry*. Available at: <https://www.topuniversities.com/university-rankings-articles/qs-best-student-cities/coventry> (Accessed: 9 August 2021).
- Quinn, J. (2010) *Learning Communities and Imagined Social Capital*. London: Continuum.
- Rae, D. and Carswell, M. (2001) 'Towards a conceptual understanding of entrepreneurial learning', *Journal of Small Business and Enterprise Development*, 8(2), 150-158.
- Raikhan, S. and Moldakhmet, M. and Ryskeldy, M. and Alua, M. (2014) 'The interaction of globalization and culture in the modern world', *Procedia*, 122, 8-12.
- Ranciere, J. (2010) *Dissensus. On Politics and Aesthetics*. Translated by Corcoran, S. London: Continuum International Publishing Group.
- Randle, K. and Forson, C. and Calveley, M. (2015) 'Towards a Bourdieusian analysis of the social composition of the UK film and television workforce', *Work, Employment and Society*, 29(4), 590-606.

- Rapley, T.J. (2001) 'The art(fullness) of open-ended interviewing: some considerations on analysing interviews', *Qualitative Research*, 1(3), 303-323.
- Richards, G. and Duif, L. (2019) *Small Cities with Big Dreams. Creative Placemaking and Branding Strategies*. Abingdon: Routledge.
- Robinson, J. (2002) 'Global and world cities: a view from off the map', *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 26(3), 531-554.
- Robinson, J. (2006) *Ordinary Cities: Between Modernity and Development*. London: Routledge.
- Rodger, J. (2014) 'Fargo Village: what's there?', *Coventry Evening Telegraph*, 29 September [Online]. Available at: <https://www.coventrytelegraph.net/whats-on/whats-on-news/fargo-village-whats-there-7817960> (Accessed: 16 September 2020).
- Rodger, J. (2016) 'Where does the phrase 'sent to Coventry' originate from? Exploring the history of the phrase', *Coventry Evening Telegraph*, 7 November [Online]. Available at: <https://www.coventrytelegraph.net/news/coventry-news/phrase-sent-coventry-originate-from-12137441> (Accessed: 20 October 2020).
- Rojek, C. (2009) 'Stuart Hall on Representation and Ideology' in Hammer, R. and Kellner, D. (eds) *Media/Cultural Studies. A Critical Approach*. Peter Lang Publishing: New York, USA, pp. 49-62.
- Rose, G. (1997) 'Situating knowledges: positionality, reflexivities and other tactics', *Progress in Human Geography*, 21(3), 305-320.
- Rose, G. and Tolia-Kelly, D. P. (eds) (2012). *Visuality/Materiality: Images, Objects and Practices*. Surrey: Ashgate Publishing Ltd.
- Royal Society of Arts (2016) *Heritage Index 2016*. Available at: <https://www.thersa.org/blog/2016/11/heritage-index-2016> (Accessed: 24 April 2020).
- Sacco, P.L. and Blessi, G.T. (2009) 'The Social Viability of Culture-led Urban Transformation Processes: Evidence from the Bicocca District, Milan', *Urban Studies*, 46(5-6), 1115-1135.
- Sack, R.D. (1992) *Place, modernity, and the consumer's worlds. A relational framework for geographical analysis*. London: John Hopkins University Press.
- Saha, A. (2015) 'The marketing of race in cultural production' in Oakley, K and O'Connor, J. (eds) *Routledge Companion to the Cultural Industries*. London: Routledge, 99-111.
- Sandford, E. (2019) 'This is how a city centre landmark will be demolished', *Coventry Evening Telegraph*, 20 February [Online]. Available at: <https://www.coventrytelegraph.net/news/coventry-news/coventry-point-demolition-15857430> (Accessed: 24 February 2019).

- Sanjek, R. (ed) (1990). *Fieldnotes. The makings of anthropology*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press:
- Sassen, S. (1991) *The Global City*. Princeton, USA: Princeton University Press.
- Sassen, S. (2000) 'Territory and Territoriality in the Global Economy', *International Sociology*, 15(2), 372-393.
- Sassen, S. (2005) 'The Global City: Introducing a Concept', *Brown Journal of World Affairs*, XI (2), 27-43.
- Schlesinger, P. (2007) 'Creativity: from discourse to doctrine?', *Screen*, 48(3), 377-399.
- Schmidt, C. (2004) 'The Analysis of Semi-Structured Interviews' in Flick, U. and von Kardorff, E. and Steinke, I. (eds) *A Companion to Qualitative Research*. London: SAGE Publications, pp. 178-183.
- Scott, J. (1990) *A Matter of Record, Documentary Sources in Social Research*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Scott, A.J. (2014) 'Beyond the Creative City: Cognitive-Cultural Capitalism and the New Urbanism', *Regional Studies*, 48(4), 565-578.
- Sennett, R. (2009) *The Craftsman*. London: Penguin Books Ltd.
- Sharp, J. and Pollock, V. and Paddison, R. (2005) 'Just Art for a Just City: Public Art and Social Inclusion in Urban Regeneration', *Urban Studies*, 42(5/6), 1001-1023.
- Shields, R. (1995) 'A guide to urban representations and what to do about it: alternative traditions in urban theory' in King, A. (ed.) *Re-presenting the city: ethnicity, capital and culture in the twenty-first century metropolis*. London: Macmillan, 227-52.
- Silver, D. and Clark, T.N. (2015) 'The Power of Scenes', *Cultural Studies*, 29(3), 425-449.
- Silverman, D. (2006) *Interpreting qualitative data*. 3rd edn. London, England: Sage.
- Slater, T. (2017) 'Territorial Stigmatisation, Gentrification and Class Struggle: An interview with Tom Slater' in Kirkness, P. and Tijé-Dra, A. (eds) *Negative Neighbourhood Reputation and Place Attachment: The Production and Contestation of Territorial Stigma*. London: Routledge, 235-251.
- Smith, N. (2002) 'New Globalism, New Urbanism: Gentrification as Global Urban Strategy', *Antipode*, 34(3), 427-450.
- Smith, R.G. (2013) 'The ordinary city trap', *Environment and Planning A*, 45, pp. 2290-2304.
- Smith, A. (2015) *Events in the City. Using public spaces as event venues*. London: Routledge.

Spivey, C. (2019) *From Shakespeare to Sonic. Creative Industries of Coventry and Warwickshire*. The University of Warwick [Online]. Available at: https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/cross_fac/enterprise/creativeanddigital/from_shakespeare_to_sonic_aw_2_1.pdf (Accessed: 14 January 2020).

Stake, R.E. (1995) *The art of case study research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Stephens, W.B. (1969) 'The City of Coventry: Introduction' in Stephens, W.B. (ed) *A History of the County of Warwick: Volume 8, the City of Coventry and Borough of Warwick*. Available at: <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/warks/vol8/pp1-23>, 1-23. [Accessed: 26 March 2021].

Stern, M.J. and Seifert, S.C. (2002) “ ‘Irrational’ Organizations: Why Community Based Arts organizations are Really Social Movement”, *Multitudes: The Magazine of the Walt Whitman Arts Center*, Fall. Camden, NJ: Walt Whitman Arts Center.

Stevenson, D. and McKay, K. and Rowe, D. (2010) ‘Tracing British Cultural Policy Domains: Contexts, Collaborations and Constituencies’, *International Journal of Cultural Policy*, 16(2), 159-172.

Stevenson, D. and Balling, G. and Kann-Rasmussen, N. (2017) “Cultural Participation in Europe: Shared Problem or Shared Problematisation?”, *International Journal of Cultural Policy*, 23(1), 89–106.

Stevenson, D. (2019) ‘Cultural participation policies: A poverty of ambitions’ [Online], *IETM Plenary Meeting in Rijeka*, 24-27 October. Available at: <https://www.ietm.org/en/resources/articles/cultural-participation-policies-a-poverty-of-ambitions> (Accessed: 29 October 2019).

Straw, W. (2002) ‘Music as Commodity and Material Culture’, *Repercussions*, 7-8, 147-172.

Straw, W. (2015) ‘Some Things a Scene Might Be’, *Cultural Studies*, 29(3), 476-485.

Sunley, P. (2009) ‘Relational Economic Geography: A Partial Understanding or a New Paradigm?’, *Economic Geography*, 84(1), 1-26.

Sunley, P. and Pinch, S. and Reimer, S. (2011) ‘Design capital: Practice and situated learning in London design agencies’, *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, 36(3), 377-392.

Talbot, C. and Talbot, C. (2020) ‘On the level: What does the government mean by levelling up?’, *Civil Service World*, 20 February [Online]. Available at: <https://www.civilserviceworld.com/in-depth/article/on-the-level-what-does-the-government-mean-by-levelling-up> (Accessed: 24 February 2020).

Taylor, P.J. (2012) ‘Extraordinary Cities: Early ‘City-ness’ and the Origins of Agriculture and States’, *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 36(3), 415-447.

Taylor, M. (2016) ‘Nonparticipation or Different Styles of Participation? Alternative Interpretations from Taking Part’, *Cultural Trends*, 25(3), 169-181.

Taylor, P.J. and Derudder, B. (2016) 'Change in the World City Network, 2000-2012', *The Professional Geographer*, 68(4), 624-637.

The Herbert (no date) *About*. The Herbert Art Gallery and Museum [Online]. Available at: https://www.theherbert.org/about/national_portfolio_organisation.aspx (Accessed: 16 September 2020).

The Boar (2018) 'An interview with street artist and Warwick graduate, Michael Batchelor', 25 December [Online]. Available at: <https://theboar.org/2018/12/interview-street-artist-warwick-graduate-michael-batchelor/> (Accessed: 4 September 2019).

The Guardian (2016) 'A cold day in Hull: why the city is (finally) on the weather map', 23 January [Online]. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/shortcuts/2016/sep/23/hull-weather-map-uk-city-culture-bbc-32m> (Accessed: 24 January 2022).

Thompson, D. (2012) *Pop Up Business for Dummies*. New York City, USA: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

Thrift, N. (2000) 'Dead Geographies – And How To Make Them Live', *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 18(4), 411-432.

Till, K.E. (2009) 'Ethnography' in Thrift, N. and Kitchin, R. (eds) *International Encyclopedia of Human Geography*. London: Elsevier Limited, 627-631.

Turnhout, E. and Metze, T. and Wyborn, C. and Klenk, N. and Louder, E. (2020) 'The politics of co-production: participation, power, and transformation', *Current Opinion in Environmental Sustainability*, 42, 15-21.

Turok, I. (2009) 'The distinctive city: pitfalls in the pursuit of differential advantage', *Environment and Planning A*, 41(1), 13-30.

Tyler, I. and Slater, T. (2018) 'Rethinking the sociology of stigma', *The Sociological Review Monographs*, 66(4), 721-743.

UK Parliament Hansard (2010) Higher Education Fees. *House of Commons* [Online]. 9 December. Available at: <https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/2010-12-09/debates/1012094600003/HigherEducationFees?highlight=tuition%20fee%20rise#contribution-10120946000764> (Accessed: 22 October 2021).

Umney, C. (2020) 'Creative placemaking and the cultural projectariat: Artistic work in the wake of Hull City of Culture 2017', *Capital & Class*, 44(4), 595-615.

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (2017) *UNESCO Creative Cities Network Mission Statement*. Available at: https://en.unesco.org/creative-cities/sites/default/files/uccn_mission_statement_rev_nov_2017.pdf (Accessed: 14 September 2020).

University of Hull and Regeneris (2018) *Cultural Transformations: The Impact of Hull UK City of Culture 2017. Summary of Preliminary Outcomes Evaluation* [Online]. Available at:

<https://www.hull.ac.uk/work-with-us/research/institutes/culture-place-and-policy-institute/report/cultural-transformations-the-impacts-of-hull-uk-city-of-culture-2017-summary.pdf> (Accessed: 22 October 2021).

Valentine, G. (2008) 'Theorizing and Researching Intersectionality: A Challenge for Feminist Geography', *The Professional Geographer*, 59(1), 10-21.

van Heur, B. (2010) 'Beyond Regulation: Towards a Cultural Political Economy of Complexity and Emergence', *New Political Economy*, 15(3), 421-444.

Virani, T.E. and Pratt, A.C. (2016) 'Intermediaries and the knowledge exchange process: the case of the creative industries and Higher Education' in Comunian, R. and Gilmore, A. (eds.) *Higher Education and the Creative Economy: Beyond the campus. Regions and Cities*. Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 41-58.

Vortex Creates (2019) *Intersect: Where Businesses and Creative Industries Meet* [Online]. Available at: <https://www.vortex-creates.co.uk/intersect-where-business-and-creative-industry-meet/> (Accessed: 21 February 2020).

Wacquant, L. (2007) 'Territorial Stigmatization in the age of advanced marginality', *Thesis Eleven*, 91, 66-77.

Wacquant, L. (2008) *Urban Outcasts: A Comparative Sociology of Advanced Marginality*. Polity Press, Cambridge.

Ward, J. (2018) 'Down by the sea: visual arts, artists and coastal regeneration', *International Journal of Cultural Policy*, 24(1), 121-138.

West Midlands Combined Authority (2018) *Creative Industries Sector Plan Consultation: part of West Midlands Local Industrial Strategy*. Available at: <https://gbslep.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/West-Midlands-Creative-Industries-Local-Industrial-Strategy.pdf> (Accessed: 12 November 2018).

Williams, R. (1958) *Culture and Society, 1780 – 1950*. Penguin: London.

Williams, R. (1977) *Marxism and Literature*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Wilson, D. and Keil, R. (2008) 'The real creative class', *Social & Cultural Geography*, 9(8), 841-847.

Wilson, N. and Gross, J. and Bull, A. (2017) *Towards cultural democracy: Promoting cultural capabilities for everyone*. King's College London [Online]. Available at: <https://www.kcl.ac.uk/cultural/resources/reports/towards-cultural-democracy-2017-kcl.pdf> (Accessed: 14 September 2019).

Wond, T. and Macaulay, M. (2011) 'Extending Time – Extended Benefits', *Public Management Review*, 13(2), pp. 309-320.

Woodward, S.C. (2004) 'Faith and tourism: Planning tourism in relation to places of worship', *Tourism and Hospitality Planning & Development*, 1(2), 173-186.

World Bank (2017) *Cities, Culture, Creativity: Leveraging Culture & Creativity for Sustainable Urban Development & Inclusive Growth*. Available at: <https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/urbandevelopment/publication/cities-culture-creativity> (Accessed: 3 September 2021).

WM Funders Network (2019) 'Briefing: Birmingham Commonwealth Games and Coventry City of Culture', Brewin Dolphin, Birmingham, 20 June. Available at: <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/briefing-birmingham-commonwealth-games-and-coventry-city-of-culture-tickets-59538960634#> (Accessed: 23 June 2019).

Yencken, D. (1988) 'The Creative City', *Meanjin*, 47(4).

Yin, R.K. (2009) *Case study research: Design and methods*. 4th edn. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Zijderveld, A.C. (1998) *A theory of urbanity: the economic and civic culture of cities*. New Jersey: Transaction Publishing.

Zukin, S. (1982) *Loft Living: Culture and Capital in Urban Change*. Baltimore, USA: John Hopkins University.

Zukin, S. (1995) *The cultures of cities*. Cambridge, MA: Blackwell.

Zukin, S. and Braslow, L. (2011) 'The life cycle of New York's creative districts: Reflections on the unanticipated consequences of unplanned cultural zones', *City, Culture and Society*, 2(3), 131-140.

Zukin, S. and Trujillo, V. and Frase, P. and Jackson, D. and Recuber, T. and Walker, A. (2009) 'New Retail Capital and Neighborhood Change: Boutiques and Gentrification in New York City', *City & Community*, 8(1), 47-64.

Appendices

A – DCMS UK City of Culture Bidding Guide Information 2017

Part B. Vision, Programme and Impacts (Total maximum score: 100)

Element	Requirement	Indicative Scores
B.1. Your Area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Geographical area covered by the bid - Why this area needs UKCoC step changes 	Maximum score: 5
B.2. Overall Vision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Overall vision for the programme - Why is it distinctive? (Main themes and components, including 2-page indicative programme) 	Maximum score: 15
B.3. Cultural and Artistic Strengths	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Main cultural assets - Main gaps and weaknesses - Involvement of local/regional/national organisations, networks, partnerships - Ensure cultural diversity and digital innovation 	Maximum score: 35
B.4. Social Impacts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Regeneration, community cohesion, health and well-being for local area - Baseline cultural participation and suggested improvements - Young people engagement - Accessibility 	Maximum score: 15
B.5. Economic Impacts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Current strengths of cultural and creative sectors - How UKCoC would boost sectors - Increased education, training, employment - UKCoC contribution to promoting local economic growth 	Maximum score: 20
B.6. Tourism Impacts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Build on current tourism activity and marketing - Boosts to visitor economy and maximised net impact - Transport infrastructure capacity 	Maximum score: 10

Part C. Delivery and Capacity (Total maximum score: 100)

Element	Requirement	Indicative Scores
C.1. Organisation, development, management and governance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Bid leadership, development and support, management - Consultation of local groups and communities - List of organisations/individuals involved with bid 	Maximum score: 15
C.2. Track Record	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Track record of organising and delivering significant cultural events 	Maximum score: 15
C.3. Funding and Budget	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Expected costs of programme delivery - Additional funding estimates - Additional fundraising plans - Existing financial commitments and guarantors 	Maximum score: 20
C.4. Partnerships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Funding and deliver partnerships - National organisation involvement 	Maximum score: 10
C.5. Risk Assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Main risks and mitigation measures 	Maximum score: 10
C.6. Legacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Main cultural, social and economic legacy elements - Retain and reuse of UKCoC expertise - Maintaining funding and partnerships - Maintaining cultural engagement 	Maximum score: 20
C.7. Learning and Evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Evaluation of step changes - Measurement and analysis of community engagement 	Maximum score: 10

B – Scores from the DCMS UKCoC Bidding Guidance 2017

Organised from Highest to Lowest Number of Points Awarded to Each Element
(Adapted from DCMS, 2017)

Maximum score (High to low)	Element
35	- B.3. Cultural and Artistic Strengths
20	- B.5. Economic Impacts - C.3. Funding and Budget - C.6. Legacy
15	- B.2. Overall Vision - B.4. Social Impacts - C.1. Organisation, development, management and governance - C.2. Track Record
10	- B.6. Tourism Impacts - C.4. Partnerships - C.5. Risk Assessment - C.7. Learning and Evaluation
5	- B.1. Your Area

C – Table Showing Coventry 2021’s Bid Guide Mapped onto DCMS UKCoC Bidding Guidance 2017

Element	Requirement	Coventry bid (2018)
<p>B.3. Cultural and Artistic Strengths Maximum score: 35</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Main cultural assets - Main gaps and weaknesses - Involvement of local/regional/national organisations, networks, partnerships - Ensure cultural diversity and digital innovation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - BAME, young and disabled people represented on boards of publicly funded cultural institutions - 5 new international cultural exchanges and partnerships - Programme delivered by internationally recognised artists representative of the city’s population and under-represented groups - 20% increase in BAME audiences - Sustained growth of £3mil by 2021 for arts sector
<p>B.4. Social Impacts Maximum score: 15</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Regeneration, community cohesion, health and well-being for local area - Baseline cultural participation and suggested improvements - Young people engagement - Accessibility 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 80% local population experiencing at least three events - over 50% programme reach into communities and schools - 100 trained culture reps - 30% of programme with opportunities for co-creation and participation - 40% increase in out of school engagement for economically disadvantaged children and young people in key wards - 20% of those not in education or training involved in the programme delivery - 25% in cultural commissions to help address mental health/ obesity - Reduced levels of depression and anxiety to national average - 20% increase in dance and physical activity - 30% increase in levels of neighbourhood and city centre satisfaction

<p>B.5. Economic Impacts Maximum score: 20</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Current strengths of cultural and creative sectors - How UKCoC would boost sectors - Increased education, training, employment - UKCoC contribution to promoting local economic growth 	<p>‘Culture driving the economy ‘</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - £349.8mil total direct economic impact predictions from 2018 – 2022 in Coventry - ‘transform the model for private sector engagement and promote growth in new creative businesses’ - 2,166 new jobs - Increase from 0.7% to 1% employment in music, performing and visual arts - 100 new businesses regularly supporting arts [e.g. CoC Club], - increased contribution of CI from 3.57% of total GVA to 5% - 10% increase in graduate retention - 20 new cultural and creative SMEs - Sustained growth of £3mil by 2021 for arts sector
<p>B.6. Tourism Impacts Maximum score: 10</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Build on current tourism activity and marketing - Boosts to visitor economy and maximised net impact - Transport infrastructure capacity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 2.5mil visitors - 20% increase in visitor spend - Tourism volume and value of £106.9mil in 2021, £95.7mil during build-up

Part C. Delivery and Capacity

Element	Requirement	Coventry bid guide (2018)
<p>C.1. Organisation, development, management and governance Maximum score: 15</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Bid leadership, development and support, management - Consultation of local groups and communities - List of organisations/individuals involved with bid 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Target of 16,690 active volunteers and participants
<p>C.3. Funding and Budget Maximum score: 20</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Expected costs of programme delivery - Additional funding estimates - Additional fundraising plans - Existing financial commitments and guarantors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - £2mil in benefit - Bid unlocked £30mil of capital development - Total predicted investment is £48.3million - £16.5mil investment for other heritage properties

		linked to transfer of assets to Historic Coventry
C.6. Legacy Maximum score: 20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Main cultural, social and economic legacy elements - Retain and reuse of UKCoC expertise - Maintaining funding and partnerships - Maintaining cultural engagement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - £750k sustainability fund for building resilience and legacy - 30% increase in levels of neighbourhood and city centre satisfaction - £349.8mil total direct economic impact predictions from 2018 – 2022 in Coventry
C.7. Learning and Evaluation Maximum score: 10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Evaluation of step changes - Measurement and analysis of community engagement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Universities and public health working together to research, develop and measure cultural impact on mental health sufferers

D – DCMS UKCoC2021 Judging Panel Biographies

(Adapted from DCMS, 2017)

- Phil Redmond, CBE – Former Deputy Chair and Creative Director of Liverpool ECoC2008 and television writer
- Suzanne Bond – Regional economic development strategist with roles for the European Commission and Cornwall Development Company
- Marcus Fairs – editor-in-chief of Dezeen, architecture and design company
- Robert Palmer – Independent cultural consultant with previous involvement with the ECoC title, advisor for UNESCO and the European Commission
- Barbara Spicer, CBE – Chief Executive of Plus Dane housing association and former Chief Executive of Salford City Council
- Dr Aideen McGinley, OBE – Chair of Galway ECoC2020, CEO of ILEX Urban Regeneration Company for Derry-Londonderry and various cultural policy roles across Northern Ireland
- Rory McEwan-Brown, OBE – Arts manager and Chief Executive of the Scottish Chamber Orchestra, with an OBE for services to music
- Lord Rowe-Beddoe – Chairman of the Welsh Development Agency alongside other industrial development roles across Wales

E – Full List of Initial Coventry 2021 Partners

Taken from Coventry 2021, 2018: 16)

Partnership Role	Specific Stakeholders
Principal Partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coventry University • Coventry City Council • University of Warwick • West Midlands Combined Authority
Bid sponsor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ricoh Arena
Bid development sponsors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jaguar Land Rover • Adient • Friargate • Pertemps Network • CEF • Listers • Coventry Building Society • petXI • SCC • Birmingham Airport • Coventry & Warwickshire Chamber of Commerce
Regional partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coventry and Warwickshire Local Enterprise Partnership • Coventry Business Improvement District • Warwickshire County Council • Heart of England Community Foundation • Coventry and Warwickshire Champions
National Partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DCMS • Heritage Lottery Fund • Arts Council England
Founding Presidents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • David Burbidge OBE DL • Roger Medwell DL • Dr Tim Watts DL • Sir Peter Rigby KBE DL • Baljit Shergill • Janet Moore • Keith Bradshaw OBE DL
Honorary Partner	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positive Youth Foundation
2021 Club	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Over 100 local and regional businesses pledging financial support

F – Stakeholders Identified Within the Coventry 2021 Performance Measurement and Evaluation Strategy

(Taken from Coventry 2021, 2019)

Stakeholders (not exhaustive)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Key Funding Partners • Delivery Partners • Strategic Partners • Commissioning Partners • Local Business and Workers * • Citizens * • Visitors • Cultural Organisations / Venues * • Local Authority * • Artists / Performers * • Faith Organisations * • Educational Institutions • Media / Press Outlets • Health Organisations • Charities / Support Organisations • Voluntary / Community Organisations*
-------------------------------	--

G – An Overview of the Coventry 2021 Logic Model

(N.B. Asterixis indicate where thesis research intersects with the official strategy)

Logic Model Strand	Involvement with the Cultural Sector
<p><u>Investment</u> (human, financial, infrastructure, practical)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Infrastructure • Key Partners • Community and Public Stakeholders
<p><u>Activities</u> (Actions undertaken by the trust using investments available to them to produce the outputs/interventions which direct a course of change)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing strong working relationships with key partners and stakeholders • Working with communities and stakeholders to develop arts and culture events for UK CoC 2021 • Employing professional artists to work with communities to co-create core elements of the programme • Arts and economic growth. i.e. work experience opportunities within the arts and culture sector from stewarding to placements, a cultural leadership program, increasing social mobility; expanding the cultural labour market • Supporting a new cohort of diverse artists and cultural leaders; negotiating and co-creating outputs and outcomes • Forming new partnerships and sustainable collaborations • Working with key partners locally, regionally, nationally and internationally (i.e. Coventry City Council, planners, developers, architects, designers, construction teams, universities, local culture sector and communities) • Deep consultation with communities of interest to co-create the cultural programme • Co-Commissioning artists from different art forms and cultural tradition • Showcasing art forms that reflect a diverse range of cultural tastes and preferences • Employing professional artists to work with communities and stakeholders to develop arts and culture events for UK CoC 2021 • Cultural activity in places outside the city centre, within the communities where people live including temporary accommodation
<p><u>Outputs</u> (direct products and tangible results that arise from the Trust’s activities)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Programmes, planning and production of events involving Coventry communities • Outreach activities in the community • Model of co-creation established • Human resource capacity development in the cultural sector in Coventry • Distribution of 2021 events across Coventry • Coventry’s CoC devolved and outcome led model shapes local, regional and national cultural policy making and funding • Needs based model for cultural delivery and planning

<p><u>Outcomes</u> (changes or differences resulting from CoC2021 programme activities and outputs)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordinated cultural sector capacity and infrastructure is building a sustainable and resilient sector CoC 2021 will provide the opportunity to invest in, strengthen and extend the local cultural sector and expand the sector’s future role and recognition in the city and region • Increase in civic pride and a renewed sense of belonging in Coventry • Community led production and programming increases cultural participation and activism • Cultural leadership and programming reflects and represents the citizens of the city • There is increased understanding, accessibility and provision of career routes into the cultural and creative sector • Cultural engagement is geographically dispersed across the city • Cultural sector activity makes a significant contribution to the economic, environmental, social, health and wellbeing targets for the city and the region • Investment in culture accelerates inward investment and economic growth in the region
<p><u>Impact</u> (All outcomes of a project should contribute to the intended impacts)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coventry Citizens Positively Influence and Shape the City They Want to Live In • Coventry’s Cultural Contributes to the Social and Economic Prosperity of the City and Region • Coventry is a Global and Connected City
<p><u>Key Performance Indicators</u> (variable that allows the verification of changes in an intervention/project or shows results relative to what was planned)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased number of artists / cultural organisations in Coventry achieving funding from external funding bodies by 2024 • Increased level of private and public investment in cultural organisations and activities in Coventry • Ongoing and sustainable links of professional to community/ amateur arts and cultural organizations • Investment in culture accelerates inward investment and economic growth in the region

H – Consent Form for Interview Participants

Consent for Participation in Qualitative Research Collection

For any questions, please contact: Emily.Hopkins.2013@live.rhul.ac.uk

Supervised by Dr Oli Mould: oli.mould@rhul.ac.uk

I volunteer as a participant in the doctoral research project of Emily Hopkins from the Department of Geography, Royal Holloway, University of London. I understand that the project is designed to gather qualitative information regarding creative-led regeneration in Coventry, in relation to the UK City of Culture 2021 title.

- My participation is voluntary. I am aware that that I will not be compensated for my participation in the research, and I can withdraw at any time without penalty. Any changes in my involvement will be kept as confidential information.
- Participation involves being interviewed. The interview is designed to take 60 minutes. Notes will be taken during the interview, and an audio recording of the conversation will also be taken. If I do not want to be taped, I am aware of the chance of a less accurate data collection, and thus the chance of miscommunication within the thesis.
- I understand that there will be a minimal chance of discomfort in our conversations. If I do feel uncomfortable at any time, I have the right to decline a question or to end the interview.
- I understand that the researcher will anonymise me in the data write-up. I am aware that taking part in this study means that any information I provide will be given with confidentiality.

However, I am also aware that some participants will be more difficult to anonymise in the written thesis (e.g. certain job titles that make can make positionality obvious). Whilst anonymity will be attempted, I understand that this is also a risk.

- I understand that all data will be managed in accordance with the Royal Holloway Data Management Policy and the Data Protection Act 2018.
- I understand that signing this form gives approval for the data I give to be used in the written thesis. I also understand that the data will be destroyed within a year of the thesis completion. Any further use of the records will also protect the anonymity of individuals.
- I understand that this research has been approved following the guidelines by the Ethics Committee from Royal Holloway, University of London. If I have any further questions regarding the research, I know I can contact Emily or the university.
- I have read and understood the explanation provided to me. Any questions have been answered satisfactorily, and I voluntarily agree to participate in this study.
- I have been given a copy of this consent form as confirmation.

Printed name:.....

Date:

Signature:

Researcher signature: (Emily Hopkins)



I – A summary of events and activities attended for ethnographic observation in Coventry, 2018-2019

Date	Location	Event	Stakeholders Involved
27/01/2018	CET Building	Emerging Art, Emerging Place	Curating Coventry, Photo Archive Miners, CET Pop Up, Positive Youth Foundation, Native, Coventry 2021, Class Room, Artspace and Coventry Biennial of Contemporary Art
01/09/2018	War Memorial Park	Godiva Festival 2018	Coventry City Council
06/09/2018	Draper's Hall	Draper's Hall Heritage Open Day	Historic Coventry Trust, CCoCT, The Prince's Foundation
20/09/2018	The Tin	Intersect: Where Business and Creative Industries Meet	The Imagineering Foundation, The Paul Hamlyn Foundation and Coventry Education Partnership
14/01/2019	Shopfront Theatre	Coventry Society January meeting	Coventry Society
15/01/2019	Warwick Arts Centre	CHANGE Festival introduction	Arts Council England, Futerra
25/01/2019	The Herbert Art Gallery	Treasures of the Archive introductory tour	Coventry Archive
28/01/2019	Central Library, Coventry	Positive Images Festival 2019 Meeting 1	Positive Images board, 30 other local organisations and charities
31/01/2019	The Empire	Fresh Thursday's, Native	Native Coventry
14/02/2019	Coventry Council House	Coventry Ambassador Induction	EnV
22/02/2019	FarGo Village	Craft Club Roundtable	CCoCT, Crafts Council, Extraordinary Arts, Voluntary Arts England

25/02/2019	Central Library, Coventry	Positive Images Festival 2019 Meeting 2	Positive Images board, other local organisations and charities
27/02/2019	Old Grammar School	Intersect: Where Business and Creative Industries Meet	Vortex Creates, various Coventry organisations
27/02/2019	The Tin	Pecha Kucha	Pecha Kucha, The Tin, other Coventry organisations and community members
28/02/2019	Andrew Anzell	Bean & Leaf Cafe	University of Warwick Business School, PhD thesis on social value and UKCoC
28/02/2019	Empire Coventry	Fresh Creative Social Edition #3	Native Coventry
07/03/2019	Artspace, Eaton House	First Thursday Drop-In	Artspace, studio residents
19/03/2019	Stoke Library	The Making Project weaving workshop 'A Bigger Weave'	The Making Project team, members of the public
18/04/2019	ClassRoom Gallery	Artzine meet up	Various artists from the city
23/04/2019	Shop Front Theatre	City Voices writing workshop (CCoC funded)	Theatre Absolute, participants
29/04/2019	FabLab Coventry	Bridge workshop	Tyler Gindraux, FabLab, another participant
30/04/2019	Central Methodist Church	CCoCT Meet The Funders	CCoCT, ACE, Heart of England Community Fund, Heritage Lottery Fund
02/05/2019	Central Library	Positive Images Festival 2019 Meeting 3	Positive Images board, other organisations
10/05/2019	Graham Hitchen	Store Street	Creative Industries Council 'Revitalising Small Cities' project
14/05/2019	Council House	Vortex Intersect #3	Vortex Creates, local councillors, CCoCT, attendees

14/05/2019	Disruptive Media Lab Coventry University Library	RSA Coventry Meet-Up	RSA, attendees
23/05/2019	Staffordshire University, Stoke-on-Trent	Small Cities Creative Industries research day	Creative Industries Council, BOP Consulting
28/05/2019	West Indian Centre	Coventry Caribbean Association UKCoC Meeting	Coventry Caribbean Association and members, CCoCT
19/06/2019	Birmingham Library	'The March of the City Placemakers'	Centre for Cities, Coventry City Council
20/06/2019	Colmore Row, Birmingham	Birmingham Commonwealth Games and Coventry City of Culture Briefing	WM Funders Network
06/07/2019 – 07/06/2019	War Memorial Park	Godiva Festival	Coventry City Council
09/07/2019	Belgrade Theatre	Meet the Producers (invite-only for arts/ culture organisations)	CCoCT and attendees
10/07/2019	Coventry Cathedral	The Specials concert	The Specials
13/07/2019	FarGo Village	Positive Images Festival at FarGo Village	Positive Images Festival
18/09/2019	Birmingham Rep Theatre	A Civic Role for Arts Organisations:	Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, CCoCT, Birmingham Commonwealth Games 2022

		Relevance Risks Rewards	
18/09/2019	Shop Front Theatre	Friday the 13 th meeting with CCoCT	F13 members, Martin Sutherland and Chenine Bhatena (CCoCT), Simon Fitch (ACE)
26/10/2019	Ellen Terry Building, Coventry University	Phoenix City Convergence conference	Coventry Biennial, Duncan Whitley, panellists https://www.coventrybiennial.com/events/phoenix-city-conference/

J - A summary of core volunteering days with Photo Archive Miners and Positive Images Festival across 2019

Date	Location	Organisation	Tasks	People involved
07/03/2019	Artspace	Photo Archive Miners	Get to know the space/ Mark	Me, Mark
14/03/2019	Artspace	PAM	Various tasks	Me, Mark
18/03/2019	Artspace	PAM	Various tasks	Me, Mark, Jason
21/03/2019	Herbert Art Gallery	PAM	Archive recording	Me, Mark, Jason
09/04/2019	Central Library	Positive Images Festival	Volunteer job allocation and history of the festival	Me, Mehru
10/04/2019	Artspace	PAM	Exhibition organisation	Me, Mark Jason, Ben
12/04/2019	Artspace	PAM	Press release	Me, Mark
23/04/2019	Artspace	PAM	Press release and admin	Me, Mark, Jason
01/05/2019	Artspace	PAM	Tale of Two Streets exhibition launch	PAM, 100 arts and culture representatives from the city, CCofCT
02/05/2019	Central Library	PI Festival	Posters and certificate	Me, Mehru, Colin
13/05/2019	Artspace	PAM	Volunteering	Me, Mark
15/05/2019	Artspace	PAM	Volunteering	Me, Mark, Jason

30/05/2019	Artspace	PAM	Volunteering	Me, Mark, Jody from the YMCA Willenhall youth group
17/06/2019	Hagard Centre	PAM	Volunteering, youth workshop, delivered by me	Me, Dan from YMCA, ten children
09/07/2019	Artspace	PAM	Volunteering, interview for Nkechi on HR	Me, Nkechi
17/08/2019	Hagard Community Centre	PAM	Willen'all 2gether Day	Me, Nkechi, Mark, Jason, Jo, YMCA group, Willenhall community

K - A summary of the semi-structured interviews undertaken in Coventry during 2019

Date	Who?	Venue	Duration	Transcribed?
14/02/2019	Jessica Pinson, Events Officer at Herbert Art Gallery	Herbert Art Gallery	1.5	Yes, no audio recording
14/03/2019	Ryan Hughes, Coventry Biennial	Artspace	1	Yes, no audio recording
19/03/2019	Aaron Ashmore, Etch & Pin	Starbucks, Broadgate	1	Yes, no audio recording
09/04/2019	Mehru Fitter, Positive Images Festival	Coventry Central Library	1	Yes, no audio recording
12/04/2019	Dom Breadmore, Ludic Rooms	Studio 20/21, The Canal Basin	1.5	Yes
30/04/2019	Lewis Spencer, Susan Schweister, Secret Knock Zine	Drapers	3 (1.5 interview)	Yes, recorded
21/05/2019	Chris O'Connell and Julia Negus, Theatre Absolute	Shop Front Theatre	1.5	Audio recorded

07/06/2019	Ed Ruane, local councillor	Unite the Union	1.5	Audio recorded
28/10/2019	Mark Cook and Jason Tilley, PAM	Artspace	2.0	Audio recorded

L – Interview Guide for the Semi-Structured Interviews

Opening statement: I am Emily Hopkins, a second-year cultural geography PhD researcher based in the Department of Geography at Royal Holloway, University of London. I am undertaking research on the UK City of Culture competition as it takes place in my home city of Coventry. I am particularly interested in understanding more about the build-up period to hosting the title, and what local artists perceive to be:

- 1) The impacts on/changes to their practice and networks in the city
- 2) Where they identify as the key creative places in the city

I would like to hear more about your role in the cultural sector in Coventry to uncover your expertise and experiences of the City of Culture bid and build-up so far. The interview will be semi-structured, starting with some open-ended question but you can take this conversation in whichever direction you would like to. I am aiming for the interview to last around an hour – I will be recording the conversation on an app on my phone and taking notes throughout the conversation, which you can stop at any time.

Topic 1: Background – your journey into the cultural sector and how your work connects to the city of Coventry

Question 1	How did you begin working in the arts and culture sector?
Question 2	What led to working in your current role?
Question 3	How long have you been based in/worked in Coventry?

Topic 2: People – this is concerned with the relationships you have with other stakeholders in the city and the networks and/or communities that you are a part of/work with/would like to be connected to through the UK City of Culture title.

Question 4	How have you been involved with the cultural network in Coventry, both in the past and in the present?
Question 5a	Who do you consider to be the main cultural players in creative Coventry?
Question 5b	To what extent do you think these key players are representative of the population of Coventry?
Question 6a	Do you/have you worked collaboratively with any other organisations in the city?
Question 6b	Do you plan to continue/expand these collaborations during the UKCoC build-up/title?

Topic 3: UKCoC Governance – looking back at the UKCoC bidding and title win, these questions relate to your involvement with this process and those in charge of governing the implementation of UKCoC2022

Question 7a	What has been your involvement with any stage of the UKCoC2021 process?
Question 7b	How would you best describe your own personal role in the process?
Question 8	In your opinion, what has gone well and what do you think could have been done differently so far?
Question 9b	For arts and culture organisations in the city, what do you identify as the key opportunities that the UKCoC year could provide?
Question 9b	For arts and culture organisations in the city, what do you identify as the key barriers to being involved with the UKCoC so far?
Question 10a	To what extent do you feel the Coventry City of Culture Trust have helped to facilitate your involvement with the process, or is it this something that you facilitate independently?
Question 10b	In your opinion, are local people being involved enough?

Topic 4: Places – this is interested in which sites/areas/buildings you feel are the most creative places in Coventry

Question 11	If you had to select which sites/areas/buildings you feel are the most creative places in Coventry, where would you pick and why?
Question 12	How do you use this place/these places?

Question 13	Are there any creative places which you used in the past and no longer exist?
Question 14	If you could provide new cultural spaces for the city due to the UKCoC investment, what would you develop and why?
Question 15	Where do you anticipate the regeneration investment in the city will be directed?
Question 16	Can you talk to me about if the ring road impacts your work/impacts your perception of the city?

Closing remark: [Brief covering of what the participant has discussed throughout the interview, see if there were any areas they would like to edit/remove]

Thanks so much for your time today, it has been incredibly useful to talk to you and hear your thoughts. I will stop the recording now. The next steps will be to transcribe the audio recording, which I will do using OtterAI. I will incorporate any additional notes into the final typed up transcript. All recordings will be deleted after this research is complete. Do you have any additional questions for me or about the research process? If not, please do know you can get in touch with me by email at any time to talk about the interview and the research.