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Abstract	<p>This chapter will discuss the case of cultural participation and practice over the last 40 years in the town of Gateshead in the North-East of England. It will ask how do already existing cultures of practice in a place, both those facilitated by state-supported cultural programmes and everyday cultural practices, interact with policy to effect and shape the local cultural ecology? The analytical approach moves away from more macroaccounts of cultural policy discourse and also moves beyond those accounts which consider the specifics of cultural policies in place. What these approaches do not account for is the <i>agency of local cultural practice</i> and its fundamental influence on the development and implementation of cultural policy and programmes. Thus, in this chapter I bring a new perspective to the well-established thinking on culture-led development, ‘place making’ and related literatures by arguing for the importance of local histories of cultural participation and practice in understanding the history and development of cultural policy. Understanding the historic local contexts of cultural participation and cultural practice is key to accounting for the ways in which cultural policies are shaped and implemented within a cultural ecology. In turn, I have argued that a cultural policy grounded within the vernacular cultural practices of place is best able to facilitate cultural participation and practice in a way that develops and supports cultural and social ecosystems.</p>	



## CHAPTER 7

Cultural Ecologies: Policy, Participation  
and Practices*Lisanne Gibson*7.1 INTRODUCTION: LOCATION AND PLACE  
AS AN OBJECT OF CULTURAL GOVERNANCE

Urbanists have long accepted the ways in which urban resources, well-maintained streets, parks and public squares, are productive of public well-being, political exchange and civic culture (for instance, Jacobs 2000 [1961]; Zukin 1996). Building upon these assumptions, ‘cultural planners’, such as Charles Landry (1994) and Franco Bianchini and Michael Parkinson (1993), have argued for investment in culture and leisure by asserting a relationship between cultural development and cultural, economic and social vitality. Indeed, in addition to the spatialisation of cultural management, the assertion of a relationship between cultural and economic development has been a defining feature of cultural policy in the UK (as well as, at least, in other Anglophone countries) for the last 30 years (Gibson 2002, 2008). This spatialisation of cultural management is premised and driven by the characterisation of a

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‘deficit’ of both resource and culture as a *local* phenomenon (rather than as a function of larger structural forces such as access to employment, a living wage and so forth) (Miles and Sullivan 2012). So, for instance, Gateshead, a town in the North East of England, has been identified as a town with a ‘deficit’ of cultural resource and as a ‘cold spot’ for cultural participation.<sup>1</sup> At the same time, this identification of ‘cultural deficit’ as a problem of location and local culture (place) has gone hand-in-hand with the measuring of particular types of participation through surveys such as ‘Active People’ (Sport England) or ‘Taking Part’ (Arts Council England) the results of which in turn inform decisions around state cultural investment. Thus, some forms of participation are validated and resourced while others are either not accounted for or are problematised (Miles and Gibson 2016, 2017). In parallel to the localisation of accounts of cultural resource deficit or wealth, particular cultures of participation, and their designation as ‘excluding’ or ‘including’, have also been localised at the level of ‘community’. Therefore, contemporary rationalities of government again find the locus of responsibility in local factors. It is thus that ‘community’ and location have come to operate as central logics in the contemporary management of culture and leisure. The relationships between these factors, resource and participation, and the ways in which they are defined and valued (by being the focus of investment and management or not) have significant effects not only for which places and activities are the focus of investment but also more fundamentally for civic and political formation. This premise is the key underpinning thesis of the research undertaken through the ‘Understanding Everyday Participation- Articulating Cultural Value’ project.<sup>2</sup> That is that the socially and administratively contingent (political) resourcing of and participation in cultural and leisure economies

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<sup>1</sup>The so-called cold spots are areas of ‘low cultural engagement’ as measured by the national survey ‘Active People’ in which Gateshead over the period 2008–2010 appeared in the lowest 20% of local government areas for participation in the arts (Arts Council England, n.d.). See Gilmore (2013) for a discussion of ‘cold spots’ as an object of UK arts policy.

<sup>2</sup>‘Understanding Everyday Participation- Articulating Cultural Values’ (UEP) was a research project which ran from 2012 to 2018 involving an interdisciplinary team of researchers based at the Universities of Manchester, Leicester, Exeter and Loughborough. The project was funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC AH/J005401/1) as part of their Connected Communities: Communities, Culture and Creative Economies programme with additional support from Creative Scotland.



plays a central role in the formation of publics and the connections (and disconnections) between them (Miles and Gibson 2016, 2017, 2021-forthcoming).

A great deal has been written about the recent (last 30 years or so) utilisation of the term ‘community’ as part of a particular kind of ‘advanced liberal’ governmentality, which seeks to manage individuals through equipping them with the capacities to become self-managing in an ever-increasing variety of ways (Rose 1996). The articulation of ‘community’, as the object of government, both moves the target of intervention to the local (rather than society) and accords the responsibility for particular kinds of functionality or deficit to the local. As Ash Amin (2005, 612) argues ‘the social has come to be redefined as community, localised, and thrown back at hard-pressed areas as both the cause and solution in the area of social, political and economic regeneration’. Location-focused cultural policies are premised on the notion that community (rather than society) can be (re)-built, (re)-created, supported, (re)-enacted through state-funded cultural interventions. The assumption of a relationship between state-supported forms of culture and leisure participation, and assimilation and consensus-building amongst local communities, to a large extent drives national cultural policies of investment, which are motivated by models of a functional social order at the base of which are ‘cohesive’ communities. Such cohesion, inclusion or exclusion is understood as a function of and therefore amenable to fixing at the level of location, regardless of the ways in which more macrocontexts, for instance national, supranational and international economics, might impinge on the location or the people within it.

There is a wealth of research that has analysed the development of national cultural policy in relation to the tropes of ‘social exclusion’ and ‘community cohesion’ including in the literature on culture-led regeneration. Such discussions have understood the national cultural policy context in terms variously of a New Labour<sup>3</sup> neo-liberalism and/or the ‘instrumentalism’ of new public management (Hesmondhalgh et al. 2015; Stevenson 2004; Belfiore 2004). Analyses of culture-led regeneration which seek to account for cultural policy in terms of

<sup>3</sup>‘New Labour’ is a term coined by the British Labour Party in order to rebrand the party and its policies under the leadership of Tony Blair and his supporters in the run-up to the 1997 general election and then during the Party’s subsequent period of government under Blair’s premiership.



macrodiscourses, while valuable in themselves, cannot be used at face value to understand particular local histories of cultural development (Gibson 2013). Thus, in undertaking an analysis of national cultural policies and their articulation to location and place for this chapter, I am moving away from more macroaccounts of cultural policy discourse and instead understanding the detail of how cultural policies of place have played out in the context of a particular local cultural ecology. O'Brien and Miles have also argued that an 'understanding of the specifics of place is an essential means of counter-balancing rhetorical conceptions of cultural policy' (2010, 11). For them, culture-led development in the town of Gateshead is presented as an example driven by 'the use of a pro-active cultural policy to promote inclusive community art programmes' (they contrast this to the case of Liverpool where cultural policy is understood as 'more reactive') (2010, 9). What these accounts, whether focusing on macrocultural policy discourses or the specifics of cultural policies in place, do not account for is the *agency of practice* on the development and implementation of cultural policy and programmes.

In this chapter I bring a new perspective to the well-established thinking on culture-led development, 'place making' and related literatures by arguing for the importance of local histories of cultural participation and practice in understanding the history and development of cultural policy. In this discussion, the case is made for the agency not only of facilitated forms of cultural practice but also, and crucially, everyday forms of cultural practice. In making this distinction, I am highlighting the differences between cultural practices that are *facilitated* by the state (through direct subvention or mechanisms of indirect support, for instance, tax exemption) and *everyday* participation, cultural activities undertaken by individuals under their own initiative and which are not dependent on state funding (Gibson and Edwards 2016; Miles and Gibson 2016). Cultural policy studies, with its focus on analysing the macrooperation of power implicit within structures of cultural development and support, rarely accounts for the microcultural ecologies within which cultural policies operate. I argue that understanding the historic local contexts of cultural participation and cultural practice is key to accounting for the ways in which cultural policies are shaped and implemented within a cultural ecology. This chapter will analyse the case of cultural participation and practice over the last 40 years in Gateshead a town in the North-East of England and will ask how



do already existing cultures of practice in a place, both facilitated and everyday, interact with policy drivers to effect and shape the local cultural policy and programmatic outcomes?

## 7.2 NATIONAL CULTURAL POLICY AND PLACE, 1990s–2008

The regionalisation agenda formed the backdrop to the cultural developments in Gateshead over the period from the late 1980s. During their period in opposition prior to 1997, the Labour Party explored future options for regional government (see reports such as ‘Renewing the Regions –Strategies for Regional Economic Development’, Regional Policy Commission [1996]). The aim was to develop proposals that would enable a programme of wide-reaching constitutional reform, in John Prescott’s words (Deputy Prime Minister from 1997 to 2007) ‘reversing the tide of centralisation and giving regions and the people who live in them more power to determine their own future’ (in John et al. 2002, 734). The emergence of a regional framework for public policy in England was developed after Tony Blair’s New Labour government came to power in 1997 and following its successful re-election in 2001. Tomancy (2002, 728) notes that a

study for the North East Regional Assembly showed that over 20 “regional” organizations were involved in the preparation of at least 12 regional strategies, which affected many aspects of the region’s life. The dominant trend among these bodies was toward the creation, or strengthening, of regional structures in order to better assist them to contribute to regional strategy making.

Thus, there was a significant strengthening of the apparatus of governance in the English regions culminating in the publication of the White Paper ‘Your Region, Your Choice’ in May 2002.

Over this same period in England, from the late 1990s to the late 2000s, there was a multiplication of national cultural programmes, which had location and place as their focus. This multiplication was the result of New Labour’s focus on regionalisation informed and motivated by its identification of the negative impact, especially on post-industrial towns, of the centralisation of governance under the previous Conservative government led by Margaret Thatcher (1979–1990). Thus, by the late 1990s, the Department of Culture, Media and Sport



(DCMS) had established Regional Government Offices and Regional Cultural Consortia (RCC) were in operation (1999). English Heritage had regional offices (1998), the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) had developed Regional Committees (2001), and the Museum Libraries and Archives Council's (MLA) 'Renaissance in the Regions' programme was focusing on better support for regional museums (2002).

In his book *Creative Britain*, Chris Smith, Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport (1997–2001), set out his vision for cultural policy under the new government:

One of the defining differences between the parties at the recent general election was this Labour Government's fundamental belief that the individual citizen achieves his or her true potential within the context of a strong *community*. For years the absurd assertion that 'there is no such thing as society' held sway. That philosophy brought about a palpable decline in the quality of communal and personal life in Britain; and our first aim must be to rebuild – piece by piece – the nation's sense of community. Our cultural life – embracing artistic and sporting endeavour, the quality of our media and the sense of our heritage – has a key role to play in this. (italics added, Smith 1998, 42)

Thus, *community*, as the object of cultural government, comes into focus. The consequence of this was that the new cultural funding arrangements were dispersed at a local level. As Smith argued in relation to cultural funding coming from the proceeds of the National Lottery: 'the Lottery, after all, is the people's money. More of it should go to where the people are' (1998, 44).<sup>4</sup>

For New Labour, the object of government was community rooted in place. Communities were cast as 'included' and 'excluded', and local places as 'regenerated' or as 'needing regeneration'. Cultural policy was to have a significant role in effecting the 'inclusion' of communities and the 'regeneration' of places. Smith argued:

<sup>4</sup>The Peoples Lottery White Paper (1997) proposed that 'Distributors should be able to examine needs in their sectors in a more systematic way... an important aspect of getting money where it is needed is to ensure that, where it is sensible, distributors work together, for example, to fund facilities which together work to reduce deprivation in areas of special need', House of Commons Research Papers, *The National Lottery Bill*, [HL] 1997/98, Bill 148.



There are, I believe, five principal reasons for state subsidy of the arts in the modern world: to ensure excellence; to protect innovation; to assist access for as many people as possible, both to create and to appreciate; to help provide the seedbed for the creative economy; and *to assist in the regeneration of areas of deprivation*. (italics added, Smith 1998, 19)

While acknowledging the wide-ranging reasons for government support of culture, Smith presents cultural policy as a tool to positively impact on ‘areas of deprivation’. Thus, New Labour from the beginning of its period in government made an explicit connection between cultural policy and the management of ‘areas of deprivation’ through the lens of culture-led regeneration leading to social regeneration.<sup>5</sup> In addition to state cultural funding being dispersed at the local level, the combination of this place-based focus with the articulation of the local as ‘included’ or ‘excluded’ meant that cultural funding was expected to ‘make a difference, *to attack targeted areas of need* and produce significant improvements, *particularly in regions of greater disadvantage around the country*’ (my italics, Smith 1998, 44).

In 1998, the DCMS issued *A New Cultural Framework*, which set out ‘a new approach to culture’ (p. 1). Key to the new direction detailed in the document was ‘the emphasis we will put in the year ahead on the role arts and sport can play in facilitating social regeneration’ (p. 2). This was to be achieved through a partnership between DCMS and the Social Exclusion Unit, which was a product of the ‘joined up government’ approach followed by New Labour in tackling social exclusion. The Arts and Sport Policy Action Team or PAT10 as it came to be called (established following the Social Exclusion Unit’s report on Neighbourhood Renewal) was fundamental to implementing New Labour’s regional and local cultural agenda.

The RCC were formed drawing in representation from a wide range of interests including local government and the creative industries. The purpose of these new RCCs was to:

<sup>5</sup>This was influenced by work undertaken by thinktank Comedia and its agenda setting report ‘The Art of Regeneration: Urban Renewal through Cultural Activity’ (Landry et al. 1996).





- provide the main focus and channel for representing and developing the whole spectrum of cultural and creative interests in the region
- be responsible for drawing up a cultural strategy for the region, which would also assist in guiding the distribution of lottery funding
- advise the Regional Development Agencies and Regional Chamber on these subjects (DCMS 1998, 3).

This devolvement of the responsibility for cultural policy and planning to the regions was further enabled through the ‘strengthening or establishing of regional bodies in DCMS sectors’ (1998, 14). In 2001, the DCMS issued the Green Paper, *Culture and Creativity: The Next Ten Years*, which amongst other things required all local authorities to produce cultural strategies by the end of 2002. These local government cultural strategies worked in conjunction with the RCCs, which also drew up detailed cultural strategies for the regions working closely with local authorities, Regional Development Agencies, cultural institutions and all regional cultural bodies. These strategies would then set the priorities for action in the region (DCMS 2001, 38).

Following *A New Cultural Framework* (DCMS 1998), the Arts Council announced proposals for the greater delegation of funding to the Regional Arts Boards (RAB). Following the appointment in 1998 of Gerry Robinson as Chair and Peter Hewitt as Chief Executive (former CEO of Northern Arts, the North East’s RAB),<sup>6</sup> there was a rationalisation of Arts Council schemes. At this time, there were ‘more than a hundred different funding schemes in operation across the country, with many organizations funded by both the Arts Council and their RAB’ (Hewison 2014, 97). Despite the fact that the Arts Council was responsible for 97.3% of the core income of the RABs, ‘a strong sense of local identity made them instinctively suspicious of London’ (Hewison 2014, 97).

The initial driver for the Arts Council’s movement of budget to the regions was to effect a rationalisation and economisation by transferring responsibility for all but the ‘national’ arts to the RABs.

<sup>6</sup>Peter Hewitt started his career as Regional Community Arts Officer for Northern Arts and was committed to regional cultural management and provision. He was CEO of Northern Arts (1992–1997) and then CEO of Arts Council England (1998–2008).



However, as Hewison notes, ‘this apparent surrender of power from the centre did not produce the desired economies’ (2014, 97). Hewitt and Robinson then planned to abolish the RABs in *The New Arts Council of England: A Prospectus for Change* (2001), with the Arts Council and the RABs becoming a single organisation controlled from the centre, reverting to a pattern that had existed in the 1940s and 1950s. The RABs, as self-governing charities with strong regional identities and loyalties, rejected this proposal outright. It is an illustration of the New Labour commitment to the regions that Chris Smith exhorted the Arts Council that regional participation should be genuine, insisting that RAB directors should not become representatives of the centre rather than spokespeople for their region (Hewison 2014, 99). A period of consultation began, with a new document, *Working Together for the Arts* (Arts Council 2001) proposing that the new Regional Councils, the equivalent of the former Boards, could have a powerful say over policy in their areas with their Chairs also becoming members of the Arts Council. By March 2002, all the RABs accepted the creation of a single organisation under these new proposals. Regional Councils continued to approve the budgets and other funding decisions for their regions but once RAB staff were employed by the centre the control had shifted. The re-formulated Arts Council England (ACE) was officially constituted in April 2003.

From 2007 to 2008 (in the context of the Global Financial Crash), the DCMS undertook a regional infrastructure review led by the then Minister for Culture, Margaret Hodge, with the objective to ‘achieve significant cost savings and efficiencies in terms of what needs to be done regionally’ (DCMS 2008a). Following the DCMS Regional Infrastructure Review (2008b), Hodge announced changes to the way the DCMS was to organise its work within the English regions which would lead to savings of £1.72m (*Arts Professional* 2008). In a ministerial statement, she said that these changes would ‘concentrate our expenditure on front-line services’ (Hodge 2008) and they were presented as a ‘new, simplified and improved way of working’ (DCMS 2008a). In practice, this meant the centralisation of cultural power through the four DCMS bodies that already had a significant regional role, Arts Council England, Sport England, English Heritage and the Museums Libraries and Archives Council, rather than the development of cultural strategy through the RABs, which were dismantled.

### 7.3 GATESHEAD CULTURAL POLICY AND PRACTICE

The dismantling of the RABs was a move of great significance for cultural policy in the North East. The Regional Arts Association was established there in the 1950s (the second to be set up nationally)<sup>7</sup> and was incorporated in 1986. By 1990, the Northern Arts RAB, according to ex-Chief Executive Officer Peter Stark,<sup>8</sup> managed nearly two-thirds of the total Arts Council funding in the region against a national average of one-third and had the third highest per capita investment in the arts after London and Merseyside.<sup>9</sup> Thus, the North East had a powerful local system of cultural management which was strongly rooted in the region's cultural identity as we will see.

These particular features of cultural policy in the North East and the large scale culture-led regeneration undertaken in Gateshead in the 2000s establish Gateshead as an optimal case for exploring the ways in which national cultural policy interacts with a particular cultural ecology. Gateshead is a large town (population 202,400 in 2017) on the southern side of the River Tyne across from the city of Newcastle upon Tyne, which is the regional centre of the North East of England. In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Gateshead was an industrial town which was increasingly dominated by a mix of heavy industry and manufacturing as its primary industry of coal mining declined. By the late 1970s, much of this industry had been closed down leaving large areas of post-industrial contaminated land close to the river, high levels of unemployment and low levels of economic activity. In this context, the Gateshead local authority—Gateshead

<sup>7</sup>Prior to the 1989 Wilding Report which was a review of arts funding structures, there were 12 Regional Arts Associations providing funding and advice for the arts across England. Most of these Regional Arts Associations 'came into being in the 1960s, organised through the combined initiative of local government and arts organisations' (Holden 2007, 8).

<sup>8</sup>Peter Stark was CEO of Northern Arts between 1984 and 1992. He led the bids for the major capital projects—Baltic, Sage Gateshead and Millennium Bridge—that anchored the culture-led transformation of the Gateshead Quayside. He was awarded the OBE in 1990 and a professorship in Cultural Policy and Management at Northumbria University in 2000. After 12 years working in South Africa, he co-authored the GPS Culture reports on arts funding (Gordon et al. 2013, 2014a, b).

<sup>9</sup>XXX.



Borough Council—invested in the development of culture and leisure infrastructure as a strategy for the regeneration of the town.

Key cultural practitioners working in Gateshead since the 1980s claim that any analysis of cultural policy in the area needs to understand the particular nature of cultural practice and cultural politics in the North East.<sup>10</sup> They refer to the longer term development of culture and leisure policy in Gateshead, tracing it back to discussions in the 1970s about the need for the development of the Gateshead Youth Stadium in the context of the local authority looking to affect regeneration of the town via the development of existing infrastructure. Thus, Gateshead's initial capital investment in regeneration was through the development of a derelict youth running track into the Gateshead International Stadium, which opened in 1981. The story of the development of cultural programming in Gateshead runs through its innovative and advanced public art programme developed in the 1980s, the Gateshead Garden Festival (1990), its hosting of the Year of the Visual Arts (1996) and Northern Arts' *The Case for Capital* (1995),<sup>11</sup> Culminating in successful applications for capital development, which resulted in the development of the Gateshead Quayside including the Baltic Art Gallery, the Sage Music Centre and the Gateshead Millennium Bridge (see Fig. 7.1).

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This narrative of Gateshead's cultural development is well known but there are diverging analyses of the main drivers. Writers such as Bailey et al. (2004) argue that the development of the Gateshead Quayside was 'underpinned not by economic imperatives, but by a

<sup>10</sup>In 2002 as a visiting fellow at the Centre for Cultural Policy and Management at Northumbria University, I undertook a series of interviews with key cultural practitioners and policy makers in the North-East. These conversations provided the genesis of the ideas developed here. In 2015 as part of the 'Understanding Everyday Participation' project work in Gateshead, I carried out a selection of further one to one interviews with key subjects. These interviews were recorded and transcribed and interview quotes in this chapter are from those interviews, see bibliography for detail. Consent was provided for the use of the interviewees words in association with their names.

<sup>11</sup>*The Case for Capital* produced in 1995 was a blueprint for £170m capital arts infrastructure investment in the North-East. The subsequent development of the Gateshead Quayside was primarily funded through successful applications to the Arts Council, National Lottery and European Regional Development Fund.



**Fig. 7.1** The Baltic, Sage and Millennium Bridge on Gateshead Quayside (Photograph: Wilka Hudson. Reproduced under a Creative Commons license [<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nd/2.0/>])

will and determination on the part of local arts activists and politicians to provide the area with the cultural facilities that it deserved' (2004, 61). Others, such as Natasha Vall, argue that the culture-led development of the Quayside should be viewed through the lens of 'the emergence of the market-oriented "cultural sector"' (2011, 12), driven by the attempt to produce an 'experience economy' (2011, 161). Thus, for Vall, the success of *The Case of Capital* and the resulting Quayside development is ultimately cast in terms of macroforces, as the success of 'the campaign to promote the region as a site of connoisseur metropolitan culture' at the expense of the 'celebration of vernacular culture' (2011, 1–2). This is in contrast to the view of Stark and others involved in the development of the Quayside. Stark asserts that:

349 what we achieved in terms of the big capital is rooted in that *history of local*  
 350 *ward-level delivery* which was way beyond face painting. This was serious  
 351 programming and the art, for instance, the very early arts that Mike White  
 352 did at Wrekenton, the Annual Art Festival and so on, these were really,  
 353 really interesting projects. (my emphasis)<sup>12</sup>

354 So how did this approach to community cultural development rooted  
 355 in ‘a history of local ward-level delivery’ square with a programme that  
 356 involved the development and programming of large arts-based capital  
 357 developments?

358 Cultural practice and policy in Gateshead have been influenced by  
 359 four key features which subsequently effected the nature of the devel-  
 360 opments on the Quayside: First, the long period of political stability in **AQ7**  
 361 Gateshead’s local government which meant that planning could happen  
 362 five to ten years ahead; second, the geography of the Borough, which is  
 363 a mix of urban and peri-urban space spread over a relatively large geo-  
 364 graphic area, means that cultural life is experienced at ward level rather  
 365 than through the town centre; third, the particular local character of  
 366 everyday cultural participation; and fourth, the agency of a diverse set of  
 367 key individuals involved in local politics and community practice.

### 368 7.3.1 *Political Stability*

369 Labour’s long period of office since 1973 when the Gateshead Borough  
 370 Council came into existence meant that the area had an unusually stable  
 371 local governance. Since the 1970s, a series of chief executives and coun-  
 372 cil leaders passionate about Gateshead have capitalised on this political  
 373 stability,<sup>13</sup> enabling long-term planning, strong advocacy with national  
 374 government and investment in significant capital infrastructure develop-  
 375 ments. For instance, in the 1970s: the redevelopment of the A1 motor-  
 376 way (connecting London, the capital of England with Edinburgh, the  
 377 capital of Scotland); the Gateshead International Stadium in 1981; the  
 378 Gateshead part of the Metro Transport system; and the MetroCentre  
 379 opening in 1986, then the largest ‘out of town’ retail facility in Europe.

<sup>12</sup>XXX.

<sup>13</sup>XXX.



### 7.3.2 *Geography of Gateshead and Associational Identity*

Gateshead is a Borough which covers 142.4 square kilometres (55 square miles) and is made up of 22 wards. Its geographic mix of urban and peri-urban communities across a hilly landscape and the village-based structure of these areas, most of which are ex-coal mining villages and communities, means that historically, leisure facilities and activities were supplied and accessed locally. There was and is a highly localised network of community and church halls, Workingmen's Institutes, branches of the Workers' Educational Association (WEA), Club & Institute Union (CIU), and local authority libraries. Through these venues, there was a strong tradition of club life in Gateshead, which was particularly buoyant between the 'golden years' of 1946 to 1980 (Annable 2015, 7). In his history of *The Clubs of Gateshead*, Annable describes how 'members began to queue up before opening time to get into the club as the working man had money in his pocket especially during the 1970s' (2015, 7). With the recession of the 1970s, the clubs started to close as unemployment rose and working-class families' disposable income declined. Nevertheless, the nature of engagement with leisure defined by local provision, preference and vernacular practices remained a central characteristic of everyday participation.<sup>14</sup> In addition to the importance of associational life, was the cultural importance of education in north-eastern mining communities. Thus, according to Ednie Wilson, Creativity Development Manager for Gateshead Council (1996 to the present), the community education service was a fundamental pathway for the provision of culture and leisure throughout the 1980s and into the late 1990s:

Not just for the things that it was explicitly there to do, there was a mandate for that service which was about community education and all the various things that might be, but it also became a network. It became a way for people to talk to Gateshead. The community education service was in every little community. There were things in every village hall. There were youth clubs, there were older people's groups, and there were women's groups.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>14</sup>Interviews undertaken as part of a year-long study of everyday participation in Gateshead for the 'Understanding Everyday Participation' project revealed that this remains the case with Gateshead participants being distinctive amongst the areas studied for having relatively localised preferences for participation (Miles and Gibson, forthcoming).

<sup>15</sup>XXX.





Participation in adult education is a defining characteristic of the cultural ecology of the North East. Comparing participation in adult education (Fig. 7.2) by English local authority areas reveals the marked distinctiveness of the high levels of participation in adult education in the North East including Gateshead.

Gateshead's geography of dispersed villages and communities meant that there was a multiplicity of local cultural practices based in the network of community halls and similar. The community education service's engagement with and facilitation of local and vernacular cultural practices was grounded in a *validation* of a strong local sense of identity. Wilson recalls:

So we'd got a number of Gilbert and Sullivan Societies and drama societies and floral artists and the Allotment Association and, and, and... But alongside that the WEA and the working men's clubs had libraries and a strong sense of working people can better themselves by learning stuff, even if it's a better way to grow marrows or conversational Spanish.... We had at the time when I first started five brass bands, I can't tell you how many choirs there were, but there were lots of church choirs and school choirs and glee clubs and those kind of things. And it was the neighbourhood-ness of it that meant that was all out there.

In the context of this geographic dispersal, highly localised forms of associational identity and a strong tradition of participation in adult education, the network of local libraries was (and is) hugely important. Gateshead has 17 branch libraries, located in most of Gateshead's wards. Use of these libraries is notable for being highly representative of the local population regardless of sociodemography (Delrieu and Gibson 2017a, b). When the Local Arts Development Agency (LADA) Network was brokered between the local authorities and Northern Arts in the late 1980s, the pathways into communities established via the library network and the community education service were fundamental to the success of the local arts development programme.

### 7.3.3 Gateshead Community Arts Practice

Ros Rigby was appointed Arts Development Officer by Gateshead Council in 1984. She was the first to occupy such a role in the North East and at least one of, if not the first, to occupy such a role in local



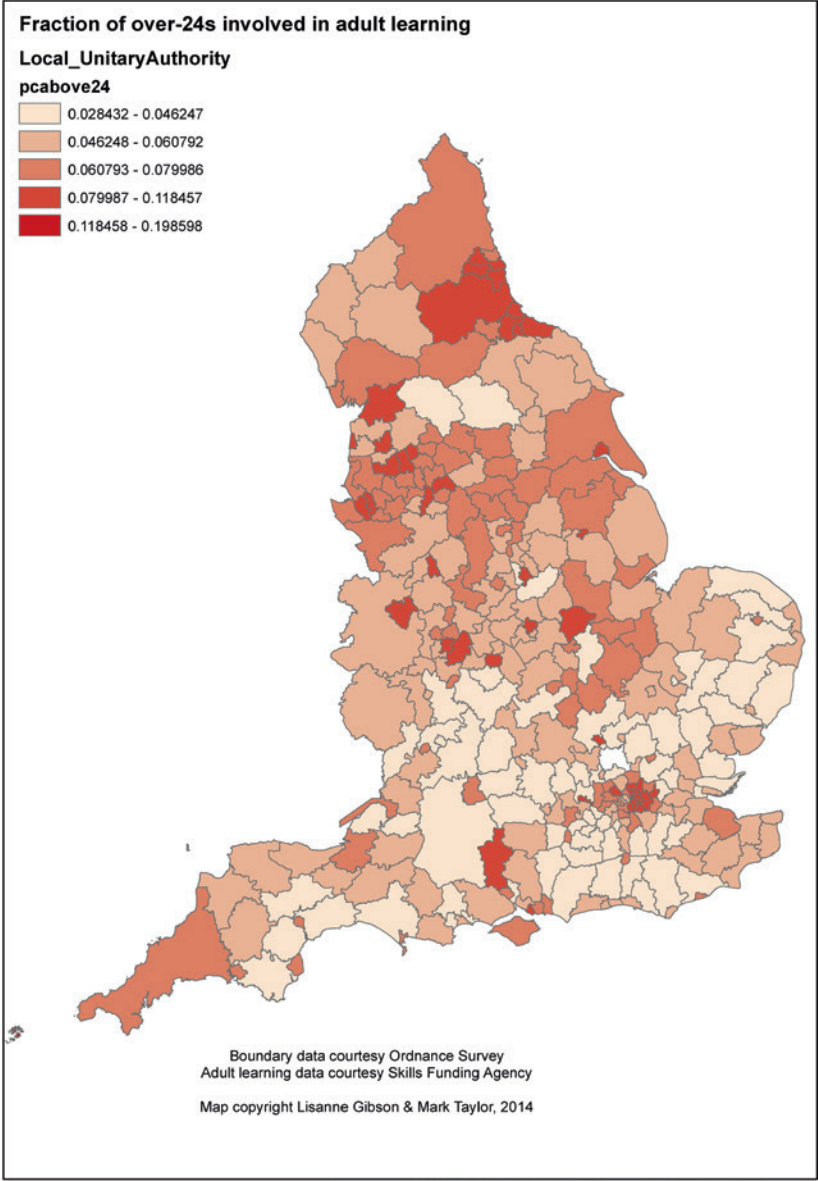


Fig. 7.2 English local authority areas and participation in adult education, 2014



government in England.<sup>16</sup> For Rigby, reflecting on the development of cultural policy in Gateshead, a key factor in enabling the Council to be innovative in its support for cultural programmes was the abolition of Tyne and Wear County Council in 1986. This meant that the local government budget that had been going to the County government was returned to the individual local authority:

So the money that used to go and probably mainly supported projects not in Gateshead, suddenly came back to the council; so when I started that job I had one and a half people working for me and then suddenly, I mean it doesn't sound that big now, but suddenly we were able to appoint a team of five or six.<sup>17</sup>

Rigby goes on to explain that as Gateshead did not at that time have significant cultural venues that needed programming, this meant that a 'decent budget' was available from the Council and via Northern Arts. This meant that the Council could grow a team of practitioners 'with a very strong commitment to work throughout the borough because, of course when you've got a network of branch libraries... then you've automatically got roots into the whole borough and you know a kind of commitment to developing activities throughout'.

AQ11

As noted by Wilson, there had already been an established community education network in Gateshead since the 1970s. With the advent of the local authority community arts programme and via the Community Arts Panel of Northern Arts from the 1970s, there was support for a large number of locally generated independent community arts projects. These included a group called 'Them Wifies'; a community arts collective founded and facilitated by Katherine Zeserson<sup>18</sup> and Geraldine Ling (Jerry).<sup>19</sup> Zeserson describes 'Them Wifies' as

<sup>16</sup>In 1988 Rigby went on to co-found Folkworks one of the UK's foremost folk music agencies which was also, alongside Northern Sinfonia, one of the partner organisations involved in setting up Sage Gateshead. She was Programme Director at Sage Gateshead from the Sage programmes establishment in 2001 (prior to the venues opening in 2004) to 2016.

<sup>17</sup>XXX.

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<sup>18</sup>Katherine Zeserson was co-founder and Arts Development Officer for 'Them Wifies' between 1984 and 1994. Amongst other subsequent roles she was founding Director of Learning and Participation at Sage Gateshead (2001–2015) and is currently a freelance Strategic Adviser, Facilitator and Creator working with music and cultural organisations.

<sup>19</sup>The name is local slang for 'those women'; according to Zeserson, this was what they were called 'by kids on the estate'.



... part of a wider movement, from the mid-seventies, it was a really rich scene of community arts in the Northeast in Tyneside... Uncle Ernie's and all the stuff around the Bubble and the mobile workshop part of the Newcastle Play Council which was set up at the Children's Warehouse in the late seventies, 'Them Wifies' grew out of these mobile workshops. And this mobile workshop was a classic sort of, you know, very seventies community arts play based kind of really, really great work around the estates. Some of the women involved in that said we need to do something for women here. That women are invisible and we need to — And it was all part of the girls youth work movement as well.<sup>20</sup>

'Them Wifies' came out of the community arts movement articulated not to the creation of community but to the *validation* of community, to work with and for community to achieve political ends such as tenants' campaigns or equal rights for women and so forth (see Jeffers and Moriarty 2017 for a collection of essays on the history of British community arts by academics and practitioners). As Zeserson describes it, this work involved building relationships with many different Gateshead communities, working with these groups by going *to* them.

Well, Jerry and I— Jerry was at Wifies for thirteen years. I was there for eleven years. I joined Wifies in '84 and Jerry developed drama practice and I developed music practice and we were all over Gateshead communities and my job was to be a community musician in Gateshead from 1984 to 1994. So I was in and out of it all the time. It was my world. So I had worked with the traveller community in that way. And I'd worked all over the borough. I worked in every community in the borough. I worked with women's groups, I worked with the small numbers of refugees that we had in the city at that time and so on. So when I came to create the relationships for Sage Gateshead I was drawing on my own experience.<sup>21</sup>

So, in Gateshead in the 1990s, there was a coming together of two areas of activity. The local authority built a community arts practice across Gateshead working at ward-level with the groups, associations and

<sup>20</sup>XXX.

<sup>21</sup>Members of 'Them Wifies' continued to influence cultural development in Gateshead after they had moved on from that organisation. Geraldine Ling was a key founding member of The Lawnmowers Independent Theatre Company (founded 1986), Zeserson as founding Learning and Participation Director at the Sage Gateshead.



**Fig. 7.3** Antony Gormley, *Angel of the North*, completed 1998 (Photograph: S. Arrowsmith. Reproduced under a Creative Commons license [<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nd/2.0/>]))

clubs already in the community. At the same time there was a significant regional arts development network via the LADA. In addition was the development of an ambitious public art programme and the establishment of Gateshead's reputation for public art, the most well known of which was the project to develop the *Angel of the North* on the site of a disused coal mine (Fig. 7.3).<sup>22</sup>

#### 7.3.4 *Public Art, the Gateshead Garden Festival and the Year of the Visual Arts*

Gateshead Council was one of the first local authorities in England to develop a public art programme after deciding 'to take art to the public because it did not have its own contemporary art gallery'

<sup>22</sup>'The Angel of the North' by Antony Gormley was completed in 1998 at a total cost of £800,000 the majority of which came from the National Lottery.

(Public Art Team 2006, 3). An initial wave of public art commissioning in the early 1980s resulted in the installation of works by significant artists such as *Bottle Bank* by Richard Harris<sup>23</sup> and *Cone* by Andy Goldsworthy, both installed as part of a programme to environmentally regenerate the banks of the River Tyne (Shaw 1990). This early commissioning was so successful that a Public Art Programme was launched in 1986. Once again Gateshead Council was a forerunner in its approach to cultural development. It was not until 1988 that public art became a focus for national cultural policy with the Arts Council's launch of its 'Percent for Art' campaign, attempting to link public art more directly to public sector intervention. The idea of the utility of culture as a driver for the regeneration of post-industrial cities gained further prominence in the UK in 1989 when the Arts Council produced its report *An Urban Renaissance: The Role of Arts in Urban Regeneration*. This report and the focus on culture-led development, which gained traction as a strategy for city redevelopment, was grounded in the already established focus on the utility of culture to the cultural and economic development of cities through examples such as the development of the Harborplace in Baltimore, USA, in the 1970s and early 1980s. In Europe, the Capital of Culture programme was established in 1983 and drove a European-wide phenomenon of culture-led development.

Gateshead's Public Art Programme was given a tremendous boost when it hosted the Garden Festival in 1990, which, in Peter Stark's words, had 'as much sculpture as there were flowers and vegetables'.<sup>24</sup> The National Garden Festival programme was staged in five towns and cities across the United Kingdom from 1984 to 1992 and was funded by the Department of Environment (under the then Conservative government). Sara Selwood has described the Festivals as 'characterised by the reclamation of derelict land – the removal and camouflaging of waste land and industrial debris – to secure long-term redevelopment, [and] provide a focus for regional promotion and celebrate urban renewal' (1995, 27). Thus, the vision for the National Garden Festival programme was to enable places, especially post-industrial cities, to develop brownfield sites for leisure use. The Festival in Gateshead consisted of 200 gardens and 50 art exhibitions located on 'a large area of derelict

<sup>23</sup>Since removed to make way for the Gateshead Hilton.

<sup>24</sup>XXX.

land (200 acres) that had previously been the site of a coal depot, gas-works and coking plant’ (Blackman 2014, 57). The Garden Festival programme was funded by a variety of sources, the Arts Council but also, underlining the Festival’s regeneration function, non-cultural funds such as the Regional Development Agency’s Single Regeneration Budget, The Town Centre Partnership and The East Gateshead Partnership (Public Art Team 2006).<sup>25</sup> The Festival resulted in a key derelict area of Gateshead—on the banks of the Tyne River facing the city of Newcastle upon Tyne—receiving accelerated funding to reclaim the land. In Rigby’s words:

it was a big thing for Gateshead to have that and it enabled both a very rapid redevelopment of the land and detoxification of the land and all of that, but also a lot of money from Northern Arts and from other sources to have a whole programme of activity right through the year.<sup>26</sup>

Thus, in addition to the strong commitment to the provision of community-based culture and leisure services at ward level, there was also a local commitment to regeneration through investment in culture and leisure infrastructure at the level of the Borough. In 1992, Northern Arts bid to host the Year of Visual Arts,<sup>27</sup> it won on the basis of its bid ‘The Region is the Gallery’. The programme took place over all 52 weeks of 1996 in all 33 Local Authority areas in the North. Stark explains that the bid was part of Northern Arts’ three-part strategy for the arts in the North in the 1990s:

1. Reassert our primary relationship with local government and with the individual artist;
2. Win something to give our arts national and international profile (at that stage the Sinfonia couldn’t get slots on Radio 3);

<sup>25</sup>The Festival secured £37 million of investment (Vall 2011, 150), with sponsorship the overall investment was £50 million.

<sup>26</sup>XXX.

<sup>27</sup>Visual Arts Year 1996 was a year-long celebration of the visual arts which took place in the North of England. It was part of an Arts Council led initiative and was supported financially by the Arts Council, Northern Arts and a wide range of partnerships between the public and private sectors in the region.

578 3. Target major new capital and institutional investment in music  
 579 and the contemporary visual arts that would (a) draw in substan-  
 580 tial new revenue funding, (b) sustain the profile (c) support the  
 581 region’s existing—smaller—infrastructure.

582 Thus, Stark positions the importance of the Garden Festival ‘and off the  
 583 back of that we’re then able to build the ‘96 bid and off the back of that  
 584 we get the Baltic, and the Angel is key’. Crucially there were high lev-  
 585 els of public engagement in Gateshead with these initiatives—the public  
 586 art programme, the Garden Festival (over three million visitors) and, the  
 587 Gateshead activities for the Year of the Visual Arts, which gave impetus  
 588 to the strategy to lobby for capital investment in culture. These initia-  
 589 tives also reveal an underlying strategy at Northern Arts working hand-  
 590 in-hand with Gateshead Borough Council, at least, from 1984 onwards.

591 **7.3.5 Gateshead Quays Cultural Development**

592 The lobby for significant cultural capital developments in Gateshead  
 593 was driven by the fact that there were limited venues for cultural pro-  
 594 vision and local councillors’ belief and assertion that Gateshead should  
 595 have ‘quality’ assets for culture and leisure. A number of commentators  
 596 have identified the importance of the partnership of Les Elton as Chief  
 597 Executive of the Council and George Gill as Leader of the Council to  
 598 the development of Gateshead Council’s cultural development pro-  
 599 grammes in the 1980s and 1990s. Zeserson describes being at a speech  
 600 by Gill:

601 I saw him at one of his speeches in 1999 that was utterly extraordinary — It  
 602 was somewhere like the Blaydon Miner’s Welfare or something like that...  
 603 He did this thing of reading out that little bit of Priestley, you know. ‘This  
 604 horrid backyard of Newcastle’, you know from *English Journey*<sup>28</sup> — and he

<sup>28</sup> *English Journey* by novelist and playwright J.B. Priestley was published in 1934, it doc-  
 umented a journey around England as it was then describing three separate Englands—the  
 heritage charm of places like the Cotswolds, an emerging ‘modern’ England, and an indus-  
 trial England. Priestley experienced Tyneside at the height of the 1930s Depression describ-  
 ing Gateshead in terms such as ‘The whole town appeared to have been carefully planned  
 by an enemy of the human race. Insects can do better than this’ (1994 [1934], 31).





said nobody will ever be able to say this about Gateshead again and it was like — It was absolutely incredible. It was like whoa! This really is powerful, you know.<sup>29</sup>

Vall (2011) argues that there was a tension implicit in the development of the Gateshead Quays between the strategy to develop large arts buildings representing ‘quality’, in the context that cultural development had been rooted in a highly local engagement with and facilitation of communities’ vernacular cultural practices. Zeserson, as the first Director of Learning and Participation (2002–2015) at the Sage Gateshead, addresses the consequence of this tension for her practice:

... if the Head of the Council was about this being about providing the best stuff for Gateshead and that meant the importation of ‘high class’ culture then my approach was to use the long standing practices involved in ward-level delivery to bed in Sage... we’re building a mansion in people’s back yards and so my job with the background of X years of community practice in Gateshead was to engage the community and to make the Sage a place that offered something to the community.

Amongst the practitioners interviewed for this chapter, all of whom have been engaged in cultural practice in the North East since the 1970s and were, in various ways, involved with the development of the Gateshead Quayside, there is a consensus about the ‘rootedness’ of the Quays development in the ‘history of local ward-level delivery’. Rigby identifies the example of Folkworks and its establishment as an illustration of this:

Northern Arts actually set up Folkworks as a way of — They stimulated the idea of Folkworks existing because Peter [Stark] is a folky ... and really thought that somewhere in England somebody should be paying attention to this art form. Which was very strong in this region because of the mining history and the sort of links with Ireland and Scotland and all of that. I mean, I think that is acknowledging something about vernacular culture. I think my view having been quite involved actually, is that you will always get that view that to someone what’s funded is not for me, not for the local population, but actually compared to some regions I think we were pretty strong.<sup>30</sup>

<sup>29</sup> XXX.

<sup>30</sup> XXX.



Thus, the strength of cultural identity and associated local vernacular cultural practices had been supported by the local and regional structures of cultural development for at least 15 years before the development of *The Case for Capital*. It was the very same practitioners who were involved with this and the subsequent development of the Quayside, and so there was a continuity in both the aim to support and to develop local vernacular cultural practice.

For Vall (2011), the culture-led development of the Gateshead Quayside exemplifies the importation of ‘metropolitan’ (middle-class) culture with the aim of developing an ‘experience’-based cultural economy. As a way of explicating the rootedness of vernacular local identity in the regional cultural structures, Zeserson offers the example of George Loggie who was the last Chair of Northern Arts (20 years as vice chairman and chairman 1982–2002) and was a councillor for Wansbeck District Council, a primarily working-class area:

.... he absolutely exemplified what was good about the system and what is bad about the current system because he was the chair of the regional arts board and he was passionately supporting the arts board to fund a really diverse portfolio, ranging from very familiar, safe work to completely new disasters. And he was absolutely championing the importance of that for his region. And that gave him a credibility with his own, if you like, cultural cohort. People who’d grown up like him... It gave it a kind of legitimacy across cultural boundaries— social cultural boundaries. So the regional arts board had a whole range of diverse people, councillors, and people who ran institutions, and independent artists like me and it was not perfect and some bad decisions were of course sometimes made but it was ours, you know? It was the region’s and it was reflective of the region and I think the abolition of that structure was a disaster, absolute disaster for the healthy development of the ecosystem.<sup>31</sup>

It is the local and regional agency of the structures of cultural funding and policy that made this commitment to the local vernacular of cultural practice and participation possible, through the diverse backgrounds of the governing bodies of such as the RAB and the locally focused experience and commitment of the people involved.

<sup>31</sup>XXX.



## 7.4 CONCLUSION

Stark et al. (2013, 2014a, b) have provided cogent evidence of the effect of the centralisation of cultural governance after the Hodge Review. They estimate that by 2013, 75% of England's decisions on public cultural funding were centralised (2013) and that in 2012/13, central government spending per head on culture in London was nearly 15 times greater than in the rest of England (2013). In *Hard Facts to Swallow*, which considered Arts Council planned expenditure from 2015 to 2019, they found an overall balance of expenditure in London's favour of 4.1:1 (2014c). Across three reports on the geographic distribution of central government cultural funding, they argue that there is 'an absence of any strategic support of participation in the arts at local level and the proven contribution that such work can make to individual and community well-being' (Stark et al. 2014b). Despite a government inquiry in 2015 into 'Countries of Culture: Funding and support for the arts outside London' (DCMS Select Committee 2015),<sup>32</sup> an Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR North) report, analysing ACE national portfolio spend for 2018–2022, shows that the spend will be £27 per head in the North compared to more than £71 per head in London (Romer 2017). Thus, the centralisation of cultural governance has resulted in a decline in the amount of central public cultural funding received by the North. This alongside the fact that local cultural funding has reduced by 40% since 2009/19 (Institute for Fiscal Studies 2019) puts the sustenance of local everyday participation and practice at risk.

This chapter has argued that understanding the role of location and place in national cultural policy is important to understanding the dimensions of local cultural policy, and that in order to understand the specificities of local cultural policy, the relationship between these two—national and local—political characteristics must be explored. However, I have argued that an even richer understanding can be gained by adding an understanding of local cultural participation and practice. It is the relationship between these three—national cultural policy, local policy and politics, and local cultural participation and practices—that the example of Gateshead has allowed us to explore. Accounting for the specificity of the ways in which a local cultural governance and cultural participation and practice ecology develops alongside and in relation to

<sup>32</sup>At which I was one of two expert witnesses.



more macroconstructs of cultural policy allows a deeper understanding of the characteristics of cultural ecosystems.

There is a great deal of research that reveals that regular participation in the cultural activities funded by the state is limited to the white, highly educated, middle-class population, Taylor for instance concludes that the figure in England is as little as 8.7% (Taylor 2016). There is also research which shows that ‘the operation of the formal cultural realm is implicated in the making of economic, social and geographical inequalities’ (Miles and Gibson 2016). Thus, the case for understanding the local characteristics of everyday participation and practice is an argument that spans beyond the realms of the cultural policy studies’ fixation on cultural value and posits instead civic and social effect and impact as the most important centre of reference (Miles and Gibson, forthcoming). This refocusing on the demand side does not mean a holistic rejection of state cultural policy. On the contrary, through the example of Gateshead I have argued that a cultural policy grounded within the vernacular cultural practices of place is best able to facilitate cultural participation and practice in a way that develops and supports cultural and social ecosystems.

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AQ21

### *Interviews with Author (Roles as at Time of Interview)*

- Ednie Wilson, Creativity Development Manager, Gateshead Council, Interview Date: 28/05/15.
- Katherine Zeserson, Director of Participation and Learning, Sage Gateshead, Interview Date: 18/05/15.
- Peter Stark, freelance Cultural Policy Analyst, Interview Date: 28/05/15.
- Ross Rigby, Performance Programme Director, Sage Gateshead, Interview Date: 18/05/15.

<h2 style="margin: 0;">Author Query Form</h2>	
Book ID: <b>375979_1_En</b> Chapter No: 7	
<p>Please ensure you fill out your response to the queries raised below and return this form along with your corrections.</p> <p>Dear Author,</p> <p>During the process of typesetting your chapter, the following queries have arisen. Please check your typeset proof carefully against the queries listed below and mark the necessary changes either directly on the proof/online grid or in the ‘Author’s response’ area provided</p>	

Query Refs.	Details Required	Author’s Response
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AQ2	The citation ‘Franco Bianchini (1993)’ has been changed to ‘Franco Bianchini and Michael Parkinson (1993)’ to match the author name in the reference list. Please check here and in subsequent occurrences, and correct if necessary.	
AQ3	Both the terms ‘North-East’ and ‘North East’ are inconsistently used with respect to hyphenation throughout the chapter. Please check.	
AQ4	Please supply the footnote 9.	
AQ5	Please check the clarity of the sentence ‘Culminating in successful applications for capital...’.	
AQ6	Please supply the footnote 12.	
AQ7	Please suggest whether the term ‘effected’ in the sentence ‘Cultural practice and policy in Gateshead...’ can be changed as ‘affected’.	
AQ8	Please supply the footnote 13.	



Query Refs.	Details Required	Author's Response
<a href="#">AQ9</a>	Please supply the footnote 15.	
<a href="#">AQ10</a>	Please supply the footnote 17.	
<a href="#">AQ11</a>	Please suggest whether the term 'in to' in the sentence 'This meant that the Council could...' can be changed as 'into'.	
<a href="#">AQ12</a>	Please supply the footnote 20.	
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<a href="#">AQ15</a>	Please supply the footnote 29.	
<a href="#">AQ16</a>	Please supply the footnote 30.	
<a href="#">AQ17</a>	Please supply the footnote 31.	
<a href="#">AQ18</a>	Reference 'Stark et al. (2013)' is cited in the text but not provided in the reference list. Please provide the respective reference in the list or delete this citation.	
<a href="#">AQ19</a>	The citation 'Stark et al. (2014b)' has been changed to 'Stark et al. (2014c)' in the sentence 'In Hard Facts to Swallow which considered ...'. Please check.	
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Delete	/ through single character, rule or underline or ⌵ through all characters to be deleted	Ⓞ or Ⓞ <sup>Ⓢ</sup>
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Change to italics	— under matter to be changed	↵
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Insert full stop	(As above)	⊙
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Insert hyphen	(As above)	⌵
Start new paragraph	⌵	⌵
No new paragraph	⌵	⌵
Transpose	⌵	⌵
Close up	linking ○ characters	⌵
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