



Bridging the Trust Divide: Understanding the Role of ‘localism’ and the ‘local’ in Cultural Policy

Mark Evans

Trust is at a breaking point. Trust in national institutions. Trust among states. Trust in the rules-based global order. Within countries, people are losing faith in political establishments, polarization is on the rise and populism is on the march.

—Antonio Guterres, United Nations Secretary General, 25
September 2018.

There is much evidence that suggests that declining public trust is not just a problem for government to solve but requires active citizenship and civic action at the local scale (Dalton & Welzel, 2014). Cultural institutions can play an important enabling and educative role in fostering and strengthening democratic governance as they have a uniquely trusted position on the frontline of community democracy, civic agency and learning. Research

M. Evans (✉)
Charles Sturt University, Wagga Wagga, NSW, Australia

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shows that, at a time of declining trust around the world, cultural institutions are trusted for delivering credible evidence-based content, giving voice to a plurality of perspectives and presenting an impartial interpretation of complex problems (Falk & Dierking, 2018). In an era of ‘truth decay’ (Kavanagh & Rich, 2018), they are uniquely placed to make sense of the contest of ideas and address uncomfortable truths. But how can social researchers conceptualise this role in the context of civic action at the local scale? This chapter critically evaluates the theory and practice of localism which has emerged in the disciplines of public policy and management, geography and governance to examine the role that local cultural institutions could and often do play in enhancing democratic governance, social cohesion and building public trust and value.

THE POLICY CONTEXT—IN CULTURAL INSTITUTIONS WE TRUST

The COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated the global erosion of public trust in liberal democratic institutions. There is widespread concern among scholars and in popular commentary that citizens have grown more distrustful of politicians, sceptical about democratic institutions, and disillusioned with democratic processes or even principles (Evans & Stoker, 2021). Weakening political trust is thought to: erode civic engagement and conventional forms of political participation such as voter registration or turnout; reduce support for progressive public policies and promote risk aversion and short-termism in government; and, to create the space for the rise of authoritarian-populist forces (Diamond, 2019). There may also be implications for long-term democratic stability as liberal democratic regimes are thought most durable when built upon popular legitimacy. The 2021 Edelman Trust Barometer reveals ‘an epidemic of misinformation and widespread mistrust of societal institutions and leaders around the world’. Declining public trust is also associated with democratic satisfaction. *The Global Satisfaction with Democracy Report 2020* found that the share of people who express dissatisfaction with the performance of democracy had risen by 10 percentage points to 57.5 per cent. The report concludes that ‘across the globe, democracy is in a state of deep malaise’ (Foa et al., 2020, p. 3).

In contrast, trust in cultural institutions remains high particularly in the parliamentary democracies and the USA (see: Hill Strategies, 2019; and, New Zealand Ministry for Culture and Heritage, 2021). A recent study

(Evans, 2021) surveyed a sample of senior administrators of cultural institutions in Australia and the United Kingdom and asked them—what is it to be a ‘trusted’ cultural institution? For them, a ‘trusted’ cultural institution is:

1. ‘Driven by small ‘I’ liberal values’.
2. ‘Independent’.
3. A local ‘safe space’ for democratic dialogue on ‘wicked’ (intractable) problems.
4. ‘Culturally relevant’—‘audiences personally connect to the content or experience. Younger people are particularly inspired by social change’.
5. ‘Active in removing barriers to social inclusion’, demonstrating social impact and embracing diversity (a key concern of cultural institutions in Australia given the need to close the social and economic development gap for Indigenous Australians).
6. Expert—they engage in ‘evidence-based practice, combat ‘truth decay’ in their areas of expertise’ and are ‘impartial entities, civic educators trusted to present the facts as they relate to their stated missions’.

In sum, while cultural industry elites believe that public trust is ‘relational and qualified’ and many institutions are not achieving or even exhibiting some of these attributes, they genuinely believe that they can perform a legitimate bridge-building role between government and citizen on the frontline of community democracy, civic agency and learning.

But how would they go about performing this role? The answer to this question is not easily answered from a social science standpoint as there is no precise conceptualisation of how it works in practice. However, the most promising lines of inquiry can be located in various heuristics of ‘localism’, the ‘local’ and associated concepts which have emerged (with different concerns) in the disciplines of public policy and management, geography and governance. We will explore the disciplinary differences in approaches to the broad issues discussed here in more detail later, before turning to look specifically at areas of common ground which pivot around the role of cultural institutions in generating public value through participatory modes of governance. We will also examine various barriers to action. But first we must examine the origins of the concept of localism to understand its political genealogy.

ORIGINS—DEVELOPMENTS IN THE FIELD OF ACTION

The flirtation with localism in parliamentary democracies emerged as a policy mantra in the Blair and Brown New Labour governments (1997 to 2010) in the UK. We will use the United Kingdom (UK) case to illustrate the emergence and development of the concept. Localism is a case of new wine in old bottles previously described as ‘area-based’, ‘place-based’, ‘action zone’ or regenerations experiments (Davies & Imbroscio, eds., 2013) but this time framed in the context of New Labour’s core focus on evidence-based policy, ‘top-down’ direction and an overarching managerialism (Lowndes & Pratchett, 2012). The evidence suggests that managerialism limited New Labour from ever really developing a localist agenda that had any political bite. The Cameron government’s adoption of the mantra of localism through the hollow concept of the ‘Big Society’ was initially a political manoeuvre to support their criticism of the perceived ‘top-down’ ‘control freakery’ of New Labour but quickly became and has remained part of an anti-state agenda that sees for the UK a future that moves it further from the continental welfare state tradition. Prime Minister Theresa May was too distracted by Brexit to give the local much thought; while localism has become a barometer of whether the current UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson has a guiding normative compass and will deliver on his professed localist credentials (forged while Mayor of London) or remain pragmatic to the core. The early signs are that greater localism and power for communities will form part of the post-COVID-19 settlement and extend the English City deals to towns and counties (Ross & Donaldson, 2021).

The Labour Party under Ed Miliband reacted by offering, in turn, a much more value-driven understanding of politics than that offered by New Labour and embraced community localism for a short period. In turn, this was usurped by the centralised planning tendencies of Jeremy Corbyn and particularly Shadow Chancellor of the Exchequer John McDonnell who saw the appeal of managerial localism for ‘top-down’ socio-economic transformation. We await Keir Starmer’s desired brand of localism. The evidence also suggests that managed localism has been the preferred approach in the devolved governments of the UK in Scotland (Pugh, 2014), and Wales (Heap & Paterson, 2021) and for local government in England (Stanton, 2018).

In short, over the last two decades, the UK has witnessed the emergence of varieties of localism but a managerial localism has dominated. But

what of the key academic literature—how has it sought to understand localism? In the field of theory, the concepts of ‘localism’ and the ‘local’ have been an ongoing concern in the disciplines of public policy and management, geography and governance.

WHAT IS LOCALISM? A PUBLIC POLICY AND MANAGEMENT APPROACH

It is almost impossible to conceive of a strong liberal democratic system without a vibrant system of local democracy augmented through various localism strategies. Although a contested term, for the purposes of this chapter localism is defined from a public policy and management perspective as an umbrella concept which refers to the devolution of power and/or functions and/or resources away from central control and towards frontline managers, local democratic structures, local community-based institutions and local communities, within an agreed framework of minimum standards (see Table 2.1). This definition encompasses and develops various strategies of localism described by Paul Hildreth (2011). Simply put, different central governments in different nation states deploy different strategies of localism to deliver different organisational tasks and goods and services. Table 2.1 provides a heuristic of how these strategies work in practice.

We can normally identify three strategies of localism at work—managerial, representative and community localism—reflecting different degrees of community involvement in decision-making. While all three forms of localism have always existed, representative localism was always first amongst equals at least in terms of its political dominance. This is no longer the case; in an era of governance where governmental organisations rarely assume a dominant service delivery role, it is the mix of strategies that matters and the balance between the three will differ from jurisdiction to jurisdiction.

Managerial localism involves the conditional devolution of delegated decision-making or delivery functions from the centre to the locality based on achieving agreed objectives (see Table 2.1). Policy is decided at the centre but policy settings and delivery functions are devolved to the locality under a strict regulatory framework. Success is evaluated on the ability to meet centrally derived performance targets. In representative localism, powers and responsibility for specific governance tasks are devolved

Table 2.1 Three strategies of localism

	<i>Managerial localism</i>	<i>Representative localism</i>	<i>Community localism</i>
Defining mechanism	Conditional devolution of decision-making based on achieving agreed objectives	Provision of powers and responsibility to local government elected on universal suffrage	Rights and support given to citizens in communities to directly engage in decisions and action
Delivery mechanisms	Intergovernmental networks	Hierarchical delivery networks	Community network governance, direct and deliberative democratic initiatives
Metrics for judging success	Targets and evidence	Electoral triumph or failure	Cohesiveness and capacity of network arrangements. Attainment of network goals and fairness of process
Strengths	Makes sense in the context of multi-level governance and complexity	Delivers clear identification of responsibility and accountability and capacity to meet localised needs	Delivers ownership, local knowledge and engagement by citizens in defining problems and supporting solutions
Weaknesses	Can be too 'top-down', lack of downward accountability, associated with a 'government knows-best narrative for change', ignores locally derived sources of knowledge. Focus in the end is on externally imposed objectives rather than local choices	Resource issues (both financial and technical) may undermine delivery; accountability in practice may be weak	Potential for network capture by local elite interests persists. Uneven distribution of capacity among community-based institutions to respond leads to engagement of some but not all. Accountability structures can be opaque with weak democratic control. Minority voices can be silent

directly to elected local government. Success is evaluated on the basis of re-election. In contrast, community localism involves the devolution of rights and support directly to citizens in communities to allow them to engage in decisions and action. This is underpinned by a participatory

view of democracy which is based on the notion that legitimate governance requires ongoing engagement with the citizenry and their inclusion within certain realms of decision-making (Stoker, 2011).

As noted in Table 2.1, the key delivery mechanisms of community localism are through network governance and potentially through the inception of direct and deliberative democratic initiatives to solve specific community problems such as citizen juries, deliberative polls or participatory budgets (Evans & Stoker, 2021). In times of instability, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, community localism becomes even more important in delivering national as well as local goals, for example, in ensuring adherence to lockdown measures or encouraging vaccine take-up. Crucially, however, there is increasing evidence to suggest that the top-down managerial approach to localism does not work (see Penny, 2017).

The reason for this is not new or surprising. In an era of governance, citizens' engagement in policy and delivery has become crucial to the achievement of social progress. Not least because all that public organisations do require co-production and adaptive behaviours from citizens and often stakeholders. Moreover, the critical challenges confronting policy-makers in a complex, fragmented world require the most adaptive form of power to enable local interests to blend their capacities to achieve common purpose. Here Joseph Nye's (Nye, 1990) concept of soft power developed in the field of international relations and described as *the power to persuade* is a useful reference point. Localism is for public policy and management academics a key policy instrument for achieving soft power.

In theory, localism provides central and local authorities with a range of strategies (managerial, representative and community-focused) for inputting community-based preferences into formal decision processes which shape the development of local communities. The arguments in support of localism can be organised into three categories: capacity development benefits, political benefits and operational delivery benefits. The potential benefits of localism for local institutional capacity development crystallise around issues of political and policy education, and training in political leadership for local leaders. Political education teaches local populations about the role of political debate, the selection of representatives and the nature of policy-making, planning and budgetary processes. While training in political leadership creates fertile ground for prospective political leaders to develop skills in policy-making, political party operations and budgeting, with the result that the quality of national politicians is enhanced (Stoker, 2011).

Several sources of political and social capital can be derived from localism strategies. Political stability is secured by enhancing public participation in formal politics, through voting, local party activism and deliberative engagements such as citizens, juries and assemblies (Moore, 2019) and direct democratic initiatives such as local referenda or participatory budgeting. Localism strategies can distribute political power more broadly, thus becoming a mechanism that can, in theory at least, meet the needs of the most disadvantaged. Public accountability can also be enhanced because local representatives are more accessible to the public and can thus be held more easily accountable for their actions than distant national leaders. Moreover, the existence of cyclical elections provides local electors with a mechanism for voicing grievances or satisfaction with the performance of local representatives.

In this conception of localism, cultural institutions would be a contracted third party in managerial localism and representative localism and a partner in community localism reflecting different models of democracy at work through elite-driven (central or local) to participatory modes of governance (see Fig. 2.1).

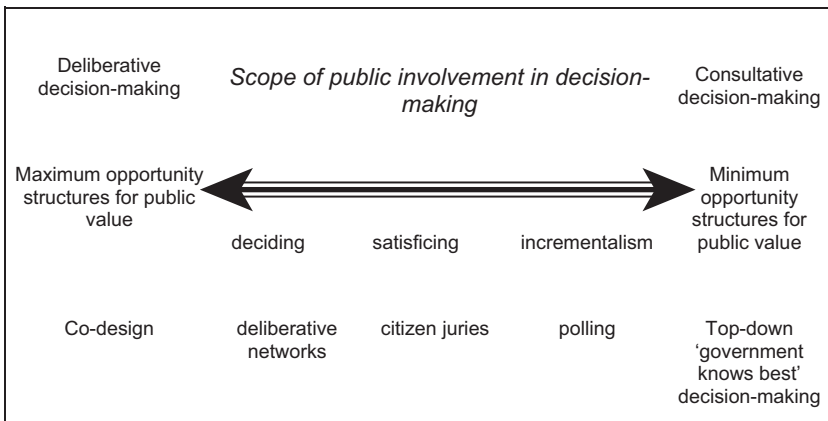


Fig. 2.1 The scope of public involvement in decision-making

WHAT IS LOCALISM? A HUMAN GEOGRAPHY APPROACH

The human geography approach to localism constitutes a political economy critique of the mainstream public policy approach. Nick Clarke (2013, p. 492) distinguishes three types of political localism to be found in human geography literature, localism describes: ‘natural ways of life—organised to maximise authentic experiences of place ...and to minimise the friction of distance in the case of spatial science’; ‘cultural–political expressions of spatial divisions of labour, including local political cultures...[and] neoliberalisations’; and, ‘struggles to produce locally scaled action, including projects of local autonomy and self-sufficiency directed against the central state’.

Much of the work geographers undertake has constructivist origins and, for constructivists, ‘locality’ or ‘place’ are much more flexible ideas/concepts. As Clarke (2013, p. 492) puts it: ‘Post-structuralist geographers view localities as characteristically open, plural and dynamic’ and thus problematise the tendency in public policy and management approaches to localism to see place and locality as more fixed. For example, the idea of ‘managerial localism’ sees geographically based, local, non-governmental organisations such as cultural institutions as ‘agents’ for delivering services in a defined territory. Representative localism focuses on the role of democratically elected, area-based, representatives, normally councillors, in policy-making and service delivery. Of course, ‘community localism’ is different to the extent that it is concerned with a focus on harnessing the resources of local community networks, but unlike much of the Geography literature on the ‘local’, such communities are viewed as given, with clear geographic boundaries, rather than as imagined, fluid and flexible.

Of course, it is not that these two literatures can’t and don’t engage with one another’s concepts and insights. There are two sources of immediate inspiration that we can look to for guidance. First, the work of Nick Clarke serves as a good example. As we noted above, Clarke identifies a flexible notion of locality, but he emphasises that a key recent trend in debates about ‘the local’ has been a move, he terms it a ‘struggle’, to produce and reproduce local-scale actions that in large part resist over-direction from the state. This is a move which resonates with arguments about community localism and indeed local governance, emphasising how the tensions between managerial and community localism are at the core of contemporary debates about cultural and heritage policy (see: Clarke & Cochrane, 2013; Gentry, 2013).

In short, human geographers particularly, but not exclusively, emphasise that ‘the local’ cannot be simply equated with geographic or administrative boundaries. This is an important insight for those who advocate managerial localism, as it shows why the implementation of this form of localism is not always straightforward. It is also chastening for those who stress any straightforward form of representative localism which can fall prey to elite capture and fail to represent the general will of the community (Waheduzzaman & As-Saber, 2018). However, this is an issue which those who advocate community localism need to address, as, in most cases their focus is on geographical or administrative communities, with little focus on how the ‘local’ or other social issues are ‘imagined’ or understood by citizens.

Despite vocal political criticism, many museums around the world have taken up this challenge. Witness the Smithsonian’s efforts to generate democratic dialogue through the National Museum of American History’s collaboration with the non-profit Zócalo Public Square and Arizona State University to create an online conversation on the thorny issue of what it means to be American (Carnegie Corporation of New York, 2014). Or the development of the ‘Protest Lab’ at the People’s History Museum in Manchester (2021) where an exhibition on the Peterloo Massacre co-created with the celebrated film director Mike Leigh and community curators inspires ideas for community action on various intractable problems from climate change to social inclusion. The ability to partner with Mike Leigh on the Peterloo exhibition has helped not only in producing a high-quality exhibition experience but has also inspired community participation on a national and international scale augmented by digital content (Evans, 2021).

Glasgow Women’s Library (2021) located in the East End of Glasgow has grown from a small grassroots project into the main hub for information by, for and about women in Scotland with 13 paid staff and more than 80 volunteers working for the museum. It offers specialised learning, collections and archives and has grown into a pioneering women’s social enterprise. The strengths of the museum lie in its ability to build community networks in academia (to build robust evidence to underpin its exhibitions and programmes), across communities of practice (to be a centre for place-based service delivery for community wellbeing programmes) and to be an information hub for like-minded grassroots organisations. It is an extremely participatory, open and democratic organisation with its board recruited through open competition.

Glasgow Women's Library also uses a community curator approach to steer annual mobilising themes on social justice issues. It is an authentic participatory museum despite (but probably because) being based in one of the poorest communities in Europe. It is noteworthy that the museum makes no attempt to walk the line and compromise politically. It is unapologetically a campaigning museum on the empowerment of women. This is viewed to be the secret of its success as a trusted, culturally relevant, community-based organisation that imagines women's empowerment from the local to the global. This contrasts with National Museums Scotland (2021a) which has had to walk a very delicate line on the Scottish referendum issue and has been heavily criticised for not providing public education on the case for or against separation. These examples provide living illustrations of cultural institutions providing 'safe spaces' for democratic dialogue on difficult social issues.

A second source of guidance can be found in the geography literature that emerged in response to austerity politics in the UK. This literature has particular significance for understanding the role of cultural institutions in community localism in providing 'spaces' or 'geographies of care' to combat social exclusion, developed in response to deep-seated cuts across health, welfare and social services (see Clayton et al., 2015; Darling, 2011). More recently, the community engagement schemes of cultural institutions have become an additional focus of concern in this literature (see: Morse, 2021; Morse & Munro, 2015). Nuala Morse and Ealasaid Munro, for example, investigate the role of museum engagement workers in shaping these spaces through community networks and their everyday practices. As Morse and Munro (2015, p. 357) observe:

Our purpose has also been to show how these are evolving in response to uneven cut-backs across welfare and social services in the UK. The spaces of care created and maintained within our respective museum services were extended and reinforced via new and renewed partnerships with local organisations and services.

Here we can locate a specific role for cultural institutions in combatting social exclusion through the development of community-based partnerships to actively remove sources of disadvantage (Penny, 2017). National Museums Scotland (NMS), for example, provides a shared services hub for all Scottish museums funded through the Scottish Parliament with the remit of 'engaging the hardest to reach' (2021a, 2021b). NMS works

with community networks and wellbeing organisations to deliver mental health and autism support programmes. It now partly measures its impact through wellbeing indicators. Delivering ‘place based’ community wellbeing programmes provides additional sources of funding for resource-poor museums. NMS also seeks to give voice to marginalised groups. Its Young Demonstrators programme, for example, is a way of ensuring that new exhibitions and programmes are youth friendly and is based on a community curator/co-design model (NMS, 2021b). The museum also has a network of academic partnerships to ensure that their exhibitions remain evidence-based (Evans, 2021).

Museums and libraries are not the only types of cultural organisation engaged in social and political action. See for example, the civic role of arts organisations such as the theatre company Slung Low (Inquiry into the Civic Role of Arts Organisations, 2021) or Artworks for Change (2021). Nonetheless, both of the examples above provide illustrations of cultural institutions generating public value through the provision of ‘safe spaces’ for democratic dialogue on difficult social issues and ‘geographies of care’ to help combat social exclusion and give voice to marginalised groups. Strong clues as to the potential role of cultural institutions in building trust at the local scale.

COMMON GROUND—PUBLIC VALUE GOVERNANCE AND THE PROTECTIVE POWER OF DEMOCRACY

This chapter began by identifying concerning evidence of the disconnect between government and citizen reflected in low levels of public trust in our key political institutions and erosion of public confidence in the capacity of governments (of whatever colour) to address community concerns. The ‘protective power of democracy’, as Amartya Sen (1999) calls it, has dissipated as the political class has become more disconnected from the citizenry it serves. This encompasses:

...first, the intrinsic importance of political participation and freedom in human life; second, the instrumental importance of political incentives in keeping governments responsible and accountable; and third, the constructive role of democracy in the formation of values and in the understanding of needs, rights, and duties. (Sen, 1999, p. 11)

Most of the problems of localism that we have encountered in this chapter thus far stem from the persistence of inequality of one form or another that the political class has conspicuously failed to counter. In contrast, effective democracy is shown to be most firmly embedded in creating empowering political and socio-economic conditions that make people both capable and willing to engage in democratic practice as critical citizens. There is compelling evidence to suggest that cultural institutions in times of declining public trust can be an alternative source of community authority for creating public value and enhancing the protective power of democracy. What do we mean by public value governance in this context, and how can it be practised by cultural institutions?

Public value governance offers a broad framework in which to understand the public management challenge in an era of citizen-centric governance and aims at improving the performance legitimacy of government. Mark Moore (1995), who developed the concept, basically argues that public services can add value to society in the same way that private for-profit organisations create value for their shareholders and other stakeholders. By implication, public intervention should be circumscribed by the need to achieve positive social and economic outcomes for the citizenry. Crucially what is and what is not public value should be determined collectively through inclusive deliberation involving elected and appointed government officials, key stakeholders and the public. Public value governance thus represents a significant challenge to both traditional forms of public administration and the dominant form of public management used in Western democracies—new public management (see Table 2.2). The public value approach demands a commitment to goals that are more stretching for public managers than those envisaged under previous management methods (see Table 2.2).

Public managers are tasked with steering networks of deliberation and delivery as well as maintaining the overall health of the system. The questions they must ask of themselves in searching for public value are more challenging and demanding than those of new public management. They are asking more than whether procedures have been followed or targets met but whether their actions are bringing a net benefit to society. Public value governance emphasises the role of reflection, lesson-drawing and continuous adaptation to meet the challenges of efficiency, accountability and effectiveness.

Its strengths lie in its redefinition of how to meet the challenges of collective problem-solving in democratic governance and in its ability to

Table 2.2 Approaches to public management

	<i>Traditional public administration</i>	<i>New public management</i>	<i>Public value governance</i>
Core purpose	Politically provided inputs, services monitored through bureaucratic oversight	Managing inputs and outputs in a way that ensures economy and responsiveness to consumers	The overarching goal is achieving publicly valued outcomes and this in turn involves greater effectiveness in tackling the problems that the public care most about; stretches from policy development to service delivery to system maintenance
Role of managers	To ensure that rules and appropriate procedures are followed	To help define and meet agreed performance targets	To play an active role in steering networks of deliberation and delivery and maintaining the overall capacity of the system
Definition of the public interest	By politicians / experts. Little in the way of public input	Aggregation of individual preferences, in practice captured by senior politicians or managers supported by evidence about customer choice	Individual and public preferences produced through a complex process of interaction which involves deliberative reflection over inputs and opportunity costs
Approach to public service ethos	Public sector has monopoly on service ethos, and all public bodies have it.	Sceptical of public sector ethos (leads to inefficiency and empire building)—favours customer service	No one sector has a monopoly on public service ethos. Maintaining relationships through shared values is seen as essential
Preferred system for service delivery	Hierarchical department or self-regulating profession	Private sector or tightly defined arms-length public agency	Menu of alternatives selected pragmatically and a reflexive approach to intervention mechanisms to achieve outcomes
Contribution to the democratic process	Delivers accountability: competition between elected leaders provides an overarching accountability	Delivers objectives: Limited to setting objectives and checking performance, leaving managers to determine the means	Delivers dialogue which is integral to all that is undertaken, a rolling and continuous process of democratic engagement and exchange between politicians, stakeholders and citizens

point to a motivational force that does not rely on rules or incentives to drive change. People are, it suggests, motivated by their involvement in networks and partnerships, by their relationships with others formed in the context of equal status and mutual learning. The core insight here is that the public realm is different from that of the commercial sector. Governing is not the same as buying and selling goods in a market economy. The distinctiveness of public management comes from advancing valued social, cultural or economic outcomes. The concept of public value is an attempt to create a framework in which judgements about how to achieve valued outcomes can be made as soundly as possible and co-produced with the wider public that is paying for services.

The obstacles to the effective application of public value governance in representative democracies have been well documented elsewhere (Rhodes & Wanna, 2007) and include professional and political resistance, the lack of political will, resource constraints to engage differently and issues of complexity. The notion of public value, so the argument goes, doesn't sit easily with representative democracy as it introduces a concept of public interest that is not determined by the government of the day, but by public servants in consultation with communities and providers. The approach affords public managers with enormous powers that they often do not have the capacity or the legitimacy to wield. These factors, amongst others, have led Francesca Gains and Gerry Stoker (2009, p. 2) to conclude that, 'this new public service contract is likely to be easier to adopt in a local setting'. However, if public value governance is to be successful at the local scale, it needs to be practised as an instrument for enhancing participation in democratic governance (as in the case of community localism) and, with a focus (as human geographers propose), on how the 'local' or other social issues are 'imagined' or understood by local citizens. So how can cultural institutions support public value governance at the local scale?

THE POTENTIAL ROLE OF CULTURAL INSTITUTIONS IN PUBLIC VALUE PRACTICE

As a trusted intermediary between government and the citizen with access to the resources of strong community networks, cultural institutions are uniquely placed to perform four key roles in local public value governance:

1. building political literacy and fostering critical citizens in their areas of expertise;
2. combating ‘truth decay’ in their areas of expertise;
3. providing safe spaces for establishing participatory governance systems and enabling community participation; and,
4. delivering high quality social inclusion programmes of various kinds to help integrate marginalised groups into the community and give voice to their current needs and aspirations for the future.

Two of these putative roles require further explanation.

How can cultural institutions help combat ‘truth decay’? ‘Truth decay’ is defined by the RAND Corporation as the increasing disagreement about facts and analytical interpretations of facts and data; the blurring of the line between opinion and fact; the burgeoning volume, and resulting influence, of opinion and personal experience over fact; and declining trust in formerly respected sources of factual information (Kavanagh & Rich, 2018, p. 1). Given the high level of trust citizens have for cultural institutions they should be publicly funded to provide independent, evidence-based fact checking services in their areas of expertise. Cultural institutions could also deliver public programmes that build the capacity of citizens to discern and refute misinformation, disinformation and malinformation.

It is also proposed that cultural institutions could provide ideal institutional venues for establishing participatory governance systems and enabling community participation, but what would this mean in practice. An ideal-type participatory governance system in this context would be one where a variety of citizen-centred participatory methods (see Table 2.3) are used to solve a local governance problem and bolster the legitimacy of policy outcomes. Cultural institutions would be responsible (and funded) for enabling the design of ‘fit for purpose’ participatory governance systems that recognise the intrinsic democratic value of public participation, integrate representative and participatory instruments of democracy, match engagement methods to engagement purposes, and reach out and empower disaffected citizens (see Evans & Stoker, 2021).

Table 2.3 Participatory governance systems

<i>Spectrum of participation</i>	<i>Purpose</i>	<i>Method</i>	<i>Governance domain</i>
Inform	<i>To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives, opportunities and/or solutions</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Digital information platforms • Gamification • Online forums • Parliamentary discussion papers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy learning • Program and service design and delivery
Consult	<i>To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Open space technology • Govhacks • Gamification • Planning cells • Citizen experience panels • User surveys and focus groups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy design • Policy learning • Program and service delivery
Involve	<i>To work directly with the public throughout the policy process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appreciative Inquiry • Community power networks • User simulation labs • Citizen experience panels 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy, program and service design
Collaborate	<i>To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Co-design, consensus conferences/dialogues, deliberative mapping • Citizen experience panels 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategic decision-making • Policy design • Policy learning • Program and service delivery

(continued)

Table 2.3 (continued)

<i>Spectrum of participation</i>	<i>Purpose</i>	<i>Method</i>	<i>Governance domain</i>
Empower	<i>To directly place decision-making in the hands of the public</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Direct democratic mechanisms such as referenda, the power of recall, community-driven development • Deliberative democratic mechanisms such as mini-publics (citizen assemblies, citizen juries, deliberative polls, participatory appraisal) depending on consequential outcomes • Action learning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategic decision-making • Policy design • Policy learning • Program and service delivery
Self-empowerment	<i>Citizen-led initiatives</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Everyday makers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Civic action

Source: Adapted from IAP2 at <https://www.iap2.org> [accessed 5 July 2021]

BARRIERS TO TRUST BUILDING

In my recent study, we also asked our sample of senior administrators—what are the main barriers to cultural institutions performing a trust-building role between government and citizen? Five main barriers were identified: genuine independence, resources for civic action, community authority and support, disciplinary capability in areas of expertise and broad capability in public engagement.

The thorny issue of independence requires further elaboration here. Cultural institutions that are less reliant on government funding and subject to government interference appear better able to speak truth to power and those dispossessed by power and to engage in protest politics on issues linked to their key mission. The former director of the Queens Museum in New York Laura Raicovich in her book *Culture Strike* draws equal attention to problematic museum funders, trustees and boards. She refers to artist Nan Goldin's efforts to hold major museums—the Metropolitan, the Guggenheim, the Tate Modern, the Louvre—accountable for accepting vast amounts of funding from the Sackler family, mega-donors whose pharmaceutical business was a key driver of the opioid crisis.

Although there is limited evidence available to identify what types of cultural institutions are best able to overcome these barriers and effectively perform this trust-building role, we have 50 years of research that tells us when public participation schemes are likely to succeed. Impact is more probable when the public:

- Can engage (*has the resources, skills and knowledge to participate*)
- Likes to engage (*has a sense of attachment to the issue or institution*)
- Enabled to engage (*is incentivised to participate*)
- Asks to engage (*feels valued*)
- Responds to when they do (*are included on an ongoing basis*)

The CLEAR model provides a useful heuristic for guiding civic action (see Lowndes et al., 2006).

IN CONCLUSION—LESSONS FOR CULTURAL POLICY

Localism has become an important issue in political practice and social scientific interdisciplinary debate with significant implications for the study of cultural policy. This chapter has addressed many of the issues in these debates, but more work is needed, both conceptually and empirically for localism to be considered more than a useful heuristic device. In particular, this requires reconciling differences between the state-centred and spatially rigid public policy and management view of localism with the more fluid understanding of the ‘local’ in human geography. It is argued that a focus on public value creation and participatory governance—provides a fruitful starting point for the development of a reflexive research agenda that seeks to articulate the relationship between localism, governance and the role of cultural institutions in a systematic and meaningful way. Most significantly, this chapter has presented the case for cultural institutions being seen as a site of democratic participation at the local level. However, this will require attention to the barriers highlighted above to ensure that they are expert, inclusive and representative of the communities they serve.

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