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Eastside Projects Public Evaluation Event, Birmingham (27-29 October, 2011).

Symposium Paper.

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‘Anti-Spaces and Ante-Spaces in the Post-Creative City Urban Landscape’

‘Anti-Space’ is a term inspired by a 1968 essay by Robert Morris called ‘Anti-form’. Morris’s short essay was a sort of rationale for what became known as ‘process art’. Using natural or industrial materials, process art was an exemplar movement for collapsing the conditions of art’s commodification – preventing any delimited object and stage of distribution emerging from the process of production. Using industrial locations, Morris used debris or raw material in a seeming random manner, where the materiality of the art work was released from its rationalisation as artistic composition. Opening up the form of the work, physical matter interacted with and enjoined itself to the specific locale of the space, and the air, moisture, walls, floor, and other phenomenal conditions of location, all became internal to the ‘work’. Art as anti-form was a spatial practice, where a given space yielded a location specific expanse of body-material-place interaction. A messy business.

Morris’s essay had a polemical edge. He argued against the ‘functioning idealism’ of dominant trends in contemporary art. By this he meant, among other things, that art-making was all too often a rationalisation of the process of art making, a repetition of a priori forms or materialisation of prior models, ideas, or concepts. Art may have the appearance of the ‘new’ or radical or advanced, but is in fact an ever-evolving variation of the self-same. Morris, rather, talked about “*holding onto process as part of the work.*”⁽¹⁾ If anti-form is about making singular artworks (in this case, acts of art), then anti-space is this as a principle raised to the level of *an organisation*. The space of art becomes an organisational act in a specific urban locale. Resisting a priori templates for ‘exhibition space’, ‘art gallery’, and so on, this act in the process of its physical unfolding discovers the conditions of its own practice. This time, however, the industrial space evokes more than material conditions of labour and the semantics of production in the dispersed materiality of form.

Anti-Space

Artist-run galleries have their immediate origins in the 1960s and the use of non-institutionalised spaces to reconfigure the spatial relation between artistic production, distribution and reception.(2) The term 'artist-run' can mean many different things. Eastside Projects is one space among many that can be seen from London to Berlin. Its main output is exhibitions, but 'exhibition organisation' does not begin to define this gallery as a cultural space. Artist-run galleries exist for all kinds of reasons, some fairly humble, like the low rents, some more interesting, like the potential for multi-purpose 'heterotopic' space. Foucault describes a heterotopia as 'capable of juxtaposing in a single real place several spaces, several sites that are in themselves incompatible'.(3) Eastside uses its space as a series of hybrid overlapping activities, and the synergies between these are as important as the 'content' of any one. Their 'incompatibility' does not, however, emerge in their co-relation but in their disjunctive relation with their urban location. Eastside Projects sits conveniently in a large ex-cabinet making facility. Yet art was never compatible with the production-line values of industrial manufacturing, nor the urban-economics that structured their activity, no matter how much it absorbed its aesthetics.

Eastside Projects bears little relation to the metal bashing shops in the area; it is, rather, more akin to the creative media enterprises around the corner. Many artist-run galleries, whether they realise it or not, operate with the models of business enterprise and entrepreneurship that gradually embedded themselves in the cultural sector from the mid-1980s. By and large the research attention devoted to the business, management and organisational models of artistic production is in inverse proportion to the quality research on exhibitions, art works and their interpretation.(4) The business, management and organisational dimension are interesting, as they are processes that are embedded in the particular space and place of the gallery. When undertaken by the artist, they are not merely a bureaucratic necessity, but become repositioned within the orbit of artistic production. The Eastside Project's *User's Manual* expresses a desire to 'incorporate the methodologies of art making at all levels of the functioning of the organisation'.(5) The organisation is a continual process, a making and remaking of the organisation as (if) art.

The Eastside Projects 'Public Evaluation Event' in October 2010 invited a range of participants to help define the terms by which an artist-run space can be scrutinised and assessed.⁽⁶⁾ For a few days, the Eastside gallery became a space of contested ideas, individual perceptions and personal memories, and also radical uncertainties. The uncertainties largely revolve around the concept of 'evaluation' and the processes of identification, criteria formation, judgement, etc. Where the demands of public policy for transparency and accountability are coextensive with state surveillance and ideological correctness, locating a space for the experimental or open-ended becomes problematic. The cultural politics of the gallery's modus operandi became more apparent as the discussion on 'value' and its methodology of measurement began.

For Eastside Projects, the locus of value is not where it normally is in art exhibition spaces – the 'viewer-object' relation (the various ways in which art objects, their composition and hermeneutic complexity can generate new modes of experience and cognitive reflection, and so on). It is the active ontology of the space itself, a space that has an endogenous and exogenous, intracommunal as well as extracommunal dimensions. It sits in a convenient space, but not co-extensive with the hard industrial labour units around it. Yet it is not Eastside Projects who are 'out of place'. It is the industrial plants, whose material labour has been superseded by the new 'real' economy of service production, communications and technology. Eastside's situation is not an affectation, nor economic opportunism. They are inhabiting the processes of global capital.

Space, place, architecture, location, situation, workers, volunteers, visitors and participants, networks, neighbours and passers-by, universities and colleges, surrounding creative and media enterprises, urban and city agencies, government agencies, are all active agents in Eastside's spatialisation of its activity. Eastside Projects does not just 'have' a location, but is situated and positioned, geo-physically in an urban space whose regimes of change are registered in the gallery's repeated attempts at self-understanding. It is not a public art lab, urban intervention or home base for urban activists, or, at least on the face of it, maintains revolutionary pretensions. It is a temporary exhibition space. And yet, the way this otherwise predictable practice is being carried out, is uncovering the discursive conditions of the spatial production of art.

The concept of value immediately demands (and presupposes) the availability of a non-specific method of measurement, developed prior to the encounter with its object. It demands efficiency, utility, effectiveness and relevance; it wants a clear delineation between normative, causal and predictive, with the 'critical' placed securely in a supporting role. It became clear to many of the Evaluation Event participants that the 'value' of Eastside had to do with the intensity and interaction of its spaces of encounter, the narratives, relationships and conceptual exchange they generated, and that was something that could only be defined with reference to 'the project' (and not, say, this or that exhibition). Through the encounter of the Event, the criterial articulation of the 'project' took many forms, providing an intellectual advance on its central mission as well as a necessary engagement with the contexts of public policy obligation.

For the Event, a reference document of essential statistics was distributed. In it was an outline of Eastside's three-year development, structured as 'Distribution, Operation, Production'. This triumvirate of classical economics did not itself provoke much scrutiny, perhaps as it seemed pragmatic, like the now common 'pragmatism' that relocates art galleries in old industrial facilities, workshops or abandoned warehouses. The symbolic 'industrialisation' of art, of course references avant-garde and neo-avant-garde traditions from Constructivism to post-minimalism, most of whom grappled with the problem of cultural value at the same time a re-inscribing artistic creativity within the frameworks of socially-transformative labour. During the Event, the art collective FREEE staged a collective reading of their Warsaw Manifesto of 2011, entitled 'Economists are Wrong!'(7) The 'collective' reading, however, was shifted to a closed room outside the main congregation, involving only Eastside site staff.

Perhaps this was symbolic of the privatisation of intellectual labour, or an act of solidarity with the gallery 'workers', or a categorical separation of 'producers' from us, the new administrative elites that have assumed the role of the old owners of the means of production. Its strategy of performative alienation left the remaining participants discussing how the discourse of public policy evaluation has so largely abandoned its 'public' purpose and shifted its axes of concern from the socio-ontology of 'the public' into the economic and the abstract spectrum of 'the economy'. With this shift comes an ideological repositioning of 'state' for 'public', which is perhaps deceiving when the state operates 'arm's length' through various layers of state agency, and those agencies are

themselves populated with relatively benign individuals who think they are working for the public good.

When the state itself is not in the public interest, public policy often subverts the true formation of public value, making deceptive the relation between public and private. There are, of course, no singular hermetic realms of life called 'public and private'; both are multivalent and interpenetrative. Many new artist-run galleries are embedded in the evolution of the service-based labour economy and its integration of culture, leisure, commerce and some of the central mechanisms of social reproduction. The economic production of new flexible, imaginative and hyper-mobile subjectivities for a neoliberal globalised order is as relevant for the study of the art world as it is for corporate capital.(8)

The artist has played a significant role in the penetration of global capital into post-industrial urban environments, acting as both signifiers of privileged consumption and stimulating property value inflation. New art galleries play a role alongside cafes and boutiques in the gentrification of urban wastelands or labouring properties now socially obsolete. Positioning art in an explicit economic context is as central to left-wing political thought as to the right. Art is a commodity, exemplar of the principle of exchange, economic abstraction and social alienation; the artist is free economic agent, exemplar of irreducible individuality and common sensibility. Eastside Projects is a 'public' gallery in 'private' facilities (albeit owned by a business entrepreneur with a sense of the 'public good'). Artists and art workers are private actors, forging a career like anyone else. The orders of value that are endemic to contemporary art (the significance, status, critical attention and global reach of individual artists and artworks) is inconceivable without the international art markets, whose functioning is however interrelated with a cultural network of non-profit biennales, philanthropic and charitable enterprises.

In the event, the Eastside Evaluation did not, as supposed, focus on the 'products', operations management or distribution strategy of the gallery. It consistently returned to the question of 'the public'. While advanced in its creative approach, the gallery was facing major questions on its mission vis-à-vis its urban location. The gallery is 'young' – and porous, permeable and embryonic in its form. The exhibitions and activities (production), core curatorial competencies (operations) and public outreach and publicity

(distribution) were not congealed by departmentalised professional interests or proceduralised curatorial strategy. The gallery's *User's Manual* states that 'Eastside Projects seeks to continuously question its status as an organisation and respond to the pressures of becoming an institution' (p.26). What 'becoming an art institution' entailed was a point that raised contrary and equally compelling arguments. Maria Lind asserted that the 'institution' embodied a politically necessary agency, enabling art to locate and represent itself in the public sphere. A purely project-based venture leaves the organisation vulnerable to funders, stakeholders or other, inevitably limited resource-based forces. Others pointed out that the 'institution' is not an organisational framework so much as a series of processes. When it comes to the relation between the endogenous and exogenous possibilities of art in a problematic urban environment, the forces of institutionalisation reduce an openness to contrary possibilities. Both views are compelling. Contemporary art is a profession; it is also a form of anarchy, recognising no law above its own. The gallery space mediates both realities and myths however incommensurable they are.

Artist Space

In the last decade there have been dozens of artist-run galleries in the UK, each established within a specific set of conditions but invariably voicing common expectations about freedom and autonomy, experimentation and transformation, social engagement and/or urban intervention, new collective patterns of production, interdisciplinarity, and so on. Many attract public funding, yet the set up also allows for a more direct market exposure and commercial availability of the artist. It can cut out the middle-man of the dealer or the patronage of mainstream gallery system, perhaps as a liberation from interference or censorship, or competition and expense. In the USA we find countless 'artist-run spaces', in Australia 'artist-run initiatives' (ARIs), in Canada 'artist-run centres' and the range of organisational entities and objectives operating under these terms is enormous.⁽⁹⁾ Artist-run galleries can be 'conservative' in the sense of providing a haven from the politically liberal contemporary art world, or perhaps reintroducing the craft-based working methods and artisanal values of the old renaissance guilds or mediaeval workshops. Contrarily, they can be or begin as a squat or illegal occupation of otherwise abandoned buildings, evading the symbolic order of cultural production and its collusion with global capitalism. Italy's Michelangelo Pistoletto, in his long career, has demonstrated two further models of artist-run galleries, both relevant to our discussion of

Eastside.(10)

At the end of 1967 in New York, where he was living, Pistoletto opened his studio as a space of collaboration, and called it The Zoo. His rationale was articulated in his manifesto, published the following year on the occasion of the Venice Biennale, was called the *Manifesto of Collaboration*. It set out a basic concept for dialogic participation in open space, with the emphasis on ideas generated by spontaneous and emotive interaction, resisting presuppositions. In 1991, Pistoletto purchased an old mill in his birthplace of Biella, Italy, then in 1999 set up the Cittadellarte (officially, the Fondazione Pistoletto). Today Cittadellarte, structured as a series of basic research subjects, continues to 'generate unedited processes of development in diverse fields of culture, production, economics and politics. It devises new methods of material production for art as well as textiles, building and basic manufacturing; it devises new exhibition strategies, forms of public engagement, pedagogy, policy making, and advocacy for alternative political economies of culture. The organisation itself is developed through a process-based ethic – of 'sharing'. Seemingly simple and naive, *sharing* is probably one of the most profound political-organisational problems facing humanity.

These two brief examples in some ways illustrate the twin axes of Eastside Projects, first horizontal and second vertical. Horizontally, Eastside is collaborative space, where a flat administrative structure and routine proximity of all its workers, visitors, partners and artists, demands an emphasis on the momentary dynamics of artistic relationships to determine organisational patterns of behaviour, rather than pre-set procedures; human interaction is fluid and 'sharing' required. As a small-scale venture it needs to construct, activate and maintain provisional networks; it is sustained by interpersonal interaction and intellectual dialogue; it maintains a visibility within, and physical connection with, the street life and mass culture of the city, stimulating a day-to-day concern with emergent sub-cultures, new trends and experiences circulating in the urban world around it. It is as aware of student work, young and unknown artists as well as those who have already gained access to the cycles of art world patronage and publicity.

Vertically, Eastside is patronised by major public funders and partnered with Birmingham City University, gradually developing new models of artistic and curatorial practice and generating the facility for influential thinking on the continued urban regeneration of this

part of the city. The vertical access is, of course, also its interconnection with this art world, and its knowledge of the international communications, consensus, recognition and endorsement of new artists, curators, dealers and institutions. The circulation of ideas, theories and new curatorial strategies in the new global order of art is routed through select media and institutional mechanisms, in a system that is governed by highly strategic approach to 'operations' and 'distribution' and how it selects particular genres of artistic production at any one time for privileged critical attention.

Eastside's *User's Manual* historicises its curatorial-creative production with reference to El Lissitzky's *Abstract Cabinet* of 1926/30 as a seminal exemplar.⁽¹¹⁾ It is a single construct yet hybrid in content, it is both a space and an object, exhibition and intervention, installation and environment. It is mobile, yet engages with a specific location – by creating space, and by event. Innovating new spatial practices, Eastside explores the multivalent, mobile and engaged potential of new art space-making. This involves exploring borders, barriers and thresholds in the public's encounter with art (urban, geo-physical, aesthetic, cognitive and discursive) and this exploration is manifest in the way every exhibition is a dialogue with the previous one over the ontology of the space (and exhibiting artists often leave a work or something else behind after an exhibition). The exhibited art is not simply collated as a display, but arranged as an articulation of the space, where each exhibition functions as an heuristic for extending Eastside's self-understanding. The on-going discourse on the changing conditions of curatorial practice are Eastside's *raison d'être*.

Eastside Projects refers to the gallery in terms of 'narrative space'.⁽¹²⁾ The on-going curatorial discourse does not add up to a series of strategies or 'best practice' objectives, or even 'creativity' as such. Narrative is the means by which Eastside remains aware, phenomenologically, of its urban location. The term 'Eastside' was historically never an official place or cartographically recognised, but emerged as a figment of popular urban narrative. Further, the architecture of the gallery building is left sufficiently exposed to signify its own part in the narrative of West Midlands industrialisation (of progress; of empire). Lastly, as an art project – Eastside Projects is a narrative construct, in the sense that such industrial unit art galleries were a major actor in the political discourse of Creative City urban expansion.

A decade ago, Eastside's immediate vicinity was the new vibrant arts and media quarter that all of us expected to explode with international art ventures and new urban galleries. New Labour's new cultural epoch was just taking off. Billions of pounds of public funding poured into the public cultural sector and universities, British creative industries massively expanded, gaining global recognition; the rapid post-industrialisation of the 1980s had ensured plenty of well-built Victorian-era industrial space was becoming available, and the a massive national investment in urban regeneration allowed local authorities and new cultural entrepreneurs alike to take advantage of this new urban landscape. The owner of Eastside Projects' building (also the owner of nearby Custard Factory) established the SPACE initiative (Society for the Promotion of Artistic and Creative Enterprise), was an exemplar of a new creative realpolitik: art could become aggressive enough to collaborate with business yet maintain its own strategic objectives.(13) It wasn't quite revolution, nonetheless, in limited open urban space we could turn 'art into life', which was as much as the old avant-garde could reasonably have hoped for.

Christopher Frayling, then Chairman of Arts Council England, (Eastside's main sponsors) later called this New Labour first decade, '...a golden age for the arts'.(14) And for labour activists (like the author), working in London in 1997, it is hard not to look back with some nostalgia on the political aspirations of New Labour's "Third Way". Ideologically, New Labour's cultural policy, with its demand that culture be a central catalyst of social justice (in turn, framing urban policy in terms of participation, community, and urban quality of life) was politically unprecedented.(15) Eastside Projects – located in the heart of the stalled dream of transformative cultural quarters and the creative city revolution – is an intellectually strategic space for re-thinking the terms of this recent political history and its narratives, by which we were all politically seduced.

City Space

The current conditions of cultural-urban change are as yet undefined. We face an age of post-World War Two levels of national debt, and yet urban regeneration strategy largely remains underpinned by the same political aspirations. The *Birmingham Big City Plan* (The City Centre Masterplan) is still predicated on 'old-style' billion pound capital

investment. The recent Birmingham City cultural strategy (*Big City Culture 2010-15*) bears the hallmarks of the old Creative City dream.(16)

That cities could be 'creative' cities is possibly an insight that can be attributed to the great American urbanist Jane Jacobs and her book *Cities and the Wealth of Nations* (1985). It was later in the 1980s that Charles Landry and think tank Comedia devised the idea of the Creative City proper, and offered a series of cultural and urban policy and planning propositions, many of which were adopted up and down the UK.(17) Adopted or not, the Creative City idea became a kind of regulative norm for large-scale city development strategy. The original Creative City idea demanded a complete shift in the democratic processes of urban policy making, whereby culture and urban policy would be interconnected, and the whole process of urban development would involve cultural mechanisms and creative decision-making processes. In the event UK cities opted for a more piecemeal approach of successive urban regeneration projects, not attaining to the cohesive unified vision that the Creative City seemed to demand. Many of the new public art forms and cultural spaces that emerged in UK cities between 1997-2007, the year of the 'credit crunch', were most likely either sponsored through an urban regeneration rationale, or through national arts funding mechanisms that demanding social-community engagement.(18) With the radical decline in capital investment, the framework and revenue sources of urban regeneration are no longer secure.

One of the main topics of debate in cultural policy and urban studies circles is therefore the 'decline' of the creative city.(19) Much more than a discussion on the decline of funding for the arts, the debates revolve around the dissolution of culture as a political obligation in public policy, and the belief that art holds out the potential to play a significant role in socio-economic reproduction. So much public policy fails when confronted with the morass of complexity that is the urban environment, with its processes of demographic change, lifestyle and leisure behaviours, shifting patterns of family life, social poverty and crime, immigration and the rise of religion, and the general decline in the physical infrastructure. We may still be living out of the old avant-garde dream, but it's not fantasy to assume that art possesses the intellectual resources to contribute to thinking and practice on the relation between the political and the public.

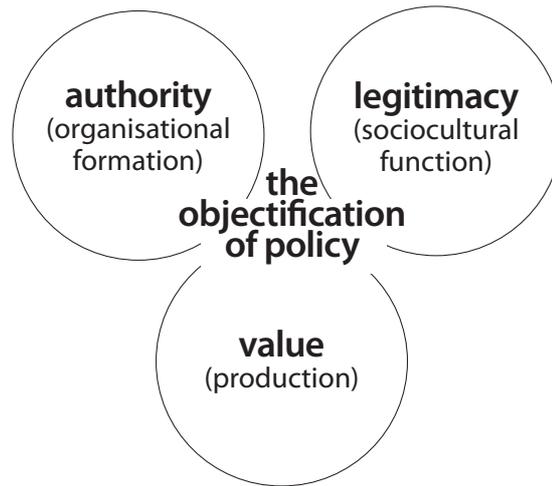
As the trajectory of Evaluation Event discussions directed us, this must start with an understanding of the political formation of culture as a policy phenomena – under New

Labour, public culture became heavily mediated by public policy. 'Public culture' is an interesting term, as if culture could somehow also be 'private culture', which makes little sense. The term private is self-evident, yet far more diverse and socially differentiated (and globalised) than public. Yet it is the 'public' that is conceptually problematic. Eastside Projects requires a three-day event with multiple participants from across the cultural-educational spectrum, and yet the concept 'public' still remained opaque.

Also opaque remained Eastside's 'role' in its urban location. In recent city boundary changes Eastside Projects finds itself in Digbeth and not Eastside. The art space is physically marginalised, cartographically displaced, possibly to be dwarfed by a culture-oriented Big City expansion to the north-east, with its Birmingham Creative City initiative and proposed 'museum quarter'.⁽²⁰⁾ The gallery's space is not a constitutive part of the urban place of Digbeth, where the expansion of creative industries stalled. Urban policy is currently in a state of profound hesitancy, where a hybrid Coalition Government is working to build, (with no obligation to any one party manifesto), a notional 'Big Society'. The promised Big Society, spearheaded by a new Cabinet level Office for Civil Society, is grounded on the new Localism Bill (2010) and a policy commitment to radical decentralisation.⁽²¹⁾ The motives appear to be both a radical reduction in public sector funding and an empowerment of city-based urban governance. The specific conditions for urban development are yet to be consolidated, but it is clear that urban space will become animated by even more private interests and absent speculators.

Policy Space

The 'public' context of Eastside is most vividly determined by its public policy appropriation: what it is to be the subject of a public value evaluation. To be an object of policy, is to be a mediator of its need to demonstrate politically-inflected public value, legitimacy and authority and, as public policy, is a means through which the state maintains and develops its own claims and maintenance of power. The state's own value, legitimacy and authority are at stake in these three basic conditions of public policy objectivity. These terms are how the policy mentality (in a variety of discursive forms) configures the arts organisation as a proper object of public service.



Eastside's evaluation task remains to determine what it is, as a policy construct (as the objectification of public value, becoming a figment of the policy imaginary, or medium of the political aesthetics of the state). What is perplexing is that we are living in the space between one political regime and another, where a major political project concerning the public, society and the city is in progress. And yet, culturally (and in the arts) our terms of reference are replete with the aspirations of the last regime.

Throughout New Labour's tenure, both major funding agencies and Government – ironically perhaps – affirmed the 'autonomy' of the arts, and denying the political invasion of policy into artistic production itself. High profile policy statements like *Government and the Value of Culture* of 2004 (22), proclaimed art and culture to have 'intrinsic value', warning public servants of the illusions of evidence-based measurement for public policy evaluation. However, it stated 'We lack convincing language and political arguments for how culture lies at the heart of a healthy society'(23).

In the absence of such basic requirements, culture had little defence. The term 'value' was deployed in many ways and could be deceiving. A public evaluation of a funded gallery would not really concern the value of the art, whether intellectual, historical or aesthetic. Evaluation was usually interested in the extent of the gallery's participation in the processes that articulate authority and legitimacy: the organisational management of production, and the socio-economic role of the gallery. Value is predicated on certain approaches to management and organisational control, where procedures of management ensure outputs that can be recognised within the frameworks of tabulated public policy expectation. Categorical separation of the 'form' of the institution from its

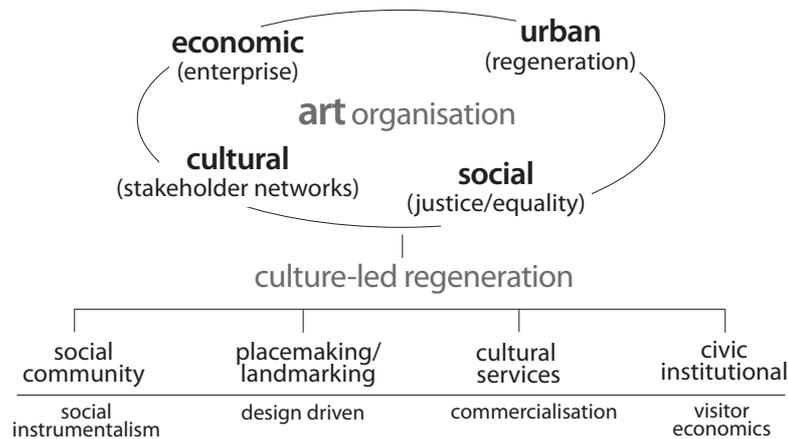
'role' and these from the 'content' of its cultural or creative practice may seem logical; but this has consequences. One of the interesting aspects of Eastside Projects – perhaps as it was born at the close of the New Labour policy regime – is that a desire to 'incorporate the methodologies of art making at all levels of the functioning of the organisation' would ultimately subvert required category distinctions.

The policy discourse on public value in part emerged from New Labour's early adaptation of America's New Public Management practices. Where historical-institutional norms of public life were rapidly replaced by management and fiscal arrangements derived from the corporate world, 'public' value had to be built back into the framework via extensive policy guidelines (featured as post-facto evaluation mechanisms). There were high level political forces at work, with HM Treasury's bible of public evaluation, *The Green Book*, the 'public service agreements' that hammered these principles into specific directives for each public agency, the further elaboration of these principles by the agencies themselves (cf. DCMS's admirable *The White Book* framework of 2004), and the cascading stream of politically-inspired terminology that even from around 2002 inhabited an evolving phenomenon that later became known as 'audit culture'.⁽²⁴⁾ Audit culture was highly sophisticated and articulate; but its evaluation mechanisms were circuitous and self-perpetuating. Ultimately they perpetuated only the public agencies empowered to produce and use them.

The bureaucratic rationality of audit culture had its own ontology of space and time. Ideologically it was difficult to combat, as it was always framed in the language of 'enablement', empowerment and of course was a precondition of public funds. The real complexity of culture demanded different spatio-temporal coordinates, as mediator of global shifts in contemporary art and the urban landscape of the creative city. The framework maintained by audit culture was that of public service provider, prescribing the various routes to the socio-economic impact required to affirm legitimacy.

The 'virtuous' art organisation in this policy mindset was exemplified the new energetic cultural entrepreneurialism of creative enterprise small business management. It maintained a suitably productive network of partners and collaborations, was strategically directed within a given regeneration framework, and open to outreach, participation and new beneficiaries. The regeneration framework may have been explicit or not, but audit

culture encouraged one of four pathways to art organisational development: neighbourhood and community involvement, collaboration with urban planning and design, contribution to the city visitor economy or, preserving a certain autonomy, operating as a cultural service provider (which meant you could do things the old way, while adding a café, gift shop and other amenities).



The framing of art institutional life as ‘cultural service provision’ enabled a steady but intellectually substantial shift in the language, reference points and professional interests of cultural workers. The processes of quasi-commercialisation generated an organisational hyperactivity. Echoing the overproduction of their public agency overseers, they extended into commissioning, project management; research, evaluation and reviewing; social space-outdoor projects; community liaison/international networks, retail, hospitality, catering; games, entertainments; educational collaborations, and so on. It is easy to criticise the admirable range of capabilities accrued by arts organizations during these years. On reflection, however, it seems that a rank compliance with the demands for a public service provision did not increase any galleries long-term security; service providers, after all, appear and disappear with the cycle of supply and demand.

Audit culture ensured that the organisational formations of public culture never exceeded its ability to monitor them, which means that organisational innovation was only substantially developed on the level of service provision itself. Experimental or highly innovative models of production, operation or distribution was kept to a minimum. Compare, for example, arts organisations with creative and media ventures: their administrative systems, office environments and management hierarchies are very conservative.

Audit culture ensured that arts organisations look more like the offices of a Government quango, than creative studios. Sociologists Paul DiMaggio, back in the early 1980s, noted the phenomena of ‘institutional isomorphism’ in US arts organisations.⁽²⁵⁾ The organisations under research observation gradually morphed into, and often replicated, the shape of sponsors (whether funders or government agency, or even of professional exemplars or competitors in the field). The essential stimulants of isomorphism are dependency, centralisation of resource supply, uncertainty, competition, and professionalisation. Each provides essential rationales for making the organisation compatible with its professional field of interests, its market or public constituency, or sponsoring agencies.

Ante-Space

Emerging from the fading narrative of creative city urban regeneration, geographically displaced and operating in a climate of political ambiguity, Eastside Projects has developed an organisational self-awareness. It has avoided the policy-induced syndrome of hyperactivity, concentrating on a limited range of activities. Its space is an anti-space, where a concentration on the active ontology of the space itself means that the processes of policy objectification have not taken hold, as what were meant to be procedures and administrative routine are held as processes through which the conditions of practice are continually sought, defined and engaged. Eastside’s intention to work the ‘methodologies of art making’ through all dimensions of the organisation (even if that’s only an intellectual rationale, not a concrete practice) has prevented an institutionalised compartmentalisation of management and production, operations and distribution. The anti-space dynamics of spatial production via the constant interrogation of the conditions of curatorial practice is their hallmark.

However, major questions are emerging in the context of new public policy narratives of public value. The coming “Big Society” will be qualitatively different from the old Creative City, even if New Labour audit culture returns. Eastside needs to continue to develop its concept of space and its spatial practice, beyond the anti-space dynamics of the urban-situated artist-run gallery.

The anthropologist Marc Augé, after Henri Lefebvre, used the phrase ‘non-place’ [non-lieux] to define the many new types of space that have developed under ‘supermodernity’

(advanced service industry economies).(26) In many ways, Augé's non-places are parallel with our 'anti-space' idea. His examples are airports, superstores, international hotel chains, and other spaces of non-production service management and consumption. As spaces they were without the usual characteristics of 'places' – without substantive identity, actual material production and social community. They are spatialised processes, continuously animated (and in principle, mobile) routes through which dynamic global capital is active. Non-place created its own locale, its own transitory community, a community of super-consciousness. New 'warehouse style' art galleries could be added to Augé's list of generic place-less spaces. They may be large, solid, works of industrial architecture. But as facilities through which the global capital of art travels, they participate in the same markets, exhibit the same big-name international celebrities and iconic works of art, sell the same branded goods, use the same curatorial strategies, even nearby residents experience the spaces as cultural tourists. Inside, you know where you are, but it's a space not a place.

Eastside Projects, being a conduit of a globalised art world, does create a space of an exclusive yet generic experience. Digbeth is still scattered with metal workshops and small industrial units, and stepping off Heath Mill Lane into the gallery can feel like entering a non-space. Yet Eastside is not Augé's non-place. It's a kind of inversion of non-place, where the global is made local and not vice versa. The exclusivity of global art space is worked into a spatial practice of localisation, where the global art world becomes a space-specific (if provisional) global art public. In doing so it opens the possibility in Digbeth for an urban public for art. Its task is not simply making a space for art exhibitions, but using art exhibitions as a means for thinking about the space as the space rehearses ways for thinking about the place. The problematic place of Eastside-Digbeth is the problematic of the post-creative city, an urban landscape of spaces whose definitive relation is incomplete and unresolved. With Eastside Projects, the big issue is not art or culture, it is the relation between 'public' and 'urban'.

Notes

1. Morris, R. (1968) 'Anti-Space', in Robert Morris (1993) *Continuous Project Altered Daily: the Writings of Robert Morris*, MIT Press: 41-51.
2. For one of the very first studies on this subject, see: Batia, S. (1979) 'Artist-Run Galleries-A Contemporary Institutional Change in the Visual Arts', *Qualitative Sociology*, 2(1): 3-28.

3. Michel Foucault, M. (1984) 'Of Other Spaces' ['Des Espace Autres'] Architecture /Mouvement/ Continuité, October: now available at <http://www.foucault.info/documents/heteroTopia/foucault.heteroTopia.en.html>
See also Cooke, J. (2006) 'Heterotopia: art ephemera, libraries and alternative space', *Art Documentation*, 25(2), pp. 37-40.
4. See: Joy, A. (2000) 'Art, works of art, and the discourse of fine art: Between art worlds and art markets', *Research in Consumer Behaviour*, 9, 71–102; Joy, A., & Sherry, J.F. (2003) 'Disentangling the paradoxical alliance between art market and art world', *Consumption, Markets and Culture*, 6, 155–181
5. Bloor, S. & T., Condorelli, C., Claxton, R., Wade, G. (2011) *Eastside Projects User's Manual* (Draft Four), Birmingham: Eastside Projects.
6. *Eastside Projects Public Evaluation Event, Thursday 27 to Saturday 29 October 2011*, Birmingham: Eastside Projects.
7. The FREEE Art Collective (2011) *Economists Are Wrong! The Warsaw Manifesto*: www.freee.org.uk/
8. For a classic article on this context, see: Harvey, D. (1989) 'From Managerialism to Entrepreneurialism: the transformation of urban governance in late capitalism', *Geografiska Annaler* 71B(1): 3–17. For some reason major studies: Philip Cooke and Luciana Lazzarotti, eds. (2008) *Creative Cities, Cultural Clusters and Local Economic Development* (Cheltenham, UK: Edward Elgar); Lily Kong and Justin O'Connor, eds. (2009) *Creative Economies, Creative Cities* (London: Springer); Tim Edensor, Deborah Leslie, Steve Millington and Norma M. Rantisi, eds. (2010) *Spaces of Vernacular Creativity: rethinking the cultural economy* (London: Routledge).
9. Canada seems to have produced the most research on artist-run galleries (or centres, in Canada); see particularly: Bronson, A.A. (1983) 'The Humiliation of the Bureaucrat: Artist-Run Centres as Museums by Artists', in A. A. Bronson and P. Gale, eds. *Museums by Artists*, Art Metropole, Toronto: 29-37; Tremblay, D.-G., & Pilati, T. (2007) 'Tohu and artist-run centres in Montreal: Contributions to the creative city?', *Canadian Journal of Regional Science*, 30, 337–356; Blessi, G.T., Sacco, P.L. & Pilati, T. (2011) 'Independent artist-run centres: an empirical analysis of the Montreal non-profit visual arts field', *Cultural Trends*, 20:2, 141-166.
10. For a biographical information see <http://www.pistoletto.it/>; (accessed 29/02/12); for Cittadellarte: <http://www.cittadellarte.it/info.php> (accessed 29/02/12)
11. *Eastside Projects User's Manual*: 31.
12. *Eastside Projects User's Manual*: 25.
13. Grey, B. (2002) 'Arts/Media led Regeneration', M. Stratton ed. in *Industrial Buildings: Conservation and Regeneration*, [introduced by HRH The Prince of Wales], London: E & FN Spon. At the time of this publication SPACE was managing around eleven projects in providing space for creative-innovative and cultural enterprises.
14. Quoted in: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/politics/2007/may/02/politicsandthearts.artsfunding1>. Stuart Jeffries, 'So How Did He Do?': (accessed 23/10/11).
15. SEE the double issue of *Cultural Trends* (based on papers given at the November 2010 Cultural Trends Conference, "A Golden Age"? Reflections on New Labour's Cultural Policy and its Post- Recession Legacy, Institute of Archaeology, University College London: *Cultural Trends*, Vol. 20, Nos. 3–4, September–December 2011, 229.
16. *Birmingham Big City Plan: The City Centre Masterplan for Birmingham*, Birmingham City Council (Marketing itself as the most ambitious, far-reaching development project in the UK, and seeks to define how more than 800 hectares of land in the city centre); Birmingham Cultural Partnership (2010) *Big City Culture 2010-15: Birmingham's Cultural Strategy*, Birmingham City Council.
17. C. Landry (2009) *The Creative City: A Toolkit for Urban Innovators*, London: Comedia/Earthscan. For an international example relevant to this chapter, see City of Amsterdam's Bureau Broedplaatsen and its partners (2008) *Building the basis for a creative Amsterdam Metropolitan Area: Art Factories Programme 2008-2012*, City of Amsterdam.
18. For a central reference, see DCMS (2004a) *Culture at the Heart of Regeneration*, London: Department of Culture, Media and Sport/ Stationery Office.
19. For example, 'Creative City Limits' (sponsored by AHRC, CABE and Urban Lab and hosted

by University College London): <http://creativecitylimits.wordpress.com/>: accessed 10/11/11.

20. Birmingham Creative City museum quarter proposal: see:

<https://docs.google.com/file/d/0B3OX4ags5zyuMmM3YmFhYjltZDFkYi00YTg5LTgzNmEtZmZjZjcwY2QxZTM1/edit?hl=en&pli=1>

21. Launched in the Conservative Party Manifesto of 2010, The Big Society is localism and devolution, powers for Third Sector, cooperative and mutual companies. See: <http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/big-society> (accessed 20/01/12).

22. Jowell, T. (2004) *Government and the Value of Culture*, London: DCMS/Stationary Office. For a similar argument, see also Jowell, T. (2005) *Better Places to Live: Government, Identity and the Value of the Historic and Built Environment*, London: DCMS/Stationery Office.

23. *Government and the Value of Culture*: 8.

24. For background, see: Holden, J./DEMOS (2004) 'Capturing Cultural Value: How culture has become a tool of government policy', London: DEMOS (following a high profile public conference organized by Holden in 2003 and called *Valuing Culture*.). HM Treasury's *Green Book*, though having its roots in John Major's reform of treasury and public service funding, its New Labour version of 2003 generated the DCMS's 2004 publication, *The White Book: DCMS Guidance on Appraisal and Evaluation of Projects, Programmes and Policies*, London: DCMS. On the matter of New Public Management (NPM) thinking in government see the Work Foundation's useful 2006 publication *Public value, politics and public management: A literature review* (Blaug, R., Horner, L. and Lekhi, R.), London: The Work Foundation.

25. P. J. DiMaggio & W. Powell, "The iron cage revisited" institutional isomorphism and collective rationality in organizational fields", *American Sociological Review*, 48 (1983), 147-60.

26. Augé, M. (1995) *Non-Places: Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity*, London: Verso.