

Cultural Labour in the Context of Urban Regeneration:  
Artists' Work in Margate and Folkestone

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The sun, with a fine irony, came bounding out. The sea, which has its own sense of humour, winked and sparkled at us. We began to walk along the front. Everything was there: bathing pools, bandstands, gardens blazing with flowers, lido, theatres and the like; and miles of firm golden sands all spread out beneath the July sun. But no people! – not a soul. Of all those hundreds of thousands of holiday-makers, of entertainers and hawkers and boatmen – not one. And no sound – not the very ghost of an echo and all that cheerful hullabaloo – children shouting and laughing, bands playing, concert parties singing, men selling ice-cream, whelks and peppermint rock, which I'd remembered hearing along this shore. No, not even an echo. Silence... This Margate I saw was saddening and hateful; but its new silence and desolation should be thought of as a bridge leading us to a better Margate in a better England, in a nobler world.

JB Priestley, 1940  
(quoted in Gray, 2006: 73-4)

With thanks to my friends, family and colleagues, and to all those who participated in this research.

Particular thanks to my supervisors, Phil Hubbard and Vince Miller, without whom this would not have been possible.

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## **Abstract**

This thesis engages with debates around cultural work and culture-led regeneration by exploring the working conditions encountered and experienced by visual artists who have located in Margate and Folkestone, two towns in Kent (South East England) which have pursued culture-led regeneration. It draws on, and contributes, to critical debates on cultural labour and the conditions of cultural work as well as long-standing debates around culture and creativity as drivers of urban regeneration. It establishes the ways in which artists' labour is integral to culture-led urban policies, and further critically explores the quality of such work, looking at the conditions under which it proceeds, and the values and meanings individual workers ascribe to it. The thesis demonstrates that culture-led urban strategies represent a locus of economic exploitation for the artists implicated in them. This accords with other studies that provide evidence of artistic, and other forms of cultural, labour as wholly beset by economic and social structures that instrumentalise cultural value, and undermine any intrinsic value or meaning to cultural labour. However, this thesis also provides a 'defence' of artists' work. While noting the continuing inequalities, marginalisation and exclusionary effects of neoliberal working conditions and practices, this thesis demonstrates that creative cultural work is not fully colonised by the market, and that within the cultural industries there remains the possibility of 'good work'. This thesis concludes that although economic exploitation and insecurity are common, workers are able to draw upon pre-existing cultural discourses that sometimes allow them to produce value and meaning in their work in ways that evade capitalist logics.

## Prologue

The studio is part of a light industrial complex west of Folkestone, just off Sandgate's High Street, itself set back only 20 metres or so from the English Channel. The entrance is by the large double doors of a car workshop, and through a small anonymous door that opens to stairs leading up to a space that was formerly used for household storage.

Going up, I first enter a small room that is filled by two sofas, a coffee table and bookcases containing art books and magazines. Of course there's art on the walls. I'm told by Nicholette that this is where she and the two others who share this space chat, have small parties.

The studio proper is larger, with workbenches, a sink, drawers and cabinets lining the walls. A couple of large tables in the middle of the room. It's littered with the detritus of three working artists sharing the space: in progress paintings, prints and other assemblages, a computer, dried apples, a large magnifying glass. The windows are small but numerous, so the room is light. There's a small original piece by Tracey Emin on the wall.

Nicholette is one of three artists who share this space. Her hair is short and has purple running through it. She makes us peppermint tea and is immediately open. She is in her mid-fifties and has grown-up children. Her partner is also an artist who shares this studio. She's talking about how they came to use the space – badgering the landlord, who also owns the local shop, until he acceded. I want my recorder on now but hold back, worried about being impolite. I needn't worry about such things and she's a great communicator, a small prompt and she speaks richly and at length. She says this part of what she does as an artist, she's 'the type of artist that communicates', not one who like to 'sit in their own place and work'.

Her practice is as a sculptor/printmaker – often working in woodlands and nature reserves, using flowers, leaves, grasses and other organic matter – and she also runs art workshops. Though Nicholette describes uncertainty and doubt in her career – submitting to the bullying of an art tutor, struggling to fit in with the privileged upbringing of many others in the art world – she is more confident now; a confidence both in what she has achieved through her art career and also in the compromises she has made to make those achievements happen. She's happy to have 'survived as an artist all the way through'.

I interview Roy a couple of months later in the studio at the back of Jill's house in Cliftonville, Margate. Roy's around twenty years younger than Nicholette, in his late thirties. Whereas Nicholette came across as being at ease with her work and life, Roy is much more hesitant and, initially, laconic. Later, looking at some photos of Roy, he is quite a well-built man, muscular and broad shouldered, but my memory is of someone quite diminutive. He doesn't share Nicholette's confidence in what he does – he describes himself as an artist 'only cringingly', embarrassed at being associated with

something that is ‘not really a proper job’. He suggests that art is a ‘conjuring trick’ wherein the artist makes a thing and persuades others that it is important, and constantly questions whether, behind the smoke and mirrors, what he produces is ‘worthwhile’. Importantly, worthwhile for Roy is in a sense beyond the confines of self-referential art worlds ‘where it seems that that’s the point of being an artist, to call yourself a curator or have something in [*Artists Newsletter*]’.

Roy’s art practice concerns memory and history, and often takes the form of landscapes and portraits in Biro or silverpoint. Despite his apprehensions about what he produces, it is possible to point to markers of some success, having had exhibitions in London, Edinburgh, St. Ives and Margate. His work has also featured in the BP Portrait Award at the National Portrait Gallery, and as part of the Jerwood Drawing Prize. However, he only makes occasional sales, something he puts down, at least in part, to his hesitancy about pricing and selling work: ‘I’m a bit rubbish at it. People want to buy the work and I always feel bad asking for money for it [laughs]. So, um... So I end up putting people off, finding excuses not to sell the work because I feel bad about asking for money’. To supplement his income, Roy teaches adult education classes in Margate and is also able to claim Working Tax Credits of around £50 a week. Still, he’s reliant on support from his brother, living in his house rent-free, and using a spare bedroom there as a studio space.

Shane has a different attitude to art as a business, and occupies a very different kind of studio. Rather than hidden above a garage or in a spare bedroom, he has taken over a shop on Folkestone’s Old High Street. His easel is in the window so that people on the street can watch him working on his latest painting. Shane is in his mid-thirties now, and started as a full-time artist in his late twenties. He is unusual in the sample in several ways. Notably, he doesn’t have a degree in an art subject and his sole income is from producing his art works, which are often local landscapes in oil but also include still life subjects. That he is able to make a living from his art work – selling his original paintings, prints and by taking on commissions – is perhaps related to his background in marketing and his forthright focus on the business of being an artist.

Indeed, Shane is clear that he is *working* as an artist – that is, he is serious about being an artist and producing the kind of work he feels has merit and is meaningful, but he is equally serious about running a business through which he is able to support himself, his partner and young child. His whole gallery/studio is testament to this ethos; highly visible, strikingly painted from outside, and thoughtfully laid out inside, he is there six days a week working on a canvas or speaking with customers, or on the phone to printers and framers. It operates as a space to work in, and a space that works for him, helping to create a brand and generate sales. But speaking with Shane it also very apparent the space carries more meaning: ‘I treat this place like a work of art. I love this gallery’. Similar to Roy, he’s cautious about art worlds, especially the ‘myth of the artists’ life’, he says ‘I’m jealous of some other artists... they sit in a café and they swan around. I don’t, it’s not like that for me.’ Shane acknowledges that others might view art and business as difficult to position so close to one another, and might say that he has ‘sold

out' any artistic vision. He is clear that the tension is not there for him, that 'bending over backwards for a customer is completely different from artistic creation'.

These brief sketches introduce some of the participants who are quoted through this thesis. While quite often different in their individual circumstances – how they make money, where they work, what they hope to achieve as an artist – there are also common features. There are narratives about career and life progression, struggles with money, a concern with what 'art' is and what being an artist means, and the kinds of spaces they have created to pursue their artistic practices and present their work in. Moreover, these artists are embedded, to varying degrees, in particular places at a particular time. Being an artist, working as an artist and the products they produce have a particular resonance, as they are used to (re-)imagine the urban policies and aspirations of two towns. These represent some of the key issues and topics that this thesis will explore.

# 1 Introduction

In *Driving Growth through Local Government Investment in the Arts*, the Local Government Association (LGA: 2013) – the umbrella organisation for almost all English councils – promotes the arts for their ‘net economic impacts’, as ‘hallmarks of sustainable communities’ (p.4), and their role in ‘transforming reputations, attracting visitors and creating jobs’ (p.6). In doing so, they follow a well-trodden path in advocating a culture-led approach to urban regeneration, as popularised by advocates such as Florida (2002) and Landry (2000), guided by the apparent success of interventions like London’s Tate Modern or Bilbao’s Guggenheim (Dean et al., 2010; Plaza, 2000; Scott, 2006).

Culture-led urban strategies have developed alongside the rise of the cultural industries in policy discourses. The Creative Industries Council (CIC) (a collaboration between UK government and industry partners, including representatives from Arts Council England, Department for Culture, Media & Sport, Microsoft, and Warner Brothers) has produced *Create UK*, its first ‘creative industries’ strategy report. The report lauds a sector that ‘punches above its weight’ (CIC, 2014: 2), pointing out that it generated over £71 billion gross value added for the UK economy in 2012, and that it has achieved levels of growth that have outperformed all other industrial sectors. The aim of the CIC is to help ‘creative businesses to start-up and grow and maintain the UK’s competitiveness against other international markets’. This echoes earlier work from the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (2001; 2008) which would play a formative role in the development of cultural industries policy around the world (e.g. United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, 2008; 2010; United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 2013; see Hesmondhalgh, 2007: 145).

However, in the months prior to the publication of *Create UK*, Sajid Javid, Secretary of State at the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS), cautioned that access to work in the sector is dependent upon assuming:

Entry-level positions [*that*] inevitably come with low pay or  
sometimes no pay, effectively barring access if you don’t have the  
‘Bank of Mum and Dad’ to fall back on. (Javid, 2014)

Despite this bleak prognosis, groups such as the Creative Industries Council and the Local Government Association still have very little to say about work in the cultural industries; about the quality of the jobs on offer and their pay and conditions. This continues a trend in the UK’s cultural industries workforce policy wherein the focus lies on skills and adaptability, that is, in policy for the provision of suitably-trained human capital (Banks & Hesmondhalgh, 2009; DCMS, 2008; Oakley, 2013). Looking at New Labour’s tenure in office, Oakley (2011: 285) suggests that the basis for this has been an assumption that this would help ‘people become fit for the labour market’.

Restricting discussion of the cultural workforce to questions of the provision of training and skills raises concerns. While training may be important, having desirable skills may

prove futile if one cannot meet the demands of what may be viewed as exclusionary working conditions and practices – Javid points to low pay, while others highlight issues including insecurity, flexibilisation, and the invasion of work into leisure and personal life (e.g. Banks, 2007; Banks, Gill & Taylor, 2013; Hesmondhalgh & Baker, 2011; Menger, 2006). This may have repercussions for the individual – whose skills and talents are wasted, or who work to excess in the attempt to remain in their role. It may also prove problematic in attempts to harness cultural workers for broader economic, social and urban outcomes, with these potentially predicted on unsustainable ways of working. Crucially, the products of the cultural industries often also play an important part in shaping our understanding of the world and ourselves, they are drawn upon and help constitute our identities, emotions and sexualities, and help to shape the development of towns and cities. If these sectors are closed to those who cannot meet economic, social and cultural expectations there will be implications on what is produced as the perspectives, narratives and experiences of whole groups of people are lost (Hesmondhalgh, 2007; Oakley, 2013).

This thesis, then, will draw upon, and add to, existing literatures on cultural labour and the conditions of cultural work, and long-standing debates around culture and creativity as drivers of urban regeneration. It seeks to enter critical theoretical debates on cultural work, autonomy and identity, and also speak to cultural and urban policy makers. It will demonstrate the ways in which artists' labour is integral to culture-led urban policies, and further critically explore the quality of such work, looking at the conditions under which it proceeds, and the values and meanings individual workers ascribe it. In doing so it will address the absence in the literature of a sociology of the situated working practices of individual actors in the cultural sector (though see Christopherson, 2004; Gill & Pratt, 2008; Watson, 2012).

## 1.1 Aims and Research Questions

This thesis will engage with debates around cultural work and culture-led regeneration by exploring the working conditions encountered and experienced by visual artists who have embedded in two towns in Kent: Margate and Folkestone. This type of exploration is important as existing research often is inattentive or underplays the importance of space and place in working conditions (e.g. Gill, 2008; Hesmondhalgh & Baker, 2011; Menger, 2006), or focuses on cultural workers in larger cities (e.g. Lloyd, 2004; 2010; Pratt, 2009; Zukin, 1982; 2010). There is a paucity of work on smaller towns where working conditions, and associated cultural and social infrastructure, may be very different to metropolitan centres and core cities, yet this work is important given the number of smaller towns seeking to develop their cultural and arts offer, and seeing arts-led regeneration as a means of securing economic regeneration. For example, a number of coastal towns are following such a strategy through the Department for Culture, Media and Sport's Sea Change programme (BOP Consulting, 2011; see also Dryburgh, 2010; NEF, 2005; Powell & Gray, 2009; Shared Intelligence, 2008a).

Following the above, this thesis will explore the on-going cultural regeneration of Folkestone and Margate to engage with wider debates around cultural work and culture-led urban strategies, and specifically artist's labour and arts-led regeneration in coastal towns. As such, the broader aims of this thesis are:

- To provide an account of the role of cultural workers in culture-led urban regeneration strategies.
- To explore the meanings and values these individuals ascribe to their work.

From these aims, the key questions are:

- How are Margate and Folkestone being constructed as 'creative' places?
- What are the implications of culture-led urban policy for artists in Margate and Folkestone?
- How do these artists understand and experience the role of 'artist'?
- What are the conditions of work for these artists?

By answering these key questions, this thesis will help enrich and inform future debates around these issues. It will add to critical discussions about work in the cultural sector, artists' autonomy, artistic identities, 'good work', and the use of culture and creativity in urban policy. Furthermore, it will underline the importance of understanding artists' labour in implementing successful and sustainable cultural interventions.

To provide background for the discussion in this thesis, the following section will introduce the culture-led urban policies of Margate and Folkestone, noting the types of interventions being implemented and their rationales, and position them in the broader regional and national policy contexts. These include the almost pervasive emphasis placed on culture and creativity in, among other areas, economic and urban policy, and the specific challenges facing many English coastal towns. The final part of this introduction will then provide an overview of the structure of the thesis.

## **1.2 Arts-Led Regeneration in Margate and Folkestone – Contexts and Strategies**

The formation of the Coalition Conservative/Liberal Democrat UK government in 2010 saw the Department of Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) adopt a different emphasis in its cultural policy to that of the previous administration. Priority was given to the delivery of the 2012 London Olympics, obtaining further large-scale sporting events, developing broadband and digital content, and boosting 'Big Society' initiatives, such as charitable giving (DCMS, 2011a). While new initiatives from central government, such as the Creative Industries Council (2014), may be viewed as a reversion to earlier rhetoric, the overall trend has been away from the approach developed under the New Labour administration (1997–2010). The policy under discussion here, however, remains a product of an earlier period in which the cultural industries (branded 'creative industries') played a prominent part in a range of policy

areas including economic development, social inclusion and regeneration (DCMS, 2001; 2008; Evans & Shaw, 2004; Hewison, 2011; Local Government Association, 2009; O'Brien, 2010; O'Connor, 2007; Oakley, 2010; 2011; Pratt, 2005; Sharp et al., 2005). New Labour's policy was developed in the context of broader discourses of culture and creativity as ameliorative of the economic and social changes associated with 'post-industrial' society, such as the deindustrialisation effecting many parts the UK (see Chapters 2 & 3; see also Bell, 1973; Florida, 2002; Harvey, 1990; Lash & Urry, 1994).

In a formative document in UK 'creative industries' policy, Chris Smith – then Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport at the Department of Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) – noted the 'continuing success of the creative industries' as 'a key element in today's knowledge economy' (DCMS, 2001: 0:3). This was echoed seven years later in the *Creative Britain* policy document:

Now is the time to recognise the growing success story that is Britain's creative economy and build on that. The creative industries must move from the margins to the mainstream of economic and policy thinking, as we look to create the jobs of the future... The vision is of a Britain in *ten years' time where the local economies in our biggest cities are driven by creativity...* (DCMS, 2008: 6, emphasis in original)

Oakley (2010: 19) notes that it is at the 'regional and local level that the fusion of economic development, regeneration and social inclusion goals was largely enacted'. Cited examples of such initiatives include 'cultural quarters', as in Brighton, Cardiff, Leicester, Liverpool, Sheffield, Stoke and Southampton; the installation of iconic public art such as Anthony Gormley's *Angel of the North* (Gateshead) and the fourth plinth series in Trafalgar Square (London); and the construction of 'flagship' cultural sites such as the Lowry (Salford), Tate Modern (London) and The Public (West Bromwich) (Evans & Shaw, 2004; Evans, 2009; Mommaas, 2004; Sharp et al., 2005).

Despite the lack of the larger urban centres generally envisaged as locations for the hubs of the creative economy, local and regional cultural policy in Kent – both at county and district levels – has developed in this context, and can be viewed as attempting to apply these principles to economic and social regeneration (Ewbank, 2011; Farells, 2010; Flemming, 2008a,b; Kent County Council, 2004; 2009; 2010a,b; Margate Renewal Partnership, 2007; 2008; 2009; Shepway District Council, 2012; Thanet District Council, 2008). Below, then, I detail the key aspects of the culture-led urban policy developed by Kent County Council as they have guided the recent regeneration strategies of the coastal towns of Margate and Folkestone, noting how such policies developed as a response to a range of economic and social shifts. This will provide the broad context for detailed discussion on culture-led urban policy and artists' labour in Margate and Folkestone in the following Chapters.

### 1.2.1 Kent

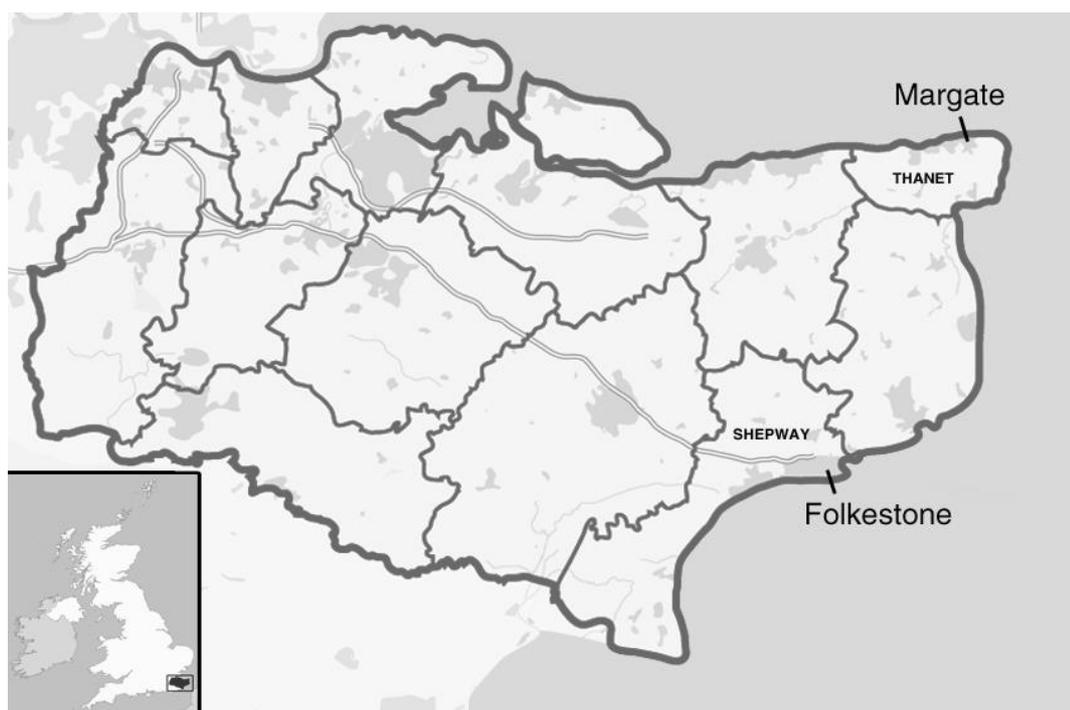


Figure 1 Map of Kent showing Margate in Thanet District and Folkestone in Shepway District.

Kent is the southeastern most county in England. The Kent County Council (KCC) area has a population of over 1.4 million across 12 boroughs.<sup>1</sup> A report commissioned by KCC for a vision of *21<sup>st</sup> Century Kent* (Farrells, 2010) places Kent within the Greater South East, ‘the UK’s only global super-region... [able to] compete with the major regional economies of Europe, the Americas and Asia’ (p.7).

Kent’s location – adjacent to London and in close proximity to the European mainland – is regarded as having important beneficial effects. Kent’s economy is integrated with London’s through those who commute into the capital and ‘spill-over’ residential, industrial and commercial developments at places such as Kings Hill or Ebbsfleet. Similarly, the Channel Tunnel Rail Link has allowed for the development of the UK’s only domestic high-speed rail service (High Speed 1 which opened in 2009) – reducing journey times within Kent and between the county and London. Dover, meanwhile, remains an important port for cross-Channel freight and passengers.

British architect Terry Farrell, through his architecture practice Farrells, has been involved in providing ‘master plans’ and ‘strategic vision’ for urban design, regeneration and redevelopment since the 1970s.<sup>2</sup> In Kent he was ‘Design Champion’ for the Medway and the Hoo Peninsula initiative in the mid-2000s. More recently, his practice has provided the Masterplan for the redevelopment of Folkestone Seafront<sup>3</sup> and

<sup>1</sup> This excludes the Medway towns which, though located within the ceremonial county of Kent, constitute a Unitary Authority.

<sup>2</sup> See [terryfarrell.co.uk](http://terryfarrell.co.uk)

<sup>3</sup> See [folkestoneseafront.co.uk](http://folkestoneseafront.co.uk)

worked on a major strategy document for Kent County Council: *21<sup>st</sup> Century Kent* (Farrells, 2010). This document is somewhat bullish in its claims, suggesting that ‘inspired leadership and a coherent long term vision will shape Kent’s future success’ (p.12), pronouncing that, by 2030:

- ‘Ebbsfleet will be a business and innovation ‘super-hub’ in the ‘Thames Gateway’ (p.17).
- ‘Kent will have the UK’s most distinctive and thriving coast’ (p.19).
- New infrastructure will reinforce ‘Kent’s strategic role in the national economy’ (p.24) so that ‘the “21st Century Garden of England” has the most vigorous rural economy in the UK’ (p.27).

*21<sup>st</sup> Century Kent* delivers a vision of Kent in line with KCC’s regeneration framework *Unlocking Kent’s Potential* (KCC, 2009). This makes similar claims about the importance of Kent’s location:

We need to grasp the competitive advantage provided by Kent’s strategic gateway location between London and mainland Europe, which will be boosted by high-speed domestic services using the Channel Tunnel Rail Link in 2009, while property and labour costs are up to 60 per cent cheap than the capital’s. (p. 19)

*Unlocking Kent’s Potential*, however, also acknowledges the challenges facing Kent. It notes that the county’s traditional industries – including shipbuilding and docks, mass tourism, paper and cement manufacturing, and coalmining – ‘all fell in to sharp irreparable decline in the recession of the early 1980s’ (p.19). Moreover, it points out that Kent is below the rest of the South East of England in terms of gross value added, average earnings and skill levels (see Figures 2-4, below). This follows earlier research that similarly highlighted the need for diversification of local economies and strategies to help communities that ‘suffer from a lack of skills, innovation and enterprise’ (KCC, 2004: 15). As such, KCC point out that desirable, high value-added sectors – ‘such as pharmaceuticals, creative industries, avionics, environmental technologies, construction, transport and communications’ (KCC, 2009: 21) – will require particular support, with an emphasis on ‘unblocking the obstacles that may deter companies from locating here’.

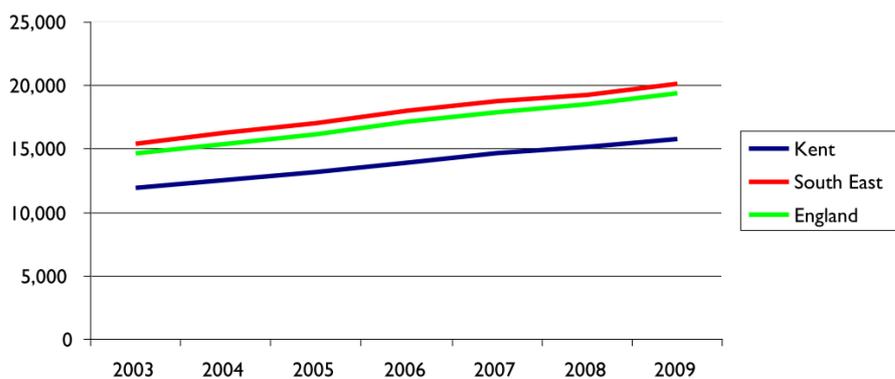


Figure 2 Gross value added per head (£) (KCC, 2009: 20)

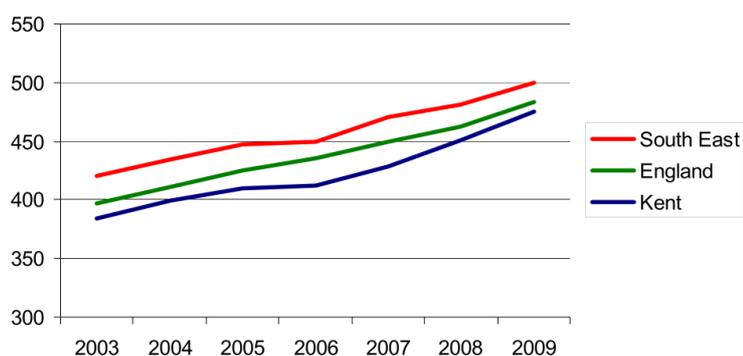


Figure 3 £ weekly median earnings by workplace (KCC, 2009: 21)

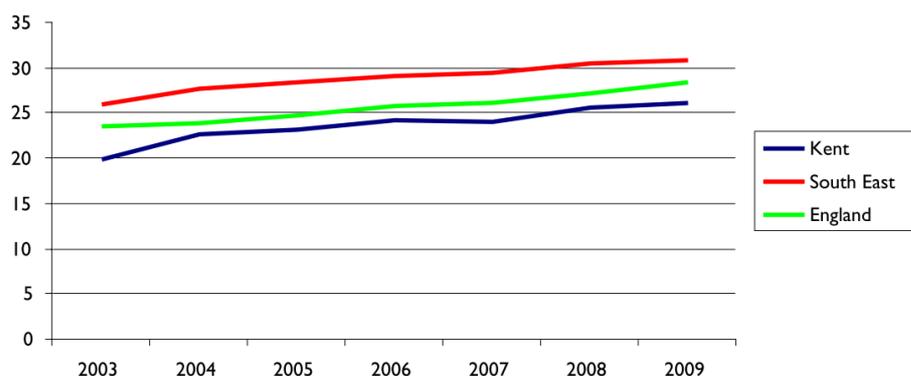


Figure 4 % working age population with a bachelor's degree, equivalent or higher qualification (KCC, 2009: 22)

### Cultural Policy in Kent

Having identified the creative industries as a sector for development in the county, KCC (2010c) went on to produce *Unlocking Kent's Cultural Potential: Cultural Strategy for Kent 2010-2015*. This notes the broad aims of the cultural strategy, wherein culture is valued for:

its contribution to the wellbeing of the county, and ... as a valuable tool for the county's work in economic and social regeneration, tourism, environmental protection, planning, health, community safety, skills development and education' (KCC, 2010c: vi).

As such, they state that the first intention of the cultural strategy is to:

*grow Kent's creative economy by being welcoming and cooperative hosts to the creative workforce... we want to: secure and grow our creative offer; grow a position which will stand out nationally by increasing the number of creative industries in the county; develop the right infrastructure to equip a Kent workforce to enter the sector and support our existing creative industries so that we will be regarded as a creative region. (KCC, 2010c: x, emphasis in original)*

Recognising extant investment, resources and projects – such as the Whitstable Biennale and Folkestone Triennial, the good provision of studio space, and specialist education centres including three campuses of the University of the Creative Arts – the strategy document highlights visual art as a priority area ‘so that artists, artists’ studio providers and visual arts audiences will come to Kent confident that they will be welcomed and rewarded’ (p.viii).

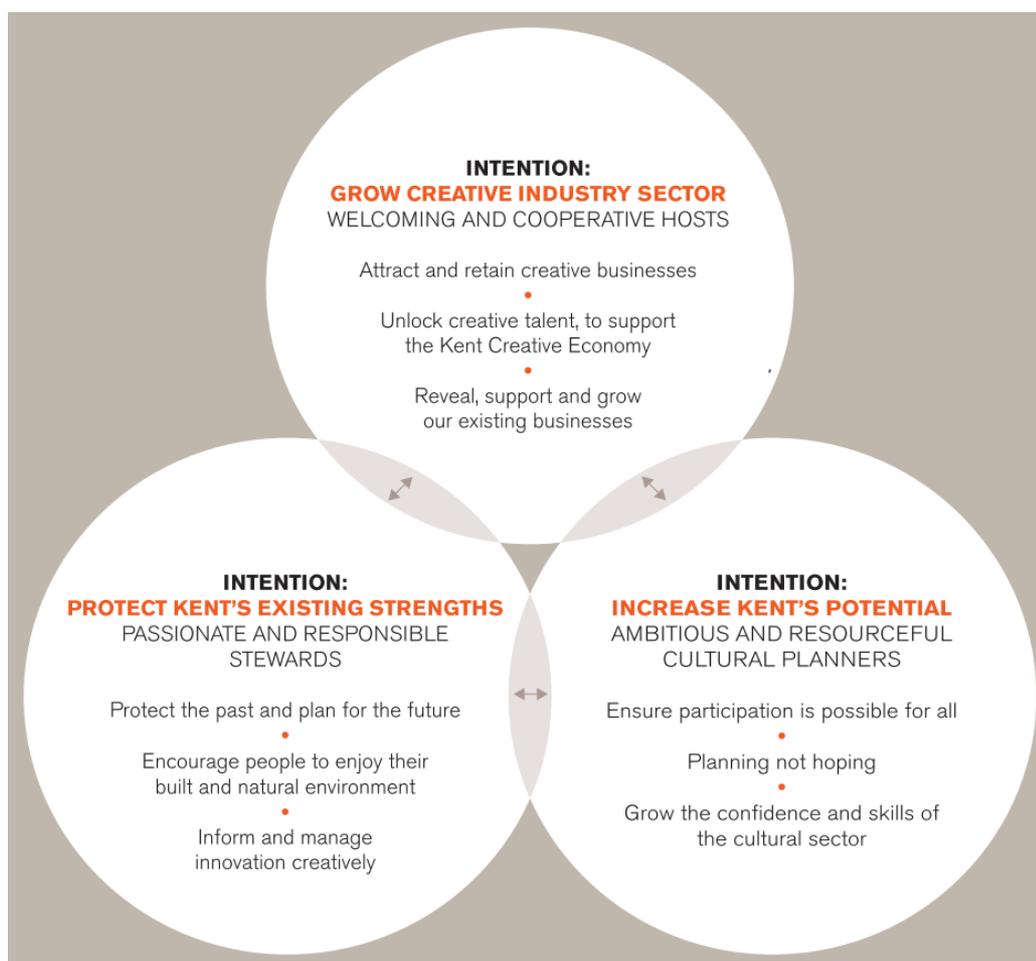


Figure 5 From *Unlocking Kent's Cultural Potential* (KCC, 2010c: xii)

The promotion of the visual arts is, however, only one part of a general shift in policy away from ‘traditional’ industries. Earlier research by Kent County Council identified the ‘development of the new knowledge-based economy (e.g. creative, hi-tech companies)’ as being ‘of great significance’ (KCC, 2004: 22) to the regeneration strategy.

The 'knowledge economy' is viewed as a means of improving skills, providing better paid jobs and an economic base for a future of 'increased global competitiveness'. Following this, *Unlocking Kent's Cultural Potential*, identifies creativity as an important personal attribute as it 'affects the way people perform in life and in business, and is recognised as the likely most in-demand attribute for the workforce in the growing knowledge economy' (KCC, 2010c: 9). KCC, therefore, aim to encourage creativity in schools 'to create intrinsically valuable skills for life and employment' (p.10). Similarly, they aim to provide information to, and facilitate the re-training of, those seeking to enter 'into fulfilling economically essential roles in culture and creativity' (p.9). Though what this might mean in practice is perhaps underdeveloped, the strategy importantly goes on to note a need to challenge practices that lead to inequalities in the creative workforce:

the field is still dominated by use of personal contacts, or financial support from family to subsidise unpaid internships. Kent must ensure that in developing its sector it addresses the causes of this trend and works to correct it. If we don't, we will be ignoring the contribution that a wide and diverse potential workforce could make.  
(KCC, 2010c: 7)

The strategy is also cautious about the effects of a purely culture-led regeneration, arguing that there is a need for a 'complex network of investment... linked to parallel programmes such as marketing, economic development and other physical regeneration such as attention to public realm' (p.26).

Kent County Council are hence promoting strategies designed to take a share of 'one of the economy's most robust sectors... an important source of innovation... [*that*] can create new markets, productivity growth, spillovers and improved efficiency' (p.7). More than that, however, they portray culture as 'the most important factor of our identity, our sense of ourselves as emotional and intellectual beings' (p.4). Such rhetoric can be viewed as in line with the more general espousal of culture-led urban policy in the UK as outlined in Chapter Three. Culture and creativity are being promoted by KCC because, as per the ideas of Richard Florida (2002: 21) about the pivotal role of the 'creative class', it is viewed as a 'defining feature of economic life... [*valued*] because new technologies, new industries, new wealth and all other good economic things flow from it'. Kent is looking to replace declining industries by re-configuring the county as an attractive site for investment for growth sectors: culture is viewed as a tool to do more than simply provide economic growth, and is a means to deliver a range of additional positive outcomes socially, culturally and environmentally.

These efforts to promote cultural regeneration have included multiple initiatives at the county level. For example, KCC runs the Kent Arts Investment Fund as a means by which to support arts groups whose activity is viewed as helping to deliver the strategic priorities outlined in the county's cultural strategy. The Council also backed the

(unsuccessful) bid for East Kent – including Margate and Folkestone, alongside Ashford, Canterbury and Dover – to become the DCMS sponsored UK City of Culture, 2017. However, *Unlocking Kent's Cultural Potential* points out that while it provides a vision for the county it is the individual boroughs that will be the ‘most significant investors in culture’ (KCC, 2010c: viii). The impetus for arts-led regeneration will, therefore, have to come from local authorities. The priority these strategies are afforded, then, will clearly differ according to the cultural assets of towns as well as the perceived need for economic revitalisation. As such, it is perhaps unsurprising that efforts to promote the visual arts have been particularly pronounced in the less prosperous coastal towns of East Kent.

### Seaside Regeneration and the East Kent Coast

Coastal towns may be viewed as fitting in with the narratives of decline that apply to many of the deindustrialised manufacturing areas of the UK, and therefore are prime candidates for the same kinds of responses based on culture and creativity as the means of securing a ‘post-industrial’ future. However, such comparisons should be approached with caution. Coastal towns developed, prospered and declined in particular ways that may be linked with national economic fortunes but also are distinct from them. Shah (2011: 37) notes, coastal towns have ‘wide and varied’ histories as ‘fishing towns (e.g. Whitby) and marine ports (e.g. Portsmouth), and concurrently also as spas (e.g. Scarborough), and coastal holiday resorts (e.g. Blackpool)’. As such, research comparing coastal towns needs an appreciation of the differences and the particularities of the coastal town under discussion, and how it may differ from other kinds of places (Beatty et al., 2008; Smith, 2004).

For example, a common narrative about coastal towns is that of economic decline, often linked to the impact of the increased availability of overseas travel and concomitant reduction in the number of holiday-makers heading to coastal resorts (Beatty & Fothergill, 2003; Centre for Social Justice, 2013; KCC, 2004; 2009; Powell & Gray, 2009; Shared Intelligence, 2008). However, earlier research by Beatty and Fothergill (2003) notes that this loss of economic basis has not proceeded in the same ways as deindustrialisation in the towns and cities of Northern England and other older industrial areas:

Economic adaptation has taken place more smoothly in seaside towns than in Britain’s older industrial areas. The summer core holiday trade is not what it was in the 1950s or 60s, but the tourist trade has moved into new markets and the towns have avoided the worst consequences of economic specialisation. (Beatty & Fothergill, 2003: 105)

In contrast to other towns in England, where a factory or mine might close quite rapidly – quickly undermining its economic base – research on behalf of the South East England Development Agency points out that decline in coastal towns has happened much more slowly (New Economics Foundation, 2005). The report goes on to note that while this may have given seaside towns time to adapt, the reality has been that

decline, though identified in the 1960s, was not recognised as a policy issue until around 2000, stifling access to regeneration funds and further entrenching problems (p.14).

Beatty and Fothergill (2003) go on, therefore, to highlight that coastal towns continue to face a range of economic and social challenges. A later benchmarking report for the UK Government's Department for Communities and Local Government (Beatty et al., 2008) provides further evidence. In an overview of the 37 largest seaside towns in England (see Figure 6), it notes that, when compared to the British average, they have:

- higher unemployment
- lower skill levels and achievement
- higher levels of individuals claiming unemployment benefits
- substantially lower earnings
- generally lower Gross Value Added per head, and;
- higher levels of deprivation

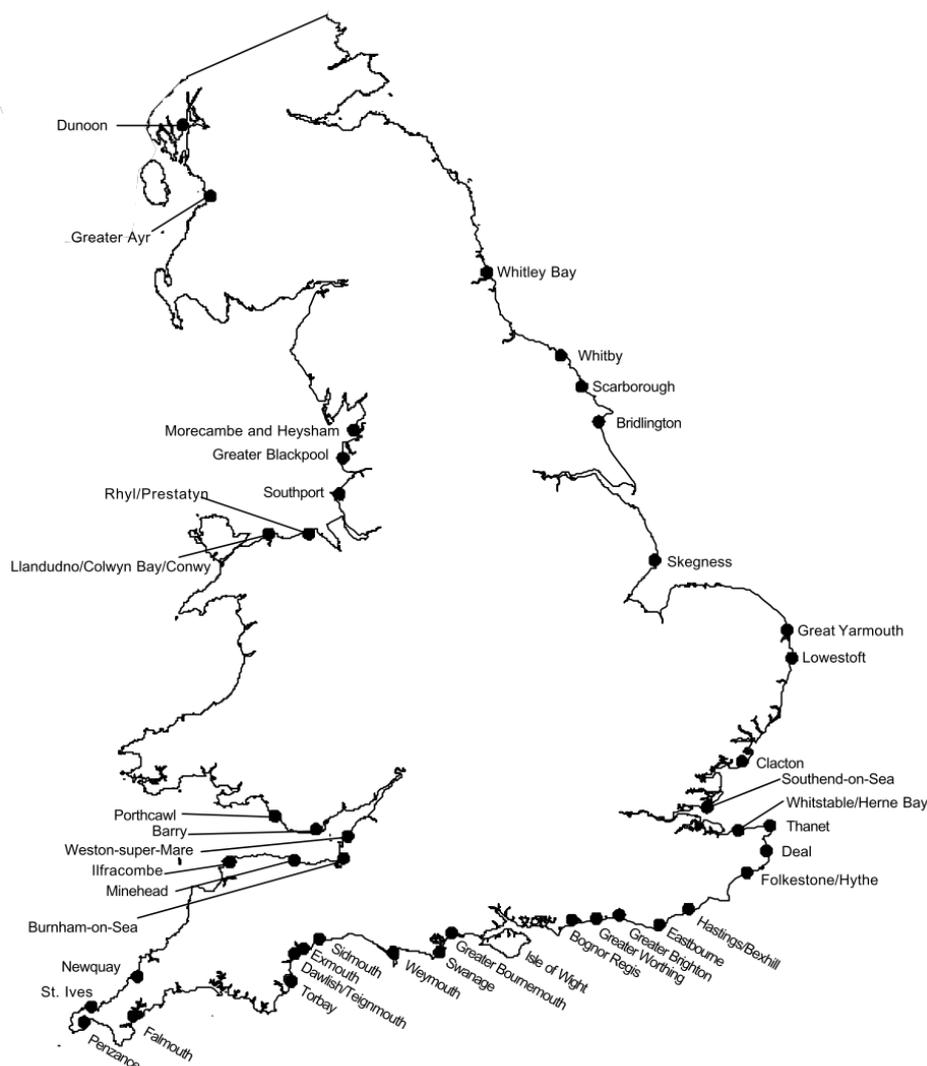


Figure 6 Map of the 37 coastal towns included in *England's Seaside Towns: A 'Benchmarking' Study* (Beatty et al., 2008: 14)

While they note variation in these issues between the English seaside towns included in their study – Greater Worthing being markedly less disadvantaged than Torbay, for example – they suggest that, overall, they are ‘rather more disadvantaged than the rest of the country’ (p.9).

Yet, while higher skilled people tend to move away from the coastal towns where suitable employment is lacking, these towns have not seen the net out-migration that affects some deindustrialising areas. In-migration, however, has come from those who are economically inactive or ‘winding down’: this includes older people who have retired, or are about to. Coastal towns are also ‘often thought to draw in benefit claimants from neighbouring areas and elsewhere’ (Beatty & Fothergill, 2003: 6) as they can provide cheaper housing than available elsewhere. The 2013 *Turning the Tide* report by the centre-right Centre for Social Justice (CSJ) repeats this claim, suggesting that ‘a depleted economy and a low-skills base’ has driven down the price of property so that buildings previously used for tourist accommodation and small businesses have been converted into extremely cheap housing, turning some seaside towns into ‘veritable dumping grounds’ for disadvantaged groups (CSJ, 2013: 6; see also Buck et al., 1989; Powell & Gray, 2008).

Smith (2004) suggests that, where ‘sustainability’ was the buzzword during the 1990s for seaside resorts looking to boost tourism, the concept of cultural regeneration gained traction in its stead through the early 2000s. Shah (2011: 55) maintains that such cultural approaches to coastal regeneration are strengthened by ‘a long-standing relationship’ between art and the seaside as ‘the varied coastline provides an emotional setting for artists’. Darwent (2012) demonstrates this link as he uses JMW Turner as the framing mechanism for a trip around some of the Kent coast. Moreover, seaside towns, in particular, may be susceptible to a cultural re-imagining as they have long engaged in place-promotion and undertaken strategies for reinvention whereby ‘particular social relationships, images and ideas of social class were managed and manipulated’ (Gray, 2006: 66) to meet changing tastes. This attention to culture also conforms to existing national policy trends (see above; Chapter 3). The DCMS Sea Change programme (2008–2010), for example, provided £37 million to projects that used ‘culture to make a difference to seaside resorts, contributing to sustainable, social and economic regeneration’ (BOP Consulting, 2011: 5). Examples of supported projects include galleries and public art installations in Bexhill-on-Sea, Ilfracombe and Hastings.

A review by Kent County Council on the regeneration of East Kent’s coastal towns suggests that the circumstances facing these places are not so different than the challenges facing many other coastal communities:

East Kent coastal towns have an ageing and transient population, are affected by their remoteness, changing demands and balancing the needs of day-trippers and residents. Specific issues can be summarised as above average levels of unemployment, employment typified by low paid or part-time/seasonal jobs, an ageing population, net outflow of

skilled workers, a large influx of long term unemployed, and large numbers of people claiming welfare benefit. There has also been a reduction in investor confidence. (KCC, 2004: 6)

However, it is worth noting variation between coastal towns in East Kent. Even in 2004, KCC noted that Whitstable was a popular tourist destination that was able to tap new markets for gastronomic tourism (with the oyster festival an important draw). The 2008 benchmarking report cites Whitstable as one of the strongest seaside economies (Beatty et al., 2008: 65). This thesis, however, focuses on Margate and Folkestone, two coastal towns in East Kent that have much weaker economies and higher levels of deprivation (Ewbank, 2011; Powell & Gray, 2009; ONS, 2011; Shared Intelligence, 2008b). The cultural policies of Margate and Folkestone have been developed in this context.

Margate and Folkestone provide interesting cases for a number of reasons. As noted above, they add to a paucity of literature on culture-led regeneration in smaller towns, and make a timely contribution to current debates on seaside towns. They also offer similarities and contrasts. Both are terminal points for High Speed 1 services, strengthening ties with a global city, but they developed as, and still are relatively isolated, 'edge' spaces. Interventions in both towns have developed in line with County Council and national policy, but are proceeding in different ways: Margate's focus is the publically-funded, top-down development of an iconic building to house a contemporary art gallery. Folkestone, meanwhile, is subject to a form of private philanthropy that is seeking to attract artists, practitioners and cultural businesses into the Creative Quarter. Exploring the labour of artists in these contexts allows for comparisons and parallels to be drawn, extending the breadth of the research without choosing such disparate cases that the depth of the research is compromised.

The following sections will provide some historical background for each town and provide an overview of the cultural policies and interventions each is subject to, noting that the attraction of the cultural and creative industries, and the visual arts in particular, is key to their regeneration schemes. In each case there are central iconic 'flagship' interventions and the creation of cultural quarters to redevelop and symbolically 're-image' the towns to 'promote a "livable" and "beautified" urban core' (Matthews, 2010: 672). Yet, while each town shares the general, longstanding, aim of fostering 'a more diverse economy, raise economic activity and increase capacity knowledge and skills' (KCC, 2004: 7), important differences will also be highlighted in their extant cultural resources and current economic and social situations, and further differences in the cultural strategies favoured in each place.

### 1.2.2 Margate

The Thanet district is located on the north-east tip of Kent. It has a population of just over 119,000, of which 58,465 live in Margate on the district's northern coastline. Margate had a long history as a popular tourist destination within the UK, dating back

to the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Newspaper notices advertising Margate's first sea-water bath appeared in 1736, beginning the transformation of 'a poor pitiful place' (John Macky quoted in Barker et al., 2007: 7) into a fashionable resort. Hasted (1800: n.p.) notes that Margate developed:

unexpectedly... to wealth and consequence, owing principally to the universal recommendation of sea air and bathing, and the rage of the Londoners at the same time of spending their summer months at those watering places situated on the sea coast; and when it came to be known that the shore here was so well adapted to bathing, being an entire level and covered with the finest sand, which extends for several miles on each side the harbour, and the easy distance from the metropolis, with the conveniency of so frequent a passage by water, it gave Margate a preference before all others, to which the beauty and healthiness of it, and of the adjoining country, contributed still more.

Its previous affluence is still visible in the town's rich architectural heritage but, as Pomery (2003: 15) points out, the built environment has suffered from a lack of investment as the town has entered a period of decline. The town was badly damaged in World War II, and again by severe storms in 1953 and 1978 (Barker et al., 2007: 51). These factors exacerbated its vulnerability to the increasing number of British holidaymakers heading overseas, a trend that resulted in many seaside towns losing their economic rationale (Centre for Social Justice, 2013; Shared Intelligence, 2008b). Today it is one of the most deprived areas in the country (Beatty et al., 2008), a place that the Centre for Social Justice think-tank suggests is:

in an advanced state of decline... [Margate is] more commonly known for high levels of deprivation, child poverty, drug addiction and educational failure... In terms of overall deprivation, approximately 30 per cent of neighbourhoods in Margate are in the poorest 10 per cent of the country. A third of children live below the financial poverty line, more than a third of pupils at Margate schools are eligible for Free School Meals, and 70 per cent of households are recorded as being deprived according to at least one measure. (CSJ, 2013: 13)

This is reflected in its Index of Multiple Deprivation<sup>4</sup> rankings which, out of over 32,000 output areas in England, place most of the town within the 20% most deprived areas. Two areas, around the centre of Margate, are in the most deprived 0.3% with a further three areas within the 5% most deprived in England and Wales (Figure 7; ONS, 2010). These factors leave Fleming (2008a) to suggest that Margate is on the edge:

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<sup>4</sup> This measure includes income, employment, health, education, barriers to services, crime and living environment.

‘located on one of the most easterly edges of England; it struggles to provide a positive environment to an increasingly diverse and disadvantaged population that has been squeezed to the edges of society’ (p.3).

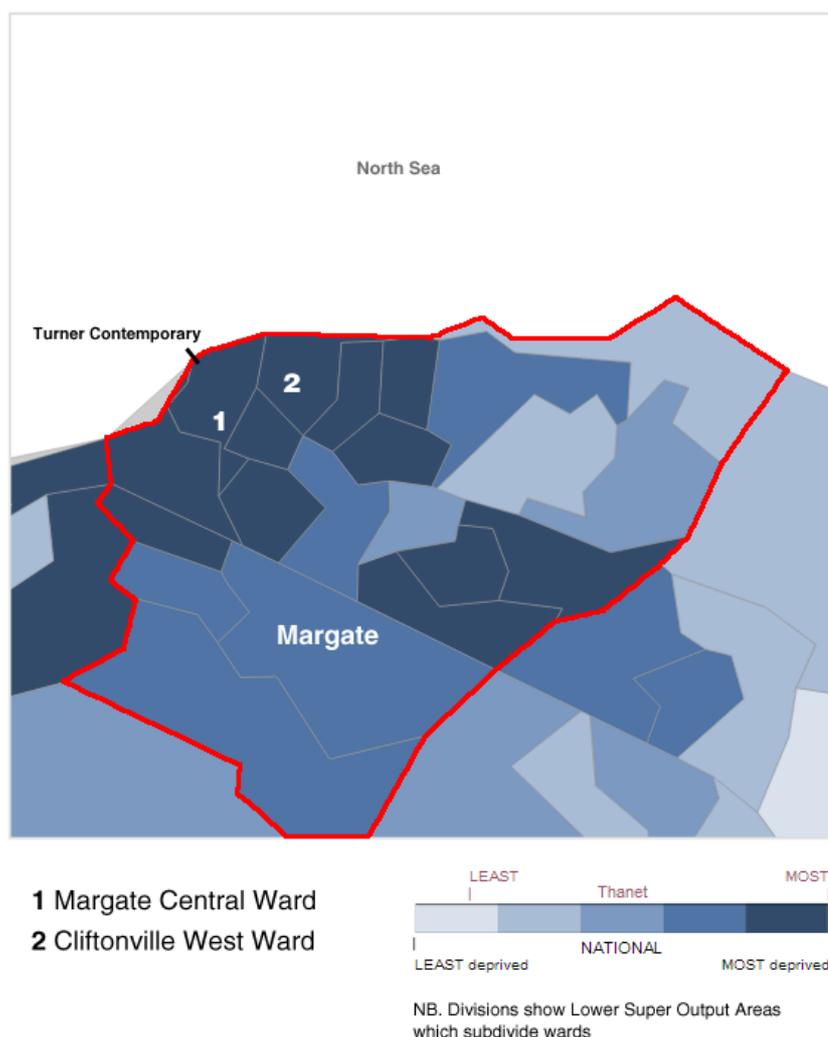


Figure 7 Levels of Multiple Deprivation in Margate relative to national figures (ONS, 2011)

Focussing in particular on Margate Central and Cliftonville West wards – which cover a principal residential area and the majority of the town centre – a study for the Margate Renewal Partnership (MRP) highlighted some key issues:

Historic dependency on a declining tourism sector and a fragile economic base – over 1,000 jobs were lost in the two wards between 2003 and 2006;

A profoundly unbalanced housing market with high and increasing numbers of private rented properties, and benefit-dependant households;

In-migration of economic migrants and the placement of looked after children and other vulnerable groups;

Entrenched and interlinked cycles of deprivation, ill health and incapacity, and worklessness – over a third of working age residents in the two wards are out of work and claiming benefit, more than three times the regional rate; and

A lack of social cohesion within and between older and newer communities, and high levels of crime – recorded crime in Margate Central is four times the Thanet average.

(Shared Intelligence, 2008a: 4-5)

The report produced a ‘Seven-Point Action Plan for Margate Renewal’, the first two points of which highlight a need to ‘Regenerate the centre of Margate and improve the public realm’ and ‘Diversify the local economy and create jobs’ (p.46). The actions identified to meet these aims highlight the key role of a culture-led strategy in tackling the regeneration of Margate, indeed, the report states that a ‘well-developed creative sector is a key element of the vision for Margate’ (p.14). This strategy prefigures the wider county-level strategy outlined in *Unlocking Kent’s Cultural Potential* (2010c) but can be viewed as in line with the earlier regeneration review completed for Kent County Council (2004: 37) that links tourism, economic and social benefits, and stresses the importance of culture in ‘adding value’.

#### Culture-led Regeneration in Margate

The Romantic painter JMW Turner (1775-1851) lived for a period in Margate and was inspired to create some of his most famous work by the local coast (Pomery, 2003); taking this as a cue, construction of a Turner gallery in Margate ‘was conceived as a complement and catalyst’ (p.16) for regenerating the area by both Kent County Council and Thanet District Council (TDC). While the initial architectural design – described as ‘innovative but controversial and costly’ (Culture24, 2008) – and schedule were not kept to, funding was secured in 2008 from Arts Council England, the South East Economic Development Agency and private backers to construct what would become the Turner Contemporary on land provided by TDC in the Margate Central ward. The gallery opened in 2011.

As originally conceived, the Turner Contemporary would be only a part of a larger project that would address the experience of visiting Margate, encourage arts participation through a programme of audience development work, and help to address ‘quality of life issues’ (Pomery, 2003: 16). To this end the Margate Renewal Partnership (MRP) was founded in 2006 to develop and implement regeneration projects identified in the Margate ‘masterplan’ (Tibbalds, 2004). This far-reaching document sought to radically transform Margate, establishing

a mix of uses and activities together with a quality of environment that will encourage people to live, to work and to visit Margate in the face of competition from holiday destinations in this country and overseas, and from larger commercial and retail centres... (p.19)

The Turner Contemporary and adjacent Old Town were identified as key steps to completing this. MRP confirmed this view in 2009, stating that:

The Old Town will be the centre of the new ‘Creative Quarter’, anchored by Turner Contemporary. The Creative Quarter will be the hub of a thriving arts community with galleries, studios, restaurants and a range of boutiques and independent shops... (MRP, 2009: 3)

Their outlook is informed by two pieces of commissioned research that ‘cut across all strands of activity within the MRP Implementation Plan’ (p.8): *A Cultural Vision for Margate: Creative Margate 10 Year Delivery Plan* (Fleming, 2008a) and *Project Margate Culture – A Cultural Toolkit for Margate* (Fleming, 2008b). These documents envision Margate in 2018 as a renaissance town that is ‘brimming with confidence’ thanks to ‘a serious and committed engagement with culture as a tool for economic vitality, social cohesion, well being and civic pride’ (2008b: 4). They argue that ‘participation in cultural activity can raise the potential of individuals... and the ability to access pathways to creative economy activity’ (p.13-4). Referencing the *Creative Britain* report by the Department of Culture, Media and Sport (2008), Fleming argues that developing a ‘vibrant creative economy’ adds:

value to other sectors of the economy (such as through the influence of design on competitiveness), provides jobs and operates as a critical attractor to an increasingly mobile population of discerning knowledge workers and cultural tourists. (Fleming, 2008a: 10)

As such, a ‘Visioning Theme’ identified by Fleming for Margate is to make the town a ‘place of cultural entrepreneurialism and creative business’ (Fleming, 2008b: 24), arguing that a culture-led strategy needs to understand both consumption and production as interdependent, and that both are required to ensure that culture can ‘play a full role at the heart of the town’s renaissance’ (p.11). If Turner Contemporary can be viewed as providing the main driver to cultural consumption, a commitment to production is perhaps visible in MRP’s *Cultural Vision*, which includes in its key objectives the provision of ‘sustainable, artist led and well managed creative workspace in Margate’ (2008: 6). Moreover, Fleming (2008a) identifies Margate as a place in which those creative practitioners ‘who need it’ can have ‘visibility and voice’, and ‘where artists and creative businesses can be part of something – a movement, a scene, a project’ (p.24).

Thanet District Council, then, is employing culture-led regeneration as an important part of its renewal strategy for Margate. The plan is focussed on the development of the Turner Contemporary gallery and the Old Town to create an attractive space for visitors, and for cultural entrepreneurs. From this, TDC hopes to realise a range of economic and social benefits. While the Turner Contemporary has exceeded expectations in terms of visitor numbers – 300,000 within 6 months, a figure that is double its annual estimate (Bates, 2011), and one million by 2013 – Margate’s deep-seated and complex problems will mean that measuring the success of the regeneration

strategy, and the role that culture plays in it, will take time to properly assess. Certainly, while by 2013 the Centre for Social Justice were reporting that the Turner Contemporary 'has helped signal a change in attitudes' (CSJ, 2013: 17) and encouraged further investment, it points out that Margate remains multiply challenged. As such while some national, and international, press depicts the town as undergoing cultural renaissance – Barton (2013) and Shaftel (2014) have both written positively about the town for the *New York Times* (see also, Aitch, 2013; Darwent 2012; Jones, 2012; Philips, 2011), other reports continue to play on its image as a 'dumping ground' for the poor and marginalised, as in, for example, *The Huffington Post* (2013) or the incredulous responses to Margate being listed as a 'Must See' tourist destination (Ellison, 2012; Lees & McKiernan, 2013; Smith, 2012).

### 1.2.3 Folkestone

Folkestone is a town in Kent's Shepway district; it is situated almost at the south east tip of England between the North Downs and English Channel. Shepway is largely rural, composed mostly of small towns and villages. Of the area's 100,000 residents over half (60,039) live in what Shepway District Council defines as the 'urban area for Shepway' (2012: 8). This is composed of the continuous built-up area of Folkestone, Sandgate and Hythe, with Folkestone accounting for over 45,000 of the urban area's residents (ONS, 2004).

Contemporary accounts of the town play on a melancholic imagery of a once genteel Edwardian seaside resort and thriving port that is faded, shabby and in decline (Ewbank, 2011; Gold, 2006; Sweet, 2005). A 1989 article from *The Independent* notes the 'modern passing of a vintage port':

Folkestone developed too late to enjoy the gloss of charming Regency seaside terraces, like Dover and Ramsgate, but it has a rugged, unpretentious character typical of Kent, while parts of the old town almost admit of prettiness... The situation of Folkestone is dramatic and fine. Between two headlands, a steep valley runs to the sea and harbour. The upper parts of this valley are filled with solid Victorian terraced houses and crossed by the great brick viaduct that carries the railway on to Dover... On the east side of this valley is East Cliff, not much built up before open countryside is reached, stretching away to Shakespeare's Cliff and Dover. On top are the remains of Martello towers – products of distant days when we wished to keep the French out rather than bring them in... *Needless to say, the twentieth century has been less kind to Folkestone...* (Stamp, 1989: 51, emphasis added)

The arrival of the railway to Folkestone in 1843 and the intervention of the Earl of Radnor meant that the town was able to develop from ‘the small, rather squalid town of 1830 into a fashionable resort and cross channel port’ (Whitney, 1986). By its Edwardian heyday Folkestone’s population was over eighteen thousand and it boasted the ‘Bathing Establishment, the Pleasure Gardens Theatre, the Victoria Pier, the Leas Shelter and the Radnor Club... to cater to visitors’ attracting the sobriquets of ‘Floral Folkestone’, ‘Fashionable Folkestone’ and ‘Gem of the South Coast’.



Figure 8 A view of Folkestone from East Cliff, 1851 (Rock & Co., c.1854)

Due to the town’s proximity to mainland Europe, however, the First and Second World Wars proved disruptive to the town’s status as tourist destination. Writing almost a decade after the end of the Second World War, Hickingbotham (1954) noted that some war damage had not been repaired and that cross-Channel services were still yet to reach the same levels as seen in the inter-war period. Folkestone’s role as a traditional English holiday resort was deemed over and from the 1960s the town was in decline:

The town was going down and down and down; gradually it lost its grandeur, its heart. It all seemed inevitable – much of the time the council just saw its job as managing gentle decline. (Philip Carter, former council leader of Folkestone, quoted in Ewbank, 2011: 14)

There were brief periods of relative prosperity as the town’s harbour met changing demands – introducing new roll on–roll off vehicle ferries in the 1970s and by running ‘booze cruises’<sup>5</sup> during the 1990s – and work on the Channel Tunnel during the 1980s and ‘90s temporarily brought in thousands of workers. Competition from the port of

<sup>5</sup> Alcohol and tobacco was significantly cheaper in France and attracted no duty when imported for personal use. This meant that British consumers could make day-trips to the continent to buy personal supplies of both and still make savings. Changes in European Union law from 1999, however, meant that such savings were reduced and the popularity of the booze-cruise greatly diminished (Hendy, n.d.).

Dover and the completed Tunnel meant that by the end of 2000 ‘Folkestone Harbour ceased to exist as a cross channel passenger port for the first time in its history’ (Hendy, n.d.). Thus, Folkestone ‘with its ferry industry fatally undermined by the ease and convenience of the tunnel, was left higher and drier than ever’ (Ewbank, 2011: 16).

Folkestone now suffers from some serious social problems, focussed in particular on its central and eastern areas. In 2003 the Harvey Central ward was worst in Kent for health deprivation, worst in the South East for unemployment and in the 0.4% most deprived parts of the UK. Thirty-four percent of the working-age population was in long-term unemployment and had no formal qualifications (Ewbank, 2011: 31). The *Atlas of Deprivation* (ONS, 2010) listed nine areas of Folkestone, which cover most of the town, as within the 20% most deprived in England. Of these, three were in the 5% most deprived. For Ewbank, then, ‘indicators of deprivation told a consistent story: Folkestone was failing to thrive’ (2011: 31).

Hope for the future comes, in part, from another railway project; in 2009 High Speed 1 began operating services from Folkestone to London in under an hour. Even three years before it opened it had already had a dramatic effect on, if nothing else, house prices (Law, 2006: 8). Opening after the start of the ongoing financial crisis, however, it is perhaps difficult to disentangle its effects from external economic pressures, and accurately gauge how successful the project has been. Shepway District Council (2012: 10) remains confident that it will prove to be beneficial, and further notes that the town’s proximity to continental Europe, and its road and rail links with London and Europe – the M20 motorway links London to Folkestone, and the near-by town of Cheriton for road traffic access to Eurotunnel services – are amongst its key strengths:

Following major investment in transport networks, the district is in a recognised gateway location between the UK and mainland Europe, with access to the continent via the Channel Tunnel. (SDC, 2012: 15)

This assessment comes from SDC’s proposed local development framework, which identifies three ‘strategic needs’ as the Core Strategy for the long-term future of the district:

**Strategic Need A:** The challenge to improve employment, educational attainment and economic performance in Shepway...

**Strategic Need B:** The challenge to enhance the management and maintenance of the rich natural and historic assets in Shepway...

**Strategic Need C:** The challenge to improve the quality of life and sense of place, vibrancy and social mix in neighbourhoods, particularly where this minimises disparities in Shepway. (SDC, 2012: 29-30)

Within Strategic Need A SDC notes nine aims, which include – alongside general targets such as ‘increase the population of settlements and their prosperity’ (p.29) – those to which culture-led interventions will play a role. For example:

A2: Enhance the viability/vitality and appeal of Town Centres; with Folkestone as a major commercial, cultural and tourism centre featuring upgraded connections and public realm...

A4: Grow the proportion of residents with higher level qualifications...

A6: Maximise the efficient use of infrastructure and secure further improvements unlocking the development of priority sites, communities and areas...

A8: Regenerate deprived neighbourhoods, including Central and Northern Folkestone and in pockets within Romney Marsh

A9: Expand cultural and creative activity in the district, with refurbished premises and spaces in Folkestone's old town forming a vibrant Creative Quarter (p.29)

As such, SDC note that for the delivery of its Core Strategy for Folkestone the town’s Creative Quarter has a role in providing ‘regenerative benefits through enhancing the cultural and commercial appeal, social vibrancy and provide property market impetus for the wider town’ (p.103) and represents ‘major opportunities for development to contribute to strategic needs and to upgrade the fabric of the town drawing from its past and potential sense of place’ (p.104). It is important to note, however, that while SDC is encouraging the development of the Creative Quarter as part of the Core Strategy it is not a Council-led project.

### The Creative Quarter and the Creative Foundation

Speaking in 2010, Paul Carter, the Leader of Kent County Council, noted the ‘unique potential’ of Folkestone going on to suggest that, like Whitstable,<sup>6</sup> the town could expect to develop as a popular place for artists thanks to its location. This would happen through ‘natural progression’ and ‘the contribution that is already happening through Roger De Haan’ (quoted in Jamieson, 2010e: n.p.).

Roger De Haan is a businessperson born in Folkestone, who owned and ran the Saga group of companies<sup>7</sup> from 1984 until 2004, when he sold it for £1.35 billion. Alongside Nick Ewbank – a specialist in arts-led regeneration – Roger De Haan established the

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<sup>6</sup> A seaside town on the north Kent coast, popular as a tourist destination and known for its arts scene, including galleries, studios and events such as the Whitstable Biennale.

<sup>7</sup> Saga is, perhaps, best known for providing holidays and financial services to the over-50s. It was founded by Roger De Haan’s father and continues to be headquartered in Folkestone.

Creative Foundation in 2001. This was borne from their involvement with Folkestone's Metropole Arts Centre; De Haan joined the struggling arts organisation as Chair of the Board, headhunting Ewbank as the new Director. Understanding that the Metropole Arts Centre was unsustainable – they argued that the building was not suitable for use as a modern arts venue and it lacked an audience – it was decided 'to work towards a new cultural centre' that, Ewbank (2011: 22) argues would 'build audiences... win hearts and minds; ... [and potentially] begin to transform a whole town'.

This plan developed to focus not on a new arts centre, but instead on the production and implementation of a cultural regeneration master plan that would develop Folkestone's Old Town. This area, centred on the Old High Street and Tontine Street, leads from Folkestone's main shopping area down to the harbour. It is located in Harvey Ward, one of Folkestone's most deprived areas where it was understood that the economy had failed and that its buildings were desperately run down. Creative Foundation property director, Robert Green, described it as 'a no-go area. Hardly anyone, other than benefits claimants, was prepared to live there... Many of the buildings probably hadn't been properly maintained since they were built' (quoted in Ewbank, 2011: 40-1).

Backed by the Roger De Haan's Charitable Trust, the Creative Foundation was able to take control of many of the properties in the Old Town and renovate them for use as retail, studio, leisure and residential spaces. These would then be leased by the Creative Foundation to creative businesses and residents at subsidised rates, with income from the properties used to improve other properties under their management. Surpluses would be used to run arts events and educational programmes. Artists and 'creatives' would 'kick-start the regeneration process' (Ewbank, 2011: 27) and, because the buildings were controlled by the Creative Foundation, rents would be controlled long-term with the hope of avoiding the 'Hoxton Effect', whereby the cultural practitioners, who instigate the process of regeneration, are priced out of the area.<sup>8</sup> Nick Ewbank, speaking to the county's coastal towns regeneration committee (KCC, 2004: 38) described the changes that the Creative Foundation is trying to bring about:

What we're talking about is the high street being reborn full of shops, cafes, bars, vibrant and interesting. The sort of place you can go and get things you can't get in any other high street. Equally you've got a beautiful natural setting and we're talking about enhancing that. So that it's a complex and interesting offer to the visitor.

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<sup>8</sup> Hoxton, in London's East End, is one prominent example of artists kick-starting a gentrification processes that raised property prices above what artists could afford (Pratt, 2009; for accounts of other cities see Deutsche & Ryan, 1984; Ley, 2003; Matthews, 2010; Zukin, 1982; 2010).

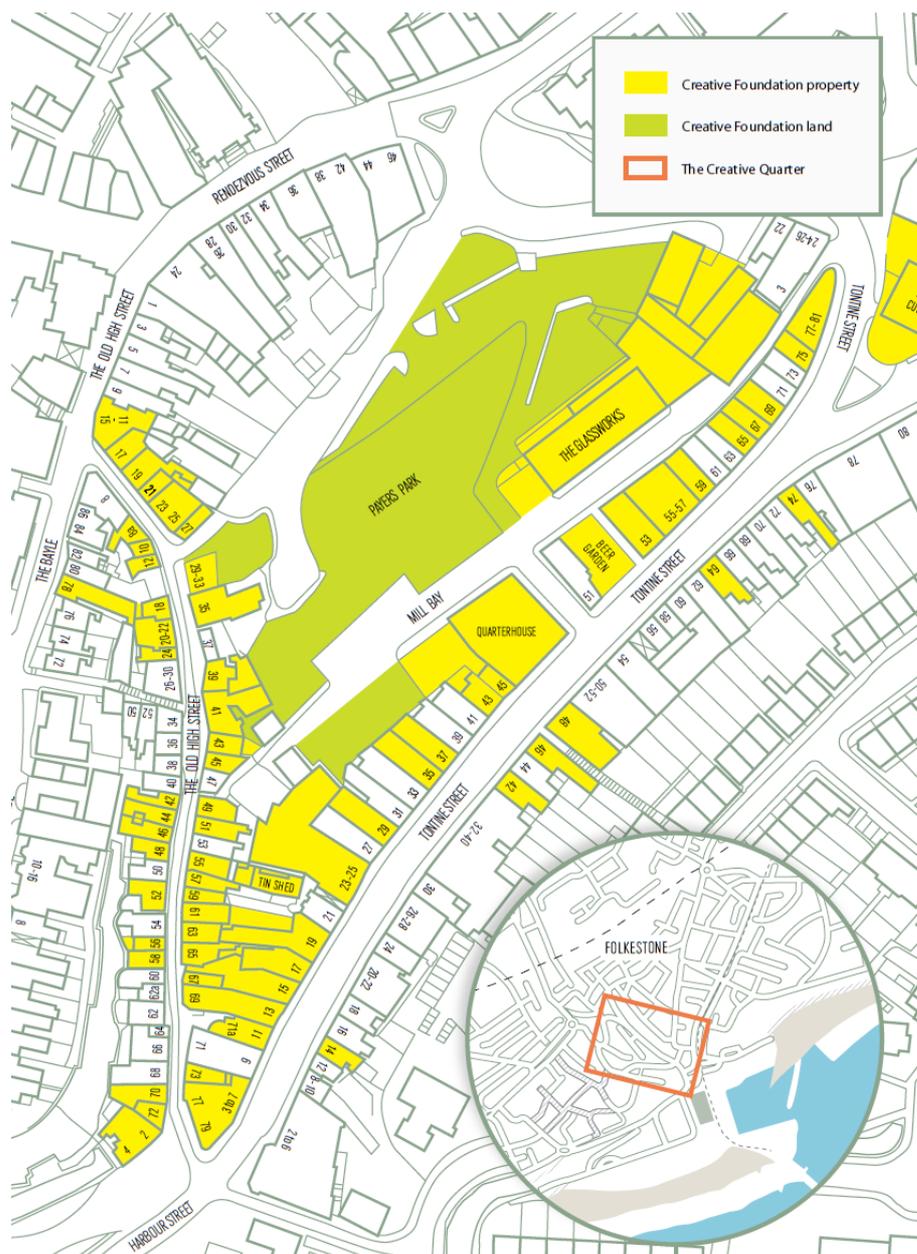


Figure 9 Property Map of the Creative Quarter (Ewbank, 2011: 44)

To further develop Folkestone as a creative town, the Creative Foundation has built and now manages the Quarterhouse Theatre on Tontine Street. It also has responsibility for the flagship Folkestone Triennial, which claims to be ‘the UK’s largest recurring show of contemporary art commissioned for the public realm’ (Ewbank, 2011: 85). First run in 2008, the third Triennial is scheduled to run from August to November 2014 with works from artists including Andy Goldsworthy and Yoko Ono. Selected works from each Triennial enter the Folkestone Artworks collection and remain on permanent display. Through the use of culture-led urban interventions, the Creative Foundation (n.d.), then, aims to make Folkestone a:

more attractive place to live, work and visit. By developing new attractions and publicising events, we hope that the project can serve as a case study in regeneration and how to build a successful creative

community. Attracting more visitors to the town will help provide new audiences so that the resident creative community can flourish and be sustained...

Artist and curator Matt Rowe – who moved back to Folkestone in 2004 to establish B&B Project Space in a Creative Foundation property – notes some of the reasons for, and benefits of, being located in the Creative Quarter:

I wanted to settle and invest my time locally; I've always made work about Folkestone and I was very keen on becoming socially engaged. The Quarter gave me the ability to develop a curatorial practice without having to conform to an institution... In Folkestone you can still make your own identity... (quoted in Ewbank, 2011: 51)

He goes on to say that his space is 'run on enthusiasm and adrenalin'; for the Creative Foundation, harnessing such energy is an important part of their model; Ewbank notes that the intention of the Creative Foundation was to achieve a 'critical mass of creative activity which would be sufficient to attract private investors to move into the area' (p.33). Before that critical mass is reached, however, Creative Quarter businesses and residents, such as Rowe, are 'pioneers' who are 'bravely setting up ahead of the audience as the building programme is still ongoing and can be physically off-putting for visitors' (Roger De Haan quoted in Ewbank, 2011: 51).

#### 1.2.4 Folkestone and Margate

It is perhaps possible to draw some parallels between Folkestone and Margate. They are both seaside towns in Kent that, while fashionable and popular in the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, now face serious economic and social issues. In this respect, both towns demonstrate the relative disadvantaged position of seaside towns in England (Beatty et al. 2008; CSJ, 2013; Shared Intelligence, 2008b).

Both district councils have developed strategies to deal with decline in line with county policy that views as desirable the development of high value-added sectors – such as the cultural industries, and in particular visual artists (KCC, 2010c: viii). Both are attempting to undertake culture-led interventions to meet the kinds of broad aims discussed in *Rebalancing Kent*, such as 'economic and social regeneration, tourism, environmental protection, planning, health, community safety, skills development and education' (KCC, 2010c: vi). Moreover, these can be viewed as following popular contemporary discourses of culture-led urban policy wherein art is 'increasingly prized... for their ability to brand, cultivate and classify space' (Matthews, 2014: 1019) and to catalyse economic development (see Chapter 3). Ewbank (2011: 22) suggests that the Creative Foundation might 'transform a whole town'; for Margate, there is a vision of a renaissance town brimming with confidence thanks to an 'engagement with culture as a tool for economic vitality, social cohesion, well being and civic pride' (2008b: 4).

Strategies in Folkestone and Margate include as key objectives attracting artists for their role in kick-starting the regeneration process; as pioneers and for their entrepreneurialism (Ewbank, 2011; Fleming, 2008b). They hope to attract artists by being recognised as places where ‘you can still make your own identity’ (Rowe quoted in Ewbank, 2011: 51) and ‘be part of something – a movement, a scene, a project’ (Fleming, 2008a: 24). As such, these strategies can be understood as being reliant on the creation of a vibrant, vital and attractive working environment for creative workers. A key question for this thesis, then, is whether they can create a *sustainable* ‘scene’. As a number of previous studies have shown (e.g. Currid & Williams, 2009; Eikhof & Haunschild, 2006; Lloyd, 2004; 2010; Mommaas, 2004; Scott, 2000) visual artists – like other creative workers - tend to cluster in areas with particular attributes (e.g. high degree of buzz, cheaper rents, bohemian atmosphere, existing arts infrastructure and so on).

However, creating an arts scene *de novo* is a difficult undertaking, and this means that cultural regeneration is a risky endeavour. For the agencies promoting it, failure could mean the loss of significant amounts of money, and they must consider opportunity costs and reputational damage. Similar risks can be applied to the artists who are implicated in this regeneration, though these are supplemented and amplified in crucial ways. As artists generally operate within very small budgets (Creative & Cultural Skills, 2009; Menger, 2006) one may suppose that the loss of comparatively small amounts of money relocating and investing in a ‘failing’ scene could have drastic consequences. Failure of the strategy may also remove arts development budgets, grants and funding streams on which they rely. A successful regeneration, meanwhile, may also carry risks as gentrifying processes can modify the symbolic and economic properties of place in ways that prove harmful to artists’ interests (Mathews, 2010).

More broadly, there is the crucial question as to whether visual art provides ‘good jobs’, of the type that can enhance the local economy, and provide valued and meaningful employment. It is, perhaps, encouraging that Kent County Council (2010c) acknowledge structural inequalities within the creative sector, and that the model developed by the Creative Foundation seeks to avoid the ‘Hoxton Effect’ (Ewbank, 2011), whereby artists are vulnerable to effects of the economic regeneration they helped foment. However, and as argued in Chapters 3 and 4, while artists play such an apparent key role in these urban policies, at both local and regional level, a more substantive engagement is called for with regards to their conditions of labour.

### 1.3 Overview of Chapters

This thesis links longstanding debates on culture-led regeneration and urban strategies (Bassett, 1993; Currid, 2007; Evans, 2004; 2009; Florida, 2002; Harvey, 1989; Landry, 2000; Scott, 2000; Zukin, 1982) with active debates on the quality of jobs in the cultural and creative sectors, questioning notions of autonomy, under-employment, pay, conditions and ways in which artistic identities are constructed (Banks, 2006; 2007; 2010; 2011; Banks, Gill & Taylor, 2013; Gill, 2008; Hesmondhalgh, 2010;

Hesmondhalgh & Baker, 2011; Holt, 2010; Lee, 2013; McGuigan, 2010; McRobbie, 2002; Menger, 2006; Murray, 2011; Oakley, 2009a; 2011; Taylor, 2013). As outlined above, it does so through an exploration of cultural labour in Margate and Folkestone. Before presenting the findings, and theoretical implications, of this study, it is however necessary to situate it within a wider policy and academic context.

To these ends, Chapter Two describes the development of cultural industries policy in the UK. It provides a broad overview of the social/economic changes associated with post-Fordism and how the cultural industries developed in policy circles as a response. It forms the basis for further discussion of two topics related to post-Fordism and the development of cultural industries policy, namely the role of culture in urban policy, and the changing nature of work (of which the cultural worker is, for some, exemplary).

In Chapter Three, then, issues around the use of culture and creativity in urban policy are explored. It suggests that culture-led urban policy rose to prominence in response to changes associated with post-Fordism, namely deindustrialisation, inter-urban competition and the development of cultural industries discourses. This chapter provides a critical account of the rationales and responses to the use of culture in urban policy. It argues that culture-led urban policy can often proceed in a way that erodes local distinctiveness and ignores extant communities, culture merely providing a veneer to strategies for economic growth.

As the cultural industries have been promoted in economic and urban policy spheres, among others, there has been an inattention to conditions of work in the sector. Chapter Four highlights critical accounts of cultural work that point to a norm of low pay, and flexibilised and insecure jobs – these accounts apparently refute the possibility of good work in these sectors. This chapter argues for a more nuanced understanding of cultural work that acknowledges such issues but which also does not elide the agency and subjectivities of cultural workers.

Chapter Five provides an account of the research conducted and the methodological approaches adopted. It assesses the methodological and epistemological choices made, and describes the research sample and methods of analysis.

Chapters Six through Nine present empirical findings and analysis of the fieldwork. Chapters Six and Seven look at the role of artists and artists' labour in reconfiguring Margate and Folkestone as 'creative places'. Chapter Six provides an account of how these coastal towns are being constructed as artful/creative places. It demonstrates that artists' labour is vital in creating, augmenting and reproducing the cultural properties of place. Chapter Seven takes a critical approach to the effects of culture-led urban interventions. It argues that these strategies, of which artists are an integral part, have created a distinction between the undesirable/uncreative and the desirable/creative. Moreover, it points to ways in which these strategies have proceeded in ways that may not be work to the interests of artists, privileging opportunities for consumption and the 'speculative construction of place' over the creation of sites of sustainable production.

Chapters Eight and Nine explore in further detail the quality of work for artists in Margate and Folkestone. Rather than reducing artists work to exploited subject of the urban growth machine, Chapter Eight explore the experiences, subjectivities and meanings respondents draw from their work as visual artists. Chapter Nine examines the conditions of work for artists – looking specifically at the critical issue of autonomy. By looking at the constraints and determinants in their work, including their relation to art markets and how they make money, it explores the tensions between idealised autonomous action and competing demands on time and resources.

The final Chapter provides an overview of the key findings. It notes the contributions of this research to academic literatures, and makes recommendations for further research. This Chapter further outlines the policy implications of these findings, and outlines questions and practices that may better inform future policies on cultural work and culture-led urban strategies.

## 2 The Development of the Cultural Industries

The growing focus in academic literatures on cultural labour (Banks, 2007; 2010; Gill & Pratt, 2008; Hesmondhalgh, 2007; 2010; Hesmondhalgh & Baker, 2010; Oakley, 2009a; 2011) and the sustained interest in culture-led urban policy (Bassett, 2003; Bailey et al., 2004; Evans, 2009; Evans & Shaw, 2004; Florida, 2002; 2005; Miles & Paddison, 2005; Vivant, 2013) can, perhaps, be linked to the increasing attention afforded to the cultural industries in policy circles (e.g. DCMS, 1998; 2001; 2008; LGA, 2009; 2013; UNCTAD, 2008; 2010; see also Braun & Lavanga, 2007; Oakley, 2010; Pratt, 2005).

Cultural industries discourses highlight culture and creativity as key resources for economic growth and the amelioration of social issues, in the context of both long term 'post-industrial' transition and shorter term economic recession (Harris & Moreno, 2012; Indergaard et al., 2013). However, to use the term 'cultural industries' is to enter a contested terrain. The origins of the contemporary phrase cultural *industries* lies in the Frankfurt School's strident critique of the culture *industry* (Adorno & Horkheimer, 1997). How, then, have 'cultural industries' lost their pessimistic gloss to become – particularly when reconfigured as the *creative* industries – a valorised object in practitioner, academic, economic and policy discourses? Another question is how this sector should be defined – to who does it apply, and to who does it not – and whether such definitions provide any kind of theoretical or analytic coherence, or merely represents a useful shorthand for modish, but otherwise empty, rhetoric (Braun & Lavanga, 2007; Garnham, 2005; Miller, 2007).

The previous Chapter provided an overview of the culture-led regeneration strategies of Margate and Folkestone, placing these in their regional and national policy contexts. This Chapter will further contextualise these developments. It will suggest that the development and rise to prominence of cultural industries policies in the global north can be linked to macro level social and economic shifts associated with deindustrialisation and the advent of what might be characterised as the post-Fordist era. This shift has presented challenges and opportunities for individuals, businesses and policy makers, through, for example: the relative increase in the mobility of capital that promotes local, regional and national competition for investment; deindustrialisation in the global north has led to an emphasis on knowledge and information as the key driver of economic growth, and; changes to employment, labour and consumption patterns that are concomitant with increasing levels of individualisation (Amin, 1994; Bauman, 2000; Bell, 1973; Castells, 2000; Harvey, 1990; Lash & Urry, 1994). This Chapter will demonstrate how the cultural industries developed in the context of the changes associated with post-Fordism, and as a means by which to meet the challenges these changes present. It will sketch the spatial and temporal trajectories of cultural industries discourses as a means by which to provide important context for the specific issues discussed in the remainder of this thesis. Specifically, it will provide a broad contextualisation to debates around the role of the

cultural industries in urban policy (Chapter 3) and as to the conditions of work in these sectors (Chapter 4).

## 2.1 A Post-Fordist Era?

During the 1960s and '70s many economies of the global north were subject to economic crises and social discontent that, in the following years, precipitated wide ranging shifts in patterns of capital organisation, work and consumption linked with social, political and technological change (Castells, 2000; Harvey, 1990; Kumar, 2005). The nature of this shift, how to characterise and analyse it, and whether it represented something genuinely new and distinct is a somewhat more contentious issue. While this is not the place to fully answer such questions, this section will provide an overview and analysis of these changes with the aim of highlighting how particular features of post-Fordism appear linked with the development of the cultural industries as an important area of economic growth, and also to the rise of inter-urban competition.

The origins of post-Fordist theory may be traced the development of post-industrial theory in the 1970s as a means by which to analyse the techno-economic changes in the societies of the global north at that time. Bell (1973), a key proponent of this idea, singled out 'theoretical knowledge' as the key driver of growth and value, going on to say that 'the post-industrial society is an information society, as industrial society is a goods-producing society' (p.467). Castells (2000) points out several weaknesses in Bell's work, particularly a failure to engage with the economic polarisation and inequalities developing in the new economy. Post-Fordism may viewed as a broadly Marxist interpretation of post-industrial theory that encompasses many different approaches, and which seeks to address some of the perceived weaknesses of post-industrial accounts of these changes (Amin, 1994; Elam, 1994; Kumar, 2005; Rustin, 1989).

This section will first briefly note the key features of Fordism as the basis for further discussion on post-Fordism. It will specifically highlight a relative increase in the mobility of capital and the implications of this for relations between capital, state and labour, and the ways in which the post-Fordist era may be characterised by its emphasis on information and knowledge as key assets.

### 2.1.1 Fordism

Fordism, in a narrow sense, has been theorised as a method of industrial production that is typified by mass production of standardised products; there is a high division of labour, with production handled by a largely unskilled workforce organised along what may be viewed as Taylorist principles. Internal corporate control is hierarchical, with 'separation between management, conception, control, and execution' (Harvey, 1990: 125). On the macro-organisational level, supply chains are vertically integrated, with centralised control and command systems – a structure that, for commercial and competitive reasons, is viewed as necessary for the co-ordination of the production process (Clarke, 1990).

The improvements within Fordism to the factory system, however, were the result of gradual changes, and their wider significance depends on expanding from this narrow definition. Harvey (1990: 125) notes the wide-ranging implications of mass production: alongside mass consumption, it allows for ‘a new system of the reproduction of labour power, a new politics of labour control and management, a new aesthetic and psychology’. Additionally, it is argued that the growth of capital in Fordism is predicated upon *intensive* accumulation, a regime dependent ‘not only dynamic production goods sectors... but also on dynamic *consumption goods* sectors’ (Elam, 1994: 63). A key aspect of such views of Fordism, then, is an appreciation of its effects upon labour, not least the complete integration of workers into the capitalist system as both producers *and* consumers who are important to the accumulation of capital as much for their purchasing-power as their labour-power. More broadly, therefore, Fordism can be described as a specific mode of development that expands from the factory floor to encompass an entire industrial, technological, social and cultural paradigm – in short, a complete ‘way of life’ (Elam, 1994: 63).

Labour, however, was (and is) not a pliant mass and thus had to become habituated to the demands of capital in a ‘long-drawn-out (and not particularly happy) historical process’ (Harvey, 1990: 123). Fordism reconfigured and rationalised work through the division of labour, with most tasks being performed by specialised machines operated by unskilled, or newly deskilled, labour. Sennett (1999: 35-37) points out that even for Adam Smith – writing over a century before Henry Ford delivered his much refined version – such repetitive work was considered to have a corrosive, even destructive, effect on workers. As such, the development of Fordism was dependent upon the benefits accrued by, and compromises reached between, labour, corporations, and states. For their part, labour and trade union organisations co-operated with corporations in disciplining labour to the Fordist production system in exchange for wage gains and similar improvements to quality of life. This social contract was underwritten by the state, which (to a varying extent in different nations) assumed welfare obligations, provided the institutional frameworks for collective labour power, and undertook the necessary public investment required for mass production and consumption, gaining for itself political legitimacy. In return, capital was able to take advantage of new infrastructure, and a period of social cohesion that provided a more-or-less willing pool of labour and consumers (Esser & Hirsch, 1994; Harvey, 1990; Peck, 1996).

This mutual dependency, and antagonism, between labour, state, and capital can be viewed as a site of both conflict and progress (Bauman, 2000: 146), and while the settlement lasted Fordism delivered low unemployment, growth and prosperity, and social stability to many. As such, the result of these compromises has been described as the ‘Golden Age’ of capitalism (De Vroey, 1984; Elam, 1994; Harvey, 1990).

The mutual dependency outlined above may be viewed as a product of the immobility of labour and capital in this period. Capital accumulation was, largely, tied to material production processes predicated on investment in spatially-fixed factories and

machinery (i.e. means of production). Like the workers, then, capital was rooted by the relative difficulty of overcoming the physical barriers to transportation and communication. Bauman (2000) characterises this as the era of ‘heavy modernity’ wherein the domination of space is a form of power, though place is simultaneously both a ‘fortress and prison’ of wealth and might (p.115). Tied into such a view of space is a particular conception of time – the immobility of labour and capital in heavy modernity encouraged long-term planning, with the durability of factories matched by the tacit promise of a ‘job for life’ (p.146). Fordism, therefore, was based around an organisational form that ultimately relied upon a negotiation between labour, capital and state, and was informed by a particular conception of space.

From the 1960s, however, the social contract of the ‘Golden Age’ was to come under pressure from economic, social and technological developments. Culturally, there was growing awareness of persistent inequalities – such as issues of ethnicity and gender – and resentment of US hegemony projected ‘through a very distinctive system of military alliance and power relations’ (Harvey, 1990: 137; Elam, 1994). Consumers also became discontent with the depersonalisation of goods and services in an era of standardised mass production. Industry, thus, had to reconfigure to meet the demands of more fragmented markets and volatile consumption patterns as consumers began to shift away from standardised goods to those that offered the promise of differentiation. Meanwhile, the 1973 oil crisis led to ‘deindustrialization and industrial restructuring... [that] ripped the heart and the tax base out of many cities’ (Indergaard et al., 2013: 2). Concurrent to these economic and social pressures, were technological advances – especially in the development of new information and communication technologies (Amin, 1994; Castells, 2000).

The result was that corporations entered a period of:

rationalization, restructuring and intensification of labour control...  
 technological changes, automation, the search for new product lines  
 and market niches, geographical dispersal... mergers, and steps to  
 accelerate the turnover time of their capital. (Harvey, 1990: 145)

More generally, the basis of the Fordist-Keynesian compromise, and the cohesion and stability it brought about, was fracturing, and attempts to deal with these changes would mean the transition one form of capitalism to another.

### 2.1.2 Post-Fordism

While the precise nature of the transition from Fordism remains a contested issue, an area of agreement can be found in the decentralisation and diversity that Kumar notes ‘feature prominently in all accounts of this new era’ (2005: 61). Whereas the Fordist paradigm in business favoured centralised decision-making based on hierarchies from core to periphery and large-scale standardised mass production, the post-Fordist society apparently moved towards small-scale customised production by decentralised and

networked firms (Tödtling, 1994: 68). This economic restructuring to meet the requirements of flexible production, as well as the rationalisation needed to confront the economic fall-out of the recession of the 1970s, represents the crux of the transition away from Fordism to a new regime of accumulation. Importantly, this is not to suggest a decline in the power of large corporations. They adapted to the requirements of flexibility through a process of vertical disintegration, the use of sub-contracting and outsourcing, and the transfer of the remnants of standardised production to low-wage regions. In this last point, it is possible to discern that spatial relationships were also reorganised in this period (Bauman, 2000: 117). For Harvey:

capitalism is becoming ever more tightly organized through dispersal, geographical mobility, and flexible responses in labour markets, labour processes, and consumer markets, all accompanied by hefty doses of institutional, product, and technological innovation.

(Harvey, 1990: 158-9)

Whereas the mobility of capital had previously been limited by its reliance on labour, investment in fixed plant and machinery, and the restrictions of physical geography in communications and transportation, from the 1970s it gained an enhanced mobility. This was due to new technologies, especially in the increased opportunities afforded for the utilisation of information and knowledge as a source of wealth and power. The development of information communication technologies (ICTs) bestowed an increasing ability to effectively obtain, utilise, and process information, offering a solution to the problems of command and control, while improvements to modes transportation – for example, containerisation, and to road, rail and air networks – eased the restrictions imposed by natural barriers to the movement of physical goods. Such improvements allowed for the co-ordination of global networks of decentralised suppliers, and subcontractors. Furthermore, global financial networks – especially since the ‘Big Bang’ of the 1980s, and equally dependent upon new technology – allowed for the global flow of capital outside the effective control of any nation (Bauman, 2000; Castells, 2000; Harvey, 2010; Kumar, 2005).

This represented the emergence of what has been termed the ‘weightless economy’ (Quah, 1996; 1999), wherein information and knowledge, in themselves, are key assets. Quah suggests that there has been a shift to an economy based on knowledge-products; these are *dematerialised* in that ‘economic value is embedded in logical units – bits and bytes of (possibly computer, possibly biological) memory’ (1996: 1). Productivity and growth, then, comes to be viewed as lying within the generation of knowledge and information, and through industries that feature ‘high information and knowledge content in their activity’ (Castells, 2000: 219). Moreover, physical distance is seen to be an irrelevance in the ‘weightless economy’ as it is negated by global flows of information through fibre-optic and satellite networks.

The effect has been to shift the balance of power between state, capital and labour. As capital has increased its relative mobility it has been able to assume an advantageous position over more territorially-bound actors. The state:

is now in a much more problematic position. It is called upon to regulate the activities of corporate capital in the national interest at the same time as it is forced, also in the national interest, to create a 'good business climate' to act as an inducement to trans-national and global finance capital, and to deter (by means other than exchange controls) capital flight to green and more profitable pastures.  
(Harvey, 1990: 170)

Thus, the state comes under pressure to present itself as an attractive site for investment. These changes can be characterised as a shift to a 'neoliberal' political agenda that seeks to utilise the mobility of capital, the advantages of new technology, and more decentralised forms of organisation in a 'determined attempt... to strengthen capital and to attack the corporate structures of labour' (Rustin, 1989: 75).

Bauman (2000: 150) suggests that a key demand of 'light capitalism' is the supply of deregulated labour markets and a weakening of welfare system, representing a retreat from the Fordist-Keynesian social settlement. Indeed, it is through the domination of work that capital has affected the 'core of social structure' (Castells, 2000: 216). If Fordism organised society around mass production, rigidity, and collective identity, then post-Fordism has delivered a different kind of societal structure, based on flexibility, the temporary, and individual identity. As corporations have taken to the network as an organisational paradigm to meet the demands of flexibility, it has been suggested that the network has gained ground in organising human relations. Thus, community as a stable, long-lasting point around which society could cohere is replaced by what Wittel (2001) calls 'network sociality', in which social bonds are created by 'the movement of ideas, the establishment of only ever temporary standards and protocols' (p.51). The search for identity is increasingly individualised and fragmented as, it is argued, there has been now a decline in what were fundamental sources of social meaning, common interest and solidarity: in short, work is no longer a 'secure axis around which to wrap and fix self-definitions (Bauman, 2000: 139) meaning even the labouring body has become contingent and a site of individual reflexive identity construction (Shilling, 2003).

However, Harvey (1990: 171) argues that while changes in social structure – a decline in solidarity and increased attention to individualised identity – 'proved destructive and ruinous to some', they have also delivered 'a burst of energy... [*that*] compares favourably with the stifling orthodoxy and bureaucracy of state control' (p.171). The Fordist compromise was predicated upon a separation of privileged/unprivileged jobs, often on a gendered or ethnic basis, and fomented increasing unrest at the homogeneity of standardised goods and services (p.138-40). Its breakdown has allowed for increased

attention to be paid to individual identity formation, particularly through the consumption of more differentiated products (Bauman, 2000: 83-4). It is therefore important to note that Fordism and post-Fordism have been unevenly experienced – not only between the global north and elsewhere, but also within societies and social groups (Aglietta, 1998; McDowell, 1991; Strangleman, 2007).

Post-Fordism, then, can be viewed as a way of discussing social and economic changes in the global north from the 1960s and '70s that were born of the economic and social crises in that period, and subsequent technological developments. The following section will highlight how two key aspects of post-Fordism – a concern with information and knowledge production, and the demand for differentiated goods – can be linked with the rise of the cultural industries in policy discourses.

## 2.2 The Cultural Industries

For O'Connor (2000) the rise of the cultural industries is linked to the shift to post-Fordist consumption habits. Under post-Fordism, markets for goods and services are more fragmented and 'niched' with rapid changes in products, with greater attention paid to consumption as being 'positional' (p.4) and involved in a reflexive construction of identity. O'Connor suggests:

These new forms of consumption [are] fast moving, highly segmented, increasingly cultural... Innovation, continual transformation, personal choice, creativity – all these were cultural values which in the 1970s and 80s ran close to the transformation of cultural consumption and, increasingly, cultural production... What I want to point to is that the emergence of the cultural industries was part of this shift, a response to it, an active negotiation with it. (p.4-5)

Moreover, Lash and Urry (1994) go so far as to state that the cultural industries were post-Fordist 'avant la lettre' (p.123). They point to the vertical disintegration and decentralisation of many creative enterprises, with project work and outsourcing – hallmarks of post-Fordist organisation – being the norm. The cultural industries, then, perhaps exemplify aspects of post-Fordist consumption and production (Garnham, 2005; O'Connor, 2007). However, producing a definitive account of the cultural industries is a complicated undertaking, one that must negotiate a range of academic, political and ideological positions that at one end sees them as mass deception and destroying individuality, and at the other as social and economic salvation. This section will highlight some of these debates as it details the development of cultural industries as an object of policy and academic interest. It will begin by noting some of the models used for defining the cultural industries noting the breadth of definitions used. It will then look at how the cultural industries developed through the twentieth century to achieve prominence as a policy focus, in the UK context at least, during the 1990s and 2000s.

### 2.2.1 Models and Definitions

There are several contemporary models that attempt to define the activities that constitute the cultural industries (see table, below) and, indeed, question whether to call them ‘cultural industries’ at all. For the UK Department of Culture Media and Sport (DCMS, 1998) the *creative* industries have:

their origin in individual creativity, skill and talent and which have a potential for wealth and job creation through the generation and exploitation of intellectual property. (p.3)

This includes a range of activities including the visual arts and publishing, as well as advertising and software. While popular in international policy circles, this definition has been criticised for the political expediency of some of its choices, leading to an ‘incoherent and vague’ model (Braun & Lavanga, 2007: 3). Alternatively, Hesmondhalgh (2007) proposes that the cultural industries be defined around ‘the industrial production and circulation of texts’ (p.12) – core cultural industries, therefore, being mass media – placing art and theatre at the periphery. For O’Connor (2007), however, this ‘cuts out much that is central to the cultural industries production system’ (p.48). Other models focus on, for example, the gradation of commercialisation in the creative arts (Throsby’s concentric circles model), or the production on intellectual property (WIPO’s copyright industries) – overviews of which can be found in O’Connor (2007) and UNCTAD (2010) – or on more radical reinterpretations based around innovation systems and social network markets (see O’Connor, 2009 for a useful overview and response).

**Classification systems for the creative industries derived from different models**  
(Derived from UNCTAD, 2010: 7)

UK DCMS model	Symbolic texts model	Concentric circles model
Advertising	<i>Core cultural industries</i>	<i>Core creative arts</i>
Architecture	Advertising	Literature
Art and antiques market	Film	Music
Crafts	Internet	Performing arts
Design	Music	Visual arts
Fashion	Publishing	
Film and video	Television and Radio	<i>Other core cultural industries</i>
Music	Video and computer games	Film
Performing arts		Museums and libraries
Publishing	<i>Peripheral cultural industries</i>	
Software	Creative arts	<i>Wider cultural industries</i>
Television and radio		Heritage services
Video and computer games	<i>Borderline cultural industries</i>	Publishing
	Consumer electronics	Sound recording
	Fashion	Television and radio
	Software	Video and computer games
	Sport	
		<i>Related industries</i>
		Advertising      Design
		Architecture      Fashion

The UNCTAD (2010) report on the creative economy suggests that there is no right or wrong model for the cultural industries, each offering ‘different ways of interpreting the structural characteristics of creative production’ (p.7). However, the report goes on to note the problems that such a proliferation of definitions poses in the gathering meaningful statistical data. This issue, perhaps, goes some way towards explaining the paucity of strong evidence in the field, even on the ‘most basic issues, let alone the more specialized concerns of policy-makers and academics’ (Hesmondhalgh & Pratt, 2005: 10).

Furthermore, and as suggested above, different models are not neutral, but can have ideological/political connotations that impact upon policy. For Pratt (2005), aesthetic, political and economic judgments are all important for cultural policy so that ‘the current challenge would seem to be one of creating a frame of reference within which all of these elements can be considered’ (p.39). Such a view is reinforced by the increasing emphasis on the impacts of cultural activity throughout many of the societies of the global north, whether through ‘aesthetic reflexivity’ or an increasing awareness of the ambiguous relationship between the economy and culture as ‘economic and symbolic processes are more than ever interlaced and interarticulated’ (Lash & Urry, 1994: 64; see also Amin, 1994). Indeed, to fully contextualise the current debates on the cultural industries it is necessary to engage with some of their long-term historical antecedents and the changing relationship between art, culture, and the economy.

### 2.2.2 Capitalism, Commodification and the Culture Industry

O’Connor (2007) notes the emergence of the market as the primary mediator between artist and public from the eighteenth century, suggesting that from ‘this point the work of art increasingly became a commodity’ (p.13). For Hesmondhalgh and Pratt (2005), the commercialisation of cultural production occurred in capitalist societies from the nineteenth century, a process that intensified in industrial societies from the beginning of the twentieth century onwards. An important part of this process was the development of new technologies, and particularly mass mechanical reproduction. The development of such technology allowed for volume sales of cultural products with which to recoup investment in materials, skills and time, and had a fundamental effect upon the structure of cultural production. To take the example of the printing press, whereas a book had previously been a unique hand-written object, mechanical reproduction allowed for the relatively cheap and fast creation of multiple copies – thus creating a publishing industry and raising difficult questions about the organisation of production and distribution:

Who paid who, and for what exactly? How did Gutenberg recoup his money? On what basis was the writer to be paid? What was ‘intellectual property’...? (O’Connor, 2007: 11)

O’Connor goes on to note that ‘a cultural commodity economy began to grow by trial and error’ and – even as publishing answered some of these basic questions – one can, perhaps, find analogous processes of trial and error at the advent of recorded sound,

cinema, broadcast media: even today the cultural industries fumble with digital distribution.

For visual artists, the commodification of the cultural product and the encroachment of the market had an ambiguous effect. While it reduced the ‘sacred’ value of an artwork to an exchange value it also ‘freed the artist from direct dependence on a patron, giving them the social and financial space (and incentive) to pursue their artistic development’ (O’Connor, 2007: 13). More broadly, these changes were occurring as part of the processes of industrialisation and urbanisation in which the ‘fundamental structures’ of:

personal and collective meaning were overturned. Crucially, the very symbolic means by which these conflicting meanings were circulated, contested and extrapolated within this changing society were themselves becoming commodities. (p.11)

It is perhaps unsurprising that criticism of new forms of cultural production, embedded in commodity production and the market, should focus on its industrialised aspects. It was ‘modernist fears of industrialisation and debasement of art and culture’ (Hesmondhalgh & Pratt, 2005: 2) that lead Adorno and Horkheimer (1997) – two notable members of the Frankfurt School of critical theory – to write in 1947 about the ‘culture industry’. From the beginning of the twentieth century, mass education, growing disposable income and increasing amount of leisure time, alongside a range of technological innovations, resulted in a new wave of cultural production and consumption (O’Connor, 2007: 15). If changes to cultural production in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries had raised questions about the art as commodity, then this culture industry negated these by ‘ensuring that practices, ideas and desires were dislocated from the relatively autonomous public sphere and re-embedded in the rational machinery of industrial production’ (Banks, 2007: 18). Adorno and Horkheimer thus viewed as misleading any democratic or emancipatory interpretation of mass culture. Informed by the Hegelian tradition – in which art was able to offer a critique of, and utopian vision for, life – they concluded that the commodified products of the culture industry had lost any radical capacity (Hesmondhalgh, 2007: 16). Popular press, music and cinema instead cultivated a false consciousness that arrested the development of ‘autonomous, independent individuals who judge and decide consciously for themselves’ (Adorno, 1991: 92). In their analysis, therefore, the culture industry represented the total absorption under monopoly capitalism of art and culture into the economy. Moreover, the culture industry was the means by which monopoly capitalism was able to ideologically reproduce itself, achieved by total control of the masses through the integration (that is, domination) of all aspects of a worker’s life:

Amusement under late capitalism is the prolongation of work...  
mechanization has such power over a man’s leisure and happiness...  
that his experiences are inevitably after-images of the work process  
itself. (Adorno & Horkheimer, 1997: 137)

The modern worker, then, became fully integrated into the Fordist system, ‘a controlled automaton... programmed and controlled by modern industrial techniques’ (O’Connor, 2007: 9). Adorno goes further, implying that the culture industry’s success at domination is equivalent to ‘that which was achieved politically under fascism’ (Bernstein, 1991: 4).

However, this pessimistic analysis of popular culture has attracted criticism. Banks (2007) notes that Adorno’s defence of modernist cultural movements and condemnation of popular culture ‘appear eccentric’ (p.20) and elitist in the context of contemporary (postmodern) social science. Furthermore, to its critics, culture industry theory is perceived to be underpinned by a structural bias that assumes an all-powerful industry that forces its product upon consumers apparently precluding the possibility of creative or independent action that could evade ‘the structures of commodification and alienation’ (Banks, 2007: 20). Its critics, then, would suggest that the reality is ‘more dynamic, diverse and conflictual than the theory allows’ (Bernstein, 1991: 20), and that since the culture industry must reproduce social life to maintain credibility and audience it ‘however unwittingly or unintentionally, includes moments of conflict, rebellion, opposition and the drive for emancipation and utopia’ (p.21).

Adorno’s idea of the culture industry was marginalised through the mid-twentieth century, described as being ‘both subversive and *démodé*’ (Garnham, 2005: 17), only to be revived in the 1960s as the Left sought cultural accounts to explain the persistence of capitalism. In this context:

[the] Culture Industry, as cultural collapse or as total system, was subjected to increased scrutiny; on the one hand the Culture Industry had grown enormously in scope and visibility since his [*Adorno’s*] first writing, but on the other, it was clear that his account of it was simply not adequate. (O’Connor, 2007: 18)

As such, while the culture industry thesis provides ‘the fullest and most intelligent version of the extreme, pessimistic view of the industrialisation of culture’ (Hesmondhalgh, 2007: 17), the revival was not simply a replay of Adorno and Horkheimer’s analysis. Garnham (2005) suggests that new approaches to these *cultural industries* do not ‘necessarily share either the elitist, cultural pessimism of the Frankfurt School (although some did) or the particular version of the Marxist economics that underpinned it’ (p.18). Using the term ‘cultural industries’ is to acknowledge that they are much more ‘complex, ambivalent and contested’ (Hesmondhalgh, 2007: 17). New frameworks, then, were developed to analyse cultural production and consumption, and in the UK this led to approaches such as those from cultural studies and the political economy school (O’Connor, 2007).<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Hesmondhalgh (2007) notes that while cultural studies and political economy may be placed in opposition to one another a view which places them as *the* binary approaches to thinking on the cultural

As a discipline, cultural studies emerged from a desire to provide, through textual analysis, a 'progressive' grounding to accounts of culture in opposition to the conservative tradition established prior to the Second World War. It represents an attempt to examine culture through its relation to social power, probing authority in culture, questioning whose voices are privileged and which are marginalised, and why. As such, it resisted 'high' or official culture and takes 'other' (popular, international) culture seriously, presenting:

a decisive rejection of both Frankfurt School cultural pessimism and the social-democratic critique of commercial, and especially American commercial, culture in favour of a positive revaluation, not to say a celebration, of popular culture and the supposed subversive decoding powers of the audience. (Garnham, 2005: 18)

Hesmondhalgh (2007) goes on to praise its contribution to the understanding of the complex relationships between judgements of cultural value and the politics of social identity. However, analysis of the cultural industries and cultural production from a cultural studies perspective is sparse and this approach generally proceeds from a theoretical perspective with a relative absence of empirical study. More stringent criticism has come from the political economy school for its abandonment of economic analysis and '(over)emphasis' on cultural objects as texts rather than as commodities (O'Connor, 2007: 19).

Cultural studies, then, can be contrasted with the political economy school that is much less concerned with issues of textual meaning than those of power, conflict and 'the particular nature of the economic structure and dynamics of the cultural sector' (Garnham, 2005: 19). This tradition emerged in the 1960s, stemming from a reengagement with Marx, seeking to 'develop a critical approach to political communication and broadcasting policy' (O'Connor, 2007: 19) that crucially views cultural production as a kind of commodity production. Formative work by Murdock and Golding (1973) states that:

The obvious starting point for a political economy of mass communications is the recognition that the mass media are first and foremost industrial and commercial organizations which produce and distribute commodities. (p.205-6)

Political economy, therefore, acknowledges and examines the problems and contradictions within this system due to the process of commodification – especially its ambivalent nature as enabling/productive – as evidenced by increased investment in, and proliferation of, cultural goods. Yet it also examines the constraining/destructive

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industries is 'neither accurate nor useful' (p.44), providing further accounts of other approaches that I have omitted here (e.g. liberal-pluralist communication studies).

elements in the power and wealth inequalities it creates for cultural producers and consumers (Hesmondhalgh, 2007).

For Garnham (2005), who played a key part in shaping the political economy school, this economic analysis is important as policy must not 'hang on to a traditional opposition between culture and markets or between culture and economics' but, rather, 'take the economics of the sector and the operation of the markets for symbolic goods and services seriously' (p.19). As such, in comparison to other forms of capitalist production and informed by political economy thinking, the cultural industries can be viewed as sharing distinctive features that Hesmondhalgh (2007: 18; see also Caves, 2000; Garnham, 2005) separates between problems and common responses:

Problems:

- Risky business
- Creativity versus commerce
- High production costs and low reproduction costs
- Semi-public goods; the need to create scarcity

Responses:

- Misses are offset against hits by building repertoire
- Concentration, integration and co-opting publicity
- Artificial scarcity
- Formatting: stars, genres and serials
- Loose control of symbol creators; tight control of distribution and marketing

These features have implications for the overall structure of the cultural industries. For example, the unpredictable/risky nature of the business resulting from the highly subjective nature of its products, favours larger companies who can finance multiple projects, offsetting failures against the profits of more successful ventures. Government policy is also influenced by these issues, as in the creation of intellectual property law at national and international scales to create artificial scarcity and enable producers to recoup the high initial investment necessary for many cultural products. The tensions between creativity and commerce have particular effects upon cultural workers whose inputs are 'governed by complex contractual relations... determining the distribution of profits to various rights holders negotiated between parties with highly unequal power' (Garnham, 2005: 20). Outcomes for labour can be viewed as somewhat ambivalent, providing for both autonomy and uncertainty (see Chapter 4).

### 2.2.3 Cultural Industries as Policy Object: The 'Creative' Industries

In many nations in the period following the Second World War, cultural policy had focussed on funding the legitimated, classical arts. Even as its scope expanded to include crafts and 'folk' art, concern remained largely with subsidising and regulating

‘the arts’ (Hesmondhalgh, 2007). Pratt (2005) suggests that the cultural industries, as commercial ventures, were an irritant to a cultural policy that sought to protect the largely not-for-profit cultural sector. By the 1980s, however, their expansion accelerated in the global north – a process linked to a number of factors including increases in leisure time, economic prosperity and literacy rates – so that ‘it was becoming increasingly difficult for cultural policy-makers to ignore the growing cultural industries’ (Hesmondhalgh & Pratt, 2005: 3).

The Labour-run Greater London Council (GLC) was a pioneer in this area. From 1983 it made radical revisions to the basis of cultural policy by introducing the cultural industries concept. This came from an engagement with the political economy school, and a desire to challenge elitist notions of culture and acknowledge the ‘importance of thinking about the distinctive characteristics of primarily symbolic production and consumption’ (Hesmondhalgh, 2007: 139). For Hesmondhalgh this developed in two strands: first was a shift of focus from the artist to the audience and an acceptance of the role of the commercial in the formation of popular tastes. There was a belief, therefore, that public policy should engage with the market to distribute cultural goods and services so that a democratic cultural policy could develop ‘based on an educated and informed audience demand to which publicly owned distribution companies and cultural producers alike could respond’ (O’Connor, 2007: 23). The second – less radical, and less central – strand was to use investment in cultural industries for the purpose of regeneration, their economic impacts being viewed as a possible ameliorative to the problems associated with the shift to a post-Fordist economy. The abolition of the Greater London Council by the Conservative government in 1986 meant that its policies were never fully implemented.

At this point it was possible to view a shift in emphasis to the second strand of the GLC’s programme, that is, economic regeneration. It was Sheffield that took up the GLC’s ideas and became influential in the spread of local cultural industries policy, and in particular the idea of the ‘cultural quarter’ (Hesmondhalgh & Pratt, 2005: 3). Cultural quarter policy focussed on the proliferation of producers in niche and volatile markets and thus led to discourses stressing the value of networks of ‘small and medium sized enterprises’ embedded in local spaces as the ‘crucial factor in economic understanding’ (O’Connor, 2007: 28). This gave rise to discussions of clustering effects and attempts to exploit tacit knowledge ‘rooted in local social structures, institutions and cultures’ (p.29; Scott, 2000). Such activity was becoming less a matter of cultural policy than of local economic strategy, the cultural industries becoming:

increasingly attached, in a new era of local and regional development policy, to the goals of regeneration and employment creation... entrepreneurs in the cultural industries provided a new model of work and a key basis for local economic growth. (Hesmondhalgh, 2007: 140)

Hesmondhalgh goes on to argue that the result of such thinking was to steadily erase the view, implicit in some of the GLC's work, that 'cultural production might be connected to wider movements for progressive social change' (p.140) and towards an engagement with economic neoliberalism (see also Hesmondhalgh et al., 2014). O'Connor (2007) notes the pragmatic basis to such a move as local authorities of the period were expected to deliver a restructured economy – no longer reliant on manufacturing – while they were simultaneous subject to restrictions on their powers over planning and local taxation:

In the process 'culture', previously seen as a marginal and mainly decorative or prestige expenditure, began to move much closer to the centre of policy making as a potential economic resource. (p.26)

From 1997, to further develop the economic potential of the cultural industries and 'creativity', policy under the New Labour administration abandoned the old name in favour of the 'creative industries'. As noted above, the creative industries were defined by the newly formed Department of Culture, Media and Sport in relation to the exploitation of intellectual property, thus creating a much broader sector – for example, including computer software – that was able to make much increased claims as to its economic importance. It was work by the Creative Industries Task Force that codified this, using attractive (although, perhaps, dubious) statistics on wealth creation and employment alongside a vision for a post-Thatcher Britain that celebrated autonomy and fluidity in individual work/life patterns (O'Connor, 2007). The *Creative Industries Mapping Document* (DCMS, 1998; 2001) became a defining document in cultural policy, and a successful export to other regions that were attempting to exploit the 'dynamic association of culture, economics and a new wave of modernisation' (O'Connor, 2007: 41).

This was supported by the development of models to measure the economic impact of the creative industries – instructive work by Myersclough introduced the 'multiplier effect' and took an instrumental view of the arts sector, seeking to forego any 'special pleading' and provide objective data for:

- the benefit, in terms of employment and other economic returns of public spending on the arts...;
- the importance of cultural tourism and its contribution to the national economy...;
- the significance of overseas earnings attributable to the arts...;
- the value to the business community of a healthy arts sector;
- the importance of the arts as an agent of urban renewal;
- the prospects of the arts sector, and the opportunities provided for realising the economic potential of the arts.

(Myersclough, 1988: 3)

The need to show a return on investment, and produce an evidence-base for policy, has embedded itself in government policy so that further frameworks have developed to justify spending on the arts – and the cultural industries linked to them in policy – by finding ways to articulate their value. Where returns are not economic in nature, or difficult to economically quantify, toolkits have been developed to measure, for example, social impacts and express these in economic terms. The Cabinet Office-backed Social Return on Investment (Nicholls et al., 2009) is an example of such a toolkit that is seen to bridge the ‘perceived distance between economics, which is the dominant language of government, and the cultural sector, which operates on a very different set of assumptions and concepts’ (O’Brien, 2010: 4). Critics, however, note that this can lead to a culture of ‘policy-based evidence making’ (Belfiore & Bennett, 2007: 138) and ‘bullshitting’ (Belfiore, 2005: 343).

For Garnham (2005) such creative industries policy was embedded not in culture or arts but in the rhetoric of the information society in which the ‘supposed pay off is not widened access or even higher quality within the United Kingdom, but jobs and export earnings in a competitive global economy’ (p.28). Garnham’s critique of the creative industries is extensive, suggesting that its entire evidence basis is flawed, and it ‘serves as a slogan, as a shorthand reference to, and thus mobilises unreflectively, a range of supporting theoretical and political positions’ (p.16). He suggests that a key outcome of this is an alliance of cultural producers committed to the strengthening of intellectual property rights, even at the expense of innovation.<sup>2</sup> Against the GLC’s attempts at creating an audience-oriented cultural policy, it also signalled the return to an artist-centred notion of subsidy, as education programmes sought to remedy a supposed lack of skills required from a creative and innovative workforce.

Further criticism comes from those who view the creative industries as lacking specificity. For example, Pratt (2005) sees the term as having little analytical value:

it would be difficult to identify a non-creative industry or activity...  
the cultural industries have a putative activity... to produce a  
‘cultural’ object; the creative industries’ object is creativity itself.  
(p.33)

Pratt goes on to suggest that it fails to capture the complexity of work and remuneration arrangements within the various sectors and is, ultimately, a small-business policy based on creative entrepreneurialism that is unable to address structural issues in their value chains, skills gaps, access to technology, market development and linkages to other sectors.

Miller (2007) suggests that the ‘high priests of creative industries’ have created policy that is:

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<sup>2</sup> Indeed, current UK coalition government policy on the creative industries appears to rest entirely on the provision of strong intellectual property rights (DCMS, 2011).

intellectually *un*formed, politically *mis*informed, and economically *de*formed... These reactionaries do not focus on the precariat/immaterial labour, high-tech pollution, cultural imperialism, or even define industries adequately. (p.43)

Producing better policy for the cultural industries, then, can be viewed as resting on an understanding of their scope and creating a better definition of what can be usefully included. Hesmondhalgh and Pratt (2005) point to arguments that suggests the cultural industries is a defunct concept, hampered by the flexibility of the term ‘culture’ or rendered superfluous by the increasingly cultural and symbolic aspects of all production. They counter this argument by delineating the cultural industries by their main interest, the production of symbolic, aesthetic and artistic outputs that can ‘can potentially have such a strong influence on the very way we understand society – including, of course, cultural production itself’ (p.6). Hesmondhalgh (2007) expands on this, suggesting that the cultural industries are institutions involved in the ‘production of social meaning... [through] activities the *primary aim* of which is to communicate to an audience, to create texts’ (p.12, emphasis added). He argues that to open discussion of the cultural industries to any object carrying social meaning would risk losing what makes these industries distinctive, making an understanding of the degree of communication in an object versus its functional aspects is a key issue (see also Banks, 2007).

Defining the cultural industries is made more difficult by the need to appreciate context. For Pratt (2005) ‘cultural formations are situated in spaces and times; the answer must be locally, culturally and politically defined’ (p.33). For example, comparing ceramics production in Stoke-on-Trent against their manufacture in the Far East demonstrates a need for an awareness of spatial particularity (Banks, 2007). Similarly, consideration needs to be given to the ‘depth’ of the cultural industries; whereas their ‘breadth’ – whether to include or exclude cultural tourism, sport etc. – has traditionally attracted attention, adequate definitions need also to explore ‘the whole circuit or cycle of production necessary to produce cultural products’ (Hesmondhalgh & Pratt, 2005: 6; see also Pratt, 2005). That is to say, there is a need to explore the surrounding structures of production, manufacturing, distribution and retail channels, and question how far down the value chain to look – and question whether to include functions such as retail, service and manufacturing.

The need, then, is simply ‘to know more about the cultural industries and how they operate, and what people do and think about during the creation and use of their products’ (Hesmondhalgh & Pratt, 2005: 10).

### 2.3 Summary

This Chapter started by providing an overview of social and economic changes associated with what might characterised as ‘post-Fordism’. In the global north, the transition to post-Fordism has been accompanied by a change in focus to information

and knowledge as keys assets and as providing the basis for future economic growth. This was alongside increasing individualisation and positional consumption, and the development of new communications and logistic technologies. These provided the basis for the emergence of the ‘cultural industries’ as a policy object. These sectors are based upon the generation of information and knowledge, and can provide a range of ‘niched’ consumer goods and services. However, this Chapter has highlighted problems as to the coherence of approaching a series of disparate ‘cultural’ industries as a distinct sector, and it has pointed to dubious measures of beneficial impacts and critiques of what is perceived as an instrumental approach to culture. Thus, there remain important questions as to the social, economic and political motivations and implications of cultural industries policy.

In considering these issues this thesis will turn to two specific topics that highlight critical debates around the cultural industries and, more broadly, about the spatial and social changes associated with post-Fordism outlined above. Chapter Three will note that, as the cultural industries are increasingly deployed in urban policy as a means by which to ameliorate social issues and the economic decline associated with deindustrialisation, there are important questions as to how they are used and the effects of such culture-led urban policy in, for example, inter-urban competition and the speculative construction of place. Furthermore, cultural work is seen by some as exemplary of post-Fordist work styles, representing both the opportunities afforded by flexible work and opportunities for self-realisation, but also the challenges of insecurity in casualised, individuated labour markets. As such, while the cultural industries are promoted by policy makers for their myriad beneficial effects, there remain important questions as to the quality of work in these sectors. Chapter Four will explore such debates on the conditions of labour within the cultural industries, considering issues of, for example, autonomy and identity construction. These literatures will provide the basis for the analysis and discussion in subsequent Chapters.

### **3 Culture-led Urban Policy**

The Introduction to this thesis highlighted the regeneration strategies being adopted by some coastal towns (BOP Consulting, 2011; Dryburgh, 2010; Kennel, 2011; New Economics Foundation, 2005), specifically those of Margate and Folkestone (Ewbank, 2011; Flaming, 2008ab; Kent County Council, 2010). While coastal towns can be viewed as having developed in particular ways, distinct from other similarly sized industrial towns (Beatty et al., 2008; Smith, 2004), these strategies may be viewed as part of a broader trend towards culture and creativity as a tool in responding to the changes associated with post-Fordism (Bassett, 1993; Landry, 2000; Scott, 2000). Such interventions have come to be viewed as an important tool in stimulating urban economic growth, culture being used to upgrade the image of a place to attract further investment, while new cultural industries replace declining sectors (Currid, 2007; Harris & Moreno, 2012; Kong, 2007; McRobbie, 2011; Mommaas, 2004; Peck, 2005; Pratt, 2008; 2009; 2011). Approaches to the deployment of the cultural industries in urban policy have, however, been criticised from many perspectives. These include questioning their instrumental approach to culture; issues of efficacy, and their misplaced emphasis on consumption over production (e.g. Lees & Melhuish, 2013; Markusen, 2006; Peck, 2005; Pratt, 2008). Moreover, discourses of culture/creativity have been viewed as distracting attention from the contested politics of urban renewal (Mathews, 2010).

This Chapter, then, will discuss how culture and creativity have come to be viewed as an important part in inter-urban competition, used as a means by which to upgrade a city's image to appeal to new investors, visitors and residents in light of the changing demands of contemporary capitalism. It will further explore the ways in which culture and creativity have come to be deployed within such policies, looking over how spaces come to be produced as 'creative' or 'cultural' and the key critical debates over what the effects of such policies might be. This includes the role of culture-led urban policy in gentrification, and the ways in which the labour of cultural producers, and artists in particular, is implicated in the production of these spaces.

#### **3.1 Capital and the Production of Space**

For Castree et al., (2004: 64) places cannot be viewed as a given but, rather, should be seen as the cumulative product of the interaction of environmental circumstance, historical outcomes and myriad human practices – this includes economic systems and means that, particularly for the economies of the global north, attention must be paid to the role of capital. For Herod (2003: 114), it is the work of Henri Lefebvre that has made explicit 'the connections between the functioning of capitalism and its spatial organization'. Lefebvre argues that space is not merely a 'container', to be subsumed by the analysis of class and social relations and the functioning of an urbanising mode of capitalist accumulation. Rather, there is a circular process in which space is actively

produced by and is generative of capitalist relations (Merrifield, 2006: 103-5). For example, the Fordist mode of production was based on large-scale and long-term investment in mass production systems that presumed stable and invariant growth in consumer markets. Particularly in the period following World War II, economic growth in this system produced particular kinds of spaces visible in what Harvey (1990: 132) calls ‘a series of grand production regions in the world economy’, such as in the US Midwest or the Ruhr–Rhineland in Germany. These are examples of ways in which capitalism has been able to:

attenuate (if not resolve) its internal contradictions... it has succeeded in achieving ‘growth.’ We cannot calculate at what price, but we do know the means: *by occupying space, by producing a space.* (Lefebvre quoted in Herod, 2003: 114)

It is possible to point to the development of these spaces as linked to new manufacturing technologies and the geographical expansion of transport and communication systems that allowed these regions to draw in supplies of raw materials from around the world. Importantly, they were also the product of mass consumer markets and the habituation of wage labour to the Fordist division of labour (see the previous Chapter).

The fracture of the Fordist compromise from the 1970s can be viewed as interlinked with a shift in these relations and the kind of geographical organisation needed to realise profit. Companies reconfigured themselves into more flexible enterprises better suited to increasingly competitive and volatile markets, and important manufacturing industries shed jobs as they utilised more efficient production techniques and – enabled by new technologies that allowed for the geographic dispersal of activity – relocated to regions that had weaker labour power and lower wages (Bauman, 2000; Tödting, 1994). Deindustrialisation in many parts of the global north meant that these places were in need of new private investment from enterprises in growth knowledge and service sectors, while the relative increase in the mobility of capital – afforded by new technologies and a shift to more flexible investments – rendered each city just one site out of many possible locations for investment, both nationally and internationally (Harvey, 1989; 1990).<sup>1</sup> Attracting such investment is viewed as critical. Command and control functions are concentrated in core cities that are the key nodes in networks of capital, money, commodities, labour and information, and failure to assume or maintain such ‘core’ status – at the regional, national or international scale – will relegate the city

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<sup>1</sup> It is important to note, however, that capital is never wholly free from the constraints of time and space. As natural barriers to communication are eroded spatial considerations may be viewed as *more* significant to the operations of capital as investment decisions can hinge on increasingly specific preferences (Herod, 2003: 125). For Castree et al. (2004: 76-8), the case for the mobility of capital is often overstated. This is especially the case when considering many small and medium size enterprises where mobility is limited by ties to local markets and networks. Moreover, whatever size a business is it must locate *somewhere*.

to the periphery ‘resulting in instant decline, and thus in economic, social and physical deterioration’ (Castells, 2000: 443). For Harvey (1989), therefore, investment:

increasingly takes the form of a negotiation between international finance capital and local powers doing the best they can to maximise the attractiveness of the local site as a lure for capitalist development. (p.5)

Contemporary urban governance, then, may be viewed as ‘embedded in a framework of zero-sum inter-urban competition for resources, jobs and capital’ (Harvey, 1989: 5). As such, the post-Fordist city is ‘less than ever the product of natural conditions of location but rather of economic strategies’ (Esser & Hirsch, 1994: 80) designed to maintain or secure a ‘post-industrial’ future. Culture and creativity have come to be understood as one such strategy.

### 3.2 Culture, Creativity and Inter-Urban Competition

As the cultural industries (and, more broadly, discourses of culture and creativity) have come to occupy a key position in policy – recognised not only for their economic performance, but also for assumed social benefits (DCMS, 2008; Landry, 2000; Miles & Paddison, 2005) – they have also come to influence urban policy. In an era of inter-urban competition, the arts have come to be:

increasingly prized in the postindustrial city for their ability to brand, cultivate and classify space... The presence of the arts (the alterations of built form and the caché attached to the artistic lifestyle/output) transforms the symbolic meaning of urban spaces and catalyzes economic development. (Matthews, 2014: 1019)

Broadly, the rhetoric of culture and creativity have been utilised to create urban policy that encompasses some combination of:

1. a concern with opening up traditional institutions such as museums and theatres to wider public use, by increasing access and encouraging more involvement in the local community;
2. an expanded program of support for community arts, ethnic minority cultures, and socially and culturally deprived neighbourhoods;
3. a new focus on the infrastructure necessary for cultural production, embracing investment in studios, workshops, marketing and support organisations, and the planning of ‘cultural districts’;

4. an extension of traditional cultural policies to include support for new technology sectors, such as television (cable and video), central to the whole field of popular culture;
5. a recognition of the role of the arts in urban regeneration, typically involving the launch of ‘flagship’ development projects for arts centres, theatres, and concert halls in inner-city areas;
6. the launching of high-profile events or festivals, often linked to local heritage themes, to encourage cultural tourism;
7. a program of investment in public art and sculpture and the revival of urban public spaces for multiple forms of activity.

(Bassett, 1993: 1775)

Prominent examples include, for example, Bilbao’s Guggenheim and London’s Tate Modern (Dean et al., 2010; Plaza, 2000) – both interventions based around the development of large contemporary art galleries – or the ‘creative’ areas of London’s East End and New York’s Lower East Side (Pratt, 2009; Deutsche & Ryan, 1984). In each case such developments have been lauded by their proponents as an important part of urban, social and economic regeneration. Evans and Shaw (2004) point to the rhetoric of ‘social regeneration’ in culture-led urban policy, while recent reports highlight the role of such strategies in generating ‘social capital’ (Ewbank et al., 2013; Vella-Burrows et al., 2014). Mommaas (2004: 518) notes that the overarching rationales of these culture-led interventions is the creation and exploitation of synergies between culture, leisure and tourism for economic development (e.g., see Local Government Association, 2013). Perhaps unsurprisingly, given the range of positive outcomes they are assumed to provide, culture-led urban policies have proved popular in policy circles and become a ‘global phenomenon’ (Evans, 2009: 1005) and part of a “‘civic gold’ rush’ (Stevenson, 2004).

While often viewed as a new and novel way of approaching urban policy, Lloyd notes that such strategies proceed in the context of historical contingency, that:

cities remain historically cumulative projects, and new strategies within urban space are shaped by the interaction with prior outcomes. (Lloyd, 2010: 28)

In particular he argues that while the ‘neighborhood-level resurgence’ (2004: 344) they foment is unevenly distributed throughout cities and while such development ‘no longer follows the impetus of industrial production’, it remains that ‘they continue to derive advantages from the morphology of older industrial neighborhoods, with important consequences for the articulation of the postindustrial city’ (p.343). For example, the starting points for the creation of the cultural hub of Shoreditch in London or Beijing’s Factory 798 art district were based in under- or disused industrial buildings that were

'recycled' by cultural workers. In these 'cultural quarters' it is argued that cultural workers can benefit from the 'agglomeration economies' of clusters (Scott, 2000: 19). Scott argues there can be 'beneficial emergent effects', including: a local labour market attuned to local requirements that facilitates recruitment; emergence of localised 'politico-cultural assets such as mutual trust, tacit understandings, learning effects'; and economies of scale in the provision of education and training, and essential infrastructure. There are also assumed to be lifestyle factors attracting cultural workers to these spaces as such developments often also take a mixed-use design, incorporating work and office space, shops, bars and cafés, alongside housing (Evans, 2004).

The perceived contributions artists make as 'creatives' are multiple given they are viewed as providing cultural consecration to the spaces they inhabit, one that draws on bohemian mythology and the durable association between artists and symbolically rich urban districts that carry normative connotations of being authentic, cool or edgy (Lloyd, 2010; Zukin, 2010). This stands in opposition to the creation of 'edge cities' – that is to urban sprawl, and the decanting of work, leisure and residential properties to the periphery of cities in the global north, with a consequent loss of urban identity and sense of place (Garreau, 1991; Bontje & Burdack, 2005). Artists are viewed as reversing this decentring as areas associated with cultural production, as broadly conceived and with artists and art in particular, are often viewed as possessing an inherent symbolic cachet as artists are understood to bestow a 'surfeit of meaning' (Ley, 2003: 2534; see also Matthews, 2010).

Culture and creativity, more broadly, can also be used to tease out the distinctive marks and increase the symbolic capital of place so important in inter-urban competition. As Landry (2000: 118) argues, this is crucial 'as celebrating distinctiveness in a homogenising world marks out one place from the next. Making the specific symbols of the city... visible [produces] assets from which value can be created'. These 'symbols of the city' can be grounded in 'the field of historically constituted cultural artefacts and practices and special environmental characteristics' (Harvey, 2001: 404) and utilised to construct an attractive image for investors by raising their 'quotient of symbolic capital and to increase their marks of distinction' (p.405; see also Bassett, 1993; Zukin, 2010). Tate Modern on London's South Bank is exemplary here, the gallery reconfiguring the disused Bankside power station into an iconic part of the city (Dean et al., 2010).

As such, the use of culture and creativity in urban policy may, then, be understood as a competitive strategy based on the 'upgrading' of the city's image and through the development of the unique selling points of the city-cum-product. That is, urban policy makers engage in a 'self-conscious and self-styled urban re-creation', seeking to reject negative images from the past and trade on claims to authenticity and uniqueness (Bailey et al., 2004: 48; Zukin, 2010). Creative and cultural spaces, then, are being produced by policies that may be viewed as producing particular 'representations of space' (Lefebvre, 1991: 38) – space as conceived in systems of signs and symbols. Culture-led urban policy, situated in contemporary discourses around culture, the creative industries, the knowledge economy and creative cities, establishes a logic for

social and political practices and have material and immaterial implications as they 'intervene in and modify spatial *textures*' (Lefebvre, 1991: 42).

To the proponents of culture-led urban policy the beneficial effects are wide ranging:

Culture is a means of spreading the benefits of prosperity to all citizens, through its capacity to engender social and human capital, improve life skills and transform the organisational capacity to handle and respond to change... Culture is a means of defining a rich, shared identity and thus engenders pride of place and inter-communal understanding, contributing to people's sense of anchoring and confidence. (Comedia, 2003 cited in Miles & Paddison, 2005: 835)

Advocates argue that there are a synergistic blend of positive economic, social and cultural outcomes. Incoming cultural workers kick-start the process of regeneration, becoming, in effect, 'the explorer and the regenerator... bringing life to run-down areas. They then attract a more middle-class clientele who would not have risked being the first, either through fear, the dislike of run-down areas or pressure from peer groups' (Landry, 2000: 125). Elsewhere, however, its political and theoretical rationales, and the effects of implementation are approached more critically (e.g. Bailey et al., 2004; Deutsche & Ryan, 1984; Matthews, 2010; Peck, 2005).

The remainder of this Section will first examine Richard Florida's Creative Class thesis as, perhaps, the most well-known exponent of the use of culture and creativity in urban policy. It will note some of criticisms this thesis has attracted, which will then be extended to a more general critique of culture-led urban policy, including its role in gentrification.

### 3.2.1 The Creative Class

Since the release of *The Rise of the Creative Class* (2002), Richard Florida's work on the Creative Class has received much attention from politicians, the popular press and academics, garnering copious amounts of both praise and opprobrium (see Markusen, 2006; Peck, 2005; Pratt, 2008b; 2011; Vivant, 2013). Peck (2005: 740) notes that the book has become a 'public-policy phenomenon' with its central thesis proving 'to be a hugely seductive one for civic leaders around the world'. It is possible to point to a number of possible reasons why the thesis has proved to be so beguiling to policy makers; *The Rise of the Creative Class* itself has been packaged in populist way – its style irreverent, informal and in-keeping with popular lifestyle-guides – and has been supported by a concerted marketing campaign to disseminate its themes. This has been bolstered by the development of an index of successfully creative cities that Peck (2006: 746) describes as 'a transparently calculated but also highly effective means of popularizing the creative cities thesis' (see also Markusen, 2006). It also offers a

‘strikingly concrete, urban development agenda’ (Peck, 2005: 742) the delivery of which is feasible within the time and fiscal constraints of political election cycles.

For Florida (2002) creativity has become ‘defining feature of economic life... [It] has come to be valued – and systems have evolved to encourage and harness it – because new technologies, new industries, new wealth and all other good economic things flow from it’ (p.21). Those cities, then, that fail to create the correct ‘people climate’ for the Creative Class ‘will wither and die’ (p.13). As such, Florida’s proposal is to represent the success of a city as a function of the presence of, or the ability to attract, the Creative Class who, he argues, have become the primary drivers of economic development, replacing the ‘former triad of blue-collar, white-collar, and wealthy classes’ (Markusen, 2006: 1922), the existence of communities of ‘creatives’, and the amenities that attract them, ‘in turn help to explain high-tech location and differential urban growth’.

To nurture, nourish, harness and channel the economic power of the Creative Class through a series of supply-side initiatives, therefore, becomes the priority of regional and urban policy-makers. The Creative Class, however, are ‘not simply motivated by material rewards, like salaries and stock options and suburban security, but instead [want] to live exhilarating lives in interesting places, to be challenged and stimulated 24/7’ (Peck, 2005: 744). The Creative Class are viewed as having specific requirements of the cities they choose to inhabit. Their particular work commitments mean that they ‘literally live in a different kind of time from the rest of the nation’ (Florida, 2002: 144), as such they seek out communities ‘rich in the kind of amenities that allow them precariously to maintain a work-life balance... communities, where social entry barriers are low, where heterogeneity is actively embraced, where loose ties prevail’ (Peck, 2005: 745). It is through their consumption of the city they ultimately seek to ‘validate their identities’ (Florida, 2002: 304). Furthermore, the Creative Class are drawn to:

organic and indigenous street-level culture. This form is typically found not in large venues like New York’s Lincoln Center or in designated ‘cultural districts’ like the Washington D.C. museum district, but in multiuse neighborhoods... it tends to cluster along certain streets lined with a multitude of small venues. These may include coffee shops, restaurants and bars...; art galleries; bookstores and other stores; small to mid-sized theatres for film or live performance or both; and various hybrid spaces – like a bookstore/tearoom/little theater or gallery/studio/live music space – often in storefronts or old buildings converted from other purposes.  
(Florida, 2005: 139)

Florida’s script for civic leaders and politicians is summed-up by Peck (2005) who suggests that it is reducible to investment in the ‘soft infrastructure’ of arts and culture through increased ‘public subsidies for the arts, street-level spectacles, and improved urban façades with expected “returns” in the form of gentrification and tourist income’

(p.749). Peck goes on to note, however, that where Florida's ideas are followed the plans produced run the risk of lapsing into the generic apparently spurned by the 'authentic experience' seeking Creative Class, that is, these plans follow 'a rather narrow repertoire of newly legitimized regeneration strategies. The recurrent themes are unmistakable, and they are already on the way to being routinized' (p.752).

As such, Florida's thesis has attracted criticism for the type of urban-interventions he prescribes; perhaps more seriously, criticism has also been directed at his definition of the Creative Class and the mobilisation of 'creativity' within this thesis. Markusen (2006: 1922) notes that these concepts are 'fuzzy at best or misspecified at worst' arguing that through the indiscriminate use of imprecise occupational census codes and sectorial categories, without recourse to any analysis of the nuances of occupations contained within, the Creative Class ultimately conflates creativity with educational attainment. The 'Creative' Class, therefore, can perhaps be more accurately viewed as describing the portion of a population with high human capital as measured by their level of education. Similarly, Pratt (2008b) notes that his methodology for ranking creative cities is based around measuring the three T's of technology, talent and tolerance none of which are measures of creativity, suggesting that the Creative Class is 'not about the cultural industries or cultural production' (p.111) but rather a thesis based on attracting a particular class of labour and business for whom creativity, in the form of culture and the cultural industries, is 'an instrumental sideshow' that:

attracts the workers, which attracts the hi-tech investors. In this sense, the argument has little to differentiate it in principle from traditional behavioural and environmental determinist arguments, or from property-led strategies. (p.108)

The Creative Class has also attracted political scrutiny from both the left and right. Malanga (2004), a senior fellow of the fiscally conservative Manhattan Institute think tank, criticises Florida for suggesting that 'taxes, incentives and business-friendly policies are less important in attracting jobs than social legislation and government-provided amenities'. Money spent on cultural 'frills', he argues, comes from higher taxes that ultimately result in economic stagnation – pointing to 'socialistic' San Francisco and New York as cities that are 'creative' by Florida's measures but also underperforming in terms of job creation and talent retention.

From the left, Florida is accused of ignoring issues of inter- and intra-urban inequality and poverty. If Florida is writing a guide for success in the 'war for talent' then he is advocating a brand of neoliberal inter-urban competition that is a zero-sum game and in which the number of losers vastly outnumbers the winners (Pratt, 2008b). Similarly, for Peck (2005), Florida's strategy within successful cities is predicated on a 'swelling contingent economy of underlaborers' and fails to acknowledge:

the possibility that there might be serious downsides to unrestrained workforce and lifestyle flexibilization strategies... Florida is inclined

to revel in the juvenile freedoms of the idealized no-collar workplaces in this flexibilizing economy, while paying practically no attention to the divisions of labor within which such employment practices are embedded. (p.756)

Both sides of the political spectrum agree that the Creative Class thesis is flawed through its inability to show causative effect: Florida eschews complex causal argument for inference, while powerful counterfactuals – such as San Francisco and New York as stagnating ‘creative’ cities, and Las Vegas and Oklahoma City as booming ‘uncreative’ cities – highlight the paucity of evidence and cast further doubt on such thinking (Malanga, 2004; Peck, 2005). Markusen (2006: 1924) is stringent in her summation that the Creative Class ‘is impoverished by fuzziness of conception, weakness of evidence, and political silence... there is really no ‘class’ here at all’.

### 3.2.2 Criticisms of Creativity and Culture in Urban Policy

These critiques of Florida’s working are resonant with those levelled at culture-led urban policy more generally. To critics, by engaging in inter-urban competition for mobile public and private investment capital, urban policy can be viewed as ‘inadvertently facilitating (indeed subsidizing) the very forms of capital circulation and revenue competition that were major sources of the problem in the first place’ (Peck, 2005: 761). That is, the economics of these new developments are such that further investment is required to ensure their profitability even while their allure quickly fades so that they require ‘circular and cumulative’ investment (Harvey, 2001: 404).

Harvey (1989: 7-8) argues that this approach can lead to a concentration of resources not on the amelioration of social problems, through improvements to living and working conditions, but on the ‘speculative construction of place’. While many such strategies have as their primary claim the procurement of benefits for local populations, he argues that their implementation can mean any positive effects are indirect and felt within an area wider or smaller than envisaged, and that they can divert focus and resources from broader problems. For Peck (2005) this results in:

a proclivity for ‘soft’, pliable and task-oriented modes of urban governance, organized around short-term, concrete projects (like funding competitions or development schemes), rather than progressive and programmatic goals (such as poverty alleviation or environmental sustainability) ... (p.764)

Moreover, Peck rejects the kind of rhetoric that posits culture-led development as, in some way, ‘civilising’ economic development, suggesting that it will ‘commodify the arts and cultural resources, even social tolerance itself, suturing them as putative economic assets to evolving regimes of urban competition’ (p.763) that in theory and practice

ultimately only provides a ‘means to intensify and publicly subsidize urban consumption systems for a circulating class of gentrifiers’ (p.764; see below).

This highlights a tension between production and consumption within these strategies. Comunian (2010) and Pratt (2008b) note an abundance of research on cultural consumption in regeneration that is not matched by work on cultural production. Pratt (2008b) and Bailey et al. (2004) point out that justification for strategies that favour consumption comes in the payoff of ‘trickle-down’ benefits to the wider community, in the form of jobs and economic growth. Both note, however, that the evidence is thin:

The distinct lack of, and commitment to, in-depth research into this issue creates a situation in which policy makers are unable to draw an evidence base upon which to make key decisions in the application of culture-led regeneration strategies... (Bailey et al., 2004: 47)

Yet the cultural industries are ‘a practical example of the hybrid and complex relationships between production and consumption’ (Pratt, 2008b: 107). Therefore, Pratt argues that to oppose these elements is to create a false dualism but, he goes on to argue, consumption oriented regeneration ‘is corrosive to production-based versions’ (p.111). It remains that attempts to ‘sell cities’ with public money are socially regressive as policy decisions result in investment targeted to the elite consumer, in which culture ‘may be viewed as the latest bauble that is offered to attract CEOs’ (p.109) made with little reference to what residents want (Malanga, 2004).

Consequently, there are also important questions raised about the properties of place culture-led strategies promote. The Creative Class thesis notes a proclivity for communities with weak social ties and low barriers to entry, that is, they demonstrate a ‘lack of commitment to place’ that Peck (2005: 764) suggests is ‘perversely celebrated’. Furthermore, the tendency to deploy a ‘routinized’ development script has been noted above in relation to the Creative Class (see Peck, 2005) and by Harvey (2001), the standard script of investment in contemporary gallery spaces and cycle paths ultimately wears away any distinctiveness. For Scott (2000: 4) this can all combine to have a ‘deeply erosive or at least transformative effects on many local cultures’ and, as such, it is possible to ascertain that there are inherent dangers in situating the cultural and economic aspects of regeneration so closely, represented by the tension between maintaining local identity and global competitiveness (Bassett, 1993; Comunian, 2010). Harvey (2001: 402) suggests these are settled when ‘[local] cultural developments and traditions get absorbed within the calculi of political economy’ – arguing that the mobilisation of distinctiveness and identity in development, and the attendant claims based on symbolic capital, are a decoy to conceal economic rationales behind the veneer of culture and taste (Harvey, 1994).

### 3.2.3 Gentrification and Artists' Labour

As culture-led urban policies have become more prominent the cultural industries, cultural workers and artists in particular have come to renewed attention for their role in gentrification processes (Ley, 2003; Mathews, 2010; Pratt, 2011; Vivant, 2013). For Landry (2000: 125), the deployment of artists to 'grotty' parts of the city allows for the 'grotteness' to be 'tamed and made safe by the artist' for the arrival of the middle-class, a view that seems devoid of any appreciation of local populations and their extant cultures and traditions. Moreover, it situates culture-led strategies as the first stage of gentrification. Therefore, culture-led urban policy raises questions about exactly who it is that benefits from such interventions, and whose culture is being mobilised.

Culture-led urban policy that attempts to socially and economically 'regenerate' spaces has been criticised as privileging the demands of inter-urban competition and contemporary capitalism. The effects have included the transferral of the possession, or use, of properties across class boundaries, alongside changes in consumption patterns, changing aesthetics of the built environment and increase in property prices – that is, gentrification (Ley, 2003; Smith, 1996).

For Redfern (2003: 2359), gentrification 'manifests itself in differences in consumption or style', suggesting that as these processes proceed there is a concomitant symbolic re-ordering and aestheticisation of space (see also Mathews, 2010: 667). As such, if gentrification can be understood as the transformation of place from working to middle-class then, as Bridge (2006: 1967) argues, this symbolic transformation could be viewed as an act of symbolic violence against the working-class residents. Existing populations, then – contra policy claims that 'regeneration' will provide 'more socially mixed, less segregated, more liveable and sustainable communities' (Lees, 2008: 2449) – face displacement on two fronts: economically they are vulnerable to the rising cost of living as high property prices and rents remove options for affordable housing, shopping and socialising, while the changing symbolic and aesthetic properties of place can result in their home areas becoming alien as they are reconfigured to the tastes and requirements of others.

In many instances, cultural regeneration has become synonymous with arts-led regeneration, and artists have come to be constructed as the vanguard of processes that symbolically embellish place. As such, within culture-led strategies it is artists who often assume – whether consciously or not – the position of 'pioneer'. Indeed, Smith (1996) notes that the construction of gentrifying areas as 'frontier' spaces is a common theme and those forerunners of gentrification processes are often discussed as 'pioneers' who establish 'beachheads and defensible borders... on the frontier', taking the 'slum... piece by piece' (p.23). Such language serves to highlight problematic aspects of gentrification as it echoes the displacement and enclosure of colonisation. Artists are implicated in these processes because the symbolic capital they can bestow on an area (see above), their presence understood as 'a catalyst for neighbourhood transition' (Bridge, 2006: 1965), converting 'urban dilapidation into ultra chic' (Smith, 1996: 18).

They can be viewed, then, as occupying a key role in ‘enhancing the interests of postindustrial capitalist enterprises, especially property speculation’ (Lloyd, 2010: 18), operating as pioneers in marginal areas they bring a cachet that increases the area’s symbolic capital, attracting cycles of investment seeking to profit from the gap between current and possible future rents.

Deutsche and Ryan (1984) are stringent in their critique of artists as complicit in, and as legitimising, the gentrification that is ‘systematically destroying the material conditions for the survival of millions of people’ (p.97). They go on to argue that while they might seek to perpetuate the myth that they are separate from the dominant social group – and, therefore, free from blame for the negative social effects of gentrification – they are, in fact, entirely complicit. Using the example of the gentrification of New York’s Lower East Side as an art scene took hold, they suggest that artists exploited the neighbourhood ‘for its bohemian... connotations while deflecting attention away from underlying social, economic, and political processes’ (p.104-5), and that artists are wilfully blinded to extant populations and their effects. They provocatively argue that:

This attitude, common among many art-world ‘pioneers,’ is reminiscent of the late nineteenth-century Zionist slogan, “a land without a people for a people without a land” (Deutsche and Ryan, 1984: 103)

Furthermore, Deutsche and Ryan argue that artists ‘present themselves as potential victims of gentrification’ as rents rise, and in doing so ‘mock the plight of the neighborhood’s real victims’ (p.104). Deutsche and Ryan usefully draw attention to power imbalances – and there must be attention drawn to the domination of the most marginalized groups in gentrifying processes – but also, wrongly, assume victimhood status in gentrification is a zero-sum game and collapse ‘artists’ into a essentialised whole.

While large-scale art projects might attract large amounts of funding, very few, if any, of the surrounding artists will have a stake in them (Markusen, 2006: 1936). Indeed, artists often represent the first wave of gentrification that, having little money, begins the gentrification process by renovation through ‘sweat equity’. As gentrification progresses a shift is discerned from ‘the creation by artists of a milieu for the *production* of art’ to ‘the commodification and *private consumption* of this artistic milieu’ (Cameron and Coaffee, 2005: 46, emphasis in original). As artists are often renters, with few legal or economic claims to gentrifying spaces, they are unable to benefit from increasing property values, and are themselves made vulnerable to displacement as rents rise due to the area becomes more popular with those attracted to the bohemian cool their presence and work has created (Pratt, 2009: 1054). Their vulnerability is also felt as the aesthetic properties of place change as artists are often attracted to run-down and edgy spaces that, once gentrifying processes take hold, become commodified and sanitised in keeping with the demands of bourgeois taste (Lloyd, 2010; Mathews, 2010). Mathews (2010) argues that this displacement of artists has little effect on the remaining

businesses, landlords and property developers who continue to ‘capitalize upon the memory of artists and the commodity of the artist milieu’ (p.666).

Consequently, despite the assumed ‘anti-bourgeois, anti-conformist dispositions’ (Ley, 2003: 2530) of artists that push against the conventional life-styles of the middle-classes, they represent their ‘colonising arm’ (p.2533). Artists, then, may be understood to have an ambivalent, even conflicted, role in regenerating/gentrifying processes. While their attraction to run-down areas neatly coincides with both their symbolic proclivities and requirement for low rents – ‘making a cultural virtue of economic necessity’ (p.2533) – their very presence can serve to erode both symbolic and material attractions as rents rise and the ‘frontier’ space is wholly transformed.

Lloyd (2010: xii-xiii), then, argues that artists are not ‘liberated by the heightened attention to local culture’ but rather ‘find themselves co-opted into new forms of postindustrial exploitation’. This includes the displacement of extant populations and the exploitation of the artists themselves. Artists’ presence in urban locations, and the work they do there, helps to create an ‘urban product’ of a cool or artful space. This product, however, can serve to conceal the social labour through which it originates. For Lefebvre:

Products and the circuits they establish (in space) are fetishized and so become more ‘real’ than reality itself — that is, than productive activity itself, which they thus take over. (1991: 81)

An emphasis in urban policy on creating ‘cultural’ spaces means that while artists are implicated in the production of space, the spaces produced are not necessarily *for* them. Their labour is deployed to the advantage of capital, to create ‘a landscape of profitability rather than unprofitability’ (Herod, 2003: 116). Yet artists are vulnerable to the changing properties of place as these space alter in material and immaterial ways (Lloyd, 2010; Matthews, 2010; Zukin 1982). For Harris and Moreno (2012: 11) ‘the implications of the absorption of cultural practitioners in urban regeneration projects have not been fully explored’. As such, the following Chapter will turn to issues around artists’ work. This kind of labour is implicitly promoted in such strategies but is itself subject to a range of critiques that may further call into question the politics of culture-led urban policy.

### 3.2.4 The Successful Mobilisations of Culture in Urban Policy?

Despite critiques, there remain some convinced that, if rethought and reconfigured, culture-led regeneration might represent a positive and progressive tool for change. For Harris and Moreno (2012: 8) this does not require outright rejection of culture-led policy, but consideration of:

the way it has been celebrated, shaped and institutionalized by policy-makers, consultancy advisors and indeed academic researchers.  
(Harris & Moreno, 2012: 8)

Pratt (2011: 129) argues that the narrow focus on a particular band of consumer must be broadened to include the many rather than the few. Bailey et al. (2004) similar make the point that culture-led urban policy must occur in a framework that allows local people to re-establish their ownership of their place and space. They argue that policy's success needs to be measured in its long-term effects, this includes a 'radical reassertion of a rooted identity' and in producing 'something far more significant than the inevitable end-product of cultural commodification' (p.63). Therefore, there also needs to be attention paid to the 'full cycle of culture making that includes cultural production' (Pratt, 2011: 129):

A creative city cannot be founded like a cathedral in the desert: it needs to be linked to and be part of an existing cultural environment. We need to appreciate complex interdependencies, and not simply use one to exploit the other. (Pratt, 2008a: 35)

If it is accepted that cultural industries can be a driver of economic growth in their own right then urban strategies must reflect this in the development of a non-instrumental cultural production policy that needs to acknowledge the importance of place, and the active and embedded role of cultural workers, artists and others have in such policy.

### 3.3 Summary

This Chapter has argued that cultural-led urban policy has become more prominent in response to changes associated with the shift to post-Fordism, including deindustrialisation and the demands of inter-urban competition. Such policy is used as a means by which to promote growth sectors, and revitalise urban districts, attracting investment through the symbolic and material reorganisation of space.

For proponents, culture and creativity are important as the 'defining features' of contemporary economies from which 'all other good economic things flow' (Florida, 2002: 21; Landry, 2000). These strategies, however, are criticised for promoting a speculative construction of place to the advantage of capital based on a paucity of evidence (Bailey et al., 2004; Harvey, 1989). Moreover, it is argued that the reorganisation of space they promote often privileges the consumption habits of affluent consumers (Lees and Melhuish, 2013; Markusen, 2006; Pratt, 2008). Gentrifying processes can displace extant populations and, ultimately, the artists and other cultural workers whose labour the cultural reimagining of place was based (Cameron & Coaffee, 2005; Matthews, 2010).

As such, it is important to consider how cultural labour is deployed in culture-led urban policy – this Chapter has explored how it is implicated in the changing properties of place, the following Chapter will turn to the conditions of such work.

## 4 Cultural Work

Previous Chapters noted that culture-led urban policies have gained prominence as a means by which to secure particular economic and social outcomes. This has happened in the context of the changes associated with the shift to post-Fordism, and the associated rise of discourses positioning the cultural industries as a cutting-edge sector of the economy (DCMS, 1998; 2008; Florida, 2002; Howkins, 2002; UNCTAD, 2010). However, even while policy interest around the cultural industries has grown considerably, policy for cultural labour (as opposed to the cultural industries or firms) remains underdeveloped in many countries (Gollmitzer & Murray, 2008a). It has largely omitted any serious consideration of the conditions under which cultural work takes place, failing to assess the costs and benefits for workers in these sectors, or assuming such work to be beneficial and virtuous.

Indeed, where it has been given attention in policy, cultural workers have tended to be unproblematically celebrated for their entrepreneurial spirit and fêted as the ideal ‘portfolio worker... focused on employability rather than employment, following a flexible, non-vertical career path designed to enhance his or her skills and networks’ (Oakley 2009a: 27). There persists a belief that those employed in the cultural industries have glamorous and agreeable jobs, meaning that such work is viewed not really as *work* but rather a frivolous vocation unworthy of critical or political debate (Banks, 2007; Hesmondhalgh, 2007; Toynbee, 2013). Oakley (2009a) notes that similar perspectives are held by some cultural workers for who discussion of their activity as work ‘still produces resistance or discomfort’ (p.16). She also notes an additional concern, that cultural workers have been rendered invisible by official statistical representation as standard data collection methodologies often fail to capture their particular working patterns. Such factors, Hesmondhalgh (2007: 186) suggests, combine so that cultural work becomes a ‘particularly potent example of the way in which work is not recognised under capitalist commodity production’.

With notable exceptions (e.g. McRobbie, 2002; Terranova, 2000), it was only from the end of the previous decade that there has been sustained interest in the conditions of cultural labour from academics (e.g. Banks, 2006; 2007; 2010; Banks, et al., 2013; Eikhof & Haunschild, 2006; Gill & Pratt, 2008; Hesmondhalgh & Baker, 2011; McGuigan, 2011; Oakley, 2009a; 2011; 2013; Taylor, 2012; Watson, 2014). This mirrors the formation of campaigning groups focussed on issues affecting workers in the cultural sector, such as the Precarious Workers Brigade and Carrot Workers Collective in the UK or Arts+Labor and Working Artists and the Greater Economy (W.A.G.E) in the United States (e.g. Arts+Labour, 2012; Precarious Workers Brigade, 2011; 2012). These critical perspectives on cultural work have raised questions about the negative consequences of individualised working patterns and severe limits to autonomy in an increasingly marketised sector, inflected with neoliberal ideology (de Peuter, 2011; Gregg, 2009; McGuigan, 2010; McRobbie, 2002; Raunig, et al., 2011; Terranova, 2000). As Harris and Moreno (2012: 7) note:

The recent age of Creative classes, Creative clusters, Creative quarters and Creative industries has been one where jobs have become increasingly short-term, casualised and precarious... The policy agenda has been one of entrepreneurship and flexibility, rather than old-fashioned yet no less important concerns such as employment, rights and entitlements (Harris & Moreno, 2012: 7)

As such, it is apt that, in promoting the cultural industries as a means by which to achieve policy ends that there also needs to be consideration of the conditions of cultural work and the reality of working in sectors where some suggest maintaining a good quality of life is increasingly difficult (Hesmondhalgh, 2007).

It is important to point out that the study of cultural work is not an attempt to ignore the working conditions of those in other sectors. Fantone (2007: 7) criticises the current interest in cultural work as ahistorical, gendered, and focussed on the travails of a middle-class and educated man, 'discussed only at the moment when the western, male worker began feeling the negative effects of the new, post-industrial, flexible job market'. Labour in different sectors can be viewed as similarly affected by many of the same issues that have an effect on cultural workers, and this is highlighted by those involved in 'precarity' movements (Böhm & Land, 2012; Gill & Pratt, 2008; Ross, 2008; 2009) who link cultural work to all kinds of employment that might be deemed 'precarious', that is:

all possible shapes of unsure, not guaranteed, flexible exploitation:  
from illegalised, seasonal and temporary employment to homework,  
flex- and temp-work to subcontractors, freelancers or so-called self-  
employed persons. (Neilson & Rossiter, 2005: n.p.)

Indeed, negative outcomes in these other sectors can often be amplified by compounding factors such as age, gender, ethnicity, educational attainment or immigration status, and by extending our perspective of what constitutes common labour conditions to economies outside of the global North, or to other historical periods, where it is insecurity that becomes the norm (Kalleberg, 2009; McDowell et al., 2009; Mitchell, 2011; Neilson & Rossiter, 2008; Standing, 2011a; 2011b). Furthermore, Hesmondhalgh and Baker (2011) point out that, even where the most critical accounts are true, cultural labour will hardly ever involve the kind of abject labour or dirty work that others will find disgusting or dangerous (Ashforth & Kreiner, 2014; Hughes, 1962). As such, there is an imperative, then, not to overstate the lot of the cultural worker. However, given the context of a burgeoning cultural industries policy scene and attempts to export the multi-skilled, flexible and enterprising working patterns of cultural work to other parts of the economy (Gollmitzer & Murray, 2008a), attempts to address this issue are particularly timely.

This Chapter will, therefore, briefly discuss positive accounts of cultural labour, specifically those that valorise it as an ideal employment type that, alongside its economic utility, allows for individual autonomous action and self-realisation through work. The following sections will articulate the criticisms of cultural work, looking at the negative effects of flexibility, insecurity, and seductive and exploitative control mechanisms. The third section will attempt a moderated version of the preceding arguments, acknowledging limits and negative consequences of autonomy and self-realisation, but suggesting that ‘good work’ remains possible in the cultural industries.

#### 4.1 The Inherent Rewards of Cultural Work

Fordism represented a ‘way of life’ (Elam, 1994) typified by mass production and consumption. It was a period of intensive accumulation made possible by relative social cohesion and a strengthening of the mutual dependency between labour and capital, underwritten by stable employment and the Keynesian settlement. However, Fordism can be over-romanticised. For example, its basis was in bureaucracy and social orthodoxy and, as Ross (2009: 5) argues, the tedium of a life in organisational employment did not produce ‘meaningful experiential outcomes, only classic (Marxist) alienation on the job’. It was also a period in which gender inequality was entrenched as social reproduction relied upon a foundation of unwaged, female, labour in the home (Harvey, 1990; McDowell, 1991; 2001). Social discontent with this system fed into the political and economic upheaval of the 1970s that, it is suggested, signalled the end of the Fordist era in many parts of the global North. The post-Fordist era promised a world based not on stifling hierarchy but on networks capable of allowing the individual to flourish as a citizen consumer. It emphasises the freedom of a person to construct their lifestyle and ‘self-concept’ from the broad range of products and services on offer. This also extends into an individual’s working life, where:

the individual is not to be emancipated *from* work, perceived as merely a task or a means to an end, but to be fulfilled *in* work, now construed as an activity through which we produce, discover, and experience our selves. (Rose 1989: 103, original emphasis, quoted in Ezzy, 1997: 430)

While such a perspective has come to inform how work is viewed in many sectors (Bauman, 2000; Bourdieu, 1998; Castells, 2000), it is work in the cultural industries that has come to be viewed as exemplary of ‘ideal’ post-Fordist employment. This is not only because cultural work is centred on the production of ideas and intellectual property – that is, the ‘weightless goods’ highlighted as the source of growth under ‘light capitalism’ (Bauman, 2000; Quah, 1999) – but, simultaneously, because cultural workers are apparently also able to maintain autonomy in their practice, free from the most exploitative elements of capitalist relations, engaging in kinds of labour that allows for fulfilment and self-realisation (Hesmondhalgh, 2010).

Whereas the Frankfurt School's analysis of the culture industry 'seemed content to uphold Marx's idea that the commodification of labour power tends towards alienation and estrangement' (Banks, 2007: 26), previous studies have emphasised a strong individual identification with work by those who undertake cultural labour (Banks, 2007; Eikhof & Haunschild, 2006; 2007; McRobbie, 2002; Oakley, 2009b). McRobbie (2002) notes that contemporary press and television coverage of cultural work has provided quite different interpretations of such labour. Cultural work here offers 'a decisive break with past expectations... the public (especially young people) are presented with endless accounts of the seemingly inherent rewards of creative labour' (p.517). The *Your Creative Future* report likewise highlights the opportunities assumed to be afforded by cultural work:

Just imagine how good it feels to wake up every morning and really look forward to work. Imagine how good it feels to use your creativity, your skills, your talent to produce a film [...] or to edit a magazine. [...] Are you there? Does it feel good? (Department of Media, Culture and Sport/Design Council/Arts Council of England, 2001 quoted in Nixon & Crewe, 2001: 129)

For the cultural worker there hence appears a chance to move away from the world of mundane work into a field that is 'fun or glamorous', where they are keenly-placed to embrace their labour for the possibility of 'pleasure, psychic income... self-realisation' (Oakley, 2009a: 50). Indeed, Stahl (2013: 72) notes that the specificity of cultural work is 'often held to reside in the unusual degrees of autonomy and expressiveness it offers'. This view draws upon Romantic notions of the artist *auteur* as subversive, inspired and, perhaps most crucially, as a self-determined and autonomous individual, resistant to the contemporary organisation of capital around 'ratio-centric, means-ends' systems (Toynbee, 2013: 87; Menger, 2006). Indeed, despite the economic policy imperatives that have emerged around cultural work, a view remains that it is 'exceptional and somehow resistant to capitalism' (Hesmondhalgh and Baker, 2011: 84).

In an era in which conceptions of 'good work' may be understood as offering the potential for it to 'be part of our own personal wellbeing or development' (Hesmondhalgh, 2010: 237), the cultural industries apparently offer a key site of aesthetic reflexivity, self-interpretation, and the possibility of an emancipatory self-construction of identity created with reference to increased flows of knowledge and information apart from traditional social distinctions (Lash & Urry, 1994). If contrasted with traditional hierarchies and organisational bureaucracy, this can appear to represent an individualised 'network sociality' that 'is argued to have a profound "liberating" effect on the social totality' (Banks, 2007: 100; Wittel, 2001).

Visual artists, in particular, appear to occupy a privileged position. Such labour remains contingent on rules of art that emphasise autonomy and resistance to the industrial system (Holt & Lapenta, 2010: 224). These are defining characteristics of the persistent

mythic tradition of artistic production that has been ‘the common sense of the middle classes since Kant’ (Toynbee, 2013: 85) and which reveres the ‘solitary’ artist as the paragon of ‘culture’ (McGuigan, 2010: 326; Menger, 2006; Wolff, 1981). Artists are accordingly able to draw on such discursive resources to derive meaning from their work, with their status as artist an important element in the construction of their individual identities (Røyseng et al., 2007; Taylor, 2012).

The following section will return to these points, developing them in relation to critical perspectives on cultural work that draw on both Marxist and post-structural traditions in cultural studies. Such critiques view cultural labour as compliant with an exploitative (neoliberal) capitalism and are specifically concerned with the corrosive effects of individualisation and the seductive but illusory nature of autonomy.

## 4.2 Critical Perspectives on Cultural Work

The contemporary focus on the cultural industries as a part of economic policy means that they are being reshaped to be responsive to economic development plans and to the generation of intellectual property (DCMS, 2011; Javid, 2014; Local Government Association, 2009; 2013). These kinds of policy-making perpetuate structural problems and inequalities for workers in these sectors, including income polarization between the reservoir of free/cheap workers and the star performers, long working hours, and lack of trade union representation (Gill & Pratt, 2008; McRobbie, 2002). Hesmondhalgh and Baker (2011: 40) draw the distinction between *workplace autonomy* – ‘self-determination... within a certain work situation’ – and *creative autonomy* – ‘the degree to which “art”... can and/or should operate independently of the influence of other determinants’. Critical accounts of cultural work suggest both are compromised by wider social and economic structures.

In the broader sociology of work, previous critical research has highlighted problematic relations between labour and capital/management. In the Marxist tradition, Braverman (1974) argues that an objective state of alienation cannot be avoided given the exploitative and oppressive relations of production. Burawoy (1979) reacts against the absent subject in Braverman’s analysis, but remains critical of the ways the exploitative nature of labour processes and management-worker antagonisms are deflected. Burawoy argues that worker’s ‘consent’ is manufactured through a relaxation of management control that secures workers active involvement and obscures the negative features of wage labour (see also Friedman, 1977). Weber (1930; 1948) highlights a cultural orientation to labour wherein, more than an instrumental activity to meet finite consumption needs, contemporary work is made central to lives, so that rather than being a means of living it becomes the purpose. He further suggests that individuals can be intoxicated with ‘romantic sensations’ (1948: 127) as to the value and purpose of their ‘calling’, and thus become vulnerable to the damage pursuit of their vocation may engender (Owen & Strong, 2004: xxv). That is, imbued with moral purpose, work is

understood to affirm one's self-development if pursued with the proper self-discipline (Rodgers, 1978).

More recent work similarly highlights how 'humane', 'no-collar' workplaces promote self-management and the grounds for work intensification (Ross, 2001; 2004) and how apparent freedoms at work 'produce docile neoliberal subjects' (Walkerdine, 2005: 50). Hochschild (1983: 132) suggests that 'emotional labour' is a key element of increasingly service-led economies as companies 'try as a matter of policy to fuse a sense of personal satisfaction with a sense of company well-being and identity'. Emotional labour requires workers' emotional lives become part of the labour process 'where they are processed, standardized, and subjected to hierarchical control' (p.153). This signifies the extension of management control over the traditionally 'non-work' elements of individual's lives. For some, this has particular relevance in the context of the end of the (seeming) certainty of Fordist employment: the uncertainty of contemporary work is elided through narratives of 'empowerment' and 'the enticing possibility of remaking oneself' (Walkerdine, 2005: 60), even as the new 'economy' produces institutional insecurity and domination through precariousness (Bourdieu, 1999).

Critical perspectives on cultural work build upon, and extend, such critiques. For example, Menger (2006: 801) suggests that while 'artists supply the golden legend of creation, that of a subversive, anti-conformist, inspired behaviour, rebelling against social conventions and commercial utilitarianism' their labour should, in fact, be seen as compliant with the demands of modern capitalism, predicated upon 'extreme flexibility, autonomy, tolerance of inequality, innovative forms of teamwork'. As Ross (2009) notes, the rhetoric of the DCMS around the creative industries has not valorised cultural work as performed in traditionally unionised commercial sectors<sup>1</sup> – such as actors, technical production staff, journalists et cetera – but has pointed to a job profile based:

in the domain of insecurity, underpayment, and disposability... [the] struggling artist, whose long-abiding vulnerability to occupational neglect is now magically transformed, under the new order of creativity, into a model of enterprising, risk-tolerant pluck. (p.21)

For many, cultural work is characterised by long hours, low pay and insecurity (Hesmondhalgh & Baker, 2011; Oakley, 2009a). Such conditions are the result of, for example, the necessity of flexible working patterns and short-term project work, and the concomitant strain of 'searching for work, preparing for projects and trying to remain visible in a highly competitive labour market' (Oakley 2009a: 31) that is oversupplied by those drawn to the 'glamour' of cultural professions (Work Foundation, 2007: 135).

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<sup>1</sup> However, as Ursell (2000) points out, the traditionally unionised UK television industry was already derecognising unions and shifting to more flexible working practices from the mid-1980s.

#### 4.2.1 Individualisation and Autonomy

Such a shift has occurred in the context of a perceived increase in individualisation across many parts of society in the global North during the post-Fordist era, which has inflected the conditions of work across many – and not just cultural – industries (Amin, 1994; Bauman, 2000; Beck, 1992; Bourdieu, 1998; Castells, 2000; Harvey, 1990). Against claims of a liberating ‘network sociality’, individualisation can be viewed as eroding stable social bonds and promoting those ‘created on a project-by-project basis, by the movement of ideas, the establishment of only ever temporary standards and protocols’ (Wittel, 2001: 51). Critical discourses emphasise the erosion of stable, secure employment and trade union power, and a transferral of responsibility from the state and ‘traditional’ social structures onto the individual. So that while some suggest individualisation may mean greater opportunities for a critical, emancipatory, self-reflexivity and remade social subjectivity (Beck, 1992; Giddens, 1991; Lash & Urry, 1994), it has also meant that fluid and less permanent social relations have come to replace ‘traditional families, communities and class formations’ (McRobbie, 2002: 518). It is suggested, therefore, that the thorough individualization of cultural work has undermined the possibility of collective action and rendered ‘collective identities extraneous or redundant’ (Banks, 2007: 62). Hesmondhalgh and Baker (2011: 225) similarly note that cultural workers ‘tend to see organisations, and jobs, as opportunities for self-development, rather than as sources of commitment’. Consequently, McRobbie suggests that individuals can no longer turn to social resources and thus have to take on the burden of what were social responsibilities and ‘become their own micro-structures’ (McRobbie, 2002: 518). Hence individualisation ‘is not about individuals per se, as about new, more fluid, less permanent social relations’ (McRobbie, 2002: 518; Sennett, 1999), meaning subjects are ‘abandoned’ and individuals are left to fend for themselves (Hesmondhalgh & Baker, 2011; McGuigan, 2010). This occurs under a kind of capitalism that Ross (2009: 51) bleakly suggests ‘thrives on actively disorganizing employment and socio-economic life in general so that it can profit from vulnerability, instability, and desperation’. It is suggested that this has established a culture of self-blame and self-disciplining in the worker whereby self-reflexivity and self-realisation are also a means by which problems are de-politicised/de-socialised so that failure always becomes a question of ‘Where have *I* gone wrong?’ (Banks, 2007: 61-2; Beck, 1992).

Creative industries discourses – such as those underpinning the reports from DCMS (2008) or UNCTAD (2010) – are not a corrective to this. Rather they promote an individualised creative economy in which ‘it is no longer appropriate to serve individual interests through collective means’ (Banks & Hesmondhalgh, 2009: 420). Such policy ‘has not created an autonomous cultural space’ (Banks, 2007: 48) but rather valorises economic over cultural imperatives, operating as a ‘mechanism of rule... [to] inculcate new economy values into the field of cultural work’ (p.51). Indeed, in a report produced to inform the DCMS Creative Economy Programme, the Work Foundation (2007) – a group campaigning for better working conditions and employment practices – engaged with cultural work only at the level of discussing how best to ensure that cultural

workers are flexible enough to meet the demands of employers. Issues such as multiple employment and contract work were seen as positives as cultural workers ‘bring their talents to the wider workforce’ (p.113), ignoring possible negative outcomes of such processes (see also, Banks & Hesmondhalgh, 2007: 422-3). This renders the cultural worker as not only the victim but also the model subject of post-Fordist work styles, their status informed by powerful and pervasive neoliberal discourses (Banks, 2010: 257; de Peuter, 2011: 420-1) ultimately concerned with, in the terms of the DCMS (2008: 26), the provision of suitably-trained ‘human capital’. The optimism on the Left concerning ‘post-Fordist socialism’ (Oakley, 2013: 59), wherein the flexible, skilled worker ‘could be made to look like [William] Morris’s well-rounded and independent artisan’ evaporated as an agenda took precedence promoting skills ‘linked to adaptability and resilience, helping to produce the neoliberal subject’ (p.58).

Bourdieu (1993) offers a further critique of autonomy in cultural work, arguing that the spectre of economy ‘always haunts the most “disinterested” practices’ (p.75) so that there is never a ‘complete repudiation of economic interest’ (p.76). He stresses the impossibility of creating a ‘cultural order [as]... an autonomous, transcendent sphere, capable of developing in accordance with its own laws’ (p.33). Cultural workers, therefore, operate in a structured space within wider social fields all of which in some way constrain their action. Bourdieu argues that whatever the relative independence of a field, ‘it continues to be affected by the laws of the field which encompasses it, those of economic and political profit’ (p.39). While types of cultural production ‘differ radically in terms of the mode of profit acquisition and therefore... in terms of the objective and subjective relationship between the producer and the market’ (p.48), he suggests there is always an underlying economic logic of practice to agents’ actions as they engage in constant ‘struggles to defend or improve their positions’ (p.30). In the cultural field this may mean seeking commercial success and the monetary profit of the market, or instead the profit that comes from the pursuit of *art gratia artis* in the form of legitimation, status and prestige from other artists, critics or those others whose taste is consecrated (p.51). Bourdieu’s conceptions of autonomy, as such, can be viewed as acquired through to the ‘individualistic pursuit of status, prestige and other “external” rewards’ (Banks, 2010: 258). It is, therefore, the status-seeking behaviour of cultural workers’ that ultimately compromises and betrays any of the ‘radical possibility of autonomy’ (see also Eikhof & Haunschild, 2007).

#### 4.2.2 The ‘Seduction of Autonomy’ and Self-Realisation

Gill and Pratt (2008) suggest there are many negative affective features of cultural work – such as, the fear of not finding work, exhaustion from long hours, and the anxiety of insecurity – and that these are:

not incidental features of the experience of cultural labour; they are toxic, individualized but thoroughly structural features of workplaces

that include television production companies, fashion and web design houses, and (not least) the neoliberal university... (p.15)

Yet, whatever the demands of cultural work may be, cultural labour markets commonly have a surplus of available workers who, Oakley (2009a: 49) suggests, approach their fields with an enthusiasm or love beyond that commonly found in other occupations. It has been noted that, so enamoured with their work, cultural workers neglect their interests not only financially, but also in their care of self, pushing the 'limits of their physical and emotional endurance' (Hesmondhalgh & Baker, 2011: 6). Ross (2001; 2009; see also, Gregg, 2009) suggests their motivation may lie in a common conception of creativity as based upon 'sacrificial labour', wherein 'physical and psychic hardship is the living proof of valuable mental innovation' (Ross, 2009: 47). Cultural workers, thus, display what some suggest are 'self-exploitative tendencies':

it is not uncommon to find self-employed [cultural workers] working long hours... taking no holidays, drawing a minimal (if any) salary, skipping meals and rest, forever pushing themselves to the limit in order to not only satisfy their own passion for creative self-realisation but also (and perhaps more often) to meet deadlines and contractual obligations imposed by others. (Banks, 2007: 58)

The negative consequences of cultural work can be viewed as disguised by the 'psychic income or self-realisation' (Oakley, 2009a: 50) that is obtained by living in the image of the 'starving artist', embracing the extension of work in to all of life, and by the rhetoric of 'do what you love' (Tokumitsu, 2014).

Attempts to self-realise mainly or exclusively through work, however, may preclude the recognition and development of life away from work that, 'even allowing for people's different dispositions and desires' may lead to 'unbalanced and even miserable lives' (Hesmondhalgh & Baker, 2011: 227). This is not unique to the cultural industries (Keliher & Anderson, 2010; Tipping et al., 2012), but the image of their labour embraced by many cultural workers – and promoted by the DCMS – makes it particularly relevant.

Banks (2007: 61) similarly points to another strand of the criticism levelled against cultural work, that the 'seduction of autonomy' is present in all forms of creative cultural labour and that it has a strong effect upon such workers by allowing them to 'deny the hardships of individualized work and to eclipse the feelings of exhaustion and despair'. It is suggested that the incentive to work provided by the pursuit of freedom nevertheless occurs within the structures and mechanisms of capitalist production with its inherent constraints and determinants. The assumed autonomy of work in the sector draws workers' attention from alienating or exploitative conditions, and co-opts them into actions beneficial to the organisation. That is, 'workers are trained to accept and reproduce *for themselves* the precise conditions of their subordination' (Banks, 2007: 42; cf. Foucault, 1978). The perceived autonomy of cultural production, therefore, is

*rationalised* by commercial imperatives as creative (self-)management seeks to corral excesses of freedom that might threaten profitability, preferring the safe option of a market rationality that dictates an increasing shift to standardised and formatted goods. McRobbie (2002), informed here by the culture industry thesis of the Frankfurt School, makes a similar point, viewing the coercive demands of an industrial and marketised cultural sector as precipitating a ‘decline in creativity’ (p.524) that renders the desire for *genuine* autonomy in cultural work futile as its goods are created ‘more or less according to plan’ (Adorno, 1991: 98).

Alienation, then, remains possible by virtue of the cultural worker’s lack of control over not only all the conditions of production, but also the distribution of cultural goods and profits (Banks, 2007: 29-31; see also Hesmondhalgh & Baker, 2011: 84). Furthermore, it is possible to re-evaluate the idea of ‘self-exploitation’, viewing it instead as solely ‘exploitation’ as the choices available for those engaged in cultural work stem from (capitalist) structural forces. It is often the case that cultural workers operate within small firms or as individuals, and that their clients are much larger companies. This – combined with an oversupply of labour and lack of any collective organisation on behalf of the former – engenders unequal contract negotiations that favour the latter (Caves, 2000; Garnham, 2005: 19-20).

#### 4.2.3 Marginalisation and Inequality

For some, it is cultural workers whom, while not unique in the problems they face, have come to be viewed as totemic of broader social and economic changes characterised as post-Fordist or post-industrial (see Chapter 2). For example, though autonomous Marxist theory is concerned with the implications of such changes for workers in all types of contingent, flexible, casual, illegal and temporary employment, it is the cultural worker who has ‘emerged as the figure of the precarious worker par excellence’ (Neilson & Rossiter, 2005: n.p.) and as ‘exemplars of the move away from stable notions of “career”’ (Gill & Pratt, 2008: 2) to more informal, insecure and discontinuous kinds of employment. The cultural worker must, therefore, successfully and continually engage in a campaign of self-promotion and networking: securing contracts and job interviews can often rely on informal ties and personal contacts, while new entrants will often have to accept unwaged internships to gain access (McRobbie, 2002).<sup>2</sup> For those employed in the cultural industries there is often an expectation that there will be long working hours, a blurring of the distinction between work and leisure,

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<sup>2</sup> The use of ‘free labour’ – in the form of internships and volunteers within established cultural workplaces and organisation, or as amateur photographers, bloggers, film makers et cetera who deliver content online – poses particular, and longstanding, problems for professionals in cultural industries (Oakley, 2009a: 51; Terranova, 2000). Amateur producers, assisted by advances in technology, can undercut and seriously undermine professional business models (Banks & Humphreys, 2008) and, more generally, insecure financing within the cultural industries has often led to the use of volunteer labour that, some argue, replaces paid workers, serves to undervalue such roles and dilutes the professionalism of the sector (Oakley, 2009a: 54).

and the adoption of a particular attitude towards consumption (Banks, 2007: 82; Hesmondhalgh & Baker, 2011: 72).

The requirement to work for free, the need to work long hours, the need to cope with uncertain income, and the requirements of networking and sociality can serve to reproduce patterns of marginalisation and strengthen inequality of access to cultural industry job markets for those not of the ‘correct’ background, age, ethnicity or gender (Hesmondhalgh & Baker, 2011: 158). It has already been noted that, particularly for those entering the cultural sector, free labour is the norm, closing avenues of entry for those unable to afford to undertake unpaid work. Similarly, the commitment and availability required in terms of expected long hours and flexible working patterns poses challenges for those with dependents, particularly affecting women and reproducing gender inequalities found in the wider workforce (Brescoll et al., 2013; Hegewisch & Gornick, 2011). Banks and Milestone (2011: 73) therefore argue that discourses of ‘creative freedom... mask fundamental inequalities and discriminatory practices in cultural work’ and go on to note that:

detraditionalized and reflexive cultural industries work can enhance the possibility for the reapplication of some rather traditional forms of gender discrimination and inequality. (p.74)

Indeed, Oakley (2013: 57) points out that since the very first cultural industry initiatives, women, ethnic minorities and the working class have been increasingly marginalised in cultural labour markets, leading to ‘the development of a highly unrepresentative cultural sector, with often poor working conditions’.

Overall, the view presented here is that cultural labour is thoroughly individualised: where workers may embrace the chance for self-realisation in work they are instead viewed as dominated by market structures that can transfer their enthusiasm into exploitation. Far from operating in a space of creative autonomy they reproduce for themselves the conditions of their own domination, and under which many people are marginalised or excluded. From this perspective, any perceived autonomy is merely ‘a mechanism to distract workers’ attention from the “real” exploitation and alienation’ (Hesmondhalgh, 2010: 237) of cultural work, while self-realisation, while ‘a commonly understood feature of good work’ can also be viewed as ‘often not far removed from narcissistic forms of competitive individualism’ (p.238).

For McRobbie (2002: 528), ‘the possibility of a revived, perhaps re-invented, radical democratic politics that might usefully de-individuate and re-socialize the world of creative work is difficult to envisage’.

### 4.3 Rethinking Cultural Work

If we accept the criticisms of cultural work laid out above – the socially negative consequences of attempts to ‘self-realise’ and develop an individualised identity through work, and the seeming impossibility of genuine autonomous action as workers are

duped by structural constraints into a kind of false consciousness – then, as Hesmondhalgh (2010: 242) notes, it becomes difficult to imagine ‘work that is something less than dreadful’.

Such desolate assessments of cultural work may have been important in providing ‘a necessary corrective’ (Banks, 2006: 460) to those advocates of the creative economy who fail to acknowledge its possible negative effects on working conditions. However, there is an emerging literature that proposes a much more uneven experience and nuanced understanding of cultural work, and that does not preclude the possibility of good work in these sectors.

Hesmondhalgh (2010: 243) notes an aversion in contemporary discourses to analyses that attempt to defend normative positions, these are informed by a postmodernist view that suggests ‘defences of particular moral positions universalise, and hence conceal, the situated character of their origins’. He argues that this should not mean the *a priori* abandonment of normativity, but instead that such claims require the scrutiny and justification of specific cases. Furthermore, Hesmondhalgh suggests that ‘failure to offer an adequate normative grounding limits critique’ (p.232). Elsewhere, Keat (2000; 2009) shows that a failure to provide a normative view of good work leaves the determination of the conditions of labour to the structural and institutional imperatives of the market. The market solution, then, perhaps represents a kind of *de facto* normative settlement which, if it is to be avoided, requires collective choices to be made on what is considered to be good work, how it might be provided and at what cost.

Some of the most strident criticism of cultural work in the cultural studies perspective focuses upon the effects of individualisation and attempts at self-realisation. Workers are viewed as ‘entranced by their own sense of personal self-identity and autonomy’ and the ‘seductive illusion of freedom’ (Hesmondhalgh, 2010: 240). This echoes literatures within wider sociologies of work and work identity. Both Marxist and neo-Weberian perspectives hold that workers are ‘cultural dopes’, that is, the passive product of structures wherein behaviour is ‘experienced *as if* it were autonomy’ while actually being ‘authoritatively engendered’ (Owen & Strong, 2004: li-lii; du Gay, 1996; Marshall, 1983). More recent work maintains that work under ‘new’ or ‘late’ capitalism, in particular, can no longer provide a space for meaningful experience, and prevents individuals from having a clear sense of a life narrative through work (Bauman, 2000; Sennett, 1999; 2006). However, Strangleman (2007: 100) suggests that critical accounts can present workers ‘as passive victims’ waiting ‘to be exploited by all-powerful global capital’, a position that does ‘violence to the experience of work’ by ignoring the structure and meaning work continues to provide for many. Others, thus caution against overdetermination and analyses of work that pay little consideration to the subjective experience or social context in which it is undertaken (du Gay, 1996; Gibson-Graham, 1996; Standing, 2011a). Thus, perspectives that foreground economic structure can be viewed as eliding the complexity of, and denying the possibility of, worker agency, demonstrating ‘an insensitivity to context and a disavowal of the contingency and subjectivity of the labour process’ (Banks, 2010: 263). Furthermore, an emphasis on

economic markets can disembed cultural goods and practices, and individual narratives and subjectivities from their cultural and social framings (Booth, 1994; Sayer, 2001). For Keat (2000), the domination of the economic over the social and cultural is to introduce a category-mistake in which such a transfer of meaning – of the former over the latter – is inappropriate. There is, then, a ‘missing subject’ in these accounts, one who is ‘constituted and formed by social relations that cannot be reduced or equated with the singular abstract logic of economic categories’ (O’Doherty & Willmott, 2001: 466).

This section, then, seeks to defend from the most stringent critiques the concepts of autonomy and self-realisation in cultural work. It argues that these are both desirable as part of the normative basis of good work, and achievable within cultural labour. Such critiques usefully point to structural issues around, for example, pay, hours, marginalisation and representation. They may not, however, adequately represent the experiences of those who work in the sector. They deny the agency of the cultural worker and fail to appreciate the individual and shared narratives of art practice that are reflexively constructed around external structures and subjective meanings and values that are not necessarily tied to market transactions (Banks, 2006; 20007; Gibson-Graham, 1996; Hesmondhalgh, 2010; Keat, 2000; 2009; Sayer, 2001).

#### 4.3.1 Narrative-Identities

While critical accounts of cultural work view individualisation as having negative outcomes, such as ‘vulnerability, instability, and desperation’ (Ross, 2009: 51), others suggest it can afford the opportunity for work to be reinvested with new forms of reflexivity (Beck, 1992; Beck & Beck-Gernsheim, 2001; Giddens, 1991; Lash & Urry, 1994). As the traditional institutions of state, class, family, ethnicity et cetera, retreat, the individual is permitted greater ‘freedoms’ to create the ‘reflexive self’ (Giddens, 1991). However, this is not to suggest the complete atomisation of society nor unfettered sovereignty, as Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (2002: 1) maintain, ‘individualisation is itself becoming the social structure of second modernity’. It is important to note that care still needs to be taken to avoid relying on idealised accounts of free and rational agents, and that there remain desocialising and other negative effects of individualisation. For example, Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (2002: xxi) highlight that neo-liberal economics rests on the ‘ideological notion of the self-sufficient individual’, this implies a lack of mutual obligation and thus threatens the welfare state and generates inequalities. Thus, such accounts must proceed in ways that acknowledge the ‘reflexivity losers’ (Lash & Urry, 1994), for who insecurity and precarity challenge their ‘ontological security’ (Giddens, 1991).

Following this, the concept of ‘narrative-identity’ provides a useful framework for exploring tensions between structure and individual autonomy (Ezzy, 1997; 1998; 2000; Hesmondhalgh, 2010; Mallett & Wapshott, 2012; Ricoeur, 1991). Ricoeur (1991) highlights the importance of narrative in identity construction, arguing that ‘human lives become more readable [*lisibles*] when they are interpreted in function of the stories

people tell about themselves' (p.73). Ricoeur's work attempts to expand on the temporality of identity; that in some senses an individual remains the sole protagonist in their autobiography (*idem* identity), but also that individuals' ways of acting, and perceiving and understanding may alter, for example, as they come up against external forces (*ipse* identity). As individuals' face uncertainty and complexity in their lives, narrative strategies can mediate discordance between *idem* and *ipse*, that is between 'who one wants (or expects) to be and what one is doing' (Mallett & Wapshott, 2012: 22). Individuals' can draw on shared narratives and construct their own to help interpret past experiences into a 'narrative whole' (Ezzy, 1997: 433). Moreover, they can also shape possible future action (Ezzy, 2000; Mische, 2009).

The strength of this approach is in providing a way of thinking about how 'pressures of internal self-reflection and potentially competing and contradictory external engagements and influences' (Mallett & Wapshott, 2012: 18) may be resolved in ways that do not rely on overly structured accounts, on one hand, or notions of sovereign self, on the other (Ezzy, 1998). The narrative conception of the self is not understood as a 'free fiction' but rather as a dynamic process that links 'pre-existing cultural discourses, the structuring effect of a person's social location, and the individual's creative use of these resources' (Ezzy, 1997: 440). Contra claims that such a perspective depends on the 'sovereign rational individual' (O'Doherty and Willmott, 2001: 479) and their 'subjective will-to-power' (p.472), narrative-identity acknowledges the impact of normative control mechanisms but suggests that they are capable of being processed through a 'dialectic of acceptance, resistance and manipulation' (Ezzy, 1997: 432).

Ezzy (1997) extends this approach to individual identity construction and understandings of what 'good work' might be. He argues that 'good work' is intersubjectively defined by the individual in relation to their narrative-identity: given the sources of this narrative-identity, Ezzy suggests that the meaning of work is 'shaped by the relationship between the act of working, its cultural and social framing, and its interpretation in an internal dialogue' (p.439). As such, he argues that integral to good work is:

both the opportunity to fulfill one's commitments to others, and a narrative about one's participation in that work that contains an imagined future that is satisfying and rewarding. (p.439)

Ezzy, then, purposefully rejects analyses of oppression through the labour process that emphasise the 'objective' to the neglect of individual subjectivity (e.g. Braverman, 1974). This is particularly important in relation to cultural work as such a conception of individualised identities and self-realisation through labour rejects the assumption that it is inexorably a mechanism of rule to inculcate (self-)exploitation or linked to competitive and desocialised self-interest (Bourdieu, 1993; McRobbie, 2002; Menger, 2006; Ross, 2009). This does not mean that the social framings and structures individuals' are embedded in, and draw on, become immune to criticism. Rather that critique must proceed in ways that are attentive to the dynamic strategies of individual

identity construction, and the ways in which shared narratives can help inform and create meaningful and valued senses of self, and further provide templates for future action.

### 4.3.2 Practice and Embedded Economies

For Ezzy, narrative-identity is informed by and evaluative of one's choices and actions that 'unavoidably have moral and ethical dimensions' (1997: 436) as:

a person's moral evaluation of their life as worthwhile or meaningless is integrally related to the form and content of the narrative they tell about their life. (p.437)

From this it is perhaps possible to discern an interest in an (re-)embedded, or moral, economy as a way of thinking about the contexts and structures of an individualised, reflexive, socially embedded narrative-identity. Whereas in the disembodied economy 'traditional' bonds and relations are dissolved and 'money becomes the real community' (Harvey, 1990: 100), the embedded economy refers to economic activity where it is understood that relations are governed by 'the institutions, traditions, and norms of the community' (Booth, 1994: 653). While moral values are always present in both kinds of economy – even the most disembodied transactions require a degree of trust between participants – it is in the embedded that issues of justice and standards of performance are central (p.654). MacIntyre (1985) articulates a kind of embedded moral economy – and how forms of value antithetical to the market and status-seeking behaviour might be present – in his discussion of practice and the attainment of internal versus external goods. Practice, in his specific use of the word, represents:

any coherent and complex form of socially established cooperative human activity through which goods internal to those forms of activity are realized in the course of trying to achieve those standards of excellence which are appropriate to, and partially definitive of, that form of activity, with the result that the human powers achieve excellence, and human conceptions of the ends of goods involved, are systematically extended. (MacIntyre 1985: 187)

In opposition to the competitively achieved *external goods* of power or money, therefore, practice is concerned primarily with *internal goods*, that is, the rewards 'intrinsic to the practice itself' (Banks, 2007: 109). Importantly MacIntyre notes that internal goods are non-exclusive, that is, 'their achievement is a good for the whole community who participate in the practice' (MacIntyre 1985: 190-1). These originate from, for example, the skill with which a game is played or the quality of an art work. These standards are partially defined by the subjects own tastes and preferences, and partially by the 'authority of the best standards realized so far' in that practice.

For Banks (2007: 101) ‘social’ and ‘ethical’ types of cultural production – perhaps most evident in small/independent firms and individual cultural workers, rather than in mainstream companies – ‘appear to have persisted and even become expanded in the apparently “desocialized” cultural industries context’, and it is the idea of practice has opened up ‘enhanced opportunities for critical self-reflection on the part of economic subjects’ (p.115). As such, practice can be viewed as an explanation of the persistence of cultural production that favours not only ‘art’ in the art–commerce relation but also the possibility of expansion of its aesthetic, moral and socially embedded aspects through the non-exclusive attainment of internal rewards.

Within the idea of practice and the moral economy there continues to be a concern with normative claims. In contrast to a neoliberal economic understanding, these are claims about how societies rank goods and the frameworks that make:

economics – unavoidably and at the outset – an ethical inquiry... It insists, in other words, on the economy as something that we do, that involves us in certain patterns of relations with our fellow human beings and with nature, and for a purpose or end. The question ‘What good is thereby served?’ is essential to understanding what we do when we do the things called economic – much more essential than grasping the most efficient way of doing them. (Booth: 1994: 663)

Internal rewards contingent on personal and social definitions of practice, and the construction of narrative-identity as a dialectic between cultural discourses and individual subjectivity infer a view of autonomy different to that assumed in the cultural studies critique of cultural work. As such, criticism of the cultural studies perspective on autonomy comes from what is perceived as an underdeveloped view of agency. Again, that there are limitations to agency and to the autonomy of the cultural worker is not in dispute – indeed, as Hesmondhalgh (2010: 235) notes, ‘all autonomy is limited’ – yet such limitation can be viewed as a necessary and desirable aspect of sociality, stemming from community and as a source of the self (MacIntyre, 1985: 221). Moreover, to fetishise complete freedom of choice is to ‘play into the hands of neoliberal ideologues who would wish to promulgate a “fantasy of individual omnipotence” [Webb, 2004: 724] at the heart of free market economies’ (Banks, 2006: 467).

### 4.3.3 Autonomy

Banks (2010: 252), therefore, suggests that cultural workers have a ‘kind of socially embedded, compromised or “negotiated” autonomy’ that, though limited, does not preclude ‘the capacity of cultural workers to think and act in ways that contradict market rationality’ (Banks, 2006: 460). He argues that labour autonomy is a normative principle, and structural precondition, that underpins cultural work, as the production of new cultural commodities, while organised increasingly to capitalist demands, is never reducible to such demands. Rather, it must encompass other forms of value,

contradictory to market economics, and ‘derived from the practices and procedures of art’ (2010: 259). A similar point is made by Harvey (2001), who elucidates an underestimated radical – perhaps even militant – possibility within cultural production:

if capital is not to totally destroy the uniqueness that is the basis for the appropriation of monopoly rents... then it must support a form of differentiation and allow of divergent and to some degree *uncontrollable local cultural developments that can be antagonistic to its own smooth functioning*. It can even support (though cautiously and often nervously) all manner of ‘transgressive’ cultural practices precisely because this is one way in which to be original, creative and authentic as well as unique. It is within such spaces that all manner of oppositional movements can form even presupposing, as is often the case, that oppositional movements are not already firmly entrenched there. (Harvey, 2001: 409-10, emphasis added)

Banks (2006: 470) notes, however, that despite ‘the identification here of some radical interests’ it is important not to exaggerate the desire of cultural workers to usurp capitalism, suggesting instead that they are ‘were mostly concerned with negotiating a space to work within the capitalist system rather than rejecting it outright’.

Even if we accept autonomy as a normative principle of cultural work, however, it will be felt unequally throughout both the cultural industries, and in other areas of work. It remains, then, that autonomy can be viewed as a critical goal: as a matter of social justice and response to an ‘authentic demand for a life not dictated by the cruel grind of excessively managed work’ (Ross, 2009: 46). So that, even accepting limitations on autonomy, improving individuals’ meaningful choices can be still be made possible by political struggles and changing social conditions so that opportunities for exercising agency can be more equally distributed (Banks, 2010: 266). As such, for Ross (2009), precarious or flexible work itself cannot be the target of critical interventions as it may be chosen by workers as well as imposed – ‘real’ autonomy would be possible, therefore, ‘in a socially regulated environment where the consequences of such choices are protected against unwanted risk and degradation’ (p.50).

While the Keynesian welfare state may appear to offer a solution, Ross goes on to argue that a return to a Fordist (or even pre-Fordist) state would no longer be possible or desirable – structures that might have mitigated the anti-social impact of marketisation have been dismantled, and utopian thinking about work cannot return the worker to stupefying routine in hierarchy and bureaucracy. Instead, the possibility of the self-directed individual should not be coupled with neoliberal ideals and the selfish neglect of others; rather individualised autonomy and self-realisation can ‘serve as the basis of ethical discussions concerning the place of work, and of creative labour, within conceptions of the good life’ (Hesmondhalgh, 2010: 238-9). Some form of trade union activity could have an important role in ameliorating the excesses of insecurity in

cultural labour, but to do so potential future organisers will have to approach flexible working as an experiential norm, something they have thus far failed to do (Hesmondhalgh & Baker, 2011; Ross, 2009). Gollmitzer and Murray (2008b: 5) point to the increasing calls for a concept of social security adjusted to the reality of cultural work styles, dubbed 'flexicurity'. These measures, in countries including Germany, Finland and Lithuania, have resulted in policies to improve the rights of contract workers, and in the revision of tax law and social security to better meet the needs of cultural workers. Such measures are far from widespread, however, and Gollmitzer and Murray argue that where present they still fail to be properly sensitive to the 'creative ecology' (p.17).

Against the dominant discourses of the creative industries and cultural studies an academic intervention responsive to the lived experience of cultural workers is needed, which differs from 'ones marked significantly by an insensitivity to context and a disavowal of the contingency and subjectivity of the labour process' (Banks, 2010: 263). Such studies should acknowledge the effects of flexible work and neoliberal markets on the individual; aware that cultural workers are necessarily required to form their identities and act within a space that limits their possible strategies. But these studies also need to remain aware that within such a limited space is the possibility of subverting and appropriating dominant discourses, acting with a range of motivations never wholly reducible to the omnipotent free agent, or the cowed subject of normative control. Crucially, such an approach should be aware of how structural pressures problematise the labour of those in the cultural industries, fomenting discussion around such issues and feeding into current policy debates.

#### 4.4 Summary

This Chapter has provided an overview of contemporary approaches to understanding the conditions under which cultural work takes place. Positive accounts of cultural labour often highlight its perceived inherent rewards: participants often having a strong individual identification with work in sectors viewed as 'fun' or 'glamorous'. Furthermore, it features an unusual degree of autonomy and expressiveness and, thus, opportunities for self-realisation (Banks, 2007; Eikhof & Haunschild, 2006; 2007; McRobbie, 2002; Oakley, 2009b; Stahl, 2013).

Critics of cultural labour, however, point to structural issues that many workers in these sectors face, including long hours, low pay and insecurity; indeed, it is argued that cultural labour exemplifies the kinds of 'precarious' work promoted by contemporary, neoliberal capitalism (Gill & Pratt, 2008; Neilson & Rossiter, 2005). Individualisation has desocialised labour, promoting the temporary at the expense of collective action and social identities (McRobbie, 2002), but also provides a seductive, though ultimately illusory, sense of autonomy and self-realisation (Banks, 2007; Gregg, 2009; Oakley, 2009a; Ross, 2001; 2009). Working practices in these sectors generate inequalities and, moreover, marginalise those who are not of the 'correct' background, age, ethnicity or

gender (Banks and Milestone, 2011; Hesmondhalgh & Baker, 2011; Oakley, 2013). While such critical responses to overly optimistic accounts of such labour are necessary, especially as work in these sectors is widely promoted in economic, social and urban policy (see Chapters 2 & 3), they also apparently preclude even the possibility of good work, and under develop or disavow agency.

This Chapter suggests that by considering how artists construct narrative-identities with reference to their socially embedded practices, one can approach the 'missing subject'. This approach explores how individuals mediate and interpret between their sense of self and external influences. This suggests that external social and economic structures are not unreflexively reproduced, fomenting in individuals a kind of 'false consciousness' that obscures the negative features of cultural work. Rather, accounts of negative features cannot, *per se*, discredit the values and meanings which individuals' work as artists produces, and that these processes of individual identity construction cannot be understood as wholly individualised, even narcissistic, as they are informed by, and inform, shared narratives. As such, this can be a means by which serious consideration can be given to subjectivity, contingency and agency in labour processes, grounded in a sociological appreciation of problems of constraint, structure and agency (Banks, 2010; Ezzy, 1997; Hesmondhalgh & Baker, 2011; Keat, 2000; 2009).

## 5 Methodology

The question of methodology is crucial within the social sciences as methods play a key role in the generation of research questions and data, and ways in which abstract theory can be related to empirics (Bryman, 2012). A critical engagement with methodological debates helps to highlight important issues that must be considered in evolving techniques of research design, data collection and analysis, research outputs, and on ethics and positionality. Understanding methodological debate is vital for both researcher and audience in assessing the reliability, validity and generalizability of data and research outputs, and is related to questions of epistemology and the status of knowledges generated during the research process. Philosophical approaches in the social sciences hence vary from the universalising aims of positivist researchers – wherein the social world is examined ‘according to the same principles, procedures, and ethos as the natural sciences’ (Bryman, 2012: 27) – through to approaches couched in ‘the constructed, partial, subjective nature of interpretation and representation’ (Lee, 2008: 119), approaches more normally associated with humanities and their hermeneutics of knowledge construction.

While this Chapter cannot do justice to the full complexity of methodological debates in the social sciences, it will situate this project methodologically to justify the research processes adopted, simultaneously highlighting key issues that arose while undertaking this project. As such, this Chapter will describe how this research was undertaken, looking at a selection of cases, that is, the research sites and participants, approaches in the field, and the iterative process of establishing and altering research focus as data were collected. It will further discuss how data were analysed, and the positionality of the researcher.

### 5.1 Research Aims

The overall aim of this thesis is to explore the labour of visual artists in the context of culture-led urban policy – to consider how it is used in such policy, and how it is understood and experienced by its practitioners. Instructive work on culture-led urban policy often considers workers, if at all, as a homogenised mass, viewed as labour power to be attracted for their ability to provide symbolic consecration and value-added production, or criticised for their role in gentrification processes. Individual experiences and subjectivities are thus elided. Florida (2002) would be the most egregious example in the construction of the vague ‘Creative Class’ but other work is similarly parsimonious in its attention to the actual labour of cultural workers (e.g. Bailey et al.; 2004; Evans, 2009; Miles & Paddison, 2005). Meanwhile, work on cultural labour can lack proper consideration of the geographies of their labour. Such broad accounts may fail to properly engage with important specificities in the ways in which artists’ labour can draw upon and construct place and space (e.g. Hesmondhalgh & Baker, 2011; McRobbie, 2002; Menger, 2006).

There are, of course, exceptions to this. Lloyd (2004; 2010) has made intensive study of artists, cultural workers and the culture-led regeneration of one district in Chicago. Markusen (2006; Markusen & Schrock, 2006), meanwhile, provides extensive coverage of artists spatial distribution and economic impacts across the United States. Situated between these two poles of breadth and depth of coverage, this thesis focuses on two cases. This allows for a relatively intensive study of people and place, and for conclusions to be made about the culture-led urban policy of each place, and as to how places can be a resource for, and are shaped by, artists' labour.

I will discuss in further detail below how cases were selected and how research design was modified through the research process. From the overarching aim outlined above, four main research questions emerge:

- How are Margate and Folkestone being constructed as 'creative' places?
- What are the implications of culture-led urban policy for artists in Margate and Folkestone?
- How do these artists understand and experience the role of 'artist'?
- What are the conditions of work for these artists?

Each question is the focus of each of one of the following four Chapters. The first two Chapters broadly focus on the creative construction of place and the implications of this. In the following two Chapters the emphasis turns to the artists' narratives and experiences of work. However, presenting the analysis into these two broad framing themes is not an attempt to impose a distinction between labour and spatial concerns, but rather provides structure to the data presented here. While I draw on various types of data throughout, observation and field-notes are brought to the fore in the first two Chapters on the 'artful' construction of place. Thereafter, it is interview data that are relied on most prominently, particularly the narratives of the research participants.

## 5.2 Case Study as Approach

The research presented here is based on data collected through a contextual study of national, county and district level cultural regeneration policy; two years' fieldwork – mainly around Margate and Folkestone, but also at events elsewhere associated with the arts, and art-led regeneration in Kent; and twenty-one semi-structured interviews with visual artists. This multi-method approach was responding to calls for analyses of cultural work:

sensitive to the temporal-spatial environments in which autonomous work is undertaken, and the full range of social, political and economic influences and motivations that help shape the course of such work. (Banks, 2010: 263)

This research explores how artists' labour is used in urban policy and helps construct places as 'artful' or 'creative', and the ways in which spatial considerations may be co-constitutive of artists' experiences, understandings and narratives of work. Importantly, the purpose of the work is not the romanticised and reductionist aim of presenting subjects' 'own' story in their 'own' voice, nor to suggest that what they say can be reduced to a reflection of societal structures. Rather –in keeping with the need for proper attention to issues of subjectivity and agency, outlined in the previous Chapter – it is to give serious consideration to what they say while acknowledging that it is affected by the environments in which they are embedded (Gubrium & Holstein, 2010: 255-6).

As such, this research draws upon what might be broadly understood as a case study approach. The case study operates as a 'design frame' (Thomas, 2011: 512) for research, the focus not being on particular methods of data collection but, as Yin (2009: 18) notes, the investigation of a 'contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-life context'.

Empirical work in the case study approach draws on multiple sources of evidence (Yin, 2009). As noted above, to establish and engage with the research aims and objectives of this thesis desk-based review of relevant policy was undertaken alongside observation and interviews of visual artists. While this research cannot be described as ethnographic in the anthropological sense of full immersion in the field, it can be viewed as using having 'ethnographic-intent' (Gray, 2003; Lee, 2008). Hammersley and Atkinson (2007: 1) note that ethnography is not a sharply defined approach and can overlap with a range of other terms and approaches, such as case studies. It can be described as 'first-hand empirical investigation and the theoretical and comparative interpretation of social organization and culture' wherein the ethnographer must assume a learning role in the field, using first-hand observations to improve their understanding. By using the term 'ethnographic' here I signal a familiarity with its key tools, including attention to the narrative features of respondents' talk, a reflexive engagement with research processes, and engagement with the field over a sustained period of time (Lee, 2008). What this meant in practice will be discussed further below.

This section, then, will note the research processes undertaken: how research cases were identified, working in the work including issues of access, conducting semi-structured interviews, and issues of ethics and confidentiality.

### 5.2.1 Identifying Cases

The choice of case for study necessarily shapes the research undertaken. It is important they be chosen carefully and with an awareness of the limitations this choice may impose. There was a strong 'opportunistic basis' (Walsh, 2012: 251) in the selection of visual artists' labour in Margate and Folkestone. My initial research proposal was focussed on producing an ethnography of cultural labour in niche media sectors. However, ethnography is an open-ended approach and from the 'foreshadowed

problem' (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007: 3) of cultural labour, the design was transformed and refined. I was made aware of the parallel artistic, culture-led urban interventions of Margate and Folkestone, and thus the possibility of case studies of situated cultural work within the context of regeneration schemes gained traction. This brought together themes from my masters course at the University of Leeds and, happily, both sites were well located for access from the University of Kent's main campus in the city of Canterbury. Through these stages, then, one can discern the 'funnel structure' (Walsh, 2012: 250) of research, as initial engagement with secondary sources foreshadowed a broad area of interest that was modified and deviated from over time.

As cases studies, Margate and Folkestone are interesting, academically and from a policy perspective, in a number of ways. These sites offered the opportunity to link literatures on culture-led development, urban regeneration and gentrification with the rapidly expanding critical literature on cultural labour. Furthermore, while both sites were – and remain – subject to policies following similar discourses of culture-led development there are interesting differences in implementation. While Margate is proceeding with the publically-funded top-down development of an iconic building to house a contemporary art gallery (The Turner Contemporary), Folkestone is using private philanthropy to promote artists, practitioners and cultural businesses (see Chapters 1 & 6). They are also interesting as small coastal towns for two reasons: much of the extant research on culture-led urban regeneration has been on larger urban areas (Bailey, et al., 2004; Currid, 2007; Pratt, 2009; Zukin, 1982; 2010), and because there is ongoing policy interest in the regeneration of English seaside towns (BOP, 2011; KCC, 2004; Shared Intelligence, 2008; Smith, 2004). Studying Margate and Folkestone thus affords an opportunity to highlight the differences (if any) between these smaller towns and existing research, and between two different models of funding urban policy.

In terms of a case study approach, these framing issues present the outline of the object of study, that is, 'the analytical frame within which the case is viewed and which the case exemplifies' (Thomas, 2011: 515). The specific phenomena, of artists' labour in the context of the urban regeneration of Margate and Folkestone, may thus be understood as the subject of the case study, selected not as a representative sample of a wider population but because they present 'an interesting or unusual or revealing example through which the lineaments of the object can be refracted' (p.514). Moreover, these sites were not randomly selected and, therefore, the data presented here poses problems of generalizability (Lloyd, 2004: 350). Both cases are specific, and, to some extent, contrasting, and the observations made in both contexts will not be representative of cases elsewhere. This criticism may be augmented by the localised approach taken, posing issues about how this micro study might translate to macro structures. Thomas (2011: 514) acknowledges this but argues that case studies cannot produce representativeness, rather they usefully explore the 'dynamic of the relation between subject and object'. Thus, as Yin (2009: 15) suggests, case studies are useful in 'analytical generalisation', that is, in the contributions they can make to theory. McRobbie (1998:

11) similarly argues that local studies can perform ‘a knowledge-generating function’ that, importantly:

allows us the opportunity to see how things actually work in practice and how more general social, and even global, trends... are translated or modified when they become grounded.

I argue, then, that these cases have an intrinsic interest and theoretical usefulness (Walsh, 2012: 251) that I hope will invite comparisons with other cases, and provide a vital grounding to debates around cultural labour and arts-led development.

Having identified cases, however, several issues are subsequently raised as to the scope of what to include. For example, does an artist need to live and work in Margate or Folkestone to be included? What about if they have just exhibited there? This is to say nothing of the contentious question of what art *is*. Engaging with these issues is important in establishing the case as a ‘real-life phenomenon, not an abstraction’ (Yin, 2009: 32). My approaches to such boundaries are further discussed and justified in the following sections.

### 5.2.2 The Problem of ‘Art’

In defining the case for this research it was important to consider who would be a ‘visual artist’ and, indeed, what ‘visual art’ might be. Providing such definitions can prove difficult. Conceptions of ‘art’ and ‘culture’ are bound up in myths and traditions that elevate them to rarified domains where ‘practitioners are not ordinary mortals’ (Wolff, 1981: 11). Furthermore, Becker (1982) notes that attempts to ascertain what is ‘really art’ persists within art worlds, members of which ‘typically devote considerable attention to trying to decide what is and isn’t art, what is and isn’t their kind of art, and who is and isn’t an artist’ (p.36). He argues, then, for a sociological attentiveness to how definitions and boundaries are drawn within the field as a means by which to understand it. However, this position cannot escape the need at some stage to define and explore the sites that are most important in the constitution and expression of the field – that is, to make the case for looking in galleries rather than a barbers. However, in doing so it is important to remain aware that the field is ‘the product and prize of a permanent conflict... the generative, unifying principle of this “system” is the struggle, with all the contradictions it engenders’ (Bourdieu, 1993: 34). Methods of inclusion and exclusion – deliberate, conscious or otherwise – are sites through which the researcher can objectify participants and shape the research by ‘blindly arbitrating on debates which are inscribed in reality itself’ (Bourdieu, 1993: 41).

As such, the starting point for this research was a critical approach to the kind of artistic labour promoted as part of regional and local urban development policy documents (e.g. KCC, 2009; 2010a; 2010b; MRP, 2007; 2008; SDC; 2011; 2012). This research followed these documents by locating initial departure points for research within the areas they highlight: namely the galleries of the creative quarters of Margate and

Folkestone, and the events associated with them. This has important implications for the research as it privileges one contestable operationalization of who might constitute a ‘visual artist’ and where they might be found. This is justified, however, by the aims of the project – specifically examining the conditions of work for artists as a role promoted in urban policies. Moreover, research continued without strong definitions as to what and whom should be included, allowing potential participants to include or exclude themselves from a research project on ‘visual artists’, and to point me towards other ‘visual artists’. The aim, then, was to use the starting points to allow entry into the field and from which participants could draw their own ‘definitions and boundaries’. Further discussion on how participants discussed being an artist can be found in Chapter Seven.

### 5.2.3 In the Field

Fieldwork started in April 2011 and continued until September 2013. Conducting ethnographic fieldwork can be difficult as it opens up so many events, occasions, incidences and places up for study. The researcher, meanwhile, remains imperfect in their awareness, misrecognising and mishearing or, indeed, excluding events as they ‘passed right under our nose and through our ears and because our hands were too tired to note the happening’ (Fine, 1993: 280). Moreover, Hammersley and Atkinson (2007) argue that providing training for novice ethnographers is extremely difficult as each site of research will ultimately require:

the exercise of judgement in context; it is not a matter of following methodological rules, nor can all the problems be anticipated, or for that matter resolved. (p.20)

Yet, despite the uncertainty and fatigue of being in the field, it can be an important way to get to the kind of important information that circulates only ‘in the air’ and through ‘gossip and rumour’ (Bourdieu, 1993: 32), also allowing for an engagement with the broader web of knotted structures, knowledges and meanings that constitute the densely layered cultural scripts (Walsh, 2012: 247). As this research focuses on visual artists within the context of culture-led regeneration schemes it was important to engage with the spaces that artists help create, enact and operate within, looking for ways in which art and artists were visible in the landscape, and the spatial implications of this. It is perhaps important to note here that this thesis is not an attempt to engage with the success, or otherwise, of culture-led regeneration, especially with regards to the usual metrics of economic or social value added. It may, however, speak to the success of such approaches where the purpose is the creation of a *sustainable* cultural sector, that is, one concerned with how policy might promote a viable space for cultural production. To reiterate, then, attention to space is another important way to situate cultural labour that provides the analytic framing to subject of the labour of visual artists.

Time spent in the field further directed research questions. As discussed above, research emerged from an engagement with academic, grey and policy literatures, in particular, policy and reports from regional, district and local councils shaped initial sites for study.

Field visits allowed the what, where and who of research to become more focussed, and, through the use of preliminary data, to help further refine research questions. It was vital in identifying potential gatekeepers, spaces of interest, and as a means of finding interview participants (see below). The collection of field notes subsequently generated on visits to Margate and Folkestone – from brief snippets and notes to more substantial, thick description and photos – played a particularly important role in the analysis presented here of the ways in which Margate and Folkestone are being produced, over time, as particular kinds of spaces (see Chapters 6 & 7). The process of field notes collection changed and adapted to the changing demands of particular situations. The normal process, however, was to keep pen and paper, or the notes option on my mobile phone, to hand where I would make short notes of a few words. Where appropriate, I would also try to supplement these with photos. At regular intervals I would use these jotting to write a more substantial notes on my laptop. Of particular interest were elements of built environment and social interactions that related to the research questions outlined above. This included, for example, not only evidence of arts activity, such as galleries and sculpture and other public art, but also things that suggested what the creative construction of place might replace or elide – such as the ‘traditional’ seaside joke shop or disused harbour buildings. It was also important to note whom I saw around Margate and Folkestone, and that this required making subjective observations on age, gender and ethnicity of people in different spaces, alongside notes that might suggest class position, such as clothing or speech. Notes would also include my own responses to what I saw, and my own accounts of what other people told me. Such data further helped contextualise the subject of this research.

Access is a vital aspect to ethnographic work – obtaining (or failing to obtain) access to the key people, events and places will have important impacts on the research. In this project, access to parts of the field was relatively easy – walking around the respective creative quarters, and attending exhibitions and special events were each open to anyone who would like to attend. Further work, either volunteering in galleries, or attending special events for ‘creative professionals’ was similarly easy to secure, and provided a wealth of data and contacts. These, however, represent the most visible and accessible part of the field. Securing an invitation to an informal monthly artists’ meet-up in Folkestone quite late into the research process exemplified how potentially important opportunities for data collection can be obscured from view and, while not a secret, they are only open to those in the know. In that particular case I was not aware of the groups’ existence until being invited, in other cases I sought access but was unable to negotiate entry. This was particularly the case for early attempts in the research process to gain access to a shared studio space where I might ‘hang out’, observe and engage with residents. There remain multiple issues as to how this would have worked: exactly who needed to grant permission, related ethical considerations and the nagging suspicion (in part backed up by later interview data) that most of what I would have seen was empty studio space. However, had this approach been successful it would have generated quite different data.

#### 5.2.4 Conducting Semi-Structured Interviews

Time spent around Margate and Folkestone, observing who was where, participating in events and engaging in informal discussions with artists, art patrons, café staff and others, proved invaluable in generating data about the cultural-regeneration of Margate and Folkestone and the contexts in which cultural labour was happening. Semi-structured interviews were undertaken in addition to this work as a means to engage in a more wide-ranging discussion, allowing research participants to construct narratives and provide their own accounts of their working lives. This method has been identified as useful for teasing out valuable information, such as individual experiences and meanings, from the interviewee (Longhurst, 2003) as it promotes a more fluid conversational form (Valentine, 1997). This section will discuss how participants were found and provide details about how interviews were conducted, exploring the challenges and issues that arose.

##### Finding Participants

The primary restriction I placed upon respondents was that they live or work in Margate and Folkestone, or have another similarly strong connection with either town (for example, that they have exhibited there multiple times, and had active connections with artists and galleries in the town). Respondents were able to self-identify whether they met the requirements of being a ‘visual artist’ with no restrictions on medium, earnings, training or exhibitions – as noted above, this is to pay attention to how the field constitutes itself rather than imposing definitions on continuing debates (Becker, 1982; Bourdieu 1993). The recruitment of participants was mainly achieved through the time I spent in the creative quarters of both Margate and Folkestone – these being spaces inscribed by policy documents as the centres of these ‘artful’ towns (see Chapters 1 & 6). In these places I was able to visit galleries and open studios as a means by which to meet potential respondents. I was aided by the usual practice in small galleries of the artist invigilating their own exhibitions, thus giving me opportunity to introduce myself, and hopefully chat and establish rapport while they had little else to do. Time spent in each creative quarter also introduced me to broader networks of artists and to events located outside these limited areas, taking me to, for example, open house shows, walking tours, workshops and seminars, and site specific installations where further contacts could be made. From these contacts I was able to snowball further participants (Byrne, 2012: 218).

However, these approaches posed some problems. Qualitative interviewing is time-consuming, both to prepare for and undertake, thus limiting the size of a sample, and means that representative sampling techniques – such as random or probability – can be impossible (Byrne, 2012: 215). In this research I could only reach a certain sections of the artist population – those attending shows, having exhibitions, or who know such people and are recommended to me by them. Moreover, by using the policy documents as a starting point I was privileging the representations of space afforded within in spite of their contested politics (see Chapters 3 and 7). While this work cannot present a complete and generalizable set of data for these reasons, it does capture artists in a

range of different professional and personal situation: working with different media, and at different stages in – and with different attitudes to – their ‘career’ as artists. Overall, I suggest the sample provides valid accounts of individual working lives in the case study towns, and hence adds to emerging academic research by grounding theory in robust empirical data about the working conditions faced by some artists in two case studies (McRobbie, 1998).

### In the Interview

Interviews can be problematic given the skill of the interviewer, their biases and the unequal power balance between interviewer and respondent can all play a role in what data are collected (Kobayashi, 1994; Longhurst, 2003). Moreover, Bourdieu (1999) warns that participants can attempt to control their own objectification, using ‘legitimate forms of expression’ (p.615) that can lure the researcher into a ‘double game’ of ‘mutual confirmation of identities’ (p.617).

Of course, attempting to control the complex and myriad effects of the interview relationship in research is not possible but attempts were made by, for instance, keeping a neutral tone to questions and allowing interviewees to express themselves without excessive prompting or intervention on my part. Interviewees were invited to choose an interview location convenient for them. This was so that they were on their own ‘territory’ where it was hoped they would be able to feel relatively more comfortable: additionally this often offered the chance to see them in their own studios or home working spaces (Valentine, 1997: 117). Interviews were digitally recorded to allow me to concentrate on the interview without also needing to make extensive notes, and allowing the interviewee to talk fluidly without feeling as though they had to pause or talk more slowly so that I could keep up.

An interview schedule was prepared for my use, with questions to prompt further discussion from the respondent and as a means by which I could ascertain that all major themes had been covered. The themes to be covered were derived from engagement with extant literatures and policy documents. The broad themes included on my interview schedule were under the headings:

- Can you tell me a bit about living here?
- Can you tell me a bit about the arts scene around here?
- Can you tell me about your work?
- What kinds of rewards do you get from your work?
- What position does your artistic practice have in your life?
- Do you feel under any kind of pressure in your work?
- Can you tell me about the different kinds of support you get for your artistic work?

However, as they were semi-structured interviews it was rare that those exact words would be used or that topics would be broached in this order. Instead interviews proceeded from the general chit-chat engaged in while reviewing consent forms and making cups of tea, and developed through the respondents own narratives. In all, twenty-one interviews were conducted each lasting from around sixty to 120 minutes.

### 5.2.5 Ethics and Confidentiality

Prior to each interview respondents read a project information sheet and were required to complete a consent form examples of which had been approved by the University of Kent Ethics Committee. The use of pseudonyms and the obscuring of identifying data is often used for data in social science research to maintain confidentiality (Ali & Kelly, 2012: 65). However, as this thesis makes use of respondents' biographic information and reference to their art practice, while also being drawn from small populations within specific locations, it was felt that offering anonymity would require extensive alterations to identifiable information and ultimately create fictional accounts. Without these changes anonymity would have been offered but not honoured, as such, all interviewees were made aware that they would be identifiable in research outputs. They were sent copies of their interview transcripts to read and the option to review sections of the thesis in which they were quoted prior to submission. Very few have taken the option to review the thesis, however, a couple of issues were raised about transcripts including sections that were to be removed. One respondent was unhappy with their whole transcript and after discussion only a small portion is cited here under a pseudonym. The purpose of these processes was to ensure informed consent from participants, and to exercise my duty of care as a researcher to participants during and after the interview process (Ali & Kelly, 2012: 62-5).

Maintaining informed consent while conducting ethnographic work outside interview settings can be more problematic. While my research was not covert by design, and early on in many of the contacts I had with people I would state my position as a researcher, it remains the case that it would be difficult, if not impossible, to operate entirely overtly and gain everyone's informed consent (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007: 210-1). Moreover, even where sought, informed consent was granted with at least some level of deception for the kinds of impressions management (see above) necessary to remain in the field, and so as not to change behaviours in ways that might affect the validity of the research. Privacy is a related issue whereby questions are raised as to the levels of control individuals can exert over their actions while in public – and, indeed, as to what spaces might constitute being 'in public' (p.212-3). Certainly the actions and words of individuals around galleries and in the street, and to who I did not even speak, are recorded in my field notes and, in a few cases, quoted in this thesis. Overall, in relation to issues of consent and privacy I, again, proceeded with the duty of care I hold as research foremost in my mind – considering issues of anonymity, privacy and possible harms both before recording and using data.

### 5.3 Data Analysis

This thesis is based on data drawn from policy documents, field notes and interviews with participants. Though each source provides a rich source of data, given the focus of this research on individual artists, their conditions of work and their roles in culture-led urban strategies, interview data has been given particular prominence in this analysis.

Interviews were transcribed verbatim and added to an NVivo project that also contained field notes and photos. Coding was approached using a start list of themes derived from literature, policy and data collection (Basit, 2003: 145). However, qualitative data analysis is a dynamic and reflexive process (p.149), as such the codes changed and developed over time to reflect interview data in an inductive-deductive analysis (Rivas, 2012: 375). Ultimately the major codes used grouped together talk about: Community/Networks, Identity, Place, Pressures and Work. These codes helped organise material into a manageable form for analysis in relation to theoretical and empirical themes and questions (Rivas, 2012). This process, however, can decontextualize segments. As such, the next step was a re-contextualization, examining segments within each code, and in relation to the interviews from which they were taken and relevant theory (Basit, 2003). From this four major themes were identified and provide the titles for the following four Chapters:

- Creating Creative Towns
- Creative Towns for Creative People?
- Being an Artist
- The Conditions of Labour

Following epistemological debates within the social sciences on the status of knowledges generated by research (e.g. Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007: 5-18; Lee, 2008: 119-28; Silverman, 2012), this thesis assumes field notes, photos and interviews each present a version of the social world (Byrne, 2012: 211). While maintaining that respondents' meanings, experiences and narratives must be subject to serious consideration, the narratives presented here unfolded 'within circumstantially situated social interaction' and that were conditioned by 'myriad layers of social context' (p.251). While completion of a thesis presupposes 'a particular mastery of this information'. (Bourdieu, 1993: 32) this researcher can only present a partial and contingent picture of what might be 'reality' that is constructed in the interplay my 'own subjectivity and the subjectivities of those whose lives and worlds are in view' (Gubrium & Holstein, 2010: 251). It is important, then, to consider the positionality of the researcher.

### 5.4 Positionality

This methodology has been designed to help gain a detailed insight into individual biographies, narratives and experiences of working as a visual artist, both over the artists' life course and, more directly, in the quotidian context of Margate and

Folkestone's cultural regeneration. However, a key issue in social science research is the position of the researcher within the research process. This thesis is the product of situated knowledges, embedded hierarchies of unequally distributed power (Ali & Kelly, 2012: 60) of which I am both constitutive of and subject to. My positionality will have added biases to this research at each stage including design and analysis, and while in the field. It is difficult to understand the effect of (potential) respondents' perceptions of me as researcher. For example, as data analysis was undertaken it became obvious that research design had been insufficiently inattentive to issues of gender: a transcript contained comments about a 'women's guilt' with regards to familial responsibility that were not adequately followed up. As a middle-class white male, with a vaguely-trendy beard and wearing New Balance, a brand of trainer beloved by 'hipsters', my appearance largely fitted in with those around me in galleries and at other cultural events. This is, perhaps, useful for gaining access to parts of the field but also further places me as researcher, whatever my own feelings or intentions, in a position of power. However, one must question how many narratives I was able to access because I am able to present myself as either 'belonging' or authoritative, and how many issues were missed as individuals did not feel comfortable discussing sensitive issues, such as gender and sexuality, or even speaking with me at all.

While to minimise bias, interviews focussed on the narratives interviewees themselves created while I tried to make my own comments and questions appear neutral though encouraging, to elicit responses that they felt important to relate, no social researcher can wholly remove their own influence from data collection. Moreover, one must consider the researcher's need to engage in impression management (Walsh, 2012: 253) to maintain rapport and the possibility of future interaction. Indeed, while Fine (1993: 269) encouragingly states that 'researchers are fundamentally honest' he goes to note that 'opportunities for deception are great... everyone's goal is to permit life to run tolerable smoothly – to engage in impression management'. Impression management was undertaken elsewhere, particularly while in exhibitions and galleries where I would attempt to 'fake' more knowledge about art than I actually possess while in conversation to attempt to disguise myself in the position of an 'insider'. Not only was this useful to build rapport with participants, but also because there was a common assumption, and expectation, that for researchers in the arts, it is 'the love of art' that is 'a strong motivation' (Røyseng, 2010: 68) for undertaking work in this field. Indeed, a common question to me when making contact with people was 'Are you an artist?'

Aware of how the desire to manage others' impressions of me and the opportunities for (self-)deception by only approaching easy to reach participants meant facing situations that I would otherwise avoid as socially awkward and, conversely, eschewing easy interactions for those that might be empirically more interesting. For example, one gallery would have regular private views for new shows that I would often attend. Numbers in attendance would vary, the small space sometimes being quite full and other times with just a handful of guests. In the latter case the guests would normally be just the artist and few of their friends and family, I would thus feel most conspicuous,

moving around the room examining and re-examining images, half-hiding behind a glass of wine while I stopped to take surreptitious notes – on the number of people there, their appearance and actions – and waiting for an opportunity to converse with the artist or others in attendance. At another gallery it appeared as though I would be the only other person, apart from the artist and the gallery owner, at a private view. It was an uncomfortable experience for me, though one that paid off as the artist, who had previously declined, consented to be interviewed.

Impression management continues into the analysis provided here as, especially given that participants in this research are identifiable, there is the persistent ‘dread’ of betraying their confidence as analysis must proceed in ways ‘more detached than our emotions demand’ (Fine, 1993: 271). And it is important to note that research participants can also engage in impression management and may seek to avoid uncomfortable experiences. I note above the strong Romantic myths attached to the role of artist. The narratives provided by participants, then, may be the narratives they believe they are expected to present about their work, rehearsed throughout their lives in countless day-to-day conversations where conforming to the ideal artist type is the best way to permit their own lives to run tolerably smoothly.

This research process – from design through to analysis and data presentation – has, thus, required critical self-scrutiny and an acknowledgement that I am not a neutral and detached observer. Further, and as noted above, during analysis there was a recontextualisation of coded segments, a process by which I could reflexively engage with the use of individual data, and consider the meanings with which I intend to ascribe the item in relation to its wider context.

## 5.5 Summary

This Chapter has provided justification for the use of a case study approach and outlined the processes taken in implementing it. This approach has allowed for a theoretically informed research design to be developed that uses a variety of methods and multiple sources of evidence. It has demonstrated how the open-ended nature of this research allowed for the development of the research design and in establishing empirical questions, that remained attentive to the subject cases, that is, artists’ labour in Margate and Folkestone. It has argued that the methodologies selected are appropriate to making a contribution to the literature on cultural work and culture-led urban policies, situating artists’ labour in specific contexts.

While localised and small scale research can pose specific issues of generalizability, this research remains useful in grounding abstract theory in an empirical study of everyday arts practice, showing ‘how things actually work in practice’ (McRobbie, 1998: 11). Moreover, this provides a timely and interesting contribution to an underdeveloped literature on cultural workers and culture-led urban strategies, beyond large-scale and global cities, in smaller and seaside towns.

## 6 Creating Creative Towns

As discussed in Chapter Three, ‘creativity’ has come to be discussed and utilised as a driver of urban change, especially within the context of urban ‘revitalisation’ and ‘regeneration’. During the 1980s, the Greater London Council developed this thinking, providing the antecedent to the first ‘Cultural Quarter’ (Hesmondhalgh & Pratt, 2005). Writing around the same time, Harvey (1989: 9) argued that, as inter-urban competition increases, ‘the city has to appear as an innovative, exciting, creative, and safe place to live or to visit, to play and consume in’. The notion of ‘creativity’, then, was an important aspect of urban regeneration even before the work of Landry (2000) and, especially, Florida (2002; 2005) globalized ‘creative city’ strategies. Creativity is now seen as a key urban asset for urban boosterists, making its promotion an almost ubiquitous strategy for place promotion and attracting inward investment (Currid, 2007; Harris & Moreno, 2012; Kong, 2007; McRobbie, 2011; Mommaas, 2004; Peck, 2005; Pratt, 2008; 2009; 2011).

There are, however, multiple approaches to the utilisation and harnessing of creativity in urban policy. Top-down strategies, such as the construction of large cultural venues (e.g. Tate Modern on London’s South Bank or the Lowry in Salford, UK), contrast with bottom-up, ‘organic’ approaches wherein more informal social milieu emerge, or are encouraged, to take advantage of agglomeration effects and knowledge ‘spillovers’ in clusters, hubs or incubators – as in the Northern Quarter of Manchester, UK, or The Westergasfabriek outside Amsterdam, the Netherlands (Currid & Williams, 2009; McRobbie, 2011; Mommaas, 2004). There are further cleavages between production and consumption-oriented models, and various kinds of financial and management. Moreover, these approaches can be viewed as having a contested politics. While visual artists, in particular, are seen as active agents in the remaking of urban environments – with Hoxton, in East London, and New York City’s Lower East Side providing the prime examples of artful, urban reinvention – they also point to debates around gentrification and displacement as middle-class consumers seek to ‘reassert their authority over urban space’ through urban cultural policy (Latham, 2003: 1713; Deutsche and Ryan, 1984; Pratt, 2009; Zukin, 1982).

This Chapter will explore how Margate and Folkestone are being constructed as cultural, creative or artistic places through urban policy, focusing on the towns’ flagship initiatives: the Turner Contemporary Gallery in Margate, and the Folkestone Triennial and Folkestone Artworks. It will demonstrate how these spaces can act as drivers for changing perceptions and experiences of place, increasing tourism and ‘drawing in’ artists. It will further examine the ways in which artists in Margate and Folkestone are also involved in creating, augmenting and reproducing the cultural properties of place through their situated art practices – a form of labour that can be hidden in the landscape and obscured by dominant representations of space where creativity appears to reside in ready-made buildings and objects. The purpose of this chapter, then, is to highlight the changing material and immaterial ‘spatio-temporal configurations’

(Lefebvre, 1991: 77) of Margate and Folkestone as creative places, and to make visible the social and productive labour that the urban ‘product’ can conceal (Lefebvre, 1991: 80-1). This will raise two further questions that will be addressed in the following Chapters: for who are these creative spaces being constructed, and what are the condition of labour for the artists whose work is co-opted into such urban strategies?

## 6.1 The Key Projects

In 2008, the UK Government’s Department of Culture Media and Sport released a report that stressed the economic argument for inculcating ‘creativity’ in British cities:

The vision is of a Britain in *ten years’ time where the local economies in our biggest cities are driven by creativity*, where there is a much expanded range of creative job opportunities in every region... It is a vision of creativity as the engine of economic growth for towns, cities and regions. (DCMS, 2008: 6, emphasis in original)

This approach was backed-up with central government funding and support through, for example, the Local Government Association (2009; 2013), and regional development agencies which, from 1999 until being wound up in 2011, were involved in many local creative industries strategies (DCMS, 2001; 2008; Oakley 2010). Coastal communities, in particular, were targeted through the £45 million DCMS Sea Change programme (BOP Consulting, 2011; Kennel, 2011; Walton & Browne, 2010). The rationale used in such initiatives echoes a broader view of culture-led development and the benefits that it can bring: as a key driver for urban economic regeneration and, simultaneously, as a tool to combat social problems (Bailey et al., 2004; Miles & Paddison, 2005; Stevenson, 2004; Tyler et al., 2013).

The economic argument can be understood as a key part of Kent County Council’s cultural strategy. As noted in Chapter One, they acknowledge pressing economic issues related to, for example, de-industrialisation. KCC go on to enumerate broader aims; that ‘regeneration is not simply economic growth’, arguing for:

transformation in education and skills, the culture renaissance in the county and an efficient transport system that supports both the economy and residents. It is about improved housing conditions, particularly for the most vulnerable both young and old.  
(KCC, 2009: 9)

While the role of art and culture in the regeneration of East Kent’s coastal towns had been identified by the County Council as early 2004 (KCC, 2004), it was after the *Unlocking Kent’s Potential* (KCC, 2009) report that a cultural strategy gained prominence at the regional policy level. In pursuit of a broad regeneration agenda. KCC produced *Unlocking Kent’s Cultural Potential – Cultural Strategy for Kent 2010-2015*, which laid out a range of aims for the county’s cultural policy, combining an interest in improving both

social and economic condition in the county. It was stated that culture will make a ‘contribution to the wellbeing of the county’ and be recognised as ‘a valuable tool for the county’s work in economic and social regeneration’ (KCC, 2010c: vi). Within this, artists, and the cultural industries more generally, were deployed as key actors who could restore, regenerate or develop local identities and economies.

KCC’s cultural policy may be viewed as a ‘self-conscious and self-styled urban re-creation’ (Bailey et al., 2004: 48): indeed, the – unsuccessful – County Council backed bid for East Kent (including Margate and Folkestone) to become UK City of Culture 2017 ran under the slogan ‘A City Imagined’.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, the *Cultural Strategy* document situates cultural policy as a tool in interurban competition, as the council aims to:

grow a position which will stand out nationally by increasing the number of creative industries... equip a Kent workforce to enter the sector and support our existing creative industries so that we will be regarded as a creative region. (KCC, 2010c: x)

Within this strategy, the visual arts are highlighted as a priority area, ‘so that artists, artists’ studio providers and visual arts audiences will come to Kent confident that they will be welcomed and rewarded’ (p.viii). The focus on the visual arts stems from investment ‘in key projects such as Turner Contemporary [and the] Folkestone Triennial’ which KCC view as making the county ‘well placed to be leaders in the field of visual arts’.

The local authorities of Thanet and Shepway – representing Margate and Folkestone, respectively – follow this rhetoric in their local policy. Indeed, in some respects their strategies predate the County Council’s interest, with several earlier commissioned reports and cultural ‘toolkits’.

This is particularly notable in Margate, where the Turner Contemporary is featured as part of a *Strategic Urban Design Framework* as early as 2004 (Tibbalds, 2004), and art and culture feature prominently in several pieces of research between 2007 and 2009. This includes work undertaken on behalf of the Margate Renewal Partnership, a collaboration that includes Thanet District Council, Kent County Council and the South East Economic Development Agency (SEEDA) (Margate Renewal Partnership, 2007; 2008; 2009; see also: Fleming, 2008a; 2008b; Shared Intelligence, 2008a; SQW & BBP Regeneration, 2007). The *Margate Renewal Study* (Shared Intelligence, 2008a: 14) states that:

Building on the development of the Turner Contemporary, the aim of the Margate Destination Strategy is to turn Margate into a hub for cultural events, artistic goods and creative production.

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<sup>1</sup> UK City of Culture is modelled on the European City of Culture designation. Locations compete for the award which is designed to promote culture-led urban schemes and their concomitant social and economic benefits. See <http://www.eastkent2017.co.uk/> for information on the East Kent bid.

And in Thanet District Council's cultural strategy, *Culture Matters* (TDC, 2008), Margate is one part of the 'naturally vibrant Isle [*of Thanet*]' (p.1), and 'recognised as an area that has changed its fortunes, thanks to a thriving and sustainable cultural community and economy' (p.11).

In Folkestone, the Creative Foundation has co-funded research, along with SEEDA, on cultural regeneration and coastal towns by Powell and Gray (2009). Nick Ewbank (2011), former director of Creative Foundation, also provides an account of the inception of Creative Foundation in 2001, and the subsequent development of Folkestone's Creative Quarter. However, compared to Margate, Folkestone does not have the same number of public research reports/strategy documents concerning its culture-led regeneration. This is perhaps due to Folkestone's reliance on private, philanthropic funding via the Creative Foundation. Indeed, Ewbank notes that it is the Creative Foundation that has taken the strategic lead, and this is perhaps confirmed by Shepway District Council's proceedings that demonstrate Council policy on the regeneration of Folkestone's Old Town is responding to the Creative Foundation's lead (SDC, 2008). However, Shepway District Council, as part of their *Core Strategy* (2012), note that a 'Strategic Need' is the 'challenge to improve employment, educational attainment and economic performance', part of which is to be met through the expansion of 'cultural and creative activity in the district, with refurbished premises and spaces in Folkestone's Old Town forming a vibrant Creative Quarter' (p.29). As part of its contribution to the Council's strategic needs, this 'Regeneration Arc provides major opportunities for development... to upgrade the fabric of the town drawing from its past and potential sense of place' (p.104).

Margate and Folkestone's culture-led regeneration are informed by policy and strategy initiatives at national, regional and local scales. These 'official' representations of space can have a 'substantial role and specific influence in the production of space' (Lefebvre, 1991:42), establishing a logic for social and political practices. The following will demonstrate some of the material and immaterial implications of such representations as they 'intervene in and modify spatial *textures*' (Lefebvre, 1991:42), situated in contemporary discourses around culture, the creative industries, the knowledge economy and creative cities (see Chapters 2 & 3). This section will particularly highlight the roles of the Turner Contemporary, in Margate, and in Folkestone the Triennial/Artworks as what might be understood as the most prominent cultural initiatives in the arts-led regeneration policies of Margate and Folkestone. Moreover, it will explore their role in the production of space and the attempted urban re-creation of these towns.

### 6.1.1 Turner Contemporary

I arrive at Margate train station on a sunny April day in 2011. Built in 1926, the parquet floor of the station concourse, its vaulted ceiling and ornately decorated clock, flanked by cherubs, recall the final few decades of Margate's heyday as a popular holiday resort.

Today volunteers in Turner Contemporary branded t-shirts hand out information packs and neon stickers, bearing the slogan 'You Are Here', to the many people disembarking the busy trains, and heading to the gallery's official opening.

Exiting the station concourse I pass a billboard featuring a carefully composed photo of the gallery building and the strapline 'Welcome to Margate / Home of Turner Contemporary' (Figure 10). Once outside, the gallery is visible across the bay, a slate blue shape separated from the train station by a 10-minute walk alongside the gentle curve of Margate's sandy beach, alongside hoardings that proclaim Margate to be 'the original seaside' (Figure 11).

The Turner Contemporary sits at the base of the Harbour Arm, a pier that extends into the North Sea 200 metres or so, creating a shelter for a few small boats. The Harbour Arm has its own small gallery, artists' studios, a café and a pub. Beneath the lighthouse, at the tip of the Harbour Arm, stands a sculpture made from small metal shells welded together to create a woman in Victorian garb, with a bustle, and bonnet on her head.

The opening has drawn a big crowd; the area around the Turner Contemporary and along the Harbour Arm is thronged with people. The queue to enter the gallery is so long that many people, myself included, will not even attempt to get inside today, preferring to enjoy the fine weather, live music and other open air entertainments. I speak with a stage and television actor who has come down from London to meet friends, and there are families, with buckets and spades, who look as though they came for the beach and were then attracted by the activity around the gallery. There are a few who stand out, with clothing I would describe not as worn but 'curated' – their haircuts and clothes look very expensive, with key items distressed in a way that suggest they are the product of hours rooting through vintage boutiques. I, perhaps unfairly, note down they bear more than a passing resemblance to the Young British Artists, a sardonic cartoon about artists featured in the UK satirical magazine *Private Eye* (see Figure 12). They would look more at home at an East London gallery or, perhaps, arty and hip Brighton, rather than in faded, tired and provincial Margate.

Loitering about I catch snippets of conversation: a woman in her 20s stands behind a baby's pushchair speaking, in a broad Kentish accent, to another woman of a similar age; perhaps because of the buzz of so many people, or even because of the type of people, she says that 'It doesn't feel like Margate today... it feels like somewhere else'.



Figure 10 'Welcome to Margate, Home of Turner Contemporary': Advert at Margate train station, 2011



Figure 11 'Margate: The Original Seaside': Hoarding along Marine Drive, 2011



Figure 12 *Blow It* (Young British Artists, Private Eye) by Birch  
(Source: <http://www.birchcartoons.co.uk/young-british-artists>)

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As a visitor to the town, Turner Contemporary may be understood as occupying a key physical position within Margate – it is visible from the train station, and from along the length of the beach and promenade. Moreover, it occupies an increasingly key position in media representation of the town. For example, the building was subject of a review in a national newspaper by prominent critic Brian Sewell (2011), was cited as a reason why Margate is a ‘must-see’ destination for 2013 (Jones, 2012), while a *New York Times* article on Kent led with the Turner Contemporary (Barton, 2013). These help to create and sustain representations of Margate as a creative and increasingly vibrant place, drawing in, as Ian Aitch (2013) – a writer and journalist who had grown up in Margate – suggests, ‘visibly new demographics over the past two years in terms of visitors, residents and businesses’. Respondents concurred: some noted, in particular, that Turner Contemporary was encouraging new tourists to come to the town:

I mean you’ve seen it with Turner, with how much difference it’s made. Suddenly all these people are coming from London to Margate, they weren’t doing that before, they were going to Whitstable. It’s bringing a whole new audience in. (Claire, Margate)

Claire is suggesting, then, that Margate is being established as a site of cultural consumption for a middle-class audience who might previously have preferred the gentility of Whitstable, a few miles along the coast to the west. Duncan similarly noted that, as opposed to the highly seasonal, traditional seaside resort, ‘now in winter on a Wednesday afternoon you’ll see a coach of people turn up’. The Turner Contemporary, then, may be viewed as changing how Margate is perceived and experienced, and intended to attract new cultural consumers to the town. By the summer of 2013 the gallery was lauding the milestone of one million visits since 2011. The gallery may also be viewed as conforming to one of the expectations of the Margate Renewal Partnership (2009: 3) for who the Turner Contemporary operates as an anchor, attracting visitors to Margate and, hence, into the Old Town’s Creative Quarter which is the location of several galleries, studios and a range of other cultural and leisure amenities such as a museum, and cafes and bars. The gallery, then, has also stimulated independent cultural, and other entrepreneurial, activity – alongside the space as a locus of cultural consumption it can be viewed as creating or promoting Margate as a site of production, drawing relationships between the two (Pratt, 2004: 123) to develop a new economic base for the area. The production of Margate as a creative place away from the gallery, in the Old Town and Cliftonville, will be discussed further below.

This strategy is in keeping with policy for seaside towns that has emphasised the role of culture in helping disadvantaged coastal communities to regenerate (BOP Consulting, 2011; Kennell, 2011; Shared Intelligence, 2008; Smith, 2004). It also possible to point to ways in which the Turner Contemporary exemplifies several institutionalised urban branding techniques (e.g. Evans, 2009; Peck, 2005; see Chapter 3) that codify and project a particular representation of space. The gallery is striking in its design (by David

Chipperfield Associates) and location; it is a spectacle that is attractive for visitors, and affords the capturing of photographs to feature in press and PR that project an image of the town as a cultural destination,<sup>2</sup> the gallery creates new cultural urban spaces as a means by which the town can accumulate cultural capital (Kong, 2007). Cultural capital is augmented by the galleries choice of artists to exhibit. Since opening, it has had major exhibitions by major artists including Alex Katz, Tracey Emin and Carl Andre, as well as hosting installations by Rodin, Mark Wallinger and Juan Muñoz. Moreover, JMW Turner will get his second exhibition in the gallery during 2014. Turner lived in Margate both in his youth and later in his life, living ‘in dubious circumstances with a certain Mrs Booth in a house where Turner Contemporary now stands’ (Darwent, 2012). Margate’s connection with the Romantic painter is part of the founding narrative of the gallery, placing itself in the tradition of:

...one of the most celebrated artists in history... Now, our gallery is testament to Turner’s lasting influence as a visionary. His passion to create something new and original continues to inspire artists today.  
(turnercontemporary.org)

The deployment of JMW Turner’s tenure in the town, and the historical framing of the ‘original seaside’ slogan, are a means by which Margate can also make claims, and trade upon, notions authenticity, heritage and uniqueness – another familiar trope of culture-led regeneration (Zukin, 2010).

The multi-million pound investment in a contemporary building to house exhibitions by a roster of internationally recognisable artists follows a well-trodden path in culture-led regeneration (Evans, 2009) – encompassing renowned interventions, such as Bilbao’s Guggenheim and Tate Modern on London’s South Bank (Dean et al., 2010; Plaza, 2000), and emulated in smaller projects such as the Turner Contemporary, the Hepworth Wakefield or Hasting’s Jerwood Gallery (Hepworth Wakefield, 2013; Rose, 2012). Folkestone, however, is subject to a materially different approach.

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<sup>2</sup> For examples see tcmillion.org, a site set up by Turner Contemporary to celebrate their one million visits.

### 6.1.2 Folkestone Triennial and Folkestone Artworks



Figure 13 Triennial information board in Folkestone Central train station, 2011



Figure 14 An advertising hoarding outside Folkestone Central train station, 2011

I visit the second Folkestone Triennial for the first time at the end of August 2011. It is one of my first visits to the town and my entrance is through the Central train station, to the north of the town centre. This was rebuilt in the 1960s in a utilitarian style, bereft of the period flourishes seen in Margate that might hint at anything beyond austere functionality. A second platform, defunct and overgrown, is visible as I leave the train – a hint to the diminished importance of the station. Around the station maintenance has been neglected so that, overall, it has become particularly tired, bleak and unwelcoming.

On the concourse there is a Triennial information board (Figure 13) that I stop at, along with a small group of visitors that also came on the same train, to pick up a map. Leaving the station a large billboard opposite the exit features five scenic photographs of locations around Folkestone and nearby Hythe and Romney Marsh, it bears the legend 'Aren't you glad you came home to this? Stunning scenery, spectacular coastline, vibrant towns and the Folkestone Triennial' (Figure 14).

Given the Triennial has been running since 25 June, I am here quite late in its run, and combined with the lack of a single place to act as a focal point, this means that there is not the same pervasive buzz of excitement and activity as around the opening of Turner Contemporary. But there are signs of the event all over town: from Folkestone Central station gulls have been spray-painted on the floor to lead visitors to the Creative Quarter, while lining Sandgate Road, the main pedestrianised shopping area for Folkestone, there are Triennial banners attached to lamp-posts. In the middle of Sandgate Road there's a small temporary Triennial information point with maps and flyers. It is staffed by a woman who normally works as a translator but who has taken this (she tells me, minimum waged) role for the summer out of curiosity and excitement. She tells me that she has spoken with visitors from all over Europe, particularly from the Netherlands, Spain and France, attracted by the event, and that local kids have been really interested in what is happening, showing me the children's map the Creative Foundation also produced.

The maps produced of Folkestone's artworks (Figure 15) suggests the installations coalesce into a collection. However, to the uninitiated or uninterested visitor the effect may be somewhat diminished as they occur in isolated, unusual locations. Many are barely visible. For example, on the west end of the Leas, at the bottom of a residential street, I find a Triennial invigilator sat on a collapsible chair in front of a dense blackthorn bush. A path has been cut through the foliage and following it I find a mirrored viewing platform created by Spanish artist Cristina Iglesias, from which I look out over a trench to Martello Tower 4 which remains, otherwise, hidden from public view (Figure 16). Similarly, at the defunct Harbour, across a car park and past the closed ticket office and a greasy-spoon cafe, under the looming control tower, I enter the disused Folkestone Harbour train station – a site that used to welcome the opulence of the Orient Express and which is now slowly turning to ruin, used most frequently by anglers who pass through and up urine soaked steps to fish from the pier. On the tracks Paloma Varga Weisz's sculpture of migrants on their 'magic' carpet sits (Figure 17). There is no invigilator here but a CCTV camera is focussed on the work. The effect is unsettling as the location feels eerie and isolated. Other Triennial pieces hide in plain view, jarring the viewer. I did not immediately realise, for example, that the clock on the Leas is divided into ten 'hours' in line with French Revolutionary metric utopianism (Figure 18).



Figure 15 Folkestone Artworks Map (Excerpt), folkestoneartworks.co.uk, 2013

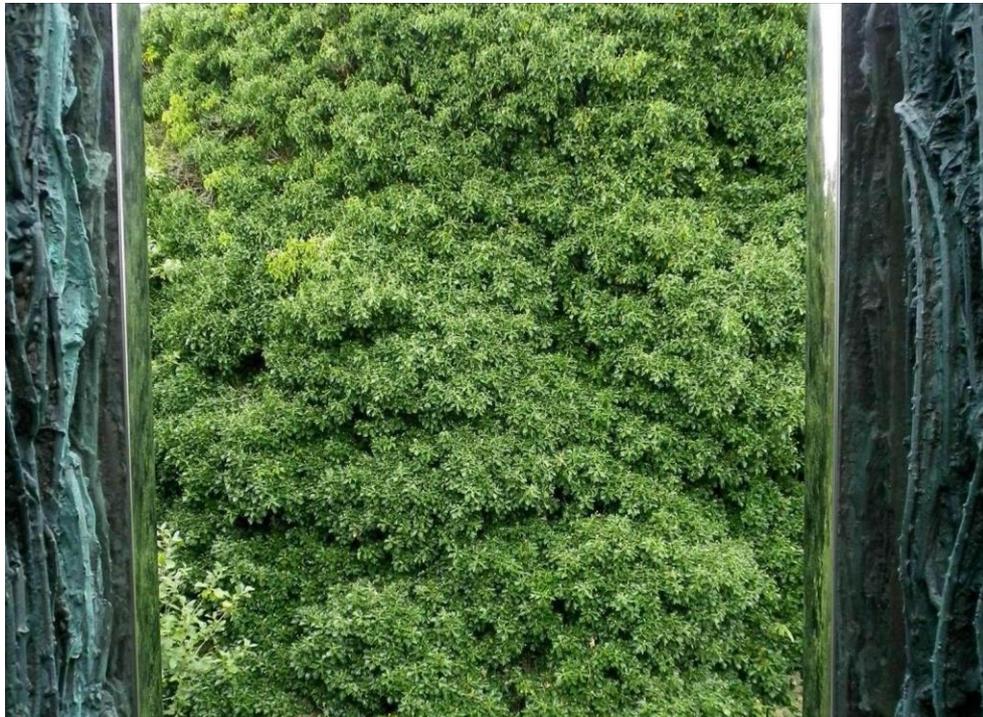


Figure 16 View of Martello Tower 4 from Cristina Iglesias' installation *Towards the Sound of Wilderness* (2011)



Figure 17 *Rug People* by Paloma Varga Weisz at Folkestone Harbour Station, 2011



Figure 18 *We Could Have Been Anything That We Wanted To Be* by Ruth Ewan, 2011



Figure 19 Bear at Folkestone Central train station, from *Baby Things* by Tracey Emin, 2008

A little further to the east along the Leas are pebbles that only on second inspection reveal themselves to be individually numbered, 19,240 of them in total, to represent the number of British soldiers – many of who left through Folkestone’s harbour – killed on the first day of the World War One Battle of the Somme (*Folk Stones* by Mark Wallinger, 2008). Tracey Emin’s *Baby Things* (Figure 19) features small bronze sculptures of babies’ toys and clothing scattered across the town like lost objects – I knew there was one located in Folkestone Central station but it was only after several months, and many visits, that I found the small bear under a bench.

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Like the Turner Contemporary, the Folkestone Triennial/Artworks retains a focus on established and recognised artists (e.g. Mark Wallinger, Tracey Emin, Hamish Fulton) but whereas the Turner Contemporary occupies a key space within Margate and offers a contemporary ‘white box’ gallery space, the material impositions of the Folkestone Triennial/Artworks are dispersed, spread over a town that sprawls along the coast. These interventions are site-specific, most likely outside a gallery setting and often in the public realm.

The programme constitutes the largest commissioning programme for public art in the UK: the 2011 Triennial featured new work by 19 artists, alongside eight works from the 2008 Triennial which now form part of the permanent Folkestone Artworks collection (eight pieces from 2011 were similarly added to this collection). Works were distributed from the number 3 Martello<sup>3</sup> tower on the East Cliff to Martello 4, two miles to the West.

<sup>3</sup> A Martello tower is a small defensive fort of the sort built across the British Empire during the 19th century.

Hall and Robertson (2001) note that public art, like ‘creativity’ and ‘culture’ more generally, was shifted in policy discourse from the 1980s from attention to its aesthetic value to:

a supposed contribution to what might broadly be termed ‘urban regeneration’. The contributions of public art, it was argued, could be economic, social, environmental and psychological. (p.5)

They go on to point to a further rationale for its commissioning, that public art can be deployed to emphasise distinction and the ‘unique’ qualities of place, playing a ‘significant promotional role’ (p.7). The stated aims of the Folkestone Triennial/Artworks are similar to those claimed in Margate, as the Creative Foundation attempts a symbolic re-ordering of space and urban re-branding:

helping to further develop Folkestone’s reputation as a unique destination in the UK... The aim remains that when people think about Folkestone they think about the collection. The size of the collection now warrants a trip to Folkestone by itself and we would like the people of the town to be aware of it, proud of it and to talk about it. (Folkestone Artworks, n.d.)

The excitement of the Triennial is engaging with the urban in a different way, approaching empty buildings or bushes in new ways, or finding compelling reasons to visit underutilised spaces – this draws upon the idea that public art has:

the ability to replace a quality that has vanished from a place or has been ignored; this is achieved, it is argued, through commemoration of events or aspects of local history... (Hall & Robertson, 2001: 12)

Writing in *The Daily Telegraph*, one critic echoes this, noting that the Triennial works ‘take you on an oblique, Alice in Wonderland journey through the town’ (Hudson, 2011). The Triennial, then, prompts visitors to adopt a particular kind of spatial practice, encouraging them to decipher the textures of place in a way that reconfigures what might be viewed as a blight on the landscape – the derelict Harbour train station, or the bleak stretch of concrete on the beach that was home to the Rotunda amusements – into installation sites for art and cultural consumption:

While the images and symbols of urban decay remained the same, their representations and attached meanings shifted from fear and repulsion to curiosity and desire. (Mele, 1994 quoted in Lloyd, 2010: 78)

In meeting their goals one respondent suggested that the Creative Foundation has adopted ‘quite a brave set-up, because it doesn’t have the one big hit, like the Turner Contemporary’ (Matt, Folkestone): the distribution of works across the town reduces the spectacle, and having a large festival only every three years can reduce the momentum behind the cultural-led regeneration. Yet this strategy may be seen as having

an effect, as discerned in the media, where the 2011 Triennial was, according to one national newspaper, ‘this summer’s must-visit’ cultural event (Emms, 2011) with the 2014 Triennial placing the ‘shabby (but improving)’ town onto *The Guardian’s* ‘Holiday hotspots’ list (*The Guardian*, 2014). Comments left in the 2011 Triennial visitors’ book similarly demonstrate how Folkestone’s image is being altered:

I come to Folkestone at least twice a year to visit my in-laws... the town looks better every time I return. I am an art teacher in Newcastle and some of the Triennial artists have inspired projects in school. Looking forward to the next one! Katherine

I’ve always loved Folkestone it’s not as nice as it used to be many years ago. The triennial is helping make Folkestone beautiful again. Wonderful Art! Wonderful! Lily

Thank you for believing in Folkestone and helping people to love this beautiful town. It will one day be restored to its original beauty if we all try and do our bit. [*Name illegible*]

(Transcribed from photos taken 30 August 2011)

These quotes demonstrate how Folkestone is becoming a more attractive place for (these) visitors and cultural consumption.

The work of the Creative Foundation more broadly has served to produce Folkestone as a more creative place. It has projected a narrative about what it hopes to achieve, and this has apparently drawn in visitors, artists and media attention. The Triennial, and the kinds of spaces it produces, is seemingly a key part of achieving the ‘critical mass of creative activity’ (Ewbank, 2011: 33) argued to be required in creating a sustainable culture-led regeneration for the town (Leslie & Rantisi, 2006; Pratt, 2004; Vivant, 2013).

### 6.1.3 An Urban Product

Comparing Folkestone and Margate it is possible to point to key differences between the two. Margate suffers from deeply-embedded social problems and its high street has been decimated by out-of-town shopping, thus Folkestone may be understood as starting from a (relatively) more advantaged position. As such, for both residents and visitors, the potential impact of culture-led regeneration strategies is less immediate. Whereas in Margate, the walk along the seafront and around the town centre can often feel desolate – amongst empty shops and sparse crowds – Folkestone often feels, comparatively, much livelier, especially out of the traditional seaside season. Discussing the cultural regeneration of Folkestone, KCC leader, Paul Carter, suggests that people ‘who live in the area probably don’t see the transformation because it’s incremental’ (quoted in Thomas, 2012).

For both towns, however, the representations of space afforded by key projects can be understood as helping to produce a representational – that is lived and affectively experienced – space that overlays the existing material and symbolic properties of the town with new socio-spatial configurations of space (Lefebvre, 1991: 41-2). They both deploy a specific ideology of culture and creativity to imagine the towns as creative, facilitating the development of representational spaces, and fostering particular spatial practices. They seek to reject negative images inherited from the past – as faded seaside resorts, past their touristic heyday (Ewbank, 2011: 11; MRP 2008: 7) – upgrading the image of their ‘product’ (Bailey et al., 2004: 48) through the utilisation of ‘the field of historically constituted cultural artefacts and practices and special environmental characteristics’ (Harvey, 2001: 404). In Margate this is expressly based on claims to authenticity and uniqueness, positioning the town through its association with JMW Turner and through references to its history as the ‘original seaside’; in Folkestone many of the Triennial/Artworks pieces respond specifically to the town and its particular historical, social, cultural and spatial properties (e.g. Wallinger’s *Folk Stones*). The overarching aim remains, in both cases, the creation and exploitation of synergies between culture, leisure and tourism for economic development (Mommaas, 2004: 518) – both towns striving to attract tourists and cultural producers in schemes where there is a virtuous synergy between the two. The effect is the layering of socially constituted discourses of culture, creativity and art over extant understandings and lived experiences of these places.

This creation of an ‘urban product’, through the reconstruction of Margate and Folkestone as cultural and creative places, can be problematic, however. For Lefebvre (1991: 81) it can serve to conceal the social labour through which they originate:

Products and the circuits they establish (in space) are fetishized and so become more ‘real’ than reality itself — that is, than productive activity itself, which they thus take over. (Lefebvre, 1991: 81)

There is an inattention to the social and productive labour in the product. For example, Bell (2007) argues that the ‘hospitality offer’ – of food, drink, accommodation etc. – can be a key, though academically undertheorised, part of urban regeneration scripts. Food spaces in particular can work as powerful emblems of urban revitalisation, and:

are increasingly central to urban regeneration and place-promotion schemes, woven into the experience economy, and used as markers of metropolitanism and cosmopolitanism. (Bell & Binnie, 2005: 79)

Commercial spaces of food and drink can ‘produce forms of hospitality and hospitableness between hosts and guests, and between guests and guests’ (Bell, 2007: 19) and, moreover, operate as sites of distinction and identification. Important labour is undertaken in these ‘theatres of regeneration’ (p.8) in the kinds of spaces they create, the food and drink served and social interactions that take place all of which can feedback into representations of space via, for example, word-of-mouth, press reports

and social media. This is particularly evident in two such spaces in Margate: GB Pizza (Figure 20), situated in a prime location on the seafront, would often be one of the places spontaneously brought up in conversation by friends and colleagues as ‘exciting’, ‘trendy’ or otherwise emblematic of the regeneration of Margate; meanwhile, a national newspaper article describes Forts Café as able to recast a ‘shabby’ part of the seafront into an ‘artsy, creative hang-out... like a little slice of east London by the sea’ (Naylor, 2013). Who these spaces are produced for and the implications of what may be viewed as a nascent gentrification are discussed in the next Chapter. The point here, however, is that while galleries and exhibitions attract much attention from visitors, the media and in policy, these can obscure the labour and social relations on which the interpretation of places as ‘creative’ is built. This can extend to include a huge range of people and in both ‘creative’ and non-‘creative’ roles and institutions: from curators to invigilators, café staff and cleaners, all of whose labour can play a constitutive role in creating creative places. The following section will highlight the role of visual artists.



Figure 20 Interior of GB Pizza, Margate  
(Source: <http://www.wedoofamily.com/perfect-pizza/>)

## 6.2 Artists Creating Space

Ley (2003: 2534) suggests that artists can bestow upon places a ‘surfeit of meaning’, providing a kind of cultural consecration for what Lloyd (2010) terms ‘neo-bohemia’. This draws on a durable association between artists and symbolically rich, ‘cool’ or ‘edgy’ urban districts. The production of these spaces, Lloyd goes on to suggest, can often rely on artists undertaking economically limited, minor activities that ‘still

contribute to the creative ambiance of the neighbourhood, and in doing so increase its attractiveness' (p.167).

This section will demonstrate how the production and social labour of visual artists in Margate and Folkestone are, alongside the key projects outlined above, also creating the towns as creative places. It will highlight the ways in which they are implicated in the changing material and symbolic properties of place through their work, studios, galleries, events and participation in aspects of the various communities within the towns.

### 6.2.1 Studio spaces



Figure 21 Shane Record's gallery/studio on the Old High Street, Folkestone, 2011

A prominent example of this is Shane Record's gallery/studio towards the top of Folkestone's Old High Street. Shane has had premises in the Creative Quarter since 2005, and has been in these premises since 2007. At the time of interview the exterior is painted a deep blue with his signature in vivid orange over the doorway, though the front had previously been a bright yellow (Figure 21). Large windows allow passers-by to peer in to see that, across the right-hand and rear walls, there are displayed many prints and original oil-paintings, all by Shane, many of them local scenes. Elsewhere, there is a custom built stand for his bicycle and two tall glass display cases filled with *objet*, such as his handmade eyeglasses and a collection of vintage telephones. In the left-hand window Shane hangs his most recently completed piece while the paint dries, and behind that his easel is set-up. These are all positioned so that anyone walking past will be able to see what he has just finished, and also watch him working at the canvas. At night a short film about Shane and the processes he undertakes in his work is projected

onto a screen in the window. For Shane the space itself is 'like a work of art. I love this gallery'. During my times on the Old High Street it was Shane's gallery that consistently attracted the most attention as people browse or just stop to look in the window. Indeed, other participants suggest that within the town Shane is probably the most visible artist and the one to whom most people are exposed.

In creating a site for the consumption and production of his work Shane's gallery/studio space helps to produce Folkestone as a cultural place – the gallery itself can be consumed, within various popular and policy discourses around art, culture and development. Importantly, the space is a product, and site, of his cultural labour. Insofar as his presence is a product of the Creative Foundation's regeneration of the Old High Street his work is co-constitutive of the completion of their strategic aims.

Shane has made the conscious decision to allow his artistic practice be viewed from the street. A few other studios also allow their resident artists to be seen producing work. For example, the Harbour Arm Studios in Margate have windows to allow the curious to peer in. The individual studios also share a central space that is often open to visitors, displaying work and inviting them to visit the artist at work. The shared studios at The Stables on Tontine Street in Folkestone similarly invite inquisitive looks through the large windows that allow people to see some of the working spaces on the open-plan ground floor.

The increasing provision of studio spaces across Margate and Folkestone represents important material and symbolic changes to the towns. In Folkestone many of the studios are provided by the Creative Foundation as part of its redevelopment of properties in the Old Town Creative Quarter, around the Old High Street and Tontine Street, and which most of the artists I spoke to were either current or former tenants of. In Folkestone I visited nine studio spaces, only three of which were outside of the Old Town. In Margate, which does not have one large provider, I visited ten studios of which only one (the Pie Factory) is within the Old Town, with three more in close proximity. As such, though there are spaces on the Harbour Arm and above the Pie Factory gallery purposed as studios, I found that they were generally distributed across a variety of spaces: Roy and Jill work from studios in their respective homes while Duncan occupies the rear of a shop. Since our interview, Nick has moved from the Pie Factory to establish Hello Print Studio in Resort Studios, a shared space in an old industrial building in Cliftonville that he has helped to set-up. Elsewhere I found studios located in the sheds and spare rooms of residential properties, above a car workshop, and converted from a commercial garage (entering part of this studio I was warned about the drop into the still present inspection pit). In both towns, then, studios are not always apparent to uninitiated observers, even within cultural districts they are often located behind anonymous doors without indication as to what happens beyond.

As I discuss further in Chapter Eight, maintaining a dedicated studio space was viewed as important for many of the artists interviewed. The banal point, then, is that availability of studios, or spaces suitable for use as studios, is an important factor in the

choice of location for many of the artists who have moved their residence and/or studio into Margate or Folkestone. Yet, hidden as they often are from street level observation, studio spaces may not appear to be significant in the quotidian creative geographies of the town but they can be important sites in establishing and maintaining an arts scene and cultural milieu. For the general public they are most visible when studios are the site of special events: the opening of Resort Studios in Cliftonville attracted 400 people to its opening day celebrations, and the Creative Foundation run semi-regular open studio events providing opportunities for visitors, potential customers and others (including PhD researchers) to meet the artists and for the artists to be seen and expose, and hopefully sell, their work to a broader audience.

More than this, however, studios can allow for social interactions that lead to expanding networks, new work and events. For Nick it plays an important part, alongside other institutions, in developing a cultural community:

It's people who work at the Turner, people from the other studios, people who run galleries and stuff and they all kind of interact, you know? (Nick, Margate)

Studios, then, can be viewed as sites not only for the production of art works but also important spaces of social labour where networks are produced that extend out into other spaces. Indeed, Currid and Williams (2004) note that 'the social milieu plays a key role in the production, consumption and valorization of cultural goods' (p.423) and suggest that the studio is a key node in this. Furthermore, they link this to the construction and branding of place, these sites of social labour being the product of and further strengthening the buzz that 'motivates consumption of cultural goods and generates aesthetic and market value' (p.424) that culture-led development strategies seek to exploit.

## 6.2.2 Art on the Street

The White Shed group in Folkestone, which ran from around 2008 to 2012, originated from a group of artists who met at while tenants of The Stables. Though formally disbanded, this has continued as an informal gathering including ex-White Shed artists, and others, where information, ideas, plans, and gossip, can be shared:

We have an informal meeting [...] And it can be three people or could be thirteen people. [...] And it's really just a bit of beer and banter. There's a lot of swapping of expertise and information. People say 'Did you see this show? It was good. Go up and see it because it's worth seeing'. You know? Stuff like that. [...] Sometimes we just share gossip. [Laughs] (Nicholette, Folkestone)

While the group was operating Nicholette noted that 'we got together so that we had a presence', working together on funding applications, exhibitions and events. One

initiative instigated by the White Shed group was the *Shared Window* scheme which, following the example of schemes they had seen elsewhere, used the windows of empty shops as gallery spaces for their work:

We realised that other towns were having pop-up spaces and it was quite useful to artists to have them. There didn't seem to be much of that happening here so we approached Shepway [*District Council*] to see if we could persuade them that they should be funding some kind of shared window scheme. (Deborah, Folkestone)

*Shared Window* was taken over by Shepway District Council. SDC rebranded the scheme as *Hidden Gems* and worked with a range of artists to transform empty shop fronts into art installations (Figure 22).



Figure 22 32 Sandgate Road, before and after. Work by Dave Boughton as part of Shepway District Council's *Hidden Gems* (Source: [shepwayshiddengems.org](http://shepwayshiddengems.org))

This offers an example of how art and artists can materially alter the built environment and extend their reach from galleries to reach a wider audience. Similarly moving beyond the traditional gallery environment, artists Clare Pattinson and Polly High ran *Make Your Mark* in the run-up to Christmas 2012, a community event at the ‘inland pier’ pop-up space *Popportunity* on Margate’s High Street. Alongside illustrations by Clare in the theme of *The Twelve Days of Christmas*, members of the public were invited, over twelve days, to draw on large pieces of paper while a time-lapse recording was made.<sup>4</sup> Speaking to Clare and Polly, they noted that over the first weekend they had around 100 people participating during the day: from babies making hand prints to OAPs. They were particularly excited by the mixture of people they had met and by the prospect of bringing participants back together at screenings. The event relied upon funding and donations from the Margate Town Team and two local art supply stores.

Both these initiatives present examples of how artists, and the networks they can draw upon for labour and other resources, can help to produce creative towns through events and material changes to spaces outside traditional gallery settings.

### 6.2.3 Exhibitions / Galleries

Within dedicated art spaces, local artists play an important role as they host, organise and participate in exhibitions. Indeed, all respondents had previously exhibited in galleries in the towns, many having also organised group shows. These range from weekend hires of the tiny Parade Gallery in Margate, to two-week long exhibitions at the prominent and long-established George House at the top of the Old High Street in Folkestone. Having a range of shows around the various galleries in these towns adds to their production as cultural places, and while galleries do not rely solely on local artists they do constitute an important part of who hires these spaces.

Respondents took on broader roles than just producing work for exhibition. Pat, while in her studio on the Harbour Arm in Margate, played a key role in organising the Harbour Arm Gallery. She was enthusiastic about it making a different offer to the Turner Contemporary and for local artists:

it is helping artists along, and it’s exciting for them and for people that are coming, our audiences always... they’re always different. They always look into the gallery to see what’s going on. I’ve never heard anyone say ‘Oh, that was a rubbish show’. But what they do say when they come over here ‘The stuff in your gallery is better than in the Turner’. [*Laughs*]. And that’s a certain type of person and that’s because it’s accessible. It doesn’t mean that it’s poor art, or that it’s simple. It’s just something about stuff that goes in there is fresh and

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<sup>4</sup> I visited on day seven and added a rather good snowman to the project.

it's accessible. I think it's really valuable what's happening here. (Pat, Margate)

Pat, then, has undertaken an important (and unpaid) roles in curating and running a gallery that, thanks to its location next to the Turner Contemporary, can be viewed a key part of the town's cultural offer. Similarly, the 2011 Triennial inspired many fringe events organised under (at least) four different names: Folkestone Fringe, Folkestone Fringe Festival, Folkestone Fringe and Inferential Grin. What began as a small number of projects for the first Triennial in 2008 became a much larger series of events happening on the street, in galleries, homes and studios of participating artists. Moreover, fringe events were able to attract other artists from across the UK:

There were people coming in from outside specifically to do Fringe events which is great. Things like the Royal College of Art took over several spaces. There were women there from either Manchester from Birmingham also in the Cube doing performance and all kinds of things. It was great that it pulled in people from elsewhere. (Helen, Folkestone)

This concentration of artistic activity represents a way in which Folkestone can be reimagined as a 'creative' town. Importantly it was reliant on the labour of individual artists outside of the key cultural project. Diane was integral in organising parts of the official Triennial Fringe series and is quite clear that she hopes to:

create a space where people will engage with something they've never engaged with... completely [*change*] their usual environment. (Diane, Folkestone)

As such, artists' labour is important not only in the work produced for galleries but also the time and effort they expend organising, invigilating and otherwise running exhibitions – both their own and for others.

### 6.3 A New Cultural Landscape?

This Chapter has shown that, in keeping with strategies to secure a 'post-industrial' future informed by the rhetoric of the culture-led regeneration of coastal towns (Kennell, 2011; Smith, 2004; Walton, 2010) and 'creative cities' (Florida, 2002; Landry, 2000), Margate and Folkestone are being materially and symbolically recreated. Yet, while the attention of Margate and Folkestone's cultural policies might focus on key projects, or a general description of the towns becoming more 'creative' places, this Chapter has demonstrated that artists' labour plays an important part in producing these kinds of spaces. Moreover, despite the material differences in the policy, implementation and funding frameworks of each town's culture-led regeneration, artists appear to fulfil broadly similar roles in the two towns. They occupy studios, produce art

on the street, and host the exhibitions and create works that fill the galleries. The visibility of art and artists contribute to the changing symbolic properties of place, producing Margate and Folkestone as cool, arty and desirable spaces through a material change to the textures of place. The effects are reflected, and amplified, in press coverage of the towns: for example, *The Times* places Folkestone at number 5 in its list of The 30 Coolest Places to Live in Britain thanks to the artists of the Creative Quarter (Bloomfield, 2013). Margate was deemed one of *Rough Guide's* 'Must see' destinations for 2013 (the only one in the UK) due to the 'Turner Contemporary and 'the proliferation of other indie art spaces' (Tim Chester quoted in Jones, 2012). Margate, in particular, was subject to a rash of media coverage over the summer of 2013 focussing on the town's 'remarkable transformation' (Gogarty, 2013; see also Aitch, 2013; Pomery, 2013; Waites, 2013). The desirability of the presence of artists is echoed by a respondent who had also previously worked for a local estate agent:

When I was working for [*name of agents*] I'd pick up a phone occasionally and even then I'd hear people saying that Margate is the next place. I've heard people here saying that *they're moving to this area because of the art scene. Nothing more, nothing less.* (Duncan, Margate, emphasis added)

The key projects and the labour of artists, amongst others, may be viewed then as achieving a key aim of cultural regeneration, 'culturally "recharg[ing]" the surrounding urban space, reintroducing that space back into a wider market of urban-dwellers, tourists and investors' (Mommaas, 2004: 518). As a group with high cultural capital, artists bestow a 'surfeit of meaning' (Ley, 2003: 2534) that provides cultural consecration to the spaces they inhabit, drawing on bohemian mythology and the durable association between artists, and symbolically rich, 'cool' or 'edgy' urban districts (Lloyd, 2010). Their presence, then, has come to be understood as 'a catalyst for neighbourhood transition' (Bridge, 2006: 1965), converting 'urban dilapidation into ultra chic' (Smith, 1996: 18). This Chapter has demonstrated ways in which this is occurring: policy and media representations of the towns as arty, cultural and creative places frame perceptions that have a substantive effect on the lived experience of living and working in, and visiting Margate and Folkestone.

However, critiques of culture-led urban strategies suggest that the instrumental uses of culture operate as a veneer to overarching economic rationales (Harvey, 1994) wherein the aim is to produce a space compliant with the demands of capital accumulation, to create 'a landscape of profitability rather than unprofitability' (Herod, 2003: 116). Art and culture are variously deployed as an 'entrepreneurial asset' in the discourses of city boosterism (Bridge, 2006: 1966; Lloyd, 2010; cf. Florida, 2002; Landry, 2000) while, in more critical accounts, are also viewed as providing a distraction from the contested nature of many urban interventions (Deutsche & Ryan, 1984; Matthews, 2010; Peck, 2005). Two important sets of issues are raised by this. The following Chapter will question who these spaces are being produced for, suggesting that artists' labour is

necessarily implicated in gentrifying spatial processes that leaves them, and others, economically and aesthetically vulnerable to marginalisation and displacement. The second set of questions, discussed in Chapters Eight and Nine, will explore the conditions of labour for these artists whose work concomitant with the spatial and symbolic restructuring and regeneration of Margate and Folkestone and their production as creative towns.

## 7 Creative Towns: For Creative People?

The previous Chapter explored how Margate and Folkestone are being produced as creative spaces through strategies that stem from modish discourses of culture-led regeneration and the idea of the ‘creative city’. As discussed in Chapter Three, such thinking has attracted some strident critiques, suggesting it is embedded in ‘extant “neoliberal” development agendas, framed around interurban competition, gentrification, middle-class consumption and place-marketing’ (Peck, 2005: 740). As such, while the creative city proposes a vision of improving ‘quality of life’ through cultural initiatives that will promote social justice, cohesion and economic growth, their distributional outcomes are more likely to be ‘not logically, or practically, progressive; in fact they are most likely to be regressive’ (Pratt, 2011: 124). Despite the existence of academic critique, Lees suggests that the policy language used in relation to culture-led regeneration is able to consistently deflect ‘criticism and resistance’:

Terms like urban renaissance, urban revitalisation, urban re-generation and urban sustainability are used... avoiding the class constitution of the processes involved and neutralising the negative image that the process of gentrification brings with it. (Lees, 2008: 2452)

The purpose of this Chapter, then, is to concentrate on the contestable spatial outcomes, class politics and social relations of the culture-led regeneration strategies of Margate and Folkestone and in which artists are implicated, asking for whom are these spaces being produced.

This Chapter will first explore the symbolic and material properties of place that attract artists to Margate and Folkestone. It will suggest that artists, through the spaces they valorise and help produce, may differ from other local groups and, as such, highlight the distinction between ‘creative’ and ‘uncreative’ populations within the towns, demonstrating that these urban interventions may ignore and marginalise ‘non-cultural’ populations in their planning, execution and outcomes. Further sections will shift focus back to local artists, pointing out the ways that culture-led urban policy may utilise artists’ labour in the production of space but not necessarily produce spaces *for* them. The Chapter note that they may be viewed as excluded from the most prominent cultural interventions – that is, the Turner Contemporary and Folkestone Triennial/Artworks – and how creative strategies may have a transformative effect on the towns that may erode desirable properties of place and result in their eventual displacement from the cultural spaces they helped produce.

### 7.1 What are the Attractions of Margate and Folkestone for Artists?

In recent times, Margate and Folkestone both appear to suffer from negative images that have played a part in how some respondents perceive the towns. Jill grew up

around Thanet, living in the area until 1986 when she went to nursing college at age eighteen. She noted that:

I used to be quite repelled by Margate and find it disgusting, dirty, a filthy place. (Jill, Margate)

For Diane, who grew up in south-east London, Folkestone was the destination for daytrips with friends but left a lasting negative impression:

we used to come down [*to Folkestone*] and get chased back on the train by people wanting to kick the living shit out of us because we were from London. So my understanding of these places was not somewhere that I wanted to move to [...] we came and sat on the beach here and [*my partner*] was like ‘You’re telling me you don’t want to live here?’ And I was like ‘No. I’m not fucking moving to Folkestone’. (Diane, Folkestone)

These quotes reflect not only personal experiences but also popular representations of the towns as beset by economic and social problems (Ellison, 2012; Lees & McKiernan, 2013; Smith, 2012; see also Section 7.2, below, for further discussion). Yet, despite such associations, eighty percent of respondents had moved to Margate or Folkestone to live or work. A common, though not universal, reason for their choice of location was a rejection of established ‘creative’ locales (e.g. London or Brighton) and an attraction to the ‘rawness’ of Margate and Folkestone. For example:

I moved here four years ago [...] And I’m now in touch with a lot of artists that have done just the same as me. You know, they didn’t want to go to Brighton where it’s established [...] the kind of rawness of Folkestone [is] quite interesting. (Nicholette, Folkestone)

As ‘raw’ places, the towns present themselves as capable of being refined and produced in ways that reflect artists’ tastes and interests. For Claire, ‘potential’ is important as it means there is:

possibility and, I think artists really feed in to that. When something’s perfect and the status quo is as is there’s no room for change [...] these places are grand. They had a wonderful legacy, really and there’s potential there. The buildings are there, the structure’s there, it’s just the infrastructure’s not there at the moment. (Claire, Margate)

Empty buildings are one such site of potentiality (Landry, 2000; Mommaas, 2004), as such spaces become obsolete in function or use-value they may be viewed as ready for reappropriation as they present ‘distinct possibilities for practices of innovation and playful intervention’ (Groth & Corijn, 2005: 506). Anthony decries the vacant shops around Margate and wishes that landlords would let them be taken over cheaply for use

as ‘galleries or studios’ and goes on to suggest that opening a studio, gallery and café is what he’d like to do: it’s ‘a possibility’. This possibility has been acted upon by Nick with the opening of Hello Print Studios in Margate, and by Nicholette, John and Helen in their shared studio space above a garage in Folkestone.

Duncan, a photographer with a studio in Margate also see the ‘potential for a lot more space’ to be taken over by artists and other cultural workers. While this potential may be untapped he suggests that the town offers ‘a chance to do what they want pretty much’ as it is ‘just at a stage now where it’s not polished but there’s things happening, [so] you can try stuff out [...] with a bit of space [*away*] from the gallery scene in London’. Rather than working with ‘established’ places where the ‘status quo’ prevails there is a stated desire to be in a place where it is understood to be possible to operate more autonomously; as Matt noted:

I wanted to do it my way, independently. I wanted autonomy. And Folkestone gave me that. It was a lawless place, like a principality [...] nothing was established, it was completely open. (Matt, Folkestone)

For many respondents, having autonomy is a key part of their work (see Chapter 9) and, as these quotes demonstrate, by working as ‘pioneers’ who are ‘bravely setting up ahead of the audience’ (Roger De Haan quoted in Ewbank, 2011: 51), they understand Folkestone and Margate as offering a space in which they can operate more independently. Respondents, then, may be viewed as following in the ‘mythic tradition’ of bohemia (Lloyd, 2010: 12), attracted by and engaging with distinctive urban districts, where neighbourhood decay and being ‘on the edge’ can be re-represented as future potential, and as a means of identifying artists working beyond established or conventional places and practices.

The cultural strategies pursued by the towns also featured in many respondents’ discussions of what makes Margate and Folkestone attractive to live and work in. Respondents in Margate valued the opening of the Turner Contemporary for the other activities it has spawned, and the excitement and sense of optimism that foment in the cultural sector. Duncan points to the increasing numbers of cultural workers who are being drawn to the town by the Turner Contemporary, and the motivation that affords his own practice:

I like being over there [*in Margate*] because it inspires me [...] I think Turner has been the catalyst of something that’s been bubbling, and that’s brought the people down and brought the creatives in... (Duncan, Margate)

For Pat, as the opening approached, it prompted her, and other people, into action:

everything was really building up with Turner and that kind of thing. So I just got involved in all sorts of things, as people do, you know? (Pat, Margate)

This is echoed by Nick:

[*The Turner Contemporary is*] not a guarantee of success but it's bound to attract other artists to the area. And there's just a lot of positive energy going around and lots of projects being set up and stuff.

(Nick, Margate)

Consequently, while the Turner Contemporary may be understood as a site of cultural consumption, for these respondents it has also stimulated the development of a productive milieu. Indeed, to build capacity in the cultural sector, it is also possible to point to employment initiatives undertaken by the gallery, even from before it opened, offering training, skill-development and educational opportunities for local people:

there're some people who have... have got on that ladder from working with the Turner that I know [...] And for a lot of people that was a really good step to get in to further education or to get jobs where you work in community projects and things like that.

(Jill, Margate)

These quotes perhaps point to progress in the aims established in the 2008 *Margate Renewal Study* (Shared Intelligence, 2008a: 14). This study described how a 'well-developed creative sector' can be encouraged and built upon 'the development of the Turner Contemporary' with the aim of turning the town 'into a hub for cultural events, artistic goods and creative production'.

In Folkestone, the regeneration scheme run by the Creative Foundation works on the assumption that artists and 'creatives' will 'kick-start the regeneration process' (Ewbank, 2011: 27), the objective being to attract a critical mass of 'pioneers' who will be 'sufficient to attract private investors to move into the area' (p.33). As in Margate, the Creative Foundation's work has helped create a 'buzz' for artists' in the town. When Nicholette moved to The Stables studios on Tontine Street in 2009 she described the 'art chaos' there which elicited excitement and curiosity about 'Who's that that's come in now? Who's the new person? What's this new person been doing?' She went on to note that, while she was 'interested in the developments' in the Creative Quarter, 'what attracted me and attracted a lot of people here was the Triennial of course'. Indeed, respondents were generally positive about the impact of the Triennial as it acted as a spur to further cultural activity in, for example, the various fringe events. One respondent, Helen, felt the way the fringe festival grew from a small addition to the Triennial into something much bigger was 'amazing', going on to note that the Triennial engendered feelings of pride that 'it's here' in Folkestone. For Diane, the opportunities afforded by the fringe events – and, by extension, the Triennial – had made Folkestone a realistic site for a career in the arts as 'the experience I've gained, as a recent graduate, has been absolutely invaluable' and, she suggests, would have been difficult to obtain elsewhere. The Triennial, then, was a key part in changing her mind about the negative connotations she had of the town which she visited when younger.

These quotes suggest that the representations of space afford by urban policy interventions have been successful in projecting the towns as spaces for artists: as places that are (or will become) ‘creative’. Policies have helped to create a social milieu in which there is excitement at ‘being there’ (Currid & Williams, 2009: 428), where artists respond to social and cultural cues of the ‘buzz’, excitement and energy of these ‘creative’ towns, while also being part of its reproduction (see the previous Chapter on how artists help to produce Margate and Folkestone as creative places).

There were also more prosaic attractions rooted in the economic, familial and social pressures of the present. These towns offer substantial properties for, comparatively, very little money – a concern for individuals whose employment may not produce much income. Duncan notes that:

It’s really very common, people wanting to get out of the city, Margate is the place they want to be. It’s cheap as well, which at the moment is making it easier. I’m buying a house that’s £60,000 for a two-bed flat with amazing views. (Duncan, Margate)

Similarly, while Nick identifies the Turner Contemporary as having an influence on his decision to locate in Margate the ‘main reason was, on a personal note, to start a family and buy a house’. This is echoed by Anette who was drawn to Folkestone not only because of the Creative Foundation’s work but also for its desirability as a location to bring up her daughter, with decent schools and away from the social problems associated with inner-city living where ‘Someone was murdered on our bus... it just got too much’. This move had the added advantage of allowing her to move from a shared studio to her own space, something she would not have been able to afford back in London. Richard was the most frank about the attractive economics of living in Folkestone:

[*Artists will come to Folkestone*] because it’s cheap. It’s realistic to paint here, compared to London for instance. I can afford... just about afford my studio [...] I’ve got a cheap studio. That’s the main thing, that’s the important thing. (Richard, Folkestone)

There were multiple factors, then, encouraging the (re-)location of artists from larger cities to Margate and Folkestone: there’s the attraction of ‘being there’, amongst the buzz of a developing cultural milieu; of being presented with an ‘unfinished’ space with the potential to be recreated in their taste; property is cheaper for studios and housing; and, there can be benefits for individual’s quality of life.

From this we can conclude that policy and urban interventions have produced representations of space that have proven attractive in some ways. They provide a symbolic, aspirational grounding for the towns as (becoming) creative and, therefore, a place to be creative. However, these are not enough and intersect with the quotidian concerns of living and working somewhere affordable and, in a couple of cases, places

where artists might wish to bring up their children. Herod argues that, given the spatiality of labour, and its self-reproduction:

it becomes clear that workers are likely to want to shape the economic landscape in ways that facilitate this self-reproduction (Herod, 2001: 6 quoted in Castree, 2007: 855)

The examples above demonstrate a pattern of self-reproduction of artistic space, a dialectic between symbolic and economic rationales. Such a perspective highlights the persistence of a bohemian mythology that informs ‘the traditions of the artist in the city, shaped both by material exigencies and by cultural identifications, create a blueprint for contemporary action’ (Lloyd, 2010: 12). That is, Margate and Folkestone offer cheap living along with the allure of a growing milieu of ‘creatives’ and cultural amenities. This is augmented by what some spoke of as the ‘raw’ state of the towns, which they viewed as offering the potential for transformation. The factors combine to provide ‘both material and symbolic supports for the plying of such an uncertain trade’ (p.56).

Artists also shape the geographies of these towns through their labour. Castree (2007: 855) notes ‘this capacity can have important consequences not only for workers themselves but for other actors also’. As artists assume the role of ‘pioneers’ or ‘colonisers’ (Lees & Melhuish, 2013; Smith, 1996), they help to establish and reproduce kinds of urban space resonant with specific patterns of ‘creative’ experience, consumption and aesthetics. As such, the following sections will look at the ways the production of ‘creative’ spaces – which artists’ labour is implicated in, and complicit with – may foment divisions between ‘creative’ and ‘uncreative’ populations.

## 7.2 ‘Creative’ and ‘Uncreative’ Margate and Folkestone

The previous Chapter described the opening day celebrations of Turner Contemporary and a visit around the Folkestone Triennial, before focussing on how artists are creating Margate and Folkestone as ‘creative’ or ‘cultural’ spaces. These are, however, very much partial descriptions of Margate and Folkestone. Parts of these towns, as discussed in Chapter One, are among some of the most deprived in the country, featuring areas of high multiple deprivation (CSJ, 2013; ONS, 2011).

Margate, in particular, presents a sharp distinction between ‘creative’ and ‘uncreative’ areas which is materially reflected in the dilapidation of the built environment where increasing numbers of properties stand vacant and/or neglected as one moves further from its creative centre (cf. Figure 23 and Figure 24). In the Old Town, and its immediate surroundings, a pizza restaurant on the sea front revels in tropes of the gentrification aesthetic of bare brick walls and chalkboard menu, and is proclaimed ‘creatively authentic’ (O’Brien, 2012). There are small galleries and a café specialising in cupcakes owned by the same people who run the upmarket kitchenware shop next door, while an expensive vintage clothing boutique and a loose-leaf tea shop all stand in close proximity to the David Chipperfield-designed Turner Contemporary gallery

whose ‘aggressive and threatening’ bulk suggests a decision to ‘impose regime change’ (Sewell, 2011). The whole area is geared to middle-class tastes, consumption styles and budget and can be viewed as ‘entailing new patterns of social segregation’ (Warde, 1991: 225) as it stands in stark contrast to elsewhere in the town.



Figure 23 People outside cafés in Margate Old Town, 2011

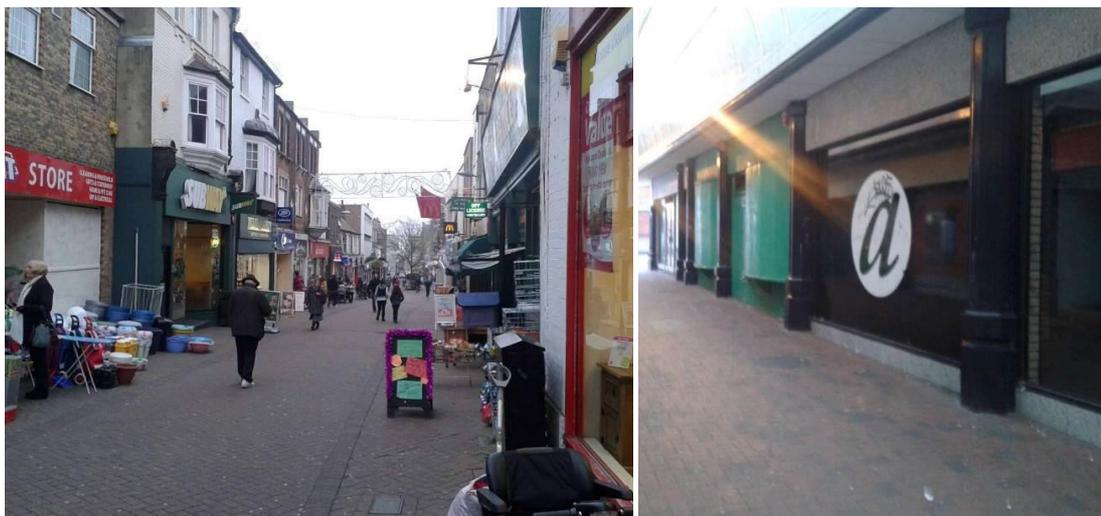


Figure 24 Margate High Street, 2012 (Left) and a row of empty shops in an arcade off the High Street, 2012 (Right)

From the Old Town Creative Quarter it is a very short walk to the bottom of the High Street. Following this up and away from the sea leads to the pedestrianised centre, of what, one supposes, must be Margate’s ‘uncreative quarter’. In 2013 it had the third highest vacancy rate (over 30%) for commercial properties in the UK (Straus, 2013), and those that remain – charity, discount and mobile phone accessory shops – display a

very different aesthetic to the Old Town at the bottom of the hill. This is described in a fieldnote:

I have some lunch in Harbour Café. There's Exposed brickwork, carefully mismatching tables, a vintage Winchester sofa, and easy listening 1930s/'40s vocal jazz is playing. More people come in, a group of six 50-60 year olds who are decently middle class (they're talking *Telegraph* [a middle-class, right of centre, UK newspaper] politics on benefits) [...] I then make the short walk across the 'Piazza' and up the High Street. Thoughts of a regenerating Margate disappear as one moves further from the sea. I notice that Burtons, one of the few remaining national chains in the town, is closing down. Fabric tote bags become plastic carrier bags, the coats are shabbier, less stylish, garish or a combination of all three. It becomes the Margate derided in the press: empty shops, the poor (a young mother complains loudly about the price of trainers for her children to a friend, also with a baby). The High Street looks and feels rough here, amongst the empty, phone and charity shops. An old fella sees an acquaintance and loudly proclaims his desire to leave for somewhere better: "Tunbridge Wells [*a nearby affluent town*] here I come. A one way ticket". (Fieldnote 2013 01 09)

The walk takes only a few minutes but shifts one between starkly different urban regimes. The disconnect between these parts of Margate is echoed by a respondent who notes that:

You walk around Margate now and the seafront there... the Old Town seafront down by the harbour and it's buzzing. There's cafes and people are really flocking down there [...] but it's just that little area where it all sort of thrives. But, beyond that it's just a... a wilderness. (Anthony, Margate)

Indeed, Margate still figures as a byword for undesirable or 'naff' destinations: early in 2013 Easyjet ran a campaign for its budget flights by prompting people to head to 'Malaga not Margate' (see Figure 25; Brown, 2013). Moreover, it has come to be known as a 'dumping ground' (CSJ, 2013; Philips, 2011) for economically and socially disadvantaged groups.

During my visits, Folkestone has never felt quite as bleak as Margate. Sandgate Road (its main shopping street) still has a large department store and a bustling market on Saturdays, while adjoining it is a recent development incorporating a large supermarket, popular clothes retailers and multi-story car parking. Along the seafront what had been a toll road connecting the harbour with Sandgate to the west was developed into the

well-liked and popular Coastal Park with attractive landscaping, a performance area and adventure playground.



Figure 25 'This year end up in Malaga, not Margate': EasyJet advert on the train from London St. Pancras to Margate, 2013



Figure 26 Site of the Rotunda (Left) and the Harbour Lookout Tower (Right), Folkestone, 2011

There are, however, areas of dilapidation. Along the coast from the park, toward the more deprived east of the town, is an expanse of tarmac that is the now vacant site of the former Rotunda amusements. Continuing you come to some squat warehousing and then to the now partially derelict harbour buildings and harbour train station (Figure 26). Following the road north, around the harbour situated between the 1970s, ship-like Grand Burstin Hotel and the disused rail bridge, you come to the bottom of the Old

High Street where it meets Tontine Street, the two roads that constitute Folkestone's Creative Quarter. In 2004, a reporter for *The Independent* newspaper visited Tontine Street to view the street very early on a Saturday morning as the two nightclubs then in operation closed:

At 2.15am yesterday in Tontine Street in the centre of Folkestone, Kent, PC Harper was on the front line of Operation Kibosh, the newly launched nationwide police crackdown on binge-drinking and associated yobbery, aimed at making town and city centres more civilised places. Seventy- seven sites have been targeted, and local authorities are also being enlisted to work towards closing down premises that cause trouble...

A short, squat man, with a bloody smear across his nose, having stood staring fixedly at the police car for several minutes, has advanced towards it, making menacing noises. Big Kev the Karaoke man – “I'm the only sober man here; I never drink, me” – drags him away.

With that, PC Harper drives off, leaving Tontine Street to the seagulls, pecking greedily at discarded takeaway cartons. And the puddles of vomit. (Kirby, 2004)

This represents a particular image of Tontine Street as a drunken, unpleasant place and coincides with similar stories and responses to the area. Speaking with a resident who had been brought up in a Folkestone I was told the (possibly apocryphal) story of the dentist on Tontine Street who would always open on Saturday and Sunday mornings to deal with the (many) broken and missing teeth from the altercations of the previous night.

For some respondents, then, there was a strong belief that cultural regeneration had been a boon and that the increased prominence afforded to the arts, and creativity more generally, was positive. Speaking about Tontine Street, Helen suggested that artists:

were changing the feel of the street. It was just an improvement. Just an absolute, practical improvement of people there being active and productive and creating a presence down there.

Yet, while the built environment in the area has changed through the work of the Creative Foundation this image remains somewhat more difficult to alter. Anette, who moved to the town from London in 2007, described how the Old High and Tontine Streets split the more affluent west Folkestone from the poorer east and how this played into the advice she received when relocating to the area:

Everyone would say ‘You must not live in east Folkestone, you just cannot look at anything in east Folkestone or north of the motorway’. Living in London, on the same street, you’ve got lovely houses, council houses, everything in between, and you’re used to everyone just living together. So we thought that was complete nonsense but you find out it’s actually true. I wish it wasn’t, but it is really true. There is a split, and the Old High Street and Tontine Street go between the two. But there’s a specific east and west, and I’ve heard there are people living in west Folkestone who will not come to the Old High Street because it’s too dangerous. These old myths... Unbelievable. (Anette, Folkestone)

This may be viewed less as a split between, putatively, creative and uncreative populations than a split between the relative levels of affluence or class – though being an artist more often coincides with being also middle class than not (Creative & Cultural Skills, 2009; Oakley, 2013). The creative (or more affluent or more middle class) ‘pioneers’ of cultural regeneration are sited in an area of high deprivation and where, with backing from Roger De Haan’s Charitable Trust, a vast swathe of property has been bought, renovated and repurposed for ‘artists, artisans and creative businesses of the very highest calibre’ (Ewbank, 2011: 48). Taking up tenancies here requires applications from prospective residents and businesses to be vetted by committee, and these are ‘sometimes... vetoed on the grounds of artistic quality’. The Creative Foundation’s then property director Robert Green described the conditions of the properties they took over with a degree of disgust:

When I first started I was really shocked by the buildings we were buying – both by the appalling state of the structures themselves and by *the dreadful conditions people were prepared to live in...* I couldn’t believe anyone could live in that amount of squalor... it was filthy (quoted in Ewbank, 2011: 39, emphasis added)

This echoes Landry (2000), for who the deployment of artists to ‘grotty’ parts of the city is the first step in the process of gentrification: it is ‘only when the “grottness” has been tamed and made safe by the artist will [*the middle-class*] arrive’ (p.125). A view that seems devoid of any appreciation of local populations and existing cultures and traditions. A similar othering was visible at a Creative Foundation event on Tontine Street in 2011 discussion turned to the friction evident in the area with the ‘rough edge’ of the community, and a more wide-ranging unease in the relationship between the ‘indigenous’ population and incoming artists. A senior member of a creative development agency, with offices on Tontine Street, noted that it still feels like there remains ‘aggression’ on the street, though she was not sure if it were ‘real or imagined’ (Fieldnote 2011 11 05). While I did not encounter or notice any hostility on the streets

around Folkestone's Creative Quarter some respondents did note that when invigilating exhibitions there were issues. Diane recalled having to deal with a disruptive man at an International Women's Day event on the Old High Street who was later that night arrested carrying a knife, an event which served to remind her that the area remains a 'dangerous' part of town.

More noticeable was who was on the streets around the Creative Quarter and how this was not reflected in attendance at galleries, shows and events. The 'rough edge' discussed at the Creative Foundation event is perhaps presented in two groups. The first was the steady stream of solitary men – mostly in their 20s and early 30s, dressed in sports casual attire – visiting the betting shop next door to the vegetarian café on Tontine Street. The other was a group of younger people of mixed genders and races – varying from 5 to 10 members – loitering around shops opposite The Cube adult education centre. These were identifiably working class and visible on the street, but not represented in the art spaces and events I visited around the town

A similar point can be made in Margate where, generally, the people one saw on the High Street were quite different in dress, age and diversity of skin colour to those in the Creative Quarter's galleries and cafés. Attending an open house exhibition in the Cliftonville area of the town I spoke with two artists who discussed the gap between 'creative' and 'uncreative' populations – to draw more people to the show they had thought about handing out flyers on Cliftonville's high street but had decided not to as 'from previous experience, we're not sure there's really a desire for it' (Fieldnote 2012 10 14). Nick also noted that there are issues 'getting local people to engage'.

There are multiple issues, then, that can be viewed as causing a divergence between 'creative' and 'uncreative' spaces. To gain entry to the art world there are symbolic, epistemic, class and material barriers to cross. Conducting interviews in galleries in Folkestone I would see many people browse the window but rarely come in. Raising this with two respondents they noted that when 'local' people would enter some would confess to not feeling comfortable enough to enter a gallery space. I can appreciate the sentiment of feeling uncomfortable in galleries and at art events as, while I am a white, educated and middle-class male – who has been a regular attendee of arts events in cities around the world for many years – I've occasionally felt (and can still feel) intimidated in such spaces, including those in Margate and Folkestone. This feeling of being uncomfortable could come from not knowing the set of learnt practices – how to look at a piece, how long for, what to think about it – for behaviour in a gallery. In many of the small galleries around Margate and Folkestone any feelings of intimidation or unease can be amplified as the invigilator, especially at quiet times, will be the only other person present inducing feelings of being observed and, perhaps, judged.

As Anette points out, however, it is maybe unsurprising that some of the poorest sections of Folkestone's population may not be engaging with the visual arts, as while people are living on the 'breadline', they're not going to be interested in the artistic things happening. She asks 'Why would they? They've got enough problems to contend

with'. The suggestion is that art may appear to be a useless, or frivolous, pursuit. Moreover, it remains that there were local people – who grew up in the area, for example, or who have lived in the area for long periods of time – who engaged in cultural events and the visual arts: three respondents were from Margate or Folkestone and over half had grown up around Kent. 'Local', then, has perhaps come to be emptied of notions of residence and instead carries symbolic weight as being uncreative or working class. This can elide, even exclude, the cultural heritages, traditions and interests of residents who prefer antiquing and tea rooms, or expressing their creativity through joinery and gardening. As Helen notes, art may just not be 'everybody's cup of tea, it's not on their radar, at all'. Certainly, sections of local populations expressed the desire for different regeneration policies. The director of Turner Contemporary, writing eight years before the gallery opened, noted that:

The local press has not been quite so positive and some local residents understandably have concerns. These range from disliking the design of the building to wanting an ice-rink, and from problems of car parking to doubts about the costs of the project. (Pomery, 2003: 16)

Nearly two years after it opened the Turner still rankled one local resident who was participating in the *Make Your Mark* event at Popportunity who, on hearing the gallery mentioned, expounded 'I don't think that Turner is very good' (Fieldnote 2012 12 19). They could not be drawn further on the comment except to say that they had not attended since its opening. This could be because they are uncomfortable with being in art spaces or the kind of art shown at the Turner Contemporary, were opposed to the millions spent on a gallery which could have been better, or differently, spent elsewhere or just opposed to an 'urban recreation' they did not want. As Nick points out 'there was a lot of resistance to Turner when that opened because they thought they could spend twenty million in better ways'. A similar feeling of unease as to how money is being spent is expressed by an anonymous Folkestone blogger:

It must be a real smack in the face for some of these shop-keepers to see the Hidden Gems project [*see Chapter 6*] repainting empty shop fronts and creating lovely shop window displays when they, themselves, are struggling to make a living with nothing similar to look forward to. (Daily Shame, 2013)

They question, therefore, the allocation of resources to the pop-up Hidden Gems project – which places art in vacant shop fronts – while they view local businesses as being neglected. The Creative Foundation is also criticised for over claiming the benefits of the Triennial (Finlay, 2011) and its treatment of pre-existing businesses in the Creative Quarter (Sims, 2010). Further to the barrier to entering art spaces noted above, then, there is a political divide between those who see the implementation of culture-led strategies as a boon for the towns and those who have different desires, wants and visions for their future development with concomitant priorities on how

resources should be allocated. As Figure 27 humorously suggests, becoming subject to the strictures of a culture-led regeneration, where Brighton and (to use a local example) the middle-class enclave of Whitstable (e.g. Fleming, 2008a,b; Gold, 2006) are seen to offer templates of what a desirable outcome might look like for Margate and Folkestone, may not be perceived favourably by all.



Figure 27 *Folkestone* (Young British Artists, *Private Eye*) by Birch  
(Source: <http://www.birchcartoons.co.uk/young-british-artists>)

As such, far from the social renewal of the area envisaged, Margate and Folkestone appear as sites of contestation between ‘creative’ and ‘uncreative’ populations who, while existing in the same (or overlapping) material space, inhabit separate representational spaces (cf. Dryburgh, 2010; Landry, 2000; Miles & Paddison, 2005; Vella-Burrows et al., 2014). While Diane did wonder whether she was engaging in ‘social engineering’, she noted that there has developed, as the town has declined, ‘a sort of down-trodden element to the local Folkestonian’. Artists, meanwhile, see ‘so much potential’. Similarly, for Nick, it is ‘creative people’ who would have the ‘impetus’ and know-how to make the most of urban potentials. Contra claims for ‘a serious and committed engagement with culture as a tool for... social cohesion, well being and civic pride’ (Flemming, 2008b: 4), this more closely accords with Lees (2008: 2456) who notes that:

an influx of middle-class residents into a disadvantaged neighbourhood does not increase social cohesion, rather the contacts between low-income and higher-income households tend to be superficial at best and downright hostile at worst...

Critiques of creative city/culture-led urban policy posit reasons for such discord as such interventions divert resources not to the amelioration of social problems but as regressive policies for the ‘speculative construction of place’ (Harvey, 1989: 7-8) to the advantage of an elite group of consumers and gentrifiers (Peck, 2005; Pratt, 2008b). As in Warde’s definition of gentrification, (1991: 225) we can discern the emergence of a fraction with shared consumer preferences, contributing to new patterns of social segregation. This represents a balkanisation of place along ‘creative’/‘uncreative’ lines in contrast to the stated aims of creative city policies to improve social cohesion (Lees & Melhuish, 2013).

### 7.3 What About Local Artists?

As noted in Chapter Six, artists' are implicated in the production of Margate and Folkestone as creative places. Indeed, of such urban regimes, Lloyd (2004: 346) suggests that it is artists who 'emerge as avatars', that is, as incarnate representations of the myriad social and economic policy goals. Elsewhere, however, he goes on to note that while now valorised in urban policy, artists:

may be disappointed to learn just what their value ultimately consists of in the eyes of the urban 'growth machine'... abetting the neoliberal tendencies toward cutthroat interurban competition and the promotion of gentrification. (Lloyd, 2010: xii)

As such, having noted how the towns are attractive to artists, and how – at least partially as a result of artists' labour – they can be viewed as sites of contestation between 'creative' and 'uncreative' populations, the following section will note that these same processes and outcomes can operate, and reconfigure Margate and Folkestone, in ways antithetical to artists' interests. This comes from their material and aesthetic vulnerability (Matthews, 2010) to the changing properties of place, and the privileging in policy of cultural consumption over production (Lees & Melhuish, 2013; Markusen, 2006; Peck, 2005; Pratt, 2008).

#### 7.3.1 Policy and the Key Projects

As centre pieces of regeneration strategies, both Turner Contemporary and the Folkestone Triennial have worked to attract visitors – in 2013 Turner Contemporary celebrated one million visits since opening in 2011,<sup>1</sup> while the 2011 Triennial saw over 103,000 visits (Kimm, 2013) – and national media attention (e.g. Emms, 2011; Graham-Dixon, 2012; Hudson, 2011; Phillips, 2011). As cultural strategies that have economic goals as a key part of their rationale (O'Brien & Pomery, 2013), encouraging visitors, and their disposable income, is a key metric of success. Their focus in curatorial and commissioning programmes, then, is on established artists with national and international reputations who can draw crowds into the towns and attract media attention.

In both Margate and Folkestone this has caused consternation among the artists who live and work within the local areas who have felt excluded from reaping the possible benefits of working within or alongside such prominent institutions and events. A respondent in Folkestone felt that the opportunities presented by the Triennial, to the advantage of both local artists and the Creative Foundation, were missed:

[...] it did seem to me to be ridiculous to have a big art festival and not include local artists, it seemed absolutely crazy. [...] for them to

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<sup>1</sup> See [www.tcmillion.org](http://www.tcmillion.org)

say “This is what we do here and these are the artists we have in, come look at their work as well” that would, to me, it would work for everybody. It’d help promote the place to other artists, to come here, to other people to come see local artists work. It’s good for the artists because people who are coming down to see big artists work will possibly also come to see your work. It’s good for everybody. So that was really disappointing. (Richard, Folkestone)

Similarly in Margate, visiting the Turner Contemporary, or its website, it is very difficult to find any information on events and exhibitions in other local galleries around the Harbour Arm or within the Old Town’s Creative Quarter. Jill suggests that ‘local artists [don’t] necessarily feel that there’s a protective arm of the Turner that’s looking out for them’. While Jill was exhibiting as part of the *Pushing Print* festival in the Old Town’s Pie Factory gallery she utilised clandestine tactics to get flyers for the event into Turner Contemporary:

I put them in the toilet [*Laughs*]. They won’t allow you put them on the desk, and they haven’t got a notice board because it’s, because I think it’s their policy to be clean lines. [...] That’s when we were in Pie Factory and we thought they [*Turner Contemporary staff*] won’t see [the flyers] in there until the end of the day, so we’ll stick them in the loo. So yeah, sometimes it feels like you’re... [...] I don’t know, you just do what you can. (Jill, Margate)

Anthony also notes that artists are working against Turner Contemporary’s current policies:

[...] one of the local artists, he’s got an online petition at the moment to try and get the Turner [*Contemporary*] to actually accept local artists’ work. To have a semi-permanent display in one of the side rooms, and even sell it and take a commission towards the running of the Turner, which would be great. But they just flatly refuse. They’re a free public gallery and they won’t be taking local art. They see themselves as the Tate Modern I think. It’s a big bone of contention with local artists. (Anthony, Margate).

For Pat, who had a studio in Margate, the overriding concern of the local and county councils with regards to the Turner Contemporary is that ‘it’s making money and they’re getting the kudos from it [...] I don’t see local artists still getting much of a look in’.

Furthermore, the role of artists in policy and for policymakers may be viewed as tending to place an emphasis on their economic, rather than cultural, value. Chair of the Turner Contemporary, John Kampfner (2011), writes of ‘the scale of the success’ of the gallery

by highlighting its role in creating a ‘new spirit of entrepreneurship... flair and business savvy’. Similarly, Ewbank (2011) notes that in planning Folkestone’s Creative Quarter there was a discussion as to the ‘critical mass’ of ‘successful businesses’ and entrepreneurs required to sustain the ostensibly ‘cultural’ regeneration. Thus, there is a tension in policy aims between those that state Kent will become a place where artists will feel ‘welcomed and rewarded’ (KCC, 2010c: viii), and overarching aims to encourage entrepreneurship, small businesses and economic growth. While these are not mutually exclusive, it suggests an emphasis on welcoming artists only insofar as they are active in an economic regeneration and only paying lip service to their cultural/creative activity.

This is perhaps exemplified by two events organised by Kent County Council: *Kent Cultural Futures* (KCF) were designed to bring together practitioners, policy makers and other relevant actors to discuss ways to better establish a cultural/creative economy in Kent. The first event in late 2012 brought in the Head of Bow Arts, a property based arts-led regeneration company based in East London. The presentation and discussion was focussed on how to develop art practice as a sustainable activity through building skills, relationships and networks. While Bow Arts may be viewed as instrumentalising artists’ work in place-making and as a tool for attracting further investment to the local area, the presentation produced a lot of positive discussion among the practitioners present who seemed enthused by the vision Bow Arts offered in navigating the tensions of bringing together cultural, economic and urban policy aims. This discussion promised to be complimented by the following KCF event on ‘Engagement, learning, skills’ and ‘Sector skills development’ at Turner Contemporary in February 2013.

However, at this follow-up event, it was announced that East Kent was to run for UK City of Culture (see Chapter 6), and the invited speaker was the director of the successful bid to become European Capital of Culture by Umeå, Sweden. Thus, rather than looking at ways to develop skills and sustainability of the cultural sector, it unfolded as a presentation that a fieldnote describes as promoting an ‘uncritical exploitation of culture as boosterist tool’, relying on culture for narrowly economic focussed urban interventions. A respondent who was also there later noted, with some frustration, that:

I thought that was fucking... I thought we were there to talk about skill sets... Instead it was [*about*] a fucking, bloody Capital of Culture bid. (Diane, Folkestone)

Therefore, while Folkestone and Margate are being imagined by some local governors as sites of cultural production, artists felt the programme undermined this, as it focussed on promoting economic activity and creating the image of places of cultural consumption in which they did not figure. This echoes an academic literature that notes, and critiques, the dominance of economic imperatives and of consumption over production in culture-led urban strategies (Lees & Melhuish, 2013; Lloyd, 2010; Markusen, 2006; Peck, 2005; Pratt, 2008).

Research participants, however, generally understood some of the tensions within arts-led regeneration strategies and why, for example, the Turner Contemporary and Triennial focus on established artists. For Richard, while he was concerned that ‘all they [*the Triennial*] want are the big name artists’, the rationale made sense, that these names work:

to draw people in, which they do, which is good for Folkestone, I can understand that, you’ve got to have big name artists. (Richard, Folkestone)

Diane was clear that ‘to think that the Triennial would commission local artists to make work for an international festival [...] you have to be really naïve, or not understand the art world at all’. Anthony echoes this in his discussion of the Turner Contemporary:

I can see where they’re coming from. They want to keep it select and professional [...] And if you start exhibiting local artists’ work is it going to start bringing it down? (Anthony, Margate)

The quote above from Anthony, where he questions whether local artists’ work might start ‘bringing [*the Turner Contemporary*] down’ is one of the few occasions where the quality of work was discussed. Other discussion was very much focussed on the symbolic capital of the artists’ names and reputations rather than there being any intrinsic, ‘superior’ quality to their work. These artists, then, acknowledge (if not agree with) the tensions inherent in and regeneration strategies that seek to encourage cultural production *and* draw in visitors. There is an acceptance on that part of the artists that to drive visitor numbers it is not they who can be the most prominent feature of the programmes as they are not, as Richard says, ‘big name artists’. As part of a broader policy to encourage cultural activity, however, there remains a desire for the ‘protective arm’ of the Triennial and Turner Contemporary to engage with the needs of local artists so that they might accrue some ‘trickle down’ benefit.

For some respondents, then, an effective approach to building a productive ‘base’ to the culture-led regeneration as missing. Andrew gives a brief précis of how he understands the culture-led strategy working in theory: that ‘artists move in to do paintings or whatever [...] cafés spring up and it builds up from there’. He then goes on to suggest that ‘what they’ve done here [*in Folkestone*] is skip the first step [...] they got international names like Tracey Emin to do bits [...] without thinking about the locals’. This lack of engagement with local artists is, perhaps, exemplified in their approach to the provision of studio space, particularly in The Stables on Tontine Street (see Figure 28). While they are the product of recent renovation and designed as artists’ studio spaces they fail to meet artists’ needs. Issues included their meagre size, suspended ceilings being too low, lack of natural light and the placement of electric outlets at waist height preventing hanging canvases on walls:

I think some of the people making key decisions on the renovation made massive fuck ups. [...] There are issues with things like fixtures

and fittings, why aren't they cheap? Why aren't they easy to replace? It's left a legacy of dysfunctionality at some of the properties. I actually did mention it to certain people, certain people who were in those positions didn't want to hear it. (Matt, Folkestone)



Figure 28 A studio at The Stables, Tontine Street, Folkestone, 2013

This provides an example of where culture-led regeneration policy has failed to engage with the needs of a group that it is putatively serving – that is, where the representation of space as becoming ‘creative’ does not produce a creative representational space. Moreover, the lived and affective space produced through culture-led strategies can be contra the material and symbolic requirements of artists.

### 7.3.2 Changing Places

In many respects cultural regeneration is about changing places in material and symbolic ways. Ewbank (2011: 22), discussing the Creative Foundation’s intentions, noted that they hope to ‘transform a whole town’. The Shared Intelligence (2008a: 5) report for Margate uses similar language: the aim is to ‘transform the physical fabric of the town centre’. In creating ‘thriving’, ‘modern’, ‘cultural’ and ‘creative’ places, however, they can erode existing creative characteristics. As such, alongside concerns about how strategies have been implemented, and the effect of an emphasis on cultural consumption, respondents raised issues with how cultural strategies might affect the properties of place to which they were attracted or that they otherwise value. This can be understood in material and economic, symbolic, and aesthetic terms (Matthews, 2010).

As noted above, artists interviewed were attracted to the rawness of place. This 'rawness' can be viewed as under threat from cultural urban strategies that seek to tame and make safe any 'grottness' before the middle classes arrive (Landry, 2000: 125). Roy was concerned about how in Margate this may, in practice, significantly alter the town in undesirable ways, aestheticisation resulting in what he calls the 'distraction of good taste' and the loss of distinctive local features. He discussed his concern for the arcades that line the seafront from the train station along the length of the beach:

because those buildings were originally built in the 1820s or eighteenth teens so they say 'Oh they're Georgian buildings so we ought to get rid of all the arcades, the arcades have only been there since the '50s'. And, well... they don't do any harm. [...] it's part of the history of the place. So on lots of levels it's a good thing to have the arcades there. And yet people say, they use it as part of the argument as to why we need regeneration [...] and they quite sincerely think we need to get rid of the arcades and turn them into posh B&Bs and stuff. Because that's what'll be good for the town. And... you know? You think, it is what it is. There's no point in moving somewhere and wanting to turn it into somewhere else. (Roy, Margate)

Susan in Folkestone similarly decries the ousting of the amusement arcade on the Old High Street, along with a shop selling Folkestone rock<sup>2</sup> and other traditional seaside items, as the Creative Foundation moved in:

the rock shop, people used to come from miles around. It had all the original machinery. You stood inside it and through huge Victorian plate glazed you watched the machine making the rock. It was a draw. Everyone came from everywhere to see that. [...] They're all empty now, or full of shite that has no... it really doesn't have any resonance for anyone outside of the arts. (Susan, Folkestone)

The concern for the remnants of the 'traditional' seaside, then, perhaps point to unease about the possibility of their respective towns becoming highly gentrified locales like, for example, Whitstable or parts of Brighton or East London. They understood local peculiarity in these places as being eroded as they were 'invaded and taken over' (Jill, Margate) through culture-led developments. Nick notes that he moved from his previous studio in London Fields, a fashionable part of East London, because of the changes associated with an influx of artists and resulting gentrification:

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<sup>2</sup> Rock is a traditional British seaside confectionary consisting of a hard cylinder of flavoured and coloured boiled sugar, often with the name of the resort where it was purchased running through the centre.

I mean, London Fields where I used to work it's full of... yummy mummies and kind-of hipsters<sup>3</sup> and that's just like I don't want to be there anymore [...] people move because they want that alternative lifestyle but they don't want to live it, they just want the café culture and the street art and art. But they actually don't... I don't know if they want to fully engage or if it's just because they think it's cool and it makes them look more interesting, you know? (Nick, Margate)

Duncan discussed the possible effects of cultural policy with reference to St. Ives, a town in Cornwall renowned for its connection with prominent British artists in the mid-twentieth century:

Obviously I was never around in St. Ives when that started to get very creative, but I could see Margate being like that. But it would be so easy to be ruined. Either by not being able to get the potential going that it should do, by the property owners or the Council, or becoming too polished. [...] If it becomes an expensive type of place like Brighton it might just be exciting to go and find the next one. Nothing stays the same does it? (Duncan, Margate)

There are multiple anxieties, then, about what has already been undertaken and what might happen. There is unease at some of the changes to the material properties of place. Moreover, there is a desire for the art scene to not become – as opposed to the attractive potential of 'lawless' Margate and Folkestone (see Section 7.1) – *polished* and, hence, 'established within a certain framework' (Nicholette, Folkestone) that they would have had little part in controlling.

While Margate or Folkestone becoming highly gentrified places may be some time off, one example points to the vulnerability of artists as their (rented) studios become more valuable to landlords repurposed from production to consumption spaces. Pat had had her studio on the Harbour Arm since they opened in 2009. While there she had – without pay – curated and run the Harbour Arm gallery on behalf of the landlords. In 2013, however, she was evicted, against her wishes, from the studio to make way for a new bar. The changing use of 3 Marine Drive, on Margate's seafront, also perhaps illustrates how arts-led regeneration is not proceeding in ways that encourages, or provides the resources for artistic production. Photographed in 2012, the building has purple hoardings emblazoned with a marketing slogan. From late 2012, through 2013, the premises had become Parade, 'a "not for profit", artist led space in Margate', hosting exhibitions and events in the small ground floor space or down precarious stairs into the basement. By 2014, 3 Marine Drive had become Crafted Naturally, a shop

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<sup>3</sup> 'Yummy mummies' and 'hipsters' are pejorative terms used to designate a particular type of middle class consumer, ironically typically deployed by those who most fall into such stereotypes of self-knowing educated middle classness.

selling ‘carefully sourced gifts including fine china mugs, novelty egg cups, money boxes, silk screened bags, traditional toys, seaside gifts, hand made soaps, gifts in a tin, tea-light holders...’<sup>4</sup> (Figure 29).



Figure 29 Clockwise from bottom left: 3 Marine Drive in 2012, 2013 and 2014

Much critical research has noted a narrow policy focus on ‘publicly subsidize[d] urban consumption systems for a circulating class of gentrifiers’ (Peck, 2005: 764) that is not matched by work on cultural production (Comunian, 2010; Pratt, 2008). This section has highlighted a concentration on prestigious forms of culture as well as a lack of attention to establishing productive networks and capacity, and strategic development that can be viewed as resulting from policies wherein ‘it is cultural consumption that is prized’ (Pratt, 2008: 109). While policy at, regional and local scales, lauds cultural production as key to successful regeneration (see Chapters 1 & 6), the reality is such that local artists’ requirements are not met.

<sup>4</sup> See <http://www.craftednaturally.co.uk/>

## 7.4 Spaces of ‘postindustrial exploitation’?

Through studio spaces, cheap rents, cultural events and festivals, and place promotion and media attention, the culture-led interventions in Margate and Folkestone can be understood to be building on and shaping the symbolic and material landscapes of these towns to reproduce artistic labour and artistic spaces (see Chapter 6; Castree, 2007; Lloyd, 2010). However, this Chapter has demonstrated how the changes to the properties of place resulting from culture-led urban policy, and in which artists are implicated, can have negative impacts. A focus on ‘creative’ places has led to a problematic division between this desirable population and the undesirable, ‘uncreative’ other. Moreover, while artists are an important part to the re-imagining and production of new creative/cultural places, an emphasis on cultural consumption means that the spaces produced *by* them are not necessarily *for* them. Key projects are buoyed by the creative milieu local artists help to create, but often fail to engage with their needs and requirements. The ‘rawness’ of place – highlighted as a desirable trait for the potential it presents – is eroded by regeneration that replaces local peculiarity. Thus artists can be understood to be vulnerable to the changing properties of place as they alter in material and immaterial ways (Lloyd, 2010; Matthews, 2010; Zukin 1982).

In seeking to enforce a divide between creative/uncreative and via an the emphasis on consumption, these developments may be viewed as proceeding contra to the stated aims as laid out by Kent County Council (2010c): namely, to ensure that cultural policy proceeds in ways that ‘are sustainable and balance the needs of visitors and residents’ (p.16) and that will ‘protect our cultural supply chain’ (p.29). These cultural-strategies, then, could be viewed as regressive, targeted towards an elite fraction of cultural consumers, increasing social segregation in the process (Harvey, 1989; Lees & Melhuish, 2013; Peck, 2005; Pratt, 2011).

In constructing Margate and Folkestone as creative places – as representational spaces high on must visit destinations and indices of the coolest places to live – the product conceals ‘the exploitation and domination on which they are founded’ (Lefebvre, 1991: 80-1). Indeed, Lloyd (2010: xii-xiii) argues that:

artists, far from being liberated by the heightened attention to local culture, find themselves co-opted into new forms of postindustrial exploitation.

This Chapter has demonstrated ways in which the value created by artists’ labour is may be viewed as expropriated by the urban ‘growth machine’ and the spatial requirements of increased economic activity and cultural consumption. Yet, for Castree et al. (2004: 180), a more fine-grained analysis is required as:

It may be, for example, that ‘progressive’ localisms and ‘regressive localisms’ coexist, that the effects of in-place labour agency on

geographically distant but inter-connected *spaces of work* may be a complex blend of gains and losses. (Castree et al., 2004: 180)

As such, while the arguments presented here are certainly an important critical perspective to the triumphalism of creative city and creative class theses, the lived and experienced properties of this labour, and the meanings drawn from it also require attention. The following Chapters, then, will turn to examine more closely how respondents construct themselves as ‘artists’ and the conditions under which this work takes place.

## 8 Being an Artist

Chapters Six and Seven demonstrated how artists' labour is implicated in the production of Margate and Folkestone as 'creative' places. Moreover, they argued that this production of space, alongside material and economic concerns around, for example, affordability and studio availability, can play a role in the reproduction of cultural labour. However, it was also shown that while produced *by* them, the spaces produced were not necessarily *for* them, pointing to ways in which their labour has been co-opted – perhaps even exploited – for the purposes of creating sites of cultural consumption.

As a starting point, then, this can be viewed as augmenting critiques of cultural labour as compliant with the demands of capitalism to the detriment of the workers' interests (see Chapter 4). Artists are deployed as a 'bauble' (Pratt, 2008) intended to attract investment and tourists, while ultimately being disposable. As Ley (2003: 2535) argues, 'the surfeit of meaning in places frequented by artists becomes a valued resource for the entrepreneur', providing a cultural consecration of place to be traded upon long after the artists' departure.

The previous Chapter, however, ended by noting that such a stark view of cultural workers – as subordinated to the demands of urban policy and, more generally, capitalism – can elide the complexity of, and deny the possibility of, worker agency. O'Doherty and Willmott (2001: 466) argue for the importance of analysing the social reproduction – rather than the domination – of capitalism as a means by which to expose 'the heterogeneous struggles that remain part and parcel of its existence'. The purpose of this is to elucidate the 'missing subject', who is:

constituted and formed by social relations that cannot be reduced or equated with the singular abstract logic of economic categories. Multiple forces clash and interact to generate inconsistency and paradox in the practice and the theory of labour processes...

Taking such a position will serve to counter accounts of cultural work that demonstrate 'an insensitivity to context and a disavowal of the contingency and subjectivity of the labour process' (Banks, 2010: 263; Beck, 1992; Beck-Gernsheim, 2002; Giddens, 1991). Importantly, the aim of this Chapter and the next is not to neglect, or overlook, structural factors that can be viewed as having a negative, even exploitative, effect upon artistic labour. Rather, these Chapters will explore the experiences, subjectivities and meanings respondents draw from their work as visual artists, and the conditions under which such labour occurs. Whereas some critiques of cultural work make it difficult to imagine such labour being 'something less than dreadful' (Hesmondhalgh, 2010: 242), this approach will suggest a view of labour in the visual arts as meeting, in some respects, the requirements of a kind of 'good work' (Ezzy, 1997; Hesmondhalgh & Baker, 2011).

It is the following Chapter, *The Conditions of Labour*, that will primarily discuss respondents' positions in relation to markets, and the multiple ways in which they make a living from various roles within and without art worlds, and explore the internal and external rewards of their practice, questioning the possibility of autonomous labour. This Chapter will seek to emphasise the 'embedded, socially constructed and mediated norms and values' (Banks, 2006: 468) of artistic production. It will suggest that, while artists may be viewed as constrained by the structure of the field, they may also draw upon these constraints as resources against which they can construct a narrative-identity, a dynamic process wherein 'a sense of self-identity is constructed through a complex interweaving of the influence of social location, lived experience, narrative strategies, significant others, biographical history, cultural repertoires, and individual creativity' (Ezzy, 2000: 121). The first section of this Chapter will examine what being a visual artist means to respondents, that is, how this relates to their own identities and senses of self, and may be viewed as part of individual projects of self-realisation. However, as Hesmondhalgh (2010) notes, critical approaches to self-realisation need to be 'grounded in a sociological appreciation of problems of constraint and freedom, structure and agency' (p.239). As such, the second section will concentrate on how respondents' define being an 'artist' and their understanding of what 'art practice' is, suggesting that both of these are socially constructed and influenced by interactions within communities which provide the 'cultural and social context in which shared cultural discourses construct the work as worthwhile' (Hesmondhalgh, 2010: 239). The Chapter will conclude by suggesting ways in which cultural labour may exhibit properties that suggest it may present the possibility of being a kind of 'good' work (Ezzy, 1997; Hesmondhalgh, 2010; Hesmondhalgh & Baker, 2011).

## 8.1 Art Practice and Identity

Previous studies of contemporary cultural labour have emphasised a strong individual identification with work (Banks, 2007; Eikhof & Haunschild, 2006; 2007; McRobbie, 2002; Oakley, 2009b). This is congruent with broader trends as individualisation inflects the conditions of work across many industries, not just the cultural sector (Amin, 1994; Bauman, 2000; Beck, 1992; Bourdieu, 1998; Castells, 2000; Harvey, 1990). More generally, it is suggested that work is 'construed as an activity through which we produce, discover, and experience our selves' (Rose 1989: 103). Some critics would argue these identifications and narratives are a kind 'of conformist individualism that actually paralyses the individual's conscious powers of resistance' (Honneth, 2004: 466). Individuated narratives are constructed in the mould of pervasive, often neoliberal, structures that inculcate a love for work that leads to workers 'self-exploiting' (McRobbie, 2002: 521).

However, while conscious of the dangers of accepting self-narratives at face value and ignoring structural constraints, this section will explore what being an artist means for respondents. It will demonstrate how labour in the visual arts is utilised as a resource in the narratives artists construct about their identity to provide a sense of self-realisation.

The assumption is not that they are dupes of (cultural) capitalism, nor ideal rational and autonomous agents, but as a means by which to consider the possibility of an active and reflexive worker (Banks, 2007; Beck & Beck-Gernsheim, 2002; Ezzy, 1997; Hesmondhalgh, 2010).

### 8.1.1 Self-Realisation

If work is to be understood as an important site in an individual's 'identity project' (Rose, 1989) – a site of personal development and self-realisation – Hesmondhalgh and Baker (2011) suggest a caveat. They point to the possibility of an 'over-identification of the self with work' (p.141) created by the 'lure of self-realisation'. They argue that where work becomes the primary mechanism of self-realisation it can produce an unbalanced existence, disrupt home life and encourage long working hours that will have negative effects for the self and others (p.227). This was, perhaps, demonstrated in this sample where some respondents were emphatic about the role of art as, vital to their wellbeing. Anette discussed a period in which she was unable to practice and negative effects she felt on her mental health:

Well, for me, mentally, I can only speak for myself, it wasn't good for me mentally, not thinking creatively. I just get purposeless. There's nothing else I can do that gives me the same... that makes me feel the same way, that keeps me on an even keel. Definitely. (Anette, Folkestone)

Deborah echoes this when she notes that if she goes too long without engaging in her art practice she gets:

quite frustrated and a little bit depressed, almost. There have been breaks where I haven't created work for quite a while and it's horrible, actually. (Deborah, Folkestone)

Kate claims that practicing as an artist requires her to commit emotional and spiritual resources to her art work, resources which can be diverted by other kinds of necessary work. She described an 'intense' period working as a pastoral tutor in a school which left her 'stressed and exhausted' and unable to produce work as an artist:

I don't think I did anything for three years while I was working. This is the thing, I've always tried to get it right, the balance. For me, I have to find jobs that aren't emotionally demanding, spiritually demanding. (Kate, Folkestone)

Research participants, then, speak of an emotional significance or investment in their practice whereby their work as artists is intimately related to their well-being. These, perhaps, serve to also demonstrate the negative affective aspects of cultural work which are 'not incidental features of the experience of cultural labour; they are toxic,

individualized but thoroughly structural features' (Gill & Pratt, 2008: 15). Work can then become 'pathological'. Hesmondhalgh and Baker (2011: 227) suggest that, 'even allowing for people's different dispositions and desires', promoting work to such a central status may produce 'unbalanced and even miserable lives'.

The narratives these issues were expressed in, however, were often mainly positive. For respondents, art practice was viewed as a means of personal development and self-realisation. Helen notes an element of compulsion in her work but also describes her work as an artist as enriching, making her life and that of her partner more meaningful:

why do I do it? Because I have to [*laughs*]. I have lengthy conversations with my partner about the fact that my art life isn't an economic activity, it's a cultural activity. [...] what it actually brings to our lives, you can't measure it. If I didn't do that our lives would be poorer, for it. (Helen, Folkestone)

She is also clear that she had undertaken her training as an artist 'very much for myself as a personal journey, rather than it being any kind of career decision?'

Helen, however, came to work as an artist as a mature student, completing arts' bachelors and masters programmes in her late 40s and early 50s, and her attitude to working as an artist may be affected by this. Yet, even where a career as an artist is the desired outcome it is similarly described. Claire notes the importance of art in providing a sense of fulfilment for her, engaging in art practice being something that she will not and cannot refrain from doing:

I know for personal experience that in order for me to feel fulfilled [...] Whether this works in terms of financial or not it's not something I'm going to stop doing, it's something that might change but it's something that I have to be doing. (Claire, Margate)

Claire goes on to situate her practice as part of how she hopes to live a good life, that is, it is important to her that her working life can make her happy:

I just keep thinking life is finite and if you don't do what we want to do when do we do it? If not now, then when? So, I'm in a precarious situation but I think that I've got to make it into something where I'm happy. I want to be doing what I'm doing, otherwise what's the point? (Claire, Margate)

As such, while acknowledging ways in which it might be problematic, Hesmondhalgh & Baker (2011) suggest that cultural labour can still offer:

genuine possibilities for self-realisation... [*Cultural workers*] find in their occupations ways of fulfilling potential and developing talents

that give them a sense of purpose and meaning in their lives.  
(Hesmondhalgh & Baker, 2011: 141)

For respondents, working as an artist offers an opportunity to construct a valued and meaningful narrative about their life course, and about their identity.

### 8.1.2 Art and Identity

For respondents, being an artist was often discussed as central to their identity. Several artists viewed this in essentialist terms: that is, they understood art as being a natural and intrinsic part of their self, and the fulfilment of an ‘irresistible emerging talent’ (Røyseng et al. 2007: 5). Anthony contextualised his inherent nature as artist within a historical frame:

My great grandfather was an artist in Sussex. He was a watercolour artist, he wasn’t particularly well known, but he did okay, and I just think it’s something that you’re born to do. (Anthony, Margate)

Claire similar notes that art ‘absolutely’ occupies a central aspect to her identity and that this stems from her childhood:

Right from when I was little. We had paper and scissors and pens and crayons and everything around the house. I remember when I was really young I cut my sister’s hair, cut mum’s clothes up. [...] I had a urge to make something new, or to change things... the way they looked. To think I could do things with my hands, right from when I was really young. [...] I have to be doing something creative, and that’s the way I’ve always been. (Claire, Margate)

Jill uses similar language, describing how, while working as a nurse, there was a:

nagging thing that... maybe an urge, something that you feel that you ought to do [...] Yeah, it was there. And I think that was part of why I stopped the nursing and went away to France and had that headspace and had that sketchbook with me and started drawing again. (Jill, Margate)

Being an artist, then, for these respondents, may be understood as an essential disposition that can present itself as an ‘urge’ to engage in art practice: that art has come to be normalised into affective and embodied experiences of ‘self-feeling that is structurally essential to subjectivity’ (Lumsden, 2013: 61). Pat describes her route into becoming an artist in different terms in that she does not use the same language of an ‘innate’ drive yet, in common with other respondents, she stressed how the role of artist assumed a vital aspect of developing her sense of self. While she had practiced when

younger it was boredom and overall dissatisfaction with her career teaching sociology and psychology that led to her pursuing art, now art is:

how I define myself. That's what occupies a lot of my thinking time. And sometimes it's difficult when I'm distracted at home, because, you know, I want to be thinking... [...] if you got a really nubbly [*complex*] problem you don't want to be thinking about getting the shopping in for a week, or taking the car to the garage or whatever, you just don't do you? You just want to be getting on with this problem. That's how I get sometimes. That's a bit of an admission to being obsessed. (Pat, Margate)

From these quotes it is possible to discern a deep identification with their roles as artists wherein differences between the individual and their labour is collapsed: artwork is described as a natural and definitive part of their lives. As Kate noted when discussing the relationship between her practice and her self: 'the two are the same'.

For two respondents, both in their 50s, being an artist was a significant component in how they constructed the narratives of their lives. Despite setbacks and struggles in their careers, it has remained a valued and central part of their identities. For Nicholette, being an artist was 'the most important thing':

I think that the thing is I can say *Look, I have survived as an artist. I know times are difficult right now, but I've survived by my wits and juggling* [...] I've survived as an artist all the way through. That's the most important thing. I don't have a big house, I don't have a smart car... I don't have savings in the bank. But I've got a studio.

(Nicholette, Folkestone)

Richard similarly notes that 'painting is the most important thing'. Having worked as an artist for much of his adult life, this role has afforded him a sense of personal satisfaction:

I'm 50 now and have been doing painting since I was five, but seriously since I was in my late 20s. And you sort of think *Is this as far as I've got? An exhibition in little Folkestone?* [...] But for me [...] the benefit is pleasure in what I'm doing. [...] Someone said to me "Oh you don't realise how lucky you are to have the ability to do that." And I think that's true, I do look at it at times and I think what else I might be doing. I always find myself back at painting again.

(Richard, Folkestone)

It is possible to discern art as coming to occupy an important, even central, role in artists' identities, their sense of self and the narratives they tell about their lives. In

contrast to contemporary accounts of ‘precarious’ or ‘post-Fordist’ labour (of which creative workers are proffered as ‘ideal’ examples) that emphasise a decline of work-based identities (Bauman, 2000; Standing, 2011a; Strangleman, 2007), ‘art’ may be viewed as the ‘genre’ or ‘narrative-model’ by which participants are able to reflect on their past experiences (Ezzy, 2000; Ricoeur, 1991).

This is important when considering labour as ‘good work’, that is, ‘in part defined by the content and form of the story that a person tells about their experience of working’ (Ezzy, 1997: 441). Where some critiques of cultural work emphasise the ‘thoroughly structural’ (Gill & Pratt, 2008: 15) negative affective features of such labour, such as an unbalanced ‘over-identification’ with work, these quotes demonstrate the importance of ‘art’ and being an ‘artist’ in the identities of respondents. Their accounts can be understood as using discourses of work and career in relation in their own senses of self, that is, they operate as part of the construction of their ‘narrative-identities’ that can provide a sense of continuity and meaning to their life story and provide a template for future action (Ezzy, 2000; Mische, 2009). This can be discerned in the ways that Nicholette and Richard were able to reflect back on their lives and the central role that being artists has played, in the importance Kate places on the integrity of her practice, and in the sense of progress Claire finds in her work.

Art practice, then, may be viewed as a means of self-realisation: of personal development and fulfilment. These concepts may be criticised as ‘not far removed from narcissistic forms of competitive individualism’ (Hesmondhalgh, 2010: 239). Yet art practices and the meanings derived from them cannot be understood as hermetically produced. Rather, respondents necessarily draw upon their cultural and social contexts to construct art as a worthwhile practice. Thus, the following section will examine how definitions ‘art’ and ‘artist’ are constructed.

## 8.2 Defining ‘Art’ and the ‘Artist’

As discussed in Chapter Five, what it means to be a visual ‘artist’ and what is defined as ‘art’ remains contested. As Bourdieu argues, the field of cultural production is not a static entity available for study but rather is:

the product and prize of a permanent conflict... the generative, unifying principle of this “system” is the struggle, with all the contradictions it engenders... (Bourdieu, 1993: 34)

This is reflected in respondents’ discussion of the varied definitions of being an ‘artist’, what it might mean to be a ‘professional’ artist, and, associated with this, the mutable borders of what constitutes their art practice. The broadness of possible definitions allows for many people to be called, and call themselves, artists but that same broadness creates uncertainty. Roy places this in a historical perspective, commenting that whereas in the past the role of artists was defined – ‘If someone was an artist in the seventeenth century they had... a proper job being an artist. You’d be a portrait artist [...]’ – contemporary

artists lack that certainty. There is no central authority to define ‘artist’, instead it is a sobriquet applied as the result of the ‘conjuring trick of making the thing [...] encouraging, persuading people that what you’ve done is important’ (Roy, Margate).

Duncan, a photographer, reflected on an incident where he felt different definitions of what constitutes an ‘artist’ worked against him while looking for shared studio space in Margate:

I did go see a space in an organised artist community but... they were only sort of interested in sort of what they see as fine artists, so I got rejected for that one which is a bit of a shame. [...] I think they were looking people who only did it full time, maybe? Or, you know, were actually creating sculpture and paintings and things like that. [...] I might be wrong but I think maybe they didn’t rate photography as that artistic? (Duncan, Margate)

This highlights several competing aspects to definitions of who is an artist and what is art: the medium in which the putative artist works; their approach to their practice (highlighted here by a concern with whether they were full-time or not) and the role of others in confirming, or otherwise, their status as artist. As noted below, education and training can also play an important role in defining the scope and membership of ‘art worlds’.

### 8.2.1 Hierarchies of Art

One respondent, Roy, has an art practice that engages with memory and history through drawing (Figure 30). He points out that to making judgements about what constitutes ‘art’ and the relative value of different pieces can be a fraught endeavour. He comments that:

it can be a bit demoralising when you’re competing [*in commercial galleries*] with papier-mâché seagulls or something. There’s nothing wrong with that but you kind of doubt yourself. “What is different about it then?” Because if other people don’t see the difference is it just me being a bit deluded, or something? Then you go on the downward spiral thinking “Oh it is a bit silly”. (Roy, Margate)

This quote demonstrates the lack of an objective basis on which to measure the intrinsic value of the work that is produced or even, as Becker (1982: 36) notes, ‘whether particular objects or events are “really art”’. However, value judgments are made. While unsure of how to go about making the distinction, Roy is concerned that his work has more artistic merit than, for example, ‘papier-mâché seagulls’.

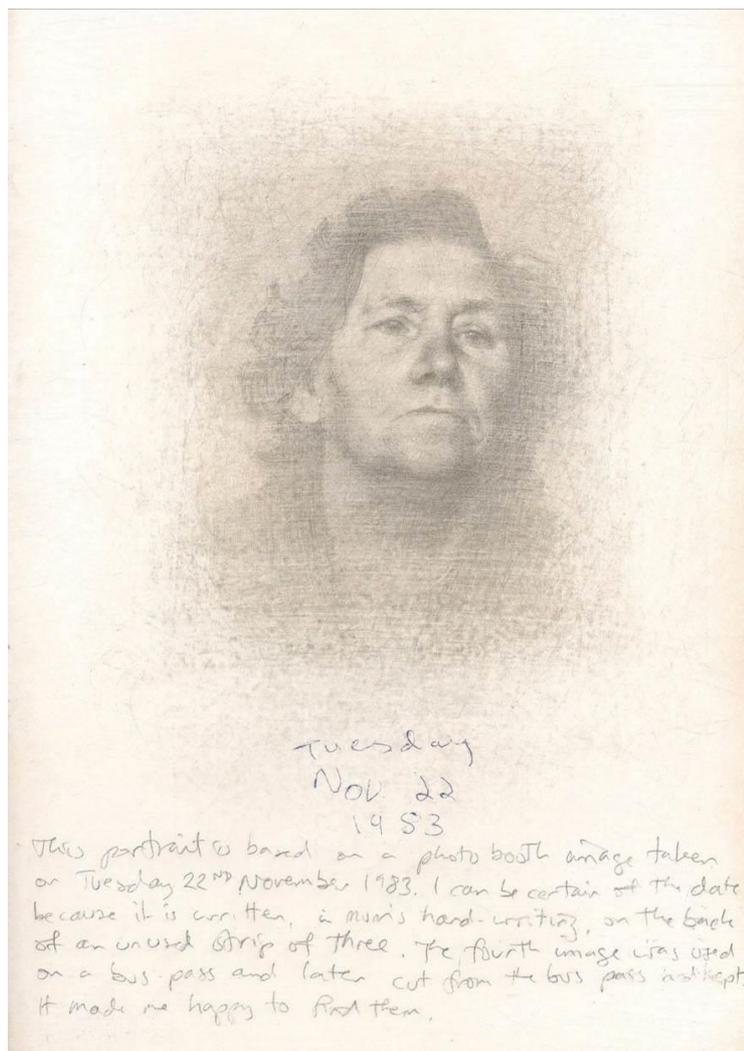


Figure 30 Roy Eastland – Tuesday 22<sup>nd</sup> November 1953

Such a product represents the decorative or saleable, properties to which respondents often expressed an aversion or disinterest. Indeed, economic motives were often discussed as especially antithetical to the integrity and quality of arts practice, with many respondents asserting the distinction between commercial and non-commercial work. This aligns with Romantic notions of the artist *auteur* and the ‘golden legend of creation’ wherein artists rebel against commercial utilitarianism (Menger, 2006: 801). For example, I asked Claire whether she modified her work or restrained her work to ensure it is commercially viable:

No. No. At a point when I was making the [greetings] cards, there was an awareness in the back of my mind that maybe I should start making some things that are brighter in colour, because they’re a bit like sweets. You pick them off the shelf, and they need to shout at people. So there was a little bit of that. But I think that harmed the work. [...] there’ve been pieces that I’ve done that are really quiet, and I know they’re not going to be commercial. I know they won’t

be particularly popular. But I like them. And that's important for me to have those [...] (Claire, Margate)

Claire, then, views her work as being harmed by altering her practice to meet the demands of the art market. Anette is similarly suspicious of the commercial constraints in her work:

if I really wanted to I could make some commercial work. I can't want it that much because otherwise I'd do that. It's more important to me to produce something that I feel is true. [...] It's been going really decorative because I think I'm trying to be commercial despite myself. (Anette, Folkestone)



Figure 31 Anthony Giles – *A Squall Off Margate Harbour*

This ethos of financial motivations being subordinate to the production of 'fine art' holds even for respondents who might be viewed as producing work that is both commercially viable and, moreover, popular. For example, Anthony mainly produces oil paintings of the seascapes around the Thanet coast, they often sell quickly through Margate Gallery or are commissioned pieces. Even for him, financial rewards remain as a secondary goal as he describes wanting to paint and wanting to produce a body of work, only then does he consider that if he can 'make some money out of it as well then it'll be even better'.



Figure 32 Anette Bjorholm – *Amber*

One respondent, Diane, explained that, to be an ‘artist’s artist’ you cannot make work to sell ‘because you’re compromising yourself’. Ruth similarly discussed the range of work she sells to Liberty<sup>1</sup>, which though ‘it’s still good quality printmaking it’s not... It is more commercial’. Commerciality, then, can degrade the artist’s position within the field of fine art, affecting their marketability as *artists* rather than as cultural workers per se.

Moreover, there are canonical hierarchies of academic art (see Bourdieu, 1993: Ch. 9 for the French example). While these were not directly discussed by the artists interviewed, respondents did distinguish certain styles and media as generally failing to meet the standards and values to which they operate and understand as desirable in their accounts of what art is and what artists do. The prime example here would be the status of watercolours – especially of landscapes – that for many respondents can be seen as amateurish, unadventurous and old-fashioned. While Pat was running the Harbour Arm Gallery in Margate, working with artists who wanted to hire the space for

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<sup>1</sup> A high-end department store in London.

exhibition, she would try to ‘sideline’ watercolourists as she wanted to establish the space as having a reputation for:

challenging contemporary art, good quality contemporary art. I don’t want to have a show of small watercolours of local scenes. It just wouldn’t be right. (Pat, Margate)

A similar view was expressed by Nicholette who views watercolours as failing to demonstrate a ‘level of understanding about the contemporary art world’. In her role as art teachers when Nicholette comes across those who would want to paint watercolour landscapes she hopes to ‘stretch their ideas a bit more, and be a bit more adventurous with what they would do’ (Nicholette, Folkestone). Pat and Nicholette, however, never say that watercolourists are not artists or that what they produce is not art – indeed, across the sample it was common for respondents to question their own status as artists but never refute someone else’s position as such. Nevertheless a hierarchy was being enacted with the notion of being ‘engaged’ with contemporary art central to someone’s legitimation as a ‘professional artist’.

### 8.2.2 A Professional Artist?

While there is no central authority that can accredit one as a professional artist, or clear definition of what being a professional in this context might mean, many respondents still applied the term to themselves and their work, or used the concepts of professional, and amateur, in their discussions.

Anette described a local arts group as ‘amateur’, when asked about the difference between amateur and professional artists she responded that it was a ‘horrible question... god knows’. While she was not comfortable assuming the title of professional for herself she understood her work as something more than amateur as it has a grounding in ‘art theory, practice and context’. For Deborah a professional artist is someone ‘who takes it seriously and has an engagement with the art world. It’s the intent of what you’re trying to go with’. Matt stressed the importance of having a ‘critical engagement’, echoing the importance of locating work within, and responding to, the contemporary art world. He positioned this as opposed to those who concentrate on process and technique at the expense of ‘content’:

If you’re not critically engaged with work, you don’t understand arts practice, you don’t look at the content of the work. If there’s no content to the work and it’s just process it’s a hobby isn’t it? If you just learn to paint technically there’s no narrative in the work or there’s no connection to anything from an art historical perspective then you’re not really engaged with art. That’s the issue for me.  
(Matt, Folkestone)

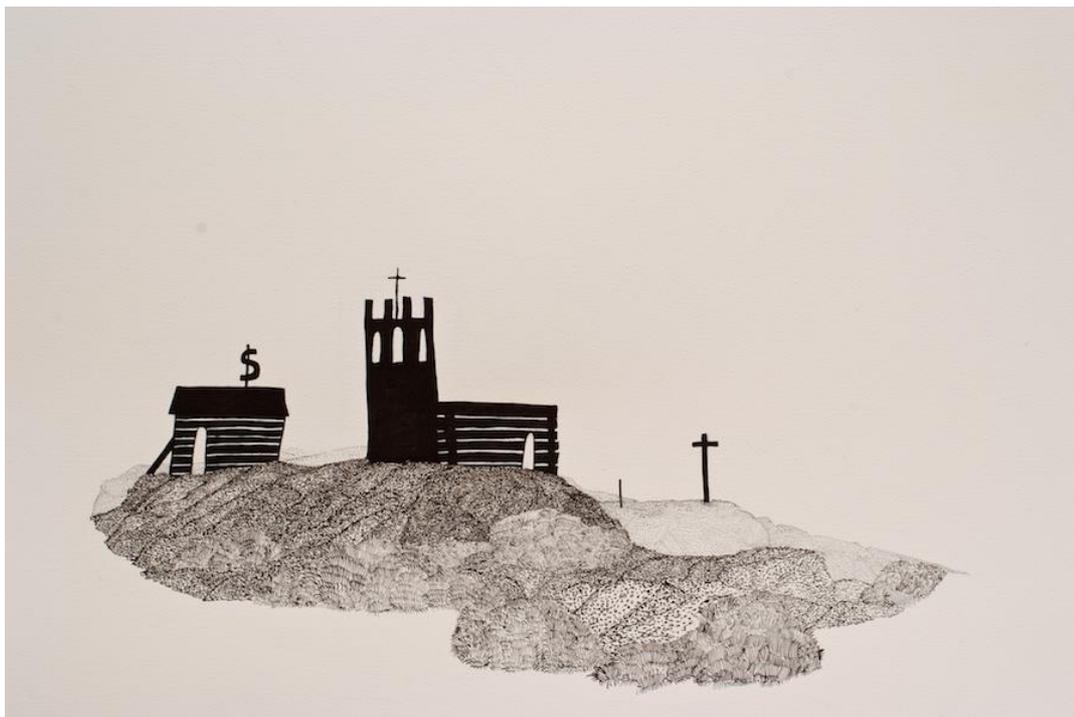


Figure 33 Matt Rowe – *Beyond Serial 25*

From these quotes it is possible to point to distinctions being drawn between professional and amateur in accordance with ‘rules and conventions of contemporary artistic production’ (Wolff, 1982: 65). For these respondents, professional work has to be produced in accordance with, and display, a knowledge of a particular vocabulary – as in the repeated use of the word ‘engaged’ to denote a particularly desirable orientation towards the consumption, production and theory of art:

[...] I try and create a space where people will engage with something they’ve never engaged with. (Diane, Folkestone)

[...] producing work that’s critically engaged. (Matt, Folkestone)

[...] which I think is really important, to kind of keep you engaged with what’s going on. (Nick, Margate)

Such understandings of professionalism, however, only cover what artists produce. The issue of whether one was able to work full time as an artist came up in this context several times – respondents often had a portfolio of jobs, roles and activities, some of which, while not directly related to the act of artistic creation, are understood as part of their practice. As noted above, Duncan was concerned that he was not viewed as an artist because he was unable to commit to his practice full-time. Nicholette approaches the issue of being a professional in a different way: acknowledging she is unable to support herself financially solely on the basis of selling her art works she still considers herself professional because she approaches her practice in a professional manner and extends the role of a professional artist beyond the process of creation:

I don't make a living from my artwork. You know, I can't [...] I've sold some pieces but definitely not a living. But I consider that I approach all of my work and the people I work with professionally. And I've stayed within my profession to earn my income. Although it's not selling my work it's selling my knowledge about art, and my increasing knowledge about art, because I keep that updated, which you know is part of my professionalism. (Nicholette, Folkestone)

When she engages in teaching workshops or other arts education roles she describes how, though not always, they can feed into, be part of and progress her art practice, and her role as 'the type of artist that communicates'. Indeed, Helen points out that there are many 'layers' and possible 'avenues' an artist could pursue so that she thinks that 'it can't be defined... the actual job, considering it in terms of work, it's quite wide. Very wide'. More than being wholly engaged in creating pieces of artwork, then, respondents discussed their art practice as incorporating an array of other activities. How this relates to the different ways in which respondents make a living is discussed in Chapter Nine.

### 8.2.3 Communities of Practice and the Influence of Place

As the rules for legitimation as an artist cannot be objectively derived, definitions are constructed with reference to the standards or norms of the communities involved. Quotes in this section have shown that the medium an artist uses, their perceived level of 'engagement' with contemporary art practice and attitude towards commerciality can all be deployed to include and exclude people from art worlds. It is important to note that definitions will also differ between art networks. In Margate and Folkestone there are multiple and overlapping heterogeneous communities and networks of artists. As discussed in the previous Chapter, the Folkestone Triennial and Turner Contemporary operate within what some respondents viewed as closed networks of 'big name' art and artists that did not extend to recognise the value of their art practice. Anthony noted how a Turner Contemporary open exhibition – which took place in a temporary space before the new gallery opened – focussed on 'contemporary crap', neglecting to host 'any decent paintings'.

Two gallery/studio spaces in Margate further highlight differences in approaches to art. LIMBO and Crate, appeared, from one outsider's perspective, to be closed, being described as 'mysterious' and 'cliquey' by Roy, who further suggested they are:

used by kind of people who are lecturers or insiders into that world  
where it seems really important to write something in *Artists  
Newsletter* or something... where it seems that that's the point of  
being an artist, to call yourself a curator or have something in *AN*.

For other respondents, however, these are 'fantastic' (Kate, Folkestone) and 'amazing spaces' (Diane, Folkestone) to be emulated in Folkestone as 'institution[s] with a

mission statement that're run professionally and feed into other networks' (Matt, Folkestone). Matt went on to describe the, if not competing then at least divergent, arts communities in Folkestone:

There's varying levels [...] You've got Folkestone Art Society [...] who can be very rude but mainly do their own thing. And fair enough, they do what they're doing, they have their open and whatnot. Then you've got FAC which is Folkestone Arts Collective that started up about the same time I started Club Shepway. They originally wanted to merge and I was like "Look, we've got completely opposing ideals here. I want to run a loose collective that puts on contemporary events, but you want to run an overarching body that applies for funding to run an arts' quarter."

These quotes demonstrate, as Becker suggests, that art worlds 'devote considerable attention to trying to decide what is and isn't art, what is and isn't their kind of art, and who is and isn't an artist' (1982: 36).

These networks, however, can prove invaluable. Duncan noted that being around Margate's Old Town afforded him the opportunity become 'part of a network [*where people are*] all willing to help, everyone's trying to help each other and promote each other'. Even the experience of being excluded from the artists' studios was discussed as a positive as it spurred him to change his practice to 'start using other things, photography for different lens-based media, more experimental stuff'. The importance of arts communities is further exemplified by Pat who values the feedback she receives from her peers. While feedback and reaction from the public 'is nice' she feels they do not possess knowledge of the relevant standards and codes within which she wishes to work. She values the opinion of her peers as 'they can be more objective really. They can put it into a context [...] That's really important. That's really helpful' (Pat, Margate). When they provide feedback that coincides with her feelings about an aspect of a piece, she says that it helps to build her confidence. For John, his practice is completed not just for himself but 'it's in the context of talking to other artists'. These examples demonstrate how the social groups artists interact with provide frameworks for both supporting and shaping art practice – in both the general sense of what an artists does and, more specifically, as a kind of 'practice' that is a 'coherent and complex form of socially established cooperative human activity' wherein 'goods internal to those forms of activity are realized in the course of trying to achieve those standards of excellence' (MacIntyre 1985: 187).

These communities of practice are one example of the distinctive spatial properties of Margate and Folkestone that necessarily shape how, where and with whom artists work and socialise, contributing to individual narratives of being an artist. But as well as providing the social milieu in which production occurs, location can affect the content of work which can come to incorporate local imagery. For example Shane's and

Anthony's oil paintings most often dealt with local scenes, and Claire was specifically asked to produce work incorporating local imagery for her first solo exhibition at the Margate Gallery – or engage with local topics, such as in Roy's series of drawings of the bombing of Tontine Street in Folkestone during World War I. There were also further, more prosaic concerns around studio access, size and cost. For Kate the size and type of work became restricted by the size and accessibility of her studio which was 'top floor and 78 steps up, it limits you in what kind of art you can do because you have to hoik everything up and down the stairs' (Kate, Folkestone). As discussed in Chapter Seven, the cost of living means that being in Margate or Folkestone allow artists to continue to live and rent a studio relatively cheaply. Meanwhile, for Deborah, the location of her studio on Tontine Street was important as it was located close to her other job, affording her the opportunity to work in mornings and during lunch breaks.

Place also affects the institutions artists can work with and the opportunities they are presented with. While artists from elsewhere are not precluded from participating in events, being located in the towns allowed respondents to take active roles in creating and reproducing arts scenes. For example, Nick is a key part of the (annual) Pushing Print festival in Margate while Jill was able to work with other artists to have an open house exhibition at her home as a Pushing Print fringe event. Similarly, in Folkestone the Triennial Fringe has provided opportunities for a number of respondents to present work and be involved in organising and curating events. Diane played an important role in this and described how, having moved from London, being in Folkestone provided opportunities to gain experience:

It's a blank canvas here. It really is. Having worked to set the Folkestone Fringe up [...] the experience I've gained, as a recent graduate, has been absolutely invaluable and I don't think I would've got that in London. (Diane, Folkestone)

Matt is enthusiastic when he talks about community projects he has undertaken with, for example, Afghan refugees and in educational outreach – both of which were contingent on his location within Folkestone. For him, without these 'interesting lines of work [*that*] come up... I wouldn't have been able to develop my practice in such an acute way'.

It is also possible to point to some general distinctions between the organisation of Margate and Folkestone's art worlds. While Margate has a large gallery there has not been a single prominent provider of studio spaces or other central organisation to bring together artists. For Pat, then, the arts scene had remained 'quite splintered'. In contrast, due to the Creative Foundation's role in providing studio space, particularly shared space, in Folkestone it was possible to identify networks of artists that have emerged with denser connections, such as the White Shed group, at The Stables studios, various fringe events and the broad range of people who participated in the artist-led International Women's Day events. Of course, this is unevenly experienced. Anette and Richard, with studios in Folkestone's Creative Quarter, noted that their contact with

other artists was quite limited, with Richard saying that when he moved to the area he thought there would be a ‘community of artists. But there isn’t’. Meanwhile, in Margate, Nick is part of Resort Studios, which is bringing together artists and other cultural workers in a large communal space and has a role in organising Pushing Print.

Despite these differences, however, it is important to note that in discussing what it means to be an artist there was very little to point to a *sui generis* Margate or Folkestone artist. Respondents used similar types of language to describe ‘artist’ and ‘art’, and the meanings they attach to these concepts (see Section 8.1) and it possible to point to similarities in, for example, Anthony’s and Shane’s work that thrives on their respective locations in Margate and Folkestone as it engages with local landscape, or the career paths of Nick (Margate) and Matt (Folkestone) as each has taken advantage of local cultural networks and policy developments to forge career paths. Respondents, then, are embedded in broader framings around art and artistic production. It is possible to point to multiple possible reasons for this: in both locations most artists had moved in, or returned, to the area having lived in a range of both UK and international locations and almost the entire sample (with three exceptions) had undertaken higher education, in various art disciplines, up to at least bachelor’s degree level. Moreover, London, as a major UK and world art centre, being so easily access via high-speed rail services may be viewed as an important influence, inculcating its definition of what an artist is beyond its physical borders. A number of respondents were educated or previously had studios in London and others commented that making trips to London to see shows was a regular occurrence for them. Even for Duncan – a photographer from Thanet and who did his photography degree at Canterbury Christ Church University’s Broadstairs campus, just to the south of Margate – London is significant:

The important bit is making the effort to go to London and meet people in London. Because that’s where the community is, to be part of that network [...] (Duncan, Margate)

Being mobile and similarly educated, and the effect of being near London (the pre-eminent UK art market) could all produce a trans-local definition as to what being an artist means – that is, the shared values and norms of these ‘communities’ is produced with reference to extended spatial and social networks.

The importance of Margate and Folkestone as sites of creative activity, then, may be understood in terms of the specific opportunities these sites present to artists, and in terms of the constitutive role they play in constructing what it means to *be* an artist. These are made in reference to broader framings, as local resources are ‘derived from the larger discursive resources and then inflected with additional meanings by the contexts in which they are encountered or re-encountered’ (Taylor, 2012: 45). Through the production of these towns as creative places – and as a means by which this was done – local networks have been established between artists, organisations, the built environment, culture-led urban policy and other actors. These operate alongside broader art world networks in which respondents are embedded, for example, in

University art departments, their knowledge of art history and particular art traditions, the London art scene or creative city discourses. Art, then, 'has continued to be a collective product' (Wolff, 1981: 27) in which definitions of 'art' and 'artist' can be understood as, per Becker (1982), a kind of communal phenomena:

the interaction of all the involved parties produces a shared sense of the worth of what they collectively produce. Their mutual appreciation of the conventions they share, and the support they mutually afford one another, convince them that what are doing is worth doing. (p.39)

Respondents both draw upon these resources in their individual understanding of what 'art' and 'artist' are. Moreover, they help to construct and reproduce these networks and, absented any legitimating authority, reinforce the norms and standards of the communities in which they practice.

### 8.3 Art – A Kind of Good Work?

Chapters Two and Four noted that artists are often assumed to typify 'post-Fordist' labour styles characterised by factors including the erosion of social bonds and a thorough individualisation that precludes work-based identities:

When employed, they are in career-less jobs, without traditions of social memory, a feeling they belong to an occupational community steeped in stable practices, codes of ethics and norms of behaviour, reciprocity and fraternity... (Standing, 2011a: 12)

However, this Chapter has demonstrated that, for respondents, working as an artist can provide an integral part of their sense of self and draws upon shared contexts. As such, it may be viewed as conforming to definitions of 'good work', as a kind of labour that allows for self-realisation in 'a cultural and social context in which shared cultural discourses construct the work as worthwhile' (Hesmondhalgh, 2010: 239). Respondents incorporated discourses of art production into their autobiographies as a resource for the construction of their own narrative-identities, as a means by which to understand life stories as meaningful, rewarding and valued, and provide continuity and stability to them.

Importantly, these narratives are not 'free fictions' but represent the product of 'a complex interweaving of the influence of social location, lived experience, narrative strategies, significant others, biographical history, cultural repertoires, and individual creativity' (Ezzy, 2000: 121). This Chapter has demonstrated some of the ways in which respondents' labour is structured, for example, that there are social norms and expectations as to what constitutes an artist and art practice, and respondents exhibited reflexivity about the exigencies of working as artists. Thus, the accounts of cultural work provided demonstrate that critiques of cultural labour should proceed in ways

sensitive to structuring effects, but not lapse into a determinism wherein workers can only be the bearer of objective (and oppressive) structures (du Gay, 1996; Gibson-Graham, 1996; MacIntyre, 1985; Standing, 2011a).

However, the experiences of economies (financial, aesthetic or otherwise) can call into question how 'free' artists' labour is, and raise further issues of commodification and exploitation. There is need, then, to further explore the possibility of autonomous action in relation to art markets and the status seeking activity that might undermine it.

## 9 The Conditions of Labour

The previous Chapter demonstrated that art worlds are constituted through social resources (Becker, 1982; Wolff, 1981). The shared values, traditions and norms of these art worlds (or communities) operate as a resource for individual artists who are able to draw upon this 'cultural and social framing' (Ezzy, 1997: 439) and relate it to the construction of their narrative-identities.

Such an approach is a means by which one might approach the 'missing subject', providing serious consideration of context and the 'contingency and subjectivity of the labour process' (Banks, 2010: 263). Furthermore, it provides a means by which 'good work' can be imagined as 'part of a life narrative in which current activities promise to lead into a desired and valued future' embedded in 'a cultural and social context in which shared cultural discourses construct the work as worthwhile' (Hesmondhalgh, 2010: 239). However, this view is criticised by O'Doherty and Willmott (2001) as reliant on the notion of the 'sovereign rational individual' (p.479) and a 'subjective will-to-power' (p.472). Moreover, they argue that, in late capitalism:

The quality of any apparently good job, it seems, is, in reality, based on a seductive illusion of freedom. The possibility of a good life for anyone in this highly disciplined society seems even more distant. For all workers are, apparently, entranced by their own sense of personal self-identity and autonomy. (Hesmondhalgh, 2010: 240)

Issues around autonomy can be viewed as central to discussions of cultural production, the contemporary 'Western' art tradition being linked to, even defined by, two kinds of autonomy. First, as art separated from the relatively secure kinds of patronage afforded in the service of elite groups it came to be viewed as an autonomous domain where it could be pursued for its own sake (Wolff, 1981: 11). This was in the context of the Enlightenment and 'the development of capitalism, the public sphere, and the nation state' (Holt and Lapenta 2010: 225) and from which arises the conceptual origins of the ideal 'reflexive bourgeois individual'. Secondly, then, is a notion of the autonomous individual, one who 'strived for the capacity and right to make his own rational choices about politics, taste, and the good life'. This was taken up by the Romantic tradition and deployed in opposition to what were viewed as the negative aspects of the Enlightenment, namely capitalist industrial development and the abasement of the aesthetic to the market. The concept was particularly associated with the 'revered' and 'solitary' artist, the paragon of 'culture' against a dehumanising 'civilisation' (McGuigan, 2010: 326). While the focus of contemporary artistic production may have diverged from the bucolic idealism of Romantic painters and authors – for example, shifting its lens to urban bohemia in the nineteenth century (Lloyd, 2010: 52) – it remains the case that artists are often assumed to strive for, or represent, the autonomy of art and aesthetic value from that of the market.

Banks (2010) highlights three critiques of autonomy: that it is a ‘pose’ (p.257) wherein status-seeking behaviour undermines their autonomy; that, despite initial aspiration to autonomy, ‘workers are eventually reduced to mere personifications of labour, or simple bearers of class relations’ (p.255); and that autonomy represents a ‘false freedom... divested of any substantive possibility for challenging the structures and iniquitous effects of the capitalist labour process’ (p.257) (cf. Adorno & Horkheimer, 1992; Bourdieu, 1993; 1996; McGuigan, 2010; McRobbie, 2002; O’Doherty & Willmott, 2001; see Chapter 3 for further discussion). Hesmondhalgh and Baker (2011) further discuss ambivalence in the development of aesthetic autonomy: as art became independent from patronage it also became dependent on the emerging control of capitalism. However, Holt and Lapenta (2010: 225) point to recent debates where autonomy is understood as ‘constituted in complex relationships between... contradictory and unstable forces’, while Ross (2009) counters critiques of autonomy that position it as a false freedom coupled to neoliberal ideals and the selfish neglect of other: he argues that autonomy ‘is not the opposite of solidarity’ (p.6) but that ‘the hunger for free agency... is a response to an authentic demand for a life not dictated by the cruel grind of excessively manage work’ (p.46). Thus, autonomy cannot easily be characterised as a positive or negative feature and, instead, Hesmondhalgh and Baker (2011: 63) argue that what is needed is ‘a critical account of creative autonomy that takes account of social justice and equality within and across different societies’.

As such, this Chapter will discuss the constraints and determinants of working as an artist. It will explore the tension between a desire for idealised autonomous action and competing demands on individuals’ time and resources, specifically looking at the effects of art markets, and the ways in which respondents were earning money. It will go on to suggest that art practices can develop in different ways to accommodate such pressures, constructing a kind of ‘negotiated autonomy’ that offers a space for the development of what might be understood as a ‘good’ job, constituted within an embedded economy with sets of practices that operate, if not beyond, then, at least, alongside the demands of markets and competitive individualism (Banks, 2007; 2010; Booth, 1994; MacIntyre, 1985). This is not an attempt to elide the negative aspects of artistic labour but, rather, to suggest that the most strident critiques of contemporary cultural work fail as they ignore the individual and shared narratives of art practice reflexively constructed around external structures, and subjective meanings and values.

## 9.1 Creativity, Economics and Limits to Autonomy

Autonomy – that is, having ‘the ability to determine the pattern and shape of their own lives’ (Banks, 2010: 252) – may, broadly, be divided into questions of flexibility and control. Flexibility concerns their ability to manage day-to-day activities, such as where and when respondents worked, for example, having the ability to meet competing demands, such as childcare commitments. Control is, perhaps, less quotidian, concerning having autonomy over the type and kinds of work that are produced, so that an individual is able to direct what they do so that it produces something they

understand as meaningful, valued or otherwise desirable (see Chapter 4; Hesmondhalgh and Baker, 2011: 40). This section, then, will explore the autonomy of the artist in two ways: through respondents' description of their relation to art markets, and of the waged and free labour in which they engage. These are important sites of discussion as they have a formative role in how respondents operate as artists and what they produce. First, however, it will make some points about the importance respondents placed on autonomy while discussing their practice.

### 9.1.1 Importance of Autonomy

Having control and flexibility was discussed by all respondents as important in their working lives and that working as an artist afforded them the opportunity for these kinds of autonomy. For respondents, autonomy as artists was often discussed in contrast to experiences or perceptions of other forms of work that were viewed as offering less autonomy. For example, Jill had been a school teacher but found herself at odds with the compromises she felt that this job demanded of her, leading her to question whether she could continue to 'work in a place where I don't uphold the strategies or the ethos', that is, at a place where she had little control over her labour and over the values that it produced. For Diane, there was an aversion to working within an 'institution of some sort' because she would become 'pissed off because I'm not allowed to do what I want to do to a certain extent'. Matt echoes this when he states that:

I find it very difficult to go into an office environment where... I think I'd probably just not be able to cope with that kind of environment because I have that autonomy [*as an artist*] to go and look at what I want to look at. [...] I don't like being stuck.

(Matt, Folkestone)

Shane had a series of full time jobs prior to establishing himself as an artist, these included being a tour guide in Berlin and working in the marketing department of a food company. He compares his current working practice to those earlier experiences, placing the two aspects of autonomy alongside one another, pointing to everyday benefits of working as an artist alongside the control it affords him to explore and further his practice:

when I look back to working in that office with all these people and I was a complete fish out of water. [*But, being an artist*] I can listen to the radio. I can try to do really, really difficult things [*with my work*] that I've never seen people attempt, you know? [...] I come home, [*and because*] I'm doing exactly what I want to do, I'm in a good mood, always. I don't come home and have to offload a load of crap that someone else has given me. Plus I can be flexible if [*my partner*] needs

me to be home at half past five I can close here at five and be back.

(Shane, Folkestone)

Moreover, as discussed in Chapter Seven, some respondents were attracted to Margate or Folkestone because of the autonomy they understood it provided for them. For example, Duncan and Richard identified the towns as relatively inexpensive places for accommodation and studios. This makes being an artist 'realistic', affording a certain amount of both flexibility and control as financial pressures are reduced. Moreover, as 'edgy', 'raw' places, Margate and Folkestone are places where 'you can try stuff out' (Duncan, Margate) independent of more established arts networks and institutions. For example, Matt explained his reasons for moving back to Kent from Wales, noting that he could gain control over the development of his practice. He explained that:

I wanted to do it my way, independently. I wanted autonomy. And Folkestone gave me that [... *Folkestone*] did have an arts programme but not in the way [*Cardiff did. In Folkestone*] nothing was established, it was completely open. (Matt, Folkestone)

Autonomy, then, was cited by respondents as important both in their practice and as a positive factor in their working lives. In the rejection of more 'conventional' workplaces and work-practices for, what is understood to be, a more autonomous kind of labour it is, perhaps, possible to recognise the perception of cultural work as removed from the alienated world of mundane work (Oakley, 2009a).

However, critiques of cultural work stress the limits to autonomy in an increasingly marketised sector which can be viewed as compliant with contemporary capitalism (e.g. McRobbie, 2002; Menger, 2006). In describing their experiences of being an artist, respondents described ways in which autonomy over how and what they produce was tempered by a range of external pressures. As such, while autonomy was discussed as important in their working lives, it was possible to point to ways in which respondent's autonomy was limited, constrained in ways that could appear to be contradictory to, or otherwise undermine positive interpretations of, the above. These limitations are discussed here, specifically in relation to art markets and how respondents made a living through their art practice and in other kinds of work.

### 9.1.2 Markets and Art Practice

Bourdieu (1996) argues that the autonomisation of art from systems of patronage has created 'new forms of dependence' (p.55); that where artists assume an anti-economic stance they do so to profit in symbolic markets and 'cannot triumph on the symbolic terrain except by losing on the economic terrain' (p.83). For Bourdieu these issues would exemplify 'the specific contradiction of the mode of production which the pure artist aims to establish'. This market is not configured for economic profit but remains economic in logic and demands limitations over what is produced. He argues that autonomy is being undermined by a desire to present a particular image to an imagined

audience, which includes both members of the public and art world peers. As such, he suggests that artists can only really have autonomy from art markets where there is ‘no audience, no economic profit’ (1993: 49).

Indeed, even when financial motives are discounted, imagined audiences still play a role in the production of art. As Nick noted, both art world peers and the general public can offer perspectives that he values in different ways as ‘they’re probably likely to appreciate it for slightly different reasons’. His peers understand the technical aspects of his work, though he also values, perhaps more so, visceral responses from members of the public:

a member of the public is more likely to take it at face value... you know, what it looks like and what it’s portraying [...] my work is often quite humorous a lot of the time, so if someone laughs at something I think that’s probably one of the best responses that you can get, or that I can get. (Nick, Margate)

For Pat, however, the feedback of peers is more important in directing her practice and allowing her to gain confidence in it:

Some public come in and are, what I would say is, easily pleased or easily impressed. Simply because of that lack of getting close to art work, familiarity with it. So I kind of don’t value that, so much. Whereas if... from my peers it’s important because they can be more objective really. They can put it into a context [...] That’s really important. (Pat, Margate)

It is possible to discern limits to control given production occurs in specific social and cultural contexts, and this often means that artists sometimes seek to orientate themselves away from economic markets. As Ruth comments, artists:

can’t equate money with success [...] It’s more important to exhibit and have your work out and about. That has to be your primary motivation. (Ruth, Margate)

In this model, success comes from the quality of the work produced, not the shows and galleries exhibited in or the financial gains made via practice. Indeed, for Matt, not only can artists not be ‘drawn in financially’ but they also ‘pay for the privilege in some ways’.

In common with other interviewees, Kate explains that she produces work that is in keeping with her sense of what her practice is about or working towards, a view that might be characterised as deriving from the disinterested perspective associated with being a fine artist. However, there remains a tension between being a ‘cutting edge’ artist and the exigencies of paying bills:

I used to make more constructed works that went on the wall, and they sell really well. [...] each piece was around a grand. So, I'm thinking of doing something similar again. [...] I'm torn at the moment as to how to do it all. I could really do with some income yet I'm wanting to play with space still because I think that's where the interesting part of my work is, the cutting edge bit.

(Kate, Folkestone)

Kate, then, is aware of what will sell but equally wary of how producing work to sell might compromise her control over her practice. Her struggle with needing an income versus her artistic vision demonstrates how control can be impinged upon, and how economic considerations can come to have a direct effect over aspects of artistic production. This is further demonstrated by Anthony who described with passion the work he was producing – contrasting elements, reflections and composition on seascapes inspired by Turner – noting that he seeks to produce visually striking work or, as he puts it, something ‘that really goes “*Bang*” as soon as you walk in’. Yet his reasons for creating this kind of work, and particularly the choice of subject, can also be seen to include a financial logic:

If I painted a little twee landscape with cows in a field, you know, people will say ‘Oh that’s nice’, but they don’t really want it. They want something that’s *Bang*. [...] I was doing this very twee little landscapes, Constable style, and they weren’t really selling. I’d sell the odd ones. I started painting Botany Bay [*a local beach*] and these big moody skies and cliffs lit up by sunlight and people started to buy those quite regularly. I sort of drifted into the seascapes a bit more.

(Anthony, Margate)

Later, while in his studio, he pointed to a work in progress that featured a beach with a dog playing in the surf. Referring to this Anthony noted that, as he works on the piece, the dog will ‘be a bit more Labrador-y because people like Labradors’. Marketability, then, can determine even the detail of his work and the feedback from exhibiting or selection to take part in events will have concomitant effects on the production of work whether by knowing what sells, in eliciting a response or recognition from other members of the art world.

Indeed, marketing – of both the art and the artist – was discussed as an essential part of selling work. While some respondents were positive about how they were able to market their work and manage the business of being an artist, others were less sure whether their skill as artists was matched by requisite levels of commercial insight. Shane and Anthony, two of the most commercially successful artists I spoke to, were very focussed on how to boost their public professional profiles. In both cases they were willing to invest time in charitable work as a means of gaining press coverage: for

example, Anthony donated a painting to a local charity and realised that ‘this is a good way of doing some good work and getting my name out’. Since then he has done prominent charitable art events around Margate’s Old Town. This is part of a broader marketing push, including a website, social media and word of mouth promotion:

I’ve got the website going and I’ve really pushed and pushed myself and blown trumpet a bit because you have to, I think. No one else is going to do it for you. (Anthony, Margate)

However, for others this aspect of artistic labour proves more difficult. Considering her own position, Anette questions whether:

Maybe I’m just the wrong kind of person to be doing it? Maybe you just need more... business acumen? (Anette, Folkestone)

Pat is similarly concerned that she is not promoting herself or her work adequately:

I don’t market myself very well. I’m really slow at doing that. I’ve got work now that I think I’m in a position to go to a couple of London galleries and see whether they’re interested. But I feel really... the idea of doing that, I find that really difficult. (Pat, Margate)

As argued by McRobbie (2002), this demonstrates the importance of ‘self promotional strategies’ (p.519) in developing a career in cultural production. Furthermore, as the sector lacks formal networks and institutional frameworks for developing a career (Gollmitzer & Murray, 2008), McRobbie argues solutions to such structural issues are more often understood as individual or biographic. The valorisation of autonomy locates personal development entirely within the purview of the individual, operating as de-socialising mechanism, meaning that the question is for McRobbie (2002: 522) always ‘Where have I gone wrong’.

In cases considered so far the art market is imagined to consist of peers, private buyers and consumers. Alongside this is are public, arts council and charity sector funding streams. Applying to these organisations requires a sense of what another market requires, presenting projects that can be instrumentalised to the imperatives of their economic, social and political aims – producing what Belfiore (2009: 348) calls ‘the type of bullshit that... has become orthodox in much of contemporary public and policy discourse around the social impacts of the arts’. For Diane, who had run several successful projects funded by local and national organisation, this means that there often must be a strong community element to the proposal. She expressed concern that this can mean that artists are running ostensibly art-based events or activities where the actual art content is minimal or completely lacking. She explained that ‘that projects are more skewed towards community because that’s where money is’ leading her to question ‘Where’s the art? How do you get the art in?’ (Diane, Folkestone).

She illustrates this with reference to bringing *The Boat Project*<sup>1</sup> to Folkestone in 2012. For this event to run she was able to secure £1,500 from Shepway District Council's Community Chest fund, a community group gave £4,000, the town council £1,500 and the Folkestone Harbour Company £2,000. This totalled a considerable amount but, as Diane noted, this covered:

bunting making, banner making, kids making origami boats, that sort of stuff [...] There was a lot for the community [...] but there was no art. There wasn't any art. (Diane, Folkestone)

These cases serve to demonstrate how markets – either economic or political – can have direct effects over what is produced and how. Respondents were wary of work produced specifically to sell but had to engage with commercial and non-commercial imperatives. These can play out in various ways, such as Anthony's direct use of a particular breed of dog to appeal to buyers, or Kate's struggles over saleable work and her desire to pursue her 'cutting edge' practice. They represent examples of the outcome of the encroachment of the market upon cultural production, and the commodification of its products, that has persisted since the nineteenth century (Hesmondhalgh, 2007), and augmented by the use of art in instrumentalising cultural and urban policies (Belfiore, 2009; Oakley, 2009a; Peck, 2005). Indeed, such a perspective could serve to diminish the 'mystification' of artistic work in the Romantic tradition and demonstrate that 'artistic work, like other work, loses its quality as "free, creative activity" under capitalism' (Wolff, 1981: 13). Such effects should be viewed as closely related to how artists' make a living.

### 9.1.3 Making Money

As discussed above, for some there is an orientation away from the market and, as such, the structure of the field is predicated upon artists producing and exhibiting work for very little, or no, recompense. This perspective leads to a shyness or hesitancy about issues of money. Roy had a potential customer who had 'been badgering me to sell some drawings to her directly', yet notes that 'because I was so shy asking for money I didn't'. Kate was approached to undertake a residency on Romney Marsh and was enthusiastic about the possibilities of working in the space but she notes that it is 'going to be no income from that at all' – on the issue of funding, she said it is 'where I fall every time. I haven't sorted that out'.

Moreover, even selling work does not mean that the artist has made a profit on that piece. Richard notes that even when he makes a sale 'you're breaking even if you're lucky'. Therefore, before respondents could consider making a living from the sale of artworks, they had to consider the costs of production. Access to the correct equipment, purchasing materials and incidental costs, such as transportation, can prove expensive. Becker (1982: 58-9) points to a link between the standards of 'art worlds',

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<sup>1</sup> See [theboatproject.com](http://theboatproject.com) for details.

and the equipment utilised. As discussed in Chapter Eight, for painters, relatively inexpensive watercolours are looked down upon in favour of more expensive acrylics and oils. Those working digitally need to produce costly high quality prints in expensive large formats, and having a studio – and the costs associated with that including, not only rent, but transportation to and from it – can be viewed as another financially burdensome investment required by artistic convention. Further incidental costs are incurred when artists want to exhibit work, including gallery rental, public liability insurance (a legal necessity), separate insurance for pieces on display (often omitted due to the expense), framing, and transportation of work to and from the exhibition space. Jill notes that such issues can affect control over production:

When I was doing the MA I was spending a lot of money, like hundreds of pounds, on paper, materials. Now I don't have a job that has definitely affected what materials I use and the scale of work that I do. (Jill, Margate)

Matt makes a similar point, noting that he has altered the materials he uses and the kind of work he undertakes to meet such demands, considering, for example:

simple things like storage. Where do you keep everything once you make it? It's such a pain in the arse. You've got to put it somewhere and that costs you money. (Matt, Folkestone)

These sunk costs have to be taken into account and new materials purchased. Ruth estimated that from one exhibition she put at least 50% of the money she took – that is, gross of any costs – back into buying more materials. Even for digital artists, like Claire, there are similar problems with making work profitable. She has to pay upfront for the limited edition print runs she sells and for the framing of pieces for the commercial galleries that hold her work:

If I just had to pay for the production of a piece and it sold I'd make about fifty quid profit on a piece. Maybe more if it's framed. But I don't. I have to pay for the production of several pieces, because they have to sit in a gallery on sale or return. So, while on an individual piece I would make money [...] I've framed thirty pieces for this exhibition. I think I've sold five framed pieces so far which will probably cover the cost, actually, but it's like breaking even all the time. And I have to live to on something. (Claire, Margate)

Asking respondents if they had ever figured out an hourly rate for the artworks they produce elicited responses such as 'You're probably better off not doing that' (Nick, Margate) or 'It's crap' (Anthony, Margate). Indeed, for Anthony, pressures to pay bills can mean that he will:

just sell them for whatever people are prepared to pay for them to foot the bills. It's as tough as that sometimes. I've sold metre square canvases of Botany Bay, which it's taken me two or three days to paint, for forty quid in the past. (Anthony, Margate)

John, however, did proffer a figure for his hourly income. He noted that on a commission he sold for £400 he was working for around £3 an hour, less than half the UK National Minimum Wage at the time. Where artistic labour is being promoted as part of a new urban future for towns such as Margate and Folkestone, workers being paid £3 an hour raises both issues of fairness and sustainability (Oakley, 2009a: 50).

Moreover, this apparently systemic low pay (McRobbie, 2002; Menger, 2006; Lee, 2013) can have negative affective consequences and, consistent with other research (Fantone, 2007; Lee, 2008), it was the women in the sample most acutely affected. Almost fifty percent of female respondents were financially dependent on their partners, compared to zero for male respondents. Jill was concerned that she was not doing enough to bring income into the household and noted that she was 'relying on my husband at the moment. I won't be able to do this if he didn't have a job. [...] I think I've had a year of guilt'. Pat echoed discomfort that her income from artwork could only meet part of the costs, rely on her partner who 'earns the money [...] I'm not happy with that really'. While not dependent on a partner, having moved to Folkestone Kate has found herself claiming various welfare entitlements, discussing her present situation in Folkestone in quite emotive terms:

I hate being a leach on society, getting housing [*benefit*], you know? It really upsets me. But I do feel this is all part to give back. I'm taking a lot but I hope to give back. (Kate, Folkestone)

Furthermore, mirroring gendered income differentials, women were more likely to have their flexibility impinged on by issues around, for example, childcare. Of the eight respondents who had children it was the case that both men and women were active in childcare and that, at least partially, working as an artist allowed them flexibility to participate further – such as Shane leaving work early or Duncan exploiting flexibility at work to care for his new baby. However, women were also primary caregivers, with implications on their work both in terms of what they could earn and the autonomy with which they could undertake it. For example, while Pat had three children who were all older and independent, she has been left still fulfilling childcare responsibilities with her grandchildren. While she was excited about reaching an age where her children are 'all away, I can get on with what I want to do', she feels she must take on these new childcare responsibilities: as she states, 'it's that quintessential women's guilt problem, about looking after her kids, making sure they're alright'. Nicholette found that when she had young children it was difficult as 'energies and time get kind of distracted and spread thinly. Um... I've often then scaled my practice to suit the time I had available'. Overall, it may be possible to characterise male respondents as finding time from work

for childcare commitments, whereas female respondents utilised flexibility to find time for work from childcare, giving credence to critics who suggest that:

culturalized work may actually be inciting the formation of new, yet somewhat traditional, patterns of discrimination and inequality, rather than uniformly alleviating their more pernicious effects. (Banks & Milestone, 2011: 77)

Anxiety about financial dependence points to a negative affective features that Gill and Pratt (2008: 15) understand to be a structural part of cultural work, and suggests ways in which artistic production is reproducing traditional social relations.

#### 9.1.4 Flexibility and Other Labour

While flexibility – relating to an individual’s capability to independently direct where, when and how they work – was claimed by respondents as a valued part of their conditions of labour, this was contingent on many other factors. It was only in three cases that the production and selling of artworks was a significant source of income, and in only one case was it the sole source. As such, for these artists, making a living required a mixture of income streams from sources with various degrees of relatedness to cultural production.

This given, all respondents, save two, had additional jobs through which they earned money to live on and sustain their work as artists. These jobs ranged from applications of their art knowledge and practice – such as, running workshops, classes and projects – through to tangentially-related jobs in, for example, framing or selling printing kits via the internet, to entirely unrelated activity as, for example, working as a cleaner or an office administrator.

Additional (paid) work was often undertaken as a means of paying for living expenses but also provided for some respondents a way of asserting their independence, their professionalism or in doing something deemed ‘worthwhile’ or ‘productive’. For instance, Helen works part-time for a charity to cover her bills; as her work is not, as she put it, ‘immediately saleable’ she notes that she feels some guilt that she does not contribute, financially, to the household. Anette described the work she took on for her partner’s publishing company which, though ‘not creative in any way or form’, meant she was able to feel as though she ‘was doing something, it was quite good in that respect. You can actually see a result, a monetary result’.

In their varied approaches to earning an income, respondents displayed the entrepreneurial spirit fêted in creative industries discourses (Eikhof & Haunschild, 2006; DCMS, 2008; Oakley 2009a: 27). Alongside her art practice, Jill not only worked as a yoga instructor but was in the process of beginning to provide printmaking classes in her studio, having been in Brighton where she had:

seen a lot of artists do workshops from home and I think, because we've got this house and it's got the opportunity and I'd given up my job the house needs to earn some money for us as well [...]

(Jill, Margate)

Other examples include Nick, who runs printing workshops and sells a printmaking set, under his Linocutboy brand, through the online retail platform *Etsy*, Claire produced a series of greetings cards, taking them to trade fairs, and Kate was running a life drawing class at her father's farm. Here, then, it is possible to discern that working as an artist has provided respondents with opportunities, through training and flexibility, for employment or paid work in cultural sectors that may not be open to, for example, a zero-hour contract care worker. This kind of income, however, can be understood as precarious (Standing, 2011a; 2011b). It is often uncertain or intermittent, can make additional demands on artists' time and resources, and speaks to issues around the use of freelancers as a 'flow' of labour to be turned on or off at will, operating as a reserve labour pool in systems of cultural production (Menger, 2006; O'Connor, 2007). As Kate's life drawing term drew to a close she is left scrabbling for work to replace it:

Tomorrow is the last one of the term and I don't think they want to do it in the summer, so at the moment I'm going 'Shit, shit, shit'. [*The life model is*] also very poor so we're trying to organise a class in Folkestone on Sandgate but we're just trying to find a space at the moment. Things are quite tight at the moment. (Kate, Folkestone)

For Kate this exacerbated financial issues, as she had recently had to stop working for a framing company having sustained an injury to her back. Nicholette echoes this as she points out that her worst year of income came due to injury:

I had to have an operation because I'd damaged both my knees. I was working in a forest and I knelt on a log that was concealed and the log rolled away and I ripped the cartilage in both my knees... and so I... it was a bit painful. So I couldn't work as much. So that year I made a £2,000 loss [...] (Nicholette, Folkestone)

Where respondents did find additional work within the sector there were ways in which they could be viewed as 'mere (and potentially expendable) units in the broader calculus of cultural production' (Banks, 2007: 77). Nick has established himself as a freelance illustrator, including book and magazine covers, using the same linocut printing techniques as his art practice. He was generally positive about this kind of work but also noted that finding the work can be difficult and that it can require working to incredibly tight deadlines:

You try and get meetings with people. You go and show them your portfolio and then maybe a year to two years later you might get a

call and a possible job. [...] I did a drawing for [*a national newspaper*] and they rang me at twelve and I had to do something by 3 o'clock. [...] I also work with book publishers. I've had three days to do three covers [...]. (Nick, Margate)

Moreover, the actual creation of the commissioned pieces is reckoned by Nick to only account for 10% of the time spent on those projects: 'The rest of the time you're doing admin and marketing, and invoicing people'. Cultural workers, then, may be viewed as part of an on-demand reservoir of labour to be called upon, and discarded, as needed. This is further evidenced by Roy who teaches drawing classes at an adult education centre in Margate. When running, these courses require him to teach for a few hours per week and, in common with other kinds of academic labour, do not pay for time outside the class he spends preparing. Whether the classes will even run is dependent upon sufficient student enrolment:

one of the courses is a ten week course and it's two hours a week. Another one is a fifteen week course and it's two and a half hours a week. Another is a five week course that two hours. So bits and pieces. And if they have enough student numbers then the courses run. But I only get paid for those hours that I'm in the building. So it's little bits of money here and there. (Roy, Margate)

Another source of income for Roy is royalty payments from miniatures he has sculpted for games companies, some of which he made on a freelance basis and kept the copyright for. This income is also intermittent, and in some cases he has even abandoned trying to obtain due monies where the effort of chasing the commissioner, and proving what is owed, became too burdensome:

I did do a lot of work for royalties and got ripped off, basically. I did try to find out how to go through small claims courts in the past but it takes so much time and it's so easy to pretend they'd not made the money... I should be getting more money than I have. (Roy, Margate)

Claire had a similar experience. While working in the fashion industry as a freelance designer, after a period working in Italy for high-end fashion houses, she found that she was 'ripped off' by larger firms:

I started to make good progress with that and I got backing from the Crafts Council and Princes Trust and I got into London Fashion Week. But the industry, the production industry in this country was collapsing at the time, and I was ripped off by big companies. It's just too difficult to make any impact in that environment. (Claire, Margate)

While relations with employers and commissioners may not always be as legally and ethically dubious as the cases presented above, where work has been allegedly stolen, they can raise further issues around what might be understood as exploitative practices. Indeed, there remains an expectation that artists will be willing to work for organisations – such as charities and schools, but also in galleries and studios – for free, running workshops or creating new works.

Claire pointed out the difficulty she faces when presented with such situations, where she is excited by the opportunity and wants to engage but is critical of those asking as they ‘don’t necessarily [...] consider that I need to live’. However, several respondents noted that as they progressed through their careers as artists, they became more confident in refusing to undertake free labour, only accepting those roles they felt a real affinity for and providing their expertise only when they are commensurately rewarded. Like Claire, Deborah notes that as art is viewed as a vocation there persists an expectation that she will work for free. Indeed, when younger, she did run workshops for no pay. Now, however, she understands the situation differently, pointing out that:

it’s my time and experience they’re using, they should be paying me to do it. You wouldn’t expect an accountant to come and do your accounts for free, why should you expect an artist to come run workshops for free? (Deborah, Folkestone)

Duncan is similarly aware of the value of the skills he has developed as a photographer. While he still undertakes some charitable work, he will not ‘do anything cheap or free for no reason. I know what I do is worth it’. He notes that for photographers a major problem is that:

there’re so many people with cameras, they run out and do jobs for next... for peanuts. And that’s ruining it for everybody else, you know? Wages for photographers have been eroded [...] because there’s always somebody willing to do it for free or cheap.  
(Duncan, Margate)

Duncan places this within a broader context, refusing to work for free or cheap because he values his own skills but also as an act of solidarity with other photographers, who are increasingly being undercut on price as professional quality equipment becomes more affordable.

The issue of free labour exemplifies a structural issue within the cultural sector where by there is an over-supply of labour with more graduates each year looking for work in these ‘highly attractive’ sectors (Work Foundation, 2007: 135). This opens cultural labour up to asymmetrical relations with the organisations that seek to utilise their skills for various kinds of profit. The cases outlined here are perhaps indicative of the power imbalance in the sector between individual freelancers and larger enterprises wherein

individual cultural workers can then be viewed as units whose work can be easily appropriated, and labour called upon and discarded as needed. Referencing Bill Ryan, Banks (2007) notes that work in the cultural industries position individual cultural workers as ‘mere (and potentially expendable) units in the broader calculus of cultural production’ (p.77).

Of course, that there are economic imperatives in artists’ working lives that necessarily affect what they produce and the conditions under which production occurs are not peculiar to artists – or even just cultural workers. Yet, while the visual arts are being promoted as a means of urban and economic regeneration (Ewbank, 2011; Kent County Council, 2010c; Local Government Association, 2009), then, the actual role of being an artist – practicing ‘free, creative labour’ – must be approached critically. And in the most pessimistic readings, it is possible to discern the pressures of various art markets in informing what is created – the spectre of the market appears to dominate production; any *genuine* autonomy is ceded as cultural goods are created ‘more or less according to plan’ (Adorno, 1991: 98). This persists in commercial art markets, in the demands of ongoing funding arrangements with patrons or the status seeking behaviour of rarefied fine art. Moreover, production occurs in relation to the ‘huge economic machinery’ of the culture industry (Adorno & Horkheimer, 1992: 127), itself inured as part of neoliberal policy initiatives; the DCMS (2008: 6) lauds ‘the growing success story that is Britain’s creative economy’ and looks towards a vision of ‘a Britain in *ten years’ time where the local economies in our biggest cities are driven by creativity*’, and the foreword to Kent County Council’s cultural strategy proclaims the cultural sector as ‘a valuable tool for the county’s work in economic and social regeneration’ (KCC, 2010c: vi). Yet the visual artists – the focus of county and local culture-led regeneration schemes included in this research – remain in a precarious position, often operating as a reserve labour pool for projects that might, in any case, expect them to work for free. Most importantly, they also struggle to operate as *artists* in the face of competing demands on their time and resources.

## 9.2 Rethinking Cultural Work

A pessimistic interpretation of the conditions of cultural labour does not adequately reflect the experiences of work as described by all respondents. Critiques of autonomy as a false freedom perhaps mischaracterise, or overstate, social and artistic activity as determined by economic logics and status-seeking behaviours. Moreover, limitations to autonomy can be viewed as a ‘desirable aspect of human sociality’ (Hesmondhalgh, 2010: 235) and, as such, these art ‘markets’ or communities can be the source of shared values, ethics and meanings. That is to suggest that while it may be possible to point to degrees of economic *exploitation*, it does not follow that there their work is absent ‘meaningful experiential outcomes’ and produces ‘only classic (Marxist) alienation on the job’ (Ross, 2009: 5).

In giving serious consideration to individual accounts it is possible to examine ways in which the constraints and determinants outlined above do not, per se, wholly result in cultural production as a sector where work is nothing ‘less than dreadful’ (Hesmondhalgh, 2010: 242) and ‘often not far removed from narcissistic forms of competitive individualism’ (p.238). This section will explore how artists are able to construct a kind of negotiated autonomy, and the rewards and motivations respondents described in undertaking cultural work. Moreover it will explore how artistic practice – in the specific sense used by MacIntyre (1985) – may not be reducible to external economic logics (Oakley, 2009b). It will suggest that external pressures can be ‘accepted, resisted and transformed’ (Ezzy, 1997: 431) in individuals’ narrative identities in ways that might meet the ‘authentic demand for a life not dictated by the cruel grind of excessively managed work’ (Ross, 2009: 46).

### 9.2.1 Negotiated Autonomy

The tenet of the possibility of action being not wholly reducible to market rationality is an important part of respondents identities as artists. Moreover, for none of the respondents did a disinterest in financial profit, as described above, amount to a total repudiation of capitalism, indeed there was an appreciation that while art worlds may profess an autonomy beyond financial markets they remain embedded within them. Pat highlights this when she notes that despite a stance of commercial disinterestedness there is also a need to engage with the financial:

money’s not everything. But then, actually you can’t really get away with that in a culture where money is everything, and where money is so hard to come by. (Pat, Margate)

Similarly, Kate is annoyed at the either-or distinction between fine and commercial art in which ‘you either make art or you make art for money. I don’t think it needs to be like that. I think there’s a very big space in between’. As such, for respondents there was a desire to negotiate a space to work in that is as autonomous as possible within the system (Banks, 2006: 470). Dismissing ‘banal’ perceptions of cultural labour as intrinsically autonomous – ‘as being more self-expressive, creative and fulfilling than conventional work’ (Banks, 2010: 251) – Banks goes on to aver:

that labour autonomy not only serves as (1) a foundational normative principle for the artistic, creative or aesthetic practices that underpin cultural work, but is also (2) a structural precondition for effective capitalist cultural production. (p.252)

Importantly, Banks is not suggesting here that autonomy is universally experienced, nor that it grants complete independence but, rather, that art is not wholly reducible to the demands of capitalism as it must encompass forms of value antithetical to capitalist production. Moreover, he usefully draws a distinction between ‘radical’ and ‘negotiated’ versions of autonomy. Drawing on revolutionary neo- and autonomous Marxist

positions, he argues that radical autonomy, while far-fetched or fanciful, remains critical in allowing social scientists to “think the unthinkable”... positing alternatives to prevailing social structures’ (p.262) that might fracture or even prove fatal to capitalism. Meanwhile, negotiated autonomy refers to:

a quotidian “struggle within” to try to mediate, manage or reconcile the varied opportunities and constraints of the art—commerce relation. The concern here is less with usurping capitalism and more with seeking opportunities for meaningful self-expression within its limits... (p.262)

It is possible to discern this in respondents’ experiences. Matt describes the complexity of arrangements between the different strands of work he undertakes, including his own practice, commercial photography and education/engagement practice:

So that’s why you find there’s MRP [*photography practice*], because that’s the more commercial angle. I do that for paid work [*and*] that feeds into what I do. [...] My arts practice is the catalyst, if you like. Because I wanted to learn how to photograph to make my work look good that’s now become an integral part of my process.

(Matt, Folkestone)

While open about the constraints placed upon his practice, Matt is able to negotiate a space in which he can undertake a kind of autonomous labour. For other respondents working within the strictures of funding arrangements can also continue to provide a negotiated space for work where flexibility and control may be limited but not compromised. Nicholette recalled the process that led to her exhibiting a series of works based on Romney Marsh. This project developed through different stages, accumulating funding from various sources, each requiring a slightly different emphasis or output – she notes, for example, that Shepway District Council want to know ‘How will this benefit the community?’ The effect, for Nicholette, was not to erode the role of the artist, entirely instrumentalising her work, but was to provide a framework around which she could work as an artist, maintaining for her the ‘thing that was important [...] that I’m an artist, and I was producing an art work in the end’. For John, limitations to his autonomy are enjoyed as they can ‘challenge you and, usually, develop the work’. Limitations to autonomy, then, can be understood as inherent and also desirable, even necessary in stimulating creative practice (cf. Hesmondhalgh, 2010: 235). The above demonstrates how financial markets and economic decisions can constrain the artist but can also inform their practice.

### 9.2.2 Rewards and Motivations

Respondents acknowledged that the financial rewards of their art practice are limited, but expressed satisfaction when works sold, they argued that money was not and could not be their primary motivation. As Matt notes:

[*The*] question of rewards is quite interesting because you're not drawn in financially. You pay for the privilege in some ways. (Matt, Folkestone)

Indeed, for Richard, 'it's always a miracle, artists selling paintings or making a living out of it' (Richard, Folkestone) yet being an artist is 'the most important thing'. As discussed in the previous Chapter, respondents described an essential urge or obsession to *practice*: this and the stated rejection of commercial imperatives may be understood to represent discourses that are derived from, and strengthen, the norms and traditions of art practice – devaluing the economic motive and emphasising rewards, and legitimation, gained from other, non-economic sources. This suggests that artists may be understood as operating in a kind of 'embedded' economy (Booth, 1994) that emphasises standards of performance common to communities of practitioners. Where the financial economy can be approached as a 'distinct theoretical sphere' (p.654), in an embedded, or moral, economy 'there are no theoretically visible boundary lines demarcating that realm from its surrounding social locus'. For example, the value of work within communities of artists that hold to idea of *art for art's sake* cannot be approached as distinct from:

the institutions, traditions, and norms [*that govern*] the community...  
It is the institutional and value-embeddedness of the economy – the fact that it is lost in the totality of social phenomena – that renders it theoretically indistinct. (Booth, 1994: 653-4)

Looking beyond purely financial motivations it is possible, then, to point to drivers of the 'urge' to produce art and to also ascertain distinct non-pecuniary rewards from engaging in art practice. These are explored here with reference to MacIntyre's concept of 'practice' (1985) and, specifically, his distinction between external and internal rewards (see Chapter 3, also Booth, 1994; Banks, 2007; 2010; Hesmondhalgh, 2010; Keat, 2000).

When Bourdieu (1993) argues that artists' claims to autonomy and financial disinterest are a pose as they struggle 'to defend or improve their positions' (p.30) within the field of cultural production, he may still understand *external* rewards as the primary motivating factor for artists. External goods – status, prestige, money, power:

*are the property and possession of individuals* and circulate in the economy as objects of competition, which... encourages the cultivation of selfish and acquisitive tendencies. (Banks, 2007: 110, emphasis added)

While the financial rewards may be limited for artists it has been demonstrated that they can inflect practice. Further to the discussion above, one can also understand a desire for the approval of the peers or public in their work as another external good. Moreover, autonomy may also be viewed as another ‘object of competition’ in that, unlike *internal* rewards, it cannot be enjoyed in a non-exclusive form.

Internal rewards, then, are ‘intrinsic to the practice itself’ (Banks, 2007: 109) – for example, the skill with which a game is played, or the quality of an art work. These standards are partially defined by the subject’s own tastes and preferences, and partially by the ‘authority of the best standards realized so far’ in that practice (MacIntyre 1985: 190-1). Importantly, MacIntyre notes that internal goods are non-exclusive: ‘their achievement is a good for the whole community who participate in the practice’. Thinking about art as a practice does not mean the total repudiation of external rewards or that internal rewards should be understood as free from competitive behaviours. Rather it suggests a way of approaching artists’ work wherein market-rationality is not paramount, instead reassessing their labour as embedded in the ‘specific demands, rhythms and routines’ of their practices.

For some, there was a stated disdain for what they saw as ‘egocentric’ aspects of being an artist that may be understood as a critique of the pursuit of status and prestige, and a disavowal of such behaviour in their own practice. Kate recounts advice she received on how to succeed as an artist. She was told that she should ‘push in there, you’ve got to go into London, you’ve got to be aggressive, you’ve got to make a noise, you’ve got to get their attention, upset them’. For her, however, this was not how she wanted to be an artist:

That’s not who I am, I don’t believe in that. [...] yes there’s a lot of artists doing the grandiose ego, and good on them making a living, but I find it very aggressive and I don’t think art should be aggressive. It can be aggressive, that’s fine, but there’s a big, big space for less ego. (Kate, Folkestone)

Shane similarly notes that his practice is not about him:

trying to massage my own ego in the slightest, or trying to pretend to be a rock star like other people do, like other artists who swan around. I’m not interested in that. It’s so not about an ego at all.  
(Shane, Folkestone)

While antipathy towards external goods is not always stated as such, internal rewards can be seen as being discussed as the primary motivation for respondents. As Shane goes on to note, for him, the work is ‘everything’ – a sentiment is shared across the sample.

One such way this emerged was in discussion of the notions of ‘truth’ in their work. Anette discusses the importance of producing something that she feels is ‘true [...]’

That's what I'm trying to do. That's what I keep working at'. The idea, then, that inherent in their practice there is an unspecified – perhaps ineffable – truth to be uncovered or found recurs across the sample. Roy discussed the satisfaction of uncovering something that rings true in his work:

a process of finding something, discovering something, learning something. Noticing something I hadn't noticed before. [...] if something comes out that seems to ring true then that's a lovely thing, a wonderful thing. (Roy, Margate).

But he goes on to note that elements of this process are from without the individual:

if you just get a... seeing a drawing, a simple drawing of somebody, if there's a mark or a line that surprises you or feels, for want of a better word, true... of course that comes about through the mixture of things, the skills you've developed, all the presentations you've ever seen. It's also to do with that, engagement with something that isn't you [...] (Roy, Margate)

As such, alongside a metaphysical interpretation of 'truth' in art – as uncovering something essential or sublime – there are also truths that come from an engagement with the norms and traditions of practice. These can also serve as powerful kinds of reward and motivation. For Shane – who undertakes a lot of commissioned work – prospective projects must mesh with his interests and the way he works to maintain a kind of truth in his practice:

If I really don't think I can do it I will tell them because it's not in my interests if someone spends lots of money, [*and*] my heart's not in it, I can't quite see what they want from it, they're not happy at the end. [...] It's like if you do music, or you make nice food, the idea is that you're trying to do something really special [...] They use that as the language, and images are a language too. They're an international language. [...] that's the side of the work that I take really, really seriously. (Shane, Folkestone)

Shane goes on to point out that what he is attempting to do is produce 'really, really difficult things that I've never seen people attempt': for him, reward stems from a sense of pride in creating something that engages with an 'international language' of painting.

Such a perspective, perhaps, demonstrates that rewards and motivations can come from working within formal aspects of art practice and academic art. However, as discussed in Chapter Seven, debates continue around who is an artist or what exactly constitutes art practice, and there is scope within these debates for artists to highlight other values and norms. For example, for Nicholette rewards were derived from maintaining integrity in her practice as understood via her sense of what it means to *be* an artist

while engaging with people and issues beyond the traditional borders of what art includes. In producing a series of works on the flora of Romney Marsh (a wetland area to the west of Folkestone) alongside horticulturalists, botanists and scientists, Nicholette stressed that she:

The thing that was important was that I'm an artist, and I was producing an art work in the end, but I still needed to respect everything that I had picked up from those people without becoming those people or... or doing or reproducing the work that they do  
[...] (Nicholette, Folkestone)

Alongside a concern with truth in the works produced, respondents also discussed the embodied processes of creation as an additional kind of internal reward. Anthony is enthused by the act of creation, saying that the 'best thing' about being an artist is that 'I enjoy doing. I mean just love sitting painting. I just drift away, am totally absorbed'. This is echoed elsewhere, Deborah talks about the 'enjoyment of the medium and using colour and creating images and trying new things' while Matt describes the rewarding aspects of the process of making ceramics, for him it was initially:

quite therapeutic, you really get into it. Then when I started doing wheel throwing work and Raku firing I realised that I like working with the elemental side of ceramics, using physical materials, using peat, using these processes, breaking it down to something that's quite... it's like building bonfires when you're a kid, there's something really physical about that and really exciting.  
(Matt, Folkestone)

Duncan describes how the whole process of photography – meeting and negotiating with people, the act of taking the shot – all add to this sense of satisfaction with his practice:

the actual act of taking a picture is probably the highlight because... it's not even like what's on the wall or in the print room or anything. Just the actual like... the negotiation and chatting to people, you know? You get a bit of buzz from actually going to these new places and starting new work. I get as much enjoyment from getting to that split second before the picture as I do after it, probably. If not more.  
(Duncan, Margate)

Embodied experiences can be highly structured and regulated, and the body a locus of further individualised responsibility, subject to various disciplinary practices (Bahnisch, 2000; Butler, 1990; McLean, 2014; Shilling, 2003). These accounts, however, point to the body as a site of individual identity construction and meaning-making. It is the site of felt and sensed interactions of self and world, and a way of accessing and performing

shared traditions of art practices. Engagement with the abstract concepts and theories of art is performed and experienced at the scale of the body and through the physical manipulation of paint, canvas, wood, paper or the plethora of other tools and media used. The material processes of creation are a further narrative resource that ‘unifies’ the ‘consciousness of the labour process and its embodiment in labour’ (Bahnisch, 2000: 64): the above quotes demonstrate how embodied and affective responses to, and experiences of, their work as artists play important roles in respondents understanding of the world, and shapes their choices and practices. For these respondents, inherent in art practice is the process of creating something which transcends market rationality, and that can assert meanings beyond economic markets (Oakley, 2009b). This can be understood, alongside the work produced, to provide a series of internal rewards derived from ‘respect, perhaps even love, of the practice, and recognition of its fundamental virtue in providing an ethical centre and a culture of embedded moral sanctions’ (Banks, 2007: 110; Gregg, 2009). They present the opportunity to explore and engage with a variety of subjects, including the self, the norms and traditions of art practice, and the embodied and material act of creation. While earning enough money to live off and receiving some recognition for their work is important, these examples demonstrate the significant ways in which art practice may not primarily be pursued within the logics of competitively achieved external goods.

### 9.3 ‘Is being an artist a good job’?

Hesmondhalgh (2010: 237) points to questions about whether autonomy can be viewed as a means by which attention is distracted from ‘the “real” exploitation and alienation lying beneath the surface of... working life’. Towards the end of interviews, respondents were asked ‘is being an artist a good job?’ This provided a range of answers that displayed a level of reflexivity about their practice and their positions as artists. These played with and explored notions of work, vocation and the question of what a ‘good job’ might mean. Nick notes that he would describe his role as ‘a vocation rather than a job. I think a good job is one that... pays well and [*being an artist*] certainly doesn’t pay well’. Yet, still he ‘wouldn’t do anything else’. Kate makes a similar point, saying that ‘job’ is ‘the wrong word [...] It’s not a good job because there’s no bloody money [...] I think it’s an incredible... vocation?’ Use of the term ‘vocation’ here suggests ways in which respondents understand art as meaningfully different from a ‘job’: a vocation can be understood as a ‘calling’, that is, as a necessary activity that is expressive of the person, ideally undertaken wholly for itself and without instrumental rationality (Owen & Strong, 2004; Weber, 1948). This can be seen in the way that Kate goes on to describe how she understands her position as an artist:

I think it’s incredibly important, as well, you know? One of the main reasons I still am an artist is because I loved Nirvana. Kurt Cobain and Nirvana, at a certain age, that sound. Even now I absolutely love it. It justified my existence at that time *Fuck yeah, someone else knows*

*exactly how I'm feeling.* They're expressive themselves, they're not keeping themselves tucked away and I think, in a way, that's been... my aim is to be there for someone else. There's been a few people that have loved my work and I think I've helped them in a way. I've helped them enjoy their life better. That's a privilege.

(Kate, Folkestone)

Kate, then, has begun to construct a narrative she can tell about her life and project the direction she wants to travel as an artist. Weber warns that individuals can be intoxicated with such 'romantic sensations' (1948: 127) in the pursuit of their vocation and thus vulnerable the realities of the 'disenchanted' world in which one lives. However, respondents were most often not like Weber's 'political infant', but able to integrate their calling with the mundane exigencies of day-to-day life. Nicholette, who is now in her late 50s, is able to look back and construct a narrative – though not always positive – in which being an artist occupies an important and valued part of her life:

it's a good job. I mean and... I think that the thing is I can say *Look, I have survived as an artist. I know times are difficult right now, but I've survived by my wits and juggling.* Sometimes I've had too much paid work and my art work suffered, I've had a family and had to reduce my work... you know? The scale of the work I'm doing. But I've survived as an artist all the way through. That's the most important thing. I don't have a big house, I don't have a smart car... I don't have savings in the bank. But I've got a studio.

Other respondents similarly noted that while money is lacking, or absent, there are reasons, important to them, that make being an artist a valuable role to undertake. Such examples can relate to Ezzy's (1997) argument that integral to good work is:

both the opportunity to fulfil one's commitments to others, and a narrative about one's participation in that work that contains an imagined future that is satisfying and rewarding. (p.439)

Of course, there remain structural issues. Working as freelancers or as a self-employed artist, like for many others both within and without the cultural industries, carries an inherent precarity. There is an oversupply of labour that creates unequal relations between artists and prospective employers and commissioners, there is low pay, and flexibility will often favour artists being flexible to employer needs. And looking at Margate and Folkestone as towns that hope to regenerate through the productive labour of artists, it could be concluded that a serious engagement with what artists want and how to support them is lacking. This is, perhaps, indicated in the provision of inappropriate studio space by the Creative Foundation and the insularity of flagship arts institutions and events from local artists. Moreover, there remain questions about who

has not been included here – how would the views of the artists who have left the field or been excluded from entering it (particularly with reference to class and ethnicity, see Oakley, 2013) differ from those presented in this overwhelmingly white and middle-class research?

However, while not discounting these concerns, it is possible to look to the way that respondents discussed their roles as artists and how they were constructing narrative identities that reflexively link individual motivations and values with pre-existing cultural discourses and other social and economic structures (Ezzy, 1997; Ricouer, 1991). As such, when Menger (2006: 801) suggest that ‘artists supply the golden legend of creation, that of a subversive, anti-conformist, inspired behaviour, rebelling against social conventions and commercial utilitarianism’ the implication should not be that artists believe it – rather, it operates as a discourse to be variously incorporated, rejected or reconfigured. This can be seen in the different narratives, stories and experiences given by respondents and discussed over the preceding chapters. Anthony and Shane both produce commercially viable oil paintings, valuing the advancements they make in, for example, their techniques and composition. Richard and Nicholette are able to look back over their careers as artists and recognise where compromises have been made but still come to the conclusion that art has been ‘the most important thing’. Kate and Helen are acutely aware of the financial precarity of their financial situations and are able to reflect on the negative implications of this on their emotions. Respondents, then, are reflexive about their positions and about the advantages and disadvantages of working in art. Yet, still, for them, art offers something like a good kind of work.

## 10 Conclusion

This thesis set out to engage with debates around cultural work and culture-led regeneration by exploring the working conditions encountered and experienced by visual artists who have embedded in Margate and Folkestone. In doing so it has drawn on and contributed to critical debates on cultural labour and the conditions of cultural work, and long-standing debates around culture and creativity as drivers of urban regeneration. It has established the ways in which artists' labour is integral to culture-led urban policies, and further critically explored the quality of such work, looking at the conditions under which it proceeds, and the values and meanings individual workers ascribe it.

It has demonstrated that culture-led urban strategies may represent a locus of economic exploitation and political contention, particularly for marginalised groups but also for the artists implicated in them. This accords with claims that foreground such issues as further evidence of artistic, and other forms of cultural, labour as wholly beset by economic and social structures that instrumentalise cultural value, and undermine any intrinsic value and meanings or the possibility of autonomous action. However, this thesis provides a 'defence' of artists' work. While not discounting structural factors, it finds that treating capitalism as a tightly organised system precludes an appreciation of individual agency. Participants were able to construct meaningful and valued narratives about their work that evade capitalist logics.

As with many kinds of social and urban research, making claims as to the generalizability of these findings is difficult. The research here generalises across two specific cases of culture-led regeneration, both being small towns on East Kent's coast. This given, it is difficult to make strong claims about the broader representativeness of the conclusions drawn. However, these case studies have afforded the opportunity to explore, and add to, understandings of theory and 'general' social trends as they are translated and modified in practice (McRobbie, 1998: 11). Moreover, in selecting two sites where different approaches to implementation are being taken more meaningful, though still tentative, generalisations might be made.

This Chapter will first point to the key contributions made in both academic and policy literatures. It will then make suggestions for future research and conclude with some final remarks.

### 10.1 Labour and Arts-led Regeneration

While it is important to note that the culture-led interventions in Margate and Folkestone have proceeded in different ways – using public money to construct a new gallery in the former case, compared to private, philanthropic investment that aims to foment a 'bottom-up' regeneration, in the latter – it also is possible to point to the similarities in their overarching rhetoric, rationales and aims. Policy in each case can be

understood to be building on and shaping the symbolic and material landscapes of these towns. In keeping with strategies intended to secure a 'post-industrial' future, both towns deploy discourses of culture and creativity to imagine the towns as creative and artful spaces. They seek to reject negative images as faded seaside resorts, past their touristic heyday (Ewbank, 2011; Margate Renewal Partnership, 2008), and upgrade the image of their 'product' (Bailey et al., 2004: 48). In doing so they follow strategies for producing 'creative' cities (Florida, 2002; Landry, 2000), and for regenerating coastal towns (Kennell, 2011; New Economics Foundation, 2005; Smith, 2004).

However, the aim of this thesis has not been to evaluate the respective merits of each strategy, nor the overall effectiveness of their implementation. Rather, it has been to explore the role of artists within these interventions. Literatures on culture-led regeneration suggests that artists neatly fit in to contemporary rhetoric about culture and creativity, the 'defining features' of contemporary economies and from which 'all other good economic things flow' (Florida, 2002: 21). They can provide a 'surfeit of meaning' (Ley, 2003: 2534) to the places they inhabit: to culturally consecrate space, drawing on bohemian mythology, recharging 'surrounding urban space, reintroducing that space back into a wider market of urban-dwellers, tourists and investors' (Mommaas, 2004: 518; Lloyd, 2010; Smith, 1996). Such approaches, however, can conceal the social and productive labour on which the urban product is constructed (Lefebvre, 1991).

This thesis has demonstrated that, despite differing implementations, artists' labour, in practice, proceeds in similar ways and fulfils similar roles in the 'transformation' of both Margate and Folkestone. Artists occupy studios, they host exhibitions, and create works that fill the galleries, the street and other public spaces; this visibility of art and artists is vital to the changing symbolic properties of place, and in producing Margate and Folkestone as cool, arty and desirable spaces. Arts-led regeneration has resulted in events and spaces valued by artists, and a 'buzz' of cultural activity they are keen to be a part of. Smaller towns, such as these, embody a 'rawness' and potential that is appealing to artists, and which provide opportunities to progress their careers in ways not available in more established locales. They have allowed respondents to make a mark – such as Shane's gallery/studio in Folkestone, Pat's curatorial work at Margate's Harbour Arm Gallery, or Nick's role in the Pushing Print festival. Given the noted 'durable' association between artists and particular urban districts (Lloyd, 2010) and the role of artists' work in producing the towns as creative locales, it is perhaps somewhat surprising that a clearer sense as to what 'being an artist' *in* Margate or Folkestone (as opposed to anywhere else) did not emerge from participants. It is possible to point to differences in organisation between the two towns – e.g. artists/studios in Margate tend to be feel more dispersed/less densely sited than in Folkestone. Participants also tended to note instrumental benefits to their location – studio space, housing costs, events etc. – rather than make reference to, or suggest, any 'spatialized' identity. This implies there was little sense in which being an artist in Margate is different to being a Folkestone-based artist, and vice versa. Despite different funding models, and different policy

mechanisms, both places seemed to exhibit similar outcomes in terms of the ambivalent embedment of artists and their commitment to place. However, it remains to be seen whether the arts-led transformations of Margate and Folkestone will, in future, produce stronger links between artists and place.

In setting out their strategic aims, Kent County Council state that artists ‘will be welcomed and rewarded’ (2010c: viii), the Margate Renewal Partnership (2009: 3) flags up the importance of a ‘thriving arts community’ where artists can have ‘visibility and voice’ (Fleming, 2008a: 24), while the Creative Foundation (n.d.) maintain that they want to provide a case study in building ‘a successful creative community’. Yet, this research has demonstrated ways in which policy in Margate and Folkestone has failed to appreciate the importance of artists. For both towns, examples were provided to show that culture-led regeneration policy has failed to engage with the needs of the group it is putatively serving, and that the culture-led regeneration could erode desirable material and symbolic properties of place and result in the eventual displacement of artists from the cultural spaces they helped produce. Respondents often cited the ‘rawness’ of the towns as attractive, unused or underutilised spaces as sites for possible recreation and ‘playful intervention’ (Groth & Corijn, 2005: 506). Yet, as regeneration proceeds, unestablished or indeterminate spaces reduce in number and other imperatives take over – in Margate one respondent was evicted from her studio for a new bar, and the Creative Foundation created studios with an apparent disregard for the actual needs of tenants. Moreover, while participants were sympathetic to the economic requirements of these policies, and the consequent use of recognised and established artists in flagship activity to attract visitors, they can be criticised for failing to adequately promote local artists. The Turner Contemporary provides little or no support to local artists, with one participant even hiding flyers in their toilets to attempts to secure some of the supposed ‘trickle down’ benefit of the gallery. Similarly, the Creative Foundation were criticised for neglecting local artists while organising the 2008 and 2011 Triennials. Meanwhile, there was a sense that local politicians were primarily concerned with the ‘kudos’ of the appearance of a successful culture-led regeneration.

These factors suggest that, despite Kent County Council’s (2010c: 29) aim of following ‘a sustainable strategy’ wherein the ‘cultural supply chain’ is protected, strategies have proceeded in ways that privilege consumption over production, and thus support the views of critics of culture-led regeneration (e.g. Lees & Melhuish, 2013; Markusen, 2006; Peck, 2005; Pratt, 2008). Policy needs to seriously consider how to properly work alongside artists to harness their enthusiasm for these places in a sustainable way – to allow local artists to have a continuing and prominent voice in the key cultural interventions. To return to the words of Richard in Folkestone, this is not wholly to the advantage of artists but has mutual benefit:

[...] for them to say “This is what we do here and these are the artists we have in, come look at their work as well” that would, to me, it would work for everybody. It’d help promote the place to other

artists, to come here, to other people to come see local artists work. It's good for the artists because people who are coming down to see big artists work will possibly also come to see your work. It's good for everybody. (Richard, Folkestone)

More than this, however, this thesis has argued that there remains the need for culture-led urban policy needs to pay more attention to the conditions of work in these sectors, something that it fails to do in any serious way. While such issues may fall outside the remit of district- or county-level policy initiatives, they further call into question the use of art as a means of regeneration: it becomes difficult to imagine a sustainable urban renaissance based on attracting a workforce that earns, as John did, around £3 an hour.

## 10.2 Work as Practice

Critics argue that the contemporary focus on the cultural industries as a part of urban and economic policy (Creative Industries Council, 2014; DCMS, 2011; Javid, 2014; Local Government Association, 2009; 2013) helps perpetuate structural problems and inequalities for workers in these sectors, including long hours, low pay and insecurity (Gill & Pratt, 2008; Hesmondhalgh & Baker, 2011; McGuigan, 2010; McRobbie, 2002; Menger, 2006; Oakley, 2009a). Banks (2007: 10) suggests that for the majority of cultural workers, the reality of work in these sectors is:

toil in relatively anonymous enterprises, either living off the erratic incomes from 'projects' or more conventionally on low or subsistence-level wages. Glamour is at a premium, and wealth and fame are uncommon.

There are multiple ways in which this thesis – across both cases – supports research that suggests artists are at best economically disadvantaged and, at worst, exploited in their work. For respondents, exploitation is occurring in various ways that is often outside the paradigmatic example of the factory, and is not as easy to pin point as that of management over workers in standard employment contracts as envisaged in Marxist accounts (Burawoy, 1979; Braverman, 1974). Several respondents perhaps typify the idea of cultural workers as a 'reservoir' of cheap, or even free, labour (Hesmondhalgh, 2010; Watson, 2012) to be called upon: for example, Roy taught adult education classes that would only provide a few hours of work a week, and only when classes had sufficient enrolment, while Nick would be called upon to do commercial illustration work on extremely tight deadlines. Others point out that there persists an expectation that artists will provide their knowledge, skills and time for free as people 'don't necessarily [...] consider that I need to live' (Claire, Margate). For many respondents income was both low, perhaps even considerably less than minimum wage, and uncertain, even while their labour was appropriated by multi-million pound investment schemes designed to provide for a social, cultural and, importantly, economic regeneration.

Furthermore, critical accounts of cultural labour suggest that individuals embrace a 'self-image of the cultural industries as fun or glamorous' (Oakley, 2009a: 50), the negative consequences of cultural work being viewed as being disguised by the 'psychic income or self-realisation' of undertaking a kind of 'sacrificial labour' (Ross, 2001; 2009). This is informed by the mythologies of bohemia, the 'starving artist' and the Romantic tradition (Lloyd, 2010; McGuigan, 2010; Menger, 2006). As such, the assumed autonomy of work in these sectors draws workers' attention from its most exploitative conditions as they 'are trained to accept and reproduce *for themselves* the precise conditions of their subordination' (Banks, 2007: 42). Certainly parts of this thesis could be used to support such a perspective. Even while respondents were co-opted into a speculative construction of place, and face uncertain, precarious working conditions, they professed a strong connection to their work as an essential, indeed vital, part of themselves and their identities. There was also evidence of a culture of self-blame and self-disciplining; instead of envisaging structural changes to the way art worlds operate, respondents were concerned about how they could develop better 'business acumen' or become more forthright in requesting/expecting pay for projects or residencies undertaken.

Ross (2009: 51) suggests this is the product of a kind of capitalism that thrives on 'disorganizing employment and socio-economic life in general so that it can profit from vulnerability, instability, and desperation'. While in such critical accounts it becomes difficult to imagine work in these sectors as 'something less than dreadful' (Hesmondhalgh, 2010: 242), this thesis has argued that closer attention and consideration of individual agency, narratives and identities can demonstrate that cultural work presents genuine and valued opportunities for meaningful work and self-realisation.

By understanding art as a 'practice' (MacIntyre, 1985) it is possible to point to the ways in which respondents' work is embedded in 'the institutions, traditions, and norms [of] the community' (Booth, 1994: 653). This has two important effects in that it first provides for a way of understanding how respondents are able to derive a series of 'internal' rewards from their work – that is, the ways in which they are able to assert meanings in ways that are not wholly reducible to the rationality of economic markets. As respondents undertake their work they engage with the embedded standards, values and codes of the arts communities to which they belong. The second point, then, is that practice emphasises the shared narrative that artists are able to draw upon as they reflect on their experiences and undertake embodied labour. Respondents narrated accounts of their lives and their work, both looking back and in their future orientations, wherein art is an important, even central, part of how they see and understand themselves. The material processes of their work – applying paint to canvas, taking a photograph, making a print – gain significance as they are undertaken in contexts of art and being an artist. They could reflect on experiences of working as an artist where structural conditions had negative effects, but their accounts were not reduced to these issues.

Of course, opportunities for exercising meaningful choice are always partial, and unevenly distributed, and this research has suggested some ways in which gender can factor into this, and there is also need to further consider social class, ethnicity and sexuality in debates about the marginalisation of particular voices within these sectors (Oakley, 2013). As such, it is important that this approach is grounded by an appreciation of the problems of structure and agency. This thesis has shown that respondents have developed narratives about valued and meaningful kinds of work and individual identities in relation to ‘pre-existing cultural discourses, [and] the structuring effect of a person’s social location’ (Ezzy, 1997: 440). That is, respondents were able to assume a kind of negotiated autonomy that, far from relying on the ‘will-to-power’ (O’Doherty & Willmott, 2001) of individuals, allows for individual and shared narratives of art practice to be reflexively constructed around external structures and subjective meanings and values (Banks, 2006; 2007; Hesmondhalgh, 2010; Keat, 2000; 2009; Sayer, 2001). This thesis maintains that while respondents’ work cannot be viewed as wholly autonomous, in either the sense of autonomy as flexibility or control (see Chapter 9), accounts of their working lives cannot lapse into a determinism wherein they can only be the bearer of objective (oppressive) structures (du Gay, 1996; Gibson-Graham, 1996; MacIntyre, 1985; Standing, 2011a). Critical accounts of cultural work that attempt to elide positive accounts and emphasise economic exploitation, individualisation and other perceived negative effects do violence to the experience of work by ignoring the structure and meaning their work continues to provide.

### 10.3 Future Research

While looking at the labour of artists in two small coastal towns in Kent cannot provide neatly generalizable results, these cases do speak to broader trends. Chapter Two discussed how cultural/creative industries rhetoric came to prominence in light of the social and economic changes associated with post-Fordism. While uneasy about pronouncing cultural workers as exemplars of such contemporary trends in working conditions, as other have (see Gill & Pratt, 2008; Neilson & Rossiter, 2005), this research is able to add to academic, policy and advocacy activity on patterns flexible and precarious labour.

Looking at currently working artists, however, limits the narratives presented here and promotes a kind of ‘survivor’ bias that precludes those for who the negative features of cultural work prove exclusionary. For example, uncertainty of income will affect those able or willing to undertake cultural work on such terms. Future research, then, may approach the conditions of cultural work not as work in itself, but as one factor in a set of wider questions about access and participation in the cultural sector and how the prevailing conditions of work in the cultural industries mean that certain groups are marginalised and under-represented in the art world.

This raises the increasingly acute question of the ethical and political implications of artists locating and doing cultural work in working class, deprived, areas (such as

Margate and Folkestone). While getting the public to engage with art may be an issue for advocates of art, the basis of such a position is in a belief in the essential worth of the arts for everyone, and a sense that the artful use of space is always a net positive. Yet, even while many artists have limited economic capital they work as part of broader art worlds which, collectively, occupy a relatively prestigious social position.<sup>1</sup> This research has shown that they are thus implicated in sometimes quite startling changes in socio-economic geographies, and property-market speculation. Future research may invite respondents to be more critical about their own roles in reproducing inequalities, bringing them together with those who have been displaced or feel excluded by culture-led urban policies.

#### 10.4 Final Remarks

While the notion of ‘art for art’s sake’ might offer a rhetoric that disavows mundane, or ‘impure’ interests in cultural production, it is easy to point out how it does not bear scrutiny in light the exigencies of art markets and the need to make a living. But it remains a powerful driving force for artists. Respondents overwhelmingly discussed their work in congruent terms, disavowing in particular the role of financial imperatives in what they produce. ‘Art for art’s sake’ can be one of the discourses incorporated into their narrative-identity – being an artist, and being poor but also ‘pure’ allows them to make sense of their position, casting themselves as ‘struggling artists’. This can similarly be identified in discussions about where they live – Folkestone and Margate are not simply cheap, but ‘raw’ and ‘edgy’. This framing provides further symbolic support to individual narratives about living in a mythic, Bohemian tradition. I would counter any attempt to cast this as a false consciousness, however. Artists were open and clear about the reality of their careers, the hardships that would engender, and, ultimately, the compromises they would have to make to accommodate working in a way that they value. That is not to elide the inequalities and power asymmetries they face. There are structural issues that, in some cases, clearly amount to exploitation – for example, Claire had her designs ripped off, Roy never received royalties due. Yet art can deliver a kind of good work – a means by which individuals can construct valued and meaningful narratives about their own lives.

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<sup>1</sup> Bourdieu (1993) suggests cultural production occupies a position that, while a dominated fraction, remains in the dominant class.

# 11 Appendices

## 11.1 Consent Form

**University of  
Kent**

***Cultural Labour in Kent***  
**Project Information**

28 June 2012

Researcher: Jonathan Ward  
School of Sociology, Social Policy and Social Research (SSPSSR)  
University of Kent, CT2 7NZ  
jw484@kent.ac.uk 07909 020 050

Supervisor: Professor Phil Hubbard  
p.hubbard@kent.ac.uk

I am a doctoral candidate undertaking research about the working lives of visual artists in Folkestone and Margate. You are being asked to participate as you are a visual artist living or working in one of these locations.

The aim of this research is to better understand the conditions under which visual artists work. This will inform future academic and policy debates about artists, and other cultural workers, and how they could or should be supported.

If you agree to participate you will be interviewed (including audio recording) at a time and location convenient for you. The interview will take between 45 and 90 minutes and will include discussion of topics such as:

- The rewards of your artistic practice.
- Difficulties you have encountered working as a visual artist.
- Your day-to-day working life.
- Your career path as an artist.
- How you engage with other artists.
- Your views on the cultural life of the local area.
- The kinds of support you receive from friends, family and organisations.

Parts of your interview may be quoted in research outputs, which will include my thesis, and may include journal articles, books and web pages. Any contributions used in this way can be wholly or partially anonymised; including the use of a pseudonym and, as far as is possible, obscuring other identifying features (e.g. titles of exhibitions, names of associated galleries or studios etc.). You will receive a copy of the interview transcript and have the option to review the relevant parts of the thesis before submission.

I also hope to recruit a small number of artists to participate in further research. I may ask you to take part in this during or after the interview. Participation is optional and not inferred by your agreement to interview. If you should agree, the exact details of how this research will be conducted will be negotiated with you.

If you agree to participate in any part of this research you may withdraw your consent at any time and without reason.

Your data will be securely stored and handled in compliance with the Data Protection Act. It will be destroyed after no more than seven years.

If you require further information about this project, or about how your information will be used, then please do not hesitate to contact me, either by phone (07909 020 050), email (jw484@kent.ac.uk) or by post (SSPSSR, University of Kent, CT2 7NZ). My supervisor, Professor Phil Hubbard, can be contacted at the same address, or by email (p.hubbard@kent.ac.uk).

Thanks for your time,

Jonathan Ward

*Please tick the appropriate boxes*

Yes No

**Taking Part**

I have read and understood the project information sheet dated 28 June 2012.  Yes  No

I have been given the opportunity to ask questions about the project.  Yes  No

I agree to take part in the project. Taking part in the project will include being interviewed and recorded.  Yes  No

I understand that I may be given the option to participate further, the details of which I will be able to negotiate.  Yes  No

I understand that my taking part is voluntary; I can withdraw from the study at any time and I do not have to give any reasons for why I no longer want to take part.  Yes  No

**Use of the information I provide for this project only**

I understand my personal details such as phone number and address will not be revealed to people outside the project.  Yes  No

I understand that my words may be quoted in publications, reports, web pages, and other research outputs.  Yes  No

I understand that I can request that my data is anonymised.  Yes  No

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of participant [printed]

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Researcher [printed]

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

Project contact details for further information: Jonathan Ward  
SSPSSR, University of Kent,  
Canterbury, Kent, CT2 7NZ  
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Contact details for the academic supervisor: Professor Phil Hubbard  
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## 11.2 Interview Schedule

### ***Cultural Labour in Kent***

### **Interview Schedule**

Can you tell me a little about yourself? (Age, home town, education, previous jobs)

#### **Can you tell me a bit about living here?**

How long have you been here? / How did you come to be here? / What do you think of the place?

#### **Can you tell me a bit about the arts scene around here?**

Do you know other artists around here?

Are you involved with art groups/organisations? What do they do?

Do you think there's a sense of community amongst those involved in the arts here? How so?

Do you feel any sort of commitment/obligation to other artists?

Have you had anything to do with [Turner Contemporary / Margate Old Town / Creative Foundation / local council arts officers / Arts Council]? What do you think about it / them?

#### **Can you tell me about your work? (What / How / When / Where)**

Would you describe yourself as a full-time artist? (Other work)

How much does your artistic practice cost? (Materials / Studio / Opportunity cost)

Can you tell me about what professional training you've had – have you been to art college?

Can you tell me about how your professional training helped you for life as an artist? (Especially in ways other than their practice – money, networks, dealing with galleries etc.)

How do you see your practice developing? Will you always be an artist?

Do you promote your work? How?

#### **What kinds of rewards do you get from your work? (Economic / Cultural / Prestige)**

What kind of income do you receive from your artistic practice?

How important to you is it that you make money from your work?

Do you get a sense of satisfaction from your work?

How important is the recognition of your peers versus recognition from the public? From the media?

Do you feel the rewards are enough?

#### **What position does your artistic practice have in your life?**

How important is it to your sense of self?

Does it feel like an important part of your identity?

#### **Do you feel under any kind of pressure in your work? (Time / Money / Cultural)**

Are you ever worried about money?

Do you feel that you get enough time for your artistic work?

Do you feel like you need to produce a particular kind of work?

#### **Can you tell me about the different kinds of support you get for your artistic work?**

(Moral / Economic / Technical / Friends / Family / Colleagues / Organisations)

What kind of support would you like?

(Work/life balance/separation)

## 11.3 Respondents

	Location	Practice	How Found	From (Year moved to area)	Main income	Other income / previous jobs	Arts Education (Fine Art unless specified)
Nicholette	55 Sandgate (Folkestone)	Sculpture / Printmaker	Web search	Tunbridge / Medway (2009)	Education / Funded Projects		BA
Anthony	50 Birchington (Margate)	Painter	Event	Margate	Disability Living Allowance / Paintings	Ex-draftsman	No
Nick	35 Margate	Printmaker	Event	Oxfordshire (2009)	Design / Printmaking	Workshops / Linocut sets / Art practice	BA
Duncan	32 Broadstairs (Margate)	Photographer	Event (PV)	Thanet	Photography shop	Ex-property photographer	BA Photography 2012
Claire	38 Dartford (Margate)	Photomontage	Event (PV)	Dartford	Teaches HE	Used to teach 6 <sup>th</sup> form / Fashion Design / Art practice	Textiles BA and MA
Pat	51 Canterbury (Margate)	Painter / Digital Media	Event (PV)	Ashford	Partner support	Art practice / Used to teach sociology	BA + MA Art 1998
Jill	45 Margate	Printmaker	Event	Margate	Yoga teacher / Partner support	Ex-art teacher (secondary)	BA, MA Fine Art 2010
Roy	37 Margate	Printmaker	Snowball	Margate (2001 from Edinburgh)	Adult education / Working Tax Credits / Family support	Ex-model maker	BA
Ruth	61 Canterbury (Margate)	Painter / Printmaker	Snowball	Kent	Pension / Printmaking	Ex-art teacher	BA Textiles, 1969, MA Fine Art 2010
Matt	32 Folkestone	Ceramicist / Photography	Snowball	Hythe (2005 from Cardiff)	Photography / Projects / Education	Photography / Projects / Education	BA Ceramics / Pottery
Shane	36 Folkestone	Painter	CF email	Hythe (2002 from Ashford/Berlin)	Art practice	Ex-Berlin Tour Guide. Ex-PR/Marketing	No
Anette	47 Folkestone	Painter	CF email	Denmark (2007 from London)	Husband's publishing co.		BA 2003
Diane	35 Folkestone	Conceptual / Sound	Event (KCF)	London (2003)	Cleaner	Photo assist / Strange Cargo (until 2011)	BA Spatial Art 2004
Susan	51 Folkestone	Artist	Snowball	Folkestone	Partner support		BA
Phyllis	76 Folkestone	Painter	Email	Kent (1980s from Africa/US)	Workshops / Pension		No
Kate	37 Dover / Folkestone	Sculpture / Painter	Snowball	Kent (2006 Glasgow via Wiltshire, Ashford)	Life drawing classes	Framing, Ex-Art teacher in rehab centre	BA 2000 / MA 2012
Deborah	44 Folkestone	Painter	Snowball	Kent (2006/7 Mile End)	Works in student support (Finished Jul'13)		BA Fine Art Sculpture 1996
Richard	50 Folkestone	Painter	Event (PV)	London/Ashford (Studio since about 2003)	Art practice	(ex-)Freelance design	BA
Helen	57 Folkestone	Textiles	Snowball	Folkestone (1992 Somerset)	Part-time administration / Partner support		BA 2005 MA 2007
John	54 Sandgate (Folkestone)	Painter	Snowball	Tunbridge / Medway (2009)	Art practice	Ex-graphic design / HE teaching	MA Graphic Fine Art 1996
Andrew	25 Folkestone	Artist	Snowball	London (2010)	Factory		BA

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