<u>Funding resilience: market rationalism and the UK's 'mixed economy' for the arts</u>

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Abstract

The contemporary emphasis on resilience in UK arts and cultural policy discourse has developed in relation to the longer-standing model of the 'mixed economy' in which state grants, earned income and private sponsorship are imagined to provide a secure foundation for sustainable growth. This genealogy is evident in a series of programmes developed by Arts Council England and the UK's other national funding bodies since the mid-1990s with the intention of fostering the sector's strength and sustainability – most often by exhorting recipients of state funding to explore and develop new business models centred on non-state income sources. Tracing that history allows us to follow the ways in which specific neoliberal rationales have been naturalised through socio-ecological metaphor and, more significantly, how policy measures encouraging the entrepreneurial pursuit of private and earned income may introduce new forms of risk that exacerbate existing structural inequalities in the cultural sector.

Keywords: resilience, funding, neoliberalism, mixed economy, entrepreneurialism

Introduction

The UK's mixed economy of arts funding – comprising state grants, earned income and private sponsorship or philanthropic giving – has a distinct though underexamined genealogy which connects Thatcherite enterprise culture of the 1980s to the more recent contemporary emphasis on 'resilience' in UK arts and cultural funding body discourse. In offering an outline of that history, this paper argues that measures advanced by the UK's state funding bodies (Arts Council England, Creative Scotland, Arts Council Wales and the Arts Council of Northern Ireland) with the intention of fostering the strength and sustainability of the sector have been drawn from a narrow ideological basis that has consistently emphasised the desirability and necessity of entrepreneurial independence in lessening the sector's 'dependency' on state funds. Connecting the notion of resilience to the concept of the mixed economy is valuable because it allows us to better understand how cultural funding models can contribute to the operation of neoliberalism as a 'specific form of social rule that institutionalises a rationality of competition, enterprise individualised responsibility' (Joseph 2013:42) and which proceeds by delegating responsibility for systemic problems with little regard for whether those so charged have access to the power or resources which might allow them to fulfil their new duties. An especially significant dimension of that dynamic is the deployment of socio-ecological metaphors in cultural policy in manner which naturalises neoliberal approaches to financial management – and their outcomes – as inevitabilities, even when they are the result of policies that are the product of political decision-making processes and thus susceptible to change. If 'what comes out as signalling the resilience of a given system is extremely sensitive to how persistence is understood for that system' (Thorén and Olsson 2017:3), then the notion of the mixed economy has served as powerful organising narrative for the sustainability of the UK's arts and cultural sector – and one which has increasingly presented its priorities as 'pragmatism' rather than a deliberate, decades-long project of organising the sector on market principles.

In the first part of the paper, I offer a history of mixed economy funding in relation to a series of initiatives in the late 1990s intended to foster the financial sustainability of the UK's arts and culture sector by encouraging them to develop new business plans centred on the growth of private and earned income. These schemes were characterised by a 'carrot and stick approach' by which development and debt-management funds were made available to arts organisations willing to more closely model themselves as sustainable, profit-making businesses. I then trace a shift from the notion of the mixed economy to the trope of the 'balanced' economy and its relationship to the rapid emergence of resilience as a policy key-word in UK cultural policy discourse following 2010, noting how the latter's conflation of ecological and commercial dynamics serves a normative world view which immunises neoliberal approaches to governance from critique. In the second part of the paper, I outline the ways in which the promotion of resilience thinking by Arts Council England, Creative Scotland (formerly the Scottish Arts Council and Scottish Screen), Arts Council Wales and the Arts Council of Northern Ireland has served to further naturalise the rationality of the market while simultaneously exhorting individual arts organisations to take greater responsibility for regular, systemic and unavoidable shocks to the UK's cultural ecology. As may be all too obvious, these concerns have been rendered sharply consequential by the Covid-19 pandemic and the widespread disruption of the arts and culture sector, most especially for those whose practice is rooted in public assembly – whether in the form of theatre audiences, gigs or access to shared spaces such as galleries and museums. A close examination of resilience – and where its pre-history has led to date – is now both urgent and necessary.

Enterprise culture and the origins of the mixed economy

The election the Conservative government in 1979 – and Margaret Thatcher as Prime Minister – is widely understood to have prefaced significant changes to arts and cultural policy in the UK oriented on reducing the role of the state as the primary source of the sector's financial support. These changes were characterized by substantial reductions in government support for the arts alongside measures intended to incentivise business investment and the pursuit of income from alternative sources through reforms to tax and inheritance law, and in the development of US-inspired 'Challenge' schemes in which public money was offered to match funds raised from private sources. Among others, Victoria Alexander (2018) narrates these developments in terms of a broader shift in which state-funded bodies came under increasing pressure to demonstrate 'value for money' and entrepreneurial acumen in their day-to-day operation in order to secure continued state support. The transformations of the sector seeded in this period were not simply characterised by changes to levels of funding but the ways in which such funding was deployed to induce change. While cuts at the start of Thatcher's period in power were followed by a period of growth in expenditure to the arts, this did not in fact represent 'actual rises in their finances, but instead an investment in the transformation of their economic model and an encouragement to seek out commercial sponsors' (Gould 2018:12). As Alexander (2018b, p. 35) argues, the seemingly superficial acceptance of commercial logics in exchange for state funding can be understood as contributing to the legitimation of neoliberal doctrine by presenting particular business practices as, "at the minimum, a very sensible way to organize, or taken further, that it is the natural, inevitable way of doing so, the only possible way to think about human endeavour". As I will trace in the discourses of the mixed economy and resilience described below, UK cultural policy has naturalised the reduction of state funding and ignored ensuing risks in the 'arts ecology', even as such risks to arts organisations and artists are heightened by the effects of Covid-19. This naturalisation has the effect of negating potential critiques of policy..

While the election of Tony Blair's New Labour government in 1997 was followed by a decade of substantially increased funding for the arts buoyed by capital infrastructure projects supported by newly-accessible National Lottery funds, that commitment to public expenditure was accompanied by a continued affirmation of choice and competition in the marketplace, and by an emphasis on the 'hidden' economic and employment potential of culture and creativity (Hughson and Inglis 2001). This period also saw a significant expansion and application of performance indicators to subsidised arts organisations in Britain as part of the drive for improved productivity across the public sector (Evans 2000) – a development that was linked to an increasingly heavy-handed instrumentalisation of arts and culture in pursuit of goals including urban regeneration, social inclusion and public health (Hewitt 2011; Lees and Melhuish 2015). Susan Galloway and Huw David Jones (2010) observe how the specific national dimension of the arm's length relationship between government and arts funding councils has historically allowed Scotland's funding agencies a distinct measure of insulation from the new public management techniques introduced during the 1980s and 1990s. Nonetheless, devolution in 1999 was followed by 'a dramatic increase in the level of public scrutiny and accountability' of the Scottish Arts Council, the more directive use of financial controls in the form of ring-fencing and target-setting, and the creation of a National Cultural Strategy providing a general framework of targets linked to government objectives (Galloway and Jones 2010:34). A broad UK-wide emphasis on the economic potential of the arts and culture sector has continued under the Conservative-led coalition government following 2010 and the Conservative government elected in autumn 2019, with the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) positioning its role as supporting 'the best of our arts and culture in delivering positive social and economic outcomes through cohesive policies focused on building a resilient and sustainable sector' (DCMS 2019b), and a UK-wide festival planned for 2022 intended to 'not only celebrate our values and identities, but … also help attract new inward business and investment' (DCMS 2019a). The coupling of resilience and growth has also developed in the context of a post-financial crisis 'austerity' agenda aimed at reducing the UK's budget deficit and 'rebalancing' the economy away from a model 'based on unsustainable private and public debt' (Osborne 2010) in favour of greater private investment and higher exports – an outcome to be achieved largely through immediate, severe cuts to public expenditure announced in an 'emergency' budget in June 2010.

Nonetheless, a contemporary emphasis on resilience has its roots in a number of earlier policy initiatives seeking to strengthen the sector by lessening its dependency on state funding and, simultaneously, re-organise its operation on market principles. For example, the late 1990s and early 2000s saw a series of major UK-wide funding schemes intended to foster organisational change in funded arts and cultural organisations by addressing (often very large) organisational deficits in exchange for revisions to business plans and management structures. The most significant of these schemes was Arts Council England's (ACE) stabilisation and recovery programme, developed in the mid-1990s in response to a period of standstill funding on revenue grants – a cut in real terms – which had made it increasingly difficult for ACE's funded clients to operate on a sustainable basis. Running between 1996 and 2008, these schemes offered funds beyond ACE's existing revenue agreements in exchange for commitments to plans which would see organizations balance their books and reformulate their working models, with additional funding made possible by newly-relaxed rules concerning the use of National Lottery funds for non-capital projects. Framed as a project of pragmatic sectoral development, the primary aim of ACE's main stabilization programme was to enable arts organisations 'to review and change their artistic mission and business operations in such a way as to achieve long term creative and financial stability, assuming limited growth in resources from public funds and realistic expectations of earned income and private sector support' (David Pratley Associates 2006 quoted in PricewaterhouseCoopers 2008, 3). A major driver of the programme's spending was accumulated debt: twelve of the fifteen organisations involved in the pilot stabilization programme carried combined deficits of £11.4m (PricewaterhouseCoopers 2008:13). In selecting its pilot scheme cohort, ACE quickly realized that there was the need to support a broader number of organizations facing imminent insolvency and developed a second 'rapid response' recovery programme with the goal of helping its funded clients to secure their operational stability in the medium term.

While criteria governing involvement emphasized support for organizations who provided leading artistic activity on a regional or national basis and whose loss 'would create an unacceptable vacuum for artists, audiences or users' (Arts Council England 2006), these programmes 'were not designed to improve artistic performance' (PricewaterhouseCoopers 2008:26). Instead, the primary intention of the programmes was to induce ACE's funded clients to more closely embrace business skills in improving their organizational efficiency, and to develop business plans oriented on sustainable growth through the diversification of revenue streams. To this end, participation in both programmes involved an initial strategic 'stock-take' where an organization was reviewed in detail to identify underlying issues and problems before working with an external 'technical adviser' to develop and deliver a 'change strategy'. Staged funding was released as the scale of the change activity (and thus investment required) became clear, and as organizations achieved specific milestones. Contemporaneous guidance for the recovery programme makes explicit that this funding was not intended to allow organisations to return to business as usual but 'often require changes in the organisation's management, including the membership of its board and senior management team' (Arts Council England 2006).

In Scotland, a parallel 'Advancement' programme was established by the Scottish Arts Council with the intention of providing funds 'for arts organisations to develop long term financial and managerial viability' (Hardie 1997). As in England, this programme was supported through newly-accessible Lottery funds as part of a £26m package that included a 'New Directions' scheme intended to 'encourage new talent, develop work and create a wider access to the arts' (Mcveigh 1997). Despite the relaxation of Lottery-funding rules noted above, the majority of this fund would be dedicated to capital projects with only 5% intended for the Advancement programme in its first year. Mirroring ACE's approach, organisations accepted onto the SAC's advancement programme would be required to work with an external consultant to develop a viable plan for change before receiving any further funding. As a report in *The Herald* newspaper announcing grants for Edinburgh's Royal Lyceum and Glasgow's Citizens Theatre would caution

> The Advancement Programme does not merely hand over cash and allow companies to get on with spending it. For the first year, independent advisers help them develop future plans, and the funding is only made available once these are in place. (Mcneil 1998)

Perhaps predictably, this investment also involved significant levels of debt mitigation, with a £500,000 award to the Royal Lyceum to assist it to 'boost audience income' also intended to reduce its reported £386,000 deficit (Dalton 1998).

<u>The mixed economy as a 'balanced tripod'</u>

A shared feature of ACE and the Scottish Arts Council's programmes, then, was the deployment of funding as a carrot to encourage organizational change that was oriented on the development of more sustainable funding models – with 'sustainable' understood as involving a diverse range of income streams of which the state would come to play a proportionately smaller role. In this manner, the trope of 'mixed funding' increasingly served to frame the reduction of state involvement as inherently good for the arts and its future health – and therefore not in direct contention with principle of additionality which holds that 'any funding which is distinct from government funding should add value rather than substitute for Exchequer expenditure' (Gould 2018:17). This overarching goal is readily apparent in the work of Arts & Business (A&B), a charitable organisation aiming to develop partnerships between the culture and private sectors in the UK, and whose work has repeatedly stressed the necessity of developing significant private income streams to secure the future of the arts and culture sector as a whole. That position was crystallised in the 2010 publication of its draft *Private Sector Policy for the Arts* which called for a 'golden triangle of income generation' comprising a third of income each coming from the state, as earned income and from the private sector (Arts & Business 2010) and wherein a 'tripod' economy for the cultural sector 'would enable it [to] achieve financial robustness and allow it to better weather wider economic shifts' (Arts & Business 2012:9).

The premise of balanced (rather than merely mixed) income is traced by A&B to comments by former chair of ACE Liz Forgan who made the case for public subsidy by arguing that 'most arts venues in England operate on a 30:30:30 rule of thumb — box office, private fundraising and subsidy' (Forgan quoted in Smith 2010). The reality, though, is that the great majority of the sector has operated nowhere near this ideal ratio and – as A&B acknowledge – derived more than half of its income from public funding sources at the time of Forgan's comments (and in many cases, far more than half). Resolving this apparent contradiction involves an appeal to the image of the arts economy as a self-sustaining ecology – that is, by representing specific policy rationales, market conditions and funding structures as elements of a naturalised (and thus largely apolitical) growth cycle. In A&B's narrative,

> the artistic success of the last decade has been driven by the deeply interdependent nature of the arts tripod economy: the healthy levels of public funding secured quality for the sector, which has allowed arts organisations to attract increasing visitor numbers (and earned income), which in turn has encouraged private investment (business sponsorship and philanthropic donations), thus enabling further growth and consolidation. (Arts & Business 2010:1)

This construction involves a series of tacit assumptions that serve to naturalise market logics: that 'quality' necessarily leads to greater audience sizes, that private investment (whether commercial or charitable giving) follows the metric of scale, and that the ecology of arts and culture as a whole is (or should be) oriented on growth. This rhetoric is paralleled – albeit on slightly more cautionary terms – in A&B's contemporaneous *Arts funding a cooler climate* (Smith 2010) report which framed the UK's 'mixed and balanced' arts and culture as preferable to dominant traditions of public subsidy in continental Europe and private giving in the USA. Here, too, the three legs of the funding tripod are positioned as offering mutually reinforcing sources of revenue that are the result of 'six decades of characteristic *pragmatism*' (Smith 2010:6, emphasis added) rather than ideologically-motivated measures adopted by successive governments seeking to more closely organise the state-funded arts and culture sector on market principles.

While a series of state-led projects have sought to foster private giving through 'match-funding' and other incentives to develop legacies and endowments – as noted above – there is persistent evidence that such schemes may favour mid and larger-scale arts bodies, and that the work of re-orienting business models to reflect commercial logics does not necessarily bring any consistent advantages to the organisations involved, nor does it distribute benefits evenly. This much is acknowledged in evaluations of ACE's Catalyst programme (2012-2015) – since followed by Catalyst Evolve (2015-18) – which offered significant grants to aid organisations in diversifying their income streams and attract higher levels of private income. Though many Catalyst programme participants were able to develop new dedicated fundraising posts and attract new philanthropic funding, this 'was not a stable source of revenue: trusts and foundations are heavily oversubscribed and so often do not provide repeat funding to organisations' (BOP Consulting 2017:8). In this respect, improved capacity for fundraising may have served only to intensify competition for what remained a limited resource. Jen Harvie (2015) notes in her analysis of Catalyst's initial outcomes that although intended to strengthen the sector as a whole, the scheme's uneven distribution of its funding to larger organisations (and subsequently uneven effects) may have served to further exacerbate inequality in the arts. Not only did larger organisations benefit from access to a large proportion of the fund's schemes but 'future funding leveraged by this scheme will go mainly to larger organisations, partly because they received the initial state funding to catalyse these "rewards", but also because private funders tend to prefer more conventional work by "safe brands"' (Harvie 2015:58). Similar patterns may be evident in Tina Mermiri's prior analysis of private investment in UK culture following the financial crisis: ‘though the levels of private investment are quite high and have been more or less maintained in spite of the recession, the distribution of private investment is very unequal’ (Mermiri 2011:261) – with the majority of such revenue secured by large organisations based in London.

John Pinder observes that ACE’s following programme Sustain was ‘launched around the time of the first wave of cuts during New Labour’s final year in government’ and similarly intended to ‘stabilise financially struggling organisations experiencing debt and loss of income due to the crisis or poor management’ (Pinder 2018:72). Here, too, the distribution of funds appears to have benefited larger organisations already in receipt of significant public subsidy. In the case of London’s ICA such funding addressed financial crises stemming from a heavy dependency on volatile forms of earned income and private sponsorship that had collapsed in the wake of the recession (Charlesworth 2010; Pinder 2018:73). In these respects, a continued policy emphasis on private fundraising may elide the increasing significance of earned income to the stability of the UK’s cultural sector, and the ways in which the push for a further diversification of revenue may produce new risks. Though differences in the ways in which evidence has been gathered across the UK’s devolved funding landscape makes robust comparisons difficult, Private Investment in Culture surveys produced by Arts & Business until its merger with Business in the Community and, most recently, by MTM for Arts Council England suggests major shifts in the balance of income from non-subsidy sources over the past fifteen years - with earned income growing from around a third of total income in 2007-8 to more than a half in 2017-18 (MTM 2019). This shift from state subsidy to earned income as the basis of the sector’s overall income may prove especially consequential for arts organisations whose work is centred on the longer-term and often less directly financially-rewarding work of artist development and sectoral support, particularly if private financiers continue to perceive the arts as an inherently risky investment opportunity (Burrows and Ussher 2011).

I am wary of offering a wholly one-sided account of the impact of private investment and the rise of philanthropic giving. The Private Investment in Culture surveys evidence an upward trajectory of business investment in the culture sector over the decade following 2000 alongside the slow but certain growth of individual giving (albeit with patterns of distribution distorted by a small number of very large donations to major museums and heritage institutions). The ongoing work of ACE-funded sector support organisations such as The

Audience Agency has also enabled cultural organisations to develop business resilience by growing new markets and, perhaps most productively, by developing a greater understanding of their existing audiences, with business resilience understood as part of the 'triple bottom line' alongside artistic vision and social purpose. Similar strategies are evident in Arts Fundraising and Philanthropy's approach to strengthening cultural organisations' resilience and sustainability through an England-wide programme of training, professional fellowships and organisational interventions focused on developing knowledge, skills and success in fundraising. The developments enabled by these and other support organisations have been vital to the stability of the sector when austerity economics have resulted in year-on-year cuts to local authority spending on arts and cultural programmes: support for diversification has allowed organisations to continue and even grow their programmes in extremely challenging conditions. At the same time, and while state subsidy is understood within the sector as playing a significant role in underwriting the inherent risk of creative projects and in giving private investors greater confidence to invest (see discussion in Hetherington 2015), a greater proportion of unrestricted revenue may enable arts organisations to engage with projects otherwise judged incompatible with the priorities of funding councils. The case for revenue diversification is also strengthened – albeit indirectly – by critiques of UK National Lottery funding to support the arts as mode of 'implicit taxation'. Drawing on the work of Clotfelter and Cook (1989), Hesmondhalgh et al. (2015) propose that such arrangements may worsen an already regressive pattern of social distribution insofar as 'lotteries often seem to be used to fund activities undertaken and products consumed primarily by higher socio-economic groups' (Hesmondhalgh et al. 2015:101). A lesser reliance on state subsidy would counter this dynamic – perhaps most radically, by rationalising the redistribution of grants enjoyed by major national organisations to other parts of the cultural ecology in favour of those least able to exploit commercial prospects.

From the 'mixed and balanced economy' to the resilient ecology

The election of the Conservative-led coalition government in 2010 – and resulting budget which saw major cuts to public spending on arts and culture – was followed by a resurgence of match-funding schemes and tax reform initiatives intended to boost corporate and individual giving that were first seen in the UK during the 1980s, as noted above. As Suman Gupta and Ayan-Yue Gupta (2019) have considered in detail, this period also saw a resurgence of interest in resilience in British government circles first seen in 2001 (following

9/11) but now entering the domain of arts policy and the work of Arts Council England where it would appear alongside 'sustainability' and 'innovation' as policy priorities in the organisation's 10-year strategic plan *Great Art and Culture for Everyone* (Arts Council England 2010). Gupta and Gupta suggest that resilience became a powerful key-word in this moment because it captured both ecology and economics, 'connoting, on one hand, the powerful moral impetus of ecological concern (saving nature/life/the world itself) and denoting, on the other, the conviction that this could be done by "management", ergo social policy-making rationalized by economic accounting' (2019:5–6). This coupling of economic and environmental goals may illustrate what Ronen Shamir (2008) has theorised as the promotion of 'market-embedded morality' wherein notions of social responsibility are grounded 'from within the instrumental rationality of capitalist markets' (Shamir 2008:3). As such, we might understand the promotion of the mixed economy as necessary to resilience as part of neoliberalism's broader processes of responsibilisation which assume 'a moral agency which is congruent with the attributed tendencies of economic-rational actors' (Shamir 2008:7) – that is, by imagining arts organisations as most able to fulfil their socio-moral obligations by modelling themselves as individuated businesses. This involves an a priori assumption that non-profit organisations might do so without contradicting the aims of their social or artistic mission – an outcome which is achievable insofar as neoliberalism tends to position 'the very notion of moral duty within the rationality of the market' (Shamir 2008:13). As Pinder identifies in his parallel analysis of Mission Models Money's deployment of resilience in its sector-support publications, it involves 'a greater alignment of the non-profit to the profit motive' and the legitimation of this shift through presentation of 'the recent economic crisis and the political choices taken in its aftermath as inevitable, an event to be placed on par with the issues of climate change and resource scarcity (Pinder 2018: 67).

This blending of sociological and ecological metaphor to provide a rationale for market logics is a characteristic feature of resilience discourses in which the term 'ecology' has been loosened from its scientific origins and used in a manner where an appeal to complexity serves to displace both accountability and politics (see Dean 2013). These dynamics are apparent in former Executive Director of ACE (North East) Mark Robinson's highly influential report *Making Adaptive Resilience Real* (2010) which draws on ecological and sociological theories to posit the notion of adaptive resilience as

> the capacity to remain productive and true to core purpose and identity whilst absorbing disturbance and adapting with integrity in response to changing circumstances. (Robinson 2010:14)

Correspondingly, a resilient organisation is characterised by its capacity for adaptive innovation, its 'situational awareness' of performance and potential risks, and by its preparedness for disruption (Robinson 2010:30–31) – in short, by a capacity and willingness to take pro-active responsibility for securing itself in an uncertain world. Jack Newsinger and Paula Serafini note how while Robinson frames resilience in terms of (positive) 'attitude', he nonetheless emphasises 'the need for a "business logic" and cutting "dependency" from public funding' and looking instead at other sources of income such as private sponsorship (Newsinger and Serafini 2019:12).

Paradoxically, this outlook also anticipates and accepts the routine instability of the market: resilience means culture workers must always be preparing for the next unavoidable crash. Robinson's framework involves a highly normative narrative of boom and bust conceived in terms of an adaptive cycle of growth, consolidation and what is euphemistically termed 'release' in which 'a disturbance, or set of disturbances, creates the need for change' prior to phoenix-like reorganisation which, along with the release phase, 'can feel traumatic' but is 'also creative and full of possibility' (Robinson 2010:19). This model may resemble analyses developed within works such as Brian Walker and David Salt's work in *Resilience Thinking: Sustaining Ecosystems and People in a Changing World* (2006) which opens by suggesting that ecologies, forests and businesses and industries can be considered similarly complex systems facing similarly unpredictable shocks and disturbances for which one might pursue managerial solutions.. The broader conflation of ecological and commercial dynamics is highly problematic in its capacity to present dominant political and economic logics as if they were natural phenomena. Among others, Alf Hornborg (2013) has explored how the discourse of socio-ecological resilience tends to 'mask the power relations, contradictions of interest, and inequalities that to a large extent determine how humans utilise the surface of the Earth' (Hornborg 2013:116). The error in the analogous comparison of old-growth forests and large corporations – and thus 'between forest fires and financial panics' – is that it elides how each may follow separate and antagonistic cycles wherein 'the growth of the logging industry is associated with the depletion of forest biomass [and] the growth of fishing industry with the depletion of fish stocks' (Hornborg 2013: 119). In this manner, models of resilience grounded in socio-ecological metaphor lend themselves to a world view that conceives of disasters ‘such as societal collapse, epidemics, starvation, and war as “adaptive” phases of more or less “natural” cycles’ (Hornborg 2013: 120).

Robinson’s more recent ‘5 things people forget about “resilience”’ (Robinson 2015) defends the notion of adaptive resilience against accusations of complicity with austerity and neoliberalism, and the argument that adaptive cycle is ‘not “disruptive” enough to the status quo’ (Robinson 2015: 18). This defence involves the claim on resilience thinking as a ‘tool’ to secure and deliver on an organisation’s underlying values. In this frame, resilience engenders agency by giving organisations ‘more shaping power in deciding how best to put your principles and values into action in the world’ (Robinson 2015: 20). While acknowledging that

> Looking for ways in which you can maximise return from your work, your intellectual property, your earned income, and so on, could to some extent go with that flow of marketisation and privatisation which is so damaging in so many ways (Robinson 2015: 20)

Robinson maintains that this does not necessarily prevent one from working to change that marketisation in the longer-term. It is unclear, though, how such a subversive practice might unfold when it appears predicated on first accepting the primary premises of the market. A greater problem may be the degree to which such a defence of resilience thinking frames dominant structural conditions as enabling meaningful (and even liberating) choices even though one may have very little capacity to resist or refuse the conditions which constrain the possibility of choice. Indeed, this affirmation of agency may be characteristic of what Nikolas Rose once theorised as neoliberal thought’s deployment of the power of freedom, wherein ‘the subjects of neoliberal governance are persuaded into active responsibility-taking by the appeal of increased personal freedom and possibilities of self-realization’ (Pyysiäinen, Halpin and Guilfoyle 2017: 219). Here, it takes the form of the exhortation to ask probing questions of one’s values – ‘What do you feel is right to do? And how do you want to live?’ – or else risk tipping in ‘a direction you do not own’ (Robinson 2015: 21). Ultimately, one may have little choice at all: in Robinson’s words, ‘No one escapes the adaptive cycle. To all things there is a season’ (2015: 17).

Through such rhetoric, the structuring of the arts and culture sector on market principles shifts from being understood as the outcome of historically and culturally located policy choices to become an immutable background feature of existence, the consequences of which we can only manage rather than attempt to change. Such fatalism works to pre-emptively foreclose the possibilities of political action and neutralise critical enquiry into the consequences of neoliberal approaches to financial regulation and crisis response (Walker and Cooper 2011:144). As Newsinger and Serafini conclude,

> This dominant version of resilience does nothing to challenge the normative basis of austerity: the attack on public funding models, the promotion of the values and practices of the private sector over the public, ideas of welfare dependency as bearing responsibility for capitalist crisis, and so on. (Newsinger and Serafini 2019:12)

If culture workers and policy researchers accept that austerity-driven approaches to arts and culture funding are seasonal rather than the outcome of policy,
the horizon of possible critique or resistance is sharply delimited - and becomes a matter of only learning how best to manage sudden, disastrous changes to the funding landscape of the public sector. Indeed, the only predictable quality of such change is that it will recur without over and over again. As a research report produced by the ACE and Creative Scotland-sponsored Mission Models Money once cautioned, 'the 2008 financial collapse, which will lead to significant public funding cuts and therefore profoundly affect the arts and cultural sector, is not the first, nor likely to be the last' (Bolton et al. 2010:4). This framing may reflect another key aspect of neoliberal thought in marking a shift from the promise of security as the basis for liberal governance to the premise of unavoidable exposure to danger (Reid 2012). It is thus the responsibility of the resilient subject – and resilient organisation – to learn how 'to alter its disposition in relation with danger so that it construes danger not as something it might seek freedom from, but which it must live in exposure to' (Reid 2012:145).

<u>Resilience thinking in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland</u>

While resilience thinking has a less obvious footprint in arts and cultural policy discourse outside of England, there is emerging evidence that similar logics and priorities may be at stake in other parts of the UK. Creative Scotland's most recent 10-year plan - *Unlocking*

Potential Embracing Ambition (2014b) - does not use the term resilience and instead offers more oblique reference to how the organisation's remit might position it to 'understand the wider cultural system and economy, identifying where to act in order to strengthen them' (Creative Scotland 2014b:32) through funding, advocacy and sectoral influence in partnerships across Scotland's creative and cultural sector. This outlook is mirrored in the organisation's annual reviews of performance in reference to the ambition of supporting 'the arts and culture sectors to strengthen their networks and resilience' (Creative Scotland 2018:56) and in annual plans following 2014 which aimed to 'support organisations to become more resilient in their operational and business models' (Creative Scotland 2014a:44) through Creative Scotland's existing regular and open project funding schemes. In this manner, Creative Scotland can be understood as following ACE by positioning itself as a middle-man or broker tasked with 'encouraging' or 'enabling' a resilience that is ultimately the responsibility of the clients that it funds (Gupta and Gupta 2019:8). Where Creative Scotland's publications do make direct reference to resilience, the term serves as shorthand for the desire that Creative Scotland's funded clients should not be dependent on grant income for their continued existence. Guidance for the 2018-21 Regular Funding round, for example, articulates the expectation that 'applicants would seek to build financial resilience and sustainability through ensuring they are not overly reliant on Creative Scotland funding and will be seeking to diversify their income' (Creative Scotland 2017). The relative absence of explicit references to resilience may be less significant than the ways in which resilience thinking has become embedded as a principle that the sector is expected to understand and manifest throughout their work. It does not seem incidental that all posts advertised for roles within Creative Scotland since late 2016 have included 'adaptive resilience' in the person specification alongside generic administrative and organisational capacities.

To return to Alexander, the surface embrace of resilience may mask how neoliberal processes are legitimated by the participation of arts organizations and workers, regardless of whether they take the ideology to heart (Alexander 2018b:34). As Alexander argues,

> the dominant system gains symbolic capital from each strategy document, mission statement, and five-year plan produced in arts organizations. These provide evidence that the neoliberal model is correct, and that galleries, symphonies, opera, and dance and theatre companies should be managed like businesses, even if many of the artists,

> curators, musicians, composers, dancers, choreographers, actors and playwrights might disagree'. (2018: 34)

Nonetheless, the relative absence of 'resilience talk' in Creative Scotland's output may signal an openness to alternative approaches to resilience. Amid discussion of fair pay for self-employed artists and cultural freelancers, a recent enquiry on arts funding held by the Scottish Parliament's Culture, Tourism, Europe and External Affairs Committee has acknowledged how Scotland's heavy dependence on National Lottery funding as a supplement to Creative Scotland's core budget had left it vulnerable to fluctuations in income – with the Scottish Government committing up to £6.6 million to cover the potential shortfall for 2018-19 (CTEEA 2019:18). At the same time, Creative Scotland's own delayed review of its overall approach to long-term funding has recognised sectoral calls for more flexible support for individual practitioners, and to consider the possibility of funding artist collectives (Creative Scotland 2019:7–8). Though these processes have yet to culminate in concrete outcomes, they nonetheless describe a desire to address dynamics which a normative discourse of resilience might otherwise present as intractable.

Arts Council Wales's (ACW) approach to resilience can be traced in their self-summary of the organisations' strategy in the three words 'make, reach, sustain', with sustain glossed as the relationship between arts organisations and their market:

> For economic sustainability, the arts must remain relevant to people. We want to help valued organisations to find and develop new business models that encourage resilience and longevity. (Arts Council of Wales 2018b)

This emphasis is further apparent in Chief Executive Nick Capaldi's introduction to ACW's *Corporate Plan 2018-23* which narrates the persistent problem of barriers to accessing the arts as an opportunity which will need 'strong, entrepreneurial leadership' which is 'embedded within the community that it serves, focuses on its audience and adopts a business model that can withstand change, whether planned or unexpected' (Arts Council of Wales 2018a:6). ACW's corporate plan is also notable for explicitly acknowledging that the intended outcome of its resilience activities is 'lessening the dependency on public funding' through further increases in earned income, with the success of a resilience programme for its core portfolio organisations accordingly evidenced by 'increases in earned income as a proportion of turnover by 5 percentage points' (ACW 2018: 11). The latter claim is significant because this goal appeared nowhere in the published guidance for the programme which was instead promoted as a means for organisations to think 'imaginatively' about how best to address financially 'challenging times' (Arts Council of Wales 2016:1).

Closely resembling the form of ACE's stabilisation programmes of the late 1990s discussed above, ACW's resilience scheme has eschewed a traditional grant application process by instead inviting organisations to pitch themselves by identifying issues that might be addressed. This process is compatible with neoliberal governance insofar as it incorporates a diagnosis of a situation – the impact of austerity – that locates the problem not in the policy choice that demands cuts to public funding but in the ability of organisations to effectively assume responsibility for the consequences of that choice. In this manner, the fate of organisations comes to depend predominantly on their own decisions, actions and abilities (Pyysiäinen, Halpin, and Guilfoyle 2017:218) with questions of power and access to decision-making structures deferred in favour of the continued affirmation of entrepreneurialism. As Jack Newsinger comments, 'the burden of adapting to the new environment is placed onto organisations themselves, with the ones that emerge relatively unscathed providing retrospective justification for the whole process' (Newsinger 2015). Here, too, the emphasis has been on organisational change with the support of external specialist advisors and the development of new or improved business models premised on replacing state income with private revenue. Unlike ACE's original scheme which deployed funding as a carrot to induce organisational change, ACW's programme offers little assurance of financial support – and has instead repeatedly cautioned that involvement in the programme means accepting that 'a cash injection may not be the most appropriate solution' (Arts Council of Wales 2016:4) to the problem at hand.

Finally, the Northern Ireland Arts Council's approach has closely followed the rest of the UK, with a Sustainability Fund launched in 2016 mirroring ACE's earlier stabilisation and recovery programme in offering financial support to a group of annually funded arts organisations to 'take appropriate action to implement permanent, significant change measures in these difficult financial times' (Arts Council of Northern Ireland 2016). As in England, Scotland and Wales, the promotion of change to ensure future sustainability has been dominated by encouragement to develop new business models, moves towards commercialisation and the identification of new markets – that is, by policy remedies that have scarcely shifted in form since the 1980s. A further resilience programme launched in 2018 has continued this project in supporting large-scale Belfast arts organisations to 'adapt and change' to 'new economic and socio-political realities' (Arts Council of Northern Ireland 2018). As in the work of ACE, this involves a depoliticised narrative of the 'challenges' faced by the arts sector that acknowledges reduced public sector spending but which (re)frames the problem of cuts as a problem of reliance – and thus the responsibility of arts organisations to address through the development of new business plans and commercial revenue streams.

Conclusions

What we have seen, in short, is the deployment of resilience – and the metaphor of the resilient arts ecology – to promote the continued acceptance of entrepreneurial business logics within the arts and culture sector, centred on the premise that the UK's mixed economy can be strengthened by lessening its dependency on the state with limited regard for how this might also open the sector to new forms of unpredictable risk. The consequences of this shift are now being seen across the sector: it is organisations who have 'increased their trading income as a percentage of turnover (and thus decreased grant dependence)' (Thelwall 2020: 43) that now face the greatest immediate risk owing to the collapse of income from box office returns, educational programmes and venue hire fees. In a cruel reversal of resilience principles, organisations 'with the highest levels of trading and donations income may be the most vulnerable in the short term' (Thelwall 2020:40). Conversely, it appears that organisations in receipt of significant funding from ACE's Creative People and Places programme – targeting areas of England where involvement in arts and culture is significantly below the national average – which have been cushioned from the most immediate impacts of the pandemic.

Given its pre-history, we might understand the shift from mixed-economy pragmatism to balanced-economy resilience following 2010 as simply the latest effort to justify a direction of policy travel that has been in motion since the 1980s. However, the era of resilience has also been characterised by significant attempts to naturalise – and thus immunise from dispute – what was at least previously argued for on its own terms. This development is especially concerning because of the ways in which it serves to (re)distribute responsibility with limited regard for whether organisations have access to the power and resources that might allow them to fulfil these new duties of resilience. However, the dominance of the mixed economy as a paradigm for understanding arts and culture funding over the past forty years does not mean that alternative models – and alternative notions of resilience – are not in play. Research undertaken by Cecilia Pasquinelli and Jenny Sjöholmac (2015) and Matt Jennings et al. (2016) among others has already begun to unpack the ways in which located artistic communities of different kinds have developed approaches to resilience which are not centred on market principles, and which are attentive to ties, reciprocities and acts of care that exceed or fail the test of market rationality. This work builds on analyses of the 'artistic precariat' and considerations of the ways in which located artistic communities have adopted practices that might 'performatively resist neoliberal tendencies' (Bain and McLean 2013) within dominant narratives of the creative industries. As Susanna Trnka and Catherine Trundle observe in their discussion of care and social contract ideologies, 'despite its flexibility, neoliberalism cannot encompass the breadth of subjectivities and collective relations that constitute contemporary enactments of responsibility' (Trnka and Trundle 2014:141). It is this latter emphasis on relational models of resilience which may hold the greatest potential for describing alternatives to a dominant model of resilience which considers the stability and sustainability of the sector in terms of individuated responsibilities maintained by similarly individualised companies and practitioners. While theatre and performance studies scholars – among others – have begun to consider care practices as models of relational exchange (see, for example, discussions of the performances and production practices of performance artist Adrian Howells in Heddon and Johnson 2016), further work is needed to consider the import of such analysis for the realities of financial planning and demands on resource sharing which might enable their scalability and broader dissemination across a diverse sector. In short, the greatest challenge for the prospect of increased collaboration – as one alternative – may be in translating the micro-level detail of practices manifest in individual artists and artist collectives to the macro-scale question of national funding for the arts.

A major step towards a renewed consideration of resilience and its implications within UK cultural policy discourse might involve ACE taking seriously the limitations of focusing – almost exclusively – on the resilience and survival of organisations. This emphasis is mirrored in the work of Creative Scotland and the UK's other agencies in programmes which align resilience strategy with the sustainability of their core funded clients, all of whom are organisations or, in a small number of cases, individually-named artists who have developed company models to sustain a broader programme of work with other artists and organisations. While ACE's most recently commissioned report 'What is resilience anyway?' (Woodley et al. 2018) reproduces the focus on organisations, it also draws attention to how those interviewed for the research 'repeatedly brought the individual perspective back into the frame' and argues that the high proportion of self-employed workers in the cultural sector compared to the UK economy overall means that 'individual wellbeing must be considered relevant to the wellbeing of the sector as a whole' (Woodley et al. 2018:11). This research also raises concerns that while 'artists and cultural workers are indeed resilient and have a number of ways to compensate for scarcity' (Woodley et al. 2018:29), a culture of overwork and low pay (along with the expectation of free artistic labour) means that organisational resilience may be achieved only at the expense of a workforce of precariously-employed freelancers. Dave O'Brien's recent evidence to the Department of Culture, Media and Sport Select Committee enquiry into the impact of Covid-19 also makes plain that the crisis will likely exacerbate longstanding inequalities in the cultural workforce as the sector contracts in shock. A reduction in the number of cultural organisations and job opportunities (amid the persistence of outdated hiring and commissioning practices) means that we are likely to see 'working class origin and BAME individuals further excluded from the workforce, and women will be less likely to make it into senior positions across arts and cultural industries' (O'Brien 2020), unless policy interventions determine otherwise.

Without a sustained examination of resilience discourse's unmarked values and uneven consequences as they circulate in the arts, we risk embedding systemic forms of inequality as a pre-condition of sustainability – not least by allowing direct and indirect forms of discrimination to be perpetuated under cover of 'necessary' pragmatism. Small steps towards the development of alternative approaches may be apparent in the varied rescue funding packages developed in response to the Covid-19 pandemic – whether in allocating specific funds to individual arts workers or in criteria for distributing such funding that acknowledges how D/deaf and disabled-led organisations and creative practitioners may be disproportionately impacted by disruptions to the arts economy (Arts Council England 2020). At the same time – and despite the developments noted above – the invitation within Creative Scotland's Sustaining Creative Development open fund for the creative sector to potentially re-imagine what they do and even consider taking 'creative risks' exists in tension with the requirement for individual and organisational applicants to develop extensive risk management plans – one identifying overall risks and a second addressing 'new risks' arising from Covid-19. The template for this latter task asks applicants to articulate how they will follow government guidance at all times in the knowledge that the risk arising from pandemic is severe and that 'no-one can accurately predict the probability of outbreaks' (Creative Scotland 2020). Serious consideration must be given to how these dynamics serve to distribute responsibility differentially, and risk undermining the ambition of strengthening and protecting the sector as a whole.

In preparing the final version of this paper, I am grateful to my peer reviewers for suggesting that that origin of the mixed economy model might be traced to a far earlier moment – in fact, to the founding of the Arts Council in 1946 when public subsidy was understood as an intervention within an arts ecosystem that had managed without subsidy for centuries. Acknowledgment of that timeline might allow us to better understand the shift following the 1990s considered above as involving a change from a view of subsidy as a mark of enlightened state intervention (intended to raise standards and improve public access to the arts) to a perception of subsidy as a proof of arts management failure. This framing might bring into sharper focus how a normative discourse of resilience privileges business enterprise as the preferred solution to systemic risk, with subsidy increasingly understood as a regrettably unavoidable exception to market logics rather than something which might be pursued on its own merits. An extended pre-history might also allow us to reconsider the values of managerial entrepreneurialism within the contemporary demand for organisational resilience – specifically, by calling to attention to how such a requirement may have been shaped by a prior unwillingness amongst funding bodies to support projects of 'empire building' when costs and risks could (and should) be borne by willingly complicit private donors rather than the general taxpayer, even when growth has been encouraged by the state.

It has also become increasingly clear that the disruption of the arts and cultural sector owing to the Covid-19 pandemic has had deeply uneven consequences. I am prompted by my reviewers to emphasise how senior arts managers in many areas of the cultural sector have experienced no imminent threat to jobs, pay or pension benefits while front-line workers (such as box-office staff) and freelancers have been made redundant or left without work. These circumstances clarify the necessity of distinguishing between the resilience of arts and culture ecologies, and the resilience of arts and cultural management structures – most especially when those structures act as the primary point of contact between funders and the broader sector. Finally, the conditions attached to the most recent wave of recovery funding suggest a deeply troubling further shift towards an openly coercive patronage economy – evidenced in the requirement for recipients of such funding to demonstrate their fealty and gratitude to the state by reproducing the UK government's 'Here for Culture' rhetoric through social media hashtags (Devlin 2020). Such a measure represents less an extension of neoliberal governmentality – proceeding through an appeal to the market as a space of responsible, empowering choice – than a direct application of power.

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