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**Title Page**

***The Cultural Policy value of building social connection for new arrivals and why arts work evaluations should reflect that value***

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***The Cultural Policy value of building social connection for new arrivals and why arts work evaluations should reflect that value***

Abstract: Increasing movement of migrants and refugees around the world present complex social issues for countries experiencing large migrant intakes. Support for recent arrivals needs deeper policy consideration, especially as reflected in cultural policy. Anecdotally, we know arts projects have greater success in assisting refugees to build social connections and support settlement than many formal government settlement programs. However, as arts initiatives struggle for adequate funding, evaluation's quantitative bias means that administrators face a conundrum about how to demonstrate evidence which values their work. Qualitative outcomes of supporting cultural expression, building trust, social connections and relationships are difficult to evidence, yet these make arts initiatives successful in supporting new arrivals. This paper discusses the context of that conundrum, explores the possibilities afforded by valuing social connection more highly and the consequences of such an approach. We argue that what is valued and how it is demonstrated need to be radically reconsidered.

Keywords; values, evaluation, social connection, power, arts policy, new arrivals

Word count 8214

**The Context of Arts and Cultural Work with Recent Arrivals**

In an era of global uncertainty, the flow of migrants and refugees around the world has become a prominent social issue for many developed countries experiencing large migrant intakes. The settlement of recent arrivals and how they can be better supported needs deeper consideration especially as it is reflected in cultural policy. The importance of supporting recent arrivals to establish and develop social connections cannot be underestimated**.** Anecdotally we know that when assisting recent arrivals to settle and build social connections- arts led initiatives have greater success than more formal welcome programs. The arguments in this paper reflect findings from a research project in Australia which sought to examine why current evaluation processes do not reflect this known value in arts work, because that oversight has significant adverse consequences . This study was based in Australia, a country built by migration where almost 50% of Australians have at least one parent born overseas (ABS 2016). As an initial comparative guide in exploring the matter of cultural work which aims to support the settlement of recent arrivals, we utilized a (2017) European Commission report titled 'How culture and the arts can promote Intercultural dialogue in the context of the migratory and refugee crisis '. The study reflected the active participation of 26 EU Member States and collated and analysed over 200 existing policies and practices relevant to the integration of refugees and migrants through the arts and culture. The questions that the EU study asked of the arts initiatives formed the basis of the interview questions we asked of Australian NGOs. The NGOs we interviewed provided services to new arrivals who had entered Australia as refugees.

As Prof Phipps' (2017) report to the European Parliament suggests, 'Criteria for identifying best practice [cultural work] are not readily available' and motivations take several forms each with attendant ethical implications. Phipps (2017) says 'Cultural work with refugees [..] is a contentious area [where] nuanced differences exist between organizations and projects.' And 'motivations underlying policies of cultural work with refugees [..] have ethical implications raising questions of property and ownership, cultural appropriation, voyeurism, duties of the artist, and the value of artistic work in culture and society'. In Phipps' (2017) summary, she suggests that motivations to engage in cultural work with refugees may take the form of: activism, intercultural education and advocacy and for affective/symbolic purposes. Measurement of whether the motivation has been achieved requires evaluation often solicited from the refugee participants. This can compromise the

intended relationship building with refugees. The following conundrum became apparent, arts work with refugees was anecdotally known to assist with building social connections and settlement. However, for NGOs and Arts organisations to receive ongoing funding to deliver such programmes, they needed those outcomes to be evidenced through evaluation beyond anecdotal evidence. Yet Arts organisations were reticent to engage in traditional forms of evaluation which often solicited the responses of the refugee participants in ways which risked compromising the intention of building relationships. For example, one NGO reported that the way they evaluate is embodied in their co-creation model, that is 'you can't co-create without embodying the back and forth communication that involves discussion [and feedback and evaluation]' (participant). Another NGO suggested that soliciting evaluation from participants when you have not yet established long term trust does not produce accurate assessments anyway as cultural conditioning to be polite and avoid offence and discomfort might prompt a 'yes' when they really the mean 'no'. Our research was motivated by a desire to better understand how this conundrum could be overcome and the extent to which the requirements of funding sources influenced the design of arts programs for recent arrivals and their evaluation. This is of relevance given that differences in approaches to arts funding can be influenced by various factors such as art forms, social values, locations, cultures, political affiliations, religious beliefs and gender (Caust 2019, 756 citing Brooks 2001; Johanson and Glow 2008). It also speaks to the observation highlighted by Belfiore that:

> not all actors involved in struggles over cultural value and authority have equal power and voice. Yet this fact, and the social justice and equality issues it causes, risk being obfuscated in our contemporary cultural policy discourses. (Belfiore 2020:4 citing Belfiore 2012).

This paper seeks to explore two primary challenges and how the correlation between them creates a compound challenge. The first challenge is that recent arrivals need assistance to develop social connections to support their settlement and governments invest in programs to help achieve 'social cohesion', yet arts funding is not included in this. The second challenge is that current evaluation requirements imposed by funders of the arts have a quantitative bias which overlooks the development of social connections as a success factor. The compound challenge therefore is that arts projects rely on positive evaluations for recurring funding yet aren't acknowledged for their success in achieving social connections with recent arrivals. As a consequence, the anecdotal evidence for the social value of Arts projects will remain anecdotal as long as these instrumentalist or quantitative agendas for evaluation are followed. This compound issue threatens the capacity of Arts organisations to continue their valuable cultural work in supporting recent arrivals to develop social connections.

Through interviews with seven NGOs across Sydney and Melbourne, our research sought to understand how the NGOs designed their programs according to the motivations of their organization and consequently what evaluation methods they apply and whether evaluation design was influenced by or impacted upon their funding sources. Our findings confirmed arts worker fatigue about evaluations, and misalignment between what is known by those involved in the process to be of value, against the funding commissioner's language expected in grant writing and acquittals. As Raw and Robson (2017, 1) report in a UK based study:

> For arts organisations and practitioners, fulfilling the duty to evaluate their work can be amongst the most taxing and anxiety---inducing aspects of delivering arts projects with Communities (e.g. Angus 2002: 11-12; Hall et al. 2009).Commissioners require a transparent system by which organizations account for granted funds, often using the project's originally agreed objectives as the framework to assess its effectiveness. However, when excavating the terrain to respond with integrity in evaluating 'evidence of impact', the ground becomes a quagmire of contradictory expectations, unclear concepts and inconsistent demands: across the sector, amongst commissioners, and between parallel projects within the same organisations (Raw and Robson 2017, 1).

These observations from the UK correlate with the findings of our interviews with Australian NGOs conducting arts led initiatives with recent arrivals.

## Materials and Methods

The seven NGOs we interviewed varied in terms of size, funding and focus, though all employed creative/arts-based approaches to support people from refugee communities living in Australia. These organisations worked with people with a broad range of artistic experience from professional artists in their country of origin to those who engaged with the arts as a personal pursuit and/or professional pathway after their arrival in Australia. The organisations ranged from small volunteer-based organisations with one or two unpaid staff, to larger organisations with forty or more employees. As anonymity was a condition of their participation, the following description is intended to provide insight into their variety in circumstances and services. The largest of the organisations is a National leader in providing services to recent arrivals across many domains. The funding of this organisation is secured by government contributions. Arts work is a small part of their operations and their funding is not contingent upon arts work outcomes. Another organisation (smaller in scale) is a National leader in providing services to recent arrivals in acute distress. Their funding is also secured by government contributions. Arts work is a small part of their operations and consequently their funding is also not tied to arts work outcomes, though they had a dedicated arts officer running community programs and recognised the power of this approach in building trust and social capital within and outside of new arrivals' immediate communities. Another medium scale Arts organisation was a State leader in advocacy for multicultural arts work and their security in funding terms was vulnerable to cyclical government funding for the Arts which has notably reduced in the past decade. Two of the programs (in Sydney and Melbourne respectively) were developed by artists and academics running art classes on a volunteer basis in asylum seeker detention centres. The groups then continued to grow and meet outside of the detention centre after resettlement in the community. Some of the artists who joined as participants, now run their own paid arts workshops in the community as a result of the capacity building support offered through these organisations. These organisations are reliant on donations and in kind contributions. Their operations and vision are reliant on personal relationships and connections, and their physical premises are tenuous. Another organisation worked with First Nations and CALD young people as emerging artists, running programs for the beginning of their creative journey as well as a longer-term pathways program that sought to create employment outcomes for artists. A critical component of their work is a social enterprise fee-for-service program, where young people undertake paid work with councils, schools, corporations etc, delivering professional film production services and workshops. This organisation also is vulnerable to uncertain funding cycles. Their operations are conducted from physical premises which are shared with other arts organisations, they are reliant on personal relationships and connections and conduct significant outreach work in training capacity. A final example of the types of organisations we spoke to is a small Arts organisation who enjoyed secure physical premises linked with a school. This organisation operated with uncertainty due to funding cycles, and embodied an arts based practice model at the heart of their work which was highly reliant on personal relationships and connections.

We conducted scoping research via phone initially with organisations to gauge appropriateness for our study and their interest to participate. After they agreed to participate, we visited each organisation at their premises and interviewed the Directors and personnel responsible for delivery of the Arts work in their organisation. The scope of our study did not extend to interviewing artists who participated in their programs. We interviewed staff only and though given the option, none required an interpreter. In total this was eight interviews with both authors attending every interview. Some

interviews involved one person at an organisation and other times involved a pair from that organisation. We adapted our interview questions from those used in the 2017 EU project 'How culture and the arts can promote Intercultural dialogue in the context of the migratory and refugee crisis' and asked participants to reflect on a range of areas including their professional trajectory and personal motivations for working in their organisation and the broader arts sector. The questions also sought the specifics of the initiatives they are involved with and the objectives of these programs, whether the design of the initiative reflected its objective; if the objective had been met and how it was evaluated; what the potential and challenges are for arts-based approaches with new arrivals who may or may not be aspiring to become professional artists; whether there are evaluation requirements attached to the funding of their initiative and what frameworks they use to evaluate and reflect on their work; and whether these organisations felt the evaluation frameworks align with, contravene or otherwise influence the work they are doing. We also asked whether the initiative was replicable/transferable, whether the initiative used public space and if so, how; we asked if the initiative was based on success factors from others, and if so from which source and in what ways. Finally, we asked if the initiative was sustainable and if so, how this was measured and overall what had been the opportunities or challenges associated with the evaluation of the initiative.

The remainder of this paper will discuss the findings from those interviews and asks the question of whether the intangible benefits of arts work process could be valued as highly as 'performed outcomes'. Combining results and discussion, the paper addresses this question in three parts. The first section outlines the conundrum of the situation framing the context and the multiple issues/problems more thoroughly. The second section explores a distinction between two starting points and their possibilities; (1) starting from an aim of social connection, building trust, relationships and networks by contrast with (2) an aim of social inclusion which can lean toward an expectation of a measured/performed outcome demonstrated in a subtly prescribed form of cultural production. The final third part, considers the consequences - both the benefits and challenges of working with an aim of social connection by contrast with social inclusion. The conclusion reflects on the implications of such an approach for re-designing evaluation models.

## Part 1: Outlining the conundrum and framing the context and the multiple issues of evaluating cultural work with new arrivals'

The speed of change in global refugee movements surpasses the rate of policy adaptation in response. Consequently, government initiatives are often insufficient or overwhelmed. Despite knowing anecdotally that arts-based initiatives often have better outcomes for new arrivals, there is little to no aggregated data which evaluates the success of, and challenges faced by, these initiatives. The European Commission states: 'Research should help improve our capacity to foresee and address the challenges of (legal and irregular) migration and to develop effective policies for integrating migrants in our society and economy' (European Commission 2017). Thus, research is needed to better understand and identify the benefits of arts led initiatives aiming to support refugees. Furthermore, effective evaluation of arts-led initiatives remains a problem which is further exacerbated by the contentious issues evaluation raises with respect to who sets the agenda for measurement and what motivates their framing as demonstrated by Phipps' (2017) and Raw & Robson (2017). In our research with seven NGOs in Australia, it was apparent that for all but one, their evaluation processes felt driven by obligations to funders rather than an intrinsic and natural consequence of the work. The work of all seven NGOs most often sought to develop relationships of social connection which could then serve as a foundation from which other opportunities grew, yet recognition of the importance of this was not reflected in the desired outcomes funders sought reporting on.

The importance of social connection cannot be underestimated. Lieberman states that 'We have an intense need for social connection throughout our entire lives' (Lieberman 2015, 48). 'Our brains [are] wired for reaching out to and interacting with others. These are design features, not flaws. These social adaptations are central to making us the most successful species on earth' (Lieberman 2015, 9). Furthermore, the link between wellbeing and social connection is indisputable. Being socially and culturally connected is so important for health and well-being that, 'for many people, improved relationships are a much more realistic path to a better life than increased income' (Kelly et al 2012, 5). 'Humans are social animals [and] relationships are critical to our wellbeing. A lack of social connection leads to loneliness and isolation, experiences far more harmful than previously realised' (Kelly et al 2012, 3).

Cacioppo & Patrick (2008) defined loneliness as 'perceived social isolation', a warning that we need social connection – something as critical to our wellbeing as food and water. Given that living with loneliness predicts not only an impoverished life experience but also increases our odds of dying early by 45 per cent, social connection is vital to our wellbeing (Holt-Lunstad, Smith and Layton 2010). This is further underscored by Lieberman, 'Although adults can survive with unmet social needs far longer than with unmet physical needs our social bonds are linked to how long we live. Having a poor social network is literally as bad for your health as smoking two packs of cigarettes a day' (Lieberman 2015, 99). Our research demonstrated just how important this is for recent arrivals who have inadequate social networks and suffer from very limited opportunities for social connection:

> *It's become more and more apparent how a lot of new arrivals can be very isolated, and having once a week contact with someone who is trying to get, trying to make prints with you, can be the most regular contact in the person's life […] when somebody isn't able to come in… they are like "I didn't realize how much I do miss having the studio". (participant)*

That observation highlights the importance of the place and regular contact their program affords recent arrivals as a setting in which social connection is possible and welcome. This paper raises an important distinction however, between social connection and social inclusion.

### *The distinction between social connection and social inclusion*

The distinction between social connection and social inclusion is discussed at greater length in Edmonds (2020). Despite often good intentions, 'inclusion' implies a dominant group opening to include a minority, hence it is inextricably linked with a power differential and, like integration, that often occurs at some cost to the minority- i.e. what is given up for the sake of being included, or integrated. It is acknowledged that 'We all need to belong. Signs that others like, admire, and love us are central to our well-being' (Lieberman 2015, 76). Yet in Brene Brown's work on true belonging, when she asked people with respect to belonging, what they were trying to achieve, participants said they wanted to be part of something – to experience real connection with others – but not at the cost of their authenticity, freedom or power (Brown 2017, 33). In 2013 the Service for the Treatment and Rehabilitation of Torture and Trauma Survivors (STARTTS) conducted a study examining social capital with refugees in Australia which also underscores this:

> It is good that we as refugees learn new culture of [this] country. But do they acknowledge we have cultural norms? They see us as having no self-esteem, devalued by war so we have nothing else left. So do we have nothing left? NO!! Each individual group of people should be acknowledged- their value, culture. This will lead to revelation. (Doney et al 2013, 19)

With respect to the distinction between social connection and social inclusion and integration, integration imposes an expectation that may compromise the freedom to continue practicing certain customs. An alternative to seeking social integration as a cultural policy aim is to achieve

differentiated solidarity which, by contrast loosens such expectations, allowing for differences to be expressed within the mutuality (Edmonds 2020, 168). Iris Young's formulation of differentiated solidarity describes that

> Openness to unassimilated others involves affirming relationship with them at the same time as one affirms a respectful distance. Such a stance of recognition or acknowledgement of the others can be described neither as tolerance nor as communal identification. […] inclusive political institutions do not require that all the members of the polity mutually identify. Differentiated solidarity requires only that these who mutually identify over here in this respect affirm their openness to and engagement with those with different situations and affinities. […] recognition in this sense is more a condition for political discussion and decision-making than one of its goals. It affirms the need for group-based organization and voice at the same time that it expresses openness to listening to others and engaging with them. (Young, 2000, 226)

In an Australian study Patulny noted that 'While acknowledging the term 'integration' is contested, reviews of the literature note that social connectedness and involvement in the civic society are among the most commonly cited definitions of successful ethnic integration' (Patulny 2015, 207 citing Ager and Strang 2008). Ryan et al (2015) suggest there is a complexity and diversity of migrant ties along a wide spectrum of relationships with different people in different places. Remaining mindful of the spectrum and its complexities they argue, means the nuances of the connections between social networks and social capital can be better understood. Patulny's findings clarify the position of Australian citizens and migrants in relation to this proposed spectrum of integration.

> Australian citizens are highly integrated, in terms of having strong bridging and bonding social capital, but it is a monocultural form of integration; they are the least likely to have ethnically diverse friends. This suggests that, rather than holding up Australian citizens as some ideal to which migrants should attempt to match themselves, Australian citizens themselves have a way to go towards achieving full, cosmopolitan, multicultural integration (Patulny 2015, 227-228).

This highlights that the degree to which social capital is cosmopolitan (ethnically heterogeneous) or ethnocentric (ethnically homogeneous) is also of notable importance. A more thorough conversation regarding the types of social capital and their relative importance for recent arrivals will be taken up in the next section. For now, in returning to the distinction between social connection and social inclusion, our research participants also reported that integration imposes an expectation that may compromise the freedom to continue practicing certain customs. As one participant described:

> *Art is an expression of culture and culture is an expression of identity and …… I think in order to feel like people belong they need to be allowed to express who they are and be accepted for who they are. And through art we can do that…, transcend those barriers of language [..], not everyone is verbal or competent in English. So it offers many different ways of expressing who people are and telling their stories in many different ways and, [..] those things are just critical for anybody anywhere. […] it is something that is enjoyable and fun and, and people especially from refugee backgrounds have been through a lot of horrible stuff. [..] just to have fun and enjoyment together can be so uplifting and help with those social connections as well, it is a great motivation to bring people together because people can become isolated here. (participant)*

As the above quote demonstrates, arts programs provide spaces for social connection often on participants' own terms. One of the important aspects repeated by arts workers we spoke with was that there should be no expectations for how people participate, how much they engage or what they

produce or make. This is a significant challenge however for arts programs funded by sources with pre-determined evaluation expectations. One NGO commented specifically that sometimes people would just show up to chat and not make anything, and the gathering the group provided was of critical importance. Another arts worker participant reflecting on an event outcome from 2010, described the experience of a refugee participant:

> *He had been on the run for 10 years and hadn't even been able to be open about his ethnicity because it would endanger him if he did. And he said, finally coming to a country where he felt safe and being able to say, "I am Burundian," and then being able to celebrate that he's Burundian through this cultural and arts celebration was just […], he finally felt safe and he was home again. And that was just an affirmation of his identity and that he could be who he was* (participant)

This quote demonstrates the importance of involvement and safety and belonging in civil society. It also highlights the importance of mutual respect for capacity and contribution and the way in which seeking a program outcome of facilitating social connection can emphasise equity and the sharing of power by contrast with an aim of social integration which risks imposing an expectation that may compromise the freedom to continue practicing certain customs. In its simplest expression, power is the ability to influence an outcome. In our research, arts workers consistently wanted to share power with the 'clients' of their services, yet the requirements of their funding model/system of operations made that difficult. Too little thought is focused on the process by which power is shared, and participation is invited and sustained- yet the subtlety of attuned process can have enormous impact on the development of trust, community cohesion, agency and sustaining social fabric. (Co Design 2018, 11 and Edmonds 2020). This also underscores the need to find a more effective language for representing the value of culture to the well-being of individuals and communities. An extension of this is that until there is a better model for recognising the value individuals and the community derive from social connection and engagement with culture, there is a risk that funding for such opportunities will remain sidelined.

## The challenges of reflecting Value in the current Evaluation Models

As Raw and Robson (2017) describe, divergences of qualitative descriptors which are standard within an academic research context, offer little help in assessing evidence of impact for those involved in community-based arts projects. Nonetheless:

> Commissioners may seek to increase confidence in findings by stipulating specific approaches: for example, methodologies involving psychological scoring (or self-assessment) systems, might be suggested to carry weight with audiences who favour traditional research hierarchies, and those less convinced by qualitative approaches (Raw and Robson 2017, 2).

This correlates with the findings of our interviews in Australia since organizations felt compelled to select a research/evaluation framework which funders would acknowledge as 'credible evidence' despite knowing it was not the most appropriate form of evaluation for demonstrating how they build and maintain trust with participants nor would it adequately capture the effects of their arts engagement experiences upon participants' lives.

This porosity of boundaries, whether inadvertent or calculated, causes problems down the line, in project delivery and reporting (Raw and Robson 2017) and as a consequence- Arts worker capability is being wasted on tedious translations requiring them to be bilingual (in creative & bureaucratic language), rather than focus upon how arts processes create value in establishing relationships and developing trust and social capital, as the vital and known preconditions to thriving. This was true of

the Australian context and our perception was that the root cause of it was informed by an underlying power dynamic of funding commissioners seeing recent arrivals in a deficit model, as without power and needing assistance. This is further supported by findings from the STARTTS 2013 study of social capital in refugee communities in Australia in which one refugee participant reported

> The issue I have is, [services] look at the problem and say "what is the problem and how can we fix it". This approach doesn't recognise people are coming here with existing social capital. We need to recognise people already have it and that it can be built on- **we are not starting with nothing** (Doney et al 2013, 22 bold in original).

With respect to the conundrum of evaluation reporting, Raw & Robson (2017) also report that

> In a domain recognized as driven by care, passion and commitment to the work and its intrinsic value there is a persistent difficulty amongst cultural professionals in distinguishing between evaluation as a balanced exploration of project outcomes, and the quest for advocacy material to support and justify the work (Raw and Robson 2017, 3).

Our interviews with organisations also revealed that evaluation had too often been framed in the service of justifying evidence of impact for funding agendas, rather than as a developmental tool of reflection and reflexivity to improve techniques and support the needs of new arrivals. The effect of top down mandated evaluation, rather than bottom up, is that the purpose of the consequently reduced narrow review is to secure scarce funding rather than support the work and participants – who are the intended beneficiaries of such funding in the first place.

Because of the deficit model, the type of assistance government offered for assisting settlement of recent arrivals was often predetermined by the government's economic agenda and perception of recent arrivals as needing to be 'reformatted' for productivity. By contrast, recent arrivals brought with them and embodied tremendous capacities, talents, resilience and opportunities which require a different reception to that which they are offered. What they more often need from the receiving host society is the opportunity to unlock that potential, capacity, and talent through mutual respect, power sharing, the building of trust and relatedness (Doney et al 2013). This is in contrast to a dominant assumption that the receiving Nation knows best what format the contribution of the recent arrival must take. Arts organisations know this, however they are compelled to comply with quantitative evaluations and enumerations of their participants. 'In this time of a 'quantitative turn' (Haynes et al. 2012) in accountability requirements for an already dwindling public resource allocation, the risk of challenging inappropriate evaluation processes, even using expert knowledge, is one few delivery organisations can afford to take' (Raw & Robson 2017, 4).

Our research found that the language of creative collaboration was often held in common between recent arrivals and arts workers, but the translation that inhibited that collaboration was the bureaucratic determination and corralling of value in a manner not respectful of creative process. Consequently, our research focus became refined in response, and this paper seeks to examine and discuss this underlying power issue of translation, evidence and appreciation of value. Drawing upon our interview data and literature, our intention in this paper is to provide provocations that acknowledge the value in creating social connection and fostering approaches which embody principles of equity and mutual respect as the preconditions for unlocking the greatest potential in recent arrivals' contributions toward thriving creative communities. If we accept that evaluation seeks the evidence of value, then what is valued and how that value is measured or demonstrated become centrally important. We argue that what is valued and how it is demonstrated needs to be radically reconsidered. This is supported by Belfiore's (2020) conclusion, who in this journal addressed issues of cultural value, representation and power:

> The process of value allocation, and consequently that of resource distribution, is not a neutral one, but rather the site of tensions, struggles for power, and the scene of a complex politics of representation, identity, taste and class. There are clearly winners and losers in the struggle over cultural value, yet cultural policy discourses seem intent on only focusing public attention on the winners. This opens up fundamental questions of democratic accountability: whose ideas of 'cultural value' drive decisions over investment and funding justified in terms of public benefits? And can [..] cultural authority [..] in this decision-making process be made genuinely democratic and accountable? (Belfiore 2020, 12)

**Part 2: What possibilities are afforded by social connection rather than social inclusion?**

This next section of the paper discusses what possibilities are afforded by starting from an aim of social connection by contrast with an aim of social inclusion. As Ryan et al note 'The work of Bourdieu reveals that the existence of a network of connections is not a given, rather it is the product of endless effort required in order to produce and reproduce lasting, useful relationships that can secure material or symbolic profits' (Ryan et al 2015, 5, citing Bourdieu 1986, 52). In the STARTTS work examining social capital in refugee communities settling in Australia, they examined the three types of social capital (bonding, bridging and linking) and refugee perceptions of their relative importance. What lays behind each of the three types of capital are 'the *relationships* between people: the *social connections* between individuals, their wider *social networks* and the *norms* or *qualities (formal and informal rules)* of the interactions between individuals and groups in their social connections and networks' (Doney at al 2015, 5 italics in original, citing Bourdieu 1968 and Coleman 1998).

Whilst there are debates and differing views about exactly what makes up social capital, how it works, who benefits and whether it is always beneficial, their project found that strong bonding capital (that is connection within one's own community) was a necessary foundation for developing bridging capital (that is connections to people and groups in the wider community) and linking capital (that is vertical connections to people in positions of authority). Furthermore, they found that there were critical social enablers that needed to be in place. 'In the initial stages of settlement, refugees have limited opportunities for community engagement and network building. Their social capital is depleted at the very time they need support and networks to link into their new environment and develop a sense of connection and belonging' (Doney et al 2013, 7). The impact of the refugee journey must be considered. In situations of war and conflict, regimes deliberately undermine and destroy trust and social bonds as a way of maintaining power and control and prolonged war can normalise these fractured relationships (Doney et al 2013, 9 citing Martin-Baro 1989). During settlement, a refugee's ability to rebuild their social capital is affected not only by their pre-arrival experience but also by the settlement environment. As one participant in their study described, '*Where I live now, for 2 years my neighbours don't know me. No one has said hello even though I sit outside'* (Doney et al 2013, 23). This experience is not uncommon and underscores the critical importance of building social connection first and foremost as a precondition upon which further networks can build.

*Power sharing and co-creation*

As social connections are formed by grace, they cannot be directed. Patience to nurture the preconditions, and create the settings where connections, belonging and trust can develop and flourish are vitally important for everyone, and especially for isolated individuals and recent arrivals. Social connection is a vital ingredient of quality of life, health, and happiness, but Australians' social isolation is growing. One in three Australians don't know their neighbours (Mackay, 2017). All seven of the NGOs we interviewed raised the critical importance of sharing power, encouraging participation and ownership. This is further underscored by Phipps, describing the work of Australian refugee

organisation RISE whose work approach is encapsulated by their statement 'Nothing About Us Without Us'. She notes:

> Working with members (not clients) they generate positive social change, redress social inequalities, and foster methods which allow refugee and asylum seeker communities to actively participate in wider society, including influencing government and non-governments policies that directly impact on their lives and their new communities. (Phipps 2017, 11)

Our research also found that the NGOs prioritised providing social opportunity, safety and fostering the preconditions that assist recent arrivals to build social connections:

> *I believe art is for everyone and I think art should be democratised and making art is a good way for people to process their situation and their relationships with the world. ……amplifies the voices of refugees and gives them a means of expressing themselves and conveying something of their experiences to the Australian public. ……one aim of our organisation it so use the art as a form of advocacy to try and educate the Australian community….. workshops gave them a feeling of community and support. So, I think the purpose of community art firstly is to provide a safe space where people can express themselves. It's also working with people on their terms and asking them what they feel comfortable with and so on. And you can only really get to that level once you've acquired a certain level of trust and friendship. So, it's about social connection and friendship.* (participant)

Another small NGO spoke about the difficulties when outside agencies come in to work with participants and are driven by their own agenda, time frames for results and expectations, which exert pressure on the participants. The Arts worker described it thus

> *And so, she came in, met people, quickly, did not really take the time to get to know them or make friends and develop trust, which I think is crucial to people feeling comfortable to express themselves in their art……and [she] exerted a bit of pressure on people, like "oh, so what is your film going to be about?" and "We need to get you making a film". She created a slightly unnatural vibe and quite a few people just did not want to do it and did not end up doing it.* (participant)

As the quote demonstrates overlooking the importance of connection and jumping straight into an assumption that inclusion and coercive integration are acceptable forms of engagement can lean toward an expectation of a measured/performed outcome demonstrated in a subtly prescribed form of cultural production. Having outlined the possibilities of working with an aim of social connection by contrast with social inclusion, we now turn to discussion in the final part of this paper regarding the consequences of doing so and will consider both the benefits and the challenges in the context of evaluation of Arts programs working with recent arrivals.

**Part 3: What are the Consequences? -both the benefits & challenges**

As arguments of the previous section have demonstrated, working with an aim of social connection by contrast with social inclusion creates a stronger foundation for longer term sustainability and viability (Co Design *Neighbourhoods Made by Neighbours* p 4, 20). If power is shared in the process, it makes it possible to create a stronger foundation. However, if power is not shared the consequences can be negative and reinforce power imbalances. Phipps (2017, 12) highlights many issues that can arise such as viewing new arrivals as a homogenous community (each individual will have their own motivations, diverse experiences, knowledges they may want to express); participation can have diverse outcomes (e.g. it may be empowering or it may be limiting and tokenistic); and expectations of 'how' people participate need to be scrutinized so as not to reinforce power binaries such as informant vs expert. Phipps argues that if power sharing is to become a reality it requires 'long term

grass-roots work, the building of trust and relationships' and that safe spaces for undertaking cultural work are not safe because artists or researchers 'declare them to be' but because they are developed through carefully and jointly nurtured relationships.

Phipps (2017, 12) describes that for negative, xenophobic cultural work to be disrupted, as (Australian refugee organisation) RISE argue, a degree of mutual discomfort will be required to enable new forms to emerge which are beneficial to all. An example of the use of aesthetic discomfort and direct intervention is demonstrated in the RISE statement;

> 'We are not your next interesting Arts project'. Our community are not sitting waiting for our struggle to be acknowledged by your individual consciousness nor highlighted through your art practice." This punctures the well-meaning or charitable approaches, or the bandwagon interest in undertaking cultural work with refugees, [informed by the] mainstream recycling of images of refugees as victims alone. (Phipps 2017, 12)

As these arguments from Phipps demonstrate, the approach that is taken, the form of invitation, the terms of participation, the way power is shared in the formulation and agenda of an arts project as well as its operation are all of vital importance. Such approaches take much longer, and therefore require significantly larger investments of time than most arts program budgets allow. Furthermore, competition for that funding is fierce and complicated by the fact that current policy contexts fund mainly outcome-based projects rather than the time-consuming messy investment that precedes projects as it establishes the preconditions of the trust and authentic relationships that are necessary to assemble project participants. The shift in Australian Arts funding to being project based and away from organisational or program funding has exacerbated these issues (Caust 2019). Yet investment in the time consuming and messy work of forming social connections and trust necessary to assemble project participants are undeniably important since Patulny's 2015 study concludes that 'refugee and family reunion migrants are in real danger of becoming socially disconnected, isolated and alienated from Australian society' (Patulny 2015, 228).

The importance of this investment in building relationships and trust and the difficulty this raises in the context of arts program funding were also described by the NGOs we interviewed:

> *I think that's a big factor of success too, because it takes time to build relationships, I think success is built also on trust, working with new arrivals and people from culturally diverse communities. The days of white person working in this space, it takes time to get to know people and for them to trust us…there needs to be a willingness to work long-term as well because what happens is a lot of culturally diverse aboriginal people think, oh here they come again with their project and there's the perception that they are being used for us to have jobs, to run projects with them [..] And I have actually heard people say that, that, "Oh this, this is not for us, this is just so you can get the money from the Government and have your job and you are using us to have your job." (participant)*
>
> *My approach is… just relationships, I think it comes down to relationships and people being able to freely speak and feel listened to as well. (participant)*
>
> *[Outside agencies] want to collaborate, but they [expect] that everyone is sitting around raring to go. ……[It will] take time is what I mean, to build relationships [..] and to get that level of trust and enthusiasm takes genuine time. And often funding goals and programs do not account for that. You are supposed to sort of hit the ground running - so, there are all those things with defined programs. (participant)*

> *There needs to be many hours of just sitting around sharing meals and making friends. Relationship has to be at the centre of it, which I think is sometimes a bit alien to the way programs are thought about and constructed (participant)*

And the NGOs also spoke of the wonderfully positive difference it makes to encounter the support of funding that does value that investment in relationships and the time it takes and funds the project in a manner that supports those processes:

> *But to build the trust with either of those groups of people, it took a good twelve to eighteen months of talking, and relationships, and coming together. And so, her process in terms of being able to build those relationships was very much supported by both funders [..] and the frameworks that they had in place, but also the work in the community in terms of working with film makers, and crew, and sound people from those cultural contexts, and so, they kind of built things up and around through that.(participant)*

One NGO we interviewed had two evaluation frameworks working at the same time which they noted was very time-consuming. One data set listed the number of events, numbers of participants, country of origin of the participants etc (the quantitative data set) for reporting to funding bodies. Another (the qualitative data set) noted the everyday/informal evaluations, including comments participants had shared revealing their delight or discomfort with an experience, reflections of participations over the long-term noting developments in their art practice, exhibitions, further contacts or work pathways they found which support their settlement. As we have argued throughout this paper, if models for evaluation and the valuing of intangible social connections were brought to the fore, there would be no need for this NGO (or others) to have two models of evaluation functioning.

## Conclusion:

As outlined at the opening of this paper, the value of arts led projects for fostering social connection between migrants and between migrants and the 'host' community is overlooked and consequently this places the arts organisations under unnecessary pressure and also imposes a deficit model on the refugees and migrants involved. This occurs because evaluation models privilege quantitative reporting of 'outcomes' (benchmarks, training, job readiness etc) which render narrative and relationship creation difficult to be accounted for as an asset produced by the arts led process. If evaluation could address how effective the techniques of engagement were in mending the social roots, building trust, creating belonging and safety and value the extent to which engagement was able to respond to the needs of participants with agility- it would much better reflect the qualities and valuable contribution these programs provide to assisting recent arrivals. All these aspects are known to be vital in creating the preconditions for thriving social connections which create social capital and sustain meaningful migrant identification with their new home. Yet they are not reflected in the required terms for evaluation of arts initiatives.

Raw & Robson (2017) describe a sample of the lineage of attempts prior to this paper advocating for use of qualitative methods of evaluation which would demonstrate the value of building social connections. Alternative perspectives have long sought a voice through academic channels, to critique the hierarchy of evidence model (Denzin and Lincoln 2000; Denzin 2009; Holden 2006; Rawet al. 2012; White 2009). In a robust challenge to dismissals of qualitative studies *per se*, Crossick and Kaszynska (2016, 149) for example conclude that 'Qualitative research (with the depth that it gives) need not be less rigorous than quantitative, experimental studies (with the breadth that they provide), but it operates with different criteria of rigour.' Raw & Robson suggest (2017,5) that the field of health could provide the field of arts with an example of leadership in demonstrating successful high-quality qualitative research. Lincoln and Guba (1985) describe the

necessity to focus on methods which demonstrate 'trustworthiness' from which evidence that is credible, balanced, consistent and transferable can emerge. The difficulty remains however that these broader perspectives are not currently accommodated by policy makers and commissioners and consequently evaluation requirements of arts organisations remain static. (Raw & Robson 2017, 5)

Our research informed by interviews with seven Australian NGOs, analysis of international studies, policy and academic literature demonstrates the importance of the social connection and relationship building aspects of arts led work with recent arrivals. Yet the question remains for how arts policy funding could adjust and recalibrate to acknowledge and value this in its formulations of support criteria and reporting. Many private philanthropists acknowledge this value. It is timely with constrained budgets and an increasing need to focus on longer term global social sustainability, that policies of public funding also recalibrate to acknowledge this value. Despite this importance 'Cultural policy, and arts funding in particular, has been a site of much contention and discussion in Australia over the past decade' (Caust 2019, 765).

There are innovative models including anthropological participant observation processes, ethnographic documentation and reflective processes as evaluation methods (Raw and Robson 2017, 6) which would allow for a better aligned demonstration of value in arts led projects with recent arrivals. Most importantly this paper has presented a provocation that the innovations in evaluation methodologies should allow for the sharing of power in who sets the agenda for the Arts work aims and who determines whether the outcomes for recent arrivals have been successfully met.

A question larger than the power to determine the evaluation framework itself, alluded to in part 1, is the way in which arts work is valued in society and how that is reflected in cultural policy at National and International levels. The opening of this paper framed that from a European perspective referring to the work of Alison Phipps and European Commission studies. In the Australian context, where our study occurred, in '*Its culture Stupid; Reflections of an Arts Bureaucrat*' Leigh Tabrett reflected upon her role as head of a Queensland Arts Department in Australia from 2005-2012 and provides acute insight into the greater need for valuing the Arts. She entered the Arts portfolio following eleven years as leader of the Queensland State Office of Higher Education and reflected:

> Health and education are funded because there is a clear understanding, supported by endless research and evaluation, that public money spent on those services produces significant benefits for individuals and the community- to the point where we accept that health and education are intrinsically valuable, and indeed measure human development globally on a scale in which they are key indicators. Funding for the arts and culture remains contested at every turn, because our policy thinking, structures and funding programs are overwhelmingly directed at Arts development, and we have yet to develop a framework for thinking about engagement at a policy level, and an effective language for representing the value of culture to the wellbeing of individuals and communities.(Tabrett 2014, 36)

Until there is a better model for recognising the value the Australian community derives from engagement with its own culture, cultural policy funding will remain at the whim of Arts Ministers and their ability to keep arts funding on the political agenda. As Tabrett reflected 'arts and culture have been marginalised by government. We don't have a consistent view of the role of government in funding the arts' (Tabrett 2014, 38). Nonetheless, 'Investment in arts and culture has many stated purposes at all three levels of government [in Australia]: to support diplomacy; [..]; to address intractable social and policy problems; to improve education outcomes- even some which are cultural, like telling our stories here and on the world stage' (Tabrett 2014, 39). Despite these

qualitative aims, until the evaluation of Arts initiatives recognises their extraordinary contribution to qualitative outcomes like building social trust and connection, significant opportunities to assist recent arrivals to settle into new communities may be overlooked. As this paper has argued, whilst this study context was Australia, the conundrum and its implications are global and since global migration patterns indicate that more people than ever before are on the move, the importance could not be greater of recognising provisions within international arts and cultural policy to use our best tools at facilitating refugee and migrant settlement.

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