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### Titre de la communication

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### Abstract

This paper investigates cultural entrepreneurship and cultural policy by enlisting ideas of what is particular about the local, in the context of a 'super-diverse' city (Creese and Blackledge, 2018). In the UK, there is growing evidence of injustices in arts, media and cultural work which point to systemic inequalities (O'Brien and Oakley, 2015) and poor representation within cultural labour markets (Saha, 2018). By drawing on a series of policy interventions aimed at 'diverse' cultural workers, this article investigates the relationship between the cultural entrepreneur's experience in relation to place and local cultural policies. The paper takes a case study approach as a means of reflecting local policies and the aspirations local cultural micro-entrepreneurs, producers and freelancers (Naudin, 2018). The findings from this research outlines three key areas of interest for a critical exploration of local cultural policy: a) the role of cultural intermediaries; b) the hyperlocal context; and c) problems with the use of terms such as 'diverse' and 'BAME' to describe cultural entrepreneurs.

### Bio

Dr Annette Naudin is Senior Lecturer in Media and Cultural Entrepreneurship and coordinates the School of Media's MA courses at BCU. Annette is member of the Birmingham Centre for Media and Cultural Research (BCMCR) and co-leads the Creative Industries cluster.

Annette's current research is concerned with inequalities in the cultural workforce, specifically with gender and BAME cultural entrepreneurs, as a focus for interrogating cultural policy.

## **Introduction/Objectifs**

A cities' character provides a milieu for 'becoming' a cultural entrepreneur; a social environment in which relationships are key to getting on. This paper investigates the nature of cultural entrepreneurship in the context of a 'superdiverse' city (Creese and Blackledge, 2018). By exploring the impact of place on cultural entrepreneurs who come from diverse ethnic backgrounds, the objective is to review the context for entrepreneurship and the challenges for ethnic entrepreneurs working in the cultural and creative industries.

This research takes a case study approach, drawing on data collected through the evaluation of training programmes, delivered in Birmingham UK, between 2016-2018. Funded by Birmingham City Council, the training programmes sought to address inequalities in cultural production and representation by developing skills in entrepreneurship and leadership for 'diverse' cultural workers. The data gathered for evaluation purposes was connected to local cultural policies as a means of analysing the experiences of ethnic cultural entrepreneurs in relation to place and local policy interventions. The participants in this case study are cultural entrepreneurs who often feel marginalised and who are sometimes described as 'hidden' from mainstream support systems.

The findings reveal a messy space in which cultural entrepreneurs negotiate their identities as an aspect of 'becoming' a cultural entrepreneur in a fluid place which they have to negotiate if they are to carve out a career (Naudin, 2018). Tensions between personal motivation and local structures in the form of local policies, institutions, key people, and the social networks become prominent.

## **Revue de littérature**

Over the last 20 years, British cities have engaged in projecting a 'creative city' agenda through cultural policies which have sought to exploit the economic contribution of the local cultural industries alongside cultural assets such as theatres and festivals. National policies, first initiated by New Labour (1997-2010), encouraged City Councils to highlight the distinctiveness of their culture and creative industries (CCIs) as a means of differentiating themselves from other cities (Laundry, 2008). City Councils invested in CCIs through a myriad of projects, from major infrastructure such as the development of cultural quarters and co-working spaces, to supporting an entrepreneurial CCIs workforce. Since then, many studies have been critical of New Labour's cultural policies and of their legacy, raising issues

with an over celebration of entrepreneurship (Ellmeier, 2003; McRobbie, 2002 & 2011), indicating inequalities across the CCIs workforce (Banks, 2007; Gill, 2002; O'Brien and Oakley, 2015) and problems with a 'cookie cutter' approach to city regeneration and CCI developments (Collis, et al, 2010; Pratt, 2008).

At the same time, since circa 1997, there has been an emphasis on 'diversity' in UK cultural policy, aligned with New Labour's desire to represent a multicultural Britain, particularly through Arts Council England (ACE) schemes which aim to encourage audience and workforce development (Mirza, 2009). At a local level, funded projects have provided support for Black, Asian and ethnic minorities (BAME) to overcome the barriers they face as they navigate local networks, policies, cultural institutions and their position as 'diverse' cultural entrepreneurs, but these targeted interventions are both welcome and disliked by the individuals they are intended to help.

Evidence from the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor suggests that ethnic minorities and immigrants to the UK are twice as likely as white Britons to be early-stage entrepreneurs (Aston University, 2018). Discrimination and lack of social and cultural capital with mainstream institutions can all be reasons for becoming self-employed, although motivation can also come from the potential financial rewards, cultural expression and wanting to make a difference to society (Aston University 2018). In general, ethnic entrepreneurship is an under researched element in the scholarly field of entrepreneurship studies (Volery, 2007), and the term is problematic as it bundles together a disparate field of research only loosely connected by the idea of being 'other' from the dominant Western white norm.

As Bell and Oakley (2015) have argued, policies which support creative economy development and culture-led regeneration of cities often ignore the significance of social relationships played out in specific localities. If BAME cultural workers were not engaging with key networks contributing to economic agendas and city centre initiatives, it is likely that funding and entrepreneurial opportunities were not directed at them.

'...the creative economy model that has been pursued nationally, locally and internationally is not only insensitive to the time and the local knowledge needed to support localised production centres, it is actively undermining the conditions of their existence' (Oakley, 2016, p.169).

Social relationships are critical to cultural work and in cities they form the glue which enable cultural entrepreneurs to thrive, establishing formal and informal relationships encouraged by

cultural quarters and co-working environments (Bell & Oakley, 2015; Long & Naudin, 2019), usually in city centres. The ‘cultural melting pot’ which has been described as an ecosystem (Warwick Commission, 2015), is deliberately deployed for cultural development and re-branding cities, integrating CCIs into all aspects of urban planning (Bell & Oakley, 2015). Yet, as we know, from the work of scholars such as Rosalind Gill, the social and professional connections created through informal networks are far from ‘egalitarian’ (2002), rather, they tend to bolster strong ties (Granovetter, 1973) over diverse new relationships. Beyond the core geographic heart of the city centre, we find cultural entrepreneurs positioned outside of creative economy policies and who operate through different sets of social networks, cultural values and practices.

### **Approche/méthodologie**

To interrogate cultural policies and the specificity of locality, I focus on a British city, Birmingham, with a diverse multicultural population. The data for this article is drawn from evaluations of Birmingham City Council (BCC) funded cultural policies, which took place between 2016-2019. The findings are based on several evaluations including the following funded programmes: ASTONish; Re:Present; and BAME Arts Development Programme. The evaluations were commissioned by BCC and Birmingham Hippodrome, and were produced by me, with colleagues from my institution. The process involved interviews, observations during training programmes, attending events, tracking social media discussions, online surveys and cultural policy documents such as Birmingham’s Cultural Strategy 2015-2019 and Arts Council England’s The Creative Case for Diversity. Other than RE:Present, all the programmes were focused on communities living and /or working in north Birmingham, defined by BCC boundary maps as Aston, Newtown and Lozells areas. Some projects received additional funding from Arts Council England and support through local universities in the form of venues, speakers and mentors. For the BAME Arts Development Programme, our brief was to explore the impact of the projects and the degree to which the funding made a difference in terms of developing BAME and ethnic minority talent in cultural leadership and entrepreneurship; addressing barriers for cultural workers; and gaining an understanding of the relation between geographical areas and support for cultural entrepreneurs within those areas. The team at BCC invited a robust and critical evaluation report, with the aim of obtaining real insights to inform future programmes and policies.

*Birmingham City Councils’ Cultural Policies*

For a number of years, BCC set out ‘A Creative City’ strategy, including policy interventions to reach wider markets, identifying skills gaps, providing a citywide programme of business start-ups and campaigns to share best practice in the use of finance and availability of grants (BCC, 2015). This took the form of cultural quarters, as evidence of how dedicated parts of the city can be identified as hubs or clusters of CCI activities: Digbeth/Eastside and the Jewellery Quarter are good examples of this (Chapain and Comunian, 2010). Furthermore, a significant aspect of Birmingham’s cultural distinction has been expressed through a celebration of its ‘diversity’ in bids to be European Capital of Culture 2008 (BBC 2003) and in the 2018 bid for Channel 4 to relocate its headquarters. But evidence from a local cultural entrepreneur suggests that there is a perception that funding in Birmingham favours established arts organisations with a lack of ethnic diversity in terms of their programmes, leadership and workforce (see blog posts by Hemmings, 2016 and Talwar, 2016).

## **Résultats**

### *The hyperlocal context*

An appreciation of cultural policy as it is enacted locally needs to situate the specificity of that locality, whether it be regional, the boundaries of a city or a ward within the city. Cultural entrepreneurs who live and or work in the Aston & Newtown part of Birmingham feel a strong sense of commitment to their local community, describing city centre venues as ‘mainstream’ and making a distinction between spaces which they understand as not inclusive of their community.

I’ve always been of the thinking that we need mainstream organisations to value what we offer as a cultural offer and to programme it within their walls, so that people in Birmingham, whether north, west, east, south, feel that they can go to mainstream venues and see work of quality and of value to their lives. I don’t think you have to have a specific building in the north of Birmingham. I really think that’s a ghettoization of arts, I really do. (Interviewee A, 2017)

Historically, the existence of a venue known as The Drum, created a focus for the local community, keeping other spaces and venues in a kind of hinterland, rendering them invisible, remote and beyond the reach of cultural entrepreneurs based in Aston and Newtown.

... in Aston and Newtown, well I do challenge this idea that art is dead in that part of the city or is simmering. It is very much alive... There are so many musicians in Aston

and Newtown, so many, who just don't crossover into the other spaces of the city...  
(Interviewee 7).

Whether borders and the lack of access to resources are imagined positions or not, BAME cultural entrepreneurs experience their practice through their hyperlocal context rather than as part of a wider 'creative city' agenda.

### ***Hand holding across imagined borders***

In the context of this study, individual projects were delivered by facilitators who could be described as cultural intermediaries; interpreting local policy initiatives and acting as a bridge between structures and cultural entrepreneurs (Durrer and O'Brien, 2014). The role of cultural intermediaries is significant in two ways: through their access to networks and in their interpretation of local cultural policies. Cultural intermediaries can be in powerful positions by shaping social interactions locally and deploying certain contacts to make introductions across networks. For instance, between mainstream cultural institutions and BAME cultural entrepreneurs, whose networks and contacts have been limited to Aston and Newtown. A key aspect of the brokering role is a kind of 'cultural translation' of the language of cultural policy or cultural milieus, to support a cultural entrepreneur crossing over into a new spaces and networks.

So, for me, knowing who the Hippodrome was, knowing the profile of some of the facilitators [cultural intermediaries], I thought, why not just challenge myself, to put myself in a different network, to see what I can learn, what I could gain (interviewee 9).

Relationships with new organisations only seemed possible if the introductions had been made by cultural intermediaries who appeared to have proved themselves to be trustworthy to cultural entrepreneurs from Aston & Newtown.

### ***Living in a tick box area: 'diversity' and 'BAME'***

Some participants from Aston and Newtown were offended by these terms and acknowledged, that when public funding is directed at their area, there was a level of cynicism about the policy intervention.

...I feel like Aston and Newtown get a lot of organisations or people using them as a tick box area and so there's a lot of mistrust around whether the people coming in are

actually coming to try and actually make a difference or whether it's just because they've got funding to do so. (Interviewee 8).

We found BAME cultural entrepreneurs to be only too aware of being part of a 'tick box' exercise and, as a result, some interviewees engaged in the process of self-diversity making or diversifying themselves. Amongst the Black community, difference is also felt between cultural entrepreneurs from Africa and Black British Caribbean who are often 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> generation and whose cultural practice appears to be less 'exotic'.

What I get is if you are a Black artist from either the Caribbean or mainland Africa coming come here to do stuff you are more likely to get attention than if you are British born. I don't think anyone is particularly interested in the Black British voice because we are not exotic enough, we are not different enough, we don't have a separate language. (interviewee 10)

As participants engaged in the process of 'becoming' cultural entrepreneurs, the funded programmes we evaluated enabled them to reflect and communicate their professionalism for a wider cultural milieu.

### **Discussion, Implications et limites**

This paper explored locality as central to understanding how cultural policies can address inequalities in the cultural workforce, specifically for entrepreneurial modes of work. The conditions of local cultural production and consumption is critical to an understanding of impactful cultural policymaking. The findings from this study are limited to a specific city, Birmingham, UK, and to a set of policy interventions which took place between 2016-19. A longitudinal study would offer a better sense of the long term impact for BAME cultural entrepreneurs.

Participants in our study appear to be disenfranchised from both cultural institutions and the cultural quarters or any other cultural industry ecosystem. What was significant was the role of cultural intermediaries, and their acknowledgement of 'imagined' borders to demonstrate an 'authentic' understanding of barriers and challenges for BAME cultural entrepreneurs. While this practice opened doors, and led to breaking down some of the 'imagined' borders, it also results in very few individuals acting as gatekeeper. The result is an overreliance on key intermediaries, potentially shutting down other voices or viewpoints. Cultural intermediaries, however well intentioned, cannot represent a multiplicity of perspectives, knowledge, experience and understanding a lack in a 'superdiversity'. Others have been critical of the use

of terms such as ‘diversity’ and ‘BAME’ in cultural policy (Ahmed, 2007 and 2012; Saha, 2017) yet they remain part of the language of cultural policymakers. Ahmed (2007) argues, that although ‘diversity’ can unify, too often it tends to refer to poor individuals and suggests a state of being that is fixed rather than pointing to underlying structural disadvantages, allowing racism and inequalities to be overlooked. Similarly, this study found problems with language and being ‘othered’ became an unwelcome outcome of a policy intervention which sought to support BAME cultural entrepreneurs.

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