Learning from The Drum

Towards a decolonization of the arts in the UK

By Davinia Louise Gregory

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Sociology

Department of Sociology,
University of Warwick

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So much of life has happened in these four years, and this really does feel like the end of a great era. Since 2015, The Drum has collapsed, closed, ‘slept’ and reopened, going from Black leadership to Black ownership. I am amazed at the tenacity and strength of the communities involved, and glad that there is a happy ending to the PhD. The story of TD so far has taught me that what seems like an ending, need not be one. The Black British community is ever-evolving (indeed, so is the very definition of Blackness), as are our relationships with government institutions. We have come so far, even in the last 20 years. I feel privileged to have had the opportunity to map a little of the journey in this thesis and look forward to tracking what happens next.

I had a very eventful PhD. The Drum’s closure six months into the process made for an unexpected, emotionally turbulent period of rather rushed fieldwork. It also meant that I bonded intensely with my colleagues there. I owe them a wealth of credit for their generosity in including me at what was an incredibly difficult time for them, and for taking an interest in my work. Drum staff, the Purpose chapter is written with conviction about you all; I witnessed your passion for the organization first-hand, and it was infectious. I learned from you what it is to put my life behind a cause I believe in, and to insist on using my talents to make positive change to the wider community, whatever the odds. I cannot name individuals because of ethics, but the teamwork I experienced when working to preserve the archive and when packing up as the organisation closed its doors, is something I will always remember. When you said that The Drum was like a family, I can attest to your being correct. Thank you for allowing me to be a part of it for a while. I also owe an extensive debt of gratitude to the staff of the archives at the Library of Birmingham, especially Corinna Rayner, who was incredibly supportive in helping us to house The Drum’s archive and allowing me special access to it.

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This thesis is dedicated to the networks of support that make things happen, the communities that are too often denied when the pinnacle of achievement is reached. This piece of work exists because of all of us.

Davinia.
Declaration

I declare that this thesis is all my own work and has not been submitted for a degree at any other university.

Davinia L. Gregory

Date: 30 September, 2019

Thesis Abstract
The Drum, in Birmingham UK (1995-2016) was the last in a succession of Black-led community arts centres to open in England in the wake of the Black Arts Movement of the 1960s-80s. It was also the last to remain open in the wake of the Global Financial Crisis and the subsequent fiscal austerity measures that cut funding to the arts and local governments in the UK from 2010 onwards. On paper, it was created to provide an inclusive creative space for the city’s African, Caribbean and South Asian populations, at a time when mainstream cultural organizations were not doing so. Additionally, it was intended as an economically regenerative project for the ‘deprived’ area of Newtown in North Birmingham when, in the wake of the early 90s recession, many city councils were pump-priming private sector investment using cultural projects. In practice however, its leadership aimed to create a space for building a community of communities in practical terms, and a space where those communities could establish creative and intellectual self-confidence. In March 2016, six months into this PhD and, incidentally, halfway through Arts Council England’s Creative Case for Diversity, The Drum organization announced that it had gone into voluntary liquidation, and finally closed on June 30th 2016. During this time, institutional ethnography participant observation and interviews were being conducted at The Drum for this project.

The dissonance between diversity as written in policy and promoted by policy makers, and cultural / racial / socioeconomic diversity as lived in practice is explored in this thesis. The research also sheds light on practices and processes that can lead to the closure of Black led arts organizations in a system where public funding is the norm. Each significant element that contributed to The Drum’s closure is examined, and evidence of what caused an organization’s demise is provided. This is the first piece of research to fully document the closure, aftermath and legacy creation of a Black-led arts organization; the first empirical analysis of what happens at this point of stress. Such closures often happen quickly and are complex. They are sometimes documented after the fact using document analysis and archival material. However, this empirical data-rich analysis of what happens in real time when an organization implodes is important because it bridges the gap between what policy documents say about the role and function of cultural diversity in the arts and what happens (and is needed) on the ground.

Developments in cultural policy are examined through the lens of sociology of Race. Seeing that very little has materially changed in the way that arts organisations work toward racial equality in Britain, it suggests new directions based on empirical evidence. It asks why and how this can be changed, as many others have done. Moreover, it asks what Black arts is in Britain in 2019, what its purpose and future is, and how far physical buildings are needed for it to meet its true remit. This thesis is likely to serve as a helpful resource for leaders and funders of arts organizations.

List of Abbreviations (Alphabetically)

ACE…………………………………………………………………………………………… Arts Council England
1. Welcome
1.1 Introduction

Welcome to The Drum.

The Drum (TD) in UK Birmingham (1995-2016) was established as an Black-led arts hub. It was the last in a succession of Black-led community arts centres to open in England in the wake of the Black Arts Movement of the 1960s-80s. When I arrived there, I could feel it. It was unlike any arts institution I had worked in before. Culturally, there was something familiar about it, and I exhaled for an indefinable reason in the same way I do when I step into an elderly Caribbean lady’s living room, or when I step off the plane in Jamaica. It did not feel like home, per se; in many ways it was less familiar to me than the National Portrait Gallery or the V&A, where I have worked. But there was a feeling of knowing the place innately and intimately; a recognition that I don’t experience in those other places. I tried to unpack this in my research journal, to figure out what made it so. As time went by, I realised that it was the subtle reminders of generations of my family; traces of familiarity that I have internalised and forgotten over the years.

As my Drum-based supervisor showed me around on my first day, I noted several of these reminders. The huge red metal heaters used to warm the office could only be described as its most distinctive features. Conversation sometimes centred on them – a Drum-specific
adaptation of stereotypical British weather talk. Days requiring more heat from them were
decried as write-offs weather-wise. Certain colleagues commandeered a heater to themselves
at all times, which was seen as an endearing quirk. Eventually, the CEO explained to me that
the heaters were necessary because corners had been cut with insulation during the original
building project, citing such short term thinking as one reason for the organization’s
haemorrhaging money. However, the fact that they made the Drum’s office the warmest that I
had ever worked in, as well as the form that they took – electric imitations of cumbersome gas
heaters with glowing red elements and direct, harsh heat – was reminiscent of houses inhabited
by diasporic people from my grandparents’ generation. By the time I was a child in the 1980s,
glowing gas heaters had replaced the iconic paraffin heaters that older South Asians and West
Indians had previously used to supplement central heating, to make the English winters
bearable. On walking into The Drum’s office I was instantly nine years old again, feeling
terrible about narrowly having escaped burning down my grandparents’ house after having left
a towel over a glowing gas heater to dry – just one instance of a late 20th century second
generation child not understanding the contraptions of adaptation clung to by the older
generation.

I shook myself out of this memory and followed Ian to the Drum’s kitchen. Instead of the tea,
coffee and occasional biscuit found in the kitchens of offices that I had previously worked in,
there was a generous supply of no-frills Kingsmill wholemeal bread and jam which, I was to
discover, was fondly referred to by staff as “Drum Toast”. There was something homely and
familiar about the simultaneous unsophistication and generosity of this, even and perhaps
especially in the face of the organization’s near bankruptcy. We moved out of the kitchen and
Ian pointed out the ladies’ staff toilets for my convenience. An intensely familiar, hitherto
forgotten smell hit me as soon as I entered. They smelled like my grandmothers’ bathroom –
a mixture of bouquet scented Zoflora, toilet Bloo and original imperial leather soap (“We use
Zoflora to hide the smell of bleach Davinia – OK?” “Yes Grandma.” I still hate the smell of
bleach-based detergent in a bathroom. It smells… unfinished). The smell of that mixture of
bathroom products, Drum Toast generosity, and the huge retro heaters represented for me a
focus on warmth (in both senses) and fragrant cleanliness. They were what novelist Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie has referred to as ‘echoes of the Global South’ (Adichie, 2009). For a second-generation diasporic person who has always been removed from the
ancestral “home” from whence these echoes originate, they often appear as traces of
inexplicable familiarity, sparking instant comfort. Through travel I have learned that many of
these traces (for example an entrenched habit of leaving one’s shoes at the door of the home, a square of muslin over the kitchen tap, a curl of orange or lemon peel in the kitchen sink, a bowl or jug in the bathroom for washing, the use of a flannel or rag in the bath or shower, a little Dettol for corporeal use) either are, or were once, common across the Global South. They often appear unexpectedly within otherwise completely westernised diasporic homes as quirks that are recognised as familiar to other people with distant roots elsewhere; serving as memories of previous generations’ practicalities that became, a generation ago, traditions unique to those from warmer climes.

Expected in the home but certainly not at work, these traces of personal and family histories are surprising oases in an office environment today. This is the pleasant novelty of working in Black-coded space as a person racialized as Black, with a resultant Black subjectivity from which to see the world. The feeling of being in a place that reflects you in this way is akin to the relaxation of a muscle that you did not know was tensed. It gives the same feeling as suddenly being in the ethnic majority – a momentary release, before beginning to worry about other codes of identity than the sticky sign of Race; a sign that requires a person to pre-emptively counteract the possible projection of others’ fears of the unknown onto them, with overcompensation, withdrawal or defensiveness. Of course when the most obvious perceived barrier of Race is removed it is quickly replaced by others, because we human beings identify ourselves in relation and opposition to each other. However the release from that particular form of self-consciousness is an important one precisely because it is so rare in a multi-ethnic society in which the person in question belongs to an ethnic minority, and in which that status frequently sets them at a disadvantage when it comes to having their voice heard. That release is essentially the increased hope of finding compassion and connection with others in the workplace, and indeed a connection to the place itself, not because of a perceived similarity, but because of freedom from the frequently encountered immediate assumption of absolute difference. This taught me that in the contemporary world of hybrid identities characterized by networks (online and otherwise) there is a clear need for places like the Drum as options for diasporic peoples in multicultural societies, not only for engagement with the arts as audiences.

1 Race has been described as a sticky sign by many sociologists. Anoop Nayak in Solomos and Murji’s Racialization: Theory and Practice writes: “The process of racialization, that is the application of racialized ‘essences’ to everyday phenomena, enables Race to operate as a ‘sticky’ sign that magically adheres itself to bodies, places, and a whole host of social activities.” (2005, p.142)
but also as places of work for those who intend to build careers in arts administration. These places can serve as nodes of resistance, as well as the aforementioned release, but how do they fit within the broader world of the arts in the UK? What is their place?

Fig. 1.2. One of TD’s signature red storage heaters, in-situ in the office. Photograph taken by Davinia Gregory, March 2016.
The Drum (TD) was the last of the (political or Afro-Caribbean) Black-led community arts centres to open in the wake of the 1980s Black-arts movement. It was also the last to remain open in the wake of the Global Financial Crisis and the subsequent fiscal austerity measures that cut funding to the arts and local governments in the UK from 2010 onwards. It was first established as part of a series of ventures, endorsed and part-funded by Birmingham’s City Council, that were intended to achieve social and economic gains for Birmingham by pumpprime private sector spending and investment. On paper, it was created to provide an inclusive creative space for the city’s African, Caribbean and South Asian populations at a time when mainstream cultural organizations were not doing so. Additionally, it was intended as an economically regenerative project for the ‘deprived’ area of Newtown in North Birmingham when, in the wake of the early 90s recession, many city councils were pumpprime private sector investment using cultural projects. In practice however, its leadership aimed to create a space for building a community of communities in practical terms, and a space where those communities could establish creative and intellectual self-confidence. In March 2016, six months into this PhD and, incidentally, halfway through Arts Council England’s *Creative Case for Diversity*, The Drum organization announced that it had gone into voluntary liquidation, and finally closed on June 30th 2016. During this time, institutional ethnography participant observation and interviews were being conducted at The Drum for this project.
1.2 The shifty terminology of Blackness in *Learning from The Drum*

An important distinction must be made here. Throughout its lifespan, TD existed as a BAME space, with different races and cultures coming into focus at different moments. However, the analysis of this thesis centres UK Afro-Caribbean, working and lower-middle-class Blackness. Unlike many debates over leadership and belonging by TD’s stakeholders toward the end of its lifespan, this thesis does not primarily seek to answer the question ‘what is the black in black arts?’. Rather, it is in part about the effect of BAME-ness on UK Afro-Caribbean Black people, and on a particular African diasporic experience of the arts in this BAME space. *Position’s Section 3.2 Position in The World | or | Being Called “Nigger!” in Africa* for explains the reasons for centring anti-blackness, and explains that this distinction was driven by the research field; by the interview sample that produced the bulk of the data, and by my participant observation at TD and of a changing world, during the last three months of its lifespan. Nevertheless, political Blackness, BAME-ness and Pan African blackness are often referred to in the chapters that follow. This is because part of the thesis’ analysis is of separation and solidarity with other racialized groups in the context of arts administration work, building community and the resisting oppression wrought by white supremacy. While I centre Afro-Caribbean Black people in this particular piece of work therefore, I do not forget the vital work of people of continental African and South Asian heritage to TD’s programming and leadership, board of directors, and audiences. Their work is considered for its effects on the community in question. Future research, either by myself or other scholars, may build on this thesis by seeking to centre their contributions to and experiences of TD. It is testament to the extensive scope of TD, incredibly difficult to achieve, that the diversity of its work and impact cannot be contained in one PhD thesis.

In practical terms, this diverse program and the linkages between community groups that it fostered, necessitates some slippage between the different meanings of the term ‘black’ that have been used over the years in this context. For the purposes of clarity then, in this thesis four types of ‘Black’ will be used. *Political Blackness* or BAME-ness will be used where I refer to solidarity between people of African and South Asian descent, while simple ‘Blackness’ refers to the conflation of African diasporic and African continental Blackness that occurs through racialization. Largely outside of majority black countries. Meanwhile, ‘Afro-Caribbean Blackness’ refers specifically to people from the double diaspora of Africa-
to-Caribbean-to Britain and ‘Pan African Blackness’ refers to strategic essentialism between people of African descent.

Some of the confusion around the term black during the research for the thesis, was due to the fact that TD did not specify what was meant by its original label ‘Black’. When I mention ‘black’ in TD’s original label, (for example, in Location’s Section 5.2.2 The Problem with Newtown: Programming for its population), this also means political Blackness.

### 1.3 Timetable of The Drum

Below is a timeline of the way that TD developed, according to the interview and archival data for this thesis:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1980s</td>
<td><strong>Mobile touring company.</strong> The organisation that later became known as TD was operating as a mobile cultural events / arts programming group, out of several temporary offices, at The Cave and Unit 206 of the Big Peg in Birmingham (See Section 4.2.1 of Purpose: ‘The Drum’s Artistic Policy’ and Location’s section 5.1 ‘Introduction’). <strong>Pre-existing cultural organisations in Birmingham.</strong> Meanwhile, several established grass-roots, community-funded, black-led cultural organizations existed in Birmingham. In ethnographic conversations during fieldwork, TD’s building, with its national funding and reputation was sometimes linked with the eventual closure of these pre-existing organizations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1992</td>
<td><strong>Birmingham City Challenge funding competition won.</strong> By the 1990s it had become clear to the programmers that they needed premises of their own. In the face of the funding shortages of the early 1990s recession, they applied for the funding available as part of the Birmingham City Challenge project, which was connected to the redevelopment of the Aston Hippodrome in Newtown. This is mentioned in <em>Purpose, Location and Relationships</em>: See sections 4.1, 5.1 and 6.4.1.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 1995-6 | **Building opens.** After this TD struggles financially for a number of years. The building continues to be completed in stages. Archival research gave evidence of this. An example is to be found in the document *The Quantity surveyor’s report on tender negotiation with John Sisk & Sons, 30th May 1996*:  

> “Due mainly to funding problems, the client was unable to issue a letter of intent to John Sisk, and there followed numerous discussions with the contractor and design team to investigate money savings and constructing the project in phases. Despite this, the client was unable to secure the necessary finance or support and the project was effectively put on hold. Following the Clients successful bid for a National Lottery grant in 1996, Edmond Shipway received an instruction from Associated Architects to reopen discussions with John Sisk to negotiate a revised contract sum based on proposed start on site date of late July 1996.” (Sisk & Sons, 1996: 1)  

At this point, TD was also referred to (largely on official documents) as Newtown Cultural Centre, which led in part, to Chapter 5 of this thesis being entitled *Location*. |
Although it later became a national hub for BAME arts and culture, it was also intended at this point to ‘raise the cultural profile of this city and [bring about] the revitalization of Newtown’ (See Fig. 1.3.9).

1997 **Stage 2 of the build revised.** Stage 2 is revised on 22nd December 1997. The remaining work at this point is the fit-out and equipment. By all accounts, there is an awful lot left to do. The total spend allowance for this by Feb 1998 is to be £504,090. So, the building work is to take place in phases. In the meantime, they are running events and paying staff also. See fig 1.3.8 for a table of the first few years’ running costs, sourced from TD archive, Box 11.

2004 **Drum goes into ACE Recovery.** This is an economic and organizational recovery intervention by ACE, aimed at making the organization economically viable in years to come. Staff members remember this period as one of team building trips away to rebuild relationships between them.

2005 **New CEO.** 2005 is identified in the interview data as one of the high points for TD in terms of economic prosperity. It is the same year that the first CEO hands the reigns over to his successor. Interview data points that this is at the suggestion of ACE at the end of the recovery period.

The switch in CEO is identified in the interview data as a result of the Recovery intervention and infighting on the Board:

> “There definitely tensions there. But it was just [one board member] vying for power. I don’t think that... cause [the chairman] always had [the first CEO’s] back. Would never have let [them] down. But when it became apparent that- and again this is a-when you asked me what evidence do I have for Arts Council not wanting to support the Drum, they basically told the board, I think just before we were going through recovery or just after we came out of recovery ‘Get rid of [the CEO’. So that was again a threat.” (Sarah Interview, 2017)

2008 **Global Financial Crisis hits.** TD doesn’t feel the effects of this at first. Interview data says:

> “I think [we began to feel the effects of the crash] when the Conservative [meaning coalition] government started their “We’re all in this together” […] they wanted to focus on getting rid of the overall deficit. So, they were reducing budgets. And that’s when [the recession] started having an impact. Because a lot of programmes or funding that was out there, began to dwindle. The fact that Birmingham City Council were having less money, and the Arts Council were having less funding. So, we were getting squeezed both ways. Instead of the funding increasing it was decreasing. Before, we used to get inflationary rises we weren’t getting those, so everything was standstill budget or lower. You might get your budget from the arts council saying, um, I don’t know 560,000 or whatever it is, and half way through the year they might say “oh we need to claw back some of that money, so we need 6% back.” And then you have to adjust everything to fit into that. It wasn’t just us they were doing it to, they were doing it to other arts organizations, but if you’re still a young organization that has a major impact because you’re already thin on the ground”. (Delia Interview, 2017)

2010 **First set of redundancies.** This year, the Cameron / Clegg Conservative and Liberal Democrat coalition government assume power and begin stringent funding...
cuts to the arts in the wake of the GFC. TD has its first set of redundancies following this. Interview data says:

“I think it was 2010 when we had our first set of redundancies. People were asked to volunteer to start with. And considering there were only 30 of us, and you’re asking for redundancies… We had about six people volunteer, and then another… I think it was another four? Or five? On top of that?” (Delia Interview, 2017)

*Great Arts and Culture for Everyone is published.* Sir Peter Bazalgette (head of ACE) publishes the first iteration of this arts policy document, which is ACE’s strategic framework for 2010-20. It promotes creative diversity, for particular reasons – See *Position’s Section 3.4, Position in Policy.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year Range</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td><strong>ACE launches its Creative Case for Diversity.</strong> See <em>Position’s Section 3.4, Position in Policy.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td><strong>NPO status achieved.</strong> This is the highest accolade an arts organization can receive from Arts Council England. It means that they are trusted with their budget, are considered to be well established, and do not need to apply for funding again for another three years. See <em>Purpose</em>, sections 4.1 and 4.3, as well as <em>Location</em>, section 5.1.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 2012-13    | **Drum Commercial Redundancies.** Interview data says:  
“Drum commercial redundancies were made, so there was only one person to bring in business […] And a bar person working part time. [There had previously been] 5 in that team […] so again, reducing down. Over the years […] things were just getting cut back, cut back, and the last year- I don’t know if it was planned or… I feel it was planned… I have no evidence to support that…” (Delia Interview, 2017) |
| 2011-15    | **Raising the Roof capital bid to BCC and the Heritage lottery fund.** This funding bid would have enabled a large reconstruction of TD’s building in celebration of its 20th anniversary, See below for the plans. During this time, TD becomes an NPO and is considered an established arts organization with a national reputation. In trying to court this and other funding, the decision was made to rebrand the organisation so that it moved beyond the label ’Black Arts centre’. See *Relationships’ Section 6.4.1.* |
The label ‘The UK’s premier Intercultural Arts Centre’ adopted, and TD is contested by multiple communities. Community members predict that TD will close because of lack of a sense of ownership of the organization by any community group.

**2015-16**  
**ACE investigation into TD’s state of health.** This produces *the Final Report on the Future of The Drum* (Royce & Bain-Burnett, 2016), which is used as a research source in this thesis.

**Programming continues.** TD’s programme is supported by prominent black performers, artists and academics. For example, Lemn Sissay returns early from Addis Ababa to perform at TD one last time, and Vanley Burke gives an in-conversation with me, which forms part of my participant observation for this project. This event is organised by of the New Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, which continues running events at TD until the very end. The NCCCS has always used the physical space of TD to continue the work of the CCCS from the University of Birmingham (1964-2002).
The Vanley Burke event is spearheaded by Prof. Kehinde Andrews, Dr John Narayan, Dr Hannah Jones and Prof. Gurminder Bhambra. These academics go on to develop the aspects of their work that brought them together on NCCS projects on larger scales at various universities. Birmingham City University (Kehinde Andrews, Black Studies), Warwick University (Hannah Jones, Sociology of race and migration), Kings College London (John Narayan, European and International Studies) and University of Sussex (Gurminder Bhambra, Postcolonial and decolonial studies). These are also the areas on which this thesis touches.

Fig. 1.3.3. Poster for the NCCCS event: Vanley Burke in conversation with Davinia Gregory, 2019.

Jan 2016  **Raising the Roof campaign fails and funding bid is rejected.**
This is referred to in the interview data as ‘the final nail in the coffin’ for TD. See 6.4.1 *Relationship with Birmingham City Council (BCC).*

Fig. 1.3.4. Screenshot from TD’s website, January 2016, showing the announcement of the *Raising the Roof* campaign’s failure.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| March-April 2016 | **TD board makes the decision to enter voluntary liquidation.** See *Process’ Section 2.3 Data Collection: An institutional ethnography for a complex field* for how this affected my research process. See *Relationships’ Section 6.2 “One big dysfunctional family”: Internal relations.*  
  **A campaign to save TD is begun, including a petition entitled ‘Black Arts Matter’.** It does not gain traction. See *Purpose’s Section 4.4.2 Final outcome: An unsuccessful campaign to save TD.* |
| Jan-May 2016 | **Further Redundancies are made.**                                                                                                                   |
| April-May 2016 | **Stakeholder and steering group meetings are held at TD to debate the future and meaning of Black Arts.** This leads participants to believe that the closure may not be final. At this point, the general consensus what that this was a coup that may result in a change of leadership, not closure. See *Relationships’ Section 6.1 The Drum Ends: The Stakeholders Meeting* and *Section 6.3.1 Community Malfunction: Audiences.* |
| April-June 2016 | **The archive is collated,** then removed from the building and stored in the Library of Birmingham’s strong rooms. My early writing on this (2017) can be found on the library’s blog, The Iron Room:  
  ![Fig. 1.3.5. One quarter of TD’s archive, in the strong rooms of the Library of Birmingham.](image) |
| June 24th 2016 | **The results of the ‘Brexit’ referendum** – Britain has voted to leave the EU.  
  **TD’s closing ceremony is held the same evening.** It is a sombre affair, followed by a dance party at another location, held by former members of TD ‘downstairs’ staff. See *Relationships’ Section 6.2 “One big dysfunctional family”: Internal relations.*** |
relations for elaboration on the ‘upstairs, downstairs distinction between staff members.

| 30th June 2016 | **TD closes. 30th June.** BCC representatives arrive to repossess the building. See Process’ Section 2.4 Closure: An evolving field for how this affected my research process. |

Fig. 1.3.6. BCC representatives seated in TD’s closed café as they await the CEO, who will hand over the keys to the building. June 20th 2016
### Newtown Cultural Project Ltd / THE DRUM

**CAPITAL COSTS REVIEW - Based on expenditure necessary to complete an operational building within current committed funds**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Estimate</th>
<th>Actual or Current estimate</th>
<th>Note</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Acquisition of Building</td>
<td>708,000</td>
<td>651,000</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Building Costs - PHASE 1</strong></td>
<td>1,364,058</td>
<td>1,859,870</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Variations to tender (net of anticipated savings)</td>
<td>38,842</td>
<td>121,687</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1,402,900</td>
<td>1,981,557</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Building Costs - works to annex - PHASE 3</strong></td>
<td>100,000</td>
<td>240,000</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- prems/ contingencies</td>
<td>20,000</td>
<td>32,000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Equipment, Furniture, Fixtures &amp; Fittings - STAGE 2</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media Infrastructure work</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>94,695</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Custom designed seating units (inc. fees)</td>
<td>47,000</td>
<td>47,000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>&quot;</strong> staging</td>
<td>18,000</td>
<td>18,000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cafe Tables &amp; Seating</td>
<td>11,000</td>
<td>11,000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Furniture</td>
<td>9,000</td>
<td>18,862</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Fixtures &amp; Fittings</td>
<td>20,000</td>
<td>30,000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flooring enhancement</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>43,000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training &amp; media suites fit out</td>
<td>190,000</td>
<td>57,000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Light &amp; Sound equipment</td>
<td>29,000</td>
<td>80,000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Equipment</td>
<td>41,000</td>
<td>19,000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>multi media, sound &amp; vision equipment</td>
<td>250,000</td>
<td>18,691</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Public art exterior lighting works</strong></td>
<td>200,000</td>
<td>10,000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>External Works</strong></td>
<td>20,000</td>
<td>20,000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feasibility Study fees</td>
<td>20,000</td>
<td>20,000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Professional Fees (inc. Public Art Consultants) - STAGE 1 123,000</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>133,515</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STAGE 2/Phase 3</td>
<td>30,000</td>
<td>52,480</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BDS/Planning Supervisor</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>17,800</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development Project Management</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>34,000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Other Costs - Project Development &amp; Management</strong></td>
<td>134,000</td>
<td>221,925</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salaries, fees &amp; overheads</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>21,570</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salaries &amp; overheads to opening</td>
<td>60,000</td>
<td>105,000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public awareness - fees, production costs &amp; PR - animations, community projects &amp; events</td>
<td>8,000</td>
<td>52,498</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equipment, furniture &amp; fittings</td>
<td>8,000</td>
<td>8,000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Unrecovered VAT</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>£1,415,500</td>
<td>£1,428,593</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Fig 1.3.7 Budget showing the estimated cost of the build next to the actual spend by 1997.
Fig. 1.3.8. Running costs for the first few years of TD. Sourced from archive, Box 11.

Fig. 1.3.9. Faded document from September 1995 introducing TD’s business plan for that period. On the second page, the arts centre is listed as being for ‘the cultural profile of this city and the revitalization of Newtown’.
1.4 Functions of The Drum

Arts Council England (ACE) stated in their 2010-2020 strategic framework *Great Arts and Culture for Everyone* (updated 2013) that their aim in funding its celebrated National Portfolio Organisations (of which TD was one) was to “provide essential core investment to arts organisations and museums in England to help them deliver our goals”. Not goals of the arts organisations, but *our* goals, the goals of ACE. ACE made clear in its *Final Report on the Future of The Drum* that TD had not achieved these goals, and the coming chapters will address the specific ways in which TD did not comply with the national agenda for the arts, and why. However, it is important to understand the role that The Drum did play in the communities that it served, what its programming looked like when it was at its strongest, and what its focus was. This section welcomes readers to an understanding of what TD was aiming for and why it was founded.

1.4.1 The Programme.

Chapter 4, *Purpose*, examines TD’s early existence as an intellectually, creatively and emotionally decolonising resource for racialized communities (particularly African-Caribbean and South Asian communities) in Birmingham. Its remit at the start, was to build self-esteem in a working-class multicultural community by fostering a sense of unity through political Blackness. In TD’s heyday, its programming was varied eclectic. I have chosen two programmes to showcase this. The first is from 2009 (during the run up to its being made a National Portfolio Organization in 2012, so, when its programming was assumed to have been best). The second is from its celebration year of 2012, after which point the organization is reported by participants in this thesis to have slid downhill quickly, although the timeline in Section 1.2 has shown a more gradual decline. The 2012 programming is an example of ‘Season programming’ at TD. Because it was the year of Jamaica’s 50th anniversary of independence (known as Jamaica50), TD’s programme was organized around a Jamaican theme.² There was, of course, a double page spread dedicated to reggae music-related events, and artists of Jamaican heritage featured heavily. However the programming still integrated Bollywood dance events (See fig. 1.12), a Brazilian carnival show called ‘Brum to Brazil’, and an exhibition about the Mosques of Gambia. Additionally, the Jamaican slant was not purely

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² The programme was particularly well-received because Jamaica dominated in the London Olympics that year.
music-related. There was an event called Art in the Dancehall, which was an exhibition of ‘dancehall [music’s] vibrant design and illustration history, from 1980 to the present day’. (The Drum, 2012: 21) There were also events on Jamaican literature and dance.

Academia and the visual arts also featured in TD’s programming. Advertised the 2012 programme, was an event called ‘Critical Mass’, in which Karen Alexander, who was then Senior Tutor on the Curating Contemporary Art MA at the Royal College of Art, provided an insight into the Inspire curatorial fellowships for aspiring curators of colour, which were created by ACE to diversify curatorial practice in the UK. Such events were put on by Kalaboration, which was a series of lectures, discussions and artists; commissions, led by the participant soon to be introduced in this thesis as Samad, and another member of TD staff. Kalaboration was separate to TD and survives it.

TD was also expansive in its conception of what constitutes arts and culture. This conception was international and inclusive of popular culture: in Spring 2009, it is possible to see UK grime music stalwart Sway, advertised alongside US neo-soul recording artist Musiq Soulchild. The organisation was also inclusive of art rooted in spirituality / religious expression: Fig. 1.4 shows a gospel music workshop and showcase (put on in collaboration with Nu Century Arts, directed by British-Barbadian Poet, writer and playwright Don Kinch), and an event (in association with ACE) exploring Islamic hip hop. Famous artists were billed alongside unknowns, and the prices were affordable so that local people could attend the concerts of even the most famous artists. The programme gives an insight into the functions of TD, though these changed with the passage of time, particularly between the years 2012-15, as the thesis will explore.

Figs. 1.4 & 1.5 The Drum Events Programme, Spring 2009, pp. 2 & 3
Figs 1.5 & 1.6 The Drum Events Programme, Spring 2009, pp. 7 & 9

Figs 1.7 & 1.8 The Drum Events Programme, Spring 2009, pp. 4 & 11

Fig. 1.9 The Drum Events Programme, Spring 2009, pp. 8

Figs 1.10 & 1.11 The Drum Events Programme, Summer 2012, Front Matter & Back Matter
1.4.2 The Functions

What is evident from TD’s program is who is centred – racialized peoples and their cultures. As Chapter 4, *Purpose* explores, TD’s programming team aimed to do this by providing a radical alternative to the liberal model of inclusion and diversity that was offered by mainstream museum, gallery and theatre spaces in the city. It did this by functioning in a way that was more typical of arts centres from the era in which it was initiated – the multicultural arts model. This model, and how it differs from the cultural and creative diversity models for ‘managing’ lived multiculture, are explored in *Position’s* section 3.4 *Position in Policy*. It also aimed to build local community and advocate for the needs of racialized people in wider Birmingham and British society. This section of *Welcome* shows how the various functions of the organization worked toward these three aims, which were drawn from my analysis of how it functioned, from the interview for the thesis, and from TD’s promotional material. I have categorised these functions as follows:

- Decolonising the cultural archive - Nurturing talent, supplementing the mainstream
• Promoting Black and Brown working-class art forms
• Holding space for Black and Brown spirituality / Helping to break unhealthy cycles that are products of enslavement and colonization

The data has revealed a dissonance between the functions of The Drum and the expectations of the wider society to which it was beholden. Analysis of the data in Chapters 4-6, *Purpose*, *Location* and *Relationships*, shows how that dissonance led to the organization’s demise.

1.4.3 Decolonising the cultural archive.

Edward Said’s concept of the cultural archive (Said: 1993) is useful in understanding the role that TD’s founders had believed it would play within British society, and the changes that they had aimed to make to the national consciousness. It can also provide a theory, to be tested against the thesis’ data, of why it was unsuccessful in achieving this aim. The above insight into TD’s programming shows its epistemic position in relation to the Western Cultural Archive, revealing decolonization as having been part of its function. The chapter *Purpose* reveals how the dissonance between its political and epistemic positionings led to its demise.

TD’s founders had intended it to penetrate and make decolonial change to the Western cultural archive by nuancing the UK’s national narrative. It appears that they did not achieve this - indeed it appears that no Black arts space had achieved it by the time of TD’s closure. This thesis identifies how in Britain, this is to do with their relationship to arts policy as implemented by governments. For example, in TD’s case, its location was cited repeatedly in this thesis’ fieldwork interviews as a reason why. The compromise with the BCC that led to its having this location (See Chapter 5, *Location*) reveals that this disadvantage, inbuilt from the moment TD gained its building, was caused by its need for government funding and the vested interests of the funders in agendas that were different from those of TD. This leads to the question of whether self-determination is preferable to state sponsorship for Black arts in the UK, and whether a state-sponsored arts centre has its place in Gramsci’s war of position (See Chapter 3, *Position*, Section 3.3.1., *Reasons Why*) tilting hegemony for a time within its walls, rather than trying to make a permanent dent in it.

The cultural archive is built as a repository in the societal memory and imagination, of “the best that was thought and known” (Said, 1993: xiii). Because the colonial project that
conceptually created The West used Enlightenment thought as the bedrock upon which were
built the seemingly contradictory but actually interdependent ideas of freedom / liberal
democracy on one hand and slavery / colonialism on the other, the Western cultural archive is
built in a way that celebrates the former ideas by denying all evidence of, or where that is not
possible, making excuses for the latter.\(^3\) (Hall, 1992; Kohn, 2002; Bhambra, 2007; Mignolo,
2011) Thus, versions of world history that include the stories and archival materials of formerly
enslaved and colonised peoples are absent from the cultural archive, replaced by those written
in a way that fits the dominant narrative of what Gloria Wekker succinctly defines as ‘White
Innocence’, or “the passion, forcefulness and even aggression that Race, in its intersections
with gender, sexuality, and class, elicits among the white population, while at the same time
the reactions of denial, disavowal and elusiveness reign supreme’. (Wekker, 2016:1) In
focusing on the Dutch context, Wekker broadens the discourse on cultural colonisation and the
contemporary functioning of racial hierarchies, pulling the work of Paul Gilroy and other
anglophone works into a Europe-wide conversation, which acknowledges a common thread of
denial of the legacies of empire.\(^4\) Wekker’s work explores how, through systemic machinations
designed to maintain White Innocence, the cultural archive works to maintain racialized
hierarchies of power, which still serve to keep some nations underdeveloped and some
overdeveloped in the contemporary world. Its main thesis is that ‘an unacknowledged reservoir
of knowledge and affects based on four hundred years of [...] imperial rule plays a vital but
unacknowledged part in dominant meaning-making processes, including the making of the
self’ via ‘a radical grammar, a deep structure of inequality in thought and affect based on Race
[which is] the cultural archive’. (Wekker, 2016: 2) This structure of inequality works within
nations, to maintain racial hierarchies in multicultural societies by way of myriad governing
institutions through which knowledge and power are disseminated, including the arts. All of
the other governing institutions are shaped by one of their number – the education system –
which produces the professionals that constitute them. This is because the cultural archive is
built by teaching individuals, whether they are imbued with Race privilege in any given setting

\(^3\) Although Mayblin (2013: 106) suggests that during the Enlightenment itself there ‘was no single view of
humanity’, and that ‘An important contextual factor here is that abolition was publicly debated for so many years
because the status of people in relation to both whites and within the grand scheme of nature was a matter of
contention. The fact that Johann Metzger, Georg Forster and Johann Gottfried Herder put considerable effort into
disputing the scientific status of Kant’s conception of Race in the immediate aftermath of its publication is
indicative of this.’ This suggests that the use of Enlightenment thought as the bedrock for racial capitalism was a
development that succeeded the Enlightenment itself.

\(^4\) Wekker is referring to the Dutch context, but when compared with works on Britain’s postcolonial attitudes by
Stuart Hall and Paul Gilroy, for example, the work is found to show many similarities, and many aspects of her
definition of White Innocence can be generally used to refer to attitudes across much of the West.
or not, to see the hierarchies as the natural order of things by erasing from public memory the processes by which they developed. This is achieved firstly by stripping whiteness of meaning, so that it is ‘generally seen as so ordinary, so lacking in characteristics, so normal, so devoid of meaning’, that the processes by which its supremacy is sustained go entirely unnoticed, even by those complicit in maintaining it. (ibid.) In short, the process by which the Western cultural archive is built is discursive and mimetic, so the actors who collude in maintaining racial hierarchies by perpetuating the lie in the public memory, are not always aware that they are doing so. Adding to the dominant narrative by teaching through, and passing on what Spivak (1999) calls ‘sanctioned ignorance’ (a term, also called ‘know nothingism’ which is synonymous with White Innocence except that it comes closer to conveying that the colonial Western cultural archive can be upheld by people who are not white), in turn creates and strengthens the very imagined communities by which that ignorance is sanctioned; the nation and The West.

The Western cultural archive is built in large part through formal education systems and curriculums. This is why TD and cultural organizations like it serve a decolonising function - counteracting the harmful effects of a partial (in both senses) formal education by supplementing it. In this way, they come from the genealogy of the Supplementary School movement, that has been written about by Kehinde Andrews (2015) in the context of Black Britain, and in other British colonial contexts by authors across the former British empire, most notably by Brian Friel (1980), when he memorialized the hedge schools of colonized 19th century Ireland, in the play Translations. The following vignette, drawn from two real seminar room experiences, describes the subtle processes by which the cultural archive is built and explains why supplementary education is necessary. It thus contextualized TD’s intellectual / political stance. I have called it: “You can’t argue with Foucault”.

1.4.4 Why educational supplementation is needed: “You can’t argue with Foucault”

As the previous section mentioned, the academy feeds the cultural industries by providing its staff, administrators and many of its artists with the critical lenses through which they engage with the world around them and do their jobs. Like those industries it comprises an institution by which power is disseminated from its source(s) to govern the thoughts of the public, and thereby, their actions. The academy provides a particularly salient example through which it is possible to explain the way that knowledge-producing institutions work to sort artforms and
organisations according to racial hierarchies – the way that the cultural archive is built by them. However, for ethical reasons I am keeping this example brief. During my PhD I was teaching a seminar group comprised of first year undergraduates. Even the most well-informed students were shocked at the fact that Stuart Hall and Michel Foucault were contemporaries, born only six years apart. Black British students present in the class were particularly engaged, yet mentioned having had their ‘minds blown’ at their own assumptions that Foucault was far older, and that Hall had been ‘translating’ his work for a lay-audience. It was mentioned in the class, that this was due to the way that they had been taught to revere Foucault in multiple subjects and had encountered Hall far less frequently in their formal education; primarily reading Hall’s work for pleasure as a supplement. This module was the first time that many of the students present had encountered Stuart Hall’s work, but they had all learned to revere Foucault before even arriving at university. This is not only the case for black students, or those in the UK academy - the cultural archive transcends national borders. When discussing the same Hall text with a cross-institutional, cross-disciplinary group of US junior-year undergraduate students in London (spring term, 2018), one European-American student’s sole critical analysis of the 59 paged, densely historical and theoretical text was “I like it, because he mentions so many other people; especially Foucault. And you can’t argue with Foucault”.

The difference in the students’ hierarchical understanding of the two theorists’ contributions to knowledge came neither from direct comparison of the number of works produced by each, nor their quality. Rather, I suggest that the disparity in the way that the two are seen comes simply from the way that each theorist’s work had been taught. As a result of the emphasis that had been placed on the white French philosopher, they had assumed that Foucault was long dead by the time Hall engaged with his work in *The West and the Rest* (1992), and had to retrain their minds to think of Hall’s engagement with his concept of discourse as exactly what it was, a cultural theorist engaging with the work of a contemporary and carrying it forward by applying it in a particular context to construct and explain another, connected theory of his own.

Why had the cannon of post-war social and cultural philosophy been taught in such a biased and uneven way? This is where the Saidian Cultural Archive provides workable insight into the answer. By teaching Foucault first, schoolteachers begin the process of teaching children erroneous methods for interpretation which place white, Western, male produced thought at the top of a hierarchy of knowledge production. By teaching his ideas as universally descriptive
of every construction of modernity, university teachers build on what school teachers have begun, ‘imbu[ing] methods of interpretation with the normative assumptions’ of the universality of white western theorists’ voices that become hinderances to their students’ understanding of the importance of theorists who become othered by default in the minds of their students, whatever Race those students may have been ascribed. Stuart Hall’s voice becomes niche and suspected of bias, while Foucault’s voice remains one of ultimate authority, and the teacher does not notice that this is because of the theorist’s whiteness.

I have assigned a variety of texts to students during when teaching such courses, yet the texts by authors of colour, assigned to highlight and critique the modern design history cannon’s focus on enlightenment ideas and therefore inherently on ideas built on White Western supremacy and the inevitable progress of capitalism, are the only two texts over which students felt they had enough epistemic authority to offer subjective opinions such as ‘I like it’. A section from Paul Gilroy’s After Empire, discussing postcolonial melancholia in Britain, was met with a particularly strong reaction from the second class. “I hated this when I first read it, so I had to read it twice”. These students were neither incapable of understanding the information that Gilroy presented, nor were they racist in the commonly understood way (which is that a person either ‘has’ racism in the way that one can have a disease, or they don’t). But this betrayed a strong and reactive allegiance to Whiteness; or in other words to the position of power that, according to a cultural archive built to sustain Whiteness as a signifier of power, should be always critiquing and never critiqued. So much so that reading the White-biased cultural archive (in this case the celebratory and whitewashed British national memory of the Second World War) against the grain in the way that Gilroy invites his readers to do, as a substitute for the less glorious history of empire, is received as uncomfortable, even repulsive.

Vivian A. May, whose words are used at the beginning of this chapter, in her article It was never a question of the slaves, explains how power can be a hindrance to true understanding; even going so far as to describe it as an ‘liability’:

“Although one part of understanding has to do with the possession of information, another key aspect of understanding entails gauging and comprehending the importance of the available information. Too often, the tools and methods for interpretation are imbued with normative assumptions that block rather than aid understanding. Moreover, power can serve as a hindrance to knowing - it can function as an epistemic liability. Thus, dominant expectations tend to rule out the meaningfulness of important marginalised struggles, stories and lives, such that some views, under systemically unjust social conditions are much more difficult to make plausible.” (May, 2008: 907)
Power, in the cases of both the Black and White students, is passed down in a chain of dissemination of the cultural archive. In both cases I attempted to break the chain through presenting decolonial texts. In both cases this was questioned. The obstacle, the ‘epistemic liability’, came strongly in the second case because whiteness meant that they experienced intellectual decolonization as an attack on the morality of others who are designated as being like them by virtue of whiteness, and on their own whiteness by proxy. They hated the experience of discomfort. The Black students in the first case were equally as surprised by the information, but they experienced the decolonization process as liberation. The White Western supremacist worldview is produced by consistently reading a Western cultural archive that is biased, and becoming accustomed to doing so. The easy rejection of it by students who are not Racialized by such processes is a prime example of what has been commonly known as white Privilegism, but also of sanctioned ignorance. Redressing the imbalance in the cultural archive and ending the sanctioning of ignorance would require a majority of cultural practitioners and educators in the West risking such reactions on a daily basis and presenting historical events as having occurred in connectivity rather than in hierarchy. Only this would prevent inequality from perpetuating itself in education and filtering through to governing institutions like the arts. However, educators and cultural practitioners have themselves been educated according to the cultural archive, and when their eyes are opened, those who take up the cause are most frequently those who do not benefit from the power imbalance. Their words are marginalised in turn and the cycle repeats itself.

Returning to the Arts from the Academy then, in my field notes from May 2016, when I was conducting the first round of interviews with The Drum staff, I wrote the following:

“Young Drum, […] originally called Young Gifted Brum (after Nina Simone’s Young Gifted and Black), really speaks to this. This is needed, as schools are not those spaces for diasporic communities, neither are museums, theatres or galleries; they are centres for the reinforcement of hegemonic power.” (Research Journal: April 2016)

This explains the importance of the decolonising potential of TD for the intellectual self-confidence of racialized young people, however the organisation was also potentially an important presence for young people with Whiteness, as is evidenced in the reaction of my White student in the vignette above. Decolonisation of the mind is equally as important for those people if the cultural archive is to be truly altered, but it is more difficult to achieve
precisely because in them, ignorance that is sanctioned by the education system and the other
governing institutions through which life is lived produces a comfort with their position in the
world (known as White privilege) that is hard to relinquish. The analysis of its programme
above, shows that TD achieved epistemic decolonization for its visitors not by making a solid
dent in the Western cultural archive, but via temporary tiltings of hegemony in a way that can
be likened to Gramsci’s War of Position, which this is explored in detail in the chapter Position
(See Section 3.3.1., Reasons Why). In another layer, as well as studying an organization that
aimed to contribute to the decolonization of the Western Cultural Archive, this thesis aims to
do the same. This is explored further in the chapters Process and Position.

1.4.5 Promoting Black working-class art forms

“That’s a good question. I think a lot of the newer forms of, sort of, yeah art; are
they art, are they not? I don’t know…” (Delia, Interview April 2017)

Location (See section 5.2.2 The Problem with Newtown: Programming for its population)
shows how one of the main problems with the programming was that because of a lack of
funding support, the Drum ended up relying on its commercial arm for survival. Its
programming was hijacked by this need and control of the program was lost – Drum-organised
shows were outnumbered by events put on by external organisers and promoters. Partly
because of the popularity of the Simmer Down festival, partly because of the contacts of many
Drum staff within the Reggae music industry and partly because it was widely known as a
creative home for Birmingham’s Jamaican community, many of its evening hires were for
reggae concerts. Indeed, non-Birmingham-based former frequenters of The Drum have
lamented its loss as a reggae music space. In interviews, many of the senior staff lamented the
loss of control in programming, saying that The Drum had eventually become “little more than
a reggae concert venue”.5 On the other hand, one of ACE’s reason’s for closing the building
was that The Drum had failed in 20 years to achieve its initial objectives, and seemed to be
moving further away from them. It was not providing the right type of arts provision. The

5 Their laments were as much to do with loss of control of the programme as with looking down on reggae music.
This was caused by a need to TD to bring in revenue by relying heavily on its commercial arm, as will be explored
in Location.
reasoning behind reggae music being identified as the ‘wrong type of art’, needs to be examined here.

Section 6.2.1 in Relationships identifies reggae music as a faultline that split TD, because of ACE’s lack of support for it as art, and TD’s commercial arm bringing in most revenue from hiring the space as a reggae music venue. Audre Lorde analysed the importance of Black working class artforms in Age, Race, Class and Sex (1995), referring to working class African American women’s poetry and the fact that it was rejected from contemporary women’s magazines:

“Recently a women’s magazine made the decision to print only prose, saying poetry was a less ‘rigorous’ or ‘serious’ art form. Yet even the form our creativity takes is often a class issue […] As we reclaim our literature, poetry has been the major voice of poor, working class, and Coloured women. A room of one’s own may be a necessity for writing prose, but so are reams of paper, a typewriter, and plenty of time. The actual requirements to produce the visual arts also help determine, along class lines, whose art is whose.”

Similarly reggae, the product of technological innovations created in the pressure cooker of struggle (Henriques, 2011), was originally dismissed by British Radio Producers when it first crossed the Atlantic in the 1960s. Filmmaker Horace Ove recalled in a 1975 interview, a BBC disk jockey’s comment: “it sounds like it was made in a toilet” (Ove, 1975). By the 1970s it had been popularised, packaged and sold to the mainstream, so much so that many working class Black Britons in the post-war period could not afford to attend concerts by large reggae acts like Bob Marley in large numbers when he performed in London. By the 2000s, Transatlantic reggae fans of the African diaspora and beyond who wished to see the likes of Tarrus Riley and Gregory Isaacs, would attend their concerts at venues like TD, and at Birmingham’s Simmer Down Festival which was initiated by Drum staff members, and spearheaded by its former Head of Arts.

The participants to be introduced at the end of this chapter as Delia and Sarah demonstrate their perspectives on class and Race in the data for this thesis, through conversations about reggae music. Sarah, a programmer at TD, compares reggae music offer to the artform she saw as its opposite – ballet.
“It’s like, how many poor Black kids from inner city areas go to the ballet? Notwithstanding the fantastic work that Birmingham ballet did with… Was it Birmingham ballet that The Drum did? You get little pockets, but they’re not traipsing down to London to go to the opera house. Do you know what I mean? It’s just not going to happen. It’s part of a project of being taken once, or somebody from the Opera House came up and talked to them and sort of went “oh aren’t you cute little black people?” But it’s not part of their DNA, as it is for god-knows-what percent of the UK population; it isn’t in their DNA to engage with these things on a regular basis.” (Sarah Interview: 2017)

Sarah’s reference to DNA, and conflation of Blackness and poverty, are interesting because they are examples of how the racialization of class happens as a result of cultural imperialism and exposure to the Western Cultural Archive, even in Black people who devote their careers to working toward social justice. Location expands on how this conflation affected TD. DNA comes up a couple of times when this participant refers to the White-coding of high culture by ACE. Here, Whiteness becomes synonymous with elevated class status - a stand-in for the upper middle-class theatre going public. To Sarah in this moment, high art is genetically implanted into a White person’s DNA. It is naturally theirs. This is the effect of cultural imperialism; it has led to a simplification of ideas surrounding identity, a flattening of its intersections and multiplicities, and a certainty that culture is racialized far more than it is classed, gendered or anything else. For this person, the majority of the country is White, and therefore ballet and opera are in their fabric and their DNA. Of course, this is all fiction; a version of history spun to favour the present power structure and the racial hierarchies that hold it in place, as the previous section of this chapter explored, but it is effective. Nevertheless, racial solidarity is present in Sarah’s statement. The class differences between she and the children about whom she is speaking dissolve for her when presented with ACE members as an outside threat. Relationships explores how this contributed to TD’s closure. And that threat is entirely, as she expresses it, due to the monolithic Whiteness of the institution, not due to any classed difference. Delia agrees:

“I think they try to understand but it goes back to – you’ve got this establishment and it’s monolithic. It’s White, predominantly, and understanding those various forms of expression, it’s probably hard. So… Because again, it’s just not representative. You’re talking to an organization that’s not representative of the majority of the country. So, they only understand… and they can only reference what they know. And you know, you’ll get the odd one who’ll come out and try and get down (awkward shoulder dancing), but on the whole… again, it’s just in their, it’s in the fabric and
the DNA. Art, to them, is the Rep; not even so much the Mac, because […] it’s going back to those (effects plummy accent) very traditional, very high brow…” (Delia, Interview: 2017)

In this thesis, Sara’s and Delia’s interviews are mostly used in separate chapters from each other until Relationships, where analysis of their interviews together reveals how staff opinion on TD’s focus on reggae music was split along a class Faultline. The positioning and depth of this Faultline is important, in an analysis of why unity was not achieved by the Drum’s stakeholders, and also in understanding the deepening class divides within increasingly established racialized communities in the UK. When searching the interview data for the topics that commonly served as catalysts for discussions of class (though they were never labelled such), I found these to be, in order:

1. Reggae music,
2. The geographical area of Newtown,
3. Crime,
4. Pay
5. Professionalism in the working environment.

To ask why it is important to consider the fact that reggae music (or more specifically, reaction to the culture around reggae music) is such a prominent class identifier inside UK Blackness, the question of who was centred comes into play. Chapter 6 touches on the fact that TD’s difficulties in defending its status as a performing arts space toward the end, were partly because many argued that it had become little more than a reggae music venue. The problems that ACE identified with this in their final report, came from their expectation that TD’s programming should do community cohesion work. This sense of expectation and disappointment deepened as it changed its marketing to label itself ‘intercultural’, yet continued to function primarily as a music venue for hire:

“The Drum’s approach to programming reflects more of a pick and mix from across communities with each community putting on events that will serve their own stakeholders. For example, recently the venue has hosted Polish and Somali comedy nights […] through their commercial hires. There are regular ‘black’ music events and a variety of South Asian dance and music.” (Royce & Bain-Burnett, 2016)
The ACE investigators saw community-specific events, of which reggae was one. As far as they were concerned, these events served to segregate communities rather than encourage cultural mixing toward ‘diversity’. TD’s business model was accused of being outdated.

The third function of TD, was holding space for Black and Brown spirituality. The next section will discuss the particularity of this, and its importance for Black people.

1.4.6 Holding space for spirituality

Chapter 4, *Purpose*, examines of the processes by which the common cultural traits of the communities were ‘embedded’ into TD’s identity at every level, and how this went beyond branding to ensure that otherwise minoritized people were centred there (See sections 4.2.3 – 4.2.5). One of these processes was the expanded view of the arts, mentioned above. Participant observation at TD and analysis of its printed programmes revealed that its administrators included spirituality in this expanded definition (See section 4.2.4). The fact that it is not mentioned in TD’s official documents as a founding principle is telling of the way that the organization related to it funders, to the Western Cultural archive (which has become secularist with regard to arts and culture) and to the dominant culture within Britain. The fact that the programmes not only include religious cultural expressions that are typical of one culture, but also some that show the hybrid nature of religious and ethnic groups, is telling of how TD’s expanded conception of the arts was rooted in an expanded understanding of multiculture, cultural hybridity and cross-cultural influences. These insights into the nuances of culture occur naturally in practices like Islamic hip hop, in which Black Muslim cultural expression takes centre stage in Fig 1.4.

The case has been made by Black liberation scholars over the years for the inclusion of spirituality within intersectional analyses that deal with African and African Diasporic cultures. It can be argued that the same is true of most Global South cultures. This is not to create an essentialising divide between a global north that is imagined as rational and a global south imagined as spiritual. Rather, when Western modernity is seen for the process it was – i.e. a process that is inextricable from coloniality, and when the cultures of the colonized are centered, it is possible to see that the cultures that were colonized clung to, or were more successful in retaining their coping mechanisms for struggle than the cultures that colonized.\(^6\)

With regard to the African Diaspora then, William Ackah (2018), makes the case for the

\(^6\) The reasons for this are matters for debate by religious studies scholars. However, what is clear from a cultural studies / sociology perspective is that spirituality crops up repeatedly in intersectional accounts of, and by, diasporic communities of African and South Asian heritage.
Inclusion of spirituality in any intersectional analysis of African descendant communities, recognizing the ‘complex crossing of spirituality and culture in Africa and the African Diaspora’ alongside, and in conversation with analyses of gender, race, class and sexual orientation, which are more often given primacy. (Ackah in Ackah, Dodson & Smith, 2018: 6)

This makes sense in the context of TD. Its programme featured regular cultural events that were rooted in the expression of religious faiths that spanned the Races, from gospel music to traditional Hindu dance, to the aforementioned Islamic hip hop, and these were seamlessly interspersed with arts events rooted in, and critiquing secular cultural traditions. From a black woman’s standpoint (See Chapter 2, Process 2.5 Standpoint in data collection and analysis) it makes common sense that this should be the case. Even for those Black people who do not practice faith, it is an inescapable cultural aspect of living in Black communities, wherever they are in the world. It intersects with other identity markers like gender, sexuality and class, in a variety of ways, and it is in constant need of decolonial critique in conversation with those other markers.

Inasmuch as expressions of African Diasporic spirituality were included in TD’s programme, this decision can be seen to have come from the Black radical tradition. To see this connection between them, Young Drum is important (See Fig. 1.8, above). The Drum’s youth programme began its life under the name Young Gifted Brum (YGB), which was a play on the title of the Nina Simone song, popularised by Aretha Franklin, Young Gifted and Black (1970). Though YGB was open to all young people between the ages of 6 and 18, its name was a clear reference to an aim of combatting negative media messaging aimed at young minds and supplementing mainstream education by raising Race-consciousness and self-esteem, that had come from the Black radical tradition. The song is clear in its ethos; it focuses specifically on Black youth and restoring or maintaining the integrity of their “souls”: their spirits or their self-esteem.

“You are young, gifted and Black’, we must begin to tell our young;
‘There’s a world waiting for you, yours is the quest that’s just begun,
When you’re feeling real low, here’s a great truth you must remember and know,
That you’re young gifted and Black. You’ve got your soul intact, oh and that’s a fact’.” (Simone, 1970)

When TD was founded in the early 1990s, it was continuing the work of The Cave, an organisation established in the mid-1980s, at the height of a Black consciousness in the arts. Moreover, in the 1990s, as a result of recession and the acuteness of global racism, there was
a revival of the Black radical tradition of the 1960s & 70s, and the types of songs that accompanied it. Like Franklin’s, these songs often came from the USA, and from the gospel music tradition that spans the Black Atlantic.

The merging of the concepts of the spirit / soul and the self is common in traditions of Black radical thought and activism. This stoicism, which persists in many Black families as a cultural feature – a religious echo - even when disconnected from active religious practice, can block people from recognising and dealing with racism as trauma, leading to dysfunction in Black life. Specifically, in Rock My Soul: Black people and self-esteem bell hooks (2004: 562) points out that because many African diasporic cultures were built upon histories of extreme trauma in which the religious organisations that they built in some cases and adapted in others became an multifunctional apparatus for coping that was built into the culture structure; for working class Black people the endurance and grit provided by stoicism can easily be lost when they distance themselves from a religious community without another holistic (meaning emotional, social and spiritual) support networks to help them cope psychologically with the continued effects of the racism that organises the world. These effects include racist shaming through media messages, microaggressions and in gendered terms, misogynoir; as well as the long-term effects of racial inequality that are often denied by peers who rank higher on the organizational scale of racial hierarchy that denies people racialized as Black equal respect, to the detriment of the Black psyche. While it does not provide the same holistic community structure to support an individual in all as many aspects of life as does a religious community, music can replace religion in the short term. Inspirational secular music of Black origin often mimics the chords, styles and messages of gospel music for example, providing messages that reinforce positive self-esteem and a stoic approach to life. Moreover, far from suggesting that all a person needs to overcome systemic oppression is a positive self-image and plenty of gumption, the songs of early 90s Black-positive music groups recognised the importance of confidence and self-belief in creating the resilience needed to thrive as a Black person in Racial Capitalism. (Robinson, 1983, Bhattacharyya, 2018) The focus was inward; not outward toward assimilation and being included with Whiteness, but toward building oneself to handle what would inevitably come whether one was included or not.

It is no coincidence that such acts performed at TD. At its best, it functioned as a supplement to religious organisations in the lives of many people and as a replacement for them in the lives
of others; as a secular holistic support network with cultural expression, rather than a deity, at its centre. Moreover, rather than focusing solely on the forward-thinking that stoicism promotes, it enabled reflection on Race trauma through artistic practice and cooperation.

As well as being a way of working toward building self-esteem in individuals, holding space for Black spirituality is a way of building community, which the thesis identifies as one of TD’s core aims. Community building and strengthening was one of the primary elements of Black self-determination promoted by late 20th century anti-colonial movements. Giving people a common purpose to unite behind was important in the mission of replacing one leadership with another, and in instilling the confidence needed in large groups of people who had been subject to external rule for generations, that they could rule themselves. This was not so necessary in settler colonies but was equally necessary and common in both indigenous and plantation colonies, like the Indian subcontinent and the African and Caribbean nations, when they were preparing for independence. Black and decolonial liberation struggles are rarely confined to one geographic location because the oppression wrought by capitalism. Neither are they confined to one time-period. The decolonial struggles of Africa and the Caribbean had echoes of thought in the civil rights struggle of the USA, and in a later period (the critical decade of the 1980s that produced the thought traditions by which TD was influenced) V.P. Franklin wrote in the USA about how the arts provided an important vehicle for black self-determination by holding space for black self-expression. (Franklin, 1984) Spirituality defines and creates community by giving people a way of connecting and coping collectively with experiences that they share. TD functioned as a home for this.

TD’s programmers had tapped into a key need of oppressed peoples, the need for sanctuary. They created a sanctuary in multiple ways at TD, and one of those ways was by holding space for spirituality. In other ways, the other functions served to meet this need too. The creation of intellectual, creative and spiritual sanctuary through its three main functions formed part of TD’s engagement in Gramsci’s War of Position (See Position’s Section 3.3.1 Reasons Why), preparing minoritized people for the various daily battles (Wars of Manoeuvre) that they would face once they left TD.
1.5 Research questions

This thesis is in part an exploration of Black-coded space in the UK. It explores its purpose, importance, potential and contestation. Although it does not seek to foreground the question ‘what is the black in black arts?’ it does explore what ‘Black’ means in the UK, and how that meaning changed over the course of TD’s lifespan. The dissonance between ACE’s creative case for diversity agenda and an agenda, described as decolonial, that aims to make long lasting, systemic change to neoliberal capitalism and the racial hierarchies that support it, are explored. Moving from the organization to consider its immediate surroundings, their social context and implications, it is possible to further consider the questions raised by the last chapter’s enquiry: Who did TD exist for, and was a building needed?

Saha & Hesmondhalgh (2013: 179) argue “that a theory of cultural production that adequately integrates Race and ethnicity needs to combine analysis of micro and macro factors, structure and agency, and change and continuity”. While I do not seek to produce a theory of cultural production here, through its multi-layered approach this thesis combines these opposing elements. The thesis’ analysis seeks to discover whether TD’s closure can be attributed simply to structural inequalities within, and therefore produced by, the institutions that distribute arts funding in the UK. It also asks how far the geographical location of TD, or poor organizational leadership can be solely blamed. This type of isolation of causes tended to occur in fieldwork interviews. However, the data points to a mixture of all these and other factors, which are all explored in Position, Purpose, Location and Relationships. Importantly, a study of the interplay of structural and specific (to TD due to agency of stakeholders) factors is a study of how an arts organization relates to hegemony, and how hegemony perpetuates inequality. It is a study of structures, as well as of agency.

The research questions, refined by the data, are as follows:

1. **The first question is to do with structure vs. agency:** How far was TD’s closure caused by issues to do with structure, and how far to do with agency? Moreover, how did structure influence agency in the running of TD?

2. **The second is to do with decolonization work vs. diversity policy:** Can true decolonization work be done by an organisation that is funded by national governing institutions, or does cultural policy work to prevent decolonisation?
3. **The third is to do with the varying definitions of Blackness in the UK:** How has strategic essentialism changed over the years, how did that affect TD, and what is the place of blackness (political, pan-African or otherwise) in surviving / resisting today’s racisms through the arts?

What this thesis explores through each of the above questions, are voices – how some voices are valued and heard more than others, and how the foregrounding of voices that are silenced in current discourses could add something precious, perhaps solving problems. I am concerned with organisations as vehicles for making voices heard. This means that at the level of agency, I am concerned with the voices of the ten chosen staff members who were left at TD’s end, and foregrounding their voices to see what picture of the arts in the UK could be given if people on the ground can be given the type of agency that informs policy. At the core of this element of the study are the nuanced and sometimes shifting opinions of ten individuals whose voices were silenced in the decision-making surrounding TD toward its end. At the level of structure, I am concerned with TD’s viability as an organization that nurtured and foregrounded working class BAME voices, given its internal issues and challenges from without. I am also concerned with what this says about UK governing institutions’ engagement with multiculture in 2019.

TD was set up in the mid-1990s to raise the cultural profile of Birmingham and revitalize its local area of Newtown (see Welcome, Section 1.1. *Timeline of The Drum*), however when its 2015/16 Heritage Lottery Fund bid was unsuccessful, I asked the question: If in 2016 the model that has existed since the late 20th century of mainstream arts institutions and somewhat supplementary ones that allow communities to speak for themselves no longer works, why is this, and what is the alternative? How else, other than providing separate outlets, can voices be given equal time, space and value?

In his book *Why Voice Matters: Culture and Politics after Neoliberalism*, Nick Couldry identifies that the word ‘voice’ can be used to distinguish between two levels or modes of usage: voice as a process, which is already relatively familiar, and voice as a value:

> “First, we need to get clearer on voice as a value. This dimension is particularly important at times when a whole way of thinking about social political and cultural organization (neoliberalism) operates on the basis that for certain crucial purposes voice as a process does not matter. By voice as a value, I shall refer to the act of valuing, and choosing to value, those frameworks for organizing human life and resources that themselves value voice (as a process)” (Couldry 2010).
Couldry’s titular reference to neoliberalism is important. It becomes quietly central to this thesis’ analysis of cultural policy also. The whole period characterised by the prevalence of Neoliberalism as economic model and ideology in the Anglophone west, particularly from its golden period of the 1980s until its economic, though not necessarily ideological crisis in 2008 and beyond, is the period that shaped TD. The questions that this consideration inspires are about the dissolution of resistance to hegemony over that time through mechanisms of what Gramsci terms ‘Passive Revolution’: behaviour that looks like resistance but in fact is designed to have no effect at all. (McNally & Schwartzmantel, 2009:14, Morton, 2007) These questions are about the continued validity of the cultural democracy model of policy first adopted in the 1970s, which delegates culturally diverse arts production and display to separate organizations removed from the mainstream; instead of aiming for a democratization of culture - a breakdown of the mainstream / margin model. (Evrard, 1997; Gattinger, 2011) These are underfunded nowadays because that model is no longer widely adhered to in policy. That model was based on public policy informed by ideas of multiculture, and now, under the creative industries model, there has been a subsumption of culture entirely, in favour of a depoliticised take on diversity (See Position’s Section 3.4. Position in Policy) Indeed, cultural democracy, supposedly implemented to enable communities to speak for themselves, relied on the imposition of rigid and unshifting labels or community boundaries from without- either actively or tacitly and regardless to changes to identity formation patterns of people within those perceived communities. So, it can be argued very strongly that cultural democracy was no longer the most effective model for making voices heard, but rather, further marginalised artists & audiences. However, this thesis asks questions about the shift toward the cultural – then creative - industries model, which supposedly promoted cultural democracy. Can this be achieved simply by destroying the margin and subsuming it within the mainstream? Doesn’t this lead to those with already marginalized voices, having those voices suppressed more entirely? Chapter 5’s develops an exploration of these questions by analysing geographies and potential locations of TD. Its spatial analysis of the Library of Birmingham, a civic but also cultural organization that aims to serve everyone equally, examines the forces at play that prevent this being possible. With scarcity of funding and smaller organizations in such trouble, something has got to give; but in which organizations and how best should it give? This is the primary question of the thesis. The great apology of TD to the creative industries model was the adoption of the title Intercultural Arts Centre. trying to engage with the update in theory that informed public policy, from concepts of multiculture to concepts of interculture. See
Welcome’s Section 1.1 Timetable of The Drum and Purpose’s Section 4.4 Loss of Purpose: From Political Blackness to Interculturalism for detail, background and context.

Chapter 4, Purpose, explores how this attempt to create slippage between adhering to the old cultural democracy model within which it was created, and the new creative industries model within which it was trying to survive, failed to work. The question of whether the Drum’s unsuccessful funding bid was a direct result of its dominant audiences’ rejection of its rebranding, is less significant than the reasons behind choosing interculturalism as a label, ethos and direction. Also significant is the cause of the reaction to it. When Political Blackness and interculturalism are brought alongside one another, they directly pit one way of seeing Race and representation in the arts, against another. What is it that is so alluring about interculturalism, why has it failed in this case, and how far is it generalizable? What could be used in its stead? The thesis explores these questions throughout its data analysis.

Therefore, while on the surface it would appear that was is simply a matter of friction between mainstream and margin, the true situation was more complex. It is true that in any situation the mainstream is the normative, and also the most powerful, stream. Anything outside of the mainstream is marginal. The mainstream caters for the dominant group, and in Britain this group is characterised by bourgeois class conditioning, educational capital, and also Whiteness. The mainstream, in other words, is the gushing river of middle-class Whiteness (or White supremacy) in which we must all try to stay afloat, swim if we are lucky. The margins are the tributaries either carved out by ourselves or by benevolent policy makers, in which it is easier for some of us to swim, but which dry up before we can go very far, because all of the water (funding, attention, value) has been redirected into the mainstream. The model of mainstream and margin in the arts serves to uphold the idea that the values of this group are supremely legitimate. In the arts this was the narrative of modernity, hence Basquiat, Gaines & Lord’s 1993 likening of model of Black art and mainstream criticism to a ‘theater of refusal’, which is explored in Chapter 3’s elaboration on the thesis’ use of the Gramscian concept, hegemony. If mainstream arts organizations are in place as homes and perpetuators of hegemonic discourse, and if, for the subaltern classes, to engage with them is to participate in and consent to cultural hegemony, it would seem that the only way to overturn this unequal relationship is for the subaltern to refuse to engage in mainstream cultural practice or to develop separate
cultural practice – in this case, for TD to try and remain separate, oppositional, and promoting politically Black solidarity for Black and South Asian people.

However, this is complicated by the idea that The Drum actually worked as part of the mainstream because it was supported by ACE throughout its lifespan and was therefore endorsed with cultural legitimacy, if limited. Its inception also complicates matters. It was introduced for two reasons: to address a lack of BAME voices in the mainstream, yes, but also when it moved to its permanent location, to pump prime private sector investment into a deprived area of Birmingham. (Evans and Shaw, 2004; Avery in Smith, 2007: 152-159) In the early to mid-1990s this was a common practice and one that speaks of neoliberal attempts at cultural regeneration; using public arts organizations to draw private investment to an area of a city. In the same way that Tate Liverpool, which opened in 1992, and the International Slavery Museum regenerated Liverpool’s Albert Dock, many city councils adopted the tactic in the 1990s (Particularly those of port cities, Cardiff is another example), hoping that economic capital would follow its cultural counterpart to the most bereft areas of cities, relieving the public purse of the financial burden of regeneration. So, by being publicly funded, approved by BCC and ACE, legitimated and allowed to exist, it would appear that The Drum has operated within territory on the margins of the mainstream. Position’s Section 3.3, Position in Scholarship places TD into the context of Gramsci’s war of position. The same chapter’s Section 3.4, Position in Policy, places the cultural policy landscape that TD’s administrators had to navigate into its broader, national and international socio-political context. The development of the policy landscape in line with its context (especially when seen alongside the development of the organization as introduced in the timeline early on in this Welcome chapter), begins to point to structural reasons for the decreasing relevance of the war of position in which TD was participating. In the wake of the Global Financial Crisis and the racialized politics of British identity surrounding subsequent general elections, and reaching a head in the ‘Brexit’ referendum of 2016, there were coinciding attempts to depoliticize diversity policy in the arts. I am left with the question: what does TD’s closure say about the changes to its surrounding environment, locally, nationally and globally?

In setting up the intellectual problem of the thesis, the theoretical framework in Chapter 3 (Position) sets out the broader consideration that arise from this study of TD. These are to do with Race and contemporary multiculture in cities. It considers the role of Race in the
contemporary world, the effects of the various crises of contemporary capitalism on Race and racisms, how have these shifts have affected urban multiculture, and how this has this played out in the arena of arts funding in the UK. Within these broad considerations, the thesis explores the following areas that are specific to Blackness: The place of strategic essentialism in the arts in the UK today, the role of (Afro-Caribbean and Pan African) Blackness within strategic essentialism, why it was needed as a chosen, unifying identity marker at TD’s inception, and how viable it is as an intellectual tool toward equity in contemporary multiculture.

This research does not suggest new models of cultural policy, nor is it a simple critique of ACE as an organisation. Neither is it a ‘how to’ guide for mainstream cultural organisations wishing to better implement diversity policy on one hand, or marginalised organisations wishing to avoid closure on the other. It exists to consider the convergence of cultural, political and social discourses at this specific point in time and space. It considers the implication of the convergence of these discourses on organisations like TD and the buildings that they exist within, and arts practitioners, audiences and administrators like its staff, audiences, board members and associated artists. In short, this thesis seeks to mine an event – the closure of TD – for insight into the following: What makes the arts of the African diaspora essential to a thriving multiculture in the UK? Also, centring the African Caribbean diasporic experience, to what extent is Political Blackness still relevant today - on what terms can people of African descent unite with those of South Asian descent for the sake of resisting racism in the 21st century? Moreover, is a PanAfrican unity between Afro Caribbean and continental Africans a more strategically beneficial alliance? To what extent is resistance to hegemony in the current, acute iteration racial capitalism incompatible with older forms of strategic essentialism that sought to disrupt colonial racial hierarchies?

1.6 Chapter structure

The work is divided into three broad sections. The first three chapters - Welcome, Process and Position set up TD, my dealings with TD and the backdrop of policy and society in which it is analysed here. The next three - Purpose, Location and Relationships, unravel the reasons why TD closed, and pull out the nuances of the situation as it happened against the backdrop of policy. Finally, Legacy is an attempt to answer the research questions above.
The chapter structure of this thesis comes directly from the field of study (namely, TD) and the data it produced. The first two chapters, Process and Position lay out the methodological, intellectual and theoretical frameworks for the thesis. The three data chapters Purpose, Location and Relationships each explore a different contributing factor to TD’s closure: a loss of purpose, a less than ideal location, and strained relationships with its stakeholders. These were pointed out within ACE’s Final Report on the Future of The Drum and recurred in interviews and conversations with people connected to TD over three years. The final chapter, Legacy, draws on the name of the new incarnation of TD, which opened in September 2019. It draws conclusions from all chapters about what can be learned from the closure of TD.

1.7 Meet the Characters

The next chapter, Process, outlines the steps taken to ensure anonymization of participants in this thesis. One method that I have used, is to change all of the names mentioned. Job roles have also been de-specified, aside from Chairmen of the Board (CP) and CEOs. The thesis’ data analysis chapters revolve around the interviews and public speeches of seven core participants, including the final CEO, who could not be fully anonymized. Participants have been given aliases and are briefly described here:

**Delia** was a member of the management team. She was not involved in programming but understood all elements of TD’s business. She was instrumental in preserving the archive

**Sarah** was involved in programming and was also a member of the management team. Her career had been conducted both inside and outside of TD.

**Ruth** was a younger member of the team and new to TD. She occupied the most junior role in the office, of the people who participated in interviews. Her job was split between the office and front of house.

**Asif** was also a non-managerial team member, who was involved in local community life. He was also highly concerned about the archive.
Samad had left the organization by the time he gave the speech at *The Final Beat of The Drum* closing ceremony in 2016 but had been involved in programming and had occupied a managerial role.

Albert and Jane were non-managerial members of staff, who preferred to be interviewed together because of nerves.

1.8 Argument

In summation, the thesis argues that there is no one cause for TD’s closure, but rather a perfect storm of causes – some of which had been eating away at the organization since its inception as a government funded arts centre. Some causes are ones of agency, and some are structural. When analysed together, these causes demonstrate the intersectional, complex and insipid nature of systemic racism and inequality in the UK. The argument here is that, given the context in which TD had been trying to survive it is no surprise that it failed, because it had always been swimming against the tide. In short, while TD’s administrators did have agency and acted to close the organization, the structures that they were working against ultimately led to the closure. Since the late 1990s it had been swimming against the tide of arts policy trends, not only in the UK but across the West. Chapter 3, Position, shows that arts policy had moved from a focus on multicultural arts (under which focus TD had been set up) to a focus on cultural diversity in the early 2000s, before moving on to a creative diversity slant in the 2010s, which depoliticized and deracialized diversity altogether, leaving TD’s model for ‘managing’ multiculture behind. TD had also been swimming against the tide of local government policy, which, in funding TD initially, had tried to instrumentalize the arts to revive an area of the city that it continued to deprive through other measures. Chapters 4 and 5, Purpose and Location, show how this failed because this instrumentalization aimed at two opposing government agendas. The surface agenda was the need provide for the culturally diverse groups of people who inhabited the area. The second, deeper agenda was to pump prime investment into a deprived area of the city through cultural regeneration, and in that respect, a centre like TD was never going to have been successful. The area of Newtown became increasingly stigmatized during TD’s lifespan, which damaged the reputation of the organization and stigmatized the image of Afro-Caribbean Blackness within the city. To have had the strength to continue to
swim upstream, TD would have needed a watertight ship, which Chapter 6, Relationships, shows it did not have. The question asked in this chapter is clear. Infighting and changes of direction are common in all organizations; why did they break TD? The answer to this final question is built before the chapter begins and continues to develop throughout its analysis. The organization was already weakened by having to swim against the tide of a policy landscape that had left it behind because the people who comprised the majority of its staff and audiences have been dealt with in policy either as a problem to be solved or subsumed, or even as instruments to be used for the betterment of the national image rather than as equal contributors to the cultural fabric of British life, centred in their own right and contexts. The thesis therefore shows the administrators of an organization, trying to work within a system set up to make it fail. It analyses the reasons for that setup - namely the British national image, the supposed national interest, and their roots in empire and structures of eurocentrism. It analyses the complicity of the administrators themselves in the setup, at various points. In essence, it is an analysis of the complex nuts and bolts of White supremacy as disseminated and experienced by policy makers and arts administrators on the ground.

I am the welder.
I understand the capacity of heat  
To change the shape of things. 
I am suited to work. 
Within the realm of sparks 
Out of control [...]” (Moraga, 1981)

In Learning from The Drum, decolonization is used politically, theoretically and methodologically. This chapter, Process, explores how it has been used as method for this thesis, as well as the interplay between/interdependence of decolonial, feminist and anticapitalist critiques in the thesis’ methodology. As Welcome has introduced, the research ultimately considers the role of a Black-arts organisation within the context of three main interlocking discourses, namely, the critical discourse of cultural diversity in the arts and the policies built upon it, the shifting nature contemporary multiculture in UK cities (which equates to the multiple, shifting meeting points of race & class in the UK), and finally the crisis of neoliberalism and austerity policies affecting the arts. In separating each discourse out, the thesis explores the dynamics and inter-relationships of the three as they met at TD’s intersection.

The thesis also considers individuals in the context of their professional relationships at and around TD. This is because the discourses mentioned above, affect the individual and the organisation simultaneously. It is at the micro level of the individual that the decolonization process begins. The thesis emphasizes an understanding of the social construction of individuals by wider political discourses, and their contribution to those discourses in return. It positions personal, institutional and societal decolonization as a mode of breaking this cycle and reclaiming agency, which has had a bearing on the construction of its methodology.

Moraga is “interested in the blend of common elements to make a common thing”:

“No magic here.
Only the heat of my desire to fuse
what I already know
exists.”

What she is describing is a form of activism that takes place through the work. That is the basis of this thesis’ methodology, as this chapter will explore. The process of bringing intense, sustained heat to a thing until all of the varying parts melt and weld together inextricably, can be descriptive of the decolonization process. For Frantz Fanon (1961) decolonisation was “always a violent phenomenon”. Before Moraga, Fanon writes:
“Decolonization, which sets out to change the order of the world is, obviously, a programme of complete disorder. But it cannot come as a result of magical practices, nor of a natural shock, nor of a friendly understanding” (Fanon, 1961: 28)

Fanon was writing of the physical violence involved in the political decolonisation of nations. But the psychological decolonisation of individuals within former seats of empire requires the infliction of a discomfort, burning or pain, equal to the violence he described. This discomfort was described in Welcome’s Section 1.4.4, *Why educational supplementation is needed*: “You can’t argue with Foucault”. The chapter to follow this one, entitled *Position*, explores how decolonization works in opposition to the processes and force of neoliberal capitalism. This chapter preambles that exploration by explaining that as such, decolonization cannot occur by chance. Even at the individual level of decolonizing thought, it is a labourd, often painful process requiring sustained reflection, extensive reading, an ever-deeper self-examination practice, a layering of methods and the constant asking of questions. It requires the bringing of intense heat. As *Position* will also explore, decolonial work is to diversity policy what welding smelted lumps of metal together is to taking various cold lumps of metal, placing them next to one another and calling them a whole. This is not integration, at least in the most commonly used sense. Moraga continues the welding analogy, acknowledging that while it is common in integrationist diversity work to plead “we all come from the same rock”, basing a bid for tolerance on the sentiment “…we are more alike than unalike” (Angelou, 1990), in doing so we ignore “the fact that we bend at different temperatures”. Because different experiences of life in different bodies means that mutual understanding is at times difficult and different people have different pressure points, she writes that “fusion is possible but only if things get hot enough- all else is temporary adhesion, patching up.”

To apply Moraga’s decolonization analogy of a scientific-industrial fusion of separate parts to TD, the organization was first established as a crucible for psychological and social decolonization for people of colour in Newtown, Birmingham and across the UK, as has been introduced in *Welcome* and will be explored in *Process* and *Location*. It was decolonial building which, Moraga points out, need not be monumentalist temples to knowledge or art, but which is important because of its function in providing psychological reprieve from neo-colonial oppressions:

“I am not talking about skyscrapers, merely structures that can support us without fear of trembling.”
This chapter will explore how, through the commitment of the research to the Drum’s legacy in the form of the archive, the research methodology for this thesis became a continuation of that process. The decolonising ‘heat’ was given to this research process by the field. It came with the urgency and sadness surrounding the organization’s closure.

2.1 Introduction

*Welcome* explored the research questions and focus of this thesis. The thesis explores the dissonance between diversity as written in policy and promoted by policy makers, and cultural/racial/socioeconomic diversity as lived in practice. The research also sheds light on practices and processes that can lead to the closure of Black and politically Black-led arts organizations in a system where public funding is the norm. Each significant element that contributed to TD’s closure is examined, and evidence of what caused that organization’s demise is provided. The main concern at hand however, is not an investigation into what caused TD to close, but rather, what the circumstances surrounding its closure reveal about how current arts diversity policy, when put into practice, can either support or destroy such organisations. It is my hope that the thesis can be drawn on by policy makers, funders and future administrators of such arts organizations, to avoid them meeting the same fate. It considers the role of the UK state in creating, via its funding bodies, a hierarchy of arts organisations, thereby voices, and thereby citizens.

This is the first piece of research to fully document the closure, aftermath and legacy creation of a Black, or politically Black-led arts organization in the UK; the first empirical analysis of what happens at this point of stress. Such closures often happen quickly and are complex. They are sometimes documented after the fact using document analysis and archival material. However, this is an empirical, data-rich analysis of what happens in real time when an organization implodes. It is important because it bridges the gap between what policy documents say about the role and function of cultural diversity in the arts and what happens (and is needed) on the ground. The research for this thesis employed a qualitative methodology that using institutional ethnography, combining participant observation with a series of interviews (21 hours in total). It involved the collation of an archive from documents and ephemera in TD, and analysis of documents and absences from that archive. My research used these methods to understand what happened at TD from multiple angles, looking at what people said in interviews and speeches, alongside what was included in or omitted from the archive, and what appeared in policy documents. An important additional layer was experiential: that
of observing and becoming part of TD’s culture, to understand the points of view of the research participants.

It is expected that this decolonial, Black feminist methodology will form part of the thesis’ contribution to the fields it touches. After laying out its epistemological foundations in section 2.2 Process explores the complex field that was TD and its aftermath, and how it shaped the research in section 2.3 Data Collection: Research Methods for a Complex Field. Next, section 2.4 Closure: An evolving field analyses the research methods that I used, and how the complex field of evolving stories and theories, produced by TD’s stakeholders over time, necessitated their evolution following TD’s closure. Then, in section 2.5 Standpoint in data collection and analysis, the epistemological questions relating to my standpoint as insider/outsider participant observer are discussed. This section aims to make sense of the endeavour to produce a thesis that examines a decolonial organization with critical distance, while being decolonized and potentially decolonizing for its readers. Further, section 2.6 In Process: Data analysis discusses how I selected the interviewees and analysed the data. Finally, the ethics surrounding a closing organization and the careful handling of sensitive information, entrusted to me by people at delicate moments (as jobs were being lost), has required constant and thorough consideration throughout the process of research and writing. This is explored in the final section: 2.6 Careful Research: ‘Washing our dirty linen in public’. Considerations of power relations and my insider/outsider position recur here, as well as ethical considerations of what to reveal to audiences, and ‘airing the community’s dirty linen in public’.

2.2 Epistemological foundations

While the research for this thesis is heavily empirical, it does not hold to positivism’s idea that empirical data is collected in service of a pursuit of an absolute truth that exists in reality. Rather, the methodology for this thesis is interpretivist, working from the axiomatic stance, common amongst qualitative researchers, that ‘a set of interpretive, material practices [can] make the world visible’ and that ‘these practices transform the world [by turning it into] a series of representations, including field notes, interviews, conversations, photographs, recordings and memos to the self” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005: 3).

The pairing of empiricism’s foregrounding of and reliance on empirical data, and interpretivism’s understanding that truth is multifaceted, is useful for this thesis’ enquiry. This is because the data collected amounts to a series of stories about the same event - the closure of TD. The primary research question is not ‘what caused the closure of TD’. To have aimed
to uncover an ultimate truth about the closure, assuming that all other accounts were lies or mistakes, would have been reductive and would have missed the value of such an enquiry. Rather, the expansive approach to qualitative research that I have chosen considers the closure as it was spoken and written about by multiple people, from multiple angles, to consider how the events that led to the closure were interpreted by the various stakeholders. Understanding the various interpretations of events enables an understanding of the effects of those events on the individuals that constituted TD as an organization. External events and their effects on individuals are seen as cyclical; with the affected people creating events that contributed to the situation in which TD closed. Because of this, the delivery of the data (whether it presented as gossip, what the body language was, pauses and gaps in speech) also becomes important.

2.3 Data Collection: An institutional ethnography for a complex field

The methodology for this PhD was constructed and shaped by the field of research. Given TD’s closure in 2016, that field was a shifting one, so the methods developed in unpredictable ways. This methodology was born of necessity and developed in an organic way. It was the product of a messy field, however it is not a messy methodology. Dorothy Smith describes institutional ethnography as ‘a sociology, not just a methodology’, explaining that it is ‘not just a way of implementing sociological strategies of enquiry that begin in theory rather than in people’s experience, and examine the world of people under theory’s auspices.’ (Smith, 2005: 2). The method of enquiry that I chose, indeed the method of enquiry that the field demanded, was this one. It began with what was happening and how people reacted to it. This is why Process comes before Position, which further explores the thesis’ theoretical framework. The thesis takes Agar’s assertion that ‘we need to argue for what we know based on the process by which we came to know it’ (1996: 13), as its own.

The field determined the timing and intensity of the research, as well as its nature. The first year of four was intended as a scoping year, also dedicated to creating the theoretical foundation for the research. The sociology ethics committee was scheduled to look at my proposal for fieldwork at the beginning of the second academic year (October 2016), and I was to devote the second year (until October 2017) to participant observation at TD. However, this was not ideal for my research because it was rooted in an organization that I had early access to. Scoping involved building relationships with participants and that meant being present at TD. I was therefore based at TD’s offices from October 2015 onwards, attending once per week, scoping and trying to establish the aforementioned relationships. It was during this time that Royce and
Bain-Burnett’s report for ACE was underway, and theories about the future of TD abounded in the office. The announcement that TD was going into voluntary liquidation was made on March 29th, 2016 and expedited ethics approval was granted for empirical research. I began fieldwork in earnest then, and the official period of ethnography lasted for three months (April-June 2016). This could not have been predicted or planned for. During those five months I experienced a distinct lack of trust from staff members, which I later discovered to be due to the ACE researchers, who were conducting research for their report at the same time. It was unclear to staff whether or not I was part of the ACE team – who, management felt, had been sent to TD expressly to find reasons to close the organization - or not. Though they had been informed that I was a PhD student, they were hesitant in trusting me because they were unsure of my allegiances. The closure announcement changed that. The ACE representatives had left and published their report, but I remained in the office. This won people’s trust and suddenly everybody wanted to talk to me, ‘on the record’, to tell their stories. It became clear at that point, that this was not only to be a study of people at work within an organization, but also a study of how their behaviour and interactions had become institutionalised by interaction with, and in opposition to, the institutions that govern and fund the arts on behalf of the British state. This was to be an institutional ethnography.

2.3.1 Untidy tales in a complex field

Institutional ethnography ‘makes language a key to the ethnographic discovery of how institutions are coordinated’ (Smith, 2005: 2). This is how it also guided my data analysis. Thematic analysis, explored in further detail below, was used to analyse the stories that people told me, told other people in TD’s office, told stakeholders at the closing ceremony in their speeches, and told themselves, about what had occurred at TD, and why. I have highlighted that the closure dispersed research participants, making the field more complex, and messy. The concept of messy methodologies has been developed by feminist scholars recently. Lucy E Bailey and Margaret Fonow recall Patti Lather referring to the use of story in feminist research practice saying: ‘There are no tidy tales. Let’s get messy’ (Bailey & Fonow in Canella, Salazar Pérez and Pasque, 2016: 60). They cite the slightly the earlier text Promiscuous Feminist Methodologies in Education: Engaging research beyond gender by Sara M Childers, Stephanie L. Daza and Jeong-eun Rhee (2013), which overtly talks about ‘the messy practice of [feminist] enquiry’ that ‘transgresses any imposed boundaries or assumptions about what counts as research…’. (Childers et Al., 2013: 1) They go on to describe the messy boundary between theory and method in this type of feminist work:
‘Often re-appropriated through the (con)texts of messy practices, the theories we put to work “get dirty” as they are contaminated by other ways of thinking and doing.’ (ibid.)

Trying to simplify and categorize what happened at TD was not required of this research. The facts of what happened could not be divorced from the way that people felt about them. I found myself wading through the mess of human experience and emotion, especially when interviewing people who had just lost jobs within an organization, in whose purpose they had invested both time and faith. The interview methods for this PhD have needed to be flexible enough to allow for the complexity of people’s changing situations and stories. Being present at this moment and becoming enmeshed in the goings on at TD in its final days, meant that I could not stand back as a critically distanced observer. This research necessitated ‘getting messy’.

2.3.2 Institutional Ethnography and Gossip as Research

Wading through gossip during ethnography, felt messy at first. Much of what instigated the collection of data, passed from and between staff members as gossip. Heidegger (1953) condemned gossip as groundless, and therefore unworthy of analysis as research:

‘[In gossip] things are so because one says so. Idle talk is constituted in this gossiping and passing the word along, a process by which its initial lack of grounds to stand on […] increases to complete groundlessness’. (1953) 2010: 163

However, Kathryn Waddington offers nuance to this wholesale condemnation by pointing out that while Heidegger’s dismissal of gossip has been supported by many (e.g., Ben-Ze’ev, 1994; Jaeger et al., 1998; Laing, 1993) it is worth considering not only the content of gossip but the very act of gossiping as something that can be authentic:

‘Indeed, it could be argued that the process of gossiping is, in itself, authentic. In other words, to what extent does authenticity lie with the telling, the teller and the relational and contextual aspects of their interactions with the listener?’ (Waddington, 2012: 45)
Waddington highlights that gossip’s value lies not primarily ‘in the words or content’ of what is being said, but rather in the sense of relatedness it imparts [as] a form of social interaction’.

Part of the research process was learning to see value in snippets of gossip, the ways that they are delivered and between whom, and the ways in which they can contradict things said in official interviews. Navigating an emotionally charged office environment and conducting research often meant listening to gossip and deciding what could ethically be used as data. Deciding what, of the snippets I overheard in the office, could ethically be recalled for further discussion in subsequent interviews and with whom, was sometimes tricky to navigate. Moreover, some of the information gaps in my early interviews came from people’s unwillingness to engage in what they were concerned would be construed as gossip, with me, an outsider. However, listening to gossip and coming to an understanding of its potential as data, helped me to observe allegiances and alliances among stakeholders at TD. It also helped me to decide that unstructured interviews, held in bustling, informal settings would be the best method for the second round of interviews. Wading through gossip necessitates a method of analysis that allows for the parallel but separate consideration of ‘story’ and ‘telling’, so elements of narrative inquiry were integrated with applied thematic analysis, as we will see below, with the understanding that stories (interpretations and the emotions that make them particular) cannot be extricated from events as they happened.

2.3.3 Institutional Ethnography: Participant observation

Fig. 2.1 A draft of the programme for the event *The Final Beat of The Drum*. Designed by Davinia Gregory, June 2016.
Ethnography has evolved remarkably from its roots in early cultural anthropology, when the aim was to ‘grasp the native’s point of view, his relations to life, to realize his vision of his world’ (Malinowski, 1922: 25). By the late 20th century this had developed into a sort of cultural appropriation, in which othering was still integral to the process:

‘Fieldwork, then, involves the disciplined study of what the world is like to people who have learned to see, hear, think, speak, and act in ways that are different. Rather than studying people, ethnography means learning from people’ (Spradley, 1979: 3).

Rather than learning from the people who were losing their jobs as TD closed, I experienced much of what they experienced. As an Afro-Caribbean-British person whose family and community links to TD were strong prior to beginning fieldwork, I, too, was losing an organization. As a PhD researcher whose project was tied to TD as a collaborative partner, I also stood to lose my job, as far as I was aware. I did not simply learn from them, I was, and remain, one of them. Because of this, I adopted a collaborative approach to my research. I aimed to carefully deconstruct power relations between myself and TD staff as far as possible as the ethics section of this chapter explores, but a good deal of this happened without my trying. The chapter Relationships explores the ways that overdetermination from without by hegemonic Whiteness at the Stakeholders Meeting, worked to create a homogenous mass of ‘people of colour’ or ‘the black community’ before TD closed. This, and other dealings with TD’s staff by the funders, effected a unity of resistance (or at least indignation), which expedited my acceptance as a member of the organization’s community. This was the ‘participant’ element of participant observer, and it stood me in good stead when I was called upon to ‘get my hands dirty’ in creating the programmes for the closing ceremony, The Final Beat of The Drum (shown in fig. 2.1). My having done this, led the stakeholders present to answer ‘yes’ when the CEO asked their permission for me to record and use the speeches for this research. Additionally, I helped to ‘pack down’ the organization, and collate and store the archive. I attended one steering group meeting and one stakeholder meeting. I was not permitted to attend board meetings, which, along with not being granted permission to interview the Chairman of the Board of Trustees, is one of the most poignant absences in the data. This absence has itself been treated as data.

The act of collating and storing the archive at the Library of Birmingham was central to my participant observation at TD. This act was key to my being finally considered part of the organization, to my being trusted enough by participants to conduct interviews, and to be
counted as part of the complex and shifting imagined community of which all staff considered themselves members. It seemed important that rather than going to London as part of the Black Cultural Archives, TD’s collection was stored as part of Birmingham’s particular history, especially because it was a decision supported by staff and board members alike, and unusually so. It revealed which affiliations were more important to them in this particular struggle; they saw saving the legacy of TD as a local fight. At the upgrade stage of this project, I questioned whether the collection should also be connected to a wider story of Black Britishness and Black arts by links to other Black cultural archives, and planned to make those connections via an online platform as we listed and catalogued the collection. In the months that immediately followed TD’s closure and the archive’s storage, I thought through my relationship to the archive through the lens of what Patricia Hill Collins (2012) has called Intellectual Activism. I wrote:

‘Once the 200 boxes are in Birmingham’s City Archives, the question of how best to make them accessible becomes paramount as one of my main concerns. What is the archive’s purpose? Is it simply to be a repository of documents and objects for researchers to seek out, or something more engaging? What stories can it tell; what is the value of those stories in the context of the Library of Birmingham’s archival collections? Thinking about the archive as a local resource, how can it be made accessible to all, so that Birmingham’s Black arts centre and its work remain part of the city’s popular folklore?’ (Fieldnotes, June 2016)

Following that initial zeal for cataloguing and promoting the archive, came a period of ten months during which the Library and Birmingham City Council were processing an application for a new position of Research Associate to be created so that I could be granted access to the strong rooms in which TD’s boxes are housed, as well as to the cataloguing system. In the intervening ten months, I accessed the archive weekly in the reading rooms with other researchers who were studying already catalogued archives. An archivist who has been anonymized for the thesis, devised a system by which I could number boxes according to priority for my project, and I did so on periodical accompanied visits to the strong rooms.

2.3.4 Institutional Ethnography meets Intellectual Activism: Creating the archive

Patricia Hill Collins describes intellectual activism as ‘namely, the myriad ways that people place the power of their ideas in service to social justice.’ (Hill-Collins, 2012: ix) This PhD began as a collaborative project that would be designed to ‘reject the imposed separation between scholarship and activism, school and society, thinking and doing’ (ibid.). When TD
closed, the partnership between it, Warwick University and myself effectively dissolved and the PhD changed focus. It shifted away from being a project that could, as had been hoped by those at TD who were involved in applying for it, reveal the value of the organization in language that could be understood and referred to by funders. It was to unavoidably become an empirical study of the end of an organization (so, thinking without doing). However, through participation in collating the archive and overseeing its transit to the Library of Birmingham, I was able to add an element of hands-on intellectual activism to the research. Questions about the organization’s legacy, which are asked in the final chapter of this thesis, began with the creation of this archive. It also enabled the rest of the research to take place, because it won the trust of the participants. As such, it was an integral part of the research process.

The archive was a part of the complex and ‘messy’ field described above. It was the primary way in which the research process required me to ‘[get] dirty’ (Childers, Daza & Rhee, 2013:1). Initially access to its material was denied to me by TD’s management. Then, when the closure was announced, I was granted access to it, and became its unofficial custodian. Once it was stored at the library my access to it became limited again, because the chief archivist needed to apply for me to be allowed direct access to the strong rooms. This was unprecedented and therefore took time to pass through BCC bureaucratic processes. Once I was granted unrestricted access to the archive, the time that had lapsed necessitated that I reconsider the place of it within my research. Nevertheless, the letters, printed threads of email correspondence, board meeting minutes and other records that are now part of TD’s archive, became key primary research sources for my thesis. In the process of collating the official archive, the management gave me several promotional brochures and posters, of which there were duplicates. Because of this, I was able to have a mini Drum Archive of my own, at home, from which I could also draw data.

My involvement in the process of removing the archive from the building before its closure marked a turning point in the research process. At first, I had not been trusted by members of staff at TD, largely because I was seen to be from outside of the communities. The terms upon which I was eventually trusted were that I proved my commitment to that community. I recorded in the research journal for May 2016 an incident in which somebody entered the office, saw me knee-deep in board meeting minutes and archive boxes, and asked me why I was bothering. Before I could open my mouth, Asif exclaimed on my behalf, ‘she’s doing it because she cares about the community!’ My field notes record this as the moment when he first began to show trust in me. On TD’s final day, he was one of two people who spent the day
loading the boxes into the Library of Birmingham’s van with me. At this point he was no longer being paid by the organization and was under no obligation to do so.

2.3.5 Institutional Ethnography: Textual and Audio Field Notes

Field notes for this thesis were taken over seven months, from November 2015 to May 2016. They comprise five notebooks and five long voice memos recorded via mobile phone. The thesis’ ethnographic description vignettes, used to bring the reader inside the research, are taken from my research journals. This required me to examine my own emotions about my experiences as I shared them, as I had done with those of others. I did not write regularly, but I wrote often; at first once per week, then later not so often. Once the closure was announced, direct interviews and archive collation took the place of regular research notes during my time at TD. I began to write in the research journals again once I had followed the archive to the Library of Birmingham and began to work from there once per week. This was an uncomfortable process. I wrote the vignettes from the field notes, and the loose designs for my second interviews developed around these vignettes. I would read the vignettes (most commonly the ‘Drum Toa’ vignette that opens this thesis’ introductory chapter, Welcome) to former staff members at the beginning of their second interviews, following the closure. This happened organically at first. I was asked how my PhD was going one evening, while out at dinner with former colleagues from TD. I told them that I had been writing vignette from my research notes and was asked whether I would mind them reading one. I read it aloud and their reactions confirmed that my way of experiencing TD was generalizable beyond my own experience. The reading also prompted individuals to share the details of their own stories with me, pointing out differences and similarities, nuancing my stories with theirs, indeed, making my stories mere catalysts for theirs. As I made this reading a practice, the reactions of participants enabled me to conduct a richer, more reflective analysis of the vignettes. In this way, ethnographic and autoethnographic description and interviews were intermingled as methods of data collection. The field had shifted, and the participants had moved on, but this had not become a multi-sited ethnography (Marcus, 1995). The research was still very much rooted in the site of TD, even as an imaginary, and these vignettes from the research notes were a way of transporting us back to it, enabling the flow of memory and conversation. Although my description rarely slipped into autoethnography, I have found the theory surrounding it helpful in thinking about this use of what Clifford Geertz termed thick description (Geertz, 1973) to encourage reflexivity in the researcher, during and after interviewing. In
Autoethnography as Feminist Method, Elizabeth Ettore explains the need for continual re-examination and cross-referencing:

‘In this space, I treat identities and experiences as uncertain, fluid, open to interpretation and able to be revised (Adams and Holman Jones, 2011: 110). This transitional or in-between fluid space creates for me, a sense of empathy with those I study. When telling an autoethnographic story, the story is not only mine – it is also co-owned with those in my story, sharing the borderland space [...] I am an insider and an outsider – a living, embodied crossroads of words, flesh, emotions, interpretations and humanity [...] To do this sort of work I need to be rigorously self-aware, to be meticulously humble and most importantly, to be cognizant strictly of the complex connections between the socially coded categories of race gender class and sex and how, as “enforced differences” these factors come to be embedded in power relations’ (Ettore, 2017: 6)

The use of thick description in conversation with my participants, which I labelled ‘Cyclical Interviewing’, necessitated being ‘rigorously self-aware and meticulously humble’ during the process. In this way, the research process began to become a practice of self-decolonisation.

2.3.6 Institutional ethnography: Interviews for the archive (First round of interviews with staff sample)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant name in Thesis</th>
<th>Managerial (Y/N)</th>
<th>Number of interviews</th>
<th>Incidental Conversations, used as data with permission (Y/N)</th>
<th>Public Speeches Recorded</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The CEO</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delia</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sarah</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Albert</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jane</td>
<td>N</td>
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<td>Ruth</td>
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<tr>
<td>Samad</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2.1. Table showing the core interviewees’ positions with TD’s structure and the types of data to which they contributed.

As has been explored, while I was based within TD, people were uncertain about the future of their jobs, cautious about trusting others and unsure of my allegiances, because of my having
joined the organization during its final few months. These first-round interviews were created to be stored with the archive in digital form, as all staff expressed wishes to have their reflection on TD archived for posterity. In these interviews, staff members rather stiffly focused on recalling favourite events held at TD over the years and relaying general sadness about the closure. They avoided speaking of ill feelings, pointing fingers of blame, or talking about what went on behind the scenes in the organization’s final days. I was also reticent about being too inquisitive, not wanting to lose the trust of my participants. These interviews were therefore highly structured; almost every staff member interviewed requested to see a list of questions beforehand. Because of this suspicion and the resistance that resulted from it, there is a great deal of difference between the richness of the data collected in the first round of interviews with seven of Drum’s staff members and the second, both in terms of interview length and richness of information. However, they became data in a different way. Their stilted nature demonstrated mistrust between the staff and the funders - particularly ACE - for the first time. This prompted me to ask about it in the second round of interviews and subsequent incidental conversations.

2.4 Closure: An evolving field [data collection continued...]

TD’s closure in June 2016 necessitated a methodology that could remain open to possible future adaptations, because as individuals dispersed to work in new organisations (some relocating to other parts of the country) and new experiences began to colour their memories of what had happened at TD, the field became increasingly uncertain in multiple respects.

2.4.1 Cyclical Interviewing and Incidental conversations (round 2)

Preserving the archive gained me the full cooperation of participants. The core group agreed to a second round of more in-depth interviews. The problem was, TD had then closed, so I needed to find ways to remain in touch with the staff. We kept in touch via text message and I met those based in Birmingham who could attend, for group dinners, at first once per month and eventually once per quarter, between August 2016 and December 2018. This was to keep a connection to TD in our memories and imaginations. These dinners were social, but I would read vignettes when asked, and would ask if something was said that I wished to write down, and so this socializing became part of an extended ethnography. We then met up for the second round of interviews in April and May 2017. This was the process of cyclical interviewing that has been described in the ‘Participant Observation’ section of this chapter. These interviews were semi-structured and conducted in coffee houses and restaurants, most commonly the
Marmalade restaurant at the Birmingham Repertory Theatre, which was chosen because of its proximity to the archive, where I was based. One of the reasons for ongoing correspondence with the core group of participants, is that I did not know what I would find upon beginning to examine the documents within the archive, or how many times I would need to talk to my participants about what I would find there. Accidents of the field made the archive integral to the interview process. As well as a source of information about the history and functioning of TD, and as well as having become a case study for the chapters Location and Legacy. The archive was also integral to the process of keeping in touch with core participants, as it was a key source of their interest in remaining in touch with me. Discussing my findings within the archive on social occasions sparked conversation about events that had often been forgotten.

Claiming my standpoint was an important element of cyclical interviewing. I recognise that my way of experiencing TD as described at the opening of this thesis was particular to both my subjectivity as a person racialized as Black in Black-coded space, and to my history as a researcher who had spent considerable time as the default representor of my Race in mainstream cultural organizations. My particular set of past experiences meant that upon setting foot in TD, I valued the feeling of this space as a reprieve from the burden of representation in a way that many who worked there had come to forget or take for granted. This taking for granted is something that many came to notice once TD had closed and they had moved to other working environments. It was the most common observation of former Drum staff when I read the section aloud at the beginning of many second-round interviews.

This type of writing, with all the methodological slippage of its usage in interviews, is not quite autoethnographic, but it is ethnographic from a specific standpoint, and for a reason. I recognised that elaborating on my particular vantage point is important in sections like these, in order to facilitate understanding of an important facet of TD’s meaning and importance by a wider readership, some of whom may not be racialized as Black.

I also conducted five secondary interviews with programmers and leaders from mainstream national arts organisations. Those whose interviews contributed to the final thesis were: a programmer from a large national art cinema, and a curator from a large national gallery. Speeches by people other than members of the core group have also been used. These are: A speech by a former CEO, and a speech by a former Chairman of the Board. Both speeches were given at The Final Beat of The Drum.
2.4.2 Interview absences, intentional and unavoidable

Intentional absences: To make sure that the thesis had sufficient depth of analysis, I chose to focus the its analysis on the rich set of interviews that I conducted with TD’s staff. I did not interview former staff members but focused on those who were there at the very end, at the moment of collapse. The purpose of interviews in this research, was to supplement the documentary sources produced by ACE and the public speeches given by BCC, so that those who were not given voice or whose voices were quoted by others, were given the opportunity to provide insight into their own accounts of what they felt caused the closure. To this end, I chose not to interview ACE and BCC representatives, but rather to use as data what they had communicated in meetings and reports. This was to go some way toward reversing the power imbalance inherent in the data documents; allowing the subaltern to speak. The reasons behind the decision to cease funding TD were made clear in the documents that they published, which were analysed as one of the bases for this thesis. Their voices were heard in the meetings that they called and hosted at TD. I decided that, as this is not a PhD about ACE or the BCC, but about TD, the voices of staff members there needed to be brought to the fore.

Unavoidable absences (Present Absences): The Chairman of the Board of Trustees, and the Board as a whole, are very poignant, present absences in this thesis. When collating the archive, participants and I found several, neatly organised files of quarterly board meeting minutes dating back to the late 1990s. However, there were no minutes for TD’s last six months. When asked why, Delia told me that she usually took the minutes, but that neither she, nor any of TD’s staff members had been admitted to board meetings for the last six months of the organisation. There was a great deal of secrecy around what occurred at those meetings, because it was within the final board meeting that the decision was made to put TD into voluntary liquidation. This is the primary event that became legend through gossip. Had I been able to interview the Chairman of the Board, I may have gained a first-hand account of what happened in those final meetings, however they refused to be interviewed when asked. The Chairman appears in the research as a spectre, scapegoated then exonerated by the staff; half-accepted by the funders and seen by me only from a distance. Like the staff, they were in a position of fear and mistrust at the end of the organisation, and unlike with them, I did not have the opportunity to build a rapport with them, so this could have been a reason for their denial of access. These two present absences positioned the Board in the thesis’ analysis as distinct from the staff in its allegiances. In this way, the absences themselves became data. Had the aim of the research been to uncover ‘the truth’ of what closed TD, these absences would have been
voids in the research. However, the aim was to discover what the relationships between stakeholders were, and how their intersubjectivity caused a breakdown in the function of the organisation and the system that supported it. Because this was the aim, the silences of the Board and its chairman spoke volumes – their absence is their presence in the research.

2.5 Standpoint in data collection and analysis

‘Decolonisation never takes place unnoticed, for it influences individuals and modifies them fundamentally […] Decolonisation is the veritable creation of new [wo]men […] the ‘thing’ which has been colonized becomes man during the same process by which it frees itself.’ (Fanon, 1963: 36-37)

The thesis emphasizes an understanding of the social construction of arts organizations and the individuals who constitute them by wider political discourses, and their contribution to those discourses in return. It positions personal, institutional and societal decolonisation as a mode of breaking this cycle and reclaiming agency. Fanon talks about the effect that political decolonization has on the individuals who set about effecting it. The decolonizing process, he writes, creates decolonised individuals as well as new states. This research process, decolonial in its ambit, practice and praxis, effected change in me, as a researcher. That change necessarily affected the research process and analysis. It is my stance that this is a necessary and beneficial part of the research process, key to giving the thesis a life beyond the page insofar as it effects some decolonial change in those who may use it to inform policy. To frame this knock-on effect, I have been influenced by feminist standpoint theory particularly as expanded upon in Black feminism, specifically the work of Patricia Hill Collins (1999 & 2012).

As I began to write up sections of my fieldwork journals for analysis, I found myself slipping between ethnographic description and something closer to autoethnography. I began writing in this way by explicitly laying claim to a standpoint, informed by my particular social location as a British-born woman of Afro-Caribbean descent, born into a working class family in an area of South London that is not dissimilar to the location of TD, but who has gained a certain amount of social mobility and cultural capital through education. This was a story not dissimilar to many on TD’s management team. Stuart Hall acknowledged that in a post absolute truth era, to openly write from one’s own standpoint is to accept that truth is made up of multiple threads of human experience:

“I do want to talk about the past, but not in that way. Not in a patriarchal way, as the keeper of the conscience […] hoping to police you back into line of what it really was if only you knew. That is
to say I want to absolve myself of the many burdens of representation that people carry around – I carry around at least three: I'm expected to speak for the entire Black Race on all questions theoretical, critical etc., and sometimes for British politics […] This is what is known as the Black person’s burden, and I would like to absolve myself of it at this moment. That means, paradoxically, speaking autobiographically.” (Hall: 1996, 261)

To speak autobiographically is to consider the equal importance, indeed interdependence, of multiple narratives in creating truth. H. Richard Milner IV rejects ‘practices in which researchers detach themselves from the research process, particularly when they reject their racialized and cultural positionality in the research process’ (2007: 388). Both Hall and Milner write from minoritized social locations, which enable them to see not only that objectivity in the research process is impossible, but that subjectivity when owned can be insight, which adds to the body of knowledge in valuable ways. Feminist standpoint theory guided my research in two essential ways. Firstly, it was necessary during fieldwork to constantly re-evaluate my own standpoint as an unambiguously Black woman from a historically working class, Caribbean background working on Race and ethnicity, yet who was an outsider in the Newtown area and new to many of its concerns. Building a rapport with interviewees and becoming imbedded in TD’s community required me to be aware of my perceived and true social locations, helping me to claim a standpoint. Julia T. Wood has written that ‘a standpoint is achieved – earned through critical reflection on power relations and through engaging in the struggle to construct an oppositional stance’. She stresses that social location is not the same as standpoint; that standpoint comes from claiming a cause (2008, 56).

2.5.1 The importance and use of a Black, working-class feminist standpoint

I write as a Black woman. Because I had spent my career living and working in what Sara Ahmed has identified to be a gap between rhetoric and action created by language, policies and attitudes surrounding ‘ethnic and cultural diversity’ within mainstream cultural institutions (Ahmed, 2012), I entered TD with the ability to see what many who worked and performed there could also see, but what, as the coming chapters will explore, some policy makers and funders could not. I was aware of the othering processes often inherent in diversity policy. In the process of my research, the intractable entanglements that have developed between my person, the layers of my identity, my research methods and my chosen theories, became strengths. They enabled me to live my project, after the period of official ethnography ended before its time.
When considering the place from which I critically view the world, experienced TD and analysed my data, a particular type of Black feminist standpoint has been considered. Not only did this help me to develop the process of cyclical interviewing to check my interpretations of the field, it also provided a place for my voice and my work with the archive. I found the work of Patricia Hill Collins useful to this end, as well as in framing my work with the archive. The standpoint of insider/outsider, Collins acknowledges, is one that each of us occupies, yet being simultaneously insider and outsider in multiple worlds for research, is a privileged position. She says: ‘The issue for most of us lies less in being a pure insider or outsider than in the terms of our participation within all of the venues to which we belong.’ Hill-Collins, 2012: ix) TD was a site-bound field, filled mostly with people supposed by British society to be ‘like me’ because of Race. During ethnography, other differences took precedence. During the scoping and relationship-building months at the beginning of the project, my Caribbean (as opposed to continental African) heritage became important to members of staff as a point of connection with me, while my solidarity with their plight as members of an organization in TD’s geographical location and its audiences, was questioned because of my educational background, accent and other perceived markers of privilege. These things affected the speed at which I was able to build trust with participants prior to beginning the interview process. Additionally, there has been the insider/outsider positioning of academia and the arts. Presenting this work has brought me into contact with many arts practitioners, and there has been acknowledgement among many of a boundary between art (seen as akin to activism and practical change-making) and academic research (viewed with suspicion as something that observes struggle solely to comment on it, before retreating to its ivory tower). In arts conferences and symposiums, the purely academic researcher’s vantage point can be assumed to be cold and disinterested; one from which it is impossible to effectively engage with, or fully understand the people who are subjects of research. Meanwhile, in many academic environments this research has been assumed to be a ‘natural’ subject for me as a Black researcher, and I have been warned of the dangers of writing about something so close to home lest my work become overly polemical and not taken seriously. Therefore, this research process has required constant negotiation of the terms of acceptance of this work by others, not only in disseminating it but also in order to collaborate on producing it. Negotiating this is something that my position as insider / outsider enabled with to do without issue. Like Hill-Collins’, my education ‘was designed to equip me to wield the language of power to serve the interests of the gatekeepers who granted me legitimacy,’ but it has ‘revealed multiple truths,’ including those of the people who have no such legitimacy. The process of interview data analysis from
a working-class Black feminist standpoint was one of seeing and presenting ‘the richness of alternative viewpoints that have been ignored [or] neglected […] out of existence’, alongside data from official documents. (Hill-Collins, 2012: xii)

2.6 In Process: Data analysis

2.6.1 ATA: Documents analysed

The research process brought up the fact that each group of TD’s stakeholders, mentioned in this thesis, are represented in a series of documents and absences. It uses interviews with stakeholders to build on the data produced by analysis of the documents. These documents (and one poignant absence) are:

- The lack of Board meeting minutes in the archive. The fact that I was denied entry to the board meetings at the end. It is the great mystery surrounding the end of TD, and there are several stories about it.
- Great Arts and Culture for Everyone. This policy Document by ACE’s Sir Peter Bazalgette has driven arts policy, especially as pertains to diversity, over the past ten years.
- The Creative Case for Diversity documents. This ACE policy document also pertains to TD, as something that was heralded at its inception as a champion of Black arts – a natural ally in policy and toward funding, but which saw TD close halfway through its tenure.
- The Final CEO’s leaving letter, which he circulated via email to TD’s mailing lists as the organization closed. It is called Valedictory Message. Throughout my time at TD, the CEO was uncomfortable being interviewed.
- Final Report on the Future of The Drum. The document that features most significantly in the thesis’ data chapters is this 32-page document by Royce and Bain-Burnett. The investigation for this report, drawn up by ACE, was being conducted when I arrived at TD in late 2015. Released in early 2016, it was death knell for the organization. Though it presented other options as well as closure, and though many on the management team felt that it was meant as a warning and would not lead to closure, it did heavily suggest closure as the only reasonable measure and was written to justify that suggestion.

2.6.2 Applied Thematic Analysis

In keeping with applied thematic analysis (ATA), the method of analysis used in this thesis ‘combines appropriate methods and techniques from across traditions and epistemological
perspectives [...] eschewing a compartmentalized view of qualitative research and data analysis’ (Guest, MacQueen & Namey, 2012: 3&4). The data collection techniques were dictated by rapid and unexpected changes in the field, as has been discussed. The methods of collection were decolonial and liberatory in that they were exploratory and reflexive. This data required an analysis technique that used the same qualities. Guest, MacQueen and Namey describe ATA as ‘a type of inductive analysis of qualitative data that can involve multiple analytic techniques.’ (ibid.: 4)

As was described in Welcome, the thesis is organised according to the dominant themes from the data. The three major reasons proffered by interviewees and authors of relevant report documents as to why TD closed, were issues relating to its perceived loss of purpose, poor location and fraught relationships – both internal relations and with those outside. These themes were found by light coding of the interviews and of the Report on the Future of The Drum, to search for the frequency of their mention. The process for this was:

1. Themes within the report were found and listed through document analysis.
2. Transcripts from interviews and speeches were coded to see which dominant themes in the interview transcripts matched those in the report
3. The three most dominant themes in both became the basis of the three data chapters, Purpose, Location and Relationships.
4. Field notes were coded according to these three themes, as was archival data.

As part of ATA, this was followed by narrative analysis of the ways that these themes were mentioned, to discern what the interrelationships were between them, and between the people who spoke in them. De Fina and Georgakopoulou (2019: 3) have identified ‘a shift from texts to practices in narrative studies.’ They propose a ‘practice based “social interactional” approach to narratives’. This involves ‘combining a focus on local interaction as a starting point for analysis with an understanding of the embedding of narratives within discursive and sociocultural contexts,’ and constitutes:

‘(i) a focus on interaction and the local level
(ii) an emphasis on the contextualizing power of narratives
(iii) a commitment to social theoretical concerns’ (ibid.).
This method of analysis was useful given the thesis’ focus not on uncovering a true narrative, but on discovering the context of TD’s successes, failures and closure by way of the narratives’ complexities. The narratives stand for people, and their interactions with each other demonstrate the interactions between people. Analysing developments in the ways that people spoke about each other over time, between one interview and another for example, and even within the same interview, was key to understanding the complexities of understandings of their own identities and actions, and those of others. Compared to this, the documents are fixed and static. The ways that people’s interviews with ACE have been used are seen as problematic in this context, because there is no room for development of thought, or for in-depth analysis of why things have been said and in what contexts, in a document that has been researched in the space of one month, then used to inform a decision as final as the closure of an organisation. The problems inherent in this are highlighted when compared with the fluidity of people’s reactions in interviews for this thesis. This is why social interactional approaches to research analysis have been important.

2.7 Careful Research: ‘Washing our dirty linen in public’ [Ethics]

2.7.1 Taking Care: What to say and what to leave unsaid

So, where is the right forum, when are we going to talk about this? We’re not supposed to wash our dirty linen in public. But we have lost an institution. Why does The Drum matter? (Samad Speech, 2016)

In his speech at the closing ceremony, Samad implored TD’s stakeholders to break silence about what happened at the organization. In doing so, he contradicted Sarah’s earlier opening of ‘I’m not going to talk about why we’re here tonight – having this conversation is not appropriate,’ (Sarah Speech, 2016) acknowledging the communities’ reluctance to share perceived failings with a wider society who may not understand. Talking publicly about what happened, he suggests, may be seen as divisive - a betrayal of trust of TD’s leadership, and its communities. Nonetheless he implored those present to do so, because he saw something larger at stake than dignity. He felt that it was necessary to talk about what happened, to reason it out, because TD mattered. The question: ‘Why does The Drum matter?’ became one of this thesis’ central questions, because if TD had closed because it did not matter, there would have been no point in writing this at all. We have since discovered that it does matter, because it is reopening taking on another iteration. The chapters Purpose and Location discuss the ways that it mattered, the peculiarity of its remit at this point in Britain’s history, and the ways that it can
be learned from. Nevertheless, the uncomfortable fact that the thesis exists to share what was perceived by TD’s stakeholders as shameful information to be kept private, is its overarching ethical concern. Then, to think about it a different way, the thesis has become part of TD’s legacy insofar as its research involved the collation of the archive, participation in at meetings and conversations about TD’s past and future and recording the final days of the organization. As such, my aim from the beginning was for the thesis to bring about decolonisation work itself, as has been discussed above. For this, it required an emancipatory research methodology that was complex, reflexive, based on repetition and re-visitation. It was focused on checking, re-checking, and taking care.

I mentioned earlier in this chapter that navigating an emotionally charged office environment and conducting research often meant listening to gossip and deciding what could ethically be used as data. I also mentioned that deciding what could be recalled in interviews as subject matter for questioning, and with whom, was sometimes tricky to navigate. The most basic level of ethics for this thesis was built on the BSA statement of ethical practice (2017). However, the particularities of my case study meant that other layers of ethical consideration needed to be added.

2.7.2 Maintaining Consent for each research method

I have been careful not to prioritize my commitment to the advancement of knowledge at the expense of the rights of others. (British Sociological Association, 2017: 4) This has meant taking care to maintain the consent of each participant for their contributions to the project. A further layer of consent is still to come, I have promised to obtain consent again before publishing the work.

**Participant Observation at TD:** Consent for my participant observation at TD was officially gained before my application to undertake the PhD. A representative from TD was instrumental in applying for the Collaborative Doctoral Award, alongside academics from Warwick University, and became part of my supervisory structure. In reality however, consent was obtained in stages. On my first day at the organization I was taken around by my Drum Supervisor and introduced to each member of staff as a researcher, undertaking a PhD at TD. I asked for consent before recording any meeting to which I was invited. Sometimes this was granted, and sometimes not. For example, I was permitted by the CEO to record the Stakeholders’ Meeting (which forms the basis of Relationships), which was also a public meeting, and which was held at TD during my tenure as ethnographer there. I did so openly,
and all present knew that I was recording. I asked for consent similarly at a steering group meeting, which was not public, and I was denied permission to record audio, but permitted to take notes.

**Interviews:** Consent forms were signed prior to each interview. The first round of interviews was for the archive, and therefore immediately admitted to the public domain pending cataloguing, with the rest of the collection. Second-round interviews were acknowledged to be specifically for the PhD. If participants wished to have something that they said in the second interviews not included in any published work, they sometimes mentioned this within the interview, and sometimes afterwards (this occurred twice). The requests were honoured, and these sections of the recordings were removed from the transcripts.

**Speeches:** The speeches used were from the event *The Final Beat of The Drum*. When he opened the ceremony, the CEO announced my involvement in preparing for the event, informed people of my role as researcher there, and let them know that I would be recording the event on my dictaphone. Nevertheless, I was aware that some people who gave speeches may have arrived late and missed the announcement, so I approached each person and asked to consent to use their speeches following the event. These were the people known in the thesis as Samad, Sarah, ‘a former CEO’ and ‘a former Chairman of the Board’. Verbal agreement was considered enough in this case, as it was a public event and was being recorded for posterity.

**Incidental conversations (extended ethnography):** Relevant elements of incidental conversations that happened at TD, and during the official period of ethnography were noted down as fieldnotes with the permission of the person with whom I was conversing. Following this, every time an incidental conversation occurred, I asked for permission to use any relevant information. Most incidental conversations were not used in the analysis, but they were helpful insofar as they often led to interviews. An example of the use of information from an incidental conversation that occurred following TD’s closure, is my conversation with Albert at a family funeral, which appears in the chapter *Relationships*.

**Documents:** All documents used are in the public domain. *Valedictory Message* by TD’s CEO was sent via email to national mailing lists and people were encouraged to share it. Additionally, I was given permission by the CEO to share it. The documents that form part of the archive were also approved for the public domain. All documents that the management team did not wish to be included were shredded, as I later discovered.
2.7.3 Anonymization

Why is The Drum not anonymized? The PhD began as a collaborative doctoral award, with TD as a named collaborative partner. The award was advertised online before my application to undertake it. This and the fact that TD was the last organization of its kind in the UK, meant that it anonymization of the organization would have been impossible. Moreover, none of the interview participants wished to have TD anonymized. All saw their participation in the project as work toward righting a wrong inflicted on the organization and its communities by representatives of the British State.

Anonymization of individuals: All names in this thesis have been changed. Job roles have also not been included; only whether or not those interviewed occupied managerial posts. Because of the necessarily small size of the sample at interview, it may be possible for those who worked within the organization to discover who is being referenced, but those who did not, should not be able to decipher this. The participants are aware of this. At the beginning of one interview, when told of this, the participant referred to as Asif is recorded saying ‘that’s OK, I have nothing to hide’. (Asif Interview, 2017) Some people were impossible to anonymize. The CEO, the former CEO, the Chairman of the Board, these were roles so integral to their inclusion in the thesis’ analysis, that I could not leave them out – to do so would be to render the findings moot and the research valueless. I ensured that they were not named beyond the inclusion of their job titles. I also gave the final CEO and Chairman the choice of whether or not to be interviewed. The CEO agreed but was vague in their interviews, the Chair declined consent and was therefore not interviewed.

2.8 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have introduced the complex field of research that I encountered, both at TD and after it closed. That field brought its own intricacies to my ethical considerations for this research. Those intricacies included how best to maintain access to participants, whether and how far it was possible to maintain anonymity of individuals and giving those individuals choice of how much to share. My research design and methods were result of my choice to focus on the core members of TD’s non-commercial staff team who remained at the organization’s end, to redress the imbalance of communication that the availability of ACE’s report and BCC’s meetings created within the data that presented itself more organically during ethnography. I have also explored the role of the archive in the process, as a source of data and as a moment of intellectual activism that enabled access to other data sources. I have described the process that I have called cyclical interviewing, which involved reading vignettes from my
fieldwork journals to participants and allowing them to respond in interviews, then using their responses to inform the analysis of the research journals, enriching both sets of data.

I was careful to be attentive to ethical guidelines, and even asked for consent where documents and speeches were in the public domain and being recorded for the archive that I would be using. I considered the specific implications of ‘washing dirty linen in public’ as an insider/outside member of TD’s communities and researcher. I was already part of the organisation and collaborated with participants in this to erode the power imbalance between researcher and participants as far as possible.
3. Position

3.1 Introduction

This PhD ultimately considers the role of a specific politically Black arts organisation within the context of three main interlocking discourses, namely the critical discourse of cultural diversity in the arts and the policies built upon it, that of contemporary urban multiculture (which equates to the multiple, shifting meeting points of Race & Class in the UK), and finally, that around the crisis of neoliberalism, as it affects the arts. In separating each discourse out, this thesis explores some dynamics and relationships between the three as they met at TD’s intersection. This chapter, moreover, positions the thesis in three arenas: policy, scholarship and the world.

Position in the world: Firstly, the thesis’ enquiries are placed into the context of a broader problem, in the section entitled Being called ‘Nigger’ in Africa. TD’s context of Birmingham is linked to the wider world here, to show how racialization and racism are not only context specific, and how they have shifted since the crisis of neoliberalism (2007-10). The moment at which the thesis has come to fruition is presented as an acute moment of for anti-Black racism worldwide, even as anti-Blackness is acknowledged to be just one of the racisms that has developed as a result of the current iteration of capitalism. Marrakech is the chosen setting, but any number of cities would have been appropriate, in varying ways. Even since 2007-10 (van Apeldoorn and Overbeek, 2014), many scholars have written about neoliberalism’s effects on the arts and knowledge production (Howard and King, 2008; Couldry, 2010; Harvie, 2013; Ward, 2014). However, in this chapter, it forms the backdrop for the other two discourses and their socio-political context of the UK. Therefore, neoliberalism’s effects are introduced in this first section. They are situated in lived experience, rather than presented through scholarship.

Position in scholarship: The second section, Lexicon, locates the PhD intellectually and within the bodies of literature surrounding elements of the three main discourses: cultural diversity, contemporary multiculture and the crisis of neoliberalism’s effects in the UK. Race and money in the arts will be the focus of the ensuing chapters, and this section of Position takes us on a journey through the key terms that were contested during the research process, to position this research within the existing literatures. The section begins by mapping the thesis’ broad
scholarly context of Race and racialization in UK sociology and cultural studies. Specifically, it considers Race in UK in urban multiculture. It then moves on to the discourse around power and privilege. The lexical markers here are: Cultural hegemony, Whiteness, White supremacy and White privilege. The thesis is then located within bodies of scholarship on resistance, surrounding Blackness, political Blackness, strategic essentialism and decolonization in the Global North. Finally, work by Sara Ahmed and Nirmal Puwar on diversity & inclusion rhetoric in neoliberal institutions is considered, to position discourse on cultural diversity policy as the point of convergence between the previously explored bodies of scholarship on power and resistance. This is the point at which this thesis sits – at point where attempts at resistance are co-opted and destroyed by power. Decolonization is then returned to as a possible alternative to diversity and inclusion.

**Position in policy:** In its final section, this chapter briefly asks: How is Race dealt with in arts policy? This last section studies elements of three documents that have informed the thesis’ enquiry into Race and money in the arts: *The Arts Britain Ignores* by Naseem Khan (1978), *Great Arts and Culture for Everyone* by Sir Peter Bazalgette for Arts Council England (ACE) (2013) and *The Creative Case for Diversity*, by ACE (2018).

3.2 Position in The World | or | Being Called “Nigger!” in Africa.

‘Race and its exclusionary, humiliating, and violent expressions, [are] historically produced and contemporarily articulated, yet so often in denial. About the transformational grammars of race and racisms as neoliberal political economy has assumed a more-or-less firm grip on different societies, across varying regions. I am concerned with what is unique to those geo-regional expressions, and what can be generalized across them.’ (Goldberg, 2009: vi)

This is bigger than TD; bigger than Birmingham. This is the world in which we live, now. Almost any city could have been chosen as case study for an enquiry into neoliberal capitalism’s effects on Race, and racialized peoples. Some would have been more dramatic than others to explain – would be more easily understood for what they are. However, each experience is, at least in part, a symptom of the same thing and produces, to greater or lesser extent, the same effect – erasure of humanity at the level of the individual, whether via institutions and organizations or not. This is not to be reductive. Solomos and Gilroy (1981: 10) pointed out that ‘such a reduction avoids difficult problems by attributing the type and
direction of the changes occurring to an outside force, some inevitable determinant of all social relations.’ However, just as they recognized at the beginning of the 1980s that ‘while the specific forms of racism which exist in Britain today have been shaped by endogenous political-economic forces, they have also been transformed in ways which can only be understood as the result of the qualitative changes in Britain’s international position’, I acknowledge that economic and some social and cultural shifts over the past ten years have been global in their nature. So, to place The Drum, Birmingham and the contemporary Black experience into the thesis’ global context, here is a snapshot from another city.

3.2.1 A Current Racism

The world goes through racism cycles. The shifting nature of racism has been written about at length, inside and outside of scholarship. Because of the need to understand its inextricability from the development of capitalism in Western modernity and because of the hope that in some way, understanding racism may lead to its eradication, it remains a constant object of study. The minute one racism is understood, the economy turns a flip and a new racism emerges to support an economic system reborn. Solomos and Gilroy (1982: 9) described this as ‘the organic [rather than the economic] nature of the crisis, meaning that it is the combined effect of economic, political, ideological and cultural processes.’ Furthermore, they acknowledged just after the financial crisis of the 1970s, that ‘Race has increasingly become the means by which hegemonic relations are secured in a period of structural crisis management’ (ibid.) The present moment sees the world in flux again, economically, politically and socially. Since the Global Financial Crisis (GFC) began in 2007, the increased divide between rich and poor and increasingly cutthroat nature of capitalist individualism and competition has led to, among many other things, a reported rise in fascism and multiple forms of racism worldwide, including anti-Blackness. The world has seen a rapid global upsurge in many forms of racism (most notably islamophobia) at this time, enabled by existing racial hierarchies that have long been embedded in the capitalist system (Hall, 1992; Kundnani, 2014). The number of conferences and forums about what it means to be Black in this world has risen alongside anti-Blackness, as has global interest in it, as well as in the African Diaspora in general.\footnote{2019 is the UN’s International Decade of the people of the African Diaspora, Ghana has had its year of return.} As a person who is read by world as a Black woman, and as someone who has travelled extensively during this
time, this means that I have been called “nigger” in more places than I can count in recent years, but one experience stands out as the only reasonable opening for this chapter of the thesis, as it encapsulates with stark imagery the intellectual conundrum addressed by the work.

In June of 2019 I found myself walking on Avenue Hommane El Fetouaki, a large main street in Marrakech. I was with a small group of female friends, all people of Afro-Caribbean descent, all from the UK. It was my first night in the city in 12 years, and I noticed several changes. In the years between 2007 and 2019 the street between the neighbourhood of Guilez and the intersection before the famous Jma El Fnaa main square had largely been gentrified. At the Guilez end, many of the ageing hotels and small, local shops selling groceries, traditional clothes and bric-a-brac had been replaced by two large malls foregrounding international women’s clothing chains H&M and Zara, and housing a large Carrefour supermarket. Further down the street, The McDonalds that had just arrived (to some buzz) in 2007 was now a busy high street staple and was accompanied by a plethora of juice bars and restaurants with large terraces that promoted French-style café culture. There were Greek, Lebanese, Thai, Indian and Italian restaurants – it was not easy to find one that served Moroccan food. There was a visibly greater number of European tourists than in 2007, and Moroccan people dressed, and seemed to socialize differently to back then. Even ten minutes’ drive away, there were still families socializing in the parks at dusk, mopeds parked up outside cafes and people who smiled and greeted you in the street; but this neoliberal hub had become something else. Chicly dressed people in their 30s and 40s milled about, drinking coffee on the Parisian looking terraces. Groups of teenage boys hung out near the mall areas, sporting Beats by Dre headphones and name-branded clothing. I didn’t notice such boys on the street in 2007. Their predecessors had been older men, walking together sometimes hand in hand, often lost in friendly conversation. The new generation seemed less concerned with each other and more inquisitive about outsiders, including me. I hung back to take it all in, and no sooner was I separated from my group than I heard, saw and felt the word “Nigger!” from the mouth of one boy. The word struck again as I looked around to see him, and he met my eye with a half-smile as he yelled it a third time, proudly and with a strange tone of surprise. He was alone, and had momentarily looked up from his phone to slide one Beats headphone back and deliver the blows in my direction. Incensed, I gave him the finger. He screamed at me: “Fucking Bitch!” but with no trace of anger in his voice. Instead there was more surprise, and pride at himself for doing something that he had seen done somewhere before. The tone of surprise stayed with me more than most of what happened. The tone, and the smile of wonder on his face as he struck me
with the most hateful words in his racist, sexist arsenal. It seemed that the situation was as surreal and unbelievable to him as it was to me.

It struck me that the boy’s branded attire (the conspicuous consumption of marketed Western and, ironically, Black-originated ‘cool’ in the Beats By Dre headphones and style of dress) and his proximity to the city’s centre of cosmopolitan consumption were not unlinked to his behaviour. I do not claim causation. It is impossible to directly attribute this incident of clear and overt misogynoir (Bailey, 2010) to an increase in consumer culture in Marrakech over other factors, such as the fact that this time, unlike in 2007 I was travelling in a group of women, not under the seeming protection of my father. But the fact was, this happened in 2019 in a place where 12 years previously I had been welcomed and treated well, and it was not a one-off incident. The teenage population of El Jadida invented a new word to describe us: Nigger-selles, a play on Mademoiselles. It was thrown at us wherever we went as a common salutation. Whether it was meant maliciously is less important than how it was unavoidably experienced. Evidence of access to American popular culture without the filter of cultural literacy and codes of politeness was also everywhere, with “’sup my nigga” as common a greeting from young Arab men in their teens as the by now familiar “Hey, Rasta!” was from the older, Bob Marley memorabilia-selling, middle-aged Berber men in the Atlas mountains. Blackness meant cool in one context, and it meant political affiliation to indigenous struggles against oppression in the other. In the case of the boys Blackness had been commodified for, marketed to and consumed by them without any accompanying education of the differences between Blackness portrayed on screen and Blackness experienced in person. In the case of the Berber men, the same is true. And while both thought they understood what they were seeing because of the version of Blackness that they had seen mediated by popular culture, in both contexts there was a freeness in applying meaning and enforcing it; a sense of ownership of our identities, which felt like a violation. As Claudia Rankine describes it in Citizen: An American Lyric, this was “the erasure [that] the attempted erasure triggers” in the psyche of the Black person (Rankine, 2014: II). The point here, is to highlight the link of Race, Race-thinking and racism to aggressive forms of capitalism and their global spread through the commodification and flattening of cultures and through communication vehicles like internet platforms and retail advertising. On the flip side, neoliberal capitalism’s crisis in the Global Financial Crisis (GFC) caused what has been commonly referred to as the migrant crisis, which has seen visibly increased numbers of sub-Saharan African men (less so women) working their way through Moroccan cities on the way to Europe, to which they must now go if they are to have any hope
of having some share of the world’s unevenly distributed wealth. Upon speaking to some members of the Senegalese migrant community in Marrakech and relaying our experiences, we discovered without surprise that the treatment we received aligned with their day-to-day experience. The Senegalese lack of respect that my group experienced, men attributed to their own lowly status in the country, and what Blackness has therefore come to mean in Morocco. This shift is a direct result of neoliberal capitalism’s effect on the contemporary world.

3.2.2 Strategic essentialism in response to racism

On my 2007 trip to Morocco I had been welcomed ‘home’ by people of all Races when they saw my skin tone, but by 2019 this was the furthest from being the case. T-Shirts with an image of the African continent embroidered onto the fronts, that were being sold by the Senegalese men we met in Jma El Fnaa square, were the only reminders we had that we were on the African continent. Interestingly we formed an alliance, my group and the Senegalese. They called us ‘Sister’ and saw to it that we were charged a fair price for our taxi ride home. One of them told us “Don’t be fooled. Moroccans do not like Negros. If they welcome you, it is because they like your money. They do not like Negros. The situation here is very bad. A Negro was murdered last week in Tangier. But nevertheless, wherever you go, Negro is happy. Because the joy comes from God.” Despite my group being second and third generation afro-Caribbean British female tourists, and these men, first-generation Senegalese migrants, strategic essentialism (Spivak 1988, 1996) formed organically between us in the face of racism. This is how racism creates alliances, even families of sorts, from people who may otherwise be strangers. This will be a recurring theme of the ensuing chapters (particularly Chapter 6, Relationships), because similar connections were formed TD. Yet, in other situations, distinctions of identity were created by those overdetermining us from without. (Fanon, 1967: 116) In neoliberal capitalism, money talks. There were two assumptions made by Arab Moroccans: either that we were American (perceived as the good kind of Black, the kind who spends and tips) or that we were Senegalese (perceived as the bad kind of Black, a migrant who takes and drains). Either way, Blackness was for exploitation only in this valuing of it. There was a difference in the way that we were treated by vendors when they thought that we were American (we were enthusiastically welcomed, then greeted with fist bump attempts before being sold to aggressively) and the way that we were treated when they thought that we were Senegalese (we were treated with absolute disdain). The solidarity that we found with the Senegalese men in Morocco, I have encountered to varying degrees with Black strangers across
the diaspora. There is the acknowledgement of ‘the nod’ between Black people, particularly men, that is so widely understood as being fact that it has become the name of a popular podcast, and the prevalence of the DAP (standing for Dignity And Pride) handshake, begun by African American soldiers in the Vietnam war and spread across Black Atlantic culture wherever there was a need for solidarity in the face of oppression. (Smithsonian, 2014; Westheider, 2008) Between Black women the equivalent has become a smile in the street, a ‘hello sis’ (mostly North American or when dealing with North Americans) or a compliment to a stranger. In this case, the exchange was strengthened and lengthened by the oppression we all faced in the Marrakech context. My group needed an explanation for it - it was happening to us but we did not fully understand it. The Senegalese men provided the explanation – they spoke the language and had lived there for a while. Moreover, being read as men by others, they could demand respect and fair treatment for us that misogynoir rendered us powerless to demand for ourselves. They could help us along a little.

In the contemporary West, solidarity is more fragmented because racism and sexism are rarely so stark and pervasive. We are united by the feeling that Rankine recalls Zora Neale Hurston in describing as being ‘thrown against a sharp white background’ (Rankine, 2014: II). Though Citizen is called an American lyric, the case studies she uses are global. Indeed, the one that refers to the stark white background is about Serena Williams’ treatment at the hands of oppressive Whiteness (which is to be explained later in this chapter) in international tennis tournaments. This cannot be isolated to one country, it happens on a daily basis wherever a Black body goes, and it takes its toll on the psyche. The term currently popular for describing this is ‘microaggression’, first coined by Harvard Psychiatrist Chester M. Peirce. Peirce wrote that ‘One must not look for the gross and obvious. The subtle, cumulative mini-assault is the substance of today’s racism’ (Peirce, 1970: 516). This descriptor deals with the end-result of insipid and pervasive systemic and institutional racisms that keep capitalism afloat by maintaining hierarchies between people. We are all complicit in this as producers, sellers and consumers of culture, as well as of products.

3.2.3 From Marrakech to The Drum: Relevance to this thesis

The ways that this affects Blackness is important for this thesis. The way that it upholds White supremacy, dividing people of colour whether Whiteness is present or not, is all-important for
understanding its focus. The Moroccan experience and others like it, as well as their increasing frequency as I move through today’s world, have led to the thesis’ standpoint. They are the reason for its focus on Blackness, and the lens of experience through which I have analysed The Drum. They are also the reason for its broad reach, despite its seemingly narrow focus. Because of the global reach of neoliberal capitalism, because of its commodification and exploitation of Blackness, Birmingham cannot be extricated from Marrakech. The case study may be in a British city, but the problem is, to a lesser or greater extent, pervasive across the world. In this thesis, Black lives, Black experiences, Black voices and therefore Black cultural expression, matter. What the experiences have given me is real, lived insight into the nature of global contemporary anti-Black racism and the importance of Black space. It helps me to understand why some black and Black Mixed-Race UK writers are calling for a return to Garveyite Pan Africanism. Franz Fanon (1967: 172) who first coined the term racialization (to be explored in this chapter’s Lexicon section), did not support strategic essentialism, predicting that it would lead to a dead end. He asserted that the ‘historical necessity in which [wo]men of African culture find themselves to racialize their claims and to speak more of African culture than of national culture will tend to lead them up a blind alley”. Nevertheless, the use of Pan African Blackness as a unifying concept has been called for in definitive terms by many in the contemporary UK as the answer to the specific issues that face those racialized as Black today; particularly within the Black Studies movement in academia (Andrews & Palmer, 2016; Andrews, 2018).

3.2.4 The Intellectual Problem

Experiences like the one in Marrakech are also the intellectual problem of the thesis: What is the role of Race in the contemporary world? How have capitalism’s most recent crisis and its aftermath affected Race and racisms? How have these shifts affected urban multicultural? Coming back to the UK, how has this played out in the arena of arts funding there? The Marrakech vignette is an everyday example of the world in which we live. A billion examples like this have been produced by the near collapse and violent salvaging of an economic system, which has led to the displacement of many, and scapegoating of even more of those at the bottom of pre-existing racial hierarchies that were created by an earlier iteration of capitalism. That iteration was built upon Western colonialism and the enslavement of people of African descent. Within the broad questions around Race outlined above, the thesis explores the following questions that are specific to Blackness: What is the place of strategic essentialism
in the Arts in the UK today? What is the role of Blackness within strategic essentialism? Why was it needed in the first place, and how viable is it as an intellectual tool toward equity in contemporary multiculture? Is it simply reactive; a defensive response to racism? If so, is it sustainable in a world where covert racism orders and structures society, culturally? Can it provide an answer to the inequitable representation and minoritization of groups considered to be of less value within social hierarchies? Should culturally specific arts organizations be provided for by the central funding bodies – given that those bodies attest to be in support of providing ‘Great arts and Culture for Everyone’? (Bazalgette, 2013)

3.3 Position in Scholarship: Lexicon

Words are generative - they create meaning as well as conveying it. Decolonization, as used in this thesis, connotes revolution and radical change to the organizational structures of racial capitalism (Bhattacharyya, 2018), which it acknowledges as the result of coloniality/modernity. Decolonization features in the title for this thesis and is integral to the political and methodological aspects of its analysis, having been used methodologically in Chapter 2, Process, and politically as we will see in Chapter 4, Purpose. The decolonization that features in the thesis’ title is an active process of dismantling colonial structures, and therefore, while it is also an important part of the thesis’ theoretical framework, having informed both its conception and praxis, theoretical decoloniality features to support decolonization as intellectual activism. As Process has shown, the research for this thesis was active and ongoing. Much time was spent in the library, but more time was spent in the field in active participant observation, and in the collation and storage of an TD’s archive. As such, the thesis goes far beyond intellectual decolonization, the limits of which have been decried (Tuck & Wang, 2012; Mahfooz, 2020).

Over the course of this PhD (the title was chosen in 2015 and the thesis submitted in 2019) decolonization has fallen increasingly out of favour in the scholarly community as a concept with the power to effect change. In contemporary scholarship, the concept and practice of decolonization is most frequently written about in relation to the claims of indigenous peoples to land from which they have been displaced by colonial settlers and their descendants. Eve Tuck and Wayne Yang (2012) opposed the popular use of the term to refer to decolonization of the mind, and of institutions, which can happen outside of settler colonies. Moreover, the use of the word in former seats of empire like Britain, is contested heavily by them. It has most
recently been critiqued as a buzzword or intellectual bandwagon, replacing Cultural Diversity as the latest term to be subsumed by the mainstream, made fashionable and stripped of its useful meaning. (Tuck & Wang, 2012; Moosavi, 2020) There is a growing consensus that the concept of decolonization itself has been colonized by intellectuals from the global north and has lost its power, which existed precisely within its situatedness in geographic alterity. (Spivak, 2014) Its origins in global south residents and their diasporic cousins, appeared to have been lost in the sea of European and North American scholars writing about decolonization, from within the very Western academic institutions that uphold systemic inequality rooted in colonialism. This thesis reasserts the term ‘decolonization’ in the context of a diasporic community within a former seat of empire, deliberately including it in its title. This is because decolonization remains at the root of the thesis’ research questions around capitalism and Race. It is also because, although neoliberalism subsumes words and exploits them for profit, this word still has value in creating change, dismantling structures of European dominance and White supremacy. It is for that reason that it has been used.

Decolonization has been written about in scholarship in a variety of ways; it is used here in the way that scholars from Latin American and Caribbean / Caribbean diaspora have developed its ideas, whether it is named explicitly, such as in the work of Frantz Fanon (1961) Quijano (1992; 2000), Mignolo (2011) and Lugones (2008; 2010), or not but referred to implicitly, as in works by Sylvia Wynter (2001), Stuart Hall, Walter Rodney (1969, 1972). Catherine E Walsh and Walter Mignolo (2018) are interested in Relationality, which is the closest conception of decoloniality to that espoused in this thesis. They describe it as “the ways that different local histories and embodied conceptions and practices of decoloniality, including our own, can enter into conversations and build understandings that both cross geopolitical locations and colonial differences, and contest the totalizing claims and political epistemic violence of modernity.” Relationality is both a way of seeing the relatedness of global decolonial struggles, and a way of valuing story in the process of producing decolonial research. Toward the end of this section, this chapter discusses the thesis’ use of decolonization, and the possible use of the term in future work.

Decolonization is carried out as much through language as through action. Because of this, decolonial language must be deliberate. The theoretical framework for this thesis is therefore not organized around the work of specific theorists, nor does it religiously adhere to schools of thought. Rather, it revolves around the recurring use of a series of words, the various meanings
and morphing usages of which are explored in this section. As *Process* explored, the aim for this thesis is to effect decolonization rather than to become, upon completion, a philosophical document of distant musings. As such, knowledge is prioritized here according to its potential use, sometimes disregarding orthodoxies in the ways that theory is applied and which theorists are used together. This section sets out the toolkit of intellectual traditions that I have drawn upon in thinking this project out. In referring to its theoretical basis as a toolkit, I draw on Foucault’s and Lorde’s conceptions of scholarship as generative of a new self, in the way that decolonization was described in *Process*. Jana Sawici has written that ‘In the Nietzschean vein, [Foucault] privileged critique over efforts to establish procedures and norms necessary to legitimate social and political order – destabilizing rather than securing our identities as human beings.’ (Sawici in Gutting, 2006: 181).

This is what Tuck and Gorlewski, drawing on Lorde (2017) and quoting Kuttner (2017), identified as “an arena of active struggle”.

> “Futurities that aspire toward struggle involve re-imagining change as ongoing and struggle toward change as desirable. This is fundamentally different from a perspective of change as linear, predictable, and measurable in increments of knowledge that are (somehow) linked to increased empowerment.” (Gorlewski & Tuck, 2018: 186)

Anamik Saha’s work, both alone and in collaboration with others (Saha and Hesmondhalgh, 2013, Saha, 2018) addresses the ways in which racial capitalism impacts the cultural industries and vice versa, in the UK. This thesis stands on the shoulders of that work, as well as on the separate bodies of literature on Race, and on the cultural industries. The literature on Race is helpful because neo-Marxist sociologists have provided a fulsome exploration of the ways in which the term can be employed practically in anti-racist action. However, it is those theorists who have been most concerned with the potential of Race as a unifying concept that I am most interested in for this thesis. Theoretically therefore, the work uses that of Gyatri Chakravorty Spivak on strategic essentialism, and of Stuart Hall and Paul Gilroy on lived multi-cultures. It sits between two realms of literature: the vast body of sociological work on Race, and the growing body of work from the discipline of Cultural Policy Studies on the changing nature of the arts in Neoliberal Capitalism. Rather than combining the wealth of scholarship on these two subjects, it uses the work within each that sits nearest their intersection. It does so to aid in an understanding of the effects of neoliberal capitalism on the way that the cultural industries have come to engage with processes of racialization and class-formation. Then, the rest of the
thesis considers the effects of those sorting mechanisms on quality of life and opportunities for people of colour in the UK, including those racialized as Black. By the same token, it aims to understand the ways in which Race and Class affect people’s engagement with the arts in the UK and what effect this has on both the nation - as a concept built through cultural and political discourses - and the people within it who contribute to that discourse to varying degrees, not least through involvement in the arts. It does so in order to help achieve the desired result for the thesis: an understanding of how this knowledge can affect arts funding structures in a way that is positive, constructive and fair.

This is as much about the use of Race by the institutions and corporations that exist within and sustain neoliberal capitalism as are incidents of overt racism like that in Marrakech. Both are about power. The research analysis utilized both Gramsci (on hegemony) and Foucault (on discourse and governmentality) interchangeably, and this is because they are both used by Stuart Hall, through whose critical lens this framework uses both Foucault and Gramsci. White supremacy is considered as the cultural hegemonic tool by which neoliberal capitalism maintains its hold on the world, ordering society. The thesis, particularly Chapter 5, Location, deals with the way that White supremacy functions when Whiteness is not directly present – how hegemony enforces its power indirectly through the arts and cultural policies. Discourse is used as Hall uses it in The West and The Rest (1992), to make sense of the way that this process happens. To do so, Hall draws on Foucault:

'We should admit that power produces knowledge .... That power and knowledge directly imply one another; that there is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute ... power relations' (Foucault, 1980: 27).

Discourses surrounding the words ‘British’ and ‘Black’ are explored in the data chapters to follow. Discourse enables an understanding of the ways in which Blackness and Britishness are formed over time and in response to racism’s various and ever-changing iterations. The reason for a call for Black people to be enabled do this on our own terms has been laid out here in this section. The value of it, and the question of how far designated cultural spaces are necessary to that end, and should be funded by the UK government, are explored in the rest of the thesis.
The way that TD functioned, and Black-coded space tends to function, as a temporary reprieve from White supremacy, is written about by Hall in relation to Gramsci’s concept of the War of Position. Writing in 1987, Hall applied it to a moment at the height of Thatcherism when he was considering populist politics and how the left could possibly compete with the regressive modernization and all-encompassing politics of Thatcherite neoliberalism. He understood that power was spread and needed to be won, over conflicting sites and on multiple levels. There needed, he felt, to be something that succeeded in capturing the mass national imagination, in the way that Thatcherism had done. This moment, at the end of the critical decade in arts and culture and five years before TD’s inception, was a tipping point, for Hall:

“We are living through the proliferation of the sites of power and antagonism in modern society. The transition to this new phase is decisive for Gramsci. It puts directly on the political agenda the questions of moral and intellectual leadership, the educative and formative role of the state, the ‘trenches and fortifications’ of civil society, the crucial issue of the consent of the masses and the creation of a new type or level of civilisation, a new culture. It draws the decisive line between the formula of ‘Permanent Revolution’ and the formula of ‘civil hegemony’. It is the cutting-edge between the war of movement and the war of position’: the point where Gramsci’s world meets ours.” (Hall, 1987: 86)

The war of position is Gramsci’s terminology for “the kind of prolonged struggle for hegemony necessitated in a state with a developed civil society in order to prepare for the moment of war of movement or frontal attack, when state power is seized”. During the war of position, it is possible to create moments and spaces that tip hegemony for brief moments in certain spaces, in the favour of the oppressed. This creates a safe haven from hegemonic power. This thesis examines how TD functioned this way until 2016.

3.3.1 Race / Racialization in UK scholarship

The thesis draws on a Neo-Marxist approach to the study of Race. It approaches Race as something that is constructed and imagined; imposed and not innate, but useful insofar as it can be employed in the resistance of racism. The word Race is not placed in inverted commas as something that is not real, as some scholars have chosen to do. Rather, it is capitalized as something that is reified through the naming of it – or even through Race-thinking, before speech (Malik, 1996). Robert Miles’ view of Race as a cover or mask has proven useful; likewise, the semiotic understanding of it as a sticky sign, to which other associations are added (Nayak in Murji & Solomos, 2005: 8). This last, has informed Location in its analysis of the
criminalization of Afro-Caribbean Blackness in TD’s locale of Newtown, Birmingham. Miles saw Race as a mere cover for Class-relations, yet The Drum case study suggests that while Race and Class intersect, one does not serve simply to hide the other. Alternatively, following critical Race and feminist theoretical work of the 1980s and 90s, and work that came out of the University of Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS), it sees Race as a phenomenon created by a complex system of racialization processes, and these processes (the arts, cultural expression and funding decisions among them) as the phenomena in need of study. The research data highlighted ways that Race and Class identifications sometimes work at odds with each other in one person or group of people, as happened with the decision over where to place the archive, discussed in the chapter The Drum and its Legacy.

Racialization is the attachment of meaning to physical or cultural characteristics, through words and gestures, institutional processes and flows of capital. The thesis rests on the idea that there should be no sociology of Race (without capitalization) but rather a study of racism, as was suggested by Miles. Indeed, Race is not treated as a problem in itself here, but rather modern Western capitalism’s reliance on White economic and cultural dominance and the structures that uphold it. These produce Race by controlling its meanings, which have changed to support the various iterations of capitalism over time. In 2005, Solomos and Murji acknowledged that the concept of racialization had become problematic because it had been overused with a lack of criticality, to refer broadly to all manner of processes of identity formation. Despite this, I have found the concept of discursive racialization, coined by Reeves and used by Ali Rattansi in their volume, useful. The concept derives from Foucauldian ideas around discourse, through Stuart Hall’s use of it in Encoding and Decoding (1973). When seen as discourse, racialization becomes a process through which Race is produced by system of language. This draws on semiotics:

“The 'object' of these practices is meanings and messages in the form of sign-vehicles of a specific kind organized, like any form of communication or language, through the operation of codes within the syntagmatic chain of a discourse. The apparatuses, relations and practices of production thus issue, at a certain moment (the moment of production / circulation') in the form of symbolic vehicles constituted within the rules of 'language'. It is in this discursive form that the circulation of the 'product' takes place.” (Rattansi in Solomos & Murji, 2005: 271)

Les Back and John Solomos (2000) cite the collectively produced volume The Empire Strikes Back (1982) as key to forming the UK iteration of the chosen approach for this thesis.
Rattansi finds racialization indispensable despite its limitations, considering that it occupies “a position somewhere between race and racism.” (ibid.) The justification for this is that “Race simply describes and racism suggests singularity and closure, in contradiction to the dynamic implied by racialization.

I do not refer to people of colour as ethnic minorities in this thesis, but rather as minoritized people. Also, people imbued with Whiteness (see below, the section of this chapter on Whiteness) are referred to as being majoritized (a new word in this thesis) by the same processes. These describe specific modes of Race creation, which is necessary following critiques of racialization as concept by scholars such as Avtar Brah (2005), who points out ‘the shortcomings of racism as an explanatory tool [for racialization] and the limits of drawing upon that to advance deracialization’ (Solomos & Murji, 2005: 5). Racialization is not always a direct response to racism, as is explored in the rest of this chapter and the remainder of this thesis, especially in relation to strategic essentialism (Spivak 1988, 1996). For that reason, racialisation processes are not always referred to as negative, and postrace is not held up as the desired end point for anti-racism in this thesis. However, minoritization (one facet of racialization) is referred to as negative, as well as constructed.

When Solomos and Murji refer back to racialization’s modern conceptual origins in Fanon (1967), they take his acknowledgement that ‘colonialism did not dream of wasting its time in denying the existence of one national culture after another’ (Fanon 1967: 171), to mean that he links racialization to European domination and colonialism. However, an interesting thing about the research for this thesis is that it effects racialization by speaking of Race; specifically Blackness and, at times, South Asian-ness. Thus, it cannot see racialization as having negative moral connotations or be equated to effecting racism. Antiracialization as the direction for antiracism is not in question in this thesis. The arts are a prime example of racialization being necessary in order to account for the experiences of all people consuming art. The question is rather, what are the potential uses of racialisation for engaging in such discourses intentionally? What is the place of strategic essentialism in today’s cultural industries? This is a question of power, because to return to Foucault, Hall and Rittansi, discourse is never neutral and equal. The question of The Drum and its legacy is a question of whether strategic essentialism is the best tool for resistance to White supremacy at this historical juncture.
3.3.2 UK Multiculture and The Drum: The Empire Strikes Back

‘The historical roots of racist practices within the British state, the British dominant classes, and the “British” working class, go deep and cannot be reduced to simple ideological phenomena. They have been conditioned, if not determined, by the historical development of colonial societies which was central to the reproduction of British imperialism. This process generated a specific type of ‘nationalism’ pertinent in the formation of British classes long before the ‘immigration’ issue became a central aspect of political discourse’ (Gilroy & Solomos, 1982: 9)

In Location’s opening quotations from ACE’s final report, their representatives cited the location as being deprived and ethnically diverse. The coupling of these phrases needs to be examined in more detail. How linked is Race to class in UK urbanities?

3.3.3 The context of Power & Privilege: A brief note on neoliberalism and Racial Capitalism

Neoliberalism – the ideology that social, economic and political worlds should be driven by market forces - forms the backdrop for this thesis because it shapes the social, economic and political landscape of contemporary times. All of the perspectives from which neoliberal capitalism have been written agree on one thing: that it has effected significant enough change in the cultural, political and economic climate for there to be “no longer any significant oppositions – that is, systematic rival outlooks – within the thought-world of the West; and scarcely any on a world scale either” (Anderson, 2000:17), which enables the rapid spread of cultural hegemony across nations, with the flow of culture following the flow of capital. This thesis is concerned with how that affects the arts – how the cultural industries function within this global economic system and how it in turn affects the possibility of their decolonization in the UK. It is necessary then, to analyse how contemporary iterations of neoliberal capitalism are supported by a cultural system that organizes people into hierarchies, to maintain order in the increasing complexity that it creates in the world, as Nick Couldry has explored this in Why Voice Matters (2010: 1). It is also necessary to acknowledge how this organizing system predates this latest iteration of Western capitalism; how actors in the creation of neoliberal discourse contribute to the continuation of values established at the inception of modernity (among them White supremacy and racism), to create the West and build its wealth through

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9 namely everyone living within the thought-world of the West and now, with the adoption of Capitalism With Chinese Characteristics (Huang, 2008: 2008) by the competing superpower and beyond
colonialism, enslavement and the dispossession of native peoples, as will be discussed later in this lexicon.

The thesis espouses an historical materialist explanation for Neoliberalism that gives combined credit for the development of this economic and cultural system in Britain to the decline in the 1960s of the profitability of advanced capitalism (and the resultant defeat of the British working class under Thatcher), and the steadily rising cultural, economic and political dominance of the United states throughout the post-war period (Howard & King, 2008: 9). It questions the merit of meritocracy as espoused by Conservative government in the direct run up to, and during the early years of The Drum’s closure (May, 2016). Jo Littler points out that for its justification, meritocracy relies on neoliberal capitalism’s focus on individualism and ‘healthy competition’, which relies on a belief in the moral/ethical neutrality of market forces and a disregard of inequality of starting point. A study of the history of racism in the era of European colonialism, and processes of racialization under Neoliberalism, serves to counter this viewpoint. This is particularly relevant to The Drum’s case because of its location in an area of the city that has housed primarily working-class communities that were relatively new to the country, as the thesis chapter Location explores. Meritocracy as ideological discourse that can lead to the racialization of poverty and crime is necessarily explored in that chapter, with neoliberal capitalism as both setting and explanation. Neoliberalism is critiqued for on one hand entrenching and relying on social hierarchy for creating competition and encouraging private spending, and on the other hand relying on the maintenance of the illusion that this is not the case. Meritocracy serves this purpose, providing a belief that that market forces are to be relied upon because they are objective, that capital flows objectively to the hardest working and most deserving nations, businesses and individuals. This view is ahistorical and a-sociological.

3.3.4 Power & Privilege: Cultural Hegemony, and diversity as divergence from normative Whiteness.

The thesis uses ‘hegemony’ in Gramscian terms; in reference to cultural hegemony. Neoliberal Capitalism is identified as the hegemonic economic system, rather than ascribing the label of hegemon to any one state. As White dominance and supremacy is taken to be one of the primary modes through which Neoliberal capitalism maintains organizes people to keep capital flowing and remain in power as hegemonic system, its cultural hegemony relies on racism – it is insidiously racist as a system. This racism more subtle and less direct than that upon which advanced capitalism and its accompanying modernity was built, but just as this capitalism is
(more advanced and complex but) still capitalism, this racism is (more indirect and insipid but) still racism.

Cultural hegemony is effectively indirect imperial dominance, a useful model for the maintenance of power. It indirectly suppresses voices potentially dangerous to the status quo, maintaining comfort for the most powerful. Hegemonic eras are therefore stable ones. McNally and Schwarzmantel have described it thus:

“Hegemony was perceived as a condition whereby one state controls the international system through its influence and superiority. As a consequence, much orthodox International relations theory uses hegemony as a key concept to explain how dominant states shape, and control specific historical systems… From this, realists have argued that periods when a hegemon (hegemonic state) existed represent successful eras of stability, whilst eras when leading states have competed for hegemonic control have been marked by unrest and conflict (Kindleberger 1981)” (McNally and Schwarzmantel, 2009: 20)

Gramsci was aware of the international nature of hegemony, and the way that it can function via supra-national networks. According to Edward Said (1993) ‘legitimate culture’, is one of these. This is why it was used to spread imperialist thought, and how cultural hegemony is in many ways, uniform across the world.

“Every relationship of ‘hegemony’ is necessarily an educational relationship and occurs not only within a nation, between the various forces of which the nation is composed, but in the international and world-wide field, between complexes of national and continental civilizations” (Gramsci 1971: 350)

David Morton adopts a Gramscian approach to socio-cultural thinking about power, agency and resistance in the 4th chapter of his book, Unravelling Gramsci. Gramsci conceptualises hegemony in terms of the ruler and the ruled. He sees cultural practices as being vehicles through which hegemony is spread, reflecting the interests of the dominant group, the ruling class (Morton 2007: 171). It is through cultural systems like the arts that power relationships between groups like classes, genders and Races are formed, reinforced and performed, and McNally and Schwarzmantel recognise that this relationship is always an unequal one:
“Gramsci’s notion of hegemony rests on the ability of a dominant class to form a consensual relationship with subaltern classes through a variety of social and cultural channels” (McNally and Schwartzmantel, 2009: 20)

The dominant class is called normal - it is neutralized with normativity. In any situation the mainstream is the normative stream, and also the most powerful. Anything outside of the mainstream is marginal. The mainstream caters for the dominant group: in Britain this group is characterised by Whiteness and bourgeois class conditioning. The two attributes are very often used together in common parlance in a way that assumes the latter’s dependence on the former (e.g. “White middle class”). Indeed, for belonging to the mainstream, they are very often interdependent. The model of mainstream and margin in the arts serves to uphold the idea that the values of this group are supremely legitimate, and in the arts this was the dominant narrative of the 20th century. Jean-Michel Basquiat, Charles Gaines and Catherine Lord (1993) likened the impossible partnership of Black art and mainstream criticism to a theatre of refusal. If Gramsci’ theory is to be applied here and mainstream arts organizations are in place as homes and perpetuators of hegemonic discourse, then engagement with them on the part of the subaltern classes is to participate in and consent to cultural hegemony, i.e. to their own continued subjugation. If this is the case, the only way to overturn this unequal relationship is for the subaltern classes to refuse to engage in mainstream cultural practice, or to develop an entirely separate cultural practice. This is the point of view of contemporary British Black radicals. To Gramsci, all activities and systems of governance legitimised by the dominant class were executed to the same end:

“In what sense should one say that fascism and democracy are two aspects of a single reality, two different forms of a single activity: the activity which the bourgeois class carries out to halt the proletarian class on its path?” (Gramsci, 1971: 267)

The publication of Selections from the Prison Notebooks in English (Hoare and Geoffrey, 1971) coincided with the birth of postmodern deconstruction and was in time to inform the intellectual basis of the 1980s moment in which cultural studies and postcolonial critique flourished. With the fall of European communism in 1989 Marxist thought lost its intellectual popularity, however Gramsci held the interest of cultural studies theorists because of his ideas on power and hegemony, and his focus on the practical application of theory. Indeed, Stuart Hall identified Gramsci as having replaced Marx in cultural studies.
To underpin this thesis, Gramsci was most often used through the lenses of Stuart Hall and Edward Said, who recontextualized hegemony for a postcolonial world. The thesis is also concerned with the renewed interest in Gramsciism that has occurred in the past decade. Neelam Srivastava and Baidik Bhattacharya (2012) identified Gramsci as a postcolonial thinker. The Gramscian understanding of subalternity as a concept that intersects Nation, Class, and Race that they proffer, has offered productive lines of enquiry for the research. Moreover, the work is concerned with whether the type of radical cultural revolution proposed by some contemporary Black Studies scholars is possible in this era of advanced neoliberalism, and what form it may take if so. In Birmingham, UK, these scholars were one faction contesting cultural spaces like The Drum, arguing for the self-determination of culturally-defined groups in the UK. The thesis utilizes Gramsci’s key theories of Hegemony and Passive Revolution, to answer these questions.

Gramsci’s writing focuses on direct political action; on revolution and active resistance to real and present enemies. Both Hall and Said critiqued Foucault’s writing on power for the lack of a link to action or practice in his work, and used Gramsci to offer alternatives. Gramscian thinking allows not only for studying the way that dominant power is spread, but also for studying struggles against that power, and of the voice that gains its own power and agency through resistance to hegemony.

Hegemony spreads by becoming unrecognizable as power. This is why Hegemonic Whiteness is referred to throughout this thesis. Whiteness functions in this same way, by being invisible, as the next two sections of this chapter will show. When the existing distribution of power is taken as a given, as the natural order of things, hegemonic power is at its most potent. John Schwarzmantel describes Gramsci’s concept of Passive Revolution, explaining that while it masquerades as resistance, it actually works toward maintaining hegemonic power:

“Passive revolution’ for Gramsci was a concept which pointed to movements which used revolutionary rhetoric while seeking to maintain the existing order in its essential features” (2009:14)

This has been linked by Schwarzmantel to New Labour, neoliberalism and the Third Way. The equality monitoring forms and diversity targets for schools and workplaces introduced under New Labour aimed at equality through inclusion and can be seen as a form of Passive
Revolution. When they were introduced, they gave the appearance of aiming to effect mass change within the mainstream, but in reality they could never have achieved the necessary change. After 20 years of these targets, this is clear. From the point of view of the Black radical scholars, speaking on behalf of people for whom nothing has changed for the better Gramsci’s explanation that introducing these targets was mere Passive Revolution, is obvious. Inclusion has increased, however the status quo has not changed because Passive Revolution does not change the nature of hegemony, or the means by which it spreads. Because of the unrecognizability of hegemonic power, this is not immediately obvious to the majority of proponents of diversity and inclusion work, who conduct it in good faith. However, the true result of diversity targets was that minoritized individuals were marked out as ‘diverse’, (an act of further minoritization) rather than as talented and deserving of a place at whichever table they were being admitted to. Diversity then became a dirty word on all sides, in the way that affirmative action did in the USA. In the end, the targets achieved little more than this negative stigmatizing of diversity in the workplace, and this is to be the basis of the robust critique of the term ‘Cultural Diversity’ that has underpinned my research.

3.3.5 Power & Privilege: Whiteness.

This thesis does not actively address the actions of White people until its penultimate chaoter, however because the field existed in a location and time built by coloniality / modernity and informed by the Western Cultural Archive, Hegemonic Whiteness, otherwise called White Supremacy, is ever-present through policy documents, education systems, thought processes expressed in interview. As the first part of this chapter has introduced, the thesis’ narrative serves partly to show how Hegemonic Whiteness functions when there is no physical Whiteness present, revealing the machinations of White supremacist, White privilegist society, and the complicity all people in those machinations.

For decades, critical Whiteness studies has been exploring reasons for the tendency amongst White-coded institutions and policies, to erase differences between White ethnic groups - a form of strategic essentialism that maintains superiority as opposed to other forms, like political Blackness (explored below), that are designed to resist inferiority. John Gabriel acknowledged this in 2000:

“Whiteness is not a monolithic discourse, and whites are not a cohesive, homogeneous ethnic group. […] The fact that whiteness is constantly threatened by its own heterogeneity and hybridity reveals
it for what it is: an intrinsically pathological discourse which has been constructed to create the fiction of a unitary and homogeneous culture and people (that is, essentialist).” (Gabriel, 2000: 68)

This is part of what Kehinde Andrews has more recently labelled the *Psychosis of Whiteness* (2018). Considering cultural hegemony’s role in neoliberal capitalism, what role does Whiteness play? How does Neoliberal Capitalism imbue some people with power and render some less powerful? How do the cultural industries work to maintain the hierarchy that privileges Whiteness, and how does White supremacy function when Whiteness is not directly present? The thesis takes the position that whiteness, while it amounts to the absence of racialization is a cover, as much as other racialisations, but that it is one that imbues power, rather than taking it away. Moreover, it asserts that Whiteness can present in the absence of White people, because it is the gold standard at the top of the racial hierarchies that support the Western world’s governing economic system. It is the background against which all else is thrown, and then compared. It is the pervasive norm, from which others diverge to varying degrees. (Clarke and Garner 2009; Gilroy 2013)

### 3.3.6 Power & Privilege: Power blindness and neoliberalism

The field of critical Whiteness studies has produced numerous accounts of the experience of awakening to one’s own privilege. Shannon Sullivan (2006:1&2) acknowledges that the process is difficult because ‘White privilege operates as unseen, invisible, even seemingly non-existent.” She identifies it as a practice; an unconscious and environmentally constituted habit that actively works to disrupt attempts to reveal its existence’:

“I do not mean that white privilege is merely a “bad habit” in need of elimination – something like overeating or interrupting others – although it is that. I am claiming something much stronger about white privilege as constituting the self, whatever race a particular self may be. Habits, whether those of race or other characteristics of contemporary human existence, such as gender, sexuality, and class. Are not some sort of veneer lacquered onto a neutral human core. They are dispositions for transacting with the world, and they make up the very beings that humans are.” (Sullivan, 2006:2)

By this definition, White privilege cannot be removed from the person; the markers of the habit can be acknowledged and combatted on a daily, even moment by moment basis, but it cannot simply be disassociated from wholesale, and stripped away. It is part of the person who has it, and importantly, it is also part of the person who does not, as it also constitutes the way that non White-privileged individuals live in the world. According to Sullivan, human beings are
not neutral, they are constituted by processes. The way that a White person walks through the world constitutes who they are. It also constitutes that world for others who are not White, and reinforces racial hierarchy:

“White privilege will help constitute a different person – say, a black man- in different ways from me, but in both cases our habits (ourselves) are composed in transaction with a world that privileges white people.” (ibid.)

On occasion, theory-made-art provides a shortcut into the experiences of others that is unparalleled by other forms of writing in its efficiency. Toni Morrison describes the waking up process perfectly, in her 1981 novel *Tar Baby*. The aptly named Valerian Street, emperor of his own plantation and perpetuator of the racial hierarchies that funded his lifestyle and maintained his comfort, began to awake to the realisation of his wife’s abuse of his young son, in a Morrisonian metaphor for the experience of awakening to the abuses inflicted by his Race upon others. First, the author takes the character through the process of self-examination, and the difficulty of coming to terms with the extent of what his privilege (on one level, gender privilege and on another, Race privilege) had allowed him to ignore. As he examines himself, he begins to take responsibility for what he terms the ‘crime of innocence’. He describes the experience of waking up as inconvenient, frightening, and never-ending. He acknowledges that it was his *choice* to not know:

‘He thought about innocence then; and realised that he was guilty of it […] and there was something so foul in that; something about the crime of innocence so revolting it paralysed him. He had not known because he had not taken the trouble to know. He was satisfied with what he did not know. Knowing was more inconvenient and frightening, like a bucket of water with no bottom.’ (Morrison, 1982)

Morrison goes on to describe the self-loathing that Street feels as a result of facing his wilful ignorance.

‘All he could say was that he did not know. He was guilty, therefore, of innocence. Was there anything so loathsome as a wilfully innocent man?’ (Morrison, 1982)

Street was a coloniser of the old school, without claim to leftist sentiments and hardly easily comparable to the arts audiences of Birmingham. are likely to be of mixed political affiliations; and many that I spoke to during fieldwork were decidedly on the left of the political spectrum.
Albert Memmi explained as far back as 1957 that this does not make a difference; that the somatic most often shapes, or at least overrides political views in such cases. He describes the conundrum faced by those on the left:

While he happens to dream of a tomorrow, a brand-new social state in which the colonized cease to be colonized, he certainly does not conceive, on the other hand, of a deep transformation of his own situation and of his own personality. In that new, more harmonious state, he will go on being what he is, with his language intact and his cultural traditions dominating. (Memmi, 1972: 84)

For Memmi, this unwillingness to do what is required for equality (to relinquish one’s position of dominance) is present in all those who are privileged by hierarchy, not only those who are actively engaged in racist practices. For him, there is no such thing as an ally, the somatic overrides politics, and the would-be ally is described as a “left wing coloniser”. This is because colonial relations “do not stem from individual good will or actions; they exist before his arrival or his birth, and whether he accepts or rejects them matters little.” The racial hierarchies of colonialism determine his place in the world, which make him, in the eyes of the colonized as responsible as anyone else who shares the privilege of Whiteness for the actions of that oppressor group (alluding to Morrison’s mention of ‘kind’). For Memmi, it is not as simple as this person actually being responsible, but he acknowledges that this doesn’t matter; that what determines action is what the left-wing coloniser thinks, and “he suspects, even if he is in no way guilty as an individual, that he shares a collective responsibility by the fact of membership in a national oppressor group.” This suspicion then leads him to exclude himself from sites of solidarity created by the oppressed group, which are constructed as a defense against the oppression inflicted by his ‘kind’. Finally, this leads to him distancing himself from the fight:

“How could he help thinking, once again, that this fight is not his own? Why should he struggle for a social order in which he understands that there would be no place for him? Hard pressed, the role of the left-wing colonizer collapses.” (ibid. 82-3)

For Memmi, the leftist colonizer is essentially a nihilist, and the realisation of that fact causes them to abandon their ideology, in practice if not in rhetoric, acknowledging that “the present life of the leftist colonizer […] is ultimately unacceptable by virtue of his ideology, and if that ideology should triumph it would question his very existence. The strict consequence of this realization would be the abandonment of that role.” The alternative is to begin the process of true decolonisation, which Memmi only alludes to, saying that “his life will be a long series of
adjustments”. His unwillingness to dwell on this alternative suggests that he does not believe it a desirable enough prospect for many to take it up. There is of course another alternative, which is to remain radical in all but actual radicalism, to talk the talk, so to speak, but remain in one’s comfort zone. This is the remit of the diversity agenda, which allows White liberal art audiences to remain in White-coded spaces and brings other cultures to them, in bite sized moderation.

Further removed chronologically and geographically from the origins of racial injustice than both Morrison’s Valerian and Memmi’s leftist colonizer, most contemporary White people in Britain have further to travel intellectually and emotionally to face the discomfort of decolonisation, as is explored in detail within Chapter 5, Location (See Section 5.2.3., What if Newtown is not a problem?). For Sullivan (2006), the left wing colonizer is called a White privilegist. In her work, the static trope of the left wing colonizer has been replaced by the more pliable, workable concept of White privilege as a system of habits that help to construct White selves whose relationships to other identities such as class, gender and sexuality makes them heterogenous. Still, the leftist colonizer and the White privilegist is the same person, or a person who acts the same way when faced with a circumstance such as the opportunity to visit The Drum. In Sullivan’s work, the White privilegist differs from White supremacists only in what they consciously claim to believe about Others. White privilegists “find it more painful to consciously claim the inferiority of non-whites than to consciously claim the opposite, their equality.” This pain is the result of having to admit to themselves that they buy into and benefit from racist ideals. This is understood as a reaction formation to their unconscious belief about racialized people:

“White privilege can be seen as functioning as a sensor of all emotions or ideas that expose it to conscious examination. Any emotion that threatens white privilege must be transformed into a different emotion that does not conflict with it.” (Sullivan, 2006: 55)

Sullivan cites pragmatist feminist Jane, who called for reciprocity between White and non-White people (Sullivan: 168). Addams recognized that immigrant and diasporic peoples can be marginalised White constituting diverse communities; that diversity is certainly no immunization to marginalization. Sullivan includes this observation in her chapter In Defense of Separatism. However, reciprocity is also flawed. Sullivan writes that “…this very notion of reciprocity also furthered White privilege because its unintentionally allowed and even
encouraged White people’s ontological expansiveness.” This is because of the very nature of racial hierarchy and power inequality, because “in a reciprocal relationship, each side takes something and benefits from the other. It is necessary the relationship not be unidirectional” (Sullivan, 2006: 168). In other words, reciprocity is most often not reciprocity at all, but expected assimilation of minoritized peoples and their cultural expression into the dominant culture. When one side is at best no more than an agent of epiphany in which Whiteness is still centred, it does not work, it is not reciprocal. In the case of The Drum, when it changed it branding from ‘Black’ to ‘intercultural’, it conceded space to Whiteness by default, “because it unintentionally allowed and even encouraged White people’s ontological expansiveness.” (ibid.). It did not consider that hierarchy exists, interactions are not on equal terms and that “it is all to easy for White people’s good intentions to address racism in responsible, antiracist ways to re-enact the very White privilege that they wish to undermine” (ibid. 167).

From this, a case can be made for partial, perhaps institutional separatism for the purpose of white self-reflection. On one hand, this is so that white people can counter their ontological expansiveness - essentially decolonising their minds - without unintentionally making mere agents of epiphany out of non-White Others and the spaces in which they create / show art:

“It is not the case that eliminating white privilege, including the racist segregation that so often has accompanied white domination, necessarily or always requires the integration of white and non-white people”. (Sullivan, 2006: 168)

On the other hand, Sullivan acknowledges that White-imposed “racial segregation can be a symptom of a White aversion to all things non-white, so the solution to white people’s ontological expansiveness is not for them to retract into an all-white life” (ibid.). This is a matter of pleasure and enthusiasm. The same arts professionals and enthusiasts that I had interviewed had been to see productions in London and Manchester; both much further away than the other side of town. The problem with The Drum, then, is not physical distance, as Chapter 5, Location continues to explore. It is a perceived conceptual, or cultural distance that makes Newtown seem further than Westminster to them. This can be at least partially attributed to the way that the cultural archive of the West is organised and maintained by racial hierarchies of power. In this way, White privilegism manifest as an aversion to the feeling of being in the minority, which critical Race theorists focusing on Whiteness have identified as being startling for people used to White privilege. Kathryn D. McKinney describes her own experience of being in Black coded space as a White American in 2004:
When visiting my husband’s family in Miami, I find I am part of a racial and ethnic minority in the city […] My whiteness seems startling, garish, and out of place. I am conscious of my status as a white female, and more careful of the impression I make and the signals I send. Now, these temporary concerns are overshadowed by all the positive things the city brings me, in both familial association and cultural diversity. Still, being in the minority is not a common experience for those of us in the majority.” (McKinney, 2005: 19 & 20)

While McKinney was in the numerical minority, she was not minoritized; she remained in the majority in terms of the value that her body retains in society’s racially organized system. The feeling of being in the minority (as close as she will come to minoritization), while temporary, is shocking, and she is struck by her sudden hypervisibility. This feeling, like the feeling that a racialized person in White space may feel, though with an added layer of minoritization that the experience serves to construct and reinforce, serves to remind the visitor to Black space of their Whiteness, of their possession of Race. McKinney calls this prompted whiteness:

“Perhaps one of the most important findings of this study is that whiteness is a prompted identity; that is, most of the respondents insist that they had not thought in any depth about whiteness until asked to do so […] other researchers have similarly found that the most common response that whites give when asked what it means to be white is that they have never before considered their white identity.” (ibid.: 20)

This is a return to Sullivan’s mention of White privilege as a habit. Because whiteness has been made the somatic norm under capitalism, it exists as the absence of racialization by the systems that use racial markers to penalise people. The habits of White privilege are partly the behaviours adopted to prevent awareness of this absence.

When White people and their needs are centred then, i.e. when the focus is on countering White ontological expansiveness, the case for integration is clear. But what happens when Whiteness is not centered? That is what this thesis explores. Sullivan is correct in suggesting that “The story is more complex than either of these two extreme options allows”, that “Different contexts will call for different types of behaviour on the part of White people,” and that “part of their learning to see their privilege involves developing habits [conscious and counter to the habit
of White privilege] that are attuned to the different ways that Race and racism operate in specific contexts” (ibid.).

bell hooks, in thinking about how White privilege serves to form the Black psyche and Black identities, considers the benefits of separatism for Black sanity and survival. She claims that racism is not the primary factor in creating low self-esteem among Black people; White domination, White ontological expansiveness and white privilege are. She claims that the focus on countering racism and White supremacy is the result of the 1960s struggle for equality having been led by men, who were focused on power and countering dominance; claiming it for themselves. For hooks, Black feminism offered a counter that focused less on replacing one form of dominance with another, than on creating community and unity, countering capitalist systems entirely. She acknowledges that this has even earlier roots in the work of Du Bois who, in his Credo at Atlanta University wrote:

“I believe in pride of race and lineage of self; in pride so deep as to scorn injustice to other selves; in pride of lineage so great as to despise no man’s father […] I believe in liberty for all men, the space to stretch their arms and their souls, the right to breathe and the right to vote, the freedom to choose their friends, enjoy the sunshine and ride on the railroads, uncursed by color; thinking, dreaming, working as they will in a kingdom of God and Love.” (Du Bois, 1904)

Hooks also cites Mary Church Terell’s 1916 speech for the National Association of Colored Women (NACW) in Charleston USA:

“We have to do more than other women. Those of us fortunate enough to have education must share it with the less fortunate of our race. We must go into our communities and improve them; we must go out into the nation and change it. Above all, we must organize ourselves as Negro women and work together.” (Terell, 1916 in White, 1993: 23)

This inward focus was not simply an African American phenomenon – it was a Black Atlantic phenomenon. I would contextualize the words of Dubois and Mary Church Terell by adding those of Marcus Garvey who, also in the early 20th century, brought the spirit of pan africansim to Jamaican decolonial discourse through the United Negro Improvement Association and his Newspaper, Negro World, which was circulated throughout the Black Atlantic. Commemorative plates from Jamaican independence, present in many Windrush generation front rooms in the UK, bore his statement “Up, Up, you mighty race, you can accomplish what
you will”. He added, “For a man to know himself is for him to feel that for him there is no human master […] the negro peoples of the world should concentrate upon the object of building up for themselves a great nation in Africa”. While Garvey called not only for self-determination but voluntary mass repatriation of African diasporic peoples and the rebuilding of Africa as one nation, his work was interpreted by many politicians who would later call for independence of formerly colonized nations, as a rallying cry for pride and progress within and across African diasporic nations and communities, wherever they were. Hooks is clear that this was not superficial call for pride of Race in reaction to White privilege and domination, “instead it was truly a call for this newly freed mass population […] African and those of African descent, to strive to be fully self-actualized.” This call focused on the “moral and ethical demands of racial uplift”, allowing the ontological expansion of Black people, where they had been squashed to make room for the excessive expansiveness of White people. For Hooks, this was more important than surface equality with White people in the public spheres. A diversity agenda is that surface equality. What does it do for the psychological wellbeing of people of colour? Nothing, because a diversity agenda centers Whiteness, and can therefore do nothing to destabilize White privilege. A separate organization that does not centralize Whiteness however, can alleviate the effects of White ontological expansiveness on Black people. Moreover, such an organization has the power to destabilize White privilegism and decolonize swiftly, if attended by White people. Where there is a building like The Drum, that throws a person racialised as White into the numerical minority upon entering, that discomfort is immediate; like a shock. This shock is necessary for the person to feel their Whiteness, then feel the suppression of their ontological expansiveness and then, hopefully, be encouraged to interrogate the discomfort that the suppression brings. For this to happen, White people would have to choose to attend; to want to experience the end of guilty ignorance; to choose to put themselves in what could be an uncomfortable position for a person used to seeing their own reflection in art and in company. Chapter 4, Purpose, shows this to have been difficult to achieve, precisely because of White privilegism and resultant ontological expansiveness in White theatregoers (See section 4.4.1, Result: A White jazz band for Black History Month). Revisiting Memmi and Sullivan then, while a White privilegist may fully embrace the position of sanctioned ignorance with the line “when White people have solidarity and Race pride it’s oppressive. How come when you do it, it’s OK?”, the left-wing colonizer may find Black solidarity simply difficult to understand, railing against it on the grounds that she is only there to help. The colonizer’s position can also be internalised by people of colour themselves, which further complicates attempts at progress through unity. In this scenario, they adopt the third
way, which is neoliberal rhetoric with no real action, diversity policy as an obstruction to an attempt at decolonisation.

The impossible question that TD staff had asked themselves ever since ACE stipulated its aim of achieving Great Art and Culture for Everyone, was how to bring the majoritized audience in, thinking that it was their own responsibility to change their marketing and make themselves amenable. It is what led them to change their branding, from marketing themselves as a Black arts centre to marketing themselves as intercultural, as is explored in the ensuing chapters. The rest of the thesis explores the ways in which TD was set up to decentre Whiteness within its walls, and the ways in which it became impossible to do within policy frameworks that were set up to serve a White, middle class majoritized community.

3.3.7 Resistance: strategic essentialism: pan-African Blackness, political Blackness and decolonization in the Global North

“Whilst Hegemonic power is expressed through the habitualisation and internalisation of social practices – organising and dividing subjectivities – it also provokes acts of resistance.” (Morton, 2007: 171)

“We must canonize our own saints, create our own martyrs, and elevate to positions of fame and honour black men and women who have made their distinct contributions to our racial history.” (Garvey, 2006 [1925]: 318)

This thesis, and specifically the next chapter, *Purpose*, explores a Black British community that has changed in its confidence and critical consciousness, and which continues to change dynamic with each wave of immigration. One of the key questions borne out in TD’s lifespan and closure, is: What does Blackness mean? It is accompanied by the sub-questions: How is it constructed? Who is included within it and to what end? Back and Solomos (2000) paraphrase Paul Gilroy (1987) in acknowledging that ‘collective identities spoken through Race, community and locality are, for all their spontaneity, also a powerful means to co-ordinate action and create solidarity.’ (pg. 9). This was one of the premises of *The Empire Strikes Back*, and close to what Spivak referred to as Strategic Essentialism before disavowing the term in 2008 because of its having been misused to promote what she called non-strategic essentialism (Spivak, 2008: 260). Returning to the first section of this chapter, exploring Race as a potentially unifying concept that may be necessary as a means of creating community and
organizing resistance to complex systems of racism. It does not take the value of Race in anti-racist activism as given, but explores the fact that in contemporary times, Blackness is returning as an identity marker in some quarters of UK intellectual life, yet is also opposed in some quarters for being potentially divisive. An identity that has always been contested, it has been taken up by academics, journalists and activists alike as a unifying umbrella for people of African descent. Such proponents of African diasporic Blackness in contemporary times call for strategic essentialism as a unifying tool. Blackness is seen by them as an identity to be chosen, not one to be ascribed from without. This PhD began in the same year as the first UK Black Studies conference was held (2015), and the inception of Europe’s first Black Studies degree course at Birmingham City University. In Birmingham, Race was being used as a unifying concept at this moment, particularly Blackness. The relevance of political Blackness was contested there, and a Pan African blackness was lent toward in discussions. Seeing how Blackness was being foregrounded and contested as TD, which had been the UK’s (last politically or otherwise) Black-led arts centre, was closing, was the reason for its inclusion as a central tenet of this thesis. The failure of political Blackness, which had originally been espoused at TD (See chapter 4, Purpose), shows a definitive change in the meaning of the term ‘Black’ in the UK and the failure of Race to create unity where other forces override it (locality, allegiance to nation or region of origin, etc).

Sara Ahmed considers the utilization of Race as a sticky sign for the purposes of unification in Affective Economies (2004: 117). Although Ahmed analyses this in relation to the creation and privileging of White identities, it is possible to see how it aids strategic essentialism for minoritized communities seeking to combat racism in its many forms:

“How do emotions work to align some subjects with some others and against other others? How do emotions move between bodies? In this essay, I argue that emotions play a crucial role in the “surfacing” of individual and collective bodies through the way in which emotions circulate between bodies and signs.” (Ahmed, 2004: 117)

“Affect does not reside in an object or sign, but is an affect of the circulation between objects and signs (the accumulation of affective value over time). Some signs, that is, increase in affective value as an effect of the movement between signs: the more they circulate, the more affective they become, and the more they appear to “contain” affect.” (Ahmed, 2004: 120)
A steering group meeting that was held at the end of TD’s existence (April 2017) ended up as a detailed discussion about what any new iteration of TD would be called, were there to be one. Would it continue to call itself an intercultural arts centre? Would it adopt the label ‘Black arts’? Or would it revert to what it had always claimed to be - a Black-led arts centre, open to everybody? If it did the latter, would it then have to continually explain, to its audiences and to its funders, why maintaining Black leadership is a valuable facet of its identity? And would it have to continually explain what the term ‘Black’ meant, even to its own staff? If it did need to do this, and explaining the meaning and necessity of ‘Black’ meant fixing that meaning in spite of circumstances that naturally change the meanings of words and identities over time, would this have been the most ethical thing to do? The shifts in meaning that words serving as identity markers undergo with shifting socio-political climates can often be unavoidable. The meaning of the term ‘Black’ for TD’s staff and audiences was a case in point. This ended up being a question of what Blackness is in this day and age, and whether it is a good enough umbrella term behind which to unite the plethora of people who led TD.

In the UK context, because of the need for strength in numbers during the latter half of the 20th Century, the term ‘Black’ was adopted by new arrivals from the Caribbean and parts of West Africa, as well as by those of South Asian origin arriving largely from Pakistan and East Africa. It was not simply adopted in fact; it was subverted. The same pejorative terms had been applied to them all indiscriminately by members of the host society, and Black was one of these. immortalized in the images of signs in urban windows that stated “No Blacks, no Irish, No Dogs.” Black, in these exclusionary notices, did not only refer to people of African descent, but all non-White peoples. When those peoples (and Irish immigrants, who were excluded by a similar token) banded together, theirs was political a Blackness that subverted terms, negative in their homogenizing effect, that had been levelled at newly arrived people of colour in the post war period, assuming them to be the same as each other. By giving them a common identity marker, it united them behind the cause of surviving overt racism and building community. It encouraged cultural conviviality in urban spaces where they lived closely together, determined by the happenstance of which areas were owned first by landlords, then vendors, who would rent or sell to them. The Blackness used by the Drum in its earliest incarnation to describe its leadership, was this political Blackness. It provided a separate space for full expression and creativity for Black and Brown people in a sometimes-hostile wider environment of historically White space that thus remains contemporarily White-coded. For performers and audience-participants it was a rare space for working through what it means to
be racialized as Black or Brown without judgement or unwelcome speculation. The fact that the space itself was coded politically Black, as was touched on in *Welcome* and as *Purpose* will describe, helped in that process. However, political Blackness had already begun to fail by the time of TD’s establishment in the early 1990s. Scholar of Black Europe, Stephen Small (2018), has argued that over the course of the 20th century, British activists of colour and their allies had successfully managed to force racism to mutate from overt, acute expressions into a largely into structural, systemic entity. Small attributes the breakdown of political Blackness in the UK to this; because people who had formerly clung to, or at least reluctantly accepted the umbrella term ‘Black’ for solidarity began to feel that there was no longer any need for it; that they would be better served by developing as individual communities, rather than as one. At the beginning of the Drum’s founding decade (the 1990s), Phillips and Karn wrote of the UK:

‘The prevailing trend for the South Asian and Afro-Caribbean population has been one of continuing residential concentration, segregation, and deprivation, with a growing overrepresentation within the poorest areas.... Black minority segregation and deprivation is produced and sustained through widespread institutional discrimination against the South Asian and Afro-Caribbean population in Britain. The process is one of cumulative disadvantage which arises… from discrimination against black minority groups in the job market and education system, by the police… the judiciary, as well as in the housing market itself… attempts to introduce racial harassment legislation in 1985 and 1988 were thwarted in Parliament’ (1991: 68,74,87)

Here, while South Asian and Afro-Caribbean people are distinguished as separate groups, their experiences in the UK are assumed to be the same, and they are referred to alike as ‘Black minority groups’. While this designation by external and official sources has persisted with the common use of BME (Black Minority Ethnic) and then BAME (Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic) by the time TD closed in 2016, British South Asian young people were far more commonly referring to themselves as ‘Brown’ than ‘Black’ or even BAME, and Afro-Caribbean young people were more often aligned with PanAfrican / Black Atlantic identities (uniting them with other people of African descent all over the world) than politically Black ones. Afro-Caribbean and South Asian young people would collaborate and work together under the banner ‘people of colour’, but the term Black was very rarely used as a unifying term for the two groups. This spirit of collaboration in light of acknowledged difference, was one reason for the eventual adoption of the term ‘Intercultural’ as label for TD, as the ensuing chapters explore. However, those chapters, particularly *Location*, also explore how policy’s way of managing multiculture can lead to ghettoization and create motive for some groups to
distinguish themselves from others, thus complying with pre-established colonial racial hierarchies that in turn fracture solidarity and sustain White supremacy. As early as 1976, in her cultural policy treatise The Arts Britain Ignores, Naseem Khan had pointed out the very distinct needs of each community that existed within political Blackness, when it came to cultural expression, and how those linked back to the distinct and differing ways that British colonialism had functioned in their countries of origin, and the level of decolonization that had been reached at the time of their departure. This can be seen by looking at census results, as Mike Savage et. Al. have done in Culture Class Distinction. It is complicated by the fact that census categories themselves have recently been criticised for being too limiting. Stephen Jivraj and Ludi Simpon (2015: 3) acknowledge “the fact that some ethnic group answer categories in the [1991, 2001 and 2011] census are tied to skin colour and region of origin (for example, White Irish, Black Caribbean and Black African) and others identify nationality or country of origin (for example Pakistani or Bangladeshi”). They write that this “reflects the dual purposes of colour discrimination and recognition of cultural distinctions that motivated the inclusion of an ethnic group question in the census in 1991”. The census itself could seen as either / both a determining factor in and / or the result of the abandonment of some forms of strategic essentialism (such as political Blackness) in favour of others (such as British Asian-ness and PanAfrican Blackness) over the course of a generation. This makes would make it a vehicle for state overdetermination:

“It could be argued that the inclusion of the question and the way that it has been designed has given unwarranted rigidity, or ‘reified’ ethnic groups, in British social policy, because the census is the standard-bearer for the measurement of socioeconomic variables with which other surveys and monitoring forms follow” (Jivraj & Simpson, 2015: 3)

In the chapter ‘Ethnic Identity and inequalities in Britain’ generational distinctions are described in their data analysis, however there could have been considerable value in allowing participants to choose their categorizations for such a survey. Self-determined ethnic orientation and acknowledgement of incremental differences has formed the basis of this thesis as far as possible, building on Culture Class Distinction by examining the moments at which self-ascribed categories change, and overdetermination occurs. This takes place primarily in Location and Relationships, taking as its foundation Frantz Fanon’s consideration in The Wretched of the Earth that:
'The Negroes of Chicago,' wrote Frantz Fanon, ‘only resemble the Nigerians or the Tanganyikans in so far as they were all defined in relation to the whites.’ (Fanon, 1967: 174)

A decolonial analysis of ‘cultural diversity’ in the arts needs to begin with the disruption of old racial hierarchies, and an understanding of the processes by which they are sustained through the intersubjectivity of people in contemporary times. This is something close to the concept of ethnic orientation, touched on by Bennett & Savage and used by Sandra Trienekens (2002). Ethnic orientation is less about over-determination from without, and is instead measured by an individual’s affiliation to certain institutions and cultural values. However, I intentionally shun the idea of ethnicity in this thesis, as a mere inference to Race, which has been common in the UK (Parekh, 1998). This has been key to processes of minoritization by lumping all non-White or non-British groups together, removing more nuanced identities that are often important to those who inhabit them, only deemed unimportant to those who benefit from this ‘lumping’ process: those covered by White Britishness, the somatic, national norm. Example are ‘ethnic foods’ aisles in major UK supermarkets, and ‘ethnic goods’ shops which offer miscellaneous selections of goods, non-Western in appearance, for purposes of cultural appropriation by those unconcerned with their distinct provenances. The distinction between this flattening, and the alternative - labelling such goods according to region - is important. The latter approach would respect and therefore more likely appeal to, people from that region, whereas the former appeals to the majoritized cosmopolitan, further majoritized by the flattening minoritization of others.

More recently, since the breakdown of political Blackness, several works have called for a return to Garveyite Pan-Africanism and Blackness as a unifier (Andrews, 2018; Hirsch, 2018a; Akala, 2018). At the 2018 Bernie Grant lecture, journalist and scholar Afua Hirsch delivered a lecture to promote her book Brit[ish]: On race, identity and belonging, which had just been released. In the lecture she called for a re-engagement with Garveyite pan-Africanism, saying: “We need to be unapologetic and create our own ideology, and there is no substitute for that.” (Hirsh, 2018b) Her reasoning was that this would provide intellectual self-confidence for Black peoples. But who counts as Black? Who can be counted in the Neo-Panafrican project? If the line is drawn at historical connection to the African continent, the claims of Gujerati Indians who were exiled from Kenya in the middle of the last century should be listened to for example,
yet they were exiled because of their deputation for and complicity European colonial rulers. The line clearly has to do with being connected to Africa in a way that doesn’t speak of complicity in colonial oppression of Black peoples, but the waters are muddied there also. After all, haven’t many corrupt rulers of African descent, heads turned by capitalist gain, been complicit in this also?

The Black radical tradition, fostered in the form of Pan-Africanism, was rooted in Marxism (Nelson & Grossberg, 1988: 20). For an understanding of this resistance tradition, it is helpful to cross half a century, the Atlantic Ocean and the Caribbean Sea, to one of its many incarnations, in Jamaica during the build-up to independence. Historian Howard Johnson, in his chapter “The British Caribbean: From Demobilization to Political Decolonization” (1999), acknowledged that, Jamaica had had a grass roots nationalist sensibility since the interwar years, spreading from its Black petit bourgeoisie of the lower professional Classes, however the imperial connection to Britain had not yet been questioned as a result of it. The Jamaica League (1913-22) and the Jamaica Reform Club (1922-33) had preceded the famous Universal Negro Improvement Association led by Marcus Garvey, who rejected racial hierarchy in Jamaica, but it was only this last movement that was able to effect change by mobilising a significant enough number of people, in order to be heard. This popular politicization led to Jamaica becoming a leader in the move toward individual independence for the Caribbean colonies. Resistance within the existing system that bowed to the hegemonic system of the British Empire did not work. The early efforts of the nation-focused Jamaica League and the Jamaica Reform Club only served as helpful precursors to the Garveyites, who then used the increasingly internationally powerful rhetoric political Blackness to link Jamaica’s struggles to those of early African American civil rights activists and the independence struggles of many colonized African countries. Political Blackness as strategic essentialism for the working classes was effective in this case because of the ways in which Class and Race had been linked in the Caribbean to sustain a plantation society (Durant & Knoeterus, 1999: 5). Campaigning for workers’ rights was synonymous with campaigning for the rights of Black Jamaicans. The same groups that adopted the motto ‘Jamaica for the Jamaicans’, campaigned the most vehemently for universal suffrage. This solidarity, opposition and mobilization is real resistance in Gramscian terms. Also relevant and interesting are the forms in which the Jamaican resistance presented itself. Howard recognizes that the political awakening was accompanied by an increased interest in education, characterised by popular study groups and literary societies. Gramsci is critical of so-called revolutionaries who remain subordinate to the
dominant group by accepting their intellectual and political leadership. British intellectuals who espouse political Blackness work in this tradition, calling for separate organizations and institutions on the grounds that if hegemony functions by keeping the subaltern subordinated, aiming for equality through inclusion must be futile. This alternative can be seen as divisive, but Gramsci would argue that hegemony has already divided the groups, so all that resistance does is expose hegemony and refuse consent. By this logic then, TD would have needed to free itself from state funding to have been truly decolonial. However, how far is it right to say that Black peoples should have to fund their own arts to be truly supported? How far does this benefit them and how far does it only benefit the government who would no longer have to support them? It seems that this leads them up Fanon’s ‘blind alley’.

3.3.8 Convergence: Diversity & inclusion rhetoric in neoliberal institutions

The literature on racism most useful for this thesis focuses on the differences between diversity and inclusion and decolonization or redistribution: essentially the differences between liberal and radical thought on the subject of equity. That literature focuses on institutions and how they have gone about including bodies of colour, moreover how that inclusion has become neoliberalized and turned into mere ‘Passive Revolution’ (Gramsci in Morton, 2007). Bodies are commodified to increase sales or used in ways that benefit the institution more than individual. In her critical Race analysis of diversity and inclusion rhetoric and policy within institutions, Sara Ahmed (2012) uses walls as metaphors to describe the obstructions to true equity, created by the gap between what neoliberal institutions say they are, stand for and do, and what they actually are, stand for and do. In the case of being seen to fight inequality, Ahmed points out that institutions deploy diversity policy to bring bodies of colour, female bodies, disabled bodies and bodies of the economically underprivileged, into positions within the institutional fold. This is how the gap is created. In the case of ‘cultural diversity’, institutions use it as evidence to brand themselves internally and externally as anti-racist and in so doing, the inclusion of people of colour can become ‘easily mobilized as a defense of reputation (perhaps even a defense of whiteness), [becoming] a technology for reproducing whiteness’ (Ahmed, 2012: 151). Ahmed suggests that ‘adding colour to the white face of the organization confirms the whiteness of that face.’ The places within the institution that have been relinquished to people whose identities diverge from the somatic norm (Puwar, 2004)
have been so relinquished with numerous subtle terms and conditions, which become walls that inhibit full acceptance or progression and all too easily recede from view for those not experiencing them directly. Ahmed lists among the terms and conditions: the promise to never speak of Race or racism, the willingness to represent one’s Race in the most essentialist of ways whenever required, the understanding that, other than when asked to represent one’s Race, one should aim to assimilate and not stand out. Failure to comply with any of these often contradicting terms, frequently results in the person of colour being seen as a problem and held back from career progression as a result of perceived problematic behaviour. To complicate matters further, the very people who do not see the walls can become walls by their very refusal to see, and by their persistence in acting on their blindness. In this way, people who have entered the institution on merit but have inadvertently become representatives of cultural diversity, become stuck in the gap between what the institution says that it will do, and what it is actually prepared to do. The only party to benefit from this inclusion is the institution.

When this project was funded by the Economic and Social Sciences Research Council as a Collaborative Doctoral Award, it was entitled ‘Cultural Diversity in the Arts’. The word Diversity has been a funding magnet over the course of neoliberal times, replacing ‘cultural diversity’, replacing ‘racial equality’ in most policy documents, but relating to the same thing. The indirectness of the term, the replacement of ‘Race’ with ‘culture’ in society at large has led to the more indirect and insipid cultural racism referred to by REF. This has given rise to newer forms of racism, most infamously, islamophobia. These forms of racism can more easily be denied, making them more robust than older forms, and making them good covers for older forms, which persist. Cultural racism racializes cultural practices, normalizing White-coded ones. Cultural diversity emphasizes divergence from a somatic and cultural norm. Moreover, it refers to visibility rather than equality. Contestation in scholarship and the arts around the term ‘cultural diversity’, is the reason for its having being removed from the title and critiqued within the thesis. The questions in relation to cultural diversity that concern this thesis are: how does Diversity function in policy, particularly ACE’s Creative Case for Diversity? How does this differ from lived multiculture -what Paul Gilroy calls conviviality – and how far does it contribute to, rather than disrupt, neoliberal cultural hegemony, by reinforcing White Western racial and cultural dominance? (Gilroy, 2003: 133)
The literature on cultural diversity within institutions focuses on White-coded organizations seeking to either diversify their cultural offer to broaden their paying audience, or to improve optics in an era when the expertise of solely dominant groups are widely recognised as being limited, and therefore problematic. The problem is that diversity for its own sake rarely equates to wholesale systemic change. Even less so, diversity as a marketing tactic. Rather, it has been critiqued for achieving the opposite (Ahmed, 2011; Puwar, 2004). Moreover, diversity when rolled out in institutional policy most often functions as Passive Revolution. The very term ‘diversity’ suggests divergence from a norm, which further normalises the core thing from which the diversity diverges. This is the conundrum with inclusion that Sara Ahmed points out in On Being Included (2011), and Nirmal Puwar also acknowledges in Space Invaders (2004). Both pieces of work on diversity within institutions focus on mainstream organizations and how they include ‘bodies out of place’ (Puwar, 2004). These works have served as a lens through which to analyse ACE’s Creative Case for Diversity, and where / whether there was room for TD within it. TD, as a Black-arts organization serving a working-class audience, within a UK arts world characterized by middle class, White dominance, became the body out of place writ large. It bore the burden of the divergent body on behalf of those bodies of colour working and performing within it. If TD takes the place of the body, then the English cultural industries, at least those administrated and led by ACE, replace the neoliberal institutions studied by Ahmed and Puwar. Similarly, this literature is used as a lens through which to look at another governing institution – the Birmingham City Council.

Ahmed frequently refers to ‘brick walls’ within institutions. She uses walls as metaphors to describe the obstructions to true equality created by the gap between what neoliberal institutions say they are, stand for and do, and what they actually are, stand for and do. In the case of being seen to fight inequality, Ahmed points out that institutions deploy diversity policy to bring bodies of colour, female bodies, disabled bodies and bodies of the economically underprivileged, into positions within the institutional fold. This is how the gap is created. In the case of ‘cultural diversity’, leaders use it as evidence to brand themselves their organizations internally and externally as non-racist (though not necessarily anti-racist) and in so doing, the inclusion of people of colour can become “easily mobilized as a defense of reputation (perhaps even a defense of whiteness), [becoming] a technology for reproducing whiteness” (Ahmed, 2012: 151). Ahmed suggests that “adding colour to the white face of the organization confirms the whiteness of that face.” The places within the institution relinquished
to people whose identities diverge from the somatic norm (Puwar, 2004) have been so relinquished with numerous subtle terms and conditions, which become walls that inhibit full acceptance or progression and all too easily recede from view for those not experiencing them directly. Ahmed lists among the terms and conditions: the promise to never speak of Race or racism, the willingness to represent one’s Race in the most essentialist of ways whenever required, the understanding that, other than when asked to represent one’s Race, one should aim to assimilate and not stand out. Failure to comply with any of these often contradicted terms, often results in the person of colour being labelled a problem and held back from career progression as a result of the perceived problematic behaviour. To complicate matters further, the very people who do not see the walls can become walls by their very refusal to see, and by their persistence in acting on their blindness in enforcing the aforementioned blocks. In this way, people who have entered the institution on merit but have inadvertently become representatives of cultural diversity, become stuck in the gap between what the institution says that it will do, and what it is actually prepared to do. The beneficiary of inclusion is the institution, which in the end, is equal only to what people make it by way of the policy documents that are used to control the behaviour associated with the organization, as Dorothy Smith acknowledged in her exploration of “how [an organization] comes into being out of the located ephemerae of people’s everyday doings” (Smith, 2001: 160). As such, this what Ahmed and Puwar refer to as the workings of institutions, are actually the working so of each institution’s leadership and their priorities, which most often involve keeping the institution running for themselves and their employees. The ability to see and willingness to acknowledge these gaps and walls is not particular to minoritized people. However, minoritized people who navigate white-coded institutions more often see and acknowledge gaps without choosing to, then commit to trying to combat them for personal necessity rather than, or as well as, out of empathy with others.

The thesis considers TD as a supplement to the mainstream for people of colour building careers in the arts. Sitting in a gap that many colleagues and counterparts do not acknowledge, while simultaneously trying to point it out and bridge it, is an emotionally and mentally fraught position to occupy, but by creating a Black-coded space, the founders of The Drum removed this responsibility from individuals. Thus, TD was effectively charged with bridging the large gap created by government (local and national), between what it said it would do post-empire.
and post-war in creating a cohesive multicultural society, and what it was actually prepared to do. TD’s leadership aimed for it to be a space in which those who worked and performed within it would not need to focus on trying to bridge gaps or bearing the burden of representation (Delia interview, 2016). This allowed them to focus instead on career development before re-entering mainstream arts organizations if they wished. How far it achieved that aim is one question for exploration in future chapters. How far the aim was realistic at all, is the question that follows, to be explored in the chapters to come. This, as opposed to the arguably more permanently effective aim of closing the gap altogether, through the slow and uncomfortable decolonization of arts institutions across the board. This second question invites a focus on the future and a consideration not only of one possible contributor to the Drum’s failure as an arts organization established to serve a particular set of communities, but of the Drum as part of a continuum of solutions toward a decolonization of the arts in the UK.

3.3.9 Decolonization as alternative.
This thesis is decolonial in its radicalism. I mean this in opposition to the liberal concept of Diversity, in the context of ACE’s Creative Case for Diversity.

![Fig. 3.1, The Axe at the Root, from the pamphlet of the same name by William Thurston Brown, 1901.](image-url)
Diversity and decolonisation are fundamentally opposed, though on the surface they seem to work toward the same goal—equality. The dissonance is described visually in Fig. 1, an early socialist political cartoon. The character labelled ‘Preacher’ represents liberalism. He tries to fix one problem at a time while saving the tree. The character labelled ‘Socialist’ represents radicalism and aims to destroy the tree. The tree represents capitalism, which is rotten at its root and will therefore always produce rotten branches. The image shows radical thought as revolutionary, while liberal thought is focused on reform. From this socialist point of view, liberals work within the existing system, trying to improve but ultimately save it, while the radical aim is to burn the system down and reconstruct it entirely. While the socialist’s way may be violent and uncomfortable, we see that the liberalist’s way is futile, only serving to ease his own conscience by giving him the appearance of being active against the most visible problems. We also see that there are other, alternative trees in the background, labelled ‘Co-operation’, ‘Justice’ and ‘Brotherhood’, which would be given room to flourish if this larger tree were to be prevented from growing. This is a socialist cartoon, accompanying an essay that was published in a pamphlet series called the Pocket Library of Socialism. It is therefore entirely expected to paint the radical solution as the only effective one. However, what we do see is that the two approaches are different and opposed to one another. This thesis considers decolonization as the radical solution represented by the axe at the root of the tree. It considers how far TD, having been funded by ACE and BCC, could ever have been such a solution, as well as considering how far those who worked within it aimed for it to do the radical work of intellectual and cultural decolonization by making processes of coloniality visible to those who attended the events in its programme, and centering providing intellectual self-confidence for its BAME visitors. See Purpose’s Section 4.3: Liberal funding institutions: TD proving the validity of its purpose.

Centring coloniality as key to the formation of Western capitalist modernity, has been key to the way that this thesis has been thought through. Welcome introduced the ways that the thesis’ analysis makes use of the Saidian concept of the cultural archive. The Western cultural archive sustains the fiction that modernity happened without coloniality. Aníbal Quijano identified coloniality as separate from colonialism in the late 1980s and early 1990s, and Walter Mignolo later developed it as a decolonial term that ‘names the underlying logic of the foundation and unfolding of civilization from the Renaissance to today of which historical colonialisms have been a constitutive, although downplayed, dimension’. (Mignolo, 2011: 2). Because of the
fiction-forming function of the Western cultural archive, naming coloniality is itself a decolonial act. Rather than identifying overt racism in the way that ACE and BCC dealt with TD, the chapters to follow (particularly Location and Relationships) analyse the residue of empire, racist in effect, that is evident in the processes by which the arts functions in the UK. Thereby they name coloniality and are decolonial. The thesis’ analysis is also decolonial in that it is rooted in a non-Eurocentric critique of critique to modernity. The first type, ‘internal to the history of Europe itself’ is the eurocentered critique most often taught in formal education within Europe, adding to the Western cultural archive ‘for example, psychoanalysis, Marxism, poststructuralism, postmodernity’. The other two types ‘emerged from non-European histories entangled with Western modernity. The second line of critique focuses ‘on the idea of Western civilization (for example, dewesternization, Occidentosis) and the third, which I use here, is focused on coloniality ‘such as postcoloniality, decoloniality’. (Mignolo, 2011: xi) As such, this thesis comes from a tradition of critiquing Europe that goes back 600 years, to the very first critiques of European colonialism and projects of enslavement. This is why very few poststructural theorists are used – it is why, for example, Bourdieu’s concept of cultural capital is absent in a thesis partly about Class and the arts. It is why Foucault and Gramsci are used through the lens of Stuart Hall. The argument here, is that a truly intersectional analysis that includes Race and does not centre Whiteness, exposes such lines of critique not merely as alternative to the other two, but as incomplete in comparison.

In terms of the sociological treatment of decolonization, this thesis partly stands on the shoulders of Gurminder K. Bhambra, who writes of post coloniality and decoloniality as part of the same project; that of bringing the coloniality/modernity paradigm to the forefront in knowledge production. This history is at the centre of the research questions introduced in Welcome. Bhambra (2014: 137) writes that ‘both postcolonialism and decoloniality are developments within the broader politics of knowledge production and both emerge out of political developments contesting the colonial world order established by European empires, albeit in relation to different time periods and in different geographical orientations”. Postcolonial studies ‘as a field, retrospectively ordered the individual intellectual contributions of scholars’ (Bhambra, 2014: 128). Decoloniality, on the other hand, is a more active
reconstruction, that has always taken place alongside activism. One aspect of the postcolonial was dewesternization, or pluriversality, but decolonial scholars argue that this did not go far enough because it does not question capitalism - it does not set the axe to the root of the tree:

“Mignolo suggests that while both decoloniality and dewesternization seek to reject the (self-proclaimed) epistemic superiority of the West, dewesternization does not question the capitalist economy with which it is bound, only who leads within it. The decolonial option, on the other hand, starts from the idea that the regeneration of life shall prevail over [the] primacy of recycling the production and reproduction of goods’ (Bhambra, 2014: 137; Mignolo, 2011: 121)

TD’s adoption of Interculturalism as an ethos was a final abandonment of a decolonial agenda to the idea of pluriversality, and an argument of the thesis is that this contributed to the organization’s failure (See Chapter 4, Purpose, pp. 100-107). Bhambra (2014: 131) paraphrased Quijano (2007) in stating that ‘there is nothing more irrational than continuing to believe that the idea of universality as articulated by a particular people, and even specified as Western rationality, could continue to be understood as universal.’ To Quijano, it is impossible to understand power (whether through governmentality or hegemony) without coloniality. Quijano goes even further, to assert, through Maldonado-Torres, that democracy and modernity, ‘as theorized by Habermas, is actually ‘the unfinished project of decolonization’ (Quijano, 2007: 263). This thesis is therefore decolonial in that it works toward the culmination of modernity/coloniality.

If decolonization is the completion of modernity, we must see freedom and true, epistemic liberation for all peoples who have been dominated by racial capitalism since its inception, as the end result. In the racial hierarchies upon which that system rests, people of Africa and its descendants were placed at the bottom of the ladder, to be exploited by all who were placed above them. Therefore, if decolonization is the completion of modernity, then we must see Black freedom struggles, of which this thesis is part, as no less than the final push toward the culmination of modernity/coloniality and the destruction that it wrought in the world.

This thesis is decolonial in that it aims to effect intellectual and societal de/reconstruction. As Welcome’s section 1.2.4 (Why supplements are needed: “You can’t argue with Foucault”)

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10 In its focus on intellectual activism (See Process, section 2.3.7 Institutional Ethnography meets Intellectual Activism: Creating the archive), the thesis went beyond philosophising about decoloniality, to actively participating in the struggle it analyses.
introduced, the arts in the UK have been long been based on an arts education system that teaches modernization history and theory without the modernity / coloniality paradigm. The majority of professionals who go on to administer arts provision either as programmers, gallerists, curators, theatre directors, even those who make and inform cultural policy, have more than likely passed through an education system that teaches the history of modernity through a Eurocentric lens. This curriculum covers the Rennaisance and the enlightenment as the most important foundations of capitalist modernity, which is taught as beginning in earnest in the 18th century with the onset of the industrial revolution (sometimes even beginning in 1851 with the Great Exhibition of the Work of all Nations), and culminating in 20th century modernism before morphing into postmodernism following the post-war period. There is typically a class on postmodern critique, but this is rarely central to the understanding of modernity or modernism. This way of teaching and understanding modernity, according to Bhambra, is a result of colonialism in that it is a means by which it ‘both created an effective global space and an elision of its continued role in the determination of social processes within that space.’ (Bhambra, 2014: 8) The result is that “the dominance of Europe, then contributed to the invisibility of the global as subsumed under Europe where Europe and modernity were one.” This effectively was an attempt at a denial of “[t]he empirical reality of colonialism [by way of] its bland representation as resolved through processes of ‘normal’ development.” (ibid.: 9) Walsh and Mignolo identify decoloniality as being “wrapped up with re-existence” in that it claims “a terrain that endeavours to delink from the theoretical tenets and conceptual instruments of Western thought” (Walsh & Mignolo, 2018: 7). This new geopolitics of knowledge, is what Maria Lugones (2010) identified as something created by decolonial work. Although TD was in the UK, it was cultural home to a diaspora whose roots are not only in the global south, but in former British Overseas Territories in the Caribbean. In this analysis of TD, members of this diaspora are not treated as cultural diversity as in the Creative Case (which keeps White Britishness, and arguably even Englishness, at its centre), but as central to understanding UK funding systems in a new way, and this is because of decolonial thought. Decolonial thought is an ongoing practice of dismantling the structures of White Western dominance. This involves consideration of the ways in which I am potentially complicit, and constantly reworking my methodology and use of words, as was discussed in the previous chapter. TD’s story is local, national and international at once, by virtue of its having been a Black-led arts centre and thereby linked to all of the Black Atlantic, and also to the Indian Subcontinent by a historical thread, because of colonialism. Moreover, the links between the
people of the Black Atlantic and those of the Indian subcontinent (and also the divisions between them) are also the result of colonialism and resultant coloniality, as the ensuing chapters will explore. Through its history, which is rooted in the movement surrounding political Blackness, TD is linked to the sometimes shared plight of the nations of the ‘new commonwealth’ and also the moments of solidarity and collaboration between people who migrated from those nations to live in England in the mid-20th century, and their descendants. Moreover it is linked to displaced and exploited people all over the world. Thus, the location of this analysis of TD, is not the UK, but the in-between of diaspora. From that political location, a decolonial critique can take place.

Nevertheless, the meaning and uses of the word Decolonization are changing, and as words are not static in this work but are tools to be used only insofar as they are effective describing and instigating change in the social world. Eve Tuck’s work has proven useful in thinking through the ways that decolonization is used in this thesis, both as work that has informed my analysis (Tuck & Gorlewska, 2019) and work that my ideas have formed in opposition to (Tuck & Wang, 2012). Tuck and Yang, having asserted that decolonization should not be used as a catch-all metaphor for social justice endeavours (rather, that decolonization means ‘land back’ and refers only to the protection of indigenous rights to land in settler nations), went on to use the words of Audre Lorde (as Mignolo has also done) that silence will not protect us; that we nevertheless need language to describe the struggle for equity. They also begin with fanon. Therefore, while this work made me think carefully how I use decolonisation in my title and analysis, I agree with Tapji Garba and Sara-Maria Sorentino (2019) who highlight that while Tuck and Yang rebuff ‘poststructuralist misdirection’ of the term decolonisation, the settler / native / slave triad claimed in their Decolonization is not a Metaphor becomes a settler / native dyad in their analysis, through their effective treatment the slave as merely another form of settler, while using black diasporic decolonial authors’ work as bases for argument:

“Their work simultaneously invokes and subsumes Black studies scholars such as Saidiya Hartman, Hortense Spillers, Sylvia Wynter, Audre Lorde, Aime Cesaire, Frantz Fanon, bell hooks, Fred Moten, Frank B. Wilderson III, Denise Ferreira da Silva, Katherine McKittrick, Thomas Shapiro, and the Black/Land Project (see Morrill et al. 2016; Tuck and Gaztambide-Fernandez 2013; Tuck et al. 2014a, 2014c; Tuck and Yang 2014, 2016).”
Garba and Sorentino identify that acknowledging modernity / coloniality’s creation and sustenance of the anti-blackness that began with the enslavement of African people, not only moves decolonization beyond the sole purpose of ‘land back’ for indigenous peoples, but introduces its relevance to black diasporic peoples outside of settler nations. It also rectifies the subsumation of black diasporic authors within their argument about indigeneity. However, while & claim that decolonization should not be made to stand in for the totality of struggle, I assert that it can in this thesis’ analysis, because all struggle is against modernity / coloniality. I argue that decolonization is the term most applicable to the type of change that this thesis on racial hierarchy in the UK seeks to effect. So, rather than engulfing slavery in a synecdoche that has decolonization stand in for the totality of struggle, this thesis has decolonization account for the totality of racial struggle in the UK because of coloniality and enslavement.

Tuck’s work with Julie Gorlewski (2019) has proven useful in defining the particular struggles that I name as decolonial in this thesis. They use ‘justice’ and ‘change’ where other scholars writing about such work on education as a site of resistance have used ‘decolonization’ (Bhambra, 2018; De Souza-Santos, 2017). They call the process futurity, or ‘What we are doing right now to bring about other futures’, and I have found this concept eminently helpful (Tuck & Gorlewski, 2019: 186). Futurity is the next step, the war of movement / manoeuvre after organizations like TD have closed, and now that new iterations have come into being. Now (in 2020) that we have a crisis (of health and of racial capitalism), we can begin to imagine “a move away from a teleological understanding of progress and time, a move away from the certainty of the future of social and state relations […] a refusal to acquiesce to the certainty of violence, especially state violence, in the lives of Indigenous people and Black people […] an insistence that things can be transformed”. (ibid.). For Tuck and Gorlewski, futurity is about imagining a world without the limits that structures of racism have placed on futures for racialized peoples, and actively building it in the wake of those structures having been disrupted. That is now imminent, so “what we imagine now can take material shape not in a distant future, but soon, next.” (ibid.) Following freedom of thought (imagination), futurity is also “acting with an orientation toward futurities”, which means that “the future is identified as a contested space where differences are investigated in relation to privilege, and where dissent is encouraged as a means of illuminating how power is exercised through social systems and institutions.” (ibid.: 187). Nevertheless, this thesis uses the term decolonization because it considers a community of people with roots in the new world. Latin American decolonial
scholars identified decolonial thought as having its roots in the developing world (even going as far as to root it specifically in the New World), and centring the that world’s interests as a means of addressing global economic inequality. (Escobar, 2011: 212) However Learning from The Drum considers the New World, and the inequality wrought in its creation and maintenance, to have been everywhere touched by colonialism, including the places from which it was instigated, just as Nandita Sharma did in her exploration of the work of Caribbean decolonial scholar Sylvia Wynter, entitled Strategic Anti-Essentialism: Decolonizing decolonization:

“[T]he enormous movement of plants, people, animals, communicable diseases, and ideas across space—and the kind of ties that such movements engendered—gave rise to what can truly be described as a new world. I argue that it was new in many senses of the word, the least of which is Columbus’s own “new discovery,” that is, a view that was both Eurocentric and geographically limited to the Americas. Rather, the New World was one in which people across continents and oceans were brought together into a single field of power. This is the world we have collectively inherited, a world organized by social relations that are, to say the least, grossly uneven.” (Sharma in McKittrick, 2015:164)

It is hegemony and inequality that tie the colonized to the colonizer, and in this mode of thought, Europe also became a new world in 1492. Diasporic communities from the former Empire are evidence of that, their treatment within the Global North has been organized according to the structures of colonially-implemented racial capitalism (Bhattacharyya, 2018), and therefore their resistance and liberation struggles within Europe can be spoken of with the language of decolonization.

3.3.10 Resistance co-opted by diversity: Created community vs ascribed community

The thesis uses community in two ways – the first being community as chosen, and the second, community as ascribed. Purpose talks a lot about self-determination. This is as opposed to Fanon’s overdetermination from without, which is what the funders do in Relationships
The creation of community is the primary way in which decolonization was effected at TD, as the chapters Purpose and Location will explore. In Asif’s interview, which is one of the fundamental sources for Location, he was adamant that the community (which meant at different moments the community of Newtown, the BAME community of Birmingham, the Afro-Caribbean community, the South Asian Community and the reggae music performing
community) had been his main reason for remaining at The Drum despite multiple pay cuts. He attributed the organization’s failure to its having had a string of management team and board members who had lost sight of the community as their focus. This idea of community, while it was the subject of much confusion and contestation throughout the lifespan of the organization, was something fiercely held dear by many who worked at the Drum. The fact that nobody seemed to know in definitive terms what that community was, did not matter in the moments when it was being defended.

The ascription of community is also one of the ways in which decolonisation was undermined by the funders. Chapter 6: Relationships, in its analysis of the layout of the Stakeholder meeting, describes this process as it occurred at TD. Community in the way that it is used in policy was found to be problematic during the period of ethnography. The term community, used to refer to groups of people, is often ascribed externally by those in power, who define the boundaries of who belongs together and who doesn’t. This overdetermination from without is a power relation that allows some people to abstract and amalgamate the identities of others in ways that materially affect those others’ chances of living as equally valued human beings within their society. Goldberg links this back to the establishment of Western modernity through the human rights abuses and genocides that the establishment of capitalist modernity warranted. The middle passage, the genocide of aboriginal Australians, systematic lynching in the southern United states in the 1890s, and the Nazi holocaust were among the examples he gave of ‘people reduced to the abstraction of a group, groups classified as abstracted numbers, belittled, rationalized as animals, treated as beasts by those whose actions would make them better candidates for the designation.’ (Goldberg, 2009: vii) Goldberg goes on to suggest that the abstraction and classification of peoples continues today to allow legacies of those colonial ‘projects’ to be ignored. (ibid.) Grouping people according to Race in a way that abstracts them and flattens the complexity of their lives, experiences and needs, amounts to ‘an ordering, valuing, ways of being and thinking that enable[d] and allow[ed] the cults of death and violence, that threaten[ed] the wellbeing of so many and later ignores their legacies.’ (ibid). One of those legacies of the abuses that built contemporary Britain, can be seen in TD and the specificity of what it needed from the funders, as is explored in the coming chapters.
3.4 Position in Policy

The aim of cultural policy has been identified as being “not just to ensure efficiency but also to foster a universal national culture and identity”. (Saha, 2018: 86) This is evident in the two ACE-produced policy documents that were mentioned time and time again by participants at TD; the Creative Case for Diversity and Great Arts and Culture for Everyone. This section analyses both documents to see how they have been written to fulfil this dual purpose, how that purpose’s two sides oppose each other, and what effects to arts organizations would likely occur in result. It is followed by two sections (3.4.2 and 3.4.3) that place the documents – and ACE’s Final Report on the Future of The Drum (Royce & Bain Burnett, 2016) which was informed by them - into broader historical and theoretical contexts. The Final Report on the Future of The Drum is cited in the data analysis of all ensuing chapters, and is pointed out repeatedly as being at odds with the organization’s roots in a multicultural arts model of cultural provision.

3.4.1 Cultural Policy that affected The Drum – the Creative Case for Diversity and Great Arts and Culture for Everyone

Together, The Creative Case for Diversity and Great Arts and Culture for Everyone outlined the strategic direction for arts and culture in England between 2010 and 2020. A summary of their messages is necessary here. The first message that runs through both documents, is that the cultural sector aims to boost the national economy and thereby the national reputation on the world stage. In Great Arts and Culture, ACE’s leader Sir Peter Bazalgette positioned the Arts Council not as an agent of government, but as a sympathetic advocate of the arts with the government and the arts, working to save the cultural sector from further austerity measures and privatization, rather than being the conduit through which they were being implemented:

“Core to our work will be making the case to government, to local authorities, to our partners and to the public that adequate public investment is the bedrock of arts, museums and libraries funding in England and is crucial to sustaining the public value of arts and culture to the individual, to society and to the national economy.” (Bazalgette, 2013 [2011]: 14).

In this message, individual organizations exist in large part to bring revenue to the cultural sector. This is the point of providing excellence and increasing visitor numbers, to increase the size of the national arts funding pot. According to Great Arts and Culture for Everyone, everybody who engages with the arts “is a stakeholder in our world-class arts and culture” and
the definition of arts and culture is very broad, covering “Every taxpayer, every lottery ticket-holder, every donor, and every reader, theatre-patron and concert-goer” (Bazalgette, 2013 [2010]:3). The reason for this, is an increase in pressure on public funding in years following the Global Financial Crisis, and subsequent cuts to arts funding (mentioned in Welcome) The policy document states that “As pressures increase on public funding, arts and cultural organisations need fresh approaches which enthral audiences and attract new sources of income”, relying less on public funding. (ibid.) Additionally, ACE values “increasing commercial acumen” in the artists and organizations they invest in, meaning that ACE grants are no longer grants but investments, from which a great return is expected. This return can be of taxes to the public purse, of commercial revitalization of the localities in which the artists / organizations work, or of growth to the national reputation for arts and culture, which contributes to revenue created from international tourism. However, commodification is identified by Saha (2018) as one of the primary ways in which the cultural industries “make Race”, adding to and sustaining the “historical constructions of Otherness” and behaving as “a technology of racialized governmentalties, and as a process that contains racializing dynamics” (Saha, 2018: 57). Under racial capitalism, commodification serves and sustains White supremacy. Another means by which Race is made for Saha, is through diversity initiatives, which reproduce Whiteness (ibid.: 93) This brings us to ACE’s Creative Case for Diversity.

Acknowledging the UK’s multiculure with the opening “Our nation is more diverse than ever before”, Arts Council England’s website then considers how that diversity can be utilized in service of the nation, describing the Creative Case thus:

“The Creative Case for Diversity is a way of exploring how arts and cultural organisations and artists can enrich the work they do by embracing a wide range of influences and practices. We believe that embracing the Creative Case helps arts and cultural organisations not only enrich their work, but also address other challenges and opportunities in audience development, public engagement, workforce and leadership, and collections development in museums. Our funded organisations are expected to show how they contribute to the Creative Case for Diversity through the work they produce, present and collect.” (Arts Council England)

In 2011, ACE adopted diversity policy “as an integral part of everything that they do, from the work they programme, to the staff they employ, to the people who are chosen to lead them”, expecting “arts and cultural institutions [to] lead the way”. (ibid.) In this thesis and particularly
in the next chapter, *Purpose*, the question of how TD’s vision, which is described as decolonial, fitted into this agenda. This focus on an embrace of a wide range of influences and practices does not speak to creating lasting systemic change to the structures and systems of coloniality/modernity – of hegemonic Whiteness. In fact, such strategy works to sustain them by enriching them with the moral upper hand of inclusivity, and with the variety brought about by a cosmopolitan sort of cultural bricolage. The excerpt above makes clear that the Creative Case aims to instrumentalize diversity for the enrichment of artists and arts organizations, and for that enrichment to lead to increased audience engagement, visitor numbers and profit. This is one of many examples within the language of *Creative Case* literature, that despite this instrumentalism being seemingly at play to use the arts as a moral driver if not toward equality, at least toward a more culturally literate and engaged society, it is primarily a business case, informed by the broader strategic plan, *Great Arts and Culture for Everyone*. ACE suggest that even so, everybody wins where there are both economic and social gains, and the Creative case seeks to “unlock the full social and economic potential of arts and culture across England”. But for whom? Whose economic and social gains are created by this seemingly neutral business case, that aims to instrumentalize (and commodify) diversity in the arts for the economic good of everyone? Identities as spoken of in the *Creative Case* are rarely intersectional. Particularly in videos produced to support the *Case*, all aspects of diversity are lumped in together, seemingly in celebration and vaguely referring to a general inclusion, but in the process, identifying people in terms of their varying degrees of divergence from the ascribed somatic norm of cisgender, heterosexual, middle class, English speaking male Whiteness – alienating them in the way that Puwar and Ahmed are described as having identified, earlier in this chapter. Moreover, this is instrumentalism at the scale of the nation – individual communities or parts of cities are no longer the focus. This lumping in, and its effects on TD and its communities, will be analysed in depth in the penultimate chapter, *Relationships*. The policy language of the *Creative Case for Diversity* evokes a seamless melting pot that ACE dreams of creating without addressing the nation’s postcolonial melancholia, or effecting lasting systemic change. In so doing, the *Creative Case* ignores rather than neutralizes power imbalances.

To return to Saha then, despite their ambivalence and the inherent contradictions of often seemingly positive representations of racialized people, capitalism and its processes of commodification are not neutral when it comes to Race. In fact, they are ‘mostly constraining’ far from meaning ‘that anything goes and anything is possible; [they are in fact] aleatory’ and
‘under neoliberalism, the scale is tipped very much toward oppression and domination.’ (Saha, 2018: 83) And the creative case for diversity, while it seemingly sought to instrumentalize the arts for the sake of all forms of diversity, actually sought to instrumentalize diversity for the sake of boosting the national economy and the reputation of Britain as a nation of inclusivity and cohesion. This happened as it became ever more fraught and fragmented in the years approaching the EU referendum.

3.4.2 Cultural Policy in Context: The Crisis of Multiculturalism.

The policy examples above are the two that affected TD most immediately, because they informed the changes in the UK arts world that led to its closure being suggested, as Purpose will show. However, they did not exist a vacuum, not are they separate from history. This section will elaborate on the social and historical contexts that eventually produced both TD and the policy documents that existed in opposition to it. This will involve an analysis of Race, multiculturalism and the arts as written about by cultural policy studies scholars.

Fig. 3.2. Title still from Pathé News’ 1955 public service film: Our Jamaican Problem.

Fig. 3.2. is a still from Pathé News’ 1955 public service video: Our Jamaican Problem. The video was intended to be ironic, and actually painted Caribbean migration in a positive (though
decidedly integrationist) light for the host population. However, this section of the thesis will show how policy and the cultural products produced to communicate it - beginning with things like this film - were shaped by, and contributed to, a discourse that treated Britain’s multiculture as a problem to be solved. To do so, it will attempt to delineate the development of arts policy in the UK with regard to Race.

The year of The Drum’s closure marked 40 years since the publication of the benchmark report *The Arts Britain Ignores; The arts of ethnic minorities in Britain*. (Khan, 1976) Sarah, when interviewed for this thesis’ research, saw the organization’s failure to mark this in its programming for 2015-16 as one of its main failures. To her, it was a key document in the formation of organizations like The Drum, because it that the first report that “highlighted the range of arts activities taking place in minority communities in Britain but which were being ignored and unfunded by mainstream arts institutions”. (Daboo, 2018: 1) It was a benchmark example of multiculturalism being used to inform cultural policy for the succeeding 20 years. It identified that the UK the government saw its post-war immigrants as one large problem that needed to be solved, rather than as people who been invited, and who had already contributed significantly to the rebuild of the country since the end of the second world war:

“The literature on the so-called problems of immigration is vast – some of them genuine ones of mutual accommodation, many part of generally innercity difficulties: shortage of housing, educational facilities and general amenities. Whatever the category, immigrants and their offspring are presented, particularly in the media, at a disadvantage, offering at best a conundrum to be valiantly solved, at worst an incursion that will hopefully be ejected.” (Khan 1976, 5)

The report, which was funded by and produced by ACE, the Gulbenkian Foundation and the Community Relations Commission. What was then called Britain’s ‘minority arts’ landscape was examined in this report, and it was pointed out that there was something unique about the double diaspora that is the Caribbean community in the UK. Khan pointed out that,

‘West Indians stand in a unique position […]. All other communities have, without exception, been primarily concerned to preserve the culture and social structures of their homeland […] All are seen as worth preserving because they have provided stability and meaning for many hundreds of years to the lives of their various peoples. West Indians have no such continuity on which to draw. Western slave traders wrenched them, in the sixteenth century, from their African tribal societies and disrupted a natural process of development.’ (Khan, 1976: 90)
Colonialism occurred in different ways in the various parts of the Empire, and the Caribbean, which was destroyed and rebuilt entirely as an archipelago of slave plantation colonies and functioned that way for 400 years, was different to any other area that the British colonized, including those of the Americas that also functioned as settler colonies. The Caribbean existed entirely as a series of hellish factories for Europe. Everything was exported (Phillips & Phillips, 2005:10-17) except the people, who had been imported either as enslaved Africans, indentured workers or Slave Owners. In Jamaica, the island whose descendants formed the bulk of the community represented at TD, indigenous people had been all but made extinct by the Spanish before the British arrived in 1655, and certainly by the end of chattel slavery in 1834. As a result, the majority of people considered to be from the island are at least partly of African descent. Many have linked this to the arts cultures of the region. Although other islands have higher percentages of people who can claim indigeneity, many cultures of the Caribbean have been formed through processes of mixing (culturally and genetically) though rarely seamlessly and to varying extents. This is evident in the influences behind its music genres (Rohlehr, 2004) Because of this, the Caribbean community in Birmingham hails from a culture that is characterized by cultural creolization and processes of Creolité. (Hall, 2003) Caribbean cultures are therefore rich and complex, but also new and relatively malleable when compared to older cultures. This becomes clear when the people move to other locations, and Khan points out the importance of protecting the cultural expressions of Caribbean culture for that reason. It is also partly for this reason that Sarah saw a direct correlation between UK leadership’s lack of acknowledgement of the need for various communities to express their cultures through art, and TD’s closure.

Linda Moss (2005) identifies that a shift in the language and focus of cultural policy following the production of The Arts Britain Ignores. She writes of the ‘minority arts’ model, that “[t]he designation [of those arts] as policy for “ethnic minorities’ communities’ arts” in 1976 indicates that the intention was limited to the enabling of homespun participatory work within those communities, not the presentation of their art to, or within, the mainstream”. (Moss, 2005: 190) This result of Khan’s report was the label ‘minority’ or ‘community’ arts being exchanged for ‘ethnic arts’ and then replaced by ‘multicultural arts’. The multicultural arts model, which gave birth to TD, will be discussed below in section 3.3.2., as well as the subsequent shift to cultural diversity, which left TD behind.
In 2018, Jerry Daboo published a note, which questioned whether Britain still ignores and underfunds the arts of its minoritized citizens. Though particularly referring to South Asian arts in urban contexts, Daboo points out that in many ways not much has changed in terms of the national discourse on multiculture and migration, though the UK’s multiculture is made up of more complex demographics and consists largely of people who are second, third and fourth generation British:

“Forty years later, we now have third, fourth and even fifth generations of those original migrants who have a very different relationship to Britain and being British, along with newer patterns of migration. However, the discourse has essentially tended to stay the same. It is not that immigration has suddenly become a ‘problem’ but that it comes more visibly into our consciousness at particular times.” (Daboo, 2018: 4)

Daboo goes on to cite some of the contemporary issues that exacerbate the painting of people as ‘problems’ in the discourse,

“At this particular point in time, the refugee crisis in the Middle East and North Africa, as well as the referendums on the EU and Scottish independence, are certainly creating a moment of significance in questioning what it means to be British, and making visible many divisions within British society.” (ibid.)

Saha also cites globalization as a pressure that exposes the faultlines within British society, because it has “intensified flows of migration […] and has led to some highly troubling reactions.” (Saha, 2018: 86) The Marrakech vignette at the beginning of this chapter demonstrated how racialized people can also engage with, internalize and act on this discourse. These moments when immigration is rendered visible as ‘problem’, reinforce the racial hierarchies established to sustain White supremacy in racial capitalism, and are often effective in igniting anti-Blackness in Non-Black people of colour too. The interview analysis in Chapter 5: Location, pinpoints a moment where it is possible to see how this contributed to division at TD, by undermining solidarity between ‘people of colour’ and reinforcing White supremacy, though in a subtle way.

How has this been dealt with / influenced by policy? The policy landscape for TD can be mapped between the publication of the Khan and Daboo Documents. Lentin and Titley (2011) identified a crisis in multiculture after the first decade of the 21st century. Saha (2018: 86) identified in turn that this was “the consequence of a populist feeling in many [Western] nations
that there is ‘too much diversity’ (Jakubowicz, 2014: 227). Saha acknowledges a dual purpose on the part of governments in implementing diversity policies within the cultural industries. That purpose seems to be self-contradictory:

“… [C]ultural industries are capable of generating vast profits. But they also wield great social power. It is because of this influence that governments of the advanced Western capitalist nations [...] are compelled to apply regulation to curb excessive [...] power. Such regulation is conducted in the name of maintaining [...] diversity, a key tenet in a liberal pluralist model.” (Saha, 2018: 85)

In her policy analysis of media and broadcasting, Sarita Malik describes a shift in public policy from a focus on multiculturalism to cultural diversity (Malik, 2013: 229). She identifies ‘varying, overlapping forces’ involved in effecting this depoliticization of cultural policy, as its effects. These forces “include the political economic, state responses to multiculturalism, neo-liberalism and discourses of creativity and innovation” with she identifies having shaped policy approaches to “the ‘problem’ of cultural difference”. Malik recognizes policy as a tool “to publicly manage what might be commonly understood as problematic situations (such as multiculturalism) while also serving alternative agendas (such as social cohesion)”. (ibid) The social cohesion focus was chosen by European governments because recognizing and providing for difference was seen by them to be ‘incompatible with collective citizenship’.

Malik considers cultural diversity policy as part of this shift from multiculturalism to social cohesion as ways of managing difference, and looks at the work of US critical sociologists writing at the birth moment of ACE’s Creative Case for Diversity, who have written about the shift as a deliberate “manoeuvre of whiteness” that effects ‘a retrenchment of white racial framing’ through diversity policy. Moore and Bell (2011) wrote that “proposing that diversity in supposedly post-racial times [is] a deliberate politics at play because diversity talk decontextualizes Race and racial inequality, consciously negates a critical multicultural politics grounded in anti-racism and most of all, holds whiteness in place”. Malik cites Colins (2011), who claimed that diversity had been exposed as an “ideological counter-point to […] Race-based policy and practice” (Collins, p. 517) in the USA at the same time as the UK introduced the Creative Case. She acknowledges a third phase after cultural diversity - creative diversity, in which policy makers removed Race from the equation completely and moving fully toward this post-racial fantasy, while still using it to manage the ‘problem’ of Race.
Above, around and driving all of this, is the crisis of multiculturalism. Paul Gilroy (1987) identified that state-sponsored multiculturalism (of which the public funding of TD can be seen as an example) was a subsumption of the antiracist movement of the 1970s and 80s by the mainstream. Indeed, as was pointed out in Welcome, TD’s advent signalled the end of a number of Black-run organizations that had existed in North Birmingham since the 1960s. The result of state sponsored multiculturalism was not only the closure of organically developed, bottom-up organizations, but also a ‘politics of limitation and ghettoization (Cottle, 2000 in Malik, 2013: 230). Nevertheless, Malik acknowledges it as having been rooted in a soft version of multiculturalism, unlike cultural and creative diversity, which, since the turn of the millennium, have actively undermined it within political and public discourse. (Malik, 2013: 230).

Returning to Malik’s recognition of policy as tool, then, which is used to manage the ‘problem’ of difference in Britain, it can be seen as no surprise that policy had worked against TD since the early 2000s, when it no longer fit the alternative agenda (of social cohesion) being served by government funding institutions. Applying Lorde (2007 [1984]: 111) to this then, it is no surprise that TD struggled and floundered throughout its lifespan. It was created by the policy of multiculturalism, in the early 1990s. At the moment when Newtown Cultural Projects was first funded by the BCC and ACE, it can be seen to have been using the master’s tools to try and dismantle the master’s house. It was able for a while to function as a disrupter of cultural hegemony in a war of position in a way that was helpful, but it could never have had lasting change – it could never have dismantled the master’s house. Moreover, once the government agenda shifted and shifted again, it was left behind. It would have needed to either become disassociated with the master’s house by becoming self-funded and self-determined or fully associated by abandoning its radical agenda. This tension between its own self-ascribed agenda, and the depoliticized agenda of social cohesion favoured by the government and its institutions, will be outlined in Purpose and continued throughout the thesis.

The policy landscape and its language provide an indication of how minoritized people featured in the national discourse before and throughout TD’s lifespan. It begins to become clear here that it is not simply a case of ACE and the BCC being racist and intentionally choosing to defund TD out of spite. There have been several shifts in the national attempt to ‘deal with’ its multiculture and the people who comprise it, attempting to provide for their needs. However, it is also clear that this has happened, in the early stages, in a patriarchal pseudo-colonial way of seeing them as a problem to be solved, as the unfortunate residue of empire or as people
who needed extra provision to feel welcome in Britain. In the later stages, with the shift to cultural diversity and inclusion within the mainstream, the contribution to mainstream life became the focus, and policy makers begin to think more about what minoritized people could give than what they needed. They provided diversity, for the education, betterment and improved cosmopolitanism of Whiteness. This was not intentional- Saha stresses ambivalence, but also that ambivalence is not neutral, nor does it create equity, but rather that ‘such policies have both constrained and enabled (though mostly constrained) the practices of racialized minorities.’ (Shaha, 2018: 85) With the shift to creative diversity, which values a Raceless version of diversity, they were written out of policy altogether and their focus on political Blackness became incompatible with policy, though subtly rather than overtly incompatible. This is why the question persisted: Why is TD closing half-way through ACE’s creative case for diversity? A policy analysis has shown that at no point were minoritized people considered in the national discourse to be equal contributors to British society, but were always ‘dealt with’ through the lens of lack. Daboo challenges this lens with a series of pertinent questions:

“I have been using the term ‘problem’ in a problematic way throughout, and quite deliberately, as often the discourse around diversity identifies it as a ‘problem’ or, […] a culture of deficit, which implies that there is a ‘lack’ in those communities which we, the white mainstream theatre organisations, need to fill for them. Obstacles and barriers to accessibility are framed in such a way as to suggest it’s ‘them’ putting up the barrier rather than us; in other words, that it is ‘their’ barrier, not ours. This not only suggests that ‘they’ need what we have to give them but can also overlook the work that’s already out there. So whose ‘problem’ is it? And who is the problem?” (Daboo, 2018: 6)

This failure is one of the things listed on ACE’s final report on The Drum as being one reason behind their decision to revoke the organization’s funding arrangement. They claimed that it had failed to meet ACE’s goal of providing a national, inclusive service:

“The Creative Case for Diversity challenges all publicly-funded organizations to extend the scope of their provision to ensure that the full creative and business benefits are gained from including diverse thinking and talent in their offer. Because of its history, The Drum could have been in prime position to develop a new vision for culturally diverse arts practice. However […] it is evident that the organization has not made the most of this opportunity.” (Royce & Bain-Burnett, 2016: 13)

Indeed, this is the case. The fact that the population demographic constituting the numerical majority did not patronise The Drum does not meet the standard of *Achieving Great Art for*
Everyone. However, when one considers the ways in which it advertised, the collaborations that it had with the Birmingham Repertory Theatre, the Midlands Arts Centre and other cultural institutions that could count themselves as more mainstream, it becomes clear that this was not for a lack of trying. If, as I explore through data analysis in Location and Relationships, it did alienate the majoritized population group by coming across to them as niche and exclusive those chapters also posit that, rather than this being because it marketed itself wrongly, it is to do with the cultural archive and The Drum’s place within it. I also suggest throughout this thesis, that it is because of the way that the cultural archive itself is constructed and maintained, through the process of sanctioned ignorance allowed by diversity’s implicit focus on divergence and creation of Race.

ACE’s conception of diversity, a cultural mixing in all arts organizations, would have seen TD, and by proxy its Black and Brown artists and audience members, becoming what McKinney has called an Agent of Epiphany for White theatre goers:

“Most turning points and epiphanies discussed in this chapter occur as a result of interactions with others whom I call agents of epiphany. In stories of whiteness, the usual agents of epiphany are African Americans” (McKinney, 2005: 25)

This is a user / used relationship, rather than an exchange between equals. The agent of epiphany is assigned the role of teacher, without an opt out option. Being an agent of epiphany requires significant emotional labour. The White people in McKinney’s interviews, while they have been enlightened about their own privilege by these encounters, still did not see their agents of epiphany as people with full subjectivities, to be known in their entirety. In the retelling of the epiphany stories, McKinney observes that the White person is still the centre of these interactions:

“In these scenarios, the racial Other is, in many ways, still more object than agent. Still, these autobiographers gain new understandings of race and racism through interactions with people of colour, even limited or temporary.” (ibid.)

As was discussed in section 3.3.7 of this chapter, TD existed as a space where interactions with White people could be had not on these terms, but on the terms of the minoritized people whose presence and ownership coded the space. The encounters with minoritized people at the Drum promised to be full ones, where people would be seen for all that they were, good and bad.
Such encounters are conducive to decolonization, but as such, they do not encourage surface diversity – which is the inclusion of as many Races within a space as possible, no matter what their experiences of that space may be. The lack of attendance at Drum events by White people suggests that deconstruction of hegemonic Whiteness, certainly under these circumstances, is an unrealistic hope. However, this section has shown that this was not the aim of the policy documents that informed TD’s closure. The next chapter, Purpose, shows that it was not TD’s aim either.

The chapters to come analyse ACE’s final report on the organization, in which The Drum was critiqued for not adhering to the latest iteration of cultural diversity. It was seen to have been made obsolete by mainstream arts organisations’ successes in including minoritized individuals on their staff bodies, and in representing a diversity of ‘cultures’ in their programming. This, paired with The Drum’s failure to courting an equally diverse audience (which would have involved courting more White theatre goers and staff members) was a problem.
4. Purpose

“There was a guy who came to work here, and he said that what makes The Drum distinctly different is that actually this place has a purpose. And we had a purpose. We had a vision and we had a mission” (Samad Speech, 2016)

“TD has never developed a clear shared vision or mechanisms to deliver common goals across the organisation. Particularly over the past ten years, the executive and artistic leaders have pulled in different directions, causing ‘silos’ and undermining the organisation’s sense of purpose.” (Royce & Bain-Burnett, 2016:10)

4.1 Decolonization vs. diversity, action vs. representation, radicalism vs. liberalism.

Central to an analysis of what caused The Drum (TD) to fail must be a study of its original purpose. A lack of purpose and vision was one of the primary flaws cited in Arts Council England (ACE)’s final report, which pointed to closure as the most logical course of action for the organisation. Central to a study of TD’s purpose must be an analysis of how diversity agendas (espoused by government agencies and institutions as a way of managing Britain’s multiculture), are incompatible with decolonial agendas (those which seek to break down the structures of thought and systems of social organisation that supported the European colonialism, enslavement and dispossession of people and land in other parts of the world, and established Western capitalism). (Bhambra, 2007) Indeed, they established The West as concept. (Hall, 1992) The overwhelmingly consistent finding of this thesis’ research is that

Fig.4.1. A segment from the application form for the Birmingham City Challenge funding (1992) which formed the capital funding for The Drum’s building.
throughout the lifespan of TD its funders were committed to a diversity agenda, while its staff members were committed to a decolonial one. In order to be funded by ACE and the Birmingham City Council (BCC), TD’s management were regularly required to attain targets created by policy makers within these institutions, who saw TD as potentially one of the country’s bastions of diversity. On the ground, in the midst of Birmingham’s multiculture, the staff could see that what was needed was not a mere focus on multicultural, multiracial representation (which is what cultural diversity is in essence, as Position has critiqued). What was needed to make multiculture work for the people who constituted it, was a particular type of decolonial action, which this chapter unpacks. Because of this, TD became caught between the purpose dictated by its funders (and the UK government) and the purpose needed by the communities it served.

When read together, the image and quotations above present this dilemma clearly. The first is a quotation from former management team member Samad’s speech at TD’s closing ceremony, The Final Beat of The Drum, in which he went on to speak in detail about TD’s purpose and vision. Here, he explains that new staff saw TD’s purpose as one of its distinguishing features. This chapter considers how far his certainty on this point was reflected by his colleagues on the final management team, and how far by others connected to the TD, including its non-managerial staff. It does so to question whether ACE’s comment that ‘there is a very clear demarcation between senior management and “The Rest”, particularly in terms of strategy, vision and planning’ (Royce & Bain Burnett, 2016: 10) is accurate. The second quotation is from ACE’s final report. Here, Royce and Bain-Burnett claim on behalf of ACE, that the last ten years of TD’s existence were the years during which its purpose was undermined, by a poor relationship between members of the management team. The CEO who was in post at the organization’s end began their tenure at in 2005, which is the year that the organization celebrated ten years of existence as TD. Interviews do show that there were communication problems and differences in vision between this CEO and other members of senior management, as well as with the Board of Trustees. These are to be unpacked in the Relationships chapter of this thesis. However, given the range of issues that Welcome’s Timetable of The Drum pinpointed across the organization’s whole lifespan, this chapter asks how far there was a straightforward split between the first half of TD’s existence and the second. It also asks how far this can be complicated by consideration of the discrepancy between TD’s vision and that of they, the funders – a structural complication. The text in Fig. 4.1 begins to make sense of the contradictions between the quotations. It is a segment of the
application form for the Birmingham City Challenge funding (1992) which formed the capital fund for TD’s building, which opened in stages, from 1995 onwards. This document, sections of which are examined throughout this and the two next chapters, presents evidence of the concessions that TD’s early leadership made to the diversity agenda in order to gain their initial funding from BCC. It suggests that TD’s leaders had planned for the organisation to simply be for everyone, nuancing the UK’s national narrative and making it more culturally diverse (thereby aiming to expand the Western cultural archive). This chapter shows that it was not the way that the organisation functioned in reality, indeed that it was never part of the leadership’s creative vision for TD. It talks of inclusion, in the same terms that mainstream organisations have an obligation to be inclusive under cultural diversity agendas. This chapter explores how far this promise was unrealistic for TD.

The data examined in this chapter reveals a dissonance between the purpose and functions of The Drum and the expectations of its funders. The analysis in Purpose asks how this dissonance contributed to the organization’s demise. In 2012, TD was awarded the national accolade of being made a National Portfolio Organisation (NPO). This award is given to arts organisations so trusted and necessary to the national portfolio of arts organizations that they no longer need apply for funding every year. NPOs need only apply for funding every three years. TD served just one tenure as an NPO. In 2015, ACE began its investigation into the organisation, the report from which suggested its closure the following year. Why did ACE make TD an NPO if it had already lacked purpose for seven years by 2012? If there was a loss of vision, and if the clear ten-year demarcation is too simplistic, what happened within the organisation’s three-year tenure as NPO that could have caused a loss of purpose, which ACE may have missed out of their report? To explore these questions, this chapter takes a loosely chronological look at TD’s programming.

The first section of Purpose, ‘A Radical Purpose: self-determination and decoloniality’, sets out the ways in which, at its best, TD functioned as a centre for holistic support of Black creative production and community building with cultural expression at its core. It explores how, through artistic practice and cooperation, the organization provided a physical space that was conducive to the liberating acknowledgement of, and necessary reflection on the traumas brought about by multiple forms of racism. It also examines TDs aims to advocate for the needs of minoritized people in wider society. This section shows how the various functions of the
organization worked toward these aims and presents them as radical, decolonial. These functions are categorised as follows, and were partially explored in Welcome:

- Supplementing the mainstream in nurturing talent,
- Promoting Black working-class art forms
- Holding space for spiritualities
- Linking the local and national to the global, in a way that reflects the multiple layers of diasporic experience in a way that goes beyond mere cosmopolitanism.\(^{11}\)

The second section, ‘Liberal funding institutions: TD proving the validity of its purpose’ explores the limits to decolonisation placed on TD by the funding structure it was forced to work within. This bridging section draws on the section of the Position chapter entitled ‘Position in Policy’, which expanded on ACE’s Creative Case for Diversity and Great Arts and Culture for Everyone strategic plans. It explores the incompatibility of the funders’ liberal diversity agendas with the original purpose of TD. The Third and final section, ‘Loss of Purpose: from political Blackness to interculturalism’, explores an outcome of this incompatibility, to ask, how far did the breakdown of TD’s purpose actually occur within the final few years of its existence?

4.2 A Radical Purpose: self-determination and decoloniality

All of the Drum’s leadership from its earliest to its last, envisioned the organization as a decolonising resource for racially and/or culturally minoritized communities in Birmingham and the wider UK. The term ‘decolonisation’ was not often used in interviews or the Drum’s official literature. This is possibly because cultural decolonisation has become part of common parlance only lately. However, many of its qualities (including self-determination and financial independence) were evident in the ways that the organization functioned, and in conversations with its staff. It is clear from TD’s many functions, that decolonisation of the minds of its staff and visitors was a major aim. Examination of the building and branding also reveal who its target staff and audiences were, as the opening vignette of Welcome began to show. The most important feature of this decolonial ambit was that it was inward-looking; this was not a mission to decolonize the mainstream – none of The Drum’s staff saw the organization as a

\(^{11}\) This list was constructed by me, as a result of fieldwork observation, analysis of events brochures, and interview data analysis.
place of cultural literacy education for leaders of White-coded institutions and mainstream arts audiences, as the funding application form in Fig.1 suggests. At its best, TD functioned to provide for minoritized people what was needed, but not provided elsewhere. It supplemented the mainstream, expanding the cultural archive for those for whom such expansion is instantly liberatory (See Welcome, Sections 1.4.3 & 1.4.4: ‘Decolonizing the Cultural Archive’ and ‘Why Supplementation is needed: You can’t argue with Foucault’)

4.2.1 Purpose: The Drum’s Artistic Policy.
In his speech at TD’s closing ceremony, Samad, one of TD’s most influential programmers, laid out what he felt its artistic vision was:

‘The Drum’s artistic policy talked about that vision of creating a confident Black-arts. It was not to be a place of the exotica; the ethnic other, but it was where we defined ourselves, and we challenged native representations of what we’re supposed to be. All of that came from, was informed by, the fact that the Drum was coming out of a particular history. And out of that history we had these values; shared values.’ (Samad Speech, 2016)

In the same speech, Samad identified as being “from Pakistan”. The Blackness that he speaks of in this segment is political Blackness. He was one of those who espoused its values until the organization’s end. When he speaks of TD being a space where ‘we challenged native representations of what we’re supposed to be’, he makes it clear that TD’s artistic policy was that of a bold creative and intellectual self-confidence for minoritized peoples. The purpose of what he refers to as a challenge to White British representations of ‘others’ inside the nation’s borders, was to give the objects of those representations agency over the way that they would come to see themselves. The aim was to do so by fostering a sense of cohesive, confident and self-defined identity. This was altogether different to the liberal tradition of inclusion and diversity offered by mainstream, subtly White-coded museum, gallery and theatre spaces in the city. In its early years therefore, TD sought to create a community of communities. Its programmers recognised the importance of unity for community, and community for decolonization. Importantly, this unity needed to be removed from hegemonic Whiteness. Only then could it have been complete in its own right, rather than existing as a point of divergence from, and therefore a reinforcement of, the understood somatic norm. As Sara Ahmed has explored (See Position Section 3.3.8, ‘Convergence: Diversity & inclusion rhetoric in neoliberal institutions’), the diversity agenda and its policies of inclusion most often serve as hindrances to the true decolonisation of institutions and individuals. This is because diversity
is a product of liberal thought and decolonization in its present form is necessarily radical (See *Position* Section 3.3.9, ‘Decolonisation as alternative’). Building community between Afro Caribbean and South Asian people in North Birmingham and foregrounding their specific needs and cultural outputs, was radical, not liberal, because a liberal agenda would still implicitly centre whiteness.

TD’s founders deemed this agency over self-image necessary for minoritized people of all ages, to combat the complex pressures faced by them within a society organized to privilege White Britishness, and middle-class White Britishness at that. To this end, Young Drum was important. The Drum’s youth programme, which was called Young Drum by 2016, began its life under the name Young Gifted Brum (YGB), a play on the title of the song, *Young Gifted and Black* (1970). As was expanded on in *Welcome* (see *Welcome*’s Section 1.2.6, ‘Holding space for spirituality’). This reference to the Black radical tradition and focus on supplementing the subtle reinforcement of racial hierarchies in the mainstream education system, was intentional. The CEO, in his speech at *The Final Beat of The Drum* and also in a January 2016 conversation, recorded in the research journal for that month, pointed out that in so doing, it continued the supplementary school tradition that Afro-Caribbean community leaders in Britain had sustained since the 1960s (Andrews, 2013). This tradition can trace its genealogy back to Garveyite self-help education practices that fuelled Caribbean Pan-Africanism from the 1930s onwards (Gregory, 2018), and before that to proactive efforts toward education by enslaved Africans in the Caribbean prior to 1834, as was fully explained in *Position’s* Section 3.3.7, ‘Resistance: strategic essentialism: pan-African Blackness, political Blackness and decolonization in the Global North’. Choosing to name YGB after a song that was recorded equally famously by Jamaican and North American artists was acknowledgement by TD’s leadership of the global nature of the diasporic cultural movements of which it was part.

As the next chapter, *Location*, will discuss, the physical building of TD was important in that it represented rootedness in Birmingham and the UK, the coexistence of that rootedness with the global nature of diaspora consciousness, and the permanence of the communities in question. The building was integral to putting the artistic policy into practice. The history that Samad spoke of, is that of a group of programmers of continental African, Afro-Caribbean and South Asian descent, who worked together in the late 1980s and early 1990s to attain the building of TD, from which they could run artistic programmes that reflected their cultures. Drum folklore is clear: the building was hard-won; the result of the work of a faithful few. Asif
spoke of these beginnings, to explain TD’s importance, and why the building’s closure would equate to a great loss:

‘Like I said, people don’t realize how it started; the Drum it started in a little room, you know? And nobody wanted to know them. And they had to fight and chop tree, fight, chop the tree, “alright we’ll give you a little room over there”; chop the tree again and get another building over there – “alright mate… listen you don’t take our acts into your venues. We need our own venues to promote our acts.’ (Asif, Interview 2016)

He makes it clear that the building was important because of what it represented – a sense of belonging, and a sense of ownership. He presents this in oppositional terms. In this segment of his interview, the group of arts programmers who eventually became Newtown Cultural Projects (NCP) are the underdogs, who were working to establish a venue of their own, as an alternative to fighting to have the creative output of their communities recognized as valid and important by the mainstream arts world. The last two sentences speak of self-determination and the reason behind TD being a separate space for minoritized people. He saw it as the result of rejection from mainstream organizations, which ‘belong’ to the nation, and to those who are recognized as belonging to the nation. Whether he feels NCP were being shunned from mainstream venues on the grounds of Race, Class or both, is unclear at this stage of the interview. What is clear is that for Asif, NCP and the communities that they represented demanded a space of their own to show their acts because they were denied space elsewhere. At The Final Beat of The Drum, several people also began their speeches by recounting the organisation’s origins. Sarah, one of the longest serving staff members, remembered it first-hand:

‘There are so many people who played a part in the galvanization of this organisation. We worked in the Big Peg, Unit 206, we gave birth to The Drum in Unit 206 of the Big Peg. [A former CEO] worked; excuse my language, he worked his arse off. But we got here. This building is a result of that man’s work. (applause). And what did we need? We didn’t give up. There was nobody supporting us, well apart from the people in this room there were very few people supporting us, but we persevered, and we got the deal, and we came here, and we celebrated.’ (Sarah Speech, 2016)

Permanent premises were the pinnacle of achievement that the early programmers worked for, because they spoke to the permanence of communities that were treated as temporal by the mainstream’s minoritizing ‘inclusion’ agendas. The building was seen by staff at all levels as
an achievement - a building of their own would enable them to embed their decolonial purpose in its branding, design and program. The logic was that this would, hopefully, undo minoritization by prioritizing and centralizing the experiences of people who were treated as tangential elsewhere.

4.2.2 Purpose: Supplementing the mainstream, nurturing new talent and audiences.

TD did not work against the mainstream but existed to supplement it. Every member of the management team placed support of artists at the top of TD’s list of functions. TD sits at the intersection of Race and Class, and this is where the radical arts centre serves the class-based needs of its local community. This was about nurturing talent rather than simply displaying it at its best. The act of nurturing talent in working class communities can be described as radical. Lack of access to funds for lessons and access to the best schools, creates the need for the complimentary incubation of talent. This supplementation can provide such artists with the polish to compete on a level playing field with those who can buy it. In both of Delia’s interviews (2016 & 2017), she pointed to her experience of TD as a place for developing new talent and audiences from communities that may access to other routes into the performing arts, such as stage schools:

‘I saw the Drum very much as a place for people who are developing and want to put on a performance. Yes, you do get some of the [...] populist type things [...] that people like, a lot. And yes, you have to do an element of that because there’s an audience out there for that. But it’s also about the other side of the arts that um, people who have had experience of putting on their art elsewhere, but they can’t do it on a regular basis but they can do it more regular in The Drum because it was a smaller scale and able to support them in what they were doing. That was another side of things. A lot of people had talent and ideas but just don’t know how to put it into play.’
(Delia Interview, 2017)

This is reinforced by the words of its first CEO. Business-focused, he was acknowledged by all of the longest serving members of staff as having bridged the gap between The Drum’s community focus and the demands of the funders adeptly until his departure in 2005. At *The Final Beat of The Drum*, his speech revealed his way of seeing TD’s radical function of training and nurturing Black talent, not as an alternative to the mainstream but as a supplement to it. He said plainly:
‘Experienced Black artistes, with management of experience, could not get a job in the mainstream venues. They couldn’t! The idea of this place is that we need to show them we can do it; train our own people so that they can make themselves available to the mainstream.’ (CEO 1, Closing Speech, June 2016)

Delia pointed out that this pertained to more than just the creative side of an arts career. She gave an example of a training programme, The Creative Circle, which funded by the Skills Council, and held at TD. It involved “looking at your skills and how you could develop that and get people in to say well as an artist how do you promote yourself how do you market yourself? How do you record your finances? All of the things that you would need as a self-employed person.” (Delia Interview, 2017) This was mentioned by way of explaining that TD’s commitment to “creating a confident Black-arts” (Samad Speech, 2016) involved helping people to become self-sufficient creative entrepreneurs, enabling them to avoid exploitation. This did not last, because of underfunding:

‘But again, all that sort of funding dried up, and how do you continue to do that without asking people to pay for it, and because they’re […] developing artists, they haven’t got the funds to pay for it themselves. So I don’t know if there’s anything out there now for people who are looking to develop themselves as a business in the arts. And as money gets tighter everywhere, the arts sort of gets pushed.’ (Delia Interview, 2017)

In order to carry out TD’s multi-functional purpose, a building was needed. Funding was needed to maintain both the building and the various programmes that took place within it. Moreover, for decolonization to be successful the building needed to be a specific type of space, with its purpose subtly embedded in its organizational culture, and the value of its specificity needed to be recognized, then funded.

4.2.3 The embedding of purpose: Design
The Drum provided a separate space for expression and creativity that was undervalued in the mainstream. For performers and audience-participants it was a rare space for working through what it means to be racialized as Black or brown in a multicultural European society, without judgement or unwelcome speculation. It may not have been the only place that diasporic people would go to engage with the arts, however it provided the option of engaging with the type of space that reflects a very important identity facet. The fact that the space itself was coded as politically Black, helped in that process. The slogans on its walls, taken from statements about
intellectual and creative freedom by Bob Marley, Claudia Jones and Rabindranath Tagore, continued this embedding. They pointed to personal decolonisation for people of African-Caribbean and South Asian descent (Figs 2 & 3). There was a more immediate job at hand than the reform of the mainstream: mental decolonization for minoritized people, who would experience increased equality as a gain rather than a loss of power.

Figs 4.2 & 4.3: Quotations on the walls of The Drum (downstairs coffee shop) Photographs taken by Davinia Gregory, July 2014.

Fig 4.4: Mirror, in the shape of TD’s signature, abstracted ‘hand-print’ or ‘splash’ logo, on the wall of the staff stairwell. Photograph taken by Davinia Gregory, June 2016

From its outset, The Drum had espoused the solidarity of political Blackness – with a focus on shared histories, experiences and values among minoritized communities. Thus, the building’s design and décor reflected the vibrancy that its founders recognised as common to the cultures it represented. The public parts of the building evoked the exuberance and vitality of African, Caribbean and South Asian performing arts traditions through vivid colours, unusual room
shapes, the decorative use of pattern and quotations on walls. Figs 4.1 & 4.2 are examples of this. Both quotations speak to TD’s philosophical and intellectual genealogies. In the first quotation, taken from *Redemption Song*, Bob Marley quotes Marcus Garvey, pointing to the philosophies of self-determination and intellectual decolonization espoused by Garvey and Garveyite pan Africanists. It speaks to the idea that the mind remains shackled long after the body has been freed unless decolonial work is done intellectually, thus calling for intellectual self-confidence and endeavour. It was emblazoned on the wall opposite the quotation by Rabindranath Tagore, which speaks of the opening of the mind to be able to see value in difference and think beyond mere conformity. These quotations spoke to aspects of the UK multicultural experience that affected TD’s audiences, and mapped TD’s links to the continents where they were written. This ‘politically Black branding’ continued in other physical manifestations of the TD’s organizational culture. In a November 2015 conversation, recorded in the research journal for that month, Sarah recounted that when the building first opened, staff had worn brightly coloured polo shirts to make the branding consistent, contrasting TD with the grey concrete of the local area and grey skies that often pervade in the UK. The name -The Drum- was chosen to reflect percussive musical styles common to those cultures; again, linking them together. Colour and movement characterized TD’s brand identity, right down to its logo and marketing material. The Logo’s purple and lime green were accompanied by a handprint, designed to appear as a hand would from the underside of a drum, capturing a moment of impact, mid-performance. Fig. 4.3 shows the feature mirror, custom-made for TD, on the lime green wall of TDs main staircase. It was in the shape of the logo design which, abstracted, appears like a splash, or some other moment of movement and impact. This was in the 1990s, when many arts organizations were embracing minimalist aesthetics; a return to modernism before the maximalist vibrancy popular early 2000s graphic design. The branding was in keeping with its early purpose, to represent the differences and commonalities in Birmingham’s multiculture, boldly, and to stand out from the White-walled mainstream when necessary. As the opening section of this thesis’ introduction described, TD was experienced differently from mainstream arts organizations. The intentional branding was a continuation of the more haptic elements noted in that section, like Drum Toast and Zoflora in the bathrooms. This continuation was an attempt to embed TD’s artistic policy, and its purpose into the fabric of the organization. Political Blackness and the global cultural movements it drew from, with their focus on self-determination and intellectual self-confidence, were thus woven into every aspect of TD in its early years. The aim of this was to make it ‘home’ for people belonging to
the groups for whom it was built (or what Welcome’s Section 1.4.6, *Holding space for black spirituality* described as a ‘sanctuary’).

### 4.2.4 The embedding of purpose: holding space for an expanded conceptualization of ‘arts’

The Drum’s original purpose was governed by two things; its allegiance to political Blackness and its physical location (the latter to be explored in the next chapter, *Location*). It held space for art-forms and activities favoured and produced by working class people from the communities it served. The following memory from an audio research-note (January 2016) serves as a breakdown of the functions, apart from that of an arts centre, the Drum fulfilled as a centre for community decolonization.

As I was leaving the Drum tonight, I was confronted by very loud music coming up the stairs from the Pit (the main space on the ground floor). Delia informed me that this gospel infusion was a regular occurrence, as the pit was rented regularly for Gospel Aerobics. I recorded a voice-memo as soon as I reached the car. I recorded that could not imagine such a thing happening in a mainstream arts venue or gym, at least not without it being watered down and stripped of its main purpose, which of course is far more than simply providing an upbeat oasis from the pressures of life. My heart instantly lifted because I remembered the song and it had positive memories for me. It was *Hosanna* from Kirk Franklin’s album *The Rebirth of Kirk Franklin* (2002). When I walked past the pit to leave for the carpark, I saw the source of this music; a small group of people doing aerobics downstairs. “Perfect song choice”, I thought. Infectiously joyful, *Hosanna* was one of a small collection of songs that had seen me through the last year of my undergraduate degree over ten years previously, providing me with the stoicism necessary to complete my work. The music had spurred me on more than the words - the song is upbeat, major key sunshine from start to finish – but the lyrics also inform the listener that the troubles of this life are transitory and can be overcome with the help of a higher power. Bonus, Kirk Franklin is master of the gospel choral build-up, and by the song’s climax, when the choir inverts its harmonic parts upward and the band falls silent to showcase the words, “Someday every tongue shall confess your name, this house made of clay soon shall pass away, whatever the test you will bring us through, Hosanna forever we worship you!” It’s impossible not to dance a two-step, sing along and believe that a first-class honours degree is within reach. By the end of that degree, all of my university flatmates knew the words to that song, which seemed embedded in the walls of our hall of residence. It had brought a stoic positivity not only to me, but to the others as well. This is the strength of gospel music, built by generations of people who have needed such a push to overcome extra obstacles, from the transatlantic slave trade to the present day.

The idea of embedding music in the walls and culture of a place, is important. Gospel music was just one of the artforms embedded in the building, and the organisational culture of the
Drum. Embedding is the process by which spaces are coded; given identity. It is more than branding, it is the creation of a culturally specific collective memory of a place through a million repeated small expressions, from the colours on the walls to weekly gospel aerobics sessions. The reason that gospel aerobics was so distinctive a memory, is because TD was an arts centre. I questioned whether gospel aerobics have happened on a regular basis in any of Birmingham’s mainstream arts organisations. What was the difference between TD and these other venues that allowed it to hold space for such an activity, adopting such an expanded idea of what ‘arts’ means? It seemed no coincidence that the session was happening in the presence of Tagore’s words “The tendency in modern civilization is to make the world uniform; let the mind be universal”. The merging of the concepts of spirit / soul and self is common in traditions of Black radical thought and activism, and has been key to many decolonial efforts. bell hooks (2004: 562) points out that because many African diasporic cultures were built upon histories of extreme trauma in which the religious organisations that they built in some cases and adapted in others became a multifunctional apparatus for coping that was built into the culture structure; for working class Black people the endurance and grit provided by stoicism can easily be lost when they distance themselves from a religious community without another source of holistic (meaning emotional, social and spiritual) support to help them cope with the continued effects of the racism that organises the social world. Inspirational secular songs of Black origin, like Young Gifted and Black, often mimic the chords, dynamics and inspirational messages of gospel music for example. It is no coincidence that The Drum was conducive to activities such as gospel aerobics; their essence was embedded in its fabric. At its best, it supplemented religious organisations in the lives of many people and replaced them in the lives of others; as a secular, holistic support centre, including an expanded repertoire of self-expression under the banner of ‘art’. Self-expression through multiple forms of spirituality, from many worship traditions of people of Afro Caribbean and South Asian descent, were honoured and included at TD. Moreover, rather than focusing solely on the forward-thinking that stoicism promotes, it enabled reflection on Race trauma through artistic practice, in other activities.

4.2.5 Why is embedding important?
This embedding of a cross-diasporic shared experience and the decolonial celebration of global cultural change, can happen freely in spaces like The Drum that are not coded as representing the interests of ‘the nation’. Cultural expression permeates the space. Likewise, mainstream environments are subtly characterized by and embedded with hegemonic Whiteness. This recalls the words of Katherine McKittrick: “we produce space, we produce its meanings, and
we work very hard to make [it] what it is” (McKittrick, 2007: xi). For each of the cultures that it served, The Drum held space for culturally specific forms of self-expression, for the development of a ‘community of communities’ (Parekh, 2000: 56) and for building self-esteem. Having a building in which this is the norm is an important element of the decolonization process for those subjected to inequality, often on the compounded grounds of Race and Class. In his only interview, Asif described his worst experience of an event organized by TD by way of explaining why this was important to him. The event was a Black History Month launch, held in collaboration with Birmingham Symphony Hall:

“And the worst one OK? […] My colleagues back in the day invited me to a Black History Month [launch] that took place at the Symphony Hall so I thought “wow, symphony hall they’re doing something- brilliant!” so I get in my car, go down to symphony hall, park up, pay 5/6 quid to park my car, I walked into the symphony hall.

‘Which hall are we in?’
‘Sorry?’
‘Which hall is the Black History Month?’
‘Oh they’re over there’
‘over where?’

As I turned around, Black History Month was launched in a corridor. And I said to my colleagues who were there from The Drum […] what are you doing? Why have you brought me here for? This is so embarrassing. […] And I left. And after that- and after that time onwards, they fought and we got Black History Month at The Drum. How could they put us out in a corridor?”
(Asif Interview, 2016)

As he continues, it is possible to see how he feels about an important British celebration being treated as an afterthought in a mainstream venue:

‘You can’t celebrate our history in a corridor, it’s disgusting! And people who allowed that to happen that day, they should be brought here and say look; this is what your people - this is the best you can do for our community?? Our community is number one mate! Our community needs everything! You know? Like… you know? We’re human beings! We’re human beings. My blood’s red yeah? (points to his arm) I’m the same as you! We speak the same language!’ (Asif Interview, 2016)

The launch of Black History Month was insignificant in the setting of the Symphony Hall. At best, it was treated as the type of an ‘outreach’ event that was part of the way that arts organizations enacted the diversity agenda until very recently. It may have ticked the
Symphony Hall’s diversity box, but it is possible to see from Asif’s reaction, years later, the effect that such half-hearted inclusion can have on those at whom it is aimed. Compared to this, the decolonisation agenda espoused by TD is radical, because it focuses on those who, according to mainstream values, should remain peripheral. So, while launching Black History Month at TD could be argued as amounting to the needless siphoning off of an event that is actually relevant to everyone (Black British history being just part of the history of Britain, though one that goes widely untold), this is an example of why it was necessary in a War of Position. Decolonising mainstream arts organizations would involve dissolving the very principles and values on which they stand. TD did not exist to do this, it would take a much larger cultural shift involving the dissolution of hegemonic Whiteness and the structures it supports (a War of Manoeuvre). In the meantime, The Drum existed as an alternative, to create, serve and strengthen communities that were othered by the mainstream if they engaged with it at all. However, in the final ACE report for TD, self-segregation was cited as one of the reasons for the suggested closure:

‘Over the past ten years, there have been significant shifts in models of practice for addressing the lack of diversity in the arts. Firstly, there has been a shift from culturally specific programming, which might segregate the practice of minority artists, to showcasing their work in mainstream settings’ (Royce & Bain-Burnett, 2016: 13)[12]

The ten-year time span reappears in this statement, this time not to blame the leadership’s divergent visions for the organisation’s demise, but to suggest that the arts in the UK has moved away from the original purpose of TD, toward a model that favours cultural diversity in the mainstream. Despite ACE’s claim that TD is not needed because “The Creative Case for Diversity challenges all publicly-funded arts organisations to extend the scope of their provision to ensure that the full creative and business benefits are gained from including diverse thinking and talent in their offer”, it served a different purpose, as has already been shown. The fact that the ACE researchers refer uncritically to ‘minority artists’ without considering the processes of minoritization, reveals that they are unlikely to have considered the role of diversity and inclusion in creating minorities; reproducing and increasing inequality. It suggests that the inclusion of minoritized artists is enough for equity to be achieved, and that there is no need for another model to exist alongside that. It reveals the persistence of the

[12] This is from a section of the report entitled ‘Addressing the diversity gap’. The title is interesting, it uses the language of Sara Ahmed, suggesting that they are aware of the discourse around diversity and its limitations.
problem that The Drum existed to solve: the fact that such artists are still viewed as minorities, distinct from and less than the majority, by those in control of the public purse. They have used the loaded word ‘segregation’, calling for an integration of arts and artists. However, inclusion as minorities is not the same as inclusion as equals - with an equally valued voice to White artists. It only means being having work showcased in the same physical spaces. Staff were left questioning the validity of the accusation of segregationism and the idea that TD was not needed, when it closed just three months later. Sarah was still unsure in 2017. She asked herself the question, “is there still a relevance [for a] separatist organisation relevant in this day and age?” and thought about it before answering it herself:

“Yes, I think so. And it’s not that it’s separatist, I think that until we have parity [it’s necessary to have separate organizations] and there’s never going to be parity so therefore… yeah.” (Sarah Interview, 2017)

She acknowledged the real issue at hand, which had been avoided by the ACE researchers in their questioning of the organisation’s purpose, when she said:

‘[But will ACE fund] The National Operas and the ballets and the London-centric [arts], or what The Drum was and represented? I just don’t know if it’s going to happen.’ (ibid.)

The CEO had been saying similar things to me in conversations at The Drum before it had closed. In a conversation shortly after the Stakeholders Meeting (2016), recorded in the research journal for that month, he said:

‘We should have figured out what we wanted and organized ourselves. Instead, we allowed massa to call us to his table.’ (Fieldnotes April 2016)

13 Anything more than an inequality would mean the mainstream fully decolonizing itself, structurally and systemically changing itself, destroying its dominance over minoritized others. ACE’s idea of the role of The Drum was not that it was to provide a solution to the diversity gap. It was there to solve another problem; the problem of urban multiculture, social deprivation and inequality of opportunity, often on the compounded grounds of Race and class.

14 The word ‘massa’ refers to the word for ‘master’ used by enslaved people in filmic representations of transatlantic slavery. In this context is suggests kowtowing to hegemonic whiteness. Famously in Caribbean decolonial history, Trinidad and Tobago’s Dr Eric Williams gave a notorious speech entitled Massa Day Done
This is what disappointed him most in the closure of The Drum. In that conversation, he repeatedly talked of Pan-Africanism and unity, saying that the reliance of the organization on National Grant funding was the cause of its downfall. He preempted Sarah’s concern, expressed the following year, that as long as the mainstream existed as a mainstream, outside of which anything else was peripheral, organizations like The Drum would always be undervalued and underfunded because their purposes would neither be understood nor valued by the funders. This was because they would always serve a mere minority, minoritized by the very existence of a mainstream.

4.3 Liberal funding institutions: TD proving the validity of its purpose.

The Drum’s leadership was only free to make its own decisions up to a point; behind every decision there needed to be a consideration of how to please its funders. How can an organization decolonise the minds of individuals when it exists to do the will of ACE, a liberal institution? The ‘Policy’ section of the Position chapter mapped the broad context of cultural policy in which TD is examined for this thesis. An understanding of the effects of the diversity agenda on arts organisations provides some insight into the ways that organisations employ diversity policy. The main enquiry here, is to do with the relevance of Black arts organisations within the existing funding structure. The reason that the various councils adopt diversity policy as opposed to committing to wholesale decolonisation, is that they exist to disseminate hegemonic power. Assimilation into the dominant culture is the requirement for surface diversity, which aims for multiplicity to exist within a system in which one Race still dominates. TD began as a radical organisation, and was critiqued at its end for failing to change to fit ACE’s diversity agendas.

Accountability is important for any organisation. However, who they are accountable to can be the deciding factor in whether they are able to remain true to their purpose. In this case, the funders are both representatives of the British state, which held tight to the values that The Drum was trying to nuance. The British state that is inseparable from and dependent on the Western Cultural Archive and relies for its existence upon the notion of the West and the Rest (Hall, 1992). This is because, in order to garner a share of global capital through tourism / being a desirable site for international education / remaining a desirable site for international
business, it needs to trade on its place myth (Urry, 1995), which is bound up in a nostalgically positive, cohesive image of Britain as nation. In straitened economic times, strengthening the economy is foremost on the agenda of government. Its cities must assume a ‘marketing fuelled renaissance of the local’, constructing ‘new market identities almost entirely out of the atmospheric vocabulary of the urban past’ (Ruby, 2002: 23). What Edward Said once dubbed cultural imperialism, still makes money for Britain and its cities. The appropriation and packaging of multiculture for the purposes profiting from cosmopolitan hipster culture sells, making it the underbelly of cultural imperialism. However, truly multicultural arts production (and by this, I mean arts production by people from otherwise minoritized people for themselves and each other, as opposed to cultural tourists either from the British mainstream or abroad), does not.15 As such, the objectives of BCC and ACE were incompatible with TD’s ambitions. For anything other than this to have been the case, the government on whose behalf the funders tacitly create hierarchies of power, and the nation that the government works to define and protect, would need to have been decolonised prior to their partnership with a Black arts organisation.

This is not to say that ACE or BCC actively chose to underfund TD to maintain hegemonic power structures. The decision was acknowledged by staff to be part of a wider shift in funding distribution patterns, because of scarcity of funding in general. In his speech, Samad alluded to there being a broader, structural problem behind the incompatibility of TD’s purpose with ACE’s expectations.

‘There’s been a change in society. Public sector’s been affected by private sector. And yes there’s lots of things we can learn from the private sector; like how to be more efficient and how to have a business plan […] But not, because all of that stuff is supposed to serve the vision and the mission. And you’re supposed to retain your values.’ (Samad Speech, 2016)

TD was expected to match-fund its public funding with grants from Trusts and Foundations, as are all NPO organizations supported by ACE, to qualify for public funding. Delia pointed out in her interview, how unrealistic this and other blanket expectations, like membership schemes and charging for rehearsals, are for community organizations.

15 Future work might compare TD to organizations that survived the gentrification of their local areas by changing from politically Black leadership, for example, Rich Mix in Shoreditch, London.
‘[ACE] expected us to [attend] these meetings about attracting trusts and foundations. They’d talk about “Oh you can have a members subscription thing, where they pay additional money”. They can come to rehearsals. Well, the sort of rehearsals we would have, it’s not the same sort of thing. There was no way we were gonna make money out of that so...’ (Delia Interview. 2017)

Large, national theatres bring in extra revenue by charging the public to attend rehearsals. TD was not the Royal Albert Hall or the Royal Opera House. Given what Delia had said about its purpose in nurturing and refining new talent, such a suggestion from ACE would show their lack of understanding of TD’s purpose. However, what is also clear, is that TD needed to make money to qualify for public funds, and once its purpose began to be compromised to became to make money and contribute to the diversity agenda, it began to lose its way.

4.4 Loss of Purpose: From Political Blackness to Interculturalism

While TD aimed to build local community and advocate for the needs of Black people in wider society, its decolonial ambit did not extend to Whiteness until close to the end of its life. As a tactic to attract funding through a Heritage Lottery Fund bid named Raising the Roof, the Drum adopted interculturalism as a branding tool and value system with the label “The UK’s Premier intercultural arts space”. This was one of the most prominent and controversial elements of the campaign. Management saw in it a new linguistic term unencumbered by the negative connotations of ‘Black’ as well as ‘diversity’, ‘multiculture’ and other such words. Interculture takes into account the new nature of super-diverse cities as described by cultural geographers of the previous decade (Vertovec, 2007; McIlwaine, 2011) and hybrid ‘new ethnicities’ as described by Stuart Hall (1988). In reality, it came across to non-staff stakeholders as an attempt to profoundly change the deeply embedded purpose of the organization, which they had collectively worked so hard to build. Why the need for this shift in position? As we have seen, ACE’s final report suggested that there was no need for a culturally specific organization, and that British approaches to diversity had moved on since The Drum was first established. Interculturalism’s exponents in scholarship herald it as the latest solution to a lack of social cohesion in a globalised world. Ted Cantle, author of seminal text Interculturalism (2012) considers multiculture to be outdated in that it assumes the existence of multiple separate cultures that ‘touch but do not interpenetrate’ in cities (Park & Burgess, 1925: 140).

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16 This was evident both in reactions at the stakeholders meeting (to be analysed in Relationships) and in reactions at the Birmingham Black Studies conference (2015), where the subject was tabled.
describes contemporary social networks as being more and more ‘intertwined and interdependent’:

‘There are signs that younger people in particular are beginning to think and act beyond these traditional outlooks and confines, through the burgeoning growth of social media and virtual connectedness that threatens more traditional boundaries and identities.’ (Cantle: 2012, 1)

The end result of late 20th century globalization of capital and peoples, not to mention the colonial projects that preceded it, is that cultures are increasingly hybrid, hyphenated, interlocked and interdependent in European cities like Birmingham. To complicate matters, it also resulted in cultural groups clinging increasingly to points of distinction through strategic essentialism, as Position has explored. Community leaders are often resistant, as interculturalism holds within it threats of post-racial systems. These fail because with postrace as a goal, identities can become further removed from the ownership of the individual and eventually subsumed by an unchanged mainstream. This in turn deepens existing inequalities by ignoring them. Interculture fights to distinguish itself as something more than postrace and it has been alluring to some as a theory because of its direct links to action. Cantle’s book is somewhat of a clarion call, painting interculturalism strongly as a progressive social movement, neither operating through erasure of identity nor segregation of communities from one another, but through their continued and often fraught effort to understand, to truly interact meaningfully with one another. He writes that:

‘This is, of course, a challenge for communities and the way in which ordinary people live their lives and relate to ‘others’. It will demand new ‘cultural navigation’ skills, the ability to be more open and engaged with change, and even a willingness to think of ourselves and our identities in different ways.’ (Cantle: 2012, 1)

The problem with this is that it requires all groups, dominant and subaltern, to relinquish ownership of certain spaces, and with them, certain parts of their identities. The problem arises when that relinquishment is unequal – when those with less power are being asked to relinquish more than the dominant group. If they are all asked to relinquish the same amount of ground but some have less than others, the relinquishment is uneven because some will need to give a portion, while others give all. In a 2016 paper on this, written just before I discovered the Drum’s impending closure, I asked the question: “In reality, who will have to change; or: who will have to change first?” The Answer, of course, was The Drum, and the change to
interculturalism as credo is considered by all interviewees without exception, to have been part of what broke the organization.\textsuperscript{17}

4.4.1 Result: A White jazz band for Black History Month.

Afro-Caribbean community leaders in Birmingham were against the adoption of the term Intercultural. Delia explained that the decision was made not as a concession, but as a way of giving a contemporary name to what TD had always done. To her, the management saw it as a way of helping the funders understand what the purpose of the organisation had always been, and its value. She felt that this just wasn’t understood by proponents of Pan African Blackness, and even those who espoused political Blackness:

‘They didn’t understand it, did they? I think maybe they felt that it was being watered down from Black art. But Black art never meant black art in the way that they probably thought it meant; it meant inclusive […] yes we all have our own cultures but then we bring in and then try and, you know, match them or mix them together. Mix and match.’ (Delia Interview 2017)

Here, she converges a description of the original purpose of TD with some diversity terminology with the use of the word ‘inclusive’. This was the conundrum among Drum staff at the end, how to use the term ‘Black’ without making people who did not consider themselves Black, but considered themselves minoritized nonetheless, uncomfortable about being excluded. The concern among Caribbean British and South Asian British people alike, raised at the 2015 Black Studies conference at Birmingham City University, was that directly following this rejection of political Blackness as an identity, the Drum chose a Jazz band comprised of White, Eastern European musicians to open its Black History Month launch event. This was meant firstly as a gesture toward interculturalism to satisfy the funders, and secondly as an attempt to reach out to the local community, which by 2015 included a large Eastern European contingent. However, it was taken by its existing stakeholders as a statement of intent on behalf of BCC; a push for Black and South Asian communities to relinquish long-worked-for spaces and places of solidarity. Delia said:

\textsuperscript{17} This is complicated by the fact that the breakdown of political Blackness in wider British society meant that TD was becoming increasingly claimed as an Afro-Caribbean space. This accompanied a shift in the meaning of the term ‘Black’. 
“Maybe that was too widely intercultural. People weren’t ready (smiles); ready for that yet. Especially during black history month! If he’d done it maybe at another time and slowly introduced that, but just doing it slap bang […] And I don’t know if these people were people that [we] had worked with as part of the project that the Birmingham City Council make us do, where you get assigned an area that you have to go and work with.” […] I think they came from that project and [my colleague] brought them into the Black History Month [launch]. But yes, I know we’re intercultural, but it wasn’t the right place.’ (Delia Interview, 2017)

The concern was that interculturalism was becoming more than branding; that it was becoming embedding, which seemed like an apology to the mainstream that would lead to inclusivity at the expense of the space’s Black-coding. The worry was that at best, that in trying to be a space for everybody, it would eventually become a space that nobody wanted or needed. This concern was to do with the delicate power balance that TD’s leadership had fought throughout its history to establish and maintain. Key to this, was resistance to hegemonic Whiteness’ infiltration of the organization’s purpose and fabric. Of course, arguments against the inclusion of an Eastern European jazz band are complicated by the label BAME (Black and Minority Ethnic) in the UK, and the minoritization of Eastern Europeans in the late 20th / 21st centuries. One year before the EU referendum, the extent of widespread scapegoating of their communities was unavoidable headline news. Given this, their inclusion within TD’s philosophy and programme made sense. However, the optics of their inclusion at the Black History Month launch event proved problematic because of the nature of racial hierarchy. It looked like a concession to hegemonic Whiteness, through interculturalism. Moreover, because BCC were suspected as having ordered it, it added to the perception of a power imbalance. Indeed, Gramsci made clear that a relationship that involved hegemony is always an unequal, and consensual one:

‘Gramsci’s notion of hegemony rests on the ability of a dominant class to form a consensual relationship with subaltern classes through a variety of social and cultural channels’ (McNally and Schwartzmantel, 2009: 20)

The inclusion of this Jazz band was read as a gesture of consent. Indeed, Sarah’s interview points to this being a consensual relationship, dictated by White reactions to TD’s embedding and enactment of its purpose. In it, she says:
‘When you’ve got people ringing you up saying “is it OK if I come and watch this film at your venue tonight?” and I’m going “yeah, why?” “Oh because you’re a Black arts centre and I’m White”, you know you’ve got your messaging wrong.’ (Sarah Interview, 2017)

When asked whether people genuinely asked that, she added that it was she suggested there was something wrong with the term ‘Black Arts’ in 2011:

‘Yes more than once. Personally I’ve spoken to people who’ve said that to me. So you know you’ve got your messaging wrong. That’s when I just went “look, the messaging is wrong”. Because we knew what we meant, and I think we did do some good stuff, but literally, and I think it was just before, or just after the riots actually, um, this woman rang me up and said can I come to – and she wasn’t the first, but that one really stuck with me and drilled home to me that no, you know we’ve got the messaging wrong because of that “can I come…”’

When she heard that question, she decided that the messaging was wrong; that TD’s embedded purpose of creating a ‘confident Black-Arts’ was wrong and needed to be adapted. This was the result of reducing the vision of the organization’s purpose to that of meeting demand and bringing in money via the box office. It led to a lack of confidence in the decolonial vision, and a eventually a concession to hegemonic Whiteness, which exists to support neoliberal capitalism. (see Position) It is important that it happened just after the riots, which broke out all over the country at nodes of economic stress in 2011. They were labelled ‘race riots’ in much of the popular media (Muir and Adegoke, 2011), and sparked fear. This suggested that the enquiry had something to do with TD’s location, the stigmatization of which is to be explored further in the next chapter. It also had to do with that location’s association with Afro-Caribbean Blackness, economic disadvantage and resultant discontent and resentment against the White middle classes. Sarah puts these together, and suggests that TD needed to change its branding as a result:

‘I think maybe because it was either just before or just after the riots I can’t quite remember. And she says: “but can I come, because I’m White.”’ (ibid.)

TD’s leadership eventually changed its messaging, in the hope of expanding their audiences. Instead, they lost the support of their exiting audience. The question of whether the Drum’s unsuccessful funding bid was a direct result of its audiences’ rejection of its intercultural rebranding, is less significant than the reasons behind choosing interculturalism as a label, ethos and direction. Also significant is the genealogy of the reaction to it. When political Blackness
and interculturalism are brought alongside one another, they directly pit one (radical, decolonial, or concerned with futurity: bottom up) way of seeing Race and representation against another (liberal, in favour of diversity policy, top down). On the surface it would appear that this is simply a matter of friction between mainstream and margin. The mainstream is the normative, therefore the most powerful. The mainstream caters for the dominant group, and in Britain this group is characterised by bourgeois class conditioning, educational capital and Whiteness. The model of mainstream and margin in the arts serves to uphold the idea that the values of this group are legitimate. This was the narrative of the 20th century. Jean-Michel Basquiat, Charles Gaines and Catherine Lord (1993) likened the model of Black art and mainstream criticism to a theatre of refusal. If mainstream arts organizations are in place as homes and perpetuators of hegemonic discourse, and if, for the subaltern classes, to engage with them is to participate in and consent to cultural hegemony, it would seem that the only way to overturn this unequal relationship is for the subaltern to refuse to engage in mainstream cultural practice or to develop separate cultural practice – which in this case would have meant the Drum trying to remain separate, oppositional, and promoting politically Black solidarity for Black and Asian groups for the purposes of strength in numbers. However, this is complicated by the idea that The Drum relied on mainstream sources of funding. It was supported by ACE and BCC throughout its lifespan and was therefore endorsed with cultural legitimacy, if limited. This meant that the British state had the power to close it down once its interests no longer aligned with either The Drum’s philosophical location or the enactment of it.

4.4.2 Final outcome: An unsuccessful campaign to save TD.

In trying to serve everybody then, TD ended up serving nobody. The result of this was that there was nobody to fight for it when it announced voluntary insolvency. When interviewed, staff at all levels lamented the lack of time between the decision to go into voluntary liquidation (late March 2016) and the final closure (June 30th 2016), saying that it had not been long enough to raise a high profile campaign. The Drum’s patrons included poet Benjamin Zephaniah and artist Vanley Burke, and well-known Black artists with personal histories in the West Midlands’ Afro Caribbean communities range from Sir Lenny Henry to Laura Mvula. Local and national support could have been rallied in those three months, with celebrity faces fronting a far higher profile campaign than the on-paper petition that was circulated among TD’s residual visitors. However, the fragmentation of community took full effect at this crucial point.
Sarah, whose team would have been responsible for spearheading such a campaign, reveals awareness of, and regret at this:

‘I feel as if the community didn’t stand up enough for it, and therefore it’s kind of... not? And that’s why [I don’t feel as emotional as I thought I would about the closure], because we didn’t actually unite as a community or as a team of people - as a group of people. We didn’t really stand up for something that we should have believed in and fought hard to get [...] I feel that there wasn’t enough of a voice and there wasn’t enough of a protest and people didn’t come together when they needed to come together... so why should I feel sad? Kind of... In a bizarre sort of strange way, because if it meant something to the community, if it meant something to people, I’m not saying it would be open, but even since it has been closed, nothing – just nothing [has been done]! (laughs sadly).’

(Sarah Interview 2017)

The emotions of frustration, indignation and sadness were palpable, even as she spoke of not feeling emotional. When asked which community she meant, Sarah clarified that she had been referring to the national and local community of artists, and the African Caribbean community at once. She went on to suggest that the needs of these community groups for talent nurturing, support and personal decolonisation were met by The Drum, and that this was contrary to the agenda of the funders. The lack of unity was undoubtedly a contributing factor, in her opinion. These groups of people failed to display the united front necessary to ward off danger when it befell the organisation. However, she did not entirely blame the adoption of interculturalism for this. Rather, she pointed out that the reasons for the lack of solidarity were connected to a long-term lack of funding in areas of need (the nurturing of talent, support of artists and personal decolonisation), unintentionally referring to ACE’s lack of support for radical initiatives. The ‘financial starvation of artists’, mentioned by Sarah (Interview 2017), is expanded upon in the Relationships chapter of this thesis. With the use of this phrase, she provides a vivid image and an insight into the depth of the problem as she sees it. It also reveals who she blames for this. Whether or not she sees it as a tactic on the part of the funders for the purposes of dividing the artists from the organisation, then conquering by way of forcing The Drum to close, is unclear. What is clear is that she recognises the effects that underfunding has had on TD’s artist community. The unity that was needed in order for TD to successfully straddle the fence between ACE’s demands and the needs of the local communities seems to

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18 Interestingly, she did not mention the political Blackness here. There seemed no expectation on her part, that South Asians could be called upon to fight for TD.
have disintegrated gradually over the organisation’s last ten years yes, but certainly in the last three years, culminating in the adoption of interculturalism as credo.

All data confirms a lack of purpose in TD. However, 2012, rather than 2005, was pinpointed by most members of staff as the moment at which they simultaneously achieved the highest accolade of National Portfolio Organization and began to significantly struggle financially. Delia felt that this was to do with funding cuts and subsequent redundancies:

‘We were okay until probably 2012 / 2013 I think it was? When Drum commercial redundancies were made. So, there was only one person to bring in business […] and a bar person working part time. There [had been] five in that team. Yeah. So again, reducing down. [O]ver the years […] things were just getting cut back, cut back, and the last year - I don’t know if it was planned or… I feel it was planned… I have no evidence to support that…’

This mistrust of the funders has appeared on occasion in this chapter and will be explored in increasing detail in the Location and Relationships chapters. It is clear that the relationship between the funders and TD’s staff, both managerial and non-managerial, undermined the organization’s purpose, and that its purpose was at odds with both the Diversity agenda and the requirements that arts organisations part-fund themselves. (Arts council.org.uk, 2019) The steady decrease of funding to TD is something that goes unmentioned in ACE’s final report, as do the redundancies and termination of programmes like the Creative Circle, which occurred as a result. Why? This is something to be explored in the ensuing chapters.

4.5 Conclusions

Purpose’s analysis has built on Welcome’s description of TD’s functions by demonstrating the processes by which they became embedded, making the building and the organisation culturally important to the relevant diasporic communities in Britain. Those processes were also supposed to effectively embed those communities within the fabric of British cultural life, but the chapter has shown that while this was listed as a purpose on the funding applications and was a requirement for national funding, it came secondarily to the purpose of embedding cultural roots from the global south into a building that people from politically Black communities could call ‘home’ or ‘sanctuary’ for survival in an often hostile environment. This was the War of Position, tilting hegemony briefly for those for whom this was necessary. This
was not primarily a place for the national image to be built in a celebration of cultural diversity. Rather, it was primarily a place where the needs of people who were minoritized by the nation and its image were to be met. This nation/people distinction is important because it explains why TD’s original purpose did not align with the funders’ diversity agendas. It did not showcase multiculture in a marketable, commodifiable way that showed the nation to be benignly diverse.

4.5.1 Purpose: Structure vs. Agency

This chapter has shown how structural influences, exercised through funding policies, removed agency over self-image (which is the intellectual self-confidence described in previous chapters as decolonial) away from the minoritized people who ran and frequented TD. Their constant struggle was one of trying to reclaim it. This was done through Young Drum (YGB), and through processes of embedding. Addressing the suggestion from ACE’s final report that there had been a loss of purpose at TD for the 10 years that preceded its closure, the beginning of Purpose asked: Why did ACE make TD an NPO if it had already lacked purpose for seven years by the time it was awarded this status in 2012? If there was a loss of vision, and if the clear ten-year demarcation is too simplistic, what happened within the organisation’s three-year tenure as NPO, which ACE may have missed out of their report, that could have caused it?

The Final Report on the Future of The Drum suggests repeatedly that a loss of purpose was key to the organization’s failure, and that this had been a problem for the ten years prior to its closure. Royce and Bain Burnett’s citing the last ten years the ones in which TD lost its purpose draws a correlation between a loss of direction and the tenure of the last CEO, who took up the post in 2005, 10 years before they wrote their report. This reasoning connects the failure to agency, rather than structure. The 10-year demarcation allows the blaming of a change in leadership for a loss of direction and purpose, and the supposedly resultant closure. Relationships will explore TD’s management’s real role in the organizational failure, however, this chapter’s analysis suggests that the ten-year demarcation is incorrect. It has recalled the timeline of struggles set out in Welcome and asked: “How far did the breakdown of TD’s purpose actually occur within the final few years of its existence?”, pointing to the acceptance of the label ‘Interculturalism’ in 2015 as the breaking point at which it lost its fight to maintain its original purpose by bowing to diversity policy.

ACE’s representatives, in their final report, showed a blind spot when it came to the role of diversity and inclusion in creating minorities, while looking upon ‘segregationist’ policies as
being always problematic without considering how and why they may be positive. Diversity and assimilation are uncritically deemed positive in this document simply because arts policy, and therefore arts organizations, have moved that way in recent years. This shows the document to have been based on surface level analysis rooted in policy direction above than the needs of the people in question. The ‘change in society’ that Samad spoke of in Section 4.3, points to a reason for this. It is beyond the agency of the ACE researchers themselves. Rather, it is structural - the move toward commodification of both Race and the arts by governments under the latest iteration of neoliberal capitalism, which is served by the diversity agenda. In short, if an organization’s purpose cannot be commodified and sold it is not viable as a business, which reveals the diversity agenda to be a business case, rather than a social justice agenda, and the very blaming of TD’s failure on a loss of purpose to be the result of structures directing the judgements and conclusions of Royce & Bain-Burnett in their analysis of TD.

4.5.2 Purpose: Diversity vs. Decolonisation
The overwhelmingly consistent finding of this chapter’s analysis is that throughout the lifespan of TD its funders were committed to a diversity agenda, while its staff members were committed to a decolonial one. ‘Decolonial’ as described here, builds on the theoretical definitions set up in Position and made use of in this thesis. The active, real-world and political decolonization that formed part of TD’s purpose was a decolonization of the mind. It has been defined here as those which seek to break down the structures of thought and systems of social organisation that supported European colonialism, enslavement and dispossession of people and land in other parts of the world, and established Western capitalism. Conversely, diversity has been described as something espoused by government agencies and institutions as a way of ‘managing’ Britain’s multiculturalism. Moreover, the diversity demanded by the funders to meet the criteria of The Creative Case, would have centred white middle class Britishness, while TD’s administration sought to centre those who would have been marginalized by an implementation of diversity policy. The chapter has explored how until 2015, there was an understanding among the administration that there was an agenda to be met that went beyond the demands of diversity policy. At the beginning of the organization’s lifespan, the two agendas were not so at odds with one another, and TD’s provision of a separate arts space for politically black audiences could be deemed part of Birmingham’s diverse cultural offer. However over the course of TD’s lifespan, as diversity policy increasingly drove the mainstream more than policy that focused on multiculturalism, they became increasingly at odds – the national focus through policy became more on instrumentalizing multiculture for
the enrichment of the Nation; which meant the enrichment of the mainstream and its audiences; which meant the enrichment of Hegemonic Whiteness at the expense of those who are othered in the process of inclusion. Asif’s example of the Black History Month launch at the Birmingham REP succinctly demonstrated how the people who constitute ‘diversity’ become further marginalized when included by the mainstream, recalling Position’s acknowledgement of diversity as mere divergence from the somatic norm, in increments of inequality. The diversity agenda’s adoption into public policy coincided with the breakdown of political blackness, and the next chapter will analyse more of Asif’s interview to expand on how incremental divergence from whiteness (and thus incremental distance from white privilege) comes in degrees, and has effected political Blackness’ fragmentation by psychologically separating people of colour from one another at crucial moments in the struggle for equality.

4.5.3 Purpose: The changing definition of blackness

TD’s purpose, as expressed in its artistic policy, was rooted in political blackness, and the demise of political blackness is part of what led to the silos mentioned in the ACE report as evidence of its loss of purpose. The silos and the loss of vision are results of the agency of specific actors, but they existed because the strategic essentialism to which TD’s vision and unity between its staff members (and indeed audiences) had been linked, had lost its potency - perhaps even its relevance. The following chapter explores how it is possible to make such a bold claim about political blackness’ loss of potency and relevance. It also explores how this manifested at TD.

The solidarity of political blackness, as spoken about by Asif toward the end of section 4.2.1, ‘Purpose: The Drum’s artistic policy’, is a similar solidarity in the face of racism to that explored in Position’s section 3.2, ‘Position in The World | or | Being Called “Nigger!” in Africa’, using a different geographical example. However, this time the racism was not anti-Blackness, but a racism that othered all people of colour, and this enabled solidarity between them all. While hegemonic whiteness targeted Black and South Asian people equally (meaning to similar extents, if not always in the same ways), they could unite in creating sanctuary - in creating Gramsci’s war of position together. However, what happens when they are not targeted equally? What happens when racial hierarchy is employed by structures of hegemonic whiteness to divide minoritized people from each other? How did it manifest at TD? This is the fragmentation of Political Blackness that Location explores next.
Section 4.2.1 pointed out that the politically Black unity needed to be removed from hegemonic whiteness to be ‘complete in its own right, rather than existing as a point of divergence from, and reinforcement of, the understood somatic norm’. This is important. TD had a remote location that kept it distinct from a majority white, middle class arts audience for a long time, and *Location* will explore the significance of this to its closure. However, this chapter has demonstrated how hegemonic whiteness was nevertheless governing it through the funding system. The diversity agenda as a tool by which hegemonic whiteness sustains itself, was at odds with TD’s existence as an organization whose focus was on a unity that explicitly sought to decentre whiteness and create politically Black unity in a space that destabilized white supremacy within it. This meant that because of the structure to which it was answerable for its funding, the organization had been set up to either abandon its purpose or fail, from the beginning.

As political Blackness fragmented and failed in line and time with diversity policy, so did TD. Interculturalism proved a poor substitute – the organization lost its way when it acquiesced to diversity policy, centred whiteness, and abandoned strategic essentialism between people of colour. *Purpose* suggests that these two final things are connected to each other. Is another form of strategic essentialism – another blackness – necessary now? And is it more appropriate for the War of Manoeuvre that the Post-Drum world appears to demand? These are questions to be explored in the coming chapters, and asked again in the thesis conclusion, *Legacy*. 
5. Location

**Fig. 5.1.** Page section from the Birmingham City Challenge competition application form, filled out by Newtown Cultural Projects in 1992. This was successful and provided the start up capital for The Drum.

"The Drum is based in Aston, a deprived and ethnically diverse ward, within the North West corridor out of Birmingham. It is built on the site of the Aston Hippodrome, which was demolished in 1980. The venue’s development was a joint capital funding project delivered through funding from Birmingham City Council, Arts Council England and the probation service". (Royce & Bain-Burnett, 2016: 7)

"There was a strong sense of being isolated and a conspicuous lack of references to developments beyond TD" (ibid.)

5.1 Introduction

In almost every conversation about the closure of TD between October 2015 and August 2019, the building’s location was mentioned as a reason for its closure. Moreover, the quotations above are two of many mentions of The Drum’s (TD’s) location and its effects that appear in Arts Council England’s (ACE’s) final report. The organization is described as isolated, having
been placed in that part of North Birmingham to develop a ‘deprived and diverse’ ward of Birmingham. This chapter considers how far the location of the building can be to blame for the organization’s demise.

The area in question is called Newtown. Understanding Newtown is important because of the way that Birmingham’s multiculture functions, through the concentration of certain self-ascribed communities in certain areas. (Andrews, 2016) This is key to further understanding the way that The Drum functioned, and the organization’s original purpose. A grey highway intersection is a questionable place to try and carve out a community, yet this is what Newtown has been since its inception – a prolonged, strained effort to build and sustain community in what would otherwise appear to be no-man’s-land. Drum folklore, when recounted by the longest-serving staff members, begins with TD’s humble inception as a group of arts programmers working from a series of temporary premises; first The Cave, then the Big Peg. Its organizers then won a funding bid and were able to move to what became its permanent location, the site of the old Birmingham Hippodrome, opposite the Barton’s Arms in Newtown. This location was dictated by funders. BCC, ACE and, interestingly, the Probation Service provided the capital for the building through a funding competition called Birmingham City Challenge, in 1992. This funding was set aside for a project to help economically regenerate Newtown. There was a dearth of more general funding, so their two options were to build in Newtown or not at all. Backed into a corner, they applied for this funding and received it. Newtown Cultural Projects’ (NCPs) answers on the Birmingham City Challenge application form reveal what was expected of them (see also Fig. 5.1):

‘As required under S05, it will make a significant contribution to raising the citywide, regional and national profile of Newtown, and is expected to draw into the area significant numbers of visitors (See Business Plan).’ (Newtown Cultural Project, 1992)

As Purpose explored, this was to set a precedent. Until the end of the organisation it was reliant on its two main funders, ACE and BCC. These gatekeepers were able to dictate what made a ‘good’ arts organisation, what it should be, and the stipulations that would be used to measure its success.

Newtown, which straddles the intersection of two highways, is more than a metaphor for the intersection of class and Race that Afro-Caribbean people straddle in the UK. It is where the
working out of historical and contemporary British multiculture, its economic causes and its equally economic effects, takes place. TD is more than a descriptive device for urban living in a forgotten, ghettoized area of the city. Rather, considering TD building’s placement and use allows for a counter to ACE’s suggestion, in the Steering Group meeting (April 2016, briefly mentioned in Process), that the cultural projects of ‘the Black community’ perhaps do not need a building; that perhaps Newtown Cultural Project worked better before they were encumbered with the burden of bricks and mortar to take care of.

The previous chapter, Purpose, concluded that the chain of communication and understanding needed to support TD became fractured due to a lack of understanding by the funders, of what TD’s purpose was, the value of that purpose and what the leadership needed to carry it out. This chapter begins to explore how the fracture happened. How far did the chain of communication break because of TD’s forced containment, not merely within a different purpose from what was needed by its audiences as Purpose explored, but also in a part of the city that was not conducive to a flourishing arts scene? The building reopens in September 2019 as the Birmingham Legacy Centre, which is a statement of faith. The new owners clearly believe it can thrive there. Why? For many years, TD flourished in Newtown, having achieved the pinnacle ACE accolade of National Portfolio Organization (NPO) in 2012. What changed during its three-year tenure as an NPO that led ACE to lose faith so suddenly in its ability to function? Purpose pointed to the adoption of Intercultrualism and increased acquiescence to Hegemonic Whiteness as one reason, because it is something that changed during that period. The location did not change. So, can the location legitimately be blamed for the closure? This chapter aims to find out how far location was a primary contributing factor to TD’s closure. The chapter also considers what the need is for arts centres in areas like Newtown and how they can be sustained, as well as where TD would have been better located. It explores the unmet need for an understanding of how groups of people move on from places, and how urban areas transcend their demographic populations. Both management and funders should have been flexible with regard to this. The chapter shows that the very fact of a building was often blamed for this – the premise being that TD should have been able to follow the Afro-Caribbean

19 “Arts Council England defines a National Portfolio Organisation as Black and minority ethnic-led where that organisation self-defines as such and where more than 50 percent of the organisation's board and senior management are from Black or minority ethnic backgrounds”. (https://www.arts council.org.uk/sites/default/files/download-file/2012_13_Full_annual_submission_report.pdf)
community as they moved away from Newtown en masse. This chapter considers this, asking whether the building of TD was what held the organization back. This is not merely about geographical location, but socioeconomic positioning and political allegiances.

The primary questions of this chapter are: how far was TD in the wrong place, and why? Was a building needed, or would it have been more appropriate for funding to have been linked to NCP as an organization, as opposed to TD as a building; the premise being that the organization could then have moved with Black community out of Newtown? If so, does this further boil down to the funders’ lack of understanding of what TD was for? TD was set up to cater to demographics relatively new to the country in the post-war period. Those populations have found their feet, moved on and settled elsewhere. Where did that leave TD? That is what this chapter aims to find out. There are two inalienable facts at play. The first is that TD did not make enough money to stand on its own. The second is that TD staff attributed this to its location. The primary concerns that seemed to arise from interviews and recorded conversations were that people in the area are unable to pay for arts participation, that Birmingham’s Black community had established themselves and moved on into Handsworth, and that people must find it difficult travel to Newtown, as it is far from the City Centre (CC) and public transport links to North Birmingham are poor. However, during the period of ethnography, it became clear that none of these should have been prohibitive to the organization’s success. Furthermore, when analysing the interviews and speech transcripts more closely, it became apparent that the actual concerns were deeper than these. The chapter is divided by these more intricate concerns about Newtown, explored from different angles by the various levels of Drum staff. They were:

- That the location of Newtown layered connotations of poverty and criminality on top of Afro-Caribbean Blackness
- That TD’s programmes failed to cater for changes to the local community and therefore lost both control of their programme, and money.
- That Newtown was seen as an ideological pariah within Birmingham, and TD, by being in Newtown, was excluded from Birmingham’s civic identity.

This chapter argues that while many other businesses in the area were closing, TD’s closest neighbour - the Barton’s Arms - was thriving, having adapted to Newtown’s changes, and to more general developments in Birmingham as a whole. It examines what TD’s leadership could
have done to follow suit and capitalize on this. *Purpose* explored that while it may have been true that the majority of people with Afro-Caribbean heritage had moved on from Newtown a decade prior to its closure, many still travelled there for shows at TD. *Location* presents evidence to suggest that while local audiences were now of different demographics and spoke different languages than those TD was originally intended for, there were in fact events at TD to meet their needs. It explores the implications of the trend of community groups hiring TD privately to hold such events. The chapter explores what TD’s leadership could have done to capitalize on this, turning it into an advantage.

In this chapter’s opening quotations from ACE’s final report, their representatives cited the location as being deprived and ethnically diverse. The coupling of these phrases needs to be examined in more detail. How linked is Race to Class in UK urbanities? What does TD and its closure reveal about the complexities of these links and how they change over time? ACE’s representatives also referred to TD’s staff as being ‘isolated’ or having an insular view of how to run an arts organization. When, and how did TD’s staff become isolated, if indeed they were, and how far did this lead directly to the closure? Was this isolation because of the location, or was it because of the peculiar dual purpose of TD?

Ultimately, *Location* looks at the processes by which Newtown came to be known as an undesirable location for TD; the processes which cause organizational leaderships to lose faith in their organization’s chances of success. Considering what TD’s purpose and vision was, it explores how far the negative image of Newtown has been created by way of processes that were partially orchestrated from above through the very efforts they have made to regenerate it, and the effects of internalization of negative placemyth (Urry, 1995) on those who whose who live and work there.

### 5.2 The problem with Newtown

#### 5.2.1 The Problem with Newtown: Ghettoization & criminalization of Afro-Caribbean Blackness

The problem with Newtown as a home for TD is that while interviewees describe the local area as ‘immeasurably improved on what it was in the 90s’ (Sarah Interview, April 2016) and ‘much better than it once was’ (Delia Interview, April 2017), staff, funders and national arts
professionals still felt that it was a location in which no cultural organization could thrive. What caused this lack of faith?

Fig. 5.2: Google map showing the location of Newtown on the A34 highway.

Fig. 5.3: Google satellite image capture, showing the location of The Drum within Newtown.

Newtown straddles the A34 ring road in an inner-city part of North East Birmingham. The satellite image in fig. 3 reveals surrounding greenery that it not immediately experienced, and the local facilities are somewhat dilapidated, many now defunct and abandoned. In October 2015, as I drove to TD for my first day of ethnographic research there, I was confronted with a billboard as I turned at the roundabout to enter Newtown. It depicted two brown hands, one topped by the cuff of a police uniform, passing a gun between them. It read: Love your son:
give up his gun. As I entered the area, I received the message clearly: Newtown is a problem. Its inhabitants are seen and treated as problems by government agencies, and Race is part of this. Even then, the location of the billboard struck me as strange. Why was it not in the heart of Newtown? Why at the entrance, like a welcome sign for visitors, in reverse?

In my first PhD supervision meeting that same month, my Drum Supervisor described Newtown as a place of transitory community, where people who have recently migrated to the UK may initially be housed by BCC, or house themselves privately because of low rents and frequent sublets. However, he said, most move on from Newtown as soon as they establish themselves. Those who remain are those unable to leave, for one reason or another. The point he was making, was that the problem with Newtown is that many local people were unable to pay for arts participation, to which he partly attributed TD’s financial deficit.

Many of the thesis’ Key Characters expressed bewilderment at TD’s having been placed in that location. In communications with staff and artists that very first month, social deprivation was linked to crime by them, and both were linked to TD in a number of subtle ways. This continued and was expanded upon as ethnography progressed and interviews began. I began to see the processes that had led to Newtown having been dismissed as a bad location by people who visited, worked and lived there. I wrote the following in my research journal on a May afternoon in 2016:

Newtown is in a particularly odd part of the city, very difficult to access by road. At the intersection of two main dual carriageways, there is not much in the immediate area, and what is there, is undergoing change. Directly across the A34, there is a neglected-looking social housing estate consisting of a number of concrete 1960s tower blocks, and a dated local centre. This centre (labelled “Newtown Shopping Centre” in Fig. 2) consists of a small newsagent selling international food products, a bargain basement store selling everything from Tupperware to pull-along shopping baskets, a second-hand office furniture store, a Gregg’s pastry shop, a fish and chip shop and Dixy Fried Chicken drive through.

Daily trips across the dual carriageway provide evidence of the socio-economic deprivation experienced by the area’s inhabitants. Once Newtown’s epicentre, this area appears to be far from regeneration and gives the feeling that it is being left [to] go to seed. The wellness centre and other civic buildings are mostly closed and abandoned. The few remaining small business owners seem to struggle to maintain a balance between charging what their regular customers can afford and affording rising wholesale prices. This lunchtime, I watched as two women in their 40s quarrelled
with the fish and chip shop’s owner over the price of a steak and kidney pie. As they left empty-handed he tried to explain, to the backs of their heads as they walked away, and to Asif and myself who remained in the shop, that he sells the pies almost at cost. He said that rising wholesale prices on food mean a high turnover of chip shop owners, because the local people simply cannot afford to buy the food. Asif had taken me to the chip shop for lunch to show me exactly this. He explained, and the chip shop owner agreed, that this type of scene is commonplace in this part of North Birmingham.

TD’s local community had long consisted of people in similar socio-economic positions to the two women, referred to in my research journals as the Chip Shop Ladies. Over the years, the resident demographics of the austere, concrete tower blocks had changed regularly; however, the socioeconomic positioning of the area remained the same – ‘deprived’ (Royce & Bain-Burnett, 2016: 7). Asif’s final comment after this exchange stood out the most:

“Can you see our big dilemma? Can you see why we can’t charge for events? They’d be excluded.”
(May 2016)

Despite this, Asif was committed to TD remaining in Newtown. In his first and only interview, which took place in TD’s boardroom just before the closure, he passionately explained that he felt there was a need for the building to be there precisely because of the deprivation of the area. In his opinion, that deprivation was due to a lack of investment from the BCC:

‘Then I challenged the woman- the lady [from the council], with regards to other areas of Birmingham, example Solihull. Solihull was another area that’s got an arts centre. OK? It’s got a wellbeing centre [while Newtown’s wellbeing centre has also been closed] for their people. Right? And I made it clear to the lady that [those things] make one feel positive and good, yeah? And she agreed, and I said “Well why haven’t we got that on this end of the woods? I’ve been [working] here twelve years, I haven’t seen nothing like that here.” OK? So, it’s a deprived area, they wanna keep it deprived, by the sounds of it.’

Leaving aside the unmentioned fact that council budgets for local authorities are determined by council tax rates paid by residents, so Solihull may be better equipped than Newtown for that reason, it was possible to hear and understand Asif’s frustration and resentment on behalf of the residents of Newtown, in the recording of this statement. The arts are publicly funded in

20 The Chip Shop Ladies were of African descent (though whether of African or Afro-Caribbean heritage is impossible to definitively confirm).
the UK to allow for precisely this type of provision - for people who cannot afford to pay for it, in areas that may not inspire private philanthropists to invest. His reaction reflected the frustration that he felt for himself and the other staff members of TD who, he felt, were also at the mercy of BCC / ACE officers described by him as ‘fat cats’, distributing public funds unfairly. Asif reflects the terminology used by policy makers. His use of the word ‘deprived’ recalls this chapter’s opening quotation from the ACE final report on TD (Royce & Bain Burnett, 2016: 7). He is clearly familiar with the language used by them when referring to Newtown. His opinion is that Newtown and its people have been held in deprivation by the very policy makers who label it ‘deprived’, and that this has been done in order to keep wealthier people and their neighbourhoods, rich.

“If you check the people who are trying to put projects together out there, if you look at their salaries, they’re on some ridiculous amounts of money from public funds, and the people who should be getting that money are suffering. As you can hear in my voice, we’re suffering. Because there are fat cats out there, using public funds to keep [things the same]. Yeah?” (Interview, April 2016)

To Asif, local government does not distribute funding evenly or fairly, and he sees TD’s location as the reason for its not being given the support it needed from the funders. To him, Newtown is the reason for the closure, but not because Newtown is bad. Rather, the problem with Newtown is that the funders had no faith in TD’s ability to bedazzle it with the sanitized razzmatazz (Hannigan, 2008) of gentrification. To him, TD was just another public service that was being taken away from the people of Newtown. Indeed, when walking through the local centre and seeing its closed public services and dilapidated housing, it is easy to see why he formed this opinion. The frustration, built over twelve years of witnessing this inequality, is clear. He saw TD as being a victim of the same underfunding as the local area, yet being expected to make the same returns as other – well-funded organizations in affluent parts of the city. This was something reflected in interviews with TD staff at all levels. The difference between the way that it was seen by leadership and by non-leadership staff, is that leaders seemed unhappy with the organization’s location, feeling that it should not have been placed there, whereas non-managerial staff (like Asif), were in support of the location. They blamed the powers that be (BCC and ACE) for underfunding TD as part of a plan to maintain socioeconomic inequality between parts of the city, seeing that as unfair and unnecessary. The implication was that by proxy, because of the way that Birmingham is segregated, there would
also be sustained inequality between White British residents and racialized others, and that this was desired by the authorities.

The interesting thing is that at this point in the interview, the link between the socioeconomic inequality imposed by those acting on behalf of governing institutions and the fragmentation of identities of political solidarity, becomes apparent. The second after Asif claims the position of outrage on behalf of his fellow underdogs, he defensively makes clear that he is moving from speaking of ‘People of Colour or BAME’ as a politically Black monolith, to speaking about people of Afro-Caribbean descent and distancing himself from that, with the caveat “This venue was originally for Afro Caribbean and Indian communities, yeah? Indians don’t need it. We don’t need it. The Indians don’t need it. Indians got their own centres out there, venues, right? I am Asian by the way yeah? So, right?” he went on to speak about the underfunding of Newtown being synonymous with the criminalization of Afro-Caribbean Blackness:

“When they take away everything from one culture and don’t give you nothing, they want it disbarked [Asif’s own word, meaning rendered deprived, or made defunct]. They want gunshots. They want fighting in the community they want – you know? People are gonna say “oh look they’re fighting again. That’s what they do best. So give them more guns.” (Asif Interview, 2016)

Even as he railed against the systematic deprivation of those at the bottom of the pile, he was keen to distance himself from its implications, eager to avoid the taint of association with a community that he felt was more oppressed than his own in this case. This is a point of unravelling of the unselfish solidarity necessary for political Blackness to be successful. The moment at which he speaks of TD’s dependency on the authorities for amenities is the first point in the interview when he does not use the ‘us’ of a BAME / People of Colour umbrella. Here, he switches to another strategic essentialism, using the (also questionable in this case) umbrella of Asianness. He is keen to point out, on the record, that he is Asian. Though of Pakistani heritage and from a self-professed working-class background, he aligns his identity with a moneyed Indian middle class who “don’t need” funding from governing bodies to run organizations. The reason for this moment of rupture in his previously professed solidarity? The self-interested preservation of privilege, in the form of a decision to align with the strongest identity possible when racial hierarchy was imposed by a system of hegemonic Whiteness. In this case, the division (the imposition of racial hierarchy) was caused by the criminalization of Afro-Caribbean Blackness, which is effected in a thousand subtle gestures by the institutions.
that govern UK society. Gestures, like the billboard that I had seen upon my first entry into Newtown - the brown hands, the gun, the slogan; the branding of a neighbourhood as criminal, and the racialisation of that branding – the layers of meaning added to Newtown and its multiculture. The implication that it refers to Afro-Caribbean Blackness isn’t clear – all that is clear from the image is that it refers to Non-Whiteness. Asif is keen to make it clear that such images of criminality do not refer to him, because the racialised community that he claims is insulated from such connotations by wealth. The placement of that billboard and the shadow of meaning that it cast on Newtown can be explained away as incidental, as can the closure of TD and the surrounding amenities. It is not simply a case of the authorities (in these cases BCC, ACE, the police / probation services) being racist, therefore causing deprivation and closing amenities out of spite. However, such gestures have impact on the way that crime, poverty and deprivation are racialized and linked to place in the minds of people, which can lead to the breakdown in initiatives that actually can improve the lives of local people, as TD did when it had a strong purpose in political Blackness. The effects are evident in reactions like Asif’s.

In interviews, TD’s non-managerial staff, represented here by Asif, were most often concerned with providing for the existing local community, wanting to instrumentalize the arts to make the lived experiences of locals more pleasant (more concerned with potential to elevate a class above its seemingly needless deprivation, while often either disregarding Race or conflating it with class, recognizing the ways that the two are linked and, perhaps subconsciously, the processes by which that happens). On the other hand, much of its leadership was concerned with how to elevate the image of Black-led arts beyond stereotypes of perpetual urbanity, economic deprivation and crime (more concerned with TD’s potential to elevate a Race above classed stereotypes). The leadership’s focus is best illustrated by two examples. The first is the speech by a former Board Chairperson at TD’s closing ceremony, and the second is from an early conversation with Sarah (January 2016), which she expanded upon in her second interview (April 2017).

21 Throughout the interviews there was a sense that the gatekeepers were considered to be the problem. To Asif it was cyclical:

‘Well there you go. Once they’ll allow you in, and then they’ll shut you down. It’s history repeating. Listen. When I was a 20-year-old youth there was nothing like this, and then they put something out for us, then they take it away from us.’
The Chair explained in June 2016, that early leadership had been ambitious for the nascent arts centre in the 1990s and did not agree with the decision to situate the centre so far from both Handsworth (historically the heart of Birmingham’s Afro-Caribbean community) and the City Centre (where it would have been recognisable as a landmark for people from outside of Birmingham, and where regular theatre goers could easily access it). Their focus was on foregrounding politically Black leadership. This was an important part of the centre’s offer, not only to show young people of colour that leading organisations was possible for them, but also to provide an alternative to working in White-coded organisations for those who chose careers in arts administration. These were not small aims. As Purpose explored, the organisation was envisioned as an ideological landmark, representing a departure from what is presented as the norm in the British cultural archive and the narratives that it feeds / are fed by it; namely those that tacitly present Black and often Brown bodies as code for cheap labour to fuel an economy that primarily benefits Hegemonic Whiteness and also White bodies, not in leadership or owning the means of production. In their speech at TD’s closing ceremony, this former Chair admitted that at the birth of the organization, they had felt that placing it Newtown would be akin to ghettoization. The use of the word ‘ghettoization’ suggests that they were concerned that this would amount to disconnecting the organisation from the rest of Birmingham, and relating Blackness to a stereotype of an eternal underclass in the public imagination. They were concerned that if this happened, the organization would never achieve its aims of reaching a wider public, thereby instilling pride in Black people and changing the mindsets of non-Black people with regard to Blackness. This suggests that one of the aims of TD's founders was integration on equal terms; something that is not offered through increased inclusion within White-coded arts organisations. Because the power imbalance that is integral to inclusion minoritizes people of colour in such organizations, they cannot provide integration on equal terms (see Position, section 3.2.10). Purpose suggested that integration into a society on equal terms involves communities self-defining and running their own organisations, until the mainstream is able to decolonize through lasting systemic change. In the 1990s, the former Chair had anticipated this agenda being thwarted simply by virtue of TD’s being in Newtown, because they felt that the geographically and socio-economically isolated location could reverse any positive effects that the fact of TD’s existence would have for political Blackness, as well as for Afro-Caribbean Blackness. It would seem from the reactions in Asif’s interview, that they may have been right.
Similarly, recorded in the research journals is a conversation with Sarah from January 2016. We sat in the Bartons Arms over lunch and discussed her concerns surrounding the first ACE visit. This was the first time that TD’s location was mentioned to me as a problem instrumental to the impending closure:

‘It isn’t in the City Centre, which would make sense for an arts organisation, and it’s not in Handsworth, which would make sense as a Black community centre.’ (January 2016)

As an organisation that needed to serve both functions (arts organization and community centre), she felt its location strange and unworkable. Firstly, because local people could not pay much for events at TD. Secondly because public transport and even road links from the city centre are so poor that those she described as “mainstream arts audiences” were deterred from venturing that far north (indeed the first few times I tried to drive there, I missed the subtle turn and ended up on the way to the M6). That lunchtime, Sarah spoke of the oddness of the location, and warned me to be present in the office more over the coming months, alluding to the impending closure. Later, in her second interview (April 2017), she repeated and expanded upon this thought, saying:

‘I think there’s both a positive and a negative and I think the positive was that it was in a location where it was certain sections of the community that it was predominantly aiming to serve, it was their home ground it was their turf, they felt comfortable. [but] a lot of Black people still wouldn’t go because of where it was […] And a lot of White people wouldn’t go because of where it was.’

It was in the next sentence of this interview that she mentioned the White theatre-goers, quoted in Purpose, who questioned whether they would be welcome at TD’s events because of their Whiteness. Standing alone, this statement from Sarah detaches social class from Race, alluding to a Black middle class who were as deterred from visiting TD as their White counterparts and suggesting that in her opinion, the problem with Newtown was that it ghettoized TD. However, when placed in the context of her next statement, it also shows her concerns about the racialization of Newtown’s deprivation crime rate – the ghettoization of Blackness that Asif railed against while contributing to.

‘And I think the label ‘Black’, um, it was confusing. It was off-putting for Asians, it was off-putting for White people. When you’ve got people ringing you up saying “is it OK if I come and watch this
Firstly, this speaks of further ruptures in solidarity, this time along class lines among people of African descent. Secondly, it shows that Sarah, a person of Afro-Caribbean descent herself, had accepted the ghettoization/criminalization of Afro-Caribbean Blackness to some extent. It also showed that the decision to espouse interculturalism as credo and label, came from that acceptance. It shows that the espousal of interculturalism was not merely an apology for Blackness, but for working-class Afro-Caribbean Blackness and the layers of meaning that association with places like Newtown heaps upon it. It was an apology for Newtown itself. Moreover, it was an apology to the funders in an attempt to justify funding. The same government agencies that ghettoize Newtown in the first place.

5.2.2 The Problem with Newtown: Programming for its population.

‘Programming I don’t think was going as well. Because if you’re not getting your audience in, that means that something else is happening. We had very much the same old same old, so like, upfront was a regular - it’s been there since I was there. But you get the same people coming all the time. Yes, it had an audience but it wasn’t making any money.’ (Delia Interview, 2017)

Fig.5.4 Page from TD’s events listing brochure, Autumn 2009.
Sarah also pointed out that the population of the area had changed several times during TD’s lifespan:

“[T]he demographic of that area has shifted so much in the time that we have been there. Because it was partly Asian partly African Caribbean, now it’s mainly [South Asian, Eastern European] and Somali.” (Sarah interview, 2017)

She felt that the local community was no longer being served by TD’s programme, because the label of Blackness that had been placed on the organization alienated some on the grounds of language and culture. Newtown was seen by Sarah as being no longer predominantly Afro-Caribbean, but Eastern European and East African which she acknowledged as a difficulty for TD, because it did not cater adequately for people speaking languages other than those typically spoken by post-war migrant communities: English, Hindi, Punjabi, Guajarati, and Urdu. Somalis often do not self-define as Black,22 and there has been a distinct move away from political Blackness by a younger generation of British South Asians, as has been discussed in Position and Purpose. (Samanani, 2018: 6) There was a sense from Sarah’s tone, that she felt TD’s programmers to be out of their depth in trying to provide for “[y]ou know, a completely different community, who we don’t touch, or sort of touched very infrequently, and so if you look […] it’s like, the whole of that North Birmingham, is like, it’s probably majority Asian now. It’s not so much the African Caribbean.” When asked why that was, she said clarified that “[t]he Black people just moved out. And… it’s become much more, as I say, Somali, Polish and maybe Asi – and Muslim.” (Sarah interview, 2017) Her Asian / Muslim slippage was a means of speaking of Somalis and Muslims from elsewhere, together. Having lost all members of the management team who identified as Muslim team by 2016, TD was on the back foot in terms of being able to cater to the types of experiences faced by its local population. It could have been a bastion and haven in that respect, as it had been for those dealing with older racisms in its early days. Purpose focused on a speech from Samad, in which he had said:

“As-salamu alaykum, greetings. That’s the way that I used to greet people [coming to] The Drum […] The Drum’s artistic policy talked about that vision of creating a confident Black arts. It was not to be a place of the exotica; the ethnic other, but it was where we defined ourselves, and we

22 “Like other immigrants and refugees, she [as a Somali woman] has quickly learned the racial hierarchy whose public gaze already reads her body as black mapped against hegemonic whiteness” (Huisman, Hough & Langellier, 2011: 151)
challenged native representations of what we’re supposed to be. And so that informed our artistic policy. We did some amazing themes like [...] Trigger Pulled where we challenged the gun violence in our communities. Routes to Freedom where we marked the abolition of slavery [...] Taboo, where we talked about sexuality and gender - things that our communities don’t talk about. All of that came from, was informed by, the fact that the Drum was coming out of a particular history. And out of that history we had these values; shared values.” (Samad speech, 2017)

Not only did he proudly wear his religious and cultural and religious identity on his sleeve, he made it part of visitors’ experience of TD. He was able to speak of shared values, and issues that were dealt with across communities. This excerpt of the speech shows that these events were location-sensitive. Newtown and its population contributed to TD’s value system in the early days. Any of the former events brochures demonstrates the diversity of the multiculture catered for in the organization’s heyday. Going back ten years to 2009, a page chosen at random and depicted in Fig. 4.4 shows Eid Milan celebrations sharing space equally with those for Barbadian Independence Day, the Black History Month launch and a collaboration with the South Asian-led organization Sampad, for Diwali. In the centre of it all, is an event that concerns everyone. Multicultural...ism, Schism and Racism, invited Arun Kundnani, who had published The End of Tolerance (2007) just two years before, to debate issues of racism and religious freedom, which are linked in TD’s description of the issues facing its audiences:

‘Immigration has transformed Britain, making it a vibrant, cosmopolitan nation. But have multicultural policies also left it more divided? How should we deal with questions of free speech and religious freedom in a multicultural society? And has multiculturalism helped or hindered the struggle for equality?’ (The Drum. Autumn Season Events Programme, 2009)

Such events were location sensitive. They could have been held at the REP, for example, but would have been part of its diversity offer rather than central to its programme and primary audiences, and the people of Newtown would rarely have been involved in the debate. At TD, Kundnani’s presence would have drawn academic audiences from far and wide, and the £3 price tag was low enough for many local people also. At this point (2009), Newtown’s

23 TD garnered a small fee for these events (See fig.4.), but its programmers also held a wide range of regular and one-off events that were free of charge, like the young people’s programme (YGB) and complimentary Sunday Jazz sessions with Saxophonist Andy Hamilton. These were recognised by ACE as being very successful by Jane, Sarah, Delia and the CEO in their first interviews (April 2016), and claimed as ‘A good example of The Drum at its best’ by the writers of ACE’s final report (Royce & Bain-Burnett, 2016: 10). Jane described the large
multiculture was reflected in TD’s programme, and TD functioned as a nucleus that drew people from all of the communities that Newtown represented, who lived further afield. The location was central to TD’s success in facilitating and celebrating the ‘community of communities’ that Britain was becoming. (Parekh, 2000: 56) This was partly because that multiculture was represented in its staff, and their networks within organizations. According to Sarah, this changed toward the end:

‘And with the Asian communities, you know I told you about [Afro-Caribbean] people moving on, less so [with South Asian people]. So we became irrelevant to those that… So the ones that are there, because there is more Muslim Asian people in [Newtow]. As far as I could see, there wasn’t anything major, ongoing, for those communities at the Drum. We’d probably do partnerships with people like things at the town hall and here (the Rep) but there weren’t…’ (Sarah Interview, 2017)

Sarah identifies here, that the ecosystem of interdependence and collaboration between arts organizations in Birmingham had broken down toward the end TD’s lifespan, with the loss of the bulk of its staff. This is to be examined further in the Relationships chapter. The acknowledgment that the new communities were ones that TD didn’t touch, was as revealing as it was honest. The Drum’s programming had become less for those in Newtown not because TD had changed, but because it hadn’t. Sarah attributed this to the shift in Newtown’s multiculture from post-war migration to the inclusion of refugees:

‘The community around it had changed and we didn’t change with it to reflect the community. It was quite difficult and I’m not saying that they didn’t engage, but I suppose if you’ve got people who are coming from war-torn countries and their primary thing is how do I stay alive, not “let me go make some music and chill out”… I mean I’m sure those things are still very, very important, but there are more immediate, pressing needs that need to be fulfilled. And… no we didn’t engage.’ (Sarah Interview, 2017)

At its end, its staff clearly felt that they couldn’t rely on local residents to save it because it wasn’t providing for them. Instead of rooting TD locally, the remaining staff had focused on situating itself culturally, to try to appeal to Afro Caribbean people further afield than downstairs area as having been “entirely packed out every time” Andy Hamilton played. (Jane interview April 2016)

Though there is little to no audience data to support their claims. TD’s data entry system was outdated and inefficient, so audience data was patchy. This is one of the gripes that ACE presented in their report.
Newtown, and partner with White-coded organizations to provide diversity to Birmingham’s cultural offer. This worked to some extent, although toward the end it was being used as a venue for hire by them rather than bringing a variety of people in as audiences for its internally programmed events.

Sarah went on to correct herself, saying “there was some language theatre that happened” but that “a lot of [it] was initiated by proactive individuals coming to hire the space as opposed to it being embedded into the programme”. She attributed this to a lack of relationship between TD and the artists from the new communities of Newtown. She felt that this made a difference, in that these events happened without being part of TD’s identity, as previous events and even gestures like Samad’s daily greetings of As-salamu alaykum, had been:

“There were things going on but it was much more low-key and you’d feel as if The Drum was very much at arm’s length with that part of the programme – it wasn’t an integral part of its being.”
(Sarah interview, April 2017)

She had left TD to work elsewhere, and when she returned this was what she found. Her regret at this was not simply because she felt that TD had lost control of its programme. That was true – the programme wasn’t cohesive toward the end, and there was little connection between consecutive events. Themed seasons, of the kind mentioned by Samad earlier in this chapter, were impossible to deliver, because the programme wasn’t planned. It largely consisted of whoever was willing to pay for the space, on whichever dates they needed it.

Sarah’s regret was not unjustified – this method of programming made poor business sense. Fig. 3 shows that by September 2015, this had taken its toll the organization’s takings, to the point where the imbalance between Drum programming and venue hires organized through its commercial arm (Drum Commercial) was no longer tenable.
Fig. 5.5. Balance sheet for accounting year 2015, from TD’s archive

The result of this was that of a target of £11,446, only £2,665 was made that month. That was the month that Sarah returned to TD after working elsewhere for a number of years:

“So it would have been the September of 2015, must have been? Then it closed June 2016. And it was interesting that the arts programme was struggling, and they were so at pains to tell you that Drum Commercial was surviving. And you looked at it and you thought “well no wonder because all of the stuff that should have been programmed, is actually being done through / via Drum Commercial.”” (Sarah Interview 2017)

This imbalance also explains the discrepancy between what is claimed by Sarah who was a programmer (that ‘Black people don’t go there because of where it is’) and what was said by front of house staff, such as Jane, who pointed out that TD was regularly filled with people attending ‘wakes and weddings’ (Jane Interview, April 2016). Jane could not understand lack
of audience being a factor in the closure, because she was considering the numbers of people she saw go through the door. However as a programmer, Sarah could see the discrepancy between the number attending private events and those attending public events programmed by TD. Delia saw this problem as being to do with the quality of the programming, and that quality in turn, being a result of underfunding:

‘if we’d had more money at The Drum, we needed to have introduced somebody else doing programming because I think it got very one dimensional.’ (Delia Interview, 2017)

It is also possible to see from the takings breakdown in Fig. 4.5., the discrepancy between paying and non-paying audiences compared to the target. TD achieved just 31.74% of its target paying audience in September 2017, yet it was exceeded its target for unpaying guests by 46.5%. However, this need not have been the case forever. Not only had the cultural and linguistic makeup of Newtown changed, the socioeconomic makeup was beginning to change too. Across the B414 dual carriageway to the north side of the building (See Fig. 4.2.), there was a development of new, affordable housing for young families and professionals.25 This was not the same dramatic gentrification that Londoners continue to experience for example – the kind of ‘top down regeneration defined by hegemonic neoliberal values’ (Campkin, 2013: 6). It is led by local authorities and affordable housing initiatives, as opposed to luxury property developers. This regeneration is slower and the ethical systems developing around it, more confusing. People moving to the area are more likely to be young working families buying starter homes than wealthy investment buyers, however the effects are likely to eventually be similar for existing residents. Exchanges like that in the fish and chip shop, suggest that some of Newtown’s shop owners are already being strained by prices rising at current rates of inflation. TD’s CEO pointed out in a conversation, recorded in the research journal for late March 2016, that as the area becomes more desirable and rents gradually rise, existing businesses are unlikely to be able to withstand the accompanying business rate increases for the area, and existing residents are unlikely to withstand the resultant rise in food, and other, costs. If previous trends of regeneration are to be taken as precedents, many of the existing community may eventually be pushed out. The CEO suspected that because the land that TD was built on was ringfenced for an arts organization by EU law, BCC would keep the building empty until the UK exited the EU, then build apartment complexes on the land. This has not

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25 By the time of fieldwork.
occurred, yet the fact that it was a concern demonstrates the extent to which these changes to the area were at the forefront of TD management’s consciousness in 2016.

Indeed, just prior to the closure, the two contrasting sides of Newtown seemed like the emergent and the fading; past and future. It did seem that whether TD would be considered by BCC to be part of old or new Newtown would determine its fate. However, a nearby local business demonstrated that it may be possible to amalgamate old and new, and adapt to the benefit of all.

At the intersection of Newtown’s two socioeconomic elements, TD was accompanied by the Barton’s Arms: a large, Victorian public house that from the outside appeared to be another relic from a fading world. On my first day I saw a sign outside of the pub celebrating its history, at some point during which, Charlie Chaplin had apparently visited. For a few months I avoided the pub. My catalogue of experiences with pubs that looked like this on the outside, telling me to give it a wide berth for my own sake, even during ethnography.\(^{26}\) In conversations with other people of colour who had visited TD but not entered The Barton’s, the pub often came up and the comments were always the same: what a juxtaposition TD was with what looked like a typical White, working-class pub, often feared as one of the final bastions of the old racism. But the Barton’s has adapted; becoming a symbol of cultural mixing through its offer of tasty Thai food, served by friendly Thai British people, in the setting of an English public house seemingly preserved in aspic. As such, it drew a broad clientele from all backgrounds and from all over the city. The Barton’s became a semi-regular lunchtime haunt for me, as it was for many Drum staff members. Every time I ate there it was full. I saw frequent company lunches there and overheard snippets of several job interviews, conducted over tea and nibbles. While the diners inside varied by the day, the pub’s external seating was almost always occupied by the same group of men, who would drink and socialize there all day without being disturbed or causing disturbance. The Barton’s was one of the places where people from outside and inside Newtown collided; also, where the employed and seemingly disenfranchised shared space to some extent. The Drum had been similar, and I saw echoes of this even at its end. Its audiences were wide ranging, and the people who frequented it during the day ranged from visiting artists having meetings to the mentally ill, who would come in as a place of refuge, where they could

\(^{26}\) Namely, the staring and casual sexism or racism, the level of which is often dependent only on the day, location of pub and level of drunkenness in the room, none of which are predictable.
talk to people and be included. On the penultimate day of opening, one such daytime regular walked in, sweating and talking to us and himself in equal measure. As we talked to him, he calmed down and began to hold a conversation about the weather. He sat and read the paper in the bar area for an hour, then bid us good day and left. Jane asked me “see? What will happen to people like him when TD closes?”

If the bar and café at TD had been fully functioning toward the end of its lifespan, a flow of clientele could have been created between it and the Barton’s through advertising and reciprocal promotions. The location did not starve the pub of clientele from all parts of the city; so can it be claimed substantively that that it was the location that discouraged potential audiences from attending events at TD? It has been suggested so far that this may have been more closely connected to programming issues caused by an imbalance between the charitable and commercial arms of TD. This has been connected to prolonged underfunding by some members of staff.

5.2.3 What if Newtown is not a problem?

![Google map showing the distance from Newtown to Birmingham City Centre](image)
The city centre was repeatedly cited in interviews and conversations as a preferable location to Newtown. As the cultural and economic centre of Birmingham, it made sense that it would be favoured by those who aspired to liberating Black arts from the margins and making the experiences of BAME people central to the story of the city, and by proxy the nation. However, a number of incidents made it clear that the desire to be included and centralized in local and national stories would be at odds with the agenda of decolonizing the minds of Black people, and providing a space in which they could escape the pressures of White dominance to build themselves psychologically as well as culturally. In addition to those incidents explored in *Purpose*, was a stakeholders meeting, held at TD in April 2016, at which the location of TD’s archive was decided. Importantly, that rather than going to London as part of the Black Cultural Archives (BCA), The Drum’s collection has been stored as part of Birmingham’s history, in the archives at the Library of Birmingham (LoB). At the stakeholders’ meeting, staff and board members decided this with Birmingham community leaders, by way of a vote. With the exception of the CEO (incidentally one of the few people in the room not from Birmingham), the decision was unanimous, and revealed which affiliations were most important to them. They saw saving the legacy of the Drum as a civic, as opposed to a national, or even Black, issue.

The choice between the LoB and the BCA represented a choice between Birmingham and Blackness. Those who made the choice of where to put the archive did so on behalf of the organization, choosing between identities that they themselves dually inhabit, nevertheless, the choice was unanimously and passionately made. The project of running TD was a balancing act between these two identities, and they were often at odds. However, the intersection of these with socioeconomic class was either not considered by those at the stakeholders meeting, or it was disregarded. This is where a consideration of TD as belonging to Newtown, as opposed to Birmingham as a whole, may have helped them to consider whether there may be a third option, and at least consider what the value of Newtown was for TD. The archive represented the heritage of a community, but whose community? The stakeholders were considering the Birmingham Black community, but what is that, and was TD representative of it? Where did the people of Newtown fit within that identity? Ease of access was considered, but only in physical terms. In meters and miles, the distance from Newtown to the Library of Birmingham was less than the distance to the BCA in Brixton, but culturally? Psychologically?

In the research journal for June 2017, I described the psychogeography of the library and its
surroundings. The excerpt below gives an impression of how different it is from Newtown and TD. The many layers around and within the Library building are important in gaining a clear picture of what true access to the archive is for the people of Newtown and the Drum’s former audiences. Some of these layers would also have to be traversed for them to have reached TD itself, had it been within the city centre. The traversal involves not only negotiating physical space, but also the possible psychological barriers to connection with, and sense of ownership of it.

Opened on September 3rd, 2013, the Library of Birmingham is one of the city centre’s most prominent architectural landmarks. On Centenary Square, which has been being developed ever since, it shares its building with the Birmingham Repertory theatre. It is adjacent to the International Convention Centre and its location is significant. The square opened in 1989 to commemorate the centenary of Birmingham having been given city status, and it remains a hub for permanent representations and, occasionally, temporary displays of Birmingham’s civic pride. The buildings, and the public art situated near them in the square, represent the city’s two civic priorities: The Convention Centre, which was once faced by Tom Lomax’s Spirit of Enterprise fountain (1991, in storage as of 2010), represents industry and international commerce. Conversely, the library and theatre are accompanied by the Gillian Wearing Statue A Real Birmingham Family (2014, in storage as of 2017, returned in 2019), linking arts and culture to family and community via the psychogeography of the square.

The library has 5 floors that are accessible to the public, and it is designed to be open plan, with escalators in the central atrium, transporting visitors up past the various floors, the functions of which become more specialized as one climbs. On the bustling ground floor there is a café, access to the REP theatre and restaurant, and to the brightly coloured children’s library, which exists as a large, comforting cubby-hole below the ground. The REP’s VIP bar area is seen to the left of the entrance, suspended above the ground and inaccessible to the general public, but visible through glass and a veil of net curtains. Directly in front of the entrance, escalators ascend past several floors of public library space and easily accessible general reference books, with a variety of seating – most notably large, red, swivelling egg chairs, perfect for a coffee, a long read and a snooze. These floors are less bustling, but still fairly social. There are meeting rooms for hire here too. Further up is the more serious reference section, with its own information desk. The staff at this desk seem a little more formal and eagerly looking out for people to help. This part is the most beautiful and quietest so far. The escalator stops here. There are some slightly less open plan study spaces, signs pointing budding entrepreneurs to business services, and a terrace from which it is possible to see the entire city while having a cigarette break. The books line the circular atrium and you cannot access them yourself – they must be retrieved by a member of staff and you must wait. This mixes the functions of an academic library with those of a contemporary co-working space.
To reach the archive, it is necessary to step onto a rather awkwardly steep, tilted moving walkway (if you are carrying a case or trolley of books it will slide away, and don’t wear heels), past the ring-tower of reference books and up into White space, toward the skylight in the building’s tower. Here, it is silent. In front of the door, there is a desk with two archivists. They are friendly and will gladly help you to navigate their catalogues and show you how to use the archives, but the room itself is intimidating. Then, you must sign up for a reader pass and go at the back of the room, looking through the glass wall that divides this silent reading room from the even more silent (if that were possible) archive reading room. If you ring the doorbell there, and show your reader pass through the glass, you will be let into the inner sanctum to view your objects. As a Black woman raised in the South East of England, I noticed that there were fewer and fewer people who looked like me as I climbed toward the archive, and more and more people who sounded like me. I took this as a metaphor for life in contemporary capitalist Britain and smiled sadly at the consistency of it – how used I was to this. Had I been a Black woman from Newtown, I would not have seen myself at all by the time I reached the top, perhaps stopping before I did.

This is not just about representation and diversity on the library’s various floors, it is also about how hierarchical geographies and architectures help to shape organizational cultures. It is about how and why the space that the civic and cultural spaces occupy within the city centre are not neutral; about how their design makes them exclusive. It is about how those responsible for TD in this location would have had to work hard toward it not being exclusionary on the grounds of class and Race, just as those in charge of the archives, library and indeed the Birmingham REP, do now.\textsuperscript{27} In the context of inclusion within such space – TD would have been the ‘diversity organisation’ in a built environment specifically to represent the power, hierarchy and money of national and local government. The decision at the stakeholders meeting on where to house the archive, showed community leaders putting action behind their opinions that TD should have been more prominently included in Birmingham’s identity. However, we can see that in actuality this decision prioritized claiming a so called ‘seat at the table’, over building a table of one’s own. In such a place, treating every visitor equally is not enough to create diversity. Ostensibly, in the CC everybody would have access to TD. Ostensibly, Race and Class matter less in this central location than in Newtown, because these are civic spaces away from the majority of residential neighbourhoods, and thus belong to everybody equally. However, Newtown’s inhabitants, especially young people and those who do not or cannot drive, would have encountered the same physical barriers to accessing TD (given the poor public transport links between centre and North Birmingham) as those who couldn’t make the

\textsuperscript{27} In fact, one of the ways that the Birmingham REP achieved as much as it did in terms of inclusivity, was through its many collaborations with TD.
same journey in the opposite direction, to visit TD in Newtown. Additionally, the differences between the experiences of life the inhabitants of Newtown and those in more affluent parts of Birmingham play a role in how the library building is experienced by different people. Essentially this is about the emotional and psychological distance between The Drum and the City Centre’s mainstream cultural venues. The same distance that caused the White theatre goer of the previous chapter to ask “am I allowed to attend a show at the Drum, as I am not Black?” works both ways. The language used in the library description came from an incidental interview that I conducted with a young professional of Afro-Caribbean descent, Eden, who described her visits to the library when living in Birmingham between 2013 and 2015. She said:

“The further up you go, and the more silent it gets, the more I feel like it is space reserved for grown, professional people doing serious things. There is always a question in my mind, as though I shouldn’t be here. I mean, I went and snooped around the whole place, but it felt like snooping. It didn’t feel like ‘let me go and look around my local library and see what’s what. Part of it felt like it was members only. You know when you go to the British Library there are doors, and you can’t go past them? That is how this felt, but there were no physical doors” (Eden, Interview, 2019)

Eden was a professional working in the area at the time of mention and had been a BSC Physiotherapy student at University of Birmingham before that. She may have been used to libraries, and be a professional now, but the library’s environment still felt disempowering, leading her to feel no ownership of the library’s upper floors. Both she and I felt increasingly excluded as we experienced Centenary Square’s amenities. How much more exclusionary would this experience be to the Chip Shop Ladies, mentioned earlier?

Eden points out that she did not feel that her age or her Race were what made her feel this way. Rather, she felt that something about the air of exclusivity made her question her status there. Centenary Square was built to celebrate 100 years of city status – its library and the other buildings stand to prove this decision is justified on economic, cultural and political grounds. Its design serves the purpose of asserting power in comparison with other towns and cities, nationally and internationally, to sustain the local economy. Monumentalism is adopted in the library’s architecture as a display of the city’s ability to compete with other British metropolises for power and capital, without which there would be no library - no archives at all. In this

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28 This is why making the Drum’s archive accessible to its emotional stakeholders, is a task worthy of analysis and planning.
context, the power of intimidation exercised over individual visitors can be seen as a mere side effect of a monumentalist architecture, which has become seen by city planners as necessary for what has been referred to as the ‘brandscaping’ of cities in contemporary capitalism (Klingmann, 2003). This problem with central civic spaces in European cities is a hangover from the days of empire, and of the ways that, since then, cities and their civic organizations have been forced to trade on placemyth and cultural capital in neoliberal capitalism.

Taking all of this into account, it can be argued that in Newtown TD’s location was decolonized – it was certainly more suited to its decolonial ambit than the city centre. The concern of those who blamed the organization’s ghettoization for its closure was that Newtown excluded middle class theatre goers of all Races. However, to include TD in an architectural display of civic pride would have been to further exclude those who are already excluded from the bulk of Britain’s cultural offer – people who live in places Newtown and places like it. The positioning of the archive is a good example of this. Additionally, who would have led the organization if it had been imbued with this air of government authority? Who would have been able to feel that they owned it? We have seen in Purpose, that when TD’s leadership embraced interculturalism, nobody felt ownership of the organization, which contributed to the closure. The feeling of the feeling of psychological closeness to the organization is important not just to visitors but to staff.

The Birmingham-based arts centres most frequently compared to The Drum in ACE’s final report, were the Midlands Art Centre (MAC) and the Birmingham Repertory Theatre (REP). They were also compared frequently by staff in interviews and ethnographic conversations. This was partly because they are deemed to be in ‘better’ locations than The Drum was, but also because The Drum was consistently being charged by the arts and city councils with the task of coaxing middle-class audiences living in and frequenting those parts of Birmingham, to Newtown for performances. There was a bitterness that accompanied these comparisons, though for different reasons. Asif’s mention of Solihull’s amenities earlier in this chapter is one example of bitterness because of the seemingly unfair distribution of public funds. Delia compared the longevity of the organisations, to point out that ACE’s comparison of their

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29 They were also presented as comparisons to TD in ACE’s final report. Their locations were what staff members were most concerned with, whereas their modes of operation were what concerned the ACE representatives. I posit that these cannot be separated, but both sets of people do so.
performance was unfair, given that TD was creating new arts audiences as opposed to the other organizations, who were working with established audiences:

“If you look at somewhere like the Mac or even the REP. They’ve been in business […] fifty years; the Drum was only 20 years old. So that’s still very young, and they’re targeting an audience who wasn’t used to […] going to the theatre, so you’re building that over the years. Yes, you may have got there eventually, but you probably would have needed a lot more time to be able to get there.” (Delia Interview, 2017)

Sarah also compared TD to the MAC, this time to lament the apathy of a disenchanted Newtown audience at the closure of TD:

“…Can you imagine if somebody said “oh, we’re going to close down the MAC”, I mean all people in Moseley, whether they use it or not, even if they just go for a walk, they’d be up there protesting. If people on your doorstep aren’t prepared to fight or you there’s no point. Do you know what I mean? I can get the national voices saying this isn’t needed and what have you, but if the people in the very community in which you live – in which you’re based – aren’t bothered, I just… it makes it a lot harder.” (Sarah Interview, 2017)

Sarah acknowledged that any campaign to save TD when it announced its impending closure would have needed to go beyond the immediate locale of Newtown, at least into Handsworth, to have been successful. When I suggested class privilege and being more accustomed to being listened to as a possible reason that the people of Moseley may me more likely to speak up for the MAC than the residents of Newtown for TD, Sarah was adamant that this wasn’t the case. This, she said, was because she wasn’t talking about the immediate locale, but the Black community of North Birmingham that she expected to also have an allegiance to the organisation. The boundary between Newtown and Handsworth was unacknowledged in this instance. The same is true of Samad, in his speech at the closing ceremony. Many of the impactful events cited by him were those that linked TD (and thereby Newtown) to Handsworth:

“[I]n the depths of the dark days we’d remember, when we had a season at the Drum called Handsworth Revolution. And we marked the 20th anniversary of the Handsworth rebellions within Inner City Exploded. And we did that not to romanticize, but so that we learned lessons so that it didn’t happen again. We had an exhibition, we showed films.” (Samad Speech, 2016)
Moving TD to Handsworth would have made a different statement altogether. Unlike the city centre, this move would have been less about civic pride than Black pride – less about inclusion than self-determination. However, that would have made a statement about the meaning of Blackness that let go of politically Black solidarity once and for all. Whether the group that became Newtown Cultural Projects (NCP) would have received funding to build there, or in the City Centre is another issue entirely. Neither of those places were earmarked for regeneration, so there was no initial funding attached to them – TD was conceived as a solution to Newtown’s particular problem. Moreover, the funders are concerned with cultural diversity and integration, as opposed to segregation (Royce & Bain-Burnett, 2016: 13), which a move to Handsworth could be seen as. Today, the focus is on bringing Handsworth and its cultural history to the CC and its organizations, providing Great Art and Culture for Everyone (Bazalgette, 2013). There have been a series of shows in the Library of Birmingham, the Ikon Gallery and at both the MAC and the REP over the course of this PhD. However, we have seen that this inclusion does not serve everyone, but primarily those deemed the racial or socioeconomic majority. It majoritizes them by providing them with easy access to the culture of all parts of the city, and minoritizes the people of places like Newtown by excluding them. This is why it is important that the new Birmingham Legacy Centre is opening on the site of TD right there in Newtown.

5.3 Conclusions

This study of TD’s location has shown the gestures and processes by which Race and Class became connected to one another in Newtown, and the effects of those connections on TD as an organisation. It necessarily built on the last chapter’s study of TD’s purpose, considering how far the location of TD was a root cause of its closure by analysing the location in relation to the research questions.

5.3.1 Location: A Changing definition of Blackness

As is evidenced by the Probation Service’s involvement in the initial funding process for the organization, and by the billboard described in Section 5.2.1, the stigmatization of the location

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30 These include: At Home with Vanley Burke, Ikon Gallery, 2015; Derek Bishton, Brian Homer and John Reardon: Handsworth Self Portrait: 40 Years On MAC Arts Centre, 2019; Connecting Stories: Our British Asian heritage, Library of Birmingham, 2017. For the last of these, TD’s archive was consulted.
also linked the organisation and the communities historically associated with it to criminality. In interviews this was linked to Black, Asian and White middle classes distancing themselves from it. This chapter has explored how it is also linked to the fragmentation of political Blackness, by leading to the increased criminalization of Afro-Caribbean blackness and the abandonment of the label ‘black’ by those who had the option of calling themselves Asian instead, choosing other forms of strategic essentialism. However, I suggest in conclusion to this chapter, that as the majority of the Afro-Caribbean population have moved out of Newtown, leaving larger numbers of South Asian and Eastern European residents in Newtown, the connection of Newtown to a working class Black criminality that alienates South Asians and fragments strategic essentialism, is due to a systemic and structural racism that layers meaning onto Race.

5.3.2 Location: Diversity vs Decolonisation /

Like *Purpose*, any study of TD’s location must be about representation vs action. The primary question of that chapter has continued in this: who was TD for? If one looks at TD through the prism of representation (diversity) TD could never have been workable in Newtown and was doomed to fail there, as the former Chair had worried in the 1990s. After all, how could it have represented racialized people positively to middle class, White theatre goers when the organization struggled to draw this audience? How could it have kept up with growing Black and South Asian middle classes when they would rarely visit the location? How could it have upheld the unifying project of political Blackness if the location’s reputation served to criminalize working-class British Blackness and tacitly linking it to Afro-Caribbean Blackness, thus apparently discouraging South Asians and continental Africans from uniting with Afro-Caribbeans? However, if one examines the organisation through the prism of action (decolonization), its location is justified. It shows that this distancing from the location and the people who have come to be represented by it, causes such ill effects as the fragmentation of political Blackness, and a loss of purpose through the espousal of Interculturalism in an attempt to achieve diversity (as was discussed in *Purpose*). This chapter has argued that while many other businesses in the area were closing, TD’s closest neighbour - the Barton’s Arms - was thriving, having adapted to Newtown’s changes, and to more general developments in Birmingham as a whole. The example of the Bartons Arms shows that the location need not have been an issue for an organization that was otherwise equipped to thrive. As was discussed earlier in this chapter, for TD to have been made workable as a more self-sustaining business, changes to its café and bar could have been made. Changes to the programming balance and
staff demographics could also have been made. A cash injection to the organization would have been justified, if bringing TD’s business model up to date had been the primary concern of the funders, board and management. However, the chapters are increasingly showing that it was not simply the business model that was out of line with ACE’s agenda by 2016. It was the organization’s vision and purpose, as well as its desired audiences. To support a decolonial community-building agenda, a decolonized funding system, divorced from the national agenda would have been needed.

To have capitalized on Newtown’s status as a place of a transitory community made up largely of newly migrated people, the organization’s ‘Intercultural’ label could possibly have eventually worked, were it not for the ideological incongruences explored in *Purpose*. This would, however, have meant turning TD into an organization with a local, rather than a politically Black, focus. The funding structure seemed to have been leading it in this direction - toward focusing on common experiences of migration and socioeconomic Class, rather than on Race, racism and the creation of sanctuary. However, TD’s focus on reggae music and its visiting audiences for Drum commercial hires like Weddings and funerals, maintained its links to the wider Black Caribbean, and often also South Asian, communities outside of Newtown and even outside of Birmingham. The organization relied on these hires because it relied on its commercial arm, and so, making it locally-focused did not make good business sense under the model that it had toward its end. It relied on its business arm precisely because the community in Newtown could not afford to pay high prices for tickets. Therefore, despite TD’s reliance on out-of-town pounds to sustain itself, its existence in Newtown sustained the national habit of connecting of non-whiteness, and particularly Afro-Caribbean Blackness, to an imagined permanent state of migration and newness to Britain, which was seen as undesirable to communities seeking to put down roots. All of this is explored further in the next chapter, *Relationships*. 
6. Relationships

6.1 The Drum Ends: The Stakeholders Meeting

The plan above represents the seating arrangements for attendees at The Drum’s Stakeholders Meeting in April 2016. This chapter will repeatedly return to the Stakeholders Meeting because its layout and what occurred within it revealed so much about the relationships between TD’s audiences, board members, staff and funders. Present at the meeting were representatives from BCC and ACE, The Drum’s key current and former staff members, some artists who had performed or exhibited there consistently and members of its board of trustees (past and present). Also in attendance were prominent community members, including religious leaders, arts administrators from other local organizations and academics from Birmingham’s universities. I took an audio recording of the meeting with the consent of TD’s management team.

Responsibility for the layout lies with BCC representatives, who organized the meeting and set out the tables and chairs upon arriving at TD. It struck me as a visual representation of the relationship of the funders to the organization, and the role of Race in that relationship. The room was set up like a school classroom or wedding reception, with a panel of people at the front of the room, sitting at one long table and facing a mass of people on rows of chairs. It was
starkly hierarchical, with only two tiers. All layers of nuance and pre-existing existing hierarchies between people were flattened by this layout – subsumed by this funder / funded relationship and its White / Non-White visual distinction. The panel was made up of the BCC and ACE representatives who sometimes sat, and sometimes stood to speak. When they spoke, most did so apologetically, and those who weren’t visibly uncomfortable came across more problematically than those who were. The crowd facing them was made up of several distinct stakeholders from TD’s audiences. There were respected Afro-Caribbean community leaders from Birmingham, like religious leaders and former city councillors, who were pointed out to me as dignitaries by Sarah and one of TD’s most regularly performing artists, who sat on either side of me. However everyone in The Crowd was treated equally by those at the front, seemingly without knowledge of who was who.31 Those at the front repeatedly referred to ‘The Black Community’ as though it were a monolith in Birmingham, without considering the possibility of nuance in the fact that there were few-to-no continental Africans present, and that there were south Asians present who may no longer refer to themselves as Black, given what previous chapters of this thesis have shown. The community of which they spoke was conjured as a way of creating a uniform group of people to whom 4.7 million pounds of public funding could be given without concern that it would exacerbate any fault lines between them, thus doing more harm than good. This was the purpose of the meeting, to call ‘the community’ together at TD, to demonstrate that there was no need for a mediating organization. TD would previously have been given this money on behalf of the communities that it helped to build and foster. Over the years, it had partially functioned as a unifier between distinct groups through its programme and the nature of its physical space, as Purpose and Location have explored. As I sat there, I noted the irony of calling people to TD for a meeting about how needless it was. As the meeting proceeded, it became clear what TD’s role had been, and just how needed an such an organization was.

That meeting room seemed to have a sorting effect; forcing those present to choose their allegiance by choosing where to sit. I certainly found myself sitting toward the back. As an insider / outsider, primarily attending this meeting to ask about the archive, I hadn’t expected to have these strong feelings of allegiance with The Crowd, but the situation and layout seemed

31 The Crowd is capitalized throughout Relationships, because it was treated as a monolith by those at the front, spoken to as though it were one person. The capitalization is used as a device to highlight the power imbalance at play in the meeting room.
to dictate choosing a side and behaving accordingly. I found myself slouching slightly and revelling in the banal subversiveness of recording the goings-on, as a relatively powerless school child might in the class of a needlessly tyrannical teacher. The imposition of a funder/funded, panel of individuals/indistinct Crowd, White/Non-White power imbalance, created a resentment that was borne out in my body language, and that of those around me. It then created division. What began to happen seemed a premonition of what was to follow the closure of the building: the dissolution of any existing solidarity among members of the ascribed community. Individuals began vying for scraps of funding, asking what they would need to do to grab a few thousand pounds for their latest projects. Most interesting were the seating positions of the CEO and Chairman of The Board, who represented two opposing factions in the organization – the board of trustees and the management team.

The CEO sat toward the back of The Crowd. He had staked his colours to the mast in an earlier conversation, saying that his reasons for leading TD were to do with his espousal of Pan Africanism’s focus on ways of organizing society that are entirely distinct from those upon which The West built and sustains itself. In the conversation that we had shortly after the meeting (partially recorded in the research journal for April 2016) he had divulged to me that he saw TD’s mission as one of disruption of a European bent toward establishing hierarchy between people. Partly because of this, partly because of his embarrassment at being blamed for the closure by many in the room, and partly because of a desire, which he had expressed, to sit quietly and allow the funders and the board to demonstrate their own involvement in the final decision to close TD, I was not surprised about where he sat. He asked only one question: as the amount of money to be distributed among individual cultural organizers for projects was similar to that quoted as necessary to keep TD’s building open for another three-year term, why could the money not have gone toward that? The question went unanswered – the funders were clear that the purpose of this meeting was not to hash over what had gone by, but to focus on what was coming next. The building was closing, there was nothing that could be done to change that, but the best would now be made of what was left, in consultation with ‘The

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32 This was the conversation, mentioned in *Purpose*, in which he said: “We should have figured out what we wanted and organized ourselves. Instead, we allowed massa to call us to his table.” He was referring to the Stakeholders’ Meeting. He expressed embarrassment at how easily The Crowd was divided by the offer of money and upset by the hierarchical layout of the room. He wished TD’s leadership had called the meeting instead.
Community’. The Crowd agreed for the most part – they were interested in who would have the chance to get their hands on some of the money. It was a sad and interesting sight to see - the way that power, visually distinguishable by its Whiteness, could throw the financial cat among the pigeons and create a barrel of crabs out of a group of intelligent people; continuously but rhetorically referring to ‘community’ while dismantling any true semblance of it.

The following emerged from Sarah’s second interview (2017), which took place after the funding had been distributed:

“The artists, they’ve got the bits of money that have been doled out. That was always going to be a difficult one. I always say I felt that they had been starved financially, and also culturally there had been no investment you know?”

Later in the interview she expanded on this, explaining what she saw happening at that moment (May 2017). To her, the promise of money had divided the artists and cultural programmers, distracting them from the loss of The Drum. Receiving the money had solidified this:

“…They’ve now had all of this cash thrown at them, [and] are far too busy worrying about how they’re going to spend their money thank you very much, because they’ve been starved, for years, and now they can go off and do all of these things. They’re celebrating, they’re in a good space. Ask them where they are in 3 – 5 years’ time, I think it will be a different story. And that’s the thing. People aren’t thinking beyond today. I think The Drum closed, and it was like “ooh we’re gonna get all this money”. So, they’ve been waiting for the year to get the money. And they’ve now got the money and they’re in the process of spending the money. When the money has gone, which it will in 5 years (which I think it will take 5 years, to use the money) then I think people will start asking questions. Not before.” (ibid.)

This is a story of scarcity. It is not a new story in forgotten parts of cities, like Newtown. As analysis of Asif’s interview showed in Location, scarcity when combined with hierarchy, works to keep those places and the people in them forgotten, by pitting them against each other to vie for scraps from the master’s table, when unity would have made them stronger. The same is true of relatively forgotten parts of a country – and it is clear from the attitude of arts workers in Birmingham that they felt relatively forgotten in comparison to London, as Sarah pointed out in the interview material that Purpose explored. Finally, it is also true of people who have been lumped together and minoritized in censuses, policy and the public imagination, then given access to fewer opportunities by (direct or indirect) virtue of that minoritization.
According to Sarah, it was because of this that the promise of money in the stakeholder meeting in 2016 pacified the majority of stakeholders in The Crowd. They certainly left the meeting quietly and did not form a cohesive campaign to save TD.

The Chairperson of the board had been the link between these two sides throughout the organization’s demise. They should have been seated at the front of the room with the BCC and ACE representatives, given the seating plan’s clear distinction between who was to ask questions and who was to answer them. This would have been the most obvious choice given how instrumental the Chairperson was in final decision to close the organization. The BCC representatives struggled to distinguish the Chairperson (Hereafter referred to as CP) from the other Black faces in the room and were visibly embarrassed when they discovered them sitting at the front of The Crowd, very near to the top table, at which they themselves sat. When they called the CP up to speak, it was clear that the CP’s position as part of The Crowd had been an oversight on the part of the BCC representatives and they warmly welcomed them to the front table half-way through the meeting. Whispers of “Oh, shame” from The Crowd, indicated how embarrassing some felt that the oversight should have been for the CP, the funders, or both.

The CP seemed happy to be acknowledged and took their place on a hurriedly pulled-up extra chair to the side of the top table. Sort of an awkward, falsely wedged place between the White and Black stakeholders, between power, and the masses that power creates, between funders and artists, between those who should have been fighting for TD and those who were widely seen as having come to close it down. This scene was horridly reminiscent of anthropological scenarios from colonial times: colonizers asserting power over a falsely homogenized colonized people, administrated by a chief from the from the group who is vaguely distinguishable from the crowd, but necessary so granted a tenuous seat, not at the colonizers’ table, but adjacent to it. This chief inevitably inspires more vitriol from the colonized group than the colonizers themselves, because their betrayal is unexpected. This chapter partly examines how the Chairman was seen in the same way; their actions in leading TD’s board to declare voluntary insolvency deemed unfathomable by all concerned, and the ultimate betrayal. It also examines the gradual dissolution of vitriol toward her, and the redirection of blame to the funders as more information became available about what took place at TD’s end.

This chapter examines the fault lines between key people connected to TD, and the ways that they cracked spectacularly, toward the organization’s end. It looks at these relationship breakdowns as primary contributing factors to TD’s closure and to the seemingly sudden, secretive way that it occurred. The enquiries in Purpose and Location around the breakdown
of political Blackness, mistrust between the funders and TD’s management, the criminalization of working-class Afro-Caribbean Blackness and the difference in vision between managerial and non-managerial staff, culminate in Relationships. All of these contributing factors put stress on the fault lines, which are named here as: Relationships with funders, internal relationships and relationships with audiences.

6.2 “One big dysfunctional family”: Internal relations

When mentioning TD to Birmingham residents in the aftermath of the closure, the response to most often follow an initial expression of sadness was resigned pragmatism, blaming the closure on a fractured leadership that ‘ran the place into the ground’. Infighting amongst TD’s leadership became common knowledge, but it is necessary to analyse it within the context of a broader funding system that made mismanagement of the TD fatal, where it hasn’t been in other organizations.

Let us analyse what that mismanagement looked like. In conversations during the period of participant observation and subsequent interviews, all staff members cited lack of leadership as a reason for TD’s closure and placed it into the context of broader systemic malfunctions. These interviews and conversations were demonstrative of people trying to make sense of the announcement and subsequent closure. It became clear that almost all relationships between groups within the organization were tense. The internal tensions that I identified during participant observation were between: Upstairs / Downstairs (Management vs front of house staff); management / board of trustees (CEO vs Chairman); and the various ethnic groups involved in the running of the organization (particularly Afro-Caribbean vs South Asian). Some of these began to be explored in Purpose and Location. From the interview data it became clear that an even more subtle network of tensions and conflicts were at play, that they were influenced by the decisions of the funders, and that they influenced those decision in return.

Interestingly however, almost all staff members used the word ‘family’ to refer to the TD, and almost always ended their interviews in defense of one another. Jane gave an indication as to why TD being like a family became problematic:

“Well in the beginning it was like being part of a family. You know, you used to work here and you used to want to party here as well.” (Jane Interview, 2016)

Perhaps because of this family dynamic, fierce and effective critique didn’t happen in the first round of interviews. Jane and Albert (the interviewees who were lowest in the organizational hierarchy) didn’t speak out
The family atmosphere worked to TD’s advantage as a community organization because it was able to advertise itself organically through word of mouth. This established TD’s community; staff at all levels brought their families and friends to events there, which meant that TD’s audiences were established as a network of friends, and friends of friends. As Purpose explored, new arts audiences were created and nurtured. The programme reflected the audiences and developed their artistic sensibilities, as Jane pointed out:

“Most definitely a vibe. And there was the programme - there was more variety. Do you know what I mean? There was reggae, theatre, dance, and it was very lively. Very enjoyable. Because that’s part of the reason that I came here, was to know – because like exhibitions and stuff […] that wasn’t part of your childhood so it’s good to come and actually educate yourself and educate you know, other members – family, your friends, get them to come…” (Jane Interview, May 2016)

In her speech at The Final Beat of The Drum, Sarah explained that her grief at the closure was due to the fact that TD’s team was like a family to her, and also that this family extended to the wider community of artists and audiences:

“Today, after being here for 18 / 19 years, it’s time to say goodbye. I’m not going to talk about why we’re here tonight – having this conversation is not appropriate. But what I do want to say is, I want to thank all the artists, and I want to thank all the audiences. I want to thank all my colleagues who are my friends. Many of whom I’ve met here, you’re my family. The Drum is my family. And it’s been a pleasure and it’s been a privilege, and I’m going to miss everyone; truly miss everyone. (Sarah Speech, 2016)

at all until they were out of the building and TD was gone. They came across as the children in a dysfunctional family. Albert was entirely different when I saw him at a funeral in July 2016 – he gave a true and detailed explanation of what had happened from his point of view explaining that he had been concerned for his job during his interview. When an outsider entered the family (like Ruth), they critiqued it heavily from the beginning.

34 This is indeed how it was, because it is how many diasporic communities function in the UK. Because of the fact that there are certain hubs of Black and south Asian life, networks emanate from cultural centres within those hubs. The conversation that I had with Albert (mentioned later in this chapter) took place at a family funeral, at which he was hired to be sound engineer. It took place in Bristol, one hub of UK Black life. I was surprised to see him, asking confused, whether he was related to me. He laughed and said ‘no, but the Drum family extends far and wide’.
Ruth described it as ‘a big dysfunctional family’ (Ruth, interview 2016), and explained what she meant through a description of a comparable community arts centre, which had also been closed by its funders:

> “Again, it was this completely dysfunctional, failing arts centre that people loved working in, but just should have been shut like 10 years before it did. And people just sort of took the piss and […] So yeah the history of the arts lab is really interesting because it’s just like this place but […] in the 70s” (Ruth Interview, 2016)

As a non-managerial staff member and one of the newest to the team, Ruth didn’t offer an explanation for the dysfunction that she saw. Delia, however, did:

> “I don’t know if people saw it as dysfunctional because people could be like a family, I would say, where, if you’d got something to say you’d say it, fall out about it, and then you’re fine - you get on and do what you need to do. I myself never experienced that, or I shouldn’t say that because I’d fall out with [the CEO].” (Delia Interview, 2017)

Indeed, the CEO was described as ‘hard work’ by those who had the closest working relationships with him:

> “Yes, Hard work. Even him and [another member of senior management team who would sometimes be responsible for programming] would fall out. And then we would see [them] go out for a drink! Yeah. Although when it came to the end and [this person] decided to leave I don’t think they ever repaired their relationship. [The person] thought, ‘he’s an idiot’.” (ibid.)

While Delia and the CEO had maintained a good relationship, she was honest about how fraught working with him could be, and how difficult he was to communicate with at times:

> “[The CEO] can be very stubborn and focused on what he wants and if you don’t agree with him, unless you can really build a case, he’d just sort of brush it aside. So there’s been times where I’ve said ‘I don’t agree with what you’re saying or what you’re asking me to do. I’ll do it because you’ve asked me, but I don’t agree with it’. And I’ll leave his office or he’ll try to justify it. [I’d say] ‘I don’t want to hear it anymore. I’ve heard what you said, I still don’t agree with it, and I’m leaving’, and I’d leave. Or if he’s doing something that I didn’t like, I wouldn’t be the person that’s gonna shout around the table in front of everybody else, because to me that’s not helpful. I’ll go to his office and tell him what I think. He may not change his mind, but he’s heard what I’ve had to say. And sometimes we’d raise voices and then I’d just leave and go and sit at my desk and, by the afternoon he’d come and talk to me, I’d answer him…. Yeah. (Chuckles)” (Delia Interview, 2017)
She identified favouritism, which caused division. In fact, in her opinion it contributed to the imbalance between TD’s charitable and commercial arms, which was analysed in Location.

“Yes. And then there’s other people that [the CEO] wasn’t keen on, that you’d see how he’s down on them all the time”. (ibid.) This management style was not conducive to unity among staff. Interviews with the CEO himself were vague and elusive. He admitted to avoiding talking to me about his feelings on what happened at TD because he wanted to do so on his own terms, in a letter. In May 2016 he produced and circulated a letter entitled Valedictory Message, in which he focused in part on defending himself against accusations levelled at him of having single-handedly run the Drum into the ground, without addressing what actually happened:

‘I have decided to support the remaining staff by staying on as CEO to the 30 June 2016, the final day of closure. You might ask what is the purpose of this gallant act? I have been overseeing a small arts programme, Young Gifted Brum workshops and honouring a number of committed hires to the end of June. So you see, there are some good DNA in me!’ (Small, 2016: 1)

The rest of the document is a celebration of his own character traits and achievements. He avoided written discussion of the closure by focusing on general thoughts about Birmingham and how, as a Londoner, he thought the city could be improved. These thoughts comprise most of the letter. Like his interviews, the letter is defensive and evasive in equal measure. In conversations recorded in the research journal for April 2016, he was more open. During one such conversation, he expressed a wry relief at being able to retire after leaving the Drum, stating “nobody would have me lead another organization anyway; I will go down in history as the man who sank The Drum.” (April 2016) Indeed, many blamed his leadership and communication styles, and fraught relationships with other key figures at the helm of TD.
6.2.1 Family Dysfunction: one-upmanship in senior management

As a member of the management team herself, Sarah acknowledged that she felt ACE’s final report to be correct in attributing the closure to ineffective management:

“I’ve read the report that the Arts Council put together on why The Drum was not sustainable or viable any longer and they’ve […] given some very tenuous examples, but […] it keeps coming back to leadership. Lack of quality leadership. The organisation did never have that. We had some pretty forceful and interesting charismatic leaders, or figureheads as I think is probably the better term for them […] some good, some not so good, but understanding the industry […] there was the arts sector for one, and then secondly, the coming together and working together of people, in that organization, I think it really, really struggled, it never had that.” (Sarah Interview, 2017)

Sarah pointed out that while there were leaders who were charismatic enough to be appointed and look the part, nobody had been appointed who knew the sector and the local communities well enough to lead an organization like The Drum. She went on to identify these problems as partially being gendered. According to her, “It was always the men that tended to not do anything but have all of the power.” Sarah felt that male figures at the top of the organization were fighting each other for power, whereas the women in jobs directly beneath them were focused on getting things done. In a conversation with Albert that took place a few months later (July 2016) he elaborated on the situation and corroborated Sarah’s judgement of the situation. He explained that from what he had seen, the organization was beset by constant bickering between the CEO and Samad. Albert explained that in his opinion, both men would rather have scored points against the other than do what was best for the organization. He felt that the selling out of the Drum’s internal programming to Drum Commercial (explored in Location), was driven by this feud. Rather than making decisions that would make good business sense for the organization, decisions were being based on one-upmanship and determination of one to not take the other’s advice.

The speeches made at the closing ceremony were testament to antipathy between Samad and the CEO, and many people took Samad’s side in the feud. Samad’s speech began with greetings to many former Drum leaders, but missed out the CEO, who had organized the ceremony. The speech itself was pointedly directed at the CEO when he said:
“I walked in the doors- for those of you who don’t know me I’ve worked here for seventeen years. I was probably the longest serving staff member aside from Delia […] I left, well I didn’t leave I had to resign, to be precise, from my place last year.” (Samad Speech, 2016)

As the speech continued, he alluded to an issue pointed out in ACE’s final report: The Drum’s loss of direction and lack of adherence to a defined set of values.

“[…]Y]ou’re supposed to retain your values. And when your values begin to change, you don’t value your staff. You don’t respect your staff. In fact a lot of colleagues are not here today because they’re at another party going on down the road. Because they don’t feel valued. And, you know, we can blame this on (whispers from the table make this part inaudible) why come to another demonstration in Birmingham? It’s not because the funders closed us down, we’ve closed it internally.” (Samad Speech, 2016)

Samad’s major gripe, expressed in this speech, was that he felt The Drum had lost its purpose. He blamed that on the leadership who had lost sight of the values of the organization and were therefore no longer respecting the staff. This again, was directed at the CEO, as the only manager above himself in rank; and the person with whom the buck stopped when it came to managing staff. At the beginning of his speech, he acknowledged with fondness the dignitaries in the room, including board chairmen past and present and all other members of the management team except the CEO, whose name he did not mention at all. Neither did he mention the CEO’s predecessor. These were two of the only men in the organization who had ever held a higher position than his own.

When asked to recall their least favourite memory from TD’s history, Albert and Delia both made reference to the same event, approximately two years prior to the closure. A promoter had hired TD through Drum Commercial, for a reggae concert. The promoter oversold tickets for the size of the venue. Albert recalled:

“So our capacity is 750, and there was probably over a thousand people upstairs. But not only that, there was probably another 400 people outside. So they’d gone outside and said “look, we’ve oversold, so if you haven’t got a ticket it’s pointless queueing outside because you’re not gonna get in”. Everybody outside put up their hand and had a ticket. So we had a couple of hundred irate people outside who’d got a ticket, who weren’t gonna get let in, and it was over capacity inside, and it was […] it was a hire, it wasn’t a drum… but it was chaotic…..” (Albert Interview, 2016)
For the audiences, it didn’t matter that this was a private hire, it was an event at TD, therefore it was considered to be a Drum event. One month after TD’s closure, Albert divulged that this had been a result of the rivalry between Samad and the CEO. One had advised the other against allowing this to go through as a private hire, and other had insisted, to spite the other. Delia recalled the same event, explaining that it was the result of a lack of communication, and that it meant TD was blamed for the actions of an untrustworthy promoter. The organisation lost money for a concert at which over 1000 tickets were sold:

They probably told us a couple of weeks before he was due to be here. Tickets had been booked, the venue had been booked, and people weren’t happy[…] I think [the CEO] took it to court to see if we could get our money back, and they just couldn’t find this person to get the money back […] Because you get these promoters that sell. So, they get the rights and then the sell it on to other people. So, we won the court case, but to get the money back off him, they couldn’t find him! So, the court bailiffs went there to his premises and stuff and [he was gone] Nothing there. So he took the money from The Drum and then…” (Delia Interview, 2017)

Delia identified this as a turning point in TD’s standing with ACE. The artist involved was a reggae artist, and according to Delia, “that made the Arts Council think ‘hold on a minute, they’re using our money to do this’. And the people who didn’t see reggae as art started saying ‘well why are they using the money to do that sort of thing?’”. (ibid.) When asked whether she felt the de-legitimization of reggae as art came from within ACE, Delia explained that if this were the case, it came from within TD, with people from the management team telling tales to the Chairman of the Board and to ACE. This was seen as a betrayal:

“Not just within the Arts Council, so people like [Amy] who have the ear, know people, so could talk to [the CP] and talk to… Arts Council People, those are the sorts of things that she would be saying. Because she was on the management team so she would know the ins and outs of everything.” (Delia Interview, 2017)

This occurred in 2014, not long before the closure, but one year before the decision to adopt interculturalism to try and rectify TD’s financial deficit. Cracks along these internal fault lines clearly undermined the organization’s functionality. However, the atmosphere of mistrust between the management, board and funders seemed to exacerbate each crack.

35 Albert had not wanted to tell me at the time because he had not wanted to jeopardise his job.
6.2.2 Family Dysfunction: The Chairperson and the CEO

The self-positioning of the Chairperson (CP) and CEO in the Stakeholders’ Meeting is of interest in the analysis of the roles of the Drum’s final stakeholders. It is certainly representative of the way that each had conducted themselves throughout the period of closure, and less self-consciously contrived than what they said in the public speeches and formal documents that they chose to release at the time. How much was this positioning about the way they were seen by the funders and the audience representatives, and how much was it about the way that they saw themselves?

In informal conversations during and after the period of ethnographic study, staff members and external community stakeholders pointed to the breakdown in relationship between the CEO and the board’s chairperson as the key moment at which the organization began to lose its strength of leadership. Indeed, the CEO himself pointed this out in the document that he released shortly after the closure and circulated widely: Sarah also felt that the CEO’s behaviour was a key issue in the organization’s closure. She blamed the CP for providing the funders with excuse and permission to pull their financial support, but the CEO for putting her in position in the first place. Sarah felt that competition between the men at the top was what had led the CEO to orchestrate things so that the final CP became chairperson. The first thing that she did was establish the idea of a male power monopoly at the top, which stood in the way of progress:

“Not with [the CEO]. I think [the CEO] is used to kind of manipulating people and […] [a former CP], Samad and [the CEO] […] those three, between them, they ruled the roost and you could not get anything done.”

The former CP stood down from their post as chairperson of the board, and Sarah described what happened next in heavily gendered terms:

“There was a woman – […] [Barbara] was being groomed, one of the board members, to take over the role of chair […] so it was a transition thing, but [Barbara] must have been her own woman with her own mind and decided - for whatever reason, this is obviously an abridged version, but um – must have been looking at the staffing structure, and I think that this was coinciding with a lot of staff unrest. Women particularly were struggling, one colleague at that time was off with stress ill (again, probably brought it on herself- I say bringing it on herself but certainly didn’t help herself,
but was very much being discriminated against by the then senior management team). Key members of the senior management team should I say the usual, won’t mention who. …”

First, Sarah established the fact that the leadership blocking progress was male, then went on to describe the female would-be chairperson as having been treated badly by them, and moreover as not having been alone among women in TD. She went on to describe the final CP’s rise to power as a result of this. The CEO had thought to use Barbara as a puppet, and when she took action that inconvenienced him, it was the person who would eventually become CP, who blew the whistle:

So anyway […] [Barbara] must have made the Chief Exec’s role part time or something, and [the final CP, called by name] was the one that went and told [the CEO]. […] and this [the CEO] set off, […] and because I think [they] came bearing gifts, he thought [they were] […] therefore going to be more malleable and engineered it so Upkar gave the job to [them]. And then [they] obviously turned round and showed her true colours, but that’s how it came about; the job should have gone to [Barbara] but [Barbara] got… yep. [the CEO] took care of that, but little did he know… yes beware of Greeks bearing gifts but little did he know that he should have stuck with [Barbara]. At least he would have had a job. (laughs)”

So, while the CEO was defensive of his position both in interview and letter, it is possible to see why. His suspicions about his own obstructive behaviour being blamed for the organization’s closure were not unfounded. However, while this may have been the perspective of several staff members, it is not the whole truth of what caused The Drum to close. It is necessary to consider why he was blamed, and to place the organization into the context of the broader cultural industries. In a conversation with the leader of a prominent national arts organisation shortly after she was appointed (July 2017), she explained that in her opinion, leading organization like TD is more difficult than leading a large national institution. Because of the multiplicity of communities that it has to represent, and because of having to work within a national funding structure not set up to take community arts organizations seriously, she said, leading such an organisation requires juggling many more relationships between culturally, geographically and socioeconomically disparate people than does leading the BFI. She urged me to look far more deeply into the root causes of the closure than those who were blaming the final leader. Indeed, it is necessary to examine what made leadership so difficult in the first place and impossible in the end. Further to Sarah’s frustration with the CEO expressed above, her interview actually goes on to show that she did not blame his leadership decisions for the final blow. While attributed the CP’s appointment to the CEO’s manipulative behaviour, she
also spoke of such internal problems as “little hiccups here and there”. The majority of her Teahouse Interview was spent talking about the input of the funders to the closure. In fact, the feeling was quite ubiquitous among those interviewed that problems with leadership needn’t have meant the end of the organization. Sarah summarized:

“But, I kind of always hold up my hand and go, you know, there’s other sectors and there are other arts organizations that have similar sorts of issues [without being shut down]. The Drum was not unique in that respect.”

Of course, this can be seen as a matter of allegiance: those blamed most during recorded interviews were most often those worked with the least closely, like members of the funding councils, and those blamed most during casual conversations in which frustration was expressed, were those worked with most closely, or whose decisions had inconvenienced the person most during their time at The Drum. Of course, in interviews, staff members had time to think through the history of the organization and explain what happened from their points of view. It is in these settings that the more complex stories unfolded.

As has been discussed, the workings of the board in the last few months were shrouded in secrecy. This left much room for speculation about how much responsibility the Chairperson had for the closure of the organization, and what their motives were. In conversation, the CEO frequently described her as ‘evil’, though this was nuanced somewhat by the explanations given in Sarah’s second interview. On one hand, the CP’s decisions were difficult for the staff to make sense of:

“There was something going on there and I would like to unravel that. I think that there are some deep-rooted psychological issues and I really think that because I can’t quite understand why anybody would be so destructive over something that was so precious, and just do what she did. I just don’t get it, when there were altern- well put it this way, as far as I could see there were no alternatives explored.” (Sarah Interview, 2017)

Indeed, when we would meet for the Teahouse Interviews, the question always asked just after ‘how is the archive?’ was ‘have you interviewed [the CP] yet?’. Aside from the CEO, the management team seemed more hurt by and curious about the CP’s decision, because of a lack of information about what instigated it. Sarah said:
“I think so. Very much her. I think because she’s, I would really like to get under the psychology of that woman I think that – I think there are issues. I, I know this sounds awful. Yes she wanted to get rid of [the CEO] and I don’t necessarily disagree with it. But when she saw the way things were going, I think most sane people would have taken a different tack. I think what I can’t quite get over is why she didn’t ever sort of change tack.” (ibid.)

However, when Sarah thinks through the CP’s actions, the person blamed is the forensic auditor who was brought in to examine TD’s accounts, for persuading the CP. The two had been friends prior to and during their involvement with TD. Like the funders, this person was an outsider because of their newness, and also because of the way that they dealt with the other board members. They were deemed by most as having no affiliation with the organization:

‘I don’t know if [the forensic auditor] had anything – I don’t know if it was personal, I met the [person] literally maybe twice, so I can’t sort of tell you much about [them]. What I did see I don’t like, I thought [they were] an awful, contemptible individual. [They were] really horrible. [They were] really, really horrible. I met [them] in a meeting, where we were discussing, it was finance and general purposes committee meeting. And if you’ve got somebody who is quite a large individual, um, talking finance, most people, no matter how clever you are, you may find finance quite challenging to understand, and I think when you’ve got somebody who is sort of quite big, quite intimidating, and I think [they] used [their] knowledge of figures and finance and how to manipulate them to intimidate other board members…” (ibid)

Interviews with the Management Team showed the problems being minimized to little hiccups, not huge misdemeanours that warranted the closure of the organization:

‘I think the Drum probably didn’t do itself any favours. I suppose it’s like the pool from which it was fishing it’s like we had some really good people go through that organization some really talented, skilled… just never en masse. I don’t know what… we couldn’t basically release that potential for long enough and strong enough and collectively enough. But there have been some fantastic people, but I think they’ve always been thwarted by just one or two little blocks, here and there.’ (ibid)

The ‘one or two little blocks’ that Sarah speaks of are described in the rest of her interview. They are things like: the fact that the building was in an area rife with gang violence and threat; the fact that because of its location its audiences could not pay for expensive tickets, which led to the organization haemorrhaging money; the sexism that she felt was at play among the
leadership, antipathy between management and the board, and other large problems that would have the potential to fatally cripple an organization.

It seems that the CP was frequently called upon by members of staff to police the decisions of senior management. In her interview, Ruth recalled a moment when, upon having trepidations about the underpayment of apprentices, she complained to the CP:

“We definitely, definitely exploit our apprentices. They are on the lowest- I don’t know what the lowest is but we pay them just over £3 an hour? [One apprentice], she worked [in the box office]. Because of BCC the minimum wage is the living wage? So it’s a good wage! Well it’s better than the minimum wage. It could be worse I should say. And [she] was doing exactly the same amount of work, as an apprentice. […] They’d get references, and I was so adamant about this, I was so disturbed by the new hires that I emailed [the CP] and I said I really, really strongly advise that we don’t hire any more apprentices, because we don’t treat them well. Well not that we don’t treat them well, but… they’re supposed to be trained.” (Ruth Interview, 2016)

‘Running’ to the CP and running to ACE, were seen as betrayals of trust by members of the management team interviewed; the equivalent of playing one parent off against the other.

TD was like a family. This worked to its advantage as a community organization because it advertised itself organically through word of mouth. However, the ties that bound its staff together were very entangled and thick. It meant that it malfunctioned like a family does. It led to a lack of professionalism. However, this need not have been something that broke the organization. Its culture was toxic, but the dysfunction could have been solved with a change of leadership. Why did TD need to be closed completely? As Location concluded, this was not as simple as the funders being racist or the management being inept. A section of Sarah’s interview makes very clear what the truth of the situation was: it was a combination of stressors from without and stressors from within that made management of an organisation like TD very difficult indeed. There would have needed to be absolute unity and an inhuman ability to work seamlessly together, for the combined stressors not to have caused the fault lines to crack. Here is the entire section of the interview:

“And that’s why I think now um…. What’s her name? [...] Interestingly now, there’s [an anonymised] Centre that’s in, wherever it is, she’s trying to get money to regenerate that and I think obviously, I think she got some. It’s, [she’s] a law unto herself, she’s just… bright, but psycho. You can’t work with her. And I think it’s really interesting you know you bring Black people together
and you’ll have so many examples and come cross so many of them it’s like […] I mean and you had this bunch - and at the [same] time you had the Arts Council going on about cost savings and spending reviews and god knows what.” (Sarah Interview, 2017)

At this point she began to reflect on how, like with any other segment of society, there are bound to be different, conflicting personality types and working styles within a group of people. Indeed, her opinion of this person, as ‘psycho’ and impossible to work with, demonstrates that these reflections originate in experience. She suggests that the pressure for a natural and harmonious unity that essentialism, even strategic essentialism, places on people, may not be realistic given this. Because the ‘Black Community’ of arts and community organisers is so small and specific in the UK, they are expected, by the authorities and each other, to work together without the luxury of picking and choosing who to work with.36

‘So, you know, you’re not only fighting external, mainstream, issues that a black organization has to struggle with and to deal with, there’s the internal struggles as well. And I mean, a fantastic example of that - you’ll never see anything else better articulated – was this’ (Ibid.)

She was really speaking of a kind of enforced unity. What TD had been, at first, was a group of people who had been able to work together, and used political Blackness as a strategic way to unite. As time went on and the staff changed, an essentialist identity, whether strategically clung to internally or overdetermined from without by policy makers, became a noose for people who could not work together but were forced to on the grounds of Race. However, even this explanation is not quite accurate, because as Sarah reflected, there may have been external factors determining their inability to unite and work together. She provided another example by way of explanation:

“And there was a consortium of Black led cultural organizations in Birmingham. So you had The Drum and you had [a person] from New Century Arts as well, you had [the] head of Kajans, there would have been somebody from Earth Studios […] and who else have I forgotten? There were probably about […] two or three others. But again, The Drum was the biggest and the most established. Anyway [there was] something like 700k - so not an insignificant amount of money - available for them to come up with some sort of project. They would work together as a consortium and save some costs. 700k to invest in the project. Never happened.” (Sarah, Interview 2017)

36 In one conversation, the CEO agreed with this, claiming that the only reason he became CEO was because he was the only person willing to relocate to Birmingham for such little money.
When asked why the project never came to fruition, her answer was:

“Arguing. [The anonymised person from the first example] starts running around behind their backs, going direct to the Arts Council, saying ‘give me the money give me the money’. Just arguing, let’s do this project. So they agree on this project [and then] she runs off again saying ‘no no no give me the money give me the money’, [The CEO] and [the person from New Century Arts] must have had a falling out about what have you… fighting. Fighting – the money never got spent. Never. To this day it’s not been spent. And there were just too many examples of that. So that was another reason why things just didn’t get anywhere, you’re fighting externally but you’re also fighting internally as well.”

The tone of Sarah’s voice imitated a whining child as she mimicked the person who went ‘running to the Arts Council’ and she rolled her eyes at the perceived childishness of it. In his interview, the CEO blamed this attitude on the people themselves, saying that it is what those in power want, suggesting that the desire to cause division is the very reason for causing the scarcity in the first place. The funders are therefore painted as amoral manipulators. Here, he speaks about the governing institutions, like the media, funding bodies and other powerful bodies:

“They don’t want to have clear demarcation, they want to have Black folks saying stuff about Black folks, because they’re tired of having White folks saying things about Black folks, so if they can have Black folks saying things about Black folks, they love it. So, if you have a crabs in a barrel mentality they love it. Like at The Drum. It’s like ‘look! We did it to ourselves!’ And what can you do? It’s a very sad state of affairs that things happen like that, but it is what it is.” (CEO Interview, 2016)

This theory is something that was ultimately agreed on by every staff member apart from Ruth. When the failure is framed this way, the Chairman of the Board comes across as a greedy, but ultimately manipulated member of TD’s community:

‘Thinking, as naively as [the CP] must have thought, not understanding the complexities of how the manipulations of the Arts Council and how these funders work, that it was just basically going to be, you know, “close it down and we’ll give you the £500,000 or the 4.whatever million and you can go off and build your health centre somewhere else wherever you like”. I really seriously thought that’s what [the CP] thought was going to happen.” (Sarah, Interview 2017)
There were rumours in the office that the CP was planning to open a health and wellbeing centre with a share of the money that the funders had set aside for Black arts production. This money was the subject of discussion at the Stakeholders Meeting. The rumour was that the CP hoped to close TD, yet to be ascribed the funding anyway. The CP did not ask about this in the meeting, and no such ascription of funds has since been made. However it is interesting that this was assumed to be the case. It shows a lack of trust in the CP, but ultimately demonstrates a lack of trust of the funders.

6.3 Relationships with Communities.

The divisions did not stop at the nucleus of TD’s staff. It spread to the extended family of community stakeholders. When ‘community’ was referred to by staff, it meant a variety of things. In interviews, I often asked them to clarify which community they were referring to, when they used the word. Four important points about these communities became clear from their answers:

1. That their perception of what TD’s community was, was more complex than that used by the funders in the stakeholders meeting,
2. That the creation and maintenance of these communities was what they felt TD existed for, as *Purpose* has explored,
3. That the staff felt that TD had failed each of the communities to which it was connected, and that they had failed it, in turn.
4. That they felt TD could not have helped this, it occurred because of underfunding.

6.3.1 Community Malfunction: Audiences

TD’s relationships with the local community of Newtown and national ‘BAME’ communities, were discussed in *Location* and *Purpose*. There is an additional local community relationship to be explored here: That with other community arts centres and with local schools. One year after the steering group meeting and during data analysis; interviews with staff, board members and other stakeholders revealed two main generational distinctions. One existed in the minds of the management team and filtered through into their programming strategies, and another emerged from interviews with younger members of staff. Namely, the management team’s interviews show a perception that once people had left their teens and were no longer under the remit of the organization’s youth provision, they did not need the Drum’s building or the
support of its team to build their careers in the arts because they were self-motivated, were connected in their industries and would work to make things happen for themselves independently. Indeed, this rings true with what I observed in the steering group meeting that took place in April 2016, during which I noted that the two attendees who were in their 20s felt that there was little need for a designated building for Black-arts. They felt that arts collectives, companies and groups could just as well apply for funding independently and hire space in which to exhibit or perform. However, when junior staff members were interviewed, they invariably displayed frustration with programming that ignored the need for connection with other organizations such as the Afro Caribbean Millennium Centre, which they saw as obvious. In interviews, they frequently presented suggestions on how to rectify this. They saw TD as problematically disconnected from other organizations and institutions that, they felt, would have an affinity with it, should relationships between them be developed. This, they felt, would enable to access the communities who were drawn to those organizations. They also felt that their suggestions went unheard in meetings with senior management. Ruth is one example. In her interview, she described her role of fielding telephone enquiries into “why [TD didn’t] offer any kind of physical resources for Black history, Black art history…” She explained that they would also have enquiries from schoolteachers about whether they offered anti-racism workshops for children:

“…do we offer workshops for kids, to basically tell kids who are exhibiting racist attitudes why that’s wrong, when the schools can’t deal with it. Which I think we should. Well I think in a dream world we could.” (Ruth Interview, 2016)

She acknowledged that this would have been expanding the remit of TD away from the arts somewhat, but considered that it shouldn’t have been a problem, given its decolonial purpose. She acknowledged that it would have required an expansion of what the organisation was considered to be, but felt that this would have been helpful for keeping the organisation afloat. Considering that its success was built on the development and support of an audience community, she felt that this would simply be building on its existing remit.

“I think that is a bit further removed from being like a hub for information on Black arts. I think in an ideal world, great […] but that requires a whole different outlook on what the organization is, I think. And we’d have to hire someone who knew what they were talking about, for that. And we would have to have like an outreach programme with schools, which we didn’t with YGB.” (ibid.)
Similarly, she offered an idea about possible connection with the Afro Caribbean Millennium Centre. Political Blackness is only one reason why the term “Black” was contested at the Drum. By 2015 the Caribbean, and more specifically Jamaica, was most focused on in its programming. Ruth pointed out that Pan African Blackness as a pan-diasporic identity was also ignored:

“So I go down city road every day, which has the African millennium centre in it, is sort of very, very heavily dominated by African communities, and you wouldn’t see any posters about anything at The Drum. Like loads of stuff that you would think “actually we complement this perfectly”, but just no attempt to market down there or have any kind of relationship with anyone down there.” (Ruth Interview, 2016)

This disconnection of cultural centres was noted by Ruth as being a problem. The Millennium Centre is actually for Afro-Caribbean communities, and thereby even more compatible with TD, yet still ignored. In his interview in June 2016, Albert recalled that in 2000, when he first arrived at the Drum, the organization was providing IT skills training to people from Newtown. It could have used the digital to bridge gaps created by its physical location and its ambiguous identity, and reach out to the Afro-Caribbean Millennium Centre, for example, mentioned by Ruth. Albert spoke of living just across the road, having seen the building being constructed but not having known what was inside until he turned up for his interview. He became involved with The Drum precisely because they had seen a need in the local community to become more technologically adept. They were running IT classes free of charge, and he signed up to work as a technical support officer. Education was the means by which the organization connected with its community, and in doing so through internet classes it encouraged a further layer of connection, through which they would be able to spread word of the organization in their networks further afield. This focus on providing for the needs of local communities to connect with them and make the organization popular, seems to have petered out in later years, and it is this that the digital native generation took issue with, in the interview data,

It was very much like, they come to us. We let them experiment with different artforms and then they go. It’s not- we never really went out to schools. We didn’t have an outreach, which I think we should, or if I was designing it that would be the first, or one of the first things I think we would have. And so yeah, so somewhere with just computers, and information, and the history of The Drum and Black arts in Birmingham […] I dunno maybe not but…” (Ruth Interview, 2016)

37 http://acmccentre.com/index.html
There is a lot of uncertainty but a wealth of ideas. Elsewhere in the interview Ruth reveals the source of the uncertainty; these ideas were either immediately dismissed by management or accepted and then dropped at a later date. Despite the ideas not having been acted upon there are two layers to what Albert has said. The first layer of course is to do with computers, but beneath that, there is a layer of concern about the Drum’s purpose, who it should be working with, and who needs it. Upon reading several interviews like this, it becomes clear that this is about a connectivity between organizations, between interest groups and between individuals, which seems intuitive to the younger staff members, but was not followed up on by management.

6.3.2 Community Malfunction: Artists

Sarah’s and Delia’s interviews, analyzed throughout the Purpose and Location chapters, reveal that management felt these internal and external fault lines were due to long-term underfunding of TD by BCC and ACE. For example, at the beginning of this chapter Sarah referred to the 3.9 million pounds, offered by the funders to what they blankly labelled ‘The Black Community’ in Birmingham upon closure of The Drum, for individual artists to bid for to fund disparate projects. Not only did it fragment any semblance of community by pitting artists against each other, it was also seen by members of Drum staff, as a final betrayal of the community’s arts organisation, because this was the same sum of money that would have been necessary to keep the building open for another three years. It was very close to the amount of money that had been bid for as part of the capital funding campaign, Raising the Roof, the previous year. The meeting is also relevant here because of the question, asked by the CEO, about what the funders’ reasons were for denying available capital to NCP. Their evasion of the question led to the formation of several theories in the aftermath of the meeting. These theories, important because they give a good insight into the relationship between the management team and the funders, were revealed in the subsequent set of interviews. One prominent theory was that ACE were seeking to divide and conquer the community by pitting artists against each other; the very theory supported by the analysis of their final report. Returning to Sarah’s second interview, the following summarises the theory perfectly. She sees the artists as short sighted, greedy, and ultimately duped by the funders into betraying their own long-term best interests. However, she attributes this to the economic starvation, mentioned earlier; which means that they attribute it to their having backed into a corner by the funders. (Sarah Interview, 2017)
“When the money has gone, which it will in 5 years (which I think it will take 5 years, to use the money) then I think people will start asking questions. Not before. So you’ve got to wait. Because they’re not ready to hear.”

The final sentence is a reference to a Jamaican saying, ‘He who can’t hear, must feel’. It has been commonly used for generations as a warning to the children of the consequences of persistent disobedience of parental orders. Here, the participant reveals a sense of responsibility for the artists / community members that is akin to that of a parent for a child. This ties again to the idea, mentioned again and again in the interview data with, of The Drum as family. The idea is important because of the dominant rhetoric surrounding the family – most commonly absorbed by individuals and released in conversations like this - which is that it exists as the nucleus from which community grows. This statement gives an indication of how widely that family is imagined as extending; The Drum family extended to the intersecting wider communities of people that it served. Because of this family feeling, even vitriol against the board for its betrayal of the organisation takes a secondary position behind this theory in which the funders are the true offenders.

6.4 Relationships with funders

“I’m sitting here thinking, is there any Black-arts organisation that’s been supported by Birmingham City Council and the Arts Council, that has continued to grow and develop and got to a similar size like the Drum and they continue funding? They all seem to fall by the wayside. The Drum was in existence for 20 years, and you’d have thought “oh its safe now, it’s going to go on from strength to strength” but it didn’t. No.” (Delia Interview, 2017)

The theme throughout this thesis is clear - a fraught relationship with the funders undermined the organization’s relationship with the community of communities that it had worked to build, nurture and sustain. The section of Delia’s second interview cited above, is typical of the mistrust of the funders by TD’s staff at all levels. Staff suspected the funders of having an agenda to close TD down.

Previous chapters have also shown that the funders displayed a lack of understanding of what was needed by the communities, and of TD’s function. This was because the decolonial agenda didn’t fit the focus on equality through integration promoted within the Creative Case for
Diversity, and Great Arts and Culture for Everyone. The reduction of funding over the years can be seen as the root of the problems with TD’s programming (as examined in Location), and it exacerbated internal relationship problems, as we have seen. This is because of a lack of understanding of how to support an organisation like TD.

6.4.1 Relationship with Birmingham City Council (BCC)
At the Stakeholders meeting, the creation of The Crowd by the BCC representatives revealed a lot about the way that the ‘community’ that they repeatedly created through language was imagined by them, and how this served their interests as local government. It was very different to the layout of ACE’s steering group meeting that took place at The Drum the following month, which was meant to be a meeting of peers and so took place in the round. This section, therefore, needs to analyse the language used by BCC to refer to the Drum and its audiences, especially in relation to the very notion of community arts, and to the imposition of identity from without.

The meeting revealed a lot about BCC’s intentions for the organization. Community arts was seen uncritically, community was happily ascribed from without and assumed to exist, again uncritically. However, they were tight-lipped throughout about their vision for the locale of Newtown, and why TD no longer fit with their plans. The City Council had changed its vision for Newtown. The vision that the Drum had been a part of had failed; there was no cultural regeneration for the area in the 1990s, as Location explored. There were several speculations from the Drum’s team as to why this may have been the case. Some said that because the building’s status as a Black arts centre was protected by EU law, BCC were waiting for Brexit to go through, so that they could destroy the building and sell the land to developers. This would gentrify the area and make the local authority some money in one fell swoop. Others said that because the original City Challenge funding had been granted in 1992 for a 5-year project, BCC had never intended for the Drum to do so well, and had never intended to fund it for 20 years. These people said that BCC needed The Drum off their hands and were looking for reasons to offload it. All speculators said that this need to offload The Drum came from changes to BCC’s financial circumstances because of an equal pay lawsuit that they were in the midst of, which saw them sued for millions by their female employees. Delia explained this from her perspective in her second interview:
“Well; there was a partnership with them, so they’d both invest, but Birmingham City Council invested less than Arts Council. And they steadily got less as we went along [because of government funding cuts to the arts] and also because Birmingham City Council had an equal pay bill that they had to pay out because they were paying the women workers less than the men, so they’d been taken to court, the European court, and they’d won [the women]. So there was a huge bill of back pay that needed to be paid. […] This was during the time when we were looking for the additional money from them…” (Delia Interview, 2017)

She explained that it was a nuanced case, with women more often being employed to do less well-paying jobs than men, rather than having simply been payed less for the same jobs, but that whatever the particulars were, the City Council had it to pay on top of their usual expenses and were looking to offload as many of those as possible:

“On top of the fact that we were asking for this money and […] the leader for the council was saying they’d find the money. Whether the money was there, I doubt it very much because when it came round to getting the paperwork completed to be able to go to one of the council meetings to say yes we can have the money, the paperwork always needed something else it always needed… so it never; it never got through. There were always excuses as to why we can’t have some of the money.” (Ibid.)

In all interviews with senior management it was clear; there was minimal trust between this member of the management team and the BCC.

“So, Arts Council had given us some money to get through to architecture stage… D, I think it was? And then once, once you get to that stage, you then submit. Then there was some more work that needed to be done, and [the CEO] tried to get some money from Birmingham city council to cover that. So, in principle they’d agreed that, yes, they’d give us £90,000 and he was trying to get some of that 90,000. But we never. We never got it.” (Ibid.)

This followed 4 or 5 years of the application process for the capital funding campaign, Raising the Roof. The idea frequently suggested by Ruth, was that Birmingham city council liked TD as an idea and supported it in theory, but would not try to save it when ACE pulled their funding because of their other financial commitments. However, this account of Raising the Roof, suggests that to Delia it seemed to be the other way around – BCC were leading the way, pulling their funding first, which showed lack of faith and alerted ACE to something being
wrong. This is what Sarah referred to when she said “Raising the Roof was the final nail in the coffin, I think”.

So, the next question is: why The Drum? Why did the BCC choose to pull their support from The Drum and not the city’s other arts organizations? Answers to this can be found in the location, the suggestion that political Blackness is an outmoded concept, and the fact that TD was not bringing in revenue. However, problems with all of these can be attributed to the nature of BCC and ACE’s support over the years. This left the staff despondent, as was evident in Jane’s interview:

‘I mean the programme is not what it used to be, d’you know what I mean? And I don’t know – funding, whatever, marketing, you know? We just don’t get the numbers anymore.’ (Jane Interview, 2016)

6.4.2 Relationship with Arts Council England (ACE)

“So I think what happened is that [the CP] – and [they] did, I kind of got it from other people, that [they] went bleating to the Arts Council going “oh we don’t want him to do that. We want him to do this but he won’t listen, I’m having to manage him”, it must have been music to the Arts Council’s ears because, you know they’re desperate to save money, in this whole climate where everybody’s trying to save money, and they’ve been trying to do this for years, they got the in that they were looking for. They got it, to close it.’ (Sarah Interview, 2017)

It seems that ACE led on the decision to close TD, and that it was a series of decisions about funding, primarily driven by them, which led the organisation to its final predicament. Great Arts and Culture for Everyone (2010) paved the way for a focus on diversity. The Creative Case for Diversity was launched in 2011, a year after Great Art for Everyone. We have seen that TD’s vision didn’t fit either of these strategic frameworks, neither was it making any money to support itself. Delia pointed out the conundrum of being expected to match fund an organization like TD with donations from trusts and foundations.

“they wanted us to go out and find funding. And so the Arts Council were running these courses. It wasn’t just aimed at the Drum but at other arts organisations to attend, to see how you can attract money from trusts and foundations, and philanthropic giving. Now where’s Black arts org- a small Black arts organisation going to…” (Delia Interview, 2017)
She felt that location had a huge part to play in this, Aston, and particularly Newtown being a part of the city not generally invested in, as the previous chapter has shown:

“In Aston, going to attract that sort of giving? Trusts and foundations, because funding out there has been reduced so much, the pull on their funding is extremely high. So, as a small Black arts organisation, you don’t stand much of a chance.”

This was the reason for their having planned the *Raising the Roof* campaign; to attract other private grants as a result. However:

“Some of them said they were interested in our capital project, [but] they very much wanted to see the capital project happen first before they would then give the money. So, you were in this never-ending circle. That must have been what [the CEO] was talking about, because to get capital money, you had to do your own funding. So, we needed to raise something like £500,000, and everybody you’re approaching is either saying “no, we don’t do that sort of thing” or “come back to us when you’ve got the money from the Arts Council”. And Arts Council is saying “we can’t give you the money unless you’ve got some money from the trusts.” (Delia Interview, 2017)

Sarah, who pointed out the programming takeover by Drum Commercial in *Location*, blamed funding cuts over the years on TD’s bad programming.

“The work coming out – and ultimately for the Arts Council I think, and to be honest if I was sitting in the Arts Council and I looked at the programme coming out of there I’d have been like “where’s my value for money, what’s the difference it’s making?” and so I think they struggled with that for a long time.” (Sarah Interview, 2017)

However, in the midst of this self-blame, she admitted that TD simply proved to be ACE’s weakest link – and that it didn’t fit within their diversity agenda:

“I think they’ve been trying to do it from when we went into recovery (in 2004), because they never really wanted to fund the Drum. When the project came about in the 90s I think they felt that it would probably last five years. I don’t think that there was any expectation that that would have been a long-term project […] And I think that […] in a world and a climate where they’re desperately needing money, and the Drum is troubled, it had always been troubled, I think sentimentally and emotionally they wanted it to work, but financially and practically, when it came down to pounds shillings and pence, which is the weakest one in the block? And whilst we were all

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38 This referred to having been placed into ‘special measures’ by ACE. This has happened to several organizations and is not rare: [https://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/music/opera/11408125/English-National-Opera-placed-in-special-measures.html](https://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/music/opera/11408125/English-National-Opera-placed-in-special-measures.html)
waving the culturally diverse banner we were safe for a while, but only a little while. But when it all became about *Arts for Everyone*, that kind of got [us].”

The staff suspected the funders of having an agenda to close TD down. The funders displayed a complete lack of understanding of what was needed by the communities, and of TD’s function. This was because the decolonial agenda didn’t fit the creative case, or great arts for everyone. Funders had a different agenda, they did keep withholding money. That was the root of all the problems with programming, and it exacerbated the relationship problems.

6.5 Conclusions

*Relationships* has been about the pacifying and dividing effects of scarcity. It focused the most explicitly on the question of structure vs agency, however it less explicitly followed on from *Location* in exploring the ways in which strategic essentialism fragments when there is a) an assumption of sameness imposed from without, and b) a scarcity of resources. *Location* showed, through its analysis of Asif’s interview, how this contributed to the breakdown of politically Black solidarity between Black and South Asian people, while *Relationships* has shown how this also caused fragmentation and competition between people of African descent.

6.5.1. Relationships: Structure vs. agency.

This chapter has focused more closely than previous chapters on the question of structure vs. agency, building on data analysis from *Purpose* and *Location*. Following its own analysis of interviews with the Management Team, the CEO’s leaving letter and the Stakeholders’ Meeting, *Relationships* concludes that while both the agency of individual actors at TD and the structures of funding & support both had parts to play in the organisation’s closure, the agency of specific actors was overdetermined, limited and directed largely by the structures within which they worked. The interview data explored in Section 6.2, *One Big Dysfunctional Family*, showed a clear progression of thought when blame for the closure was being cast in interviews. Initially there was blame for the CEO. Then with further thought there followed blame for the Chairperson, and finally the blame rested with the funders. Opinions expressed in interview were not taken as objective fact, however they do reveal to a deep mistrust of ACE and the BCC by TD’s management – and a deep understanding of those institutions as white-coded. In the eyes of the Management Team, the Chairperson’s main misdemeanour was that they sided with the funders over the organization in closing TD, thus crossing a tacitly
acknowledged racial line and making an already unequal power dynamic impossible to work around any longer. The section pointed out that in interviews, cracks along internal fault lines had undermined the organization’s functionality. However, it also concluded that the atmosphere of mistrust between the management, the board and the funders seemed to exacerbate each crack, making them fatal for the organisation.

The layout of the stakeholders meeting then, as visual representation of the relationship of the funders to the organization, and the role of Race in that relationship. It was more than a mere metaphor for the flattening effects of structure, which defines and uses agency to its own advantage. It was a case study for how in institutional structures (and therefore in policy and policy-speak like that implemented at the Stakeholders’ Meeting), self-ascribed identities become overdetermined to the detriment of real community – a stark and visual example of how crabs are created in the proverbial barrel. When looking at the Stakeholders’ meeting layout, the actions and words of the funding bodies’ representatives showed the unconscious and officially sanctioned way of seeing the group to which they spoke as monolithic, and the subduing blanket that placed over individuality and self-ascribed statuses. When it is considered that those representatives were the people upholding institutional structures by creating and implementing the policies that constitute them, we can see how, while structures restrict the actions of individuals at organizations like TD, those structures are constituted of individuals, and their own backgrounds of study, standpoints and biases. The next chapter will fully explore the implications of this.

The question: ‘was it the management or was it the funders that caused TD to close?’ therefore, is akin to asking whether the chicken preceded the egg. The structures are created by agents like the representatives in the room that day. However, Relationships has explored the complexities that led to the closure, slowly, over a number of years. It shows that seemingly neutral funding bodies can never be entirely objective. When decisions are made about who to fund, and what criteria they must meet to attain funding, standards are set. Whose standards these are, determine who finds it easier to achieve them and who finds it more difficult. An understanding of the nuances of multiculture and the act of building community, would have helped the funders in this case. Sarah said:
“I don’t care what the Arts Council say about their cultural diversity agenda now, it’s so broad it means nothing, it’s meaningless. It’s meaningless so now arts is for everyone, it’s for everyone. And what were we doing as an organization? We weren’t doing anything for the man down the street let alone everyone. So, I think it became a lot easier for them to [shut us down]” (Sarah Interview, 2017)

Juggling TD’s different functions would always have been a difficult job. As Delia pointed out, anyone leading the organization would have needed to be equally adept at creating a thriving business against the odds in an unlikely part of town, steering the production of a first-class arts programme covering the performing and visual arts, and thinking like a community activist. In order to support the organization effectively, BCC and particularly ACE would have had to adopt separate criteria for funding applications, to take into account that this was a unique organisation, given that all similar centres had already met their end.

Delia put it perfectly. Chaotic, ineffective management and a crabs-in-a-barrel mentality that pervaded TD’s community at large, didn’t help matters. However, scarce funding helped to create the latter, and a more tailored, targeted approach to community arts centres like TD would have been needed, to have avoided the former proving fatal for the organization:

“I thought it would have worked better if you’d applied and then you’d have somebody to come and talk to you about your needs, what you wanted and how they could work with you to help you get to where you needed to get to. Maybe the money wasn’t enough for that, but just this generic thing, really didn’t work. They had people come over from America talking about how they – because they don’t have any sort of funding support; they have to get all theirs from philanthropic giving, and trusts and foundations. But you couldn’t say to them “Show me an organisation like The Drum. How did they do that and how did they get on? Did they achieve what they wanted to?” (Delia Interview, 2017)

6.5.2. Relationships: A Varying definition of Blackness

Relationships has primarily addressed the research question pertaining to structure and agency. However, it has also considered moments at which a notion of Blackness, through the idea of a monolithic black community, was constructed at TD by officials from organizations that governed from the standpoint of hegemonic whiteness, who were overdetermining group identity from without. The chapter pointed out the difference between strategic essentialism when chosen by racialized people for reasons that benefit them (as was defined in Purpose with
the description of TD’s original adoption of a politically Black ethos), and essentialism when applied to racialized people as part of the flattening, dehumanizing effect of White Supremacy. What structures of Whiteness do in the administration of everyday life, is partly what was done in that Stakeholders’ Meeting: they superimpose a specific hierarchy. Layers of nuance and pre-existing existing hierarchies between people were flattened by this layout – subsumed by this funder / funded relationship and its White / Non-White visual distinction. This first creates apathy via a sense of powerlessness at the overdetermination and removal of individual agency. Then, it creates division, and tacitly, because the assumption of absolute sameness creates leads to a crabs in a barrel mentality – a perceived need to assert individuality to be distinguished as an individual in the face of an invisibility that has been imposed from above. This played out, small scale, in the stakeholders meeting, but it also played out in Asif’s interview from Purpose when he distinguished himself from Blackness and its connotation, abandoning political blackness in that moment to distinguish himself as more worthy. It recalls the coloniality / modernity / capitalism triumvirate from earlier in this thesis – encouraging individualism rather than collectivism created the divisions that leave a group open to being divided by the promise of a reprieve from scarcity, which breaks down solidarity. Moreover, The choice to store the archive at the local library addressed not only the varying definition of Blackness, but the varying importance of Race as point of strategic essentialism at different moments in time – a reminder that strategic essentialism is a choice, and that at the point of TD’s closure people chose varying identities rather than unifying around one. This individualism made division of people easy.

Relationships leads us to understand that for resistance through solidarity to be effective, people need to remain true to their collective strategy even when it seemingly goes against their immediate self-interest. This is a difficult takeaway that, it is hoped, will be a legacy of TD as a result of this thesis. It will be an insightful reminder of how to use strategic essentialism effectively for the sake of disrupting Racial Capitalism and resisting racism, and what happens when people fail to do so in the face the existing governing structures in the UK. This would be a truly decolonized strategic essentialism. The following chapter, Legacy, explores this in greater depth.
7. Legacy (Conclusions)

7.1 Introduction: Research Questions and Findings

‘Critique doesn’t have to be the premise of a deduction which concludes this then is what needs to be done. It should be an instrument for those who fight, those who resist and refuse what is . . . It is a challenge to what is.’ (Foucault [Berehal et al] 1991)

This thesis is one legacy of TD, and the practical lessons learned from the closure will hopefully be further legacies. I begin the concluding chapter of the thesis with Foucault not because, as the student in Welcome’s Section 1.4.4’s critique of the Western cultural archive and its cultural canon of knowledge, ‘you can’t argue with Foucault’. Rather, I use this section of Foucault’s work because in the spirit of critique and intellectual activism (Hill-Collins, 2005), I wish for this thesis to serve as an ‘instrument for those who fight’; who ‘resist and refuse what is’. To that end, rather than offering policy or arts administration suggestions, I will conclude with the series of questions raised in the thesis’ various chapters. It is my hope that insights produced as a result of this empirical analysis of TD’s closure may serve as instigators of, or guides toward developing effective ways for Black-led arts organisations to navigate the cultural policy landscape in the UK. I also hope that some iteration of it will one day be used by cultural policy makers who wish to productively critique their own practice.

This final chapter will conclude the thesis’ discussion of its main themes, considering:

1. The importance of unity through strategic essentialism for both survival and resistance under racial capitalism

2. How agency far can effectively be utilized to resist structural pressures and predeterminations
3. And how, at the end of the Creative Case for diversity, another model can be sought.

It does so by addressing the thesis’ research questions one last time. The *Welcome* chapter explained that the question ‘Why did The Drum close?’ was a catalyst, which precipitated deeper enquiry. The more pertinent questions posed by the thesis, which bubbled under the surface each time I asked myself, the participants, or the page the question ‘Why did The Drum close?’ became the research questions for the thesis:

1. **Structure vs. agency:** How far was TD’s closure caused by issues to do with structure, and how far to do with agency? Moreover, how did structure influence agency in the running of TD?

2. **Decolonization work vs. diversity policy:** Can true decolonization work be done by an organisation that is funded by national governing institutions, or does cultural policy work to prevent decolonisation?

3. **Definitions of Blackness in the UK:** How has strategic essentialism changed over the years, how did that affect TD, and what is the place of blackness (political, pan-African or otherwise) in surviving / resisting today’s racisms through the arts?

This final chapter of *Learning from The Drum* will be structured by these research questions, pulling out themes and insights produced by the asking of them in this thesis’ analysis.

I began this research seeking to understand ‘the truth’ about what led TD close. What I discovered was a complex web of interdependent factors that revealed more than a single truth – they revealed how incompatible the diversity agendas written into cultural policy are with effecting real and lasting equity in, or through, the arts. The also revealed the reasons why. The thesis has presented true, practical decolonization both as a possible antidote to diversity, and as something that is under threat by diversity policies when they are used to inform funding strategy. That having been said, the thesis did not aim to be a simple critique of ACE and its diversity policies or strategic frameworks. It focused on the effects that these have had on the individual administrators of a Black-led arts organization, centring them, and by proxy also centring the communities that they served. This has therefore been a thesis about how systemic racism works in and through cultural policy – its subtle machinations that rely on ignorance.
and conflicting agendas. It is about how it works despite the good intentions of those who implement and work with it. To learn from The Drum is to develop an expanded idea of what racism is. It is beyond insipid institutional racism. It is beyond microaggressions and unconscious bias; beyond overt, covert and other forms commonly acknowledged. It is about racism as the governing, organising system upon which Western capitalism is built, and by which it is sustained – about the inseparability of coloniality and modernity, as was explored in Position. Moreover, it is about the particular place of Blackness within that system of power and societal organization. This is why, although its analysis was of an arts organization that had been set up to create and strengthen a BAME coalition in Birmingham and across the UK, it has not only decentred whiteness and the policies that hegemonic whiteness produces, it has aimed to centre the experiences of people of African descent, addressing not just racism in general, but also anti-blackness in particular.

7.1.1 Decolonization work vs Diversity Policy: A thesis overview

A decolonial framework was chosen for its scope. Rather than being critique only, a decolonial approach allows for a view of Western modernity as incomplete because it was coupled with coloniality to achieve its goals of liberal democracy, and increased equity. Unlike a postcolonial approach, it allows for an understanding of colonialism as not over, and focuses on action. It has allowed me to learning from, and include practically in the analytical framework of this thesis the writings of, scholars connected to anticolonial movements, like Marcus Garvey, Frantz Fanon and Walter Rodney. Decolonialization uncouples coloniality from modernity and aims to complete the process. At the moment, the process is incomplete, and this thesis works toward its completion by highlighting the processes by which White supremacy keeps much of Global society intellectually culturally and economically stuck in the colonial moment, long after political decolonization has happened, through the racialized systems of inequality that it built and sustains.

Process described how decolonization informed this thesis’ methodology. Position rooted its foundations in decolonial theory, then Purpose went on to describe how it was also the original methodology of TD, as the programme analyses in Welcome’s Section 1.4.1, The Programme, had already shown. As the opening segment of Process illustrated through the work of Cherrie Moraga, decolonization at any level is difficult and uncomfortable work. It is work meant to scorch, melt and change minds so that they can bend toward each other. Diversity, the process
of shoving often incongruent elements together, is not enough to create what institutions that implement diversity policy claim to want — a melting pot, cohesion, integration. *Welcome* and *Purpose* explored difference as a potential strength, not something to be melted away. What is melted away in the welding / decolonization process is not difference, it is distance. *Location* discussed how this can be physical distance – how decolonization’s breakdown of hierarchy can lead to the disruption of white supremacy. Its analysis of Sarah’s interview, in which she described the wariness of white and middle class theatre-goers in visiting TD, showed that this can also be psychological distance. Those chapters also showed how the interdependence that enables this can be achieved, how power imbalances can make it impossible, how racial hierarchy etches power imbalances into the fabric of everyday life, and how resisting them involves relinquishing the (even small, even purely psychological, even momentary) experience of power or privilege over someone else. The way that difference is instrumentalized in diversity policy, as explored in *Position’s* Section 3.4, *Position in Policy*, is not the same as the interdependence described here. That chapter has identified that this is because diversity policy reinforces racialized power imbalances by normalising and tacitly centring whiteness, rather than collapsing the power imbalance to encourage the precondition for decolonial interaction (and thereby, action), which is interdependence between people on equal terms.

The thesis has also shown that in carefully created and fostered places of sanctuary like TD aimed to be (See *Welcome*, Section 1.4.6), trust and vulnerability can be fostered over time, across lines of difference, through expressions of common experience that can melt barriers to mutual understanding. It is those moments that create solidarity, because they inspire people to choose it. The thesis understands solidarity as the bedrock of decolonization, unity as the bedrock of solidarity, strategic essentialism across inevitable lines of difference as useful for creating unity, and the constant choice of unity as an imperative of strategic essentialism.

7.1.2. Structure vs. Agency: A thesis overview

Throughout the thesis, the question of how far TD’s closure can be attributed to the actions and agency of individuals, and how far to the structure within which it existed, has arisen repeatedly. A detailed empirical study of TD has necessitated the “combine[d] analysis of micro and macro factors, structure and agency, and change and continuity”. (Saha & Hesmondhalgh, 2013: 179)
The thesis’ analysis has sought to discover whether TD’s closure can be attributed simply to structural inequalities existing within, and therefore being reproduced by, the institutions that distribute arts funding in the UK. It has also asked how far, more micro factors resulting from the decisions of individuals like the geographical location of TD, or poor organizational leadership, can be blamed. This type of isolation of causes tended to occur in fieldwork interviews. However, data analysis has pointed to a mixture of all factors. Moreover, the thesis identified how, with every major point that emerged in the data as a potential reason for TD’s closure (namely, the decision to place it in Newtown, its loss of purpose, fraught intra-organizational relationships and the collapse in relationship TD’s between leadership and its funders), there was an overarching structural reason that led to destructive action, thus removing real agency. The thesis became less about casting blame, than about examining how institutional structures work to create subtly, insidiously racist results, and how those institutional structures are products of coloniality/modernity. This is how learning from TD through this research can lead organizations and institutions toward a decolonization of the arts in the UK. Future research to carry this process forward could investigate the organizational structure and power relationships within ACE and local government organisations in this same, empirically focused way.

*Welcome* established the structure or agency question using the Saidian concept of the Western Cultural archive, describing in Section 1.4.4 how it is created through education, and how it values knowledge (as process), then shapes education, and then structures society. Here TD was introduced as a supplement to mainstream education, led and sought out by those British residents who would ‘experience the decolonization process as liberation’. The Western Cultural Archive, created to support Cultural Imperialism (intellectual coloniality), is nuanced, disrupted and expanded effectively through decolonial processes, which is why *Welcome* claimed that TD’s founders had intended it to penetrate and make decolonial change to the Western cultural archive by nuancing the UK’s national narrative. As the thesis continued, the reasons for their failure to achieve this, were explored. For example, *Location* discovered the compromise with the BCC that led to TD’s being situated in Newtown, to reveal what the former Chairperson saw as a ‘ghettoization of Black arts’ to have been predetermined from the moment TD gained its building. Furthermore, it showed that this location was caused by the

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39 Hereby, the decolonization and structure / agency questions overlap.
organization’s need for government funding and the vested interests of the funders in agendas that were different from those of TD’s original leadership.

The analysis in *Purpose, Location and Relationships* has produced the conclusion, not only that a number of intricately linked factors caused TD to close, but also that they were both internal and external to the organization. Those inside the organization ultimately blamed the funders, and the funders ultimately blamed those inside the organisation. The only exceptions were the Chairman, who was silent throughout, and Ruth, who claimed a standpoint of so-called objectivity. The conclusion of the penultimate chapter refers to a chicken / egg scenario, but to cling to this as a final conclusion would be to disregard the power relations between TD’s leadership and their funders, which are described in the same chapter. The UK state’s underfunding of the arts since 2010 has been the overarching cause of the problems at TD, because it places more power into the hands of institutions designed to gatekeep which arts and public services are valued in Britain, by creating scarcity. Although one of the Creative Case’s aims is would seem to be greater diversity, *Position’s Section 3.4 Position in Policy* has shown that this does not work to reverse inequality, as has been discussed above.

The analysis concludes in asking, how far can agency exist for leaders of arts organizations, within the expansive, oppressive structures of racial capitalism? This led to the primary question: Can true social justice work, let alone decolonial work, be done by an organisation that is funded by national governing institutions? The conclusions produced by this research suggest that largescale deconstruction of the Western Cultural Archive would be needed for that to take place, and that such deconstruction would take place far beyond individual organizations. The purpose, motivations and allegiances of cultural policy would need to be overhauled, from a focus on the imagined community of the nation, to the real and ever-changing communities of the people within it.

7.1.3. An evolving definition of Blackness: A thesis overview

The thesis has provided empirical insight into the ways in which the definition of Blackness in the UK has been, and continues to be, contested. TD was created to use Political Blackness as strategic essentialism to unify the people who lived in Newtown at the time – Post-War British subjects and migrants from the former empire, and their descendants. As political Blackness fragmented and failed in line and time with diversity policy, so did TD. Interculturalism proved
a poor substitute – the organization lost its way when it acquiesced to diversity policy, centred whiteness, and abandoned strategic essentialism between people of colour. *Purpose* suggests that these two final things are connected to each other.

*Relationships* considered moments at which a notion of Blackness, through the idea of a monolithic black community, was constructed at TD by officials from organizations that governed from the standpoint of Hegemonic Whiteness, who were overdetermining group identity from without. Until this point in the empirical data analysis, while White supremacy had been examined as organizing system, the direct effect of unchecked Hegemonic Whiteness had not been examined directly during one of the thesis’ vignettes. This formed a culmination of the analysis, which had been building from the relative solidarity of the organization’s origins in *Purpose*, through to *Location’s* analysis of the fragmentation of political Blackness (partly in response to the structural demonization of Afro-Caribbean Blackness) to this, the complete breakdown of solidarity among TD’s stakeholders, when the power structure and othering processes of Hegemonic Whiteness were both enacted and physically represented in this meeting. The chapter pointed out the difference between strategic essentialism when chosen by racialized people for reasons that benefit their interests (as was defined in *Purpose* with the description of TD’s original adoption of a politically Black ethos), and the essentialism of overdetermination from without, (Fanon, 1952) when applied to racialized people as part of the flattening, dehumanizing effect of White Supremacy.

Through the examination of what structures of Whiteness do in the administration of everyday life, *Relationships* leads us to understand that for resistance through strategic essentialism to be effective, people need to remain true to their collective strategy even when it seemingly goes against their immediate self-interest. This is a difficult takeaway that, it is hoped, will be a legacy of TD as a result of this thesis. It will be an insightful reminder of how to use strategic essentialism effectively for the sake of disrupting Racial Capitalism and resisting racism, and what happens when people fail to do so in the face the existing governing structures in the UK. This would be a truly decolonized strategic essentialism.

### 7.2 Significance of findings

#### 7.2.1 Methodological and Empirical Significance
The three most productive choices that I made methodologically were: to limit my interview sample to ten individuals who were involved with the organization at the moment of its closure, to revisit selected individuals for further rounds of interviews shortly after the closure and one year later (the process called cyclical interviewing in Process), and to help with the collation and storage of the archive, the action that Process calls ‘getting my hands dirty’ through what it has dubbed Cylcical Interviewing. Limiting my sample allowed me to prioritise depth of analysis over breadth, seeing that the Final Report on the Future of The Drum had seemed to focus on working from a broad sample but over a short period, which meant that it lacked the depth of analysis that a PhD project could bring. As that document had been researched no long before my arrival at TD, it was important for my research to provide something different. At some points the research has served as a counterpoint to that document, and at others it supplements it. The nuance afforded by the depth of study, (which was in turn enabled partly by the methodological focus on ‘taking care’ and cyclical interviews, but also partly by the length of time that PhD study allows a researcher in the field) led me to make a conclusion about the value of collaborative PhD projects in small arts organizations. Had a collaborative PhD been funded and conducted earlier on in TD’s life cycle, that life cycle may not have been so short. Just as this thesis can be used by ‘those who fight’ in the administration of future Black-led arts organisations, this could have been used by TD’s leadership, had it been conducted at an earlier point.

Moreover, Process pointed out that this decolonial, Black feminist methodology will form part of the thesis’ contribution to the fields it touches. It works at the methodological intersection of decolonial, feminist and critical race critiques, with decolonisation informing its intellectual framework and Black feminism parts of its methodology. It utilizes Black feminist standpoint theory to make visible the gap, identified by Sara Ahmed as existing between rhetoric and action that is created by the language, policies and attitudes surrounding ‘ethnic and cultural diversity’ within mainstream cultural institutions (Ahmed, 2012). I entered TD with the ability to see what many who worked and performed there could also see, but what the policy makers and funders represented in the Relationships chapter could not.

The multiple methods I employed in my research enabled me to be attentive to the changes that were happening in the field, not only to the organisation as it closed, but also to the opinions and feelings of the participants over time, that shape the youth mobility scheme, and how they interact with migrant agency. Moreover, by using ACE’s final report to represent that
organisation, I was able to foreground the voices of TD’s final administrators. This redressed the racialized power imbalance between organization and institution that Relationships expanded upon, enabling the subaltern to speak in the thesis, in ways not enabled in the report. (Spivak, 1988) By conducting policy analysis and semi and unstructured ‘cyclical’ interviews alongside one another, I could understand the dissonance between the agendas of the funders and the administrators of the organization, how that dissonance came into being and how, when coupled with the power imbalance inherent in a funder / funded relationship, eventually broke the organization. Participant observation at TD, including the collation and storage of the archive, enabled me to understand the intricacies of the intra-organizational relationships, as well as their motivations for loyalty and / or disloyalty to TD, to its communities, and to each other in the face of Hegemonic Whiteness. This participant observation also gave me first-hand experience of how personal identities and work lives blended at the organisation - the ‘one big dysfunctional family’ atmosphere that Relationships describes. Deploying black feminist standpoint theory enabled me to value the insight this produced; if I had not observed the closure at such close range emotionally as well as physically, I would not have known how the relationships functioned in and around TD. The data would have been less rich and deep. I have no doubt that had I not taken this approach, I would not have been permitted to sit in on, or record, the stakeholders meeting or Steering Group Meeting that formed the basis of Relationships’ analysis. If I had been part of the team I would neither have been given access to the final report, nor invited to the Final Beat of The Drum. As it was, I designed the program for that event and was permitted to use the speeches in this thesis. Getting dirty approach to research enabled me to research with empathy, which was part of the feminist approach outlined in Process, and develop a decolonial breakdown of the hierarchy assumed to be inherent in the researcher / participant relationship. This forms part of the thesis’ methodological contribution.

7.2.2 Theoretical Contributions

This thesis contributes an original sociological perspective to cultural policy/arts administration research, based upon a unique study of the closure of an arts organization in the UK, a topic which has not been studied before at such close range. It also enables a comparison between the experiences of TD’s administrators and those in other, comparable organisations elsewhere, which future research may seek to undertake. Furthermore, my thesis contributes
its unique case study to the growing body of research on Race and the Arts (Saha, 2013; 2017 & 2018), and to scholarship on Race in cultural policy (Malik, 2013; Moss, 2005; Daboo, 2018). Furthermore, its ethnographic approach produced rich data that highlighted the tensions created by attempts to sustain solidarity in the arts based on strategic essentialism during the cultural policy turn toward cultural, and then creative, diversity. My study contributes an empirical approach to critical race scholarship around UK Blackness and the fragmentation of Political Blackness in the UK. By insisting that its critical framework is first and foremost decolonial however, I have insisted on a focus on the process of race-making by systems of power, where those systems of power have come from and why they persist in the UK, a former seat of Empire that wears its postcolonial melancholia heavily and structurally. As has been explored above, the focus on decolonization, though it informs the thesis’ theoretical framework, is primarily a focus on action. The importance of this focus, is explicated below, in this chapter’s final section: 7.4: Concluding Remarks: Legacy, a new day?.

7.3 Future Research Agendas

The data collected during my PhD extends far beyond what I could have used for this thesis, there. Future research will analyse and add to this data, to explore networks of black-led cultural organizations in various predominantly anglophone and francophone cities. It will examine the communities they exist within, the archives they create, and their funders. The poles, between which the other locales will sit and to which they will be compared, are Handsworth and Harlem. I employ Paul Gilroy’s concept of a black Atlantic to justify drawing comparisons between locales that have, historically, been predominantly inhabited by people of African descent. I also take Kehinde Andrews’ re-assertion that black is a country, to look at the ways in which shared histories make for shared presents and futures across the African diaspora, and also in which funders and leaders of black-owned cultural organizations can look to and learn from each other. Handsworth to Harlem will consider the importance of their interdependence, particularly at moments of gentrification, while working within different funding and policy landscapes.
It is my hope that this research will involve the continuation of the activist archiving project begun at TD. My PhD and previous research are linked by archives - each project has involved the collation of activist archives. The value and ethics of preserving marginalised or forgotten histories, as an act of connecting the parts of a society fractured by various types of inequality, has been explored briefly in *Relationships* and *Process*. When TD closed, 20 years of unarchived documents and ephemera were discovered in the building and my role as researcher shifted from observer and interviewer to Intellectual Activism. (Hill Collins, 2005) As the question of how best to make TD’s archive accessible becomes paramount; future research will revisit the questions, asked in my fieldnotes for June 2016 and quoted in *Process*: What is the purpose of this archive? Is it simply to be a repository of documents and objects for interested researchers to seek out for projects, or something more engaging? What stories can it tell; what is the value of those stories in the context of the Library of Birmingham’s archival collections? Thinking about the archive as a local resource, how can it be made accessible to students and school children, so that the first iteration of Birmingham’s black arts centre remains part of the city’s popular folklore? These questions will be explored further in the *Handsworth to Harlem* project. Doing so from my new post as Assistant Professor of Arts Administration at Teachers College, Columbia University will enable me to establish a working network between the Arts Administration Department at TC, the Archives within the Library of Birmingham, UK, the Schomburg Centre and the Black Cultural Archives in London, to continue the intellectual activism of linking TD’s archive with other Black archives and making it both visible and accessible.

7.4 Concluding remarks: Legacy, A new day?
On September 7th 2019 on the site of the old Aston Hippodrome, the building that had housed The Drum reopened as the Legacy Centre for Excellence. I had already named this chapter *Legacy* when the announcement of the opening appeared in *The Voice* Newspaper that summer. It opened not only under Black leadership as TD had been, but under Black ownership, and where TD had underwritten its title with the subtitle ‘The UK’s Premier Intercultural Arts Centre’, The Legacy Centre boldly used the following: ‘We are Europe’s largest Black-owned business and arts centre’. The statement of Black ownership gave me hope for the new organization. This was because economic power and self-determination were pointed to throughout the thesis’ data as possible means of bypassing the funder-funded relationship to the Hegemonic Whiteness of the British state’s governing institutions and their cultural policies. This was not emphasized in the analysis because of my determination not to focus on presenting solutions, but rather, on presenting a thorough analysis of the problem, which could inform future action. However, the latest addition to the Centre’s website (in the summer of 2020) is an acknowledgement to Arts Council England for their financial support during the COVID-19 crisis. With the financial vulnerability that has come with COVID, the Legacy Centre’s leadership have had to rely on ACE for funding, and they say that they ‘look forward to doing so in the future’. (See Fig. 7.1) In the 2019 *Voice* article, the CEO of the centre was
very clear that his aim was to serve the local community. He was also clear about the intellectual and political roots of his community-focused work.

“I am a person who is concerned about the welfare of the community in which I live. I am concerned about the welfare of the young people, the elders, the job opportunities, the business opportunities that are available. Are they accessible for the people of the most marginalised communities within the West Midlands? Since I was a teen I have been involved in volunteering in community projects. I started off at 15 years old volunteering in Saturday school projects.” (The Voice, 2019)

This work was rooted in the Afro-Caribbean Saturday school movement, which set out to supplement the Western cultural archive for Black children from as far back as the 1960s, when it became apparent that the UK government’s practice of placing black children in Educationally Subnormal schools would otherwise further systemically damage the community. (Andrews, 2015) These statements of purpose and their focus on the tradition of black educational resistance toward the development of an intellectual self-confidence, are reminiscent of TD’s early program and the dreams of its founders. The comfortable focus on Newtown is a difference that could make the purpose even more relevant. However, with the 2020 ACE funding support came a change in language. The website shows the language of diversity creeping in, and a focus on not just the community, but the nation. (See Fig. 7.1) This throws us for a loop of déjà vu, returning us to the points in Purpose and Position where TD’s funding applications and ACE’s Creative Case for Diversity were analysed. (See Pages 128 & 140) It is my hope that this thesis’ study will go some way toward furnishing the leadership of the Legacy Centre for Excellence and others like it, to navigate the funder-funded relationship in a way that allows them to resist the pressures of bowing to policy in ways that undermine purpose. It is my hope that this research can truly serve as ‘an instrument for those who fight’.

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