



**Pride, shame, and the civic imaginary: Hull as UK City of Culture
and Brexit**

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Abstract

This thesis investigates how civic pride and shame have shaped the political cultures and cultural behaviours of Kingston Upon Hull between 2010-2020. In 2016, Hull voted ‘overwhelmingly’ to leave the European Union - a decision interpreted by many as inward looking and protectionist (eg. Bevington, 2018). In 2017, Hull hosted the UK City of Culture (UKCoC), an event promoted by policy makers as signifying the openness and cosmopolitanism of the host city. For some, a ‘Brexit’ city hosting UKCoC was paradoxical (Clavane, 2017), and that Hull’s political and cultural behaviours have been somehow contradictory. Through the conceptual and methodological framework of the civic imaginary, this study investigates that assumed paradox to develop multi-perspective views of Hull and its changing sense of self in response to Brexit and UKCoC.

Taking a multidimensional, mixed methods – though primarily ethnographic - approach, this interdisciplinary project analyses Hull’s civic imaginaries in relation to the wider political cultures and cultural behaviours locally and nationally. Discussion is also drawn from the critical analysis of key Hull2017 events and the critical discourse analysis of materials such as speeches, interviews and reports produced by Hull2017 decision makers and by key local and national figures in the Brexit debates. It examines how civic pride and civic shame are entwined within the Hull civic imaginary, furthering understandings of how these feelings, key to our sense of place and belonging, are felt, mobilised and put to work through multiple policy realms, modes and levels of governance, and ultimately, how they are lived and enacted through everyday political cultures.

I argue that Hull’s recent history has been marked by diverse, and diversely formulated modes of emotional governance that have influenced, and at times exploited local political cultures and feelings. Such strategies have contributed to the sometimes problematic re-imagining of residents’ senses of place and belonging. The thesis makes new observations about the role of civic pride and shame in the contemporary political culture and cultural behaviours of Hull, a relatively unresearched and under-represented city. It develops new understandings of Brexit at the scale of the city and nuances existing understandings of localised identities and political behaviours in ‘left-behind’ places. It presents new insights into the processes of production and reception of a UKCoC in a dynamic period of political change – finding that Hull’s status as both ‘Brexit’ city and UK City of Culture were not so paradoxical at all.

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List of abbreviations

ABP – Associated British Ports

ACE – Arts Council England

BBC – British Broadcasting Corporation

CDA – Critical Discourse Analysis

CME – Cultural Mega Event

CPPI – Culture, Place and Policy Institute

ECoC – European Capital / City of Culture ('City of Culture' until 2000, 'Capital of Culture' thereafter)

EDL – English Defence League

EEC – European Economic Community

ERYC – East Riding of Yorkshire Council

EU – European Union

HCC – Hull City Council

HDM – *Hull Daily Mail*

HDO – Hull Data Observatory

HSG – Humber Street Gallery

Hull2017 – Hull UK City of Culture 2017

IWTCWY – *I Wish to Communicate With You*

LOGG – *Land of Green Ginger*

NDA – Non-disclosure agreement

NRT – Non-representational theory

QVS – Queen Victoria Square

UKCoC – UK City of Culture

UKIP – United Kingdom Independence Party

Chapter 1 Introduction

1.1 Project background

In 2016, my home city of Kingston Upon Hull voted overwhelmingly to leave the European Union (EU). The following year, Hull staged the UK City of Culture (UKCoC). For some, a 'Brexit city' hosting UKCoC was paradoxical (Araujo, 2017), with the high leave vote interpreted as inward looking and protectionist, prompted by the populist, exclusionary narratives of ethno-nationalism (Stocker, 2017; Bevington, 2018). Yet, Martin Green, director of the Hull2017 programme, has claimed that the city 'refused' such narratives and that 'Brexit doesn't stop cities being [...] outward-looking' (quoted in Clavane, 2017). For Green, thanks to UKCoC Hull had become 'a forward-thinking, outward-facing bastion of cosmopolitanism' (ibid). Not everyone in the city agreed with him. Local artist and activist, Richard Lees, assessing an absence of critique regarding Hull2017, especially what he felt was an 'exclusion' of Hull's immigrant communities, has renamed the endeavour: 'UK City of Brexit Culture' (Lees, 2018). Whilst Green and Lees' comments are more anecdotal than evidence based, they signal wider processes at work: that Hull, its people and their futures, have been re-defined and re-imagined, and that Hull's UKCoC year was also somehow intricately bound with its political culture. Further, whilst perhaps limited, there was some resistance to the official narratives. My thesis investigates these positions, exploring their underlying agendas and wider political and cultural contexts.

I suggest that it is in the realm of the imagination that Hull residents have attempted to make sense of these alternate positions, narratives, and futures. Investigating Hull's imaginaries might therefore illuminate debates concerning Hull2017 and Brexit. Thus, my discussions are framed by the concept of *civic* imaginaries, by which I mean acts of inventive, prospective thinking about the societies in which we live (Baiocchi *et al.*, 2015). Tracing the history of civic imaginaries to ancient Athens, Loraux (1994) has argued that Athenian city leaders forged a sense of *collective* identity amongst citizens by promoting an idealised self-image through a range of public discourses. As was seen with the high proportion of Leave votes in the city, such *collective* imagining can act performatively and result in momentous political action. I use 'momentous' here, as the Brexit vote called to attention the simultaneous challenges facing liberal democracy and international integration in other nations such as the Trump presidency and the electoral gains made by the far-right in Germany and elsewhere in Europe, as well as the authoritarian policies of Viktor Orbán in Hungary, Narendra Modi in India, and Jair Bolsonaro in Brazil. Further, the vote for Brexit highlighted the deepening political divides that

cut across traditional party lines in Britain and continues to destabilise the constitution of the United Kingdom itself with the undermining of the Irish peace process and reignition of Scottish independence debates. Thus, there are potentially wider implications to my research, and Hull's recent political and cultural behaviours make the city a timely case study to further understandings of such changes to political cultures worldwide.

Writing any thesis concerning contemporary issues runs the risk that events will overtake the narrative. This is especially true of this project: the consequences of the 2016 referendum continue to emerge, Joe Biden defeated Donald Trump in the 2020 US presidential election instigating the storming of the Capitol building in Washington DC, and Coventry begins its year as UKCoC2021. The latter catalysing some discussion regarding the legacy of Hull2017 and a questioning of its triumphal narratives (Bissett and Howcroft, 2021; Corner and Munn, 2021). While very much a time-bounded festival that ceased to function after 2017, the *idea* of Hull2017 lives on as memories, resonances, and longer-term impacts on the lives of residents, cultural workers, and policy makers in the city and beyond. As an object of study, it is therefore still unfolding and incomplete. Similarly, 'Brexit' (as well as wider global politics), though often framed as a singular event, is in reality, a process that continues to move in multiple and contradictory directions. As I will discuss in Chapter 2, the act of, and debates about, leaving the EU have forced reconsiderations of significant structures in society which will take many years to resolve. Thus, Mondal (2020:60) questions how we can 'account for all [the] ways in which Brexit has charged the social imaginary of Twenty-First Century Britain, and galvanised forces that had lain dormant only to erupt in a furious mass of swirling, inchoate and perhaps uncontrollable social energy?'

More immediate is the Coronavirus pandemic, which, since late 2019 has seen 'lockdowns' occur across the globe, altering understandings and experiences of the public realm and forcing re-conceptualisations of the 'local'. In the UK, the Coronavirus lockdowns have severely impeded national and international travel, and made cultural gatherings such as festivals, live performance, and nightclubs illegal. Yet, due to digital connectivity, political protests have rapidly galvanised and spread across the globe, as seen in the women's rights #MeToo movement and the Black Lives Matter protests, demonstrating new conceptions of public space and civic responsibility. A lot has happened in the world during this research that could not have been foreseen at the outset that have huge implications for the findings and directions for future work. The circumstances in which I began researching Hull have changed

immeasurably. Given these rapid and profound changes which are producing new political environments for policymakers, I argue that my thesis has particular relevance for its contextualisation of cultural policymaking as well as cultural and political participation within this newly emergent and highly dynamic political sphere.

1.2 Why Hull?

Robinson (2006) argues that too much city discourse revolves around a small number of iconic cities such as New York, Paris or London, and that other urban centres, which together far outweigh these world cities in population size are ignored. She advises that we instead, address and develop greater understandings of 'ordinary' cities. I suggest that Hull is such an 'ordinary city' and that its ongoing attempts to grasp and reimagine its spirit of place makes it a distinctive site for understanding how civic imaginaries operate in the modern world. Once an economically thriving port city, Hull has now lost many of its traditional maritime functions, and like other post-industrial cities across the UK, Europe and United States, especially those where industry was core to the local economic base, has similarly experienced the consequences of socio-economic decline. Coupled with factors such as geographic marginalisation and negative external perceptions, the term 'structurally disadvantaged' has been applied to Hull and other places, that are poorly equipped for survival in today's neoliberal economy (Jonas *et al.*, 2017).¹ Additionally, within structurally disadvantaged places, neighbourhoods of concentrated socio-economic difficulties develop, characterised by social isolation, low educational attainment, poor access to jobs and by the inability to sustain basic institutional structures (Wilson, 1987; Krivo, 1996). As the authors of *The Civic Imagination* argue (Baiocchi *et al.*, 2015:11), such conditions can result in neighbourhoods feeling disaffected and turning their backs on politics,

¹ I understand 'Neoliberalism' as the driving ideology of late 20th century conservatism in the UK, USA and elsewhere. Born from the alleged failures of Keynesian economics to address the fiscal stagnation of the 1970s it is associated with policies of privatisation, deregulation, globalization, free trade, and austerity in order to increase the role of the private sector in the economy and society. It is, via Harvey (2007:2), a 'theory of political economic practices that proposes that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade.' The neoliberal state is therefore designed to 'preserve an institutional framework' that supports such practices through, for example, the 'military, defence, police, and legal structures and functions required to secure private property rights', including the 'proper functioning of markets' (ibid). Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher oversaw significant neoliberal reforms, including tax reduction, exchange rate reform, deregulation, and privatisation (Steger and Roy, 2010). Reforms continued by her successor John Major and, according to some, largely accepted and unaltered by Tony Blair's Labour administrations (Bone, 2010; Harvie, 2013b; Hickel, 2016).

whilst simultaneously turning '*toward* community'. My thesis narrates and draws out the place-based specificities of these processes occurring in Hull.

Scholars on the left suggest that accepting such a 'post-political' political culture, in exchange for nostalgic notions of 'community' has the potential to replace genuine political discourse and the undermining of democracy (Žižek, 1999; Mouffe, 2000). Modern democratic states require their citizens to engage in an appropriate way for them to function properly such as by voting and by keeping informed about the issues of the day (Almond and Verba, 1963). However, if citizens conclude that governments are damaged beyond repair then there is little incentive to engage with the political system (Jackson *et al.*, 2009). These are the circumstances in which populist parties and demagogues thrive. Thus, the need to locate and spark the civic imagination has taken on much greater urgency at a time when people are turning away from established systems of democratic politics. In Hull (as elsewhere in the UK) turnout at parliamentary, local, and European elections has been in decline. In the 2014 and 2018 local council elections, Hull (at 26.8% and 25% respectively) had the lowest turnout in the country (Electoral Commission, 2018), prompting local councillor Phil Webster to comment that people in Hull 'have lost faith in politics as a whole' (quoted in Young, 2018).

Structural disadvantage and accompanying social and cultural decline, has informed the rationale behind many recent bids for Cultural Mega Event (CME) initiatives such as UKCoC, which are perceived by city leaders as opportunities to revive city fortunes. This was seen explicitly in Hull's winning UKCoC bid, which developed narratives around the central transformational theme: 'a city coming out of the shadows' (Hull2017, 2013:3). An approach which received ringing endorsements from chair of the UKCoC judging panel, Phil Redmond and then Culture Secretary Maria Miller (gov.uk, 2013). Similarly, the five short-listed cities for UKCoC 2021 (Paisley, Swansea, Stoke, Sunderland and Coventry) all deployed the same 'cry for help' tactics in their bids that Hull foregrounded before its selection in 2013, forced by the competitive framing which pits places against each other to prove that they are the "shittiest" and therefore the most deserving of a prize which promises to transform their fortunes.

Interestingly, all but one of these cities (Paisley) also voted to leave the EU, with Stoke being the highest Leave voting city in the country.²

This is not a purely British phenomenon. In 2017, almost a quarter of the German city of Chemnitz's residents voted for the far right political party Alternative for Germany (AfD), and in 2018 it was the site of violent anti-immigrant protests. In 2025, Chemnitz will host the European Capital of Culture, seen as an opportunity by local leaders (and using language not dissimilar to that of Hull) for the city 'to show a lot of the unseen' and that 'it will give the city a boost' (Yorck von Wartenburg, 2020). Thus, whilst rooted in the specific locale of Hull and its recent political and cultural behaviours, this project potentially relates to the civic imaginaries of other locations and communities both in the UK and abroad. I argue that the abundance of stories (re)produced, (re)called and (re)invented in the debates leading up to June 23rd, 2016 and throughout Hull2017, make the civic imaginary a fertile concept for thinking about Hull and similarly structurally-disadvantaged, post-industrial cities during this period.

1.3 The civic imaginary

Narratives, images, and feelings through which civic imaginations are forged, shift across place and time. For the American civil rights movement in the 1950s, it might have been formed around the rhetoric of the black church with its talk of 'crossing the River Jordan' and entering the 'promised land'. This thesis finds both Hull2017 and the EU Referendum campaign were characterised by a proliferation of 'change' narratives. Dominating the Hull2017 discourse is the transformative power of culture: a common trope here being that through culture-led urban regeneration, Hull can look to a prosperous future, free of the 'crap town' or 'shit-hole' monikers that have dogged the city for decades. As for the EU Referendum, utopian slogans such as the Leave campaign's 'Let's take back control' and 'Believe in Britain' competed with Remain's 'Better Together' and 'Yes to Europe'. Whilst Remain's economic dystopia - dubbed 'Project Fear' - failed to outperform Leave's implied cultural annihilation due to immigrant swarms. Throughout history, creative works have informed political and social movements, such as Swift's novel *Gulliver's Travels*, understood in its time as an experiment in godlessness as well as satire of political parties; Brecht's play *The Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui* which

² In order of highest to lowest leave vote: Stoke – 69.4%, Sunderland – 61.3%, Coventry – 55.6%, Swansea – 51.5%.

allegorises Hitler's rise to power; and Ken Loach's *Cathy Come Home* which highlighted the plight of 1960s homelessness and dire social housing. Social change has also been fuelled by more informal cultural resources, ranging from folk practices to personal testimony, that have awoken people to shared perspectives expressing their hopes and fears for the future. Thus, the civic imaginary is a somewhat utopian endeavour, to provoke 'utopian thinking' which escapes 'the tyranny of the possible' and imagines alternative paths forward (Duncombe, 2012:xliv).

1.3.1 Pride and shame

For many of my respondents, the key civic feelings of pride and shame, were significantly to the fore, compounded by the multiple uncertainties of the post-referendum 'impasse' (Anderson *et al.*, 2019), and the promises of UKCoC, which for many, were yet to materialise. Indeed, as this thesis relates, Hull's journey via Hull2017 from 'crap town' to 'proud city' has become somewhat of a trope for policymakers. For example, Ros Kerslake, CEO of the Heritage Lottery Fund, a major funder of Hull2017, commented at the *Cultural Transformations* conference in 2018,³ that '[Hull2017's] increased pride statistic is the one to be most excited about'. As Chapter 6 explores, Kerslake's claim here is curious, for she is referring to a particularly fragile statistic, that shows a significant boost in civic pride at the beginning of 2017 that dwindles towards the end of the year, and in 2018 reverts almost back to pre-UKCoC levels. As Collins (2017) notes, civic pride is becoming more explicitly written in to local government policy, and I am interested in why policymakers (especially cultural policymakers such as Kerslake) are so interested, indeed 'excited' by pride. As Boris Johnson's post-Brexit government announce multiple 'levelling up' policies which enlist pride as a barometer of economic success, there appears to be increasing political value in the emotion.⁴ But what are the impacts of such policies on the communities whose pride is so eagerly sought? This is a critical lacuna my research begins to address.

In focussing primarily on pride and shame, I accept there is a danger of obscuring the myriad other feelings and experiences of Hull, and how they might also work to inform civic

³ A preliminary conference to disseminate and discuss early findings from the Hull2017 evaluations.

⁴ Section 1.3 of 'The Levelling Up Prospectus' (HM Treasury, 2021) states that 'Prosperity can be measured in many ways. However, for many people, the most powerful barometer of economic success is the positive change they see and the pride they feel in the places they call home'.

imaginaries. Certainly, my encounters with pride and shame were infused with, and accentuated by, many feelings and affects, such as loss, disappointment, embarrassment, trust (and mistrust), hope, and anger. However, such an all-encompassing survey is beyond the scope and resources of this project, and I have been guided by Scheff's claim that pride and shame 'may be the most powerful forces in the human world' (1994:277). Forces which, when coupled with place and a place's inherent issues of boundary, governance, and identity, can be significantly amplified and politicised. Thus, I am attempting to elucidate, through the discussion and analysis of micro- and meso levels of social action and experience, the complex interplay of politics, culture, place, and emotion in Hull. A city that, as I outline in Chapter 4, has multiple and messy histories with Europe and European political structures.

1.4 Research questions and approach

My research framework seeks to examine how pride and shame are entwined with the Hull civic imaginary and to deepen our understandings of how these feelings, key to our sense of place and belonging, are felt, mobilised and put to work through multiple realms and relationships: from policy, through management speak and marketing, in the dramaturgies and semiotics of Hull2017, and ultimately how they are lived and enacted through everyday political cultures.

My key research questions are:

- 1) How, if at all, did UKCoC and Brexit inform the civic imaginaries of Hull?
- 2) What can we learn about Hull's political and cultural behaviours through the Brexit and Hull2017 moments by exploring the city's civic imaginaries?
- 3) How are civic pride and civic shame engaged in these processes?

As Chapter 3 details, my research methodology involves the use of multidimensional, mixed methods and primarily ethnographic techniques, with understandings arrived at via inductive analytical processes. This study draws on original qualitative data from interviews and focus groups, providing multi-perspective views of the city and its recent history. Discussion will also be drawn from critical analysis of Hull2017 events and generated through the critical discourse analysis of materials such as speeches, interviews and reports produced by Hull2017 decision makers and key local and national figures in the Brexit debates.

1.5 Contribution to knowledge

In addition to several policy recommendations (see Chapter 8), this research makes original contributions to the study of CoC mega-events and furthers understandings about the roles of emotion in political culture, cultural behaviour and cultural policy making. Investigations of the impact of CoCs on the political culture of their host cities are surprisingly limited in number. While studies of CoCs and their regenerative potential attract diverse academic disciplines, the canon is dominated by their economic and social regeneration agendas. Explicit attention to the intersections of cultural and political representation in CoC mega events as well as political and cultural behaviours more generally, is rare. Such studies as they exist, predominantly focus on European and ECoC cases, in some instances (such as Glasgow's ECoC1990) taking place within very different political contexts. Further, whilst many CoC studies refer to programming policies, broader curatorial trends and contexts, there is a notable absence of detailed analyses attending to the *content* of specific events – what they might mean in and of themselves, what they might mean as part of a CoC, and what they might mean to residents and other audiences (though see Nicholas, 2019). My project contributes original insights through the inclusion of critical analysis of (and a small selection of resident responses to) Hull2017 events.

Further, as García and Cox (2013) have observed, quantitative enquiries of CoC mega-events have dominance over qualitative. They argue that due to a lack of appropriate methods, the kind of impacts of CoC mega-events I investigate here, are rarely researched. One might argue (as is also perhaps typical in other fields), that CoC researchers have tended to follow established methods. Thus, through the innovative framework of the civic imaginary, my thesis makes inroads toward revealing the potential qualitative avenues that CoCs research might make in questioning and evaluating their broader societal impacts. At a time when some Monitoring and Evaluation units are advocating more social impact metrics to demonstrate the success of CMEs and often enlisting 'civic pride' as a 'key outcome' (e.g. Needlands et al., 2020; 2021), my thesis is perhaps a valuable critical intervention. I show how the emotions of place contributed to Hull's UKCoC year being largely uncritically accepted as a 'triumph' in the city and beyond, perhaps evidencing a cultural populism in Hull akin to the 'anti-political' populism that marked some elements of the Brexit debate. Despite the city's claims of rebellion and 'freedom', the thesis finds Hull's recent history to be dominated by a relatively weak critical public sphere in which top down quasi-authoritarian approaches have been allowed to flourish.

A contribution to the qualitative research methodologies literature is also anticipated, specifically the use of performance for political science research. Much of the published research on Brexit relies upon quantitative methods, with qualitative accounts relatively scarce. My thesis contains richly descriptive first-hand accounts of how civic pride and shame permeate Hull's contemporary political culture and nuance existing contributions to the Brexit debates, especially those which attempt to speak for the 'left behind' or 'left behind places'. Further, these debates often consider the UK's relations with the EU exclusively at the national level, whereas this study is one of the first to address the subject at the scale of the city. Finally, whilst there are several case-studies which explore the concept of civic imaginaries in the United States and Latin America, it is less established in the British literature. A gap that this project begins to address.

1.6 Thesis outline

In the following two chapters I set out the critical and methodological approach of the thesis. The literature review contextualises my research in keeping with the interdisciplinary nature of Human Geography, drawing on readings from (amongst others) cultural studies, urban studies, political science, psychology and behavioural science, affect theory and art criticism. Through these readings I work towards an understanding of the civic imaginary as a framework within which to analyse Hull's political and cultural behaviours. The literature review also sets out my understandings of key terms such as 'populism', 'affect' and 'emotion' as well as highlights my understandings of civic pride, civic shame, and the backgrounds to the two key events of this thesis: Hull2017 and Brexit. The methodology chapter outlines the mixed methods and 'multidimensional' process I have undertaken, detailing the specific innovative methods of data collection and analyses.

Chapter 4 is intended as a 'way in' to the rest of the thesis. It acts as an introduction to Hull's recent social, economic, cultural and political past - and details its modern (post-war) history as a 'proud' industrial city in decline. This chapter introduces key figures from the city's past and present, as well as the key locales which recur in later chapters. I outline Hull's awkward relationships with neighbouring authorities as well as its changing political forces – once a staunchly Labour city, this commitment to the left can no longer be taken for granted. Chapter 4 also begins to fold in the responses of my participants, and through their voices explore some of the dynamics of civic pride and shame which will be investigated further through Chapters 5-8.

Chapters 5, 6 and 7 develop from Chapter 4, and apply key learnings to the specific instances of Brexit and UKCoC. In Chapter 5, I argue for more qualitatively based understandings of Brexit's causes and impacts and that more attention should be paid to regional imaginings and feelings. In Hull, exploring Brexit in this way reveals new understandings about the role of place-based shame in populist and anti-political cultures, as well as the role of civic pride in the formation (and dissolution) of political allegiances. Chapters 6 and 7 focus on Hull2017, and how it produced a dramaturgy that played on the city's sensitive self-identity. I show how UKCoC management and city leaders mobilised a form of emotional governance, which stirred civic pride within residents, yet also strategised to limit public critique of the initiative. Whilst there may be many positive long-term benefits from civic pride, and from Hull2017 more generally (though it is too early to tell), I suggest that it was a missed opportunity to 'hold a mirror up' to the city and to ask more probing, thoughtful questions of itself, as well as the country. Finally, Chapter 8 concludes the thesis, draws my arguments together and assesses the relative merits of the civic imaginary as a theoretical framework. Whilst I do not agree entirely with Lees' re-titling of Hull2017 as 'UK City of Brexit Culture', I understand both Brexit (in Hull) and Hull2017 to be of a local political culture that is increasingly populist and anti-political, and perhaps evidences the lived experience of Berlant's cruel or toxic optimism, 'which can suture someone or a world to a cramped and unimaginative space of committed replication, *just in case* it will be different' (2011:259). I make suggestions for the value of the civic imaginary in future research, as well as identify other areas for future work, including several policy recommendations.

Chapter 2 Literature review

2.1 Research context: Human Geography and interdisciplinarity

Human Geography is a discipline with the potential to examine a broad range of problems that ‘encompass a complex mix of phenomena and processes’ (Baerwald, 2010:493). It is inherently interdisciplinary, with the ability to critically address political culture and cultural behaviour as spatial phenomena across analytical divides of ‘social’, ‘political’, ‘economic’ and ‘cultural’ (Waite, 2008:514). Bell and Oakley (2015:8), point out ‘the importance of thinking spatially or geographically about cultural policy’, and of the place specific analysis of local implementations of policy; Anderson et al (2019:8), argue that geographically specific accounts of Brexit and its aftermaths are ‘critical’. Similarly, Volkering (2001:400), notes the ‘territorial nature of policy’, arguing that policy is ‘a territorial or spatial concept’ through its metaphors of ‘mapping’ or through notions of ‘boundaries’. Bell and Oakley further observe that the geography of policy is more than metaphorical – for policy is shaped by, and also shapes, geography (2015:9).

This raises questions of scale, and whilst my project is set primarily within the urban, it also considers relationships of Hull to its nation, the supra-national body of the EU and as part of global (or at least ‘global north’) trends. Crucially, as well as making connections ‘beyond’ or ‘above’ the urban, it makes a detailed investigation of some of the impacts of urban cultural policy within the minds and bodies of Hull’s citizens. Thus, a significant scale of my work is the body, a zone that has often been neglected in geographical analysis ‘and has also received less attention as a site of cultural policy too’ (Bell and Oakley, 2015:11). As I will discuss further, bodily attributes such as deportment, manners, affects and emotions have been a resource for policy makers, or a target of policy, whether in terms of stirring national or civic pride, or in disciplining certain people into more ‘civilised’ forms of behaviour. Thus, my project aims to contribute to the debates concerning the relationship(s) between the state, emotions, and power – what Heaney calls the ‘emotional state’ (Heaney, 2019). For Heaney, the ‘emotional state’,

Refers to the various ways in which the nation-state has been directly and indirectly involved in the construction and deconstruction of the emotional life of the polity; the degree to which it reflects (and constructs) dominant emotional regime(s) and norms; and how these processes change through time (Heaney, 2019:225).

Rather than a nation, my enquiry is about a city, and focusses on the specific imbrications of political cultures and cultural behaviours, and their impacts on the emotional life and imaginaries of that city.

In this chapter, I set out the academic context of the thesis, which combines perspectives from urban studies, cultural theory – especially the cultural politics of emotion, cultural policy, the study of emotion in politics and political imaginaries, sociology, performance studies and what is increasingly termed ‘Brexit studies’, as well as their overlaps and the gaps in between.

McGuigan (2006:138), in his description of Cultural Studies – which this project might also align itself with – acknowledges its openness ‘to all sorts of borrowings and offerings, which makes it difficult to pin down’. This issue is further compounded here, given the fast-moving nature of my objects of study which are still in process and incomplete, yet producing vast and rapidly evolving literatures. There are however, four distinct areas to draw attention to:

- 1) The concept of the ‘civic imaginary’, including theoretical understandings of ‘the civic’ and ‘the imaginary’ as well as its close association with the more established notions of ‘political culture’.
- 2) The cultural politics of emotion, in particular the various understandings of civic pride, civic shame, and the concept of territorial stigmatisation. I also survey the developing literatures of emotional governance and the affective dynamics of policy making.
- 3) Hull 2017 and cultural mega-events more broadly, focussing on issues of place identity and imaginaries, particularly through the contested discourse of culture-led urban regeneration.
- 4) Brexit – in particular, the production of ‘Brexit identities’ and some of the emotional politics of those identities.

2.2 Civic imaginaries: Definitions and key writings

In comparison with social, urban, or political imaginaries, which as I shall discuss, have been the subject of seminal writings, the ‘civic imagination’ is relatively untheorized. Despite growing interest, especially in North and Latin America (e.g. Cruz, 2011; Baiocchi *et al.*, 2015; Jenkins *et al.*, 2020), as a discrete concept, it remains somewhat vague. In this section I work towards a definition, via considerations of ‘civic’ and ‘imaginaries’ and outline my understanding of it as a space where the arts, humanities, and social and political sciences intersect. It is, I argue, an arena that facilitates exploration of the political consequences of

cultural representations and the cultural roots of political participation, and therefore a suitable framework for my investigations in Hull.

2.2.1 Civics

The notion of 'civic' has varied meanings. As 'civics', though now somewhat outdated (and in the UK tainted by associations with Imperialism, Colonialism and Victorian paternalism), it can mean the comparative study of government (e.g. Apsa Committee on Instruction in Political Science, 1922). I borrow Philo's (2015:357) understandings of the term, to mean a 'connection one feels with a larger community', 'relating to the person as a member of society or to civil affairs'; or, with specific reference to urban locations, 'relating to, or derived, from a city or citizen'. Sennett (1990) cites Isodore of Seville as first making the distinction in the sixth century between *urbs/urban* (the stones laid for the practical purposes of shelter, commerce and warfare) and *civitas*, the structures of feeling, ritual, custom and belief that take form within it. This rests on a division between profane and sacred space which finds its contemporary academic resonance in what Cohen (1997:74) calls 'the prosaics and poetics of socio-spatial analysis'. For Cohen, the first operates the logistics of urban policy, planning and administration; the second 'on the lived cultures and narratives through which the daily business of living, loving, working, travelling and playing around in the city are conducted by different groups of citizens' (ibid). This is similar to Rykwert's notion of the town as 'shaped by impersonal forces' (2000:4-5). For Rykwert,

Feelings, and desires governed the makers and builders of towns, that the city did not grow, as the economists taught, by quasi-natural laws, but was a willed artifact, a human construct in which many conscious and unconscious factors played their part. It appeared to have some of the interplay of the conscious and unconscious that we find in dreams (ibid).

Thus, to investigate *the civic* is to consider what makes people feel connected to, or associated with, something larger than themselves. An assembly of 'others', a 'community' or a 'society', and importantly, with a collective sense of *place*. Mazzoleni (1990:97) describes the city, as 'the largest of the body's possible Doubles' in that it is the container which 'supports, surrounds and metabolizes the [...] family and small social groups, ensuring the continuity of symbolic exchanges at the level of collective life'. For Mazzoleni, the phrase 'my city' therefore refers to 'emotions as deep as those concerning "my home"' and can be its substitute (ibid). In this way the city is a source of both our collective and individual identity. It is,

Where our "we" takes shape; where "we" know our individuality in its difference from what is "out there" and "beyond" [...] we can draw on the city's "concentration of energy" to animate our own happiness and enjoyment (Robins, 1995:49).

As I will describe throughout this thesis, my engagements with Hull's civic imaginaries were simultaneously personal and public, and with the powerful emotional dynamics of 'us', 'we', 'them' and 'I'.

Anderson's notion of an imagined community (1991:4-5) is particularly helpful to an understanding of the civic, as he uses 'imagined' in the sense that people may only know a few of the many who comprise their community but nevertheless share a common bond. A familiar example is the passionate singing of national anthems during international sporting fixtures where 'the nation' comes together, or the weekly meeting of football fans accompanied by the performance of songs and chants expressing a collective kinship with their club. Similarly, with respect to race and ethnicity, Hall (1997:349-350) emphasizes 'cultural politics' in the construction of identity, a process in which people locate themselves as members of a 'knowable community'. These collective acts of identity making, for Nicholson (2005:94), can forge a deeper sense of community belonging, specifically *because* of their shared interpretations of experience. This has proved crucial to existing understandings of Brexit, where (for example) senses of 'Englishness' have been shown to increase the likelihood of voting Leave (Henderson *et al.*, 2016).

Civics can be imagined and enacted across different spatial scales, in which diverse contributions are made by people in places that matter to them, from the nearness of a town square, village green or local library to the transcontinental flows of migrants and refugees and attempts at European or other transnational citizenships. At these varying scales of imagining, the vital theme is that of *connectedness*: of feeling associated with others in ways that 'sentiments of concern, pride and even enthusiasm arise' (Philo *et al.*, 2015:358). Therefore, to research civics is to explore the moments when peoples and places have (or have not) cultivated such connectedness. This process, and its implied constructions of power and authority, has been defined by Loraux (1994), as the 'civic imaginary'.

In early modern England, civic identities and images were often defined by portraits of mayors, aldermen and other public figures; and in the Victorian period, many see British civic culture as achieving its zenith (Shapely, 2012:311). Debates regarding the civic, community empowerment and local devolution are currently undergoing a resurgence in popular and political discourse (e.g. Wills, 2016; Giovannini, 2018; Katz and Nowak, 2018; Landry, 2018; Hopkins, 2020). A resurgence that found a keen impetus through the EU Referendum campaigns.⁵ As Wills explains:

Over the past 30 years, for a combination of reasons, momentum has been building to revisit the inherited spatial architecture that underpins politics in the UK. There is now a growing consensus about the need for greater devolution, decentralisation and localisation (2016:1).

The rhetoric of community empowerment and the decentralisation of power have long featured in British politics, though some question the political will to turn this into action (e.g. Cox *et al.*, 2014; Berry and Giovannini, 2019), especially when compared to federal European countries such as Germany, Belgium and Austria. Whilst more recently the strongest advocates of this agenda (at least in rhetoric) have been on the right of the political spectrum, support for localism has also featured prominently in Labour Party policy. Tristram Hunt's (2004) call to learn from the development of the Victorian city and to revive levels of civic pride, was supported by David Miliband in 2005 when he became the new minister for communities and local government.⁶ Under David Cameron's leadership, this agenda was promoted as the Big Society. Philip Blond, founder of the think tank ResPublica and author of the influential book *Red Tory*, which advocates a greater role for civil society in Britain, described the Big Society concept as 'a complex of political and economic ideas that attempts to empower citizens rather than the state or the market' (Blond, 2011; see also Norman, 2010). However, many, including the then Archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams (echoed in 2018 by Archbishop Justin Welby),⁷ argued that the concept suffered from a lack of definition, designed to 'conceal a deeply damaging withdrawal of the state from its

⁵ As well as being heightened in the response to the Coronavirus pandemic (Domínguez *et al.*, 2020; O'Dwyer, 2020; Preston and Firth, 2020).

⁶ In his first speech as minister, Miliband stated that civic pride had to be put at the centre of urban renewal (Miliband, 2005).

⁷ I refer here to Welby's 'crisis of capitalism' speech which sparked indignation from Conservative politicians and commentators (see Parker, 2018).

responsibilities to the most vulnerable' (BBC News, 2012). Although use of the term 'Big Society' had subsided by the mid-term of the coalition government, its key elements remain at the core of centre-right localism debates and, with the advent of Brexit, have seen something of a resurgence, with the Johnson government's delivery of a series of 'levelling up' initiatives such as the Stronger Towns Fund (Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government, 2019). Though dogged by accusations of 'pork barrel politics' (Hanretty, 2021; Jennings *et al.*, 2021), these have geographically targeted spending across England's regions.

As Wills explains (2015:189), 'the contemporary localist regime involves a civic offer being made to a range of actors and in turn, its outcome will depend upon the response of those on the ground'. As such, the success of this ideology has been questioned, particularly as issues relating to community engagement rely heavily upon volunteerism and active citizens. This itself, is a contested issue, as under continuing austerity measures, funding cuts to public services, such as libraries, schools, and hospitals, and subsequent closures of public amenities, have resulted in volunteers stepping in to keep vital services running. This is a significantly uneven process, geographically and socially, as capacities for volunteer engagements vary (Mohan, 2012:1121-1129). It also comes at the same time as public austerity is resulting in funding cuts to the voluntary sector itself, a disinvestment that is undermining the capacity of third-sector organisations to sustain their presence in a landscape of escalating need. It could be argued that there is a danger of structurally disadvantaged areas such as Hull declining further under proposals for neighbourhood renewal centred around volunteering and community action, unless ways of increasing levels of participation amongst citizens are found. As I shall discuss in Chapter 6, Hull's UKCoC year galvanised such community action, being recognised as one of the initiative's more significant legacy achievements (CPPI, 2019; Morpeth, 2020).

Although nearly 250 years old, the work of Adam Ferguson is of striking relevance to this discussion. Ferguson wrote at a time of major transformations in social and economic life, precipitated by increased international trade, surges in urban growth and the emergence of commercial markets. As an increasing urban population from disparate communities engaged in market relations, political theorists sought to imagine structures that could generate civic commitment based in a morality that would restrict the modern individual's new-found freedom. In *An Essay on the History of Civil Society* (1782), Ferguson suggested that it was people's 'natural' desire to maximize affective arousal. Hill (2006:19), notes that Ferguson's

idea of liberty required a dynamic community that could counter political corruption and authoritarianism. Thus, the social improves the individual and society, and is the energy of human life. Ferguson's argument for fostering civic feeling was predicated on the belief that 'under commercial conditions, everyone (or rather, every white male of majority age) is self-sufficient and therefore enabled to participate civically' (Hill, 2006:17). In *Civil Society*, Ferguson sought to identify and amplify individuals' affective connections to each other in order to stave off the threats to communal life that he associated with capitalism and the power of the state, while maintaining that economic inequality and social hierarchies were necessary for individual industry (McDaniel, 2013:87). His writing promoted social relations as key to managing the tensions associated with a developing capitalist economy without seeking to address or challenge its structural shifts. Thus, we might understand Ferguson's tension 'managing' as a forebear to today's strategies of 'emotional' or 'affective' governance, which, I shall argue were key elements of both the Brexit debates and Hull's City of Culture year.

As the divisions of labour took hold and territories grew, Ferguson argued that citizens must be offered affective 'occasions to act as the member of a public' (Ferguson, 1782:10; Hill, 2006). In his polemic *The Morality of Stage-Plays Seriously Considered* (1757), Ferguson proposes theatre as one such site for civic performance, sketching a correlation between theatre and citizenship, similar to Schiller's *The Stage as a Moral Institution* (1784). What differentiates Ferguson's position from Schiller, is his lengthy defence of theatre's economic value. Ferguson counters imagined concerns that 'industry and commerce have declined [...] since the Playhouse was first opened' with a declaration that 'they have increased' (1757:17). He situates theatre's positive relationship to the wider labour economy, giving it an enabling role in a trickle-down system from the wealthy theatregoer to the industrious poor (ibid. p.25). Most strikingly, is Ferguson's argument of the theatre's civic responsibility, because of its centrality to the city's retention of an affluent class, which he states,

Are necessary to the order and good of society, and to the maintenance of the poor. If we shut up our places of entertainment, and deprive people of distinction of that society and those amusements which they have a relish for, they must tire of living among us; and the few who yet remain will chuse to remove to another place, where they will not meet with popular antipathy, on account of their most commendable amusements. Then indeed the money they expend would be lost to the poor of their native country. This and every other city would feel, in such a case, that the residence of persons of fortune is necessary to give any number of tradesmen, and industrious poor, the means of subsistence (ibid. pp.25-26).

In part, theatre was good, Ferguson claimed, because it attracted and promised cultural distinction to the 'right' kind of people. Ferguson's argument for the role culture plays in maintaining a competitive urban economy, prefigures affirmative contemporary discourses associated with the cultural industries and the creative city – that cultural activities offer opportunities to *feel* like a citizen and contribute to urban social life. Equally, they contribute to the economy because they produce experiences that can be commodified and can attract and maintain a new economically mobile class. As I shall discuss, Richard Florida's *Creative Class* is one such example. To return to localism, Ferguson's arguments for a feeling public outlined in *Civil Society* also seems to have served as another inspiration for recent neoliberal appeals to social entrepreneurship and austerity. Conservative political pundit David Brooks appears to recall Ferguson in his 2011 book *The Social Animal: The Hidden Sources of Love, Character and Achievement*, with his claims that 'decision making is an inherently emotional business' (2011:20). A book that David Cameron, in his May 2011 speech on the Big Society directly referenced.⁸

Such appropriative strategies by successive Conservative regimes and other neoliberal governments globally, have led many on the left to berate a failure of progressive thinking in this arena, especially following the 2008 financial crisis. Klein, for example (quoted in Hartnell, 2020), has stated that 'Neoliberalism has polluted our imagination, made collective action suspect', Mulgan (2020:3), that 'the world faces a deficit of social imagination', and Knight (2020b), argues that 'if any model is to work, it has to engage the emotions of our collective psyche'. As such, there is a growing literature attempting to fashion a return to a civics based on solidarity and social responsibility (e.g. Frase, 2016; Bregman and Manton, 2018; Glaser, 2018; Monbiot, 2018; Bastani, 2019; Hopkins, 2020). All which position the 'imagination' as a realm wherein the ideological battle can be won.

Yet, this communitarianism, as it might be called, has historically been criticised for authoritarian moralising, and use of stigmatisation to oppress and shame people to conform (Lund, 2000). Kymlicka (1993:208-221), has argued that communitarian oppression can result

⁸ See the section titled 'Approaching Policy' (Cameron, 2011).

in community-wide subordination that limits people's individual potential and threatens their psychological well-being; and Phillips (1993:195), that:

In their celebration of the ecstasy of belonging, communitarian writers exhibit a frightening forgetfulness about the past. They fail to acknowledge that the quest for community often involves domination for some and subordination for others. In attacking post-Enlightenment liberalism and the politics of rights, communitarian theorists threaten to rob individuals of their most basic protections against abuses of power. In emphasizing the importance of community for people's everyday lives, communitarians fail to see that it is attachment rather than membership that is general human value.

Such criticisms have led contemporary communitarians, especially those who define as 'responsive communitarians' (Etzioni, 1994; 1996), to stress their approaches as based on open participation, dialogue, and shared values rather than a return to traditional communities and socially conservative, discriminatory practices. As I discuss in Chapters 4 and 5, these shifting values and approaches, form part of the political context in Hull, and in particular the Labour Party's 'mountain to climb' (SurrIDGE, 2020b), if it is to bridge the divides exposed and exacerbated by Brexit, between its leadership and 'traditional' supporters.

2.2.2 Imaginaries

Scholarly understandings and applications of 'imaginaries' abound, from Aristotle, via Kant to the present day. Gregory (1993) has written of *Geographical Imaginations*, Mills (1959) of *The Sociological Imagination* and Taylor, *Modern Social Imaginaries* (2004). All of which revolve around being able to see the relationship between personal troubles and public issues. As Flinders points out (2020:26), Mills' analysis explicitly focussed on 'feelings and emotions in the context of rapid social change', where:

The very shaping of history now outpaces the ability of men to orientate themselves in accordance with cherished values. And which values? Even when they do not panic, men often sense that older ways of feeling and thinking have collapsed and that newer beginnings are ambiguous to the point of moral stasis' (Mills, 1959:4)

Through the spatial framing Mills introduces ('orientate' with 'values'), we can understand 'trapped' as feeling confused, fearful, anxious, and adrift. As I discuss later, we can thus read spatially into contemporary debates concerning the 'cultural backlash', or the 'left behind'.

Spinoza's seventeenth century theories continue to inform a plethora of work on *political* imaginaries, including Anderson's *Imagined Communities* (1991) and Ezrahi's *Imagined Democracies* (2012). In modern philosophy, the concept emerges from French post-Heideggerian phenomenology (Adams, 2012:30), and particularly Sartre's *The Imaginary* (1940/2004). Lacan (1977), inspired by Sartre, advanced his psychoanalytic system, dividing human existence into the 'symbolic', 'the imaginary' and 'the real'.

Anderson's ground breaking work has somewhat overshadowed Castoriadis's earlier *The Imaginary Institution of Society* (1975/1997), which posits that the creative imagination is universal and involves a combination of individual and social processes. Tucker (2005), explains that for Castoriadis, the individual's ability to imagine new worlds has the potential to enter public life, developing existing patterns of thought and behaviour – but that (and in a similar formulation to Ferguson – and Marx for that matter) the social world forms the imagination in the first place, limiting its potential to institute new worlds. In other words, people actively imagine, but not in conditions of their own choosing. Castoriadis' conception brings about 'new ways of thinking and acting, that have their origin in the individual and collective imaginary' (Wallace, 2000:111), and he calls this creative and collective ability the 'social instituting imaginary' (Castoriadis, 1975/1997). As such, political activity involves both *imagining* new worlds and *instituting* them (Baiocchi *et al.*, 2015:21). Following Castoriadis, Ricoeur (1983/2012) incorporated the term 'social imaginary' into his phenomenological hermeneutics, whilst Arnason reconstructs Castoriadis's 'imaginary significations' to 'interpretative patterns' in such ways that underscore the 'hermeneutical dimension of social-historical creation' and the 'imaginary element' that Castoriadis neglects (Arnason, 1989; Adams, 2012:31).

Of political imaginaries, Nowotny (2014), states that they are neither right nor wrong and that they have the potential to be causative and performative. Additionally, given their presence in the public sphere, political imaginaries can acquire power by shaping individual and collective minds. They can thus influence public engagement by permeating institutions, public discourse, laws, regulations, and procedures. For Ezrahi (2012), it is this performativity of collective imagining that transforms mere imagination into effective and powerful imaginaries. As Arendt proposed, the imagination 'brings about the power to begin anew through words and deeds, to think in unanticipated ways about recent events, to make sense of their multiple meanings with others' (in Wedeen, 2007:67). It enables us to 'see and understand everything

that is too far away from us as though it were our own affair' (Arendt and Kohn, 1994:323). Thus, to imagine, is to enable a 'crucial democratic capacity: "enlarged thinking"' (Baiocchi *et al.*, 2015:22). For Baiocchi *et al.* (2015), when people imagine alternative futures, especially in moments when they perceive their democracy as failing, they are making a judgement about the political system they currently inhabit.

2.2.3 Urban imaginaries

Bianchini (2006) provides a rich review of the structures of thinking about cities, in particular the various concepts of how they are imagined. For Bianchini (2006:13), the 'urban mindscape [...] exists between the physical landscape of a city and people's visual and cultural perceptions of it'. It consists of 'local and external images of a city', found in,

Media coverage, stereotypes, jokes and "conventional wisdom"; representations of a city in music, literature, film, the visual arts and other types of cultural production; myths and legends; tourist guidebooks; city marketing and tourism promotion literature; views of residents, city users and outsiders, expressed, for example, through surveys and focus groups (*ibid.*).

Bianchini quotes Bloomfield's assertion that it is also important to consider other components of the urban mindscape, such as,

The special knowledge of 'environmentally sensitive' groups like cyclists and city walkers, or of 'confidantes and gossip mongers like hairdressers and taxi drivers'; urban symbols and memorabilia, including 'religious and civic rituals and celebrations'; 'the institutional filters which operate as gatekeepers of collective memory', including local history museums and published histories of the city; the spatial practices of different individuals and social groups (Bloomfield, 2006 quoted in Bianchini, 2006).

As such the 'soul and cultures of a city' are as relevant as the physical (Amendola, 1997).

Bianchini notes the similarities in the concepts 'urban imaginary' and 'urban mindscape', in that both are mental constructs of the city and both include media and cultural representations of meanings and memories (2006). However, the notion of 'urban imaginary' emphasises 'desire, fantasy and imagination' as explored by Silva (2003), who defines urban imaginaries as 'symbolic, psychic indicators of unconscious desires and social constructions impacting on urban reality'. Similarly, Raban's notion of the 'the soft city' (2008), invites considerations of city identity through imagination, illusion, fiction and performance. For Raban, the city is soft, mouldable like clay and implores the individual to re-imagine and re-

invent its identity. This city is more 'real' than the 'hard city' located on maps, in statistics, and in buildings (CPPI, 2018:127).

Donald (1997:181), similarly picks up the notion of non-existence in his comment that 'to imagine is to make present to [the] mind's eye what is absent'. The modern city, for Donald, is a 'combination of information and affects', mediated through 'a powerful set of political, sociological and cultural associations (ibid).' It is therefore, 'an eternal, impossible question of how we strangers can live together' (ibid). Donald quotes Jacobs' famous argument that 'Designing a dream city is easy; rebuilding a living one takes imagination' (2016:129). Thus, for Donald, rebuilding a living city 'requires less a utopian plan than a poetics of political imagination' (ibid). The imaginary city then, partially overlaps the immaterial, and both play powerful roles in shaping the *real* city – whether that be its spatial planning and architecture, or the lived experience of its everyday culture and politics. Abstracting further, Raymond Williams' 'structure of feeling' (2001), is a way of attempting to grasp the essence or inner life of a place. A concept that Taylor et al. (2002), draw on extensively in their studies of Manchester and Sheffield. Similarly, Bell & de-Shalit have coined the phrase 'spirit of cities' to show how the ethos of a city is expressed in political, cultural, and economic life, and importantly, how pride in such an ethos can oppose the homogenizing tendencies of globalisation to 'curb the excesses of nationalism' (Bell and de-Shalit, 2013).

Thus, many contemporary practices in cities, both the everyday and especially those by artists, can be described as 'more than representational', contesting the dominance of visual signs by celebrating other sensory dimensions such as smell, taste, and touch (see Chapter 3). Given that emotions appear so frequently in my field work, both as considered thoughts (i.e., when participants *describe* or *state* their feelings) as well as viscerally experienced (i.e., when a participant clenches their fists in anger), I have come to understand them as a key feature of Hull's civic imaginary. As the editors of *Emotional Geographies* argue: 'understanding the emotional dimensions of artistic, political, and commercial representations in relation to their various spatial and temporal contexts is [...] a project of considerable importance and urgency' (Bondi et al., 2016:11).

2.2.4 The civic imaginary

That the imagination is creative but also constrained by circumstance, and that it is also bound up with understanding and judgement, are central to the conceptualisation of the civic imaginary (Baiocchi *et al.*, 2015:22). For the civic imagination is concerned not only with possible alternative futures (such as economic equality and effectively representative systems of government), but also about how we think about other people and our roles, responsibilities, and actions within civic life. Civic imaginations therefore provide a conceptual framework against which we judge the present communities we inhabit and are informed by specific experiences and events. They respond to cultural traditions and familiar symbols. Importantly, civic imaginations 'come alive' in groups (Baiocchi *et al.*, 2015:23).

Such utopian possibilities of the city have inspired generations of scholars (e.g. Lefebvre *et al.*, 1996; Pinder, 2002; Lees, 2004) and I suggest that the civic imaginary follows such a lineage. For Lefebvre, *l'imaginaire urbain* is essential in constructing an 'experimental utopia for a new urbanism' (Weiss-Sussex and Bianchini, 2006:16). Kofman and Lebas (in Lefebvre *et al.*, 1996:16), explain that 'experimental utopia' is 'the exploration of what is humanly possible based upon the image and the imaginary [...] constantly subjected to critique and referring to a problematic' which is derived from the analysis of reality. Pinder, whose influential work developing theoretical relationships between art, performance and the city, has identified several strands of utopian urbanism that express their desires for better ways of being and living (Pinder, 2002). Such a desire works utopically to reveal the 'gap between present conditions and desired alternatives' (Blomley, 2007:58). Thus, cities in the imagination exist somewhere in between the Lacanian real of concrete space and the subjective realm of our conception and experience of that space (Collie, 2011:425). Their stories contribute to the way we make sense of and inhabit cities. Investigating imaginaries can reveal utopian aspirations and hidden desires. These hidden desires form a significant element of civic imaginaries, and my thesis investigates how they have found expression through Hull's recent cultural behaviours and political cultures.

2.3 Political culture

The concept of 'Political Culture' was first proposed by Almond (1956) and subsequently developed in *The Civic Culture* (Almond and Verba, 1963). Despite its theoretical fuzziness, it is an attempt to provide a framework for understanding the intermediate role culture plays in

the relation between citizens and the 'dynamics of the polity structure, organisation and operation' (Voinea and Neumann, 2020:335). Almond's initial formulation defined political culture as the 'particular pattern of orientations to political action' (1956:396), which was revised to the more individual-level definition of 'distribution of patterns of orientation' (Almond and Verba, 1963:15). In his comprehensive literature review of the concept, Chilton notes a 'proliferation of definitions' that is 'natural for an important, widely used concept' and that 'political culture remains [...] suggestive rather than [...] scientific' (1988:419-420). Ultimately, he defines it as 'how people affect their political system, and vice-versa' (1988:419). Yet, despite its apparent simplicity, since first being proposed, complex conceptual problems persist, with many issues arising in defining, measuring, and testing hypotheses in political culture (Chilton, 1988). This is perhaps not surprising, for 'culture' itself has such contested meanings, histories, and methodologies (Williams, 1981; 1983). As such, critiques of political culture question its explanatory power, philosophical backgrounds, and methodological means (e.g. Welch, 2013; Voinea and Neumann, 2020).

Despite its drawbacks, for my purposes political culture as a concept provides a useful adjunct to the civic imaginary and a vocabulary to help consider relationships between individuals and the state. Indeed, there is wide agreement that culture informs the 'intricate milieu' of this dynamic relationship and has 'directly or indirectly stimulated the development of research' in a vast array of related disciplines (Voinea, 2020:365). Political culture has seen something of a resurgence in literatures that attempt to explain Brexit and other geo-political shifts, often employed in emerging theories of national identity, populism and the decline (or retreat) of Western liberalism (Inglehart and Norris, 2016; Clarke *et al.*, 2017; Ford *et al.*, 2017; Luce, 2017; Fieschi, 2019; Norris and Inglehart, 2019; Sobolewska and Ford, 2020). As Voinea and Neumann point out however (2020:341), Almond and Verba's influential approach generated empirical data from *national* surveys, and in particular, social and political attitude surveys, which led to a 'predictable' process of data collection and political analysis ever since. They also point out Political Culture Theory's unchanging 'development' under this positivist framework (*ibid*). Thus, through its interpretivist, ethnographic and regionally scaled approach, my thesis makes several unique contributions to the Brexit literature.

It is beyond the scope here to offer a detailed examination of political culture's many facets. However, in fusing 'culture' with 'political', one of the most debated aspects has been that of causality. As Dittmer proposed, 'if political culture can be reduced to the distribution of

attitudes among a given population, wherein lies the need for a distinct conceptual framework and line of inquiry?' (1977:555). 'Classic' political culture theory blends political behaviour and culture at the level of the individual citizen – which is problematically subjective – before aggregating *individual* measurements to produce generalisations of mass attitudes. If culture is considered as an emergent *collective* phenomenon (Elkins and Richard, 1979 my italics), it thus cannot be explained by *individual* projections. Yet, as Voinea and Neumann argue, it does enable patterns or features to be identified, so that 'cultures are associated in time and space with some typical community of individuals' (2020:341). In practice, Chilton (1988:422) points to the 'very different cultures of the Weimar Republic and the Third Reich' which 'both arose from the same German population', and Fleron (1996) berates its over- and misuse in assessments of Post-Soviet Russia. Indeed, the collapse of the Weimar Republic and the establishing of the Nazi dictatorship is a history which resonates through many contemporary debates for its contribution as a 'warning' within cultural backlash theses that portray the image of a disgruntled white working class voting for anti-liberal politics (e.g. Inglehart and Norris, 2016; Ash, 2018; Hung, 2018). As discussed later in this chapter, cultural backlash theories have much to contribute to our understandings of Hull's political cultures and the role of place-based shame and place-based pride on cultural divergence.

Thus, with its flexibility to bridge the 'micro' and 'macro', 'political culture' is a valuable conceptual tool to help reveal patterns of political action, helping us to 'connect individual tendencies to system characteristics' (Almond and Powell, 1966:51-52). Aligned with the 'civic imaginary', it forms a useful framework for the investigation of Hull's recent political and cultural behaviours. It is in the realm of the imagination that humans process their immediate contexts and attempt to make sense of their possible futures. It is in this realm that *collective* imagining can result in momentous political action. As Levitas states, imagination is a crucial element of utopian thinking: it is central to 'short-term creative action and to a longer-term sense of direction' (2013:183). However, whilst Levitas proclaims utopian thought as *method*, to produce *action*, the imagination must somehow be connected to the reality of social lives, or it remains forever a fantasy. I argue that a progressive reclamation of *the civic* provides a way towards this collective action. The civic imaginary is inherently concerned with the 'local' and, therefore offers a gateway to more localised knowledge, following Anderson et al.'s observation (2019:8), that given the uneven impacts of austerity, of uneven development, and of the spatial politics of political disillusionment, geographically specific accounts of Brexit and its aftermaths are critical.

2.3.1 Populism

Of great relevance to the political cultures of Brexit (Wills, 2015; Inglehart and Norris, 2016; Luce, 2017; Müller, 2017; Mudde, 2018; Fieschi, 2019), and a key theme of my proceeding chapters, 'populism' is a notoriously slippery concept which 'always seems to escape definition' (Beasley-Murray, 1998:195). Since Brexit and the rise of Donald Trump, Viktor Orbán, Jair Bolsonaro and others, a significant amount of literature has attempted to refine or redefine its contemporary meanings (Krastev, 2007; Mudde *et al.*, 2017; Müller, 2017; Eatwell and Goodwin, 2018; Mouffe, 2018; Nai and Martínez i Coma, 2019; Norris and Inglehart, 2019; Rovira Kaltwasser *et al.*, 2019). Krastev (2007) calls our time 'an Age of Populism', yet Mudde (2018) acknowledges 'the term still lacks meaning in much of the public debate' and Müller (2017:2) insists that 'it is far from obvious we know what we are talking about' for we do not have 'anything like a *theory* of populism'. Based on Norris and Inglehart's definition (2019:4), I understand populism to be a style of rhetoric about who should rule, that claims legitimate power rests with 'the people' not the elites. However, it 'remains silent' on 'what should be done, what policies should be followed [and] what decisions should be made' (Norris and Inglehart, 2019:4).

The notion of 'authoritarian' is commonly used in political studies to denote a particular type of regime, and in social psychology to refer to a particular set of personality predispositions or learnt cultural values (Norris and Inglehart, 2019:7). Further,

Authoritarian values prioritize three core components: 1) The importance of security against risks of instability and disorder [...] 2) the value of group conformity to preserve conventional traditions [...] 3) the need for loyal obedience toward strong leaders who protect the group and its customs (ibid).

Crucial to understanding the power or dominance of authoritarian rule is 'the tribe'. Norris and Inglehart (2019:7) define tribes as 'social identity groups, often communities linked by economic, religious, or blood ties, with a common culture and dialect, typically having a recognised leader'. They describe processes of modern tribalism to involve 'loyalty, stickiness, boundaries and shared cultural meanings and feelings of belonging' (ibid), perhaps indicating the nostalgia Maffesoli (1995) pointed towards in his prediction of a 'neotribalism' that would look for guidance to the organisational principles of a distant past, as the culture and institutions of modernism declined.

I discuss below, how tribes have been understood within the specific context of Brexit, including their recourse to nostalgia. For now, populists have been described as adopting a 'transgressive political style' (Oliver and Rahn, 2016:191), that 'emphasises agitation, spectacular acts, exaggeration, calculated provocations, and the intended breach of political and socio-cultural taboos' (Heinisch, 2003:94). Populists rely on provocation and a more aggressive rhetoric that sets them apart from other 'mainstream' candidates (Nai and Martínez i Coma, 2019:1337). At the same time, it is also not uncommon to associate populists with qualities of leadership and charisma (Nai and Martínez i Coma, 2019:1338), with Max Weber (1864–1920) often cited as the starting point for studies into charismatic leadership (e.g. Nisbett and Walmsley, 2016).

Dow's analysis of Weber's work on charisma, understands charismatic authority as existing when an individual's claim to 'specific gifts of body and mind' (Weber, 1978:1112) is 'acknowledged by others as a valid basis for their participation in an extraordinary programme of action' (Dow, 1978:83). The leader's authority and programme are 'outside the realm of everyday routine and [therefore] sharply opposed both to rational [...] and traditional authority [...] Both [...] are [...] forms of everyday routine control [...] while charismatic authority [...] is [...] a specifically revolutionary force' (Weber, 1947:361-362). In this sense, 'charisma is self-determined and sets its own limits' (Weber, 1978:1112). It 'rejects all external order (p.1115), 'transforms all values and breaks all traditional and rational norms' (ibid), and 'in its most potent forms [it] overturns all notions of sanctity' (p.1117). Thus, instead of respect for rational rule and tradition, charisma is unsettling, risky, and unbalanced, and occurs especially in moments of social crisis where the existing social order can be overturned and the world reorganised (Conger, 1993). Charismatic leadership 'helps instil confidence in the leader's capacity to perform' (Barr, 2009:45), and seems to be a common characteristic of Latin American left-wing populists, from Chavez in Venezuela to Haya de la Torre in Peru (Roberts, 2007), though it is not limited to that region or ideology (Mudde *et al.*, 2017). Accordingly, populists are able to establish a direct and effective connection with their followers, allowing them to mobilise and persuade, through their energetic, emotional and bold political style (Canovan, 1999; Weyland, 2001). Charisma is particularly useful in demagogic communication, as it helps politicians 'overcome gaps between their messages and reality' (Barr, 2009:32). As I will discuss in Chapter 6, charismatic, authoritarian leadership styles have been prominent not only in the Brexit debates and wider British political culture, but also in the delivery of Hull2017 – which (like Brexit) might be understood in Weberian terms as an extraordinary programme of action. However, whilst such agendas may require (or

at least attract) leadership ‘from outside the realm of everyday routine’, I will show that in Hull, it set unrealistic targets and sequential over-promising at the expense of more critical self-reflection. My thesis explores the influence of these key figures and the impacts of their charismatic style on the civic imaginaries of participants, which have contributed challenging barriers to successful post-2017 legacy.

2.4 Pride and shame

There is a growing scholarly engagement with the emotional dynamics of political cultures and cultural behaviours (e.g. Robins, 1995; Ahmed, 2004b; Anderson and Holden, 2008; Busher *et al.*, 2018; Hochschild, 2018; Askins and Swanson, 2019; Borén *et al.*, 2020; Flinders, 2020; Hidalgo-Tenorio and Benítez-Castro, 2021); part of a wider ‘emotional’ or ‘affective’ turn in the study of these (and other) phenomena in several disciplines. Emotions, affects, and feelings do not simply reside in individual subjects, but are situated in, and relational, across space and time. Thus, ‘emotional geographies are inherently woven through all human experiences and interactions, with other people, places and things’ (Askins and Swanson, 2019:2-3), and ‘emotions do diverse kinds of work in different contexts and spaces’ (Borén *et al.*, 2020, see also Davidson, Bondi, and Smith 2005). For example, in urban geography, Anderson and Holden (2008:148) argue that affect and emotion emerge ‘in between, within, and alongside the other distantiated flows and events that make up cities’; and in political science, Moss *et al.* (2020:2) describe the greater attention being paid to interactions of affect and rationality, and how affect, emotion, feelings, mood and atmosphere ‘mediate our judgements’. While it is well established that urban space is one arena shaped by a range of emotional and affectual responses, the role of emotion in urban mega events and urban regeneration strategies such as Cities of Culture initiatives has yet to receive specific attention – though Anderson and Holden (2008), develop their understanding of ‘affective urbanism’ and typologies of hope, through interviews with Liverpool residents prior to its 2008 ECoC year. Further, whilst nationalism and other national feelings have taken precedence in the Brexit discussions, the role of such feelings at the local scale – within and in relation to ‘local bodies’ – is often unexplored.

This local focus is of further relevance, since emotions are ‘interscaled and interconnected, refracted and fractured across cultural spheres’ (Askins and Swanson, 2019:3), entangled in urban, rural and supra-national geographies. Their geographical distribution therefore is

uneven, and I will argue how post-war Hull has suffered from a surfeit of shame – or a deficit of pride, which has significantly influenced its civic imaginary and subsequent behaviours. I shall argue in later chapters, that these affectual losses and gains point to a cultural vulnerability in Hull that potentially renders the city open to exploitation. As Anderson and Holden (2008:147-148) explain, emotions ‘fold into [...] spatially nuanced, topologies of power’ within which ‘emotions function differently in relation to the varied kinds and mixtures of powers, including [...] domination, authority, manipulation, coercion, and seduction.’ Thus, without a more critically activated public sphere, I suggest that Hull risks remaining in a state of collective ‘reflexive impotence’ (Fisher, 2009:21).

Fisher’s concept of ‘reflexive impotence’ refers to the state of mind (or being) produced in individuals, who whilst aware of the flawed natures of capitalism and the cyclical behaviours it enforces, at the same time feel unable to enact change. On the other hand, Freire has articulated how such malaise may be overcome, and that:

Hopelessness is a form of silence, of denying the world and fleeing from it. The dehumanisation resulting from an unjust order is not a cause for despair but for hope, leading to the incessant pursuit of the humanity denied by injustice. Hope, however, does not consist in crossing one’s arms and waiting. As long as I fight, I am moved by hope; and if I fight with hope, then I can wait (Freire, 1968:91-92).

Freire’s notion of ‘conscientisation’, focusses on the raising of consciousness through a praxis of action, theory and reflection and has been adopted by many exponents of community development, including community artists (see Jeffers and Moriarty, 2017) to challenge political apathy and encourage community empowerment.

Galvanizing civic pride amongst the people of Hull was a key aim throughout the UK City of Culture initiative and the emotional dynamics of place a recurrent theme of the Brexit debates. Civic pride, although a trope in a range of disciplines, has meanings and significances which have sometimes been overlooked (Collins, 2016:175). My thesis includes extended analysis of high profile Hull2017 events and public interventions (such as speeches or interviews by key figures) which were crucial to the perceived success of the entire year. This achievement, I will argue, was made possible due to the performative strategies of emotional governance that momentarily ‘transformed’ Hull’s sense of self, though missed opportunities to instigate the ‘conscientisation’ required to support lasting change (see Chapters 6-7). In this section, I survey the literature on civic pride and its potential opposite, civic shame, attempting to draw

closer theoretical links between cultural representation, the civic pride/shame dichotomy, and the civic imaginary.

2.4.1 Affect, emotion, feeling, mood, atmosphere

Frosh (2011:2) notes that it possibly does not help to unpick the 'definitional knot of affect, emotion and feeling that is hard to penetrate'. Indeed, that task is beyond the scope here. However, in the last decade or so, through considerations of 'mood' and especially of 'atmosphere', scholars have attempted to grapple with how these experiences coalesce through collectives or assemblies of people and can be 'engineered' (McCormack, 2008), 'staged' (Bille *et al.*, 2015) or 'designed' (Edensor and Sumartojo, 2015) for various ends, including the political. As Bille *et al.* (2015:33) argue, focussing on atmospheres 'offers a different perspective from the agency or networks of things and people, and a critical stance on erecting rigid conceptual boundaries between emotion and affect, subject and object, nature and culture.' As I argue through Chapters 5-7, Hull's recent political and cultural behaviours have perhaps been influenced through Hull2017 and the Brexit discourse by highly orchestrated, localised atmospheres of pride, shame and other place-based emotions and affects and as such offers an opportunity for the empirical study of these phenomena.

Affect has been defined as 'a substrate of potential bodily responses, often autonomic responses, in excess of consciousness' (Clough and Halley, 2007:2), whereas emotions are a conscious (though subjectively experienced) mental and embodied reaction to something or context (Bondi *et al.*, 2016; Urry, 2016). Emotions, then, are 'experiences that emerge out of specific situations in which we are related to other people and things in a socially meaningful way' (Burkitt, 2019:56). They are associated with specific bodily feelings, with our reflexive consciousness of them, and we can verbalise and reflect on them. Emotions therefore inform us about the relationships we have to other people and things.

Affect theory is an emerging field of thought from queer theory, poststructuralism, feminism, and antiracist theory. It follows a loose typology, which Schaefer notes as being 'divided into two branches' (2020:3). Inspired by Deleuze, one 'branch' (according to Schaefer), identifies affect as a 'radically precognitive, preconscious, and nonconceptual force that shapes subjectivity upstream of self-awareness' (Schaefer, 2020:3). In his analysis of the rhetorical

style of Donald Trump, Schaefer suggests that such a definition, however dominant, is 'not sufficient', and finds that affect theory of the second 'branch', what Ahmed (2010:13), calls 'feminist cultural studies of emotion and affect' to be more 'versatile for mapping the landscape of feeling, emotion, experience, and communication' (Schaefer, 2020:3). Whilst I understand that some Deleuzian affect theorists might contest a patchwork use of terms, given the centrality of politics to my thesis (as in electoral politics and national/local policy making), I recall Berlant's argument that 'politics is always emotional', that political communication is affectively organised and that 'All the messages are emotional' (Berlant, 2016). I therefore agree with Schaefer's (2020:3), contention that Deleuzian vocabulary 'cannot go much farther than positing an on-off switch' where affect is either present or not. It thus limits the potential, multiple affects, and emotional *effects* of politics on and between bodies, which requires a more flexible and multiple terminology.

Of relevance to the civic, Intergroup Emotions Theory (Mackie *et al.*, 2016), argues that many emotions are experienced because we identify with groups or in collectives. In contrast to individually felt/experienced emotions, intergroup emotions arise when social identities and group concerns are revealed in a specific context. Thus, for individuals who self-identify as a member of a particular group (such as sporting team fan, political party, or social category such as gender, ethnicity, or nationality), events can be appraised based on one's personal position *and* the broader concerns of the group. Intergroup Emotions Theory argues that this might lead to cases in which emotions are experienced 'even if the event has absolutely no personal impact on the individual' (Smith and Mackie, 2015:350). Intergroup emotions are therefore of relevance in contexts 'involving conflict, competition, social comparison or cleavages regarding culture and identity' (Salmela and von Scheve, 2017:578). They can be directed towards out-groups perceived as threats, such as anger or hatred of immigrants, homosexuals, or religious minorities. They can also be directed inwards at the group itself, for instance in cases of hope, pride, or joy. As I will discuss below and analyse further in Chapters 5-7, such intergroup emotions are a key part of civicism as well as a strategic tool for populist leaders in making religious, national, or local identities salient. This, as Moons *et al.* (2009) have argued, also allows those in power to establish norms on how members should feel regarding certain issues or events. Thus, it is important to consider not only the workings of civic pride and civic shame as individually experienced, but also their intergroup, collective manifestations.

Understanding such manifestations is of growing interest in the humanities, where various terms and theories arise. For example, Barbalet (2002) has coined 'emotional climates' – a group phenomenon that can help explain the collective emotions that are vital components of 'in-group' identity making and group mobilisation. This is similar to Closs Stephens' (2016; 2019:185) exploration of 'affective atmospheres' which 'attend to those unpredictable affective encounters that cannot be traced back to the feelings or emotions of *an* individual or (national) group' (2016). Such an approach, for Closs Stephens, 'draws our attention to the transmissions between the singular and the collective' and 'enables us to question how this comes to matter politically' (ibid). Thinking about collective feelings as transmissible, Brennan (2004) argues, helps us to understand group behaviours and gatherings in a way that considers feelings, affects and emotions as 'beyond' the skin – as something that can be communicated, 'passed on' or, as contagious. For Ahmed (2004a), this is how emotions, like (for example), smells, sounds, chemicals, rhythms and vibrations 'work' to align people with others and against other others.

Thus, through the consideration of atmospheres, the distinction between 'affect (as a pre-personal field of intensity), feeling (as that intensity registered in a sensing body), and emotion (as that felt intensity expressed in a socio-culturally recognizable form)' (McCormack, 2008: 426), is perhaps 'not as tenable as initially envisioned' (Bille *et. al.*, 2015:35). For Edensor (2012:1105) such distinctions are rather elusive and amorphous anyway, with the concept of atmospheres allowing for a way for such 'vagueness and fluidity to affect people' (Bille *et. al.*, 2013:35). Further, as Bille *et al.* argue (2015:33), 'even though atmosphere may be vague as a conceptual occurrence and as an experience, atmospheres are by no means weak cultural phenomena.' Rather, by exploring the staging or designing of atmosphere, one might reveal how political and cultural manipulators of such phenomenon work in tacit or ambiguous ways, that are otherwise easily overlooked as social, economic, and political instruments. Such theories of collective feeling are therefore important in the study of Hull, for their role in the creation and influence of political cultures and cultural behaviours that have significant potential to shape the future course of the city. In turn, Hull and its dominance of collective pride and shame becomes an important case study, providing empirical evidence to understand the role of emotional or affective atmospheres.

2.4.2 Civic pride

2.4.2.1 Authentic and hubristic pride

Despite the pervasiveness of pride in everyday social discourse, it has only recently received scientific and critical attention comparable to that of other emotions (Tracy and Robins, 2007:506). Pride has been primarily viewed as a positive psychological phenomenon, although it should be understood as at least two different emotions rather than one single construct. It is understood as having positive and constructive effects ('authentic pride'), whilst also being linked to narcissism and egotism ('hubristic pride'). 'Authentic pride' is derived from honestly won accomplishments and satisfaction and is generally regarded as having beneficial effects on individuals, such as promoting constructive behaviours and generating a genuine sense of self-esteem (Tracy and Robins, 2007:507; Tracy *et al.*, 2009). Those who experience authentic pride appear to enjoy life, have a sense of purpose and can cope with defeats through setting new goals (Carver and Johnson, 2010). Characteristics derived from authentic pride are thought of as being positive and adaptive and this authentic form of pride is linked to a range of positive social outcomes, which is particularly relevant when considering the effects of the emotion on political culture and cultural behaviour. For example, Williams and DeSteno (2009), have found that when pride is experienced in its authentic form, it plays a vital role in both the development of leadership and social capital, suggesting the emotion has repercussions far wider than personal happiness and life satisfaction.

'Hubristic pride' is associated with a grandiose sense of self-importance, excessive confidence and vanity (Bodolica and Spraggon, 2011). Theoretically linked with narcissism, it can contribute to a range of maladaptive behaviours, along with aggression, hostility and interpersonal problems (Tracy and Robins, 2007). Bushman and Baumeister (1998) argue that those who are narcissistic and preoccupied with self-image, find criticism upsetting and often react with aggression. Surmising the evolutionary origins of these variations in pride, Cheng *et al.* (2010), suggest that hubristic pride might have arisen from the need to attain dominance, whilst authentic pride from acquiring prestige. Further, they argue that those higher in hubristic pride are more disposed to engage in anti-social acts and attempt social dominance, intentionally inducing fear in others. Further, Ashton-James and Tracy (2012) evidence the adverse effects of hubristic pride on social cohesion, demonstrating that hubristic pride promotes discrimination and negative attitudes against stigmatized others. This supports the argument that experiencing different forms of pride could have contrary implications for both individuals and local communities. For responsible cultural producers and city leaders who intend to arouse civic pride in their audience and *polis*, it indicates a level of caution is

required, for to evoke feelings of inauthentic, *hubristic* pride, may render critical questioning problematic and influence such anti-social behaviours.⁹

2.4.2.2 Collective pride

Sullivan (2014b), adds significant nuance to the pride literature, with a focus on the 'belongingness' of collective pride. He argues that collective pride comprises 'complex emotional phenomena' which arise when celebrating an encouraging feature of collective identity. It can have both positive and negative facets, which are linked to differing social consequences (Sullivan, 2014b:1), and highlights a particular challenge that is significant for this project:

Accounts of collective proud feelings need to highlight how self-regulation of healthy and unhealthy pride occurs, including an analysis of the ideologies and social forces that facilitate, reinforce, undermine and reconfigure emotional experiences of 'us' and 'them' (Sullivan, 2014a:184).

This tribal 'us' and 'them' aspect and how it is represented and manifested through Hull2017 and the EU Referendum debates shall be examined more closely in later chapters. However, it is worth considering briefly here the relevant links between personal and collective pride in areas of economic deprivation such as Hull, where opportunities for the development of personal pride may be closely linked with socio-economic circumstances. As Wacquant explains, the acute sense of social indignity that 'enshronds neighbourhoods of relegation' can be reduced only by forcing the stigma onto a demonised other (2007:68). This in turn, develops an entrenchment or territoriality that subsequently limits more potentially productive forms of collective local pride. Similarly, such entrenched tribal feelings might also support Fisher's 'reflexive impotence' and resist the more emancipatory hope of Freire's 'conscientisation'. We should therefore look carefully at the broader contexts within which local governments proclaim increased civic pride as a measure of their policy success.

⁹ There are a growing number of critics to the 'authentic' versus 'hubristic' pride model. Holbrook et al. (2014), while agreeing that there may be different forms of pride, question the validity of the authentic/hubristic thesis, especially how the different facets are measured. They argue that the authentic/hubristic pride scale, used by Tracy et al. to determine pride types, is flawed, and raise concerns regarding the hubristic pride scale, which they note does not measure pride at all but rather *perceptions* of pride as excessive. They do, however, acknowledge that both positive and negative aspects of pride may well exist.

That said, as Shapely notes (2012:328), civic pride continues to be ‘a defining feature of the urban landscape’ and a reflection of the political structures that dominate British cities in an era of renewed localism. As an ideal of local government, or identity signifier, civic pride is part of what defines and shapes cities, forming an important lens through which they are imagined and governed. However, the term lacks theoretical investigation. Often undefined and ambiguously examined, its emotional meanings and values can also be left ignored or unexplored (Collins, 2016:175). Geography’s recent ‘emotional turn’ has made significant interventions into how emotions can configure urban developments, yet civic pride is rarely central to discussion. For Collins (2016; 2017), examining civic pride is important because it shapes and reflects the values and aspirations local governments stand for and represent. It provides a basis for thinking about how and why cities promote and defend local identity and autonomy, and how emotions figure within, and are productive for, urban policy (Collins, 2016:176).

At a national level, mobilizing feelings of pride of membership has been a key objective for many governments. McKinnie, citing Lloyd and Thomas (1998) in his discussion of the ‘civic transnational’, argues that,

The entrenchment of representative democracy as the dominant form of Western political organisation from the eighteenth century onward has involved culture contributing to a regulative ‘idea of the state’ – broadly speaking, a bourgeois liberal democratic one – and entailed cultural institutions and artefacts serving as ‘exemplary objects of pedagogy’ in ‘the formation of citizens and the legitimisation of [that] state’ (McKinnie, 2009:113).

Being a proud citizen of a liberal democracy, therefore, requires a devotion to the common cause and to treating its cultural symbols (flags, language, music) with respect. This is essential to achieving nation-state versions of what Bourdieu referred to as ‘habitus’ (Shusterman, 1999). Central to Bourdieu’s philosophy, habitus is the way in which the culture of a particular social group is internalised in the individual, especially during the socialisation processes of early childhood. For Bourdieu (1990:63), habitus is ‘society written into the body, into the biological individual’ and provides the basis for ways of acting, seeing and making sense of the world. Discourses, representations, and everyday practices of civic pride are a central element in such constructions of legitimacy, authenticity, and local belonging. The language of pride ‘calls you into being as a citizen’ and reinforces appropriate citizen behaviour such as going to school, entering the military and paying taxes; it assists in the support of economic markets by legitimizing the discourses and forms of expression that sustain them; it helps to veil the

modes of social selection underpinning the reproduction of economic inequality (Duchêne and Heller, 2012:5). Wood (2002), in examining national pride, has shown how music can be particularly effective and affective in generating non-conscious, visceral emotional attachments, sometimes evoking sentiments despite ourselves, such as feeling unaccountably aroused by national anthems. This sense of 'losing oneself' then might be exploited outside of our awareness. Pride continues to be a powerful instrument of social structuring, at times compelling homogenisation and unity, at others catalysing power struggles.

Bell and de-Shalit (2013) posit that cities are becoming an important source of pride and offer the term 'civicism' to describe a type of patriotism towards one's city. They argue that it may be more constructive to feel pride in a city as opposed to a nation as 'if people fight too hard to affirm the uniqueness of their nation, it can easily spill into hatred and warfare. But cities are different. In fact, civicism can curb the excesses of nationalism' (Bell and de-Shalit, 2013:2). In comparison with civic pride, there is a much more extensive literature exploring the origins and role of the nation and nationalism (e.g. Hobsbawm, 1990; Anderson, 1991; Gellner, 2006). Hall (1993:8) has argued that 'no single, universal theory of nationalism is possible [...] as the historical record is diverse, so too must be our concepts'. Furthermore, attempts by scholars to develop a general theory of nationalism have suffered from a failure to separate the concepts of nationalism and patriotism and the concepts of nationality, ethnicity and race (Jaffrelot, 2003). Viroli (1995), calls for such distinctions, arguing that they can and must be separated. Yet, in considering the different forms of national pride, it may be possible to draw comparisons between the authentic and hubristic models discussed earlier. De Figueiredo and Elkins (2003) suggest that pride in one's nation reveals itself in different forms. Patriotism, they argue, can be considered a positive force, resulting in a negligible effect on prejudices towards outsiders, with nationalism seen as negative, resulting in hostility towards immigrants. This distinction between the different forms of pride on a national scale could prove useful when applied to smaller locations such as towns and cities. In an ever more urbanised world, where cities compete for people and investment and social tensions surface, encouraging the most cohesive and progressive kind of pride could be essential.

For Dolan (2010), pride can also provide the *means* for imagining alternative modes of being and belonging. A utopian potential which, Harvey has argued, can subsequently develop dynamic bases for progressive political mobilisation (in Castree and Gregory, 2006). In *Utopia in Performance*, Dolan explores what she calls the 'utopian performative' which sees theatre

and performance as a unique site for ‘experiment[ing] with the possibilities of the future in ways that shine back usefully on a present’ (2010:113). Dolan suggests these moments can provide space in which ‘people constitute themselves as citizens’ which may also ‘model civic engagement in participatory democracy’ (2010:90). She argues for theatre’s role as a site of hope to a community of spectators by affording opportunities for civic engagement (2010:23). Her argument for revitalizing humanity centres on utopia as a “‘what if’”, rather than the more limiting, finite image of the “‘what should be’”, and on theatre and performance as a site for exhibiting and inspiring social change (2010:13). Writing elsewhere (and reminiscent of Ferguson and Freire’s claims as discussed earlier), Dolan challenges cultural practitioners, especially those working in representative forms, to ‘demonstrate modes of embodied civic engagement’ (Dolan, 2011). Indeed, this ability to imagine another world is a vital element in questioning what Fisher calls ‘capitalist realism’ (2009). In his influential polemic written after the financial crash of the late 2000s (and from which the earlier discussion on ‘reflexive impotence’ derives), Fisher describes the ways an inability to see any realistic alternative to capitalism has amounted to a naturalisation of neoliberalism, engendering depression across the political left. This depression was compounded by Tony Blair’s Labour government which is seen by some to have ignored the realities of socially produced poverty in acceptance of the Thatcherite notion of TINA (There Is No Alternative), limiting the possibility of serious systemic critique. Whilst Dolan’s utopian performative is somewhat (and self-admittedly) romantic, for a city such as Hull that has experienced years of stigmatisation, in part due to the TINA orthodoxy, the potential benefits that pride might bring, should at least be considered, as I discuss further in Chapter 7.

Fisher’s final, unfinished work, *Acid Communism* (2018), develops a utopianism which rejects ‘both the conformism and authoritarianism that characterised much of post-war society and the crass individualism of consumer culture’ (Gilbert, 2017a). Fisher’s ‘acid’ is a way of being, akin to the effects of psychedelic drugs, an attitude of ‘improvisatory creativity and belief in the possibility of seeing the world differently in order to improve it’ (ibid). Such a call echoes Dolan’s understanding of pride and place, and that such positive feelings can provide the mechanisms for at least *imagining* alternative modes of being and belonging. Thus, seemingly small interventions can make important contributions, and I will discuss in the conclusion to the thesis, the grass roots initiatives in Hull working with this ethos of subverting top-down approaches.

This is not to discount the importance of heritage and collective cultural memories in such future thinking. Gallagher and Neelands (2014), argue that the past is a vital resource from which to draw on when interpreting the present and envisaging futures. They suggest that identification with the past is important in the formation of individual identity and *essential* for collective identity (Gallagher and Neelands, 2014:90). Because of this, place and identity formation are intrinsically linked, as identity with place and the awareness it brings of tradition, folklore, culture, and inheritance, also brings with it a sense of community. Hull2017 presented several opportunities to forge these senses of community, and in doing so, perhaps also approached Dolan's performative utopia. One might also argue that drawing on traditions and inheritances was a key approach of the Leave campaign whose 'take back control' narrative, evoked the 'British spirit' of Winston Churchill and the Empire. As I discuss in Chapter 5, such imagining is its own utopia.

2.4.3 Civic shame

If civic pride is linked to positive feelings of success or achievement, resulting in a heightened sense of belonging, and a shared belief in place, then it is important in Hull, where those feelings have been hard to muster (prior to 2017 at least), to also consider its opposite: civic shame. Writing from a queer theory perspective, where much theoretical work on shame and pride has occurred, Sedgwick (1993:5) claims that 'shame and pride [. . .] are different interlinings of the same glove', and Munt explains that,

Pride is dependent on shame; pride is predicated on the – sometimes conscious – denial of its own ostracized corollary, shame. Cognisant of our outlaw status we have imposed a heterodoxical sense of pride as a strategic deployment [...] but its counterpoint of shame is no less (or more) real (2000:533).

Thus, shame itself is often repressed, because acknowledgement of it is to bring it in to being. Whilst 'shame' itself is rarely mentioned by name, my data contains moving accounts of 'other cities' being able to offer more than Hull, which is a place where voting never makes a difference, shaped by abandoned, derelict buildings that stand as visual reminders of the deeper wounds from being a forgotten or 'left-behind' place.

As will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 4, prior to 2017, Hull was perhaps most commonly understood in the national imaginary for being a 'crap town' – indeed, according to a novelty book from 2003, Hull was ranked the 'crappiest' in the UK (Jordison and Kieran,

2003). 'Post-industrial', 'structurally disadvantaged' and 'left behind' are some of the more polite terms applied to the city (Byrne, 2016; Corcoran, 2017; Jonas *et al.*, 2017) and Atkinson *et al.* (2002) detail some impacts of the city's decline on its sense of self – how it had come to be a 'city unusually sensitive to its image', 'wary of being stereotyped' (p.27) and of the numerous, unsuccessful attempts to alter its image prior to embarking on the UKCoC initiative. Given the economic priorities for many cities hosting cultural mega events such as UKCoCs or ECoCs, it is perhaps not surprising that, in comparison to pride – with its associations of celebration and status – shame is a less explored emotional terrain. However, as I discuss in this section, the literature shows that for a city such as Hull that has battled against negative perceptions, stigmatisation, and low self-esteem for many years, attending intelligently and with care to these negative feelings, might, *through a critical reflection*, be more recuperative, and transformative than the entrepreneurial discourses which have tended to take precedence in processes and discourses of 'regeneration', 'renewal' and (particularly foregrounded through the Coronavirus pandemic) 'recovery'.

2.4.3.1 Shame

A key figure in the psychology of shame, Michael Franz Basch explains that the shame-humiliation response, when it appears in very young infants, 'represents the failure or absence of the smile of contact, a reaction to the loss of feedback from others, indicating social isolation and signalling the need for relief from that condition' (quoted in Sedgwick, 1993:5). Similarly, for Tomkins, 'shame is both an interruption and a further impediment to communication, which is itself communicated' (1995:137). As Silverstone notes, 'shame thus indicates a form of communication in a moment of a break in communication' (2012:69), which produces recognisable physical signals, such as blushing, averting eyes and the lowering of the head. For Sedgwick, such actions are 'semaphores of trouble and at the same time of a desire to reconstitute the interpersonal bridge' (1993:5). As I shall discuss in later chapters, such a desire for recognition, based on histories of physical and mental geographical isolation as well as an awareness of itself as a stigmatised place, runs through Hull's contemporary political cultures and cultural behaviours. It is therefore important to understand the cultural politics of shame.

Writing about the politics of recognition, Taylor argues that equal recognition is not only an 'appropriate mode for a healthy democratic society' but that 'its refusal can inflict damage on those who are denied it' (1997:36). Further, Taylor describes the process of internalisation that

occurs when an 'inferior or demeaning image' of the self is given room to 'distort and oppress' (ibid). This relates to Sedgwick's summary of shame as 'a bad feeling that does not attach to what one does, but to what one is' (1993:12). Shame's ability to provoke a 'hyper-alertness to one's place in the world' (Munt, 2019:226), with its particular sensitivity to hierarchy and status, undergirds Taylor's premise that 'the withholding of recognition can be a form of oppression' (1997:36). As I discuss below, when applied to a city, this *feeling* of oppression due to low status and lack of recognition is a key consequence of territorial stigmatisation, leading to the formation of 'second class citizens'. As Tomkins writes (1995:172), shame 'must itself be hidden as an ugly scar is hidden, lest it offend [...] the one who looks'. Drawing on the concept of the 'tourist gaze' (Urry, 2002), I suggest the onlooker in CME terms is the potential visitor, outside investor or mobile creative worker, for whom city leaders would prefer to present a sanitised version of the city.

Thus, shame is relational and can stimulate status anxiety, where the shamed subject, via 'rites of humiliation or confession' seeks 'forgiveness, absolution, and reinstatement' from its dominant culture (Munt, 2019:226). Alternatively, as seen in response to Hilary Clinton's use of the word 'deplorables' in the 2016 US Presidential Election, shaming can have the opposite effect, highlighting the Liberal versus Communitarian debate discussed earlier and the accusation that communitarianism relies on stigmatisation to shame people into conforming. Unacknowledged shame features heavily in the literature, and is thought of as leading to anger and resentment, in what Scheff and Retzinger (1991) call 'shame-rage spirals'. This is where, left unchecked, shame mutates into bitter hatred, and further isolationism, as alienation intensifies. As I shall discuss in Chapter 5, this process (and the disavowal of shame specifically) is of growing interest in studies of populism and anti-politics, joining anger, (in)dignity, (in)security, and powerlessness as predictors of support for extreme populist organisations (Vasilopoulou and Wagner, 2017; Busher *et al.*, 2018; Hochschild, 2018; Mishra, 2018).

Munt (2019) points to shame's temporality as key to understanding how it becomes toxic. As a '*temporary* acknowledgment of wrongdoing in the eyes of others and acknowledged self-reflexively' shame has a pedagogical dynamic (Munt, 2019:228 *my italics*). If acknowledged, it can therefore contribute to a collective morality and strengthening of social bonds. However, if prolonged, a more toxic 'state of shame' is experienced, in which social bonds become unstable. In this case, a shamed subject will 'always look for compensations' (Munt, 2019:228).

On the other hand, the shorter felt 'healthy shame', has 'a vital role to play in creating ethical societies' (Munt, 2019:226). In this formulation, shame at transgression is acknowledged (however painful) and promptly resolved. As such, it 'can be instrumental in preventing further violence' by its recognition and imposition of shared moral values (Munt, 2019:226). In its (socio-political) transformative potential, shame has creative power, and *resolved shame* may lead to new, alternative, and progressive attachments.

Thus, many shame theorists advocate the benefits that can be derived from a closer attention to what Ngai has termed 'ugly feelings' (2007). Scheff, for example, warns of the denial of shame and that most societies can be seen as 'conspiracies to deny all shame', whose lack of acknowledgement is the 'decisive source of interminable conflict' (1994:290, 288); and Ahmed makes clear that there is much to be learned by spending time with shame for it is a 'mode of recognition of injustices committed against others' and thus potentially, a form of community building (2004b:102). Attending to shame then, contains something potentially recuperative, which for Hull, a city whose modern history is marked by territorial stigmatisation, bearing witness and coming to a deeper understanding of its 'ugly feelings' might be *genuinely* transformative beyond the purely entrepreneurial discourses which, in a neo-liberal economy, tend to short-termism and lack sustainability – especially for personal and communal well-being, socio-economic stability and social cohesion (e.g. Bone, 2010). This may not be as traumatic as some might fear. As Scheff states (1994:288), if 'shame is acknowledged it turns out to be an ordinary emotion, painful but bearable'.

2.4.3.2 Territorial stigmatisation and collective shame

Everyday experiences of Hull's civic shame can be further understood through what Wacquant calls 'territorial stigmatisation' (2007; 2013). Connecting Goffman's work on stigma (1963), with Bourdieu's work on symbolic violence and group-making (e.g, 2003), Wacquant explains that territorial stigmatisation becomes normalised as a result of the internalisation of social and political power dynamics (Wacquant, 2007; Wacquant, 2013). He describes territorial stigmatisation as:

The powerful stigma attached to residence in the bounded and segregated spaces, the 'neighbourhoods of exile' to which the populations marginalised or condemned redundant by the post-Fordist reorganisation of the economy and state are increasingly being relegated (1993: 369).

As Chapter Four will detail, such negative feelings of loss, isolation, and redundancy due to the political, social, and economic situation of the city have for a long time been felt in Hull, often accompanied by the language of excremental waste. For example, Featherstone (2013:180) has declared: ‘ask anybody [...] what life is like in Hull [...] and they will tend to respond in the same way: “it’s crap”’. ‘Crap’, Featherstone argues, being understood as shorthand for the feelings of failure at not being able to participate in the neoliberal economy. I shall also discuss how ‘crap’ and other scatological terms are used by the city against itself, in what might appear to outsiders as instances of self-loathing, but more-often occur as insider jokes and in-group or tribal bonding.

To unpack this a little further, I draw on the closely related concept of collective self-esteem, which pertains to ‘self-worth derived from membership in larger social groups’ (Du *et al.*, 2017:2). Deonna *et al.* (2012:87) argue that ‘shame is not simply a blow to self-esteem’ but still ‘consists in an evaluation of oneself as degraded or worthless’, which emerges from the perceived inability to live up to a society’s core values. Shame can also be felt vicariously, such as when family members, close friends or, I suggest, an entire city, are subjected to repeated humiliations. As Munt (2000:541) observes: ‘Shame is contagious, we are ashamed of our shame, and when those around us catch it they blush and blush in awkward sympathy; vacillating, they turn their gaze upon another’. Thus, shame is a reflection of powerlessness, and the blush, a notoriously uncontrollable, involuntary physical response (de Jong, 1999).

Further, Turner (2007) notes that people who fail to meet expectations in multiple spheres are at increased susceptibility to shame. Moreover, ‘authority structures, per se, are shame-generating machines, and when coupled with the unequal distribution of valued resources, they increase the likelihood that large numbers of individuals will not meet expectations for resources – income from jobs, prestige from educational credentials that give access to money and power, love from family, or power from unions or political parties’ (Turner, 2007: 520–521). Thus, groups who find themselves powerless in modern capitalist societies, due to unemployment and/or lack of relevant social and cultural capital, may experience multiple shames. Especially, as Salmela and von Scheve observe (2017:581) ‘if the constitutive values of their salient social identities derive from more affluent times and are therefore unattainable to them in their present situation’. A collective loss of self-esteem and associated shame affects is therefore a consequence of contemporary consumer societies, where, as Featherstone cited

earlier declared, economic capital is important for maintaining positive social (and civic) identities.

Such stigmatizing of Hull finds expression through its awkward relationships with neighbouring local authorities, which some respondents understand as a form of class-based snobbery. It is beyond the scope of this thesis to investigate the specific intersections of class within the Hull civic imaginary. However, given that Hull continues to be framed as a 'working-class city' (e.g. English, 2014; Rose, 2019), it is important to briefly introduce class snobbery as one of the shaming strategies which have marked resident's lived experiences of territorial stigmatisation. Whilst Hull is by no means unique, and rivalries exist between many neighbouring places, drawing on Skeggs (1997; 2012), Tyler (2013) and McKenzie (2015), Beswick (2020) states that 'snobbery is an affectively experienced phenomenon' in which 'class is systematically leveraged to position the working-class as a morally lacking, inferior "other"'. Such stigmatizing experiences and feelings of negative judgement are intensified, due to the numerous other slights [experienced] in the past and anticipated in the future' (Morgan, 2019:96). Thus, shame, Morgan proposes, is a powerful and common response to snobbery, which my research in Hull attests.

The processes by which shame can become attached to place are due, as I discussed earlier, to shame being intimately bound with notions of identity. Indeed, shame is the very 'place where the *question* of identity arises most originally and most relationally' (Sedgwick, 2003:37). By its very nature then, territorial stigmatisation and its bounding of a 'people' within a defined place, is a collectively felt phenomenon in which shame constitutes a collective understanding of identity in response to how 'we' are seen by those who are not 'us'. In some circumstances, collective affects of shame can be comforting because of their ability to form bonds within shamed communities as well as 'the ways they in part rely on ideas about how some people are more progressive, developed and enlightened than others' (Closs Stephens, 2019:4). These experiences (as well as the definitions such as 'progressive' or 'enlightened') are deeply subjective.

Indeed, *national* shame has been a key interest of those seeking a critical understanding of Brexit's intersecting logics of 'nationality, multiculturalism, coloniality, and racism' (Closs Stephens, 2019:4). For example, examining how shame has informed feelings of Britishness

and British understandings of ‘multicultural tolerance’, Fortier (2005) documents the shift in public debate during the 1990s towards a British version of multiculturalism, where shame was ‘evoked, rejected and projected onto particular subjects’ in the formation of a national identity of ‘us’ and ‘them’ (pg. 561). Fortier analyses responses to the Parekh report (2000),¹⁰ which advocated a rejection of ‘Englishness’ as a label for the new British multi-cultural nation, because of the historical connections between English identity, white supremacy and imperialism (Fortier, 2005:563-564). Fortier notes the outrage prompted by the report, including claims that Britain should not be ‘ashamed of its history’ and shows how shame was repelled as something ‘we’ did not want to feel. As several authors have shown, contested notions of Empire resonate powerfully within Brexit discourse, in particular the resurgence of white superiority, British (or English) exceptionalism and the framing of Ireland as a ‘problem’ (Gormley-Heenan and Aughey, 2017; Dorling and Tomlinson, 2019; Meek, 2019; O’Toole, 2019). Thus, as Closs Stephens articulates (2019:5), ‘ideas about shame interconnect with ideas about the nation, Europe, modernity, civilisation, and multiculturalism in very different ways.’ I discuss some of these interconnections further in Section 2.5.2 below.

To conclude this section, positive collective emotions, such as pride, can be felt and shared in the ritualistic encounters of civic celebrations and are important for reinforcing personal, social, and civic identities as well as group solidarity and self-esteem. As Chapters 6 and 7 will show, the generation and mobilisation of civic pride through Hull2017 might be considered one of the UKCoC organisers key successes. However, whilst the feeling may bring a utopian potential noted by Dolan (2010) and others, I shall argue that in the tightly scripted formulation of civic pride delivered by Hull2017, it missed a crucial opportunity to open up a recuperative consideration of Hull’s ‘shame’ and challenge the stigmatizing agendas bound in capitalist regimes of place promotion that spurred the city to bid for the title in the first place. Though such a strategy is perhaps anathema to the celebratory boosterism embedded in UKCoCs, I will argue that Hull’s civic pride through Hull2017 was encouraged somewhat carelessly through the exploitation of the city’s shame narratives and may therefore share some features associated with hubristic pride (Tracy and Robins, 2007; Tracy *et al.*, 2009), which, as Sullivan (2014b) has shown, is associated with prejudice and hostility towards out-

¹⁰ Co-incidentally, the report’s author, Bhikhu Chotalal Parekh was Professor of Political Theory at the University of Hull from 1982 to 2001. He was appointed a life peer in 2000, as Baron Parekh of Kingston upon Hull.

groups. This suggests that a more responsible approach to the emotional governance of place by UKCoC organisers is needed. In the wider context of Hull's political cultures – increasingly populist and anti-political (see Chapters 4 and 5) – I will argue later in this thesis that to neglect shame in this way, accelerates the decline of the city's critical public sphere and limits opportunities for understanding across ideological or cultural differences.

2.5 Two 'transformative' events

In this section I sketch the backgrounds to the two monumental events which form the central 'problem' of this thesis: Hull's year in 2017 as UK City of Culture and what has come to be known as 'Brexit', a process which was put in motion the previous year after the bitterly fought referendum of 2016. I understand both as phenomena which promised transformation and thus engaged with the emotions of place, belonging and local feeling. Whilst the ensuing chapters will incorporate more analytical detail, here I set out the broader themes and key arguments from relevant literatures in what are dynamic, emerging and highly inter-disciplinary fields.

2.5.1 Hull2017 and the rhetoric of 'cultural transformation'

The inaugural holder of the UKCoC award was Derry-Londonderry in 2013, making Hull the first English city to host the event. The idea for the UKCoC initiative was first established in 2009 with the aim of building 'on the success of Liverpool's year as European Capital of Culture (ECOC) 2008' (gov.uk, 2018). Prior to Liverpool's ECOC year, the scheme had been found to provide numerous benefits to host cities and act 'as a catalyst for city change' (Palmer *et al.*, 2004:188). Glasgow's experience as ECOC in 1990 is particularly understood as a major success and driver of change (Garcia, 2005), becoming a significant factor in encouraging other de-industrializing cities to enter cultural capital competitions, such as Antwerp, Rotterdam and Lille – as well as Liverpool. This emphasis on 'change' sees cities aspiring to not only present a world-class year of cultural activity but also to transform opinion in the eyes of both locals and outsiders. They have generally set out to achieve this through rebranding and cultural programming as well as a major scheme of regeneration and development. In this sense, Cities and Capitals of Culture as promotional initiatives, might be understood as a version of what Williams (1984) called 'culture as display' – later adapted by McGuigan (2004) into 'cultural policy as display' – to explain the transformations occurring within contemporary cultural policy under global capitalism. In many ways, Liverpool's aspirations to become more than it

had been before, were very similar to Hull's, fitting Bell & Oakley's (2015:58) reference to Royseng's (2008) argument of cultural policy's 'ritual logic' and 'the assumption that culture can magically make things (and people) 'better', or make 'better' people (and things)'. Indeed, as Cunningham and Platt have noted (2019), cities bidding for such events often see themselves as the 'underdog' in need of investment, but with strong cultural heritage to draw tourism and boost local pride. Although, as I discuss in Chapters 6 and 7, emerging analysis suggests that Hull's 'change' is proving to be rather more contested. Demonstrative of Finkel and Platt's (2020:3) assertion that the relationships between cultural festivals and cities is 'often commercialized and politicized with multifarious impacts on communities, urban spaces and cultural identities'.

This is not to say that such tensions are new. For the first few years of the ECoC programme, the chosen cities were all recognised artistic and cultural centres such as Athens, Paris, and Berlin. While the utilisation of the title may have differed in each city, a common focus was on the portrayal of their arts and cultures with relatively small budgets and seemingly little attention to long-term investment or legacy (Richards, 2004; Bell and Oakley, 2015). In contrast, when announcing Hull's selection, the judging panel were: 'particularly impressed with Hull's evidence of community and creative engagement, their links to the private sector and their focus on legacy, including a commitment to enhance funding beyond 2017' (gov.uk, 2013). This statement has echoes of Glasgow's 1990 ECoC designation, which represented a watershed in the history of the ECoC initiative (Bianchini *et al.*, 2013), as its programme adopted a much broader definition of culture than previous host cities (where 'culture' often meant the creative and performing arts), and aimed at regenerating the city centre, as well as the periphery. The praise credited to Glasgow centres on the economic benefits gained through increased visitor numbers and the image enhancement perceived to have arisen, in part, to such inward investment. Whilst similar narratives of success about Hull's UKCoC year are in circulation post-2017, it is too early to fully evaluate the long-term economic impact of the event – particularly given the significant disruptions due to the Coronavirus. However, as Chapters 6 and 7 will show, critical questions are being asked of the Hull2017 legacy, including the apparent failure to adequately raise the funding required for its success.

Despite Glasgow1990's positive reputation, there were voices at the time which presented an alternative view, such as prominent artists and writers – including Alasdair Gray, David Kemp,

James Kelman, and Tom Leonard – which chime with the emerging critical voices from Hull.¹¹ For example, McLay (1990:86-87) claims that Glasgow1990 was at ‘heavy cost to the public purse’ and that its image was ‘overhauled and tarted-up so that financial services can flourish, up-market shopping malls thrive, and high-priced luxury flats proliferate to the glory of capitalism’. Additionally, Reason (2006:76) details the anger of The Workers City Group, a loose collective of academics, writers and activists, who believed ‘that the city was being gentrified at the expense and exclusion of local residents; and that the entire event was intricately tied up with the needs of big business rather than those of culture, let alone the people of Glasgow’.¹² For cities wishing to emulate Glasgow’s transformation, the creation of an eye-catching identity that appeals to the broadest audience is crucial. However, as Reason (2006) observes, efforts to ‘boil down’ multiple identities into a singular city logo or promotional narrative are partial, divisive and exclusive, particularly if the process ignores certain histories, identities or social groups. Attempts to ‘brand’ cities can be controversial, and critics claim they fail to be democratic, inclusive, or participatory. Harvey (1989:9) argues that this compels cities ‘to appear as an innovative, exciting, creative and safe place to live or to visit, to play and consume in’ and that the delivery of temporary or permanent urban spectacles become key strategies of entrepreneurial approaches to urban regeneration (see also Bianchini *et al.*, 1992; Bianchini and Ghilardi, 2007). However, policy makers in many cities, inspired by the ‘Glasgow model’, the ‘Barcelona model’ or the ‘Liverpool model’, continue to adopt aggressive branding strategies which exploit local identity as a marketing device (García, 2004a). Such an instrumentalist view of culture exemplifies the ‘tokenistic’ position of policy makers and marketers dominated by economic and corporate logics (García, 2004b:103). Harvie (2013a:488) has described a ‘vision’ of London during the 2012 Cultural Olympiad that ‘effectively buried East London’s problems of comparative poverty, overcrowding and post-industrial under- and unemployment’ whilst promoting ‘the city as a site of tourism, commerce [...] and power’. Such exclusions risk glossing over the need to improve employment, education, and wellbeing by effectively refusing to witness the conditions that need redress. Conditions in Hull that were foregrounded in the winning bid and have contributed to the shame inducing ‘shit-hole’ or ‘crap town’ rhetoric. Whilst concepts of city branding and the relationship between the arts and economic regeneration may be more established today than in 1990, there has been little attention paid to their affective dynamics, nor how such issues interact with the wider political cultures of the

¹¹ For example, see Kemp (1990), and for a satirical attack on Culture City from an artist’s perspective see Leonard (1989).

¹² For more on the Workers City Group see: <http://www.workerscity.org/> [Accessed 8 April 2021].

host city. With its critical focus on civic pride and shame, (emotions tightly regulated in place-making and place-branding exercises), this thesis hopes to make a timely contribution to knowledge on this under researched topic.

Strategies such as those identified by Harvie are much discussed within the gentrification discourses of culture-led urban regeneration (e.g. Deutsche, 1998; Pratt, 2011; Harvie, 2013b), in which critical attention typically focusses on the hegemonic neoliberal understanding of 'creative cities' and 'creative class' associated with Richard Florida (e.g. Florida, 2004). However, as Bianchini notes (2018), the origins of the 'creative city' concept were more progressive, with the objective to deal 'with the obstacles hindering the development of a "good" (sustainable, balanced, lively, civilised, productive, well run and open-minded) city' (Landry *et al.*, 1996:1). It is now:

Understood in a variety of different ways, ranging from narrower policies for the cultural and creative industries at city and regional level, to fully fledged urban and regional strategies, aimed at harnessing people's creativity as a resource, in policy areas going well beyond the cultural sector (Bianchini, 2018:23).

Thus, the original 'creative city' idea has been 'used, misused and misunderstood by both politicians and academics' (*ibid*), and Bianchini argues, as a 'policy implementation for the future and as a subject of social scientific discussion and theorisation [is] in dire need of more research and reflections on the time – and place-specific idiosyncrasies that have shaped the enigmatic relationships between cities and creativity' (p.39). This is something that this thesis (at least in part) attempts.

Florida's 'creative class' consists of individuals whose professions deal with creating and developing new ideas, technologies and concepts, and Florida claims that creative centres, with vibrant cultural atmospheres, play a key factor in making cities appealing to this new class, and the inward investment they subsequently attract. This is problematic for several reasons. Significantly, it utilises arts and culture as gentrifying forces, as consumables to attract tourists, mobile human capital and outside investment that can raise the income-generating capacity of a city and promote 'positive' social engagement (Pratt, 2011). Critiques of Florida's 'creative city' point to the ways in which this approach to culture-led urban regeneration is underpinned by unfair competition, privileges neoliberal ideologies and caters to a 'middle class' elite (see Harvie, 2013b:118-19). As a result, the concerns of local cultures and low-

income populations can be marginalized, displaced, or occluded altogether, re-entrenching gender, class, and race inequalities.

Florida has recognised some of the unfairness arising from the reality of the creative class ideology, advocating instead a more localist agenda that calls for investment in infrastructure, affordable and centrally located rental housing, raising service sector wages, and investing in people and places to tackle concentrated poverty (Florida, 2017). However, austerity politics in the UK, poor transport links within and between regions and the machinations of an unregulated free market more widely, make it difficult for some to conceive how these suggestions can ever be implemented without systemic reform – especially in relation to affordable housing, and greater powers for devolved regions (McKee *et al.*, 2017; Prosser *et al.*, 2017). Thus, ‘boosterism’ and place promotion appealing to foreign tourists and investors remain embedded as central tropes of local government and the politics of localism more generally (Soja, 2015; Wills, 2016). This is evident in Hull with the city’s cultural strategy (2016-2026) focussed on becoming a ‘world class visitor destination’ (Hull City Council, 2016) – an ambition restated in a 2021 *Arts Professional* article written by Lee Corner and Stephen Munn, chair and CEO of the Hull2017 legacy company Absolutely Cultured (Corner and Munn, 2021). However, despite the increases in tourism seen in 2017, which were largely maintained in 2018, Hull still ranks relatively poorly as an international visitor destination (CPPI, 2019:39). The final Hull2017 evaluation report quotes Visit Britain’s analysis of inbound international staying visits from 2010-2017, and their ranking of over 100 UK towns and cities which revealed that in 2017 Hull was 84th - lower than other towns and cities in the Yorkshire region, including Doncaster (76th place), Bradford (72nd), Sheffield (57th), York (23rd) and Leeds (22nd). Thus, there is limited evidence to suggest that that the 2013-2023 City Plan’s ambition of Hull becoming a ‘World Class Visitor Destination’ can be met.

Recalling the role of charismatic leaders to produce ‘extraordinary programmes of action’ as discussed earlier, one might suggest that this goal for Hull, to be achieved after a single year-long cultural event, was always unrealistic. Especially considering (as I discuss further in Chapter 4) Hull’s geographic remoteness and poor transport infrastructure. One might question whether desires for Hull to be a ‘world-class visitor destination’ or a ‘world class cultural city’ are not now redundant when it is clear that international travel damages the environment (Lim and Flaherty, 2018; Flaherty and Holmes, 2020), and that the Coronavirus pandemic has exacerbated the collapse of urban retail and cultural tourism (Bereitschaft and Scheller, 2020). Either way, this strategy for the city chimes with my enquiries of civic pride (the status of being

a 'world class' visitor destination) and shame (in reality having fewer visitors than Doncaster or Bradford).

Ward (2000) has argued that such campaigns perform an ideological function in cementing neoliberalism within urban policy, and Boyle (1997) suggests that 'urban propaganda' projects such as the European (and by extension, UK) City of Culture initiatives have a distinctly political function. Serving to disguise 'efforts made by an urban elite to refashion collective emotions and consciousness [...] in order to legitimize political projects' (Boyle, 1997:175). As mentioned in Chapter 1, the case of Chemnitz ECoC2025 is a stark example, with its recent history of violent, far-right protests perhaps being 'cleansed' for the tourist gaze by the ECoC denomination.¹³ This thesis argues that through Hull2017 such tactics have been at work in Hull, and that certain marketing, programming and leadership strategies have clustered to produce agendas of emotional governance in the support of 'refashioning' and re-branding the city.

In addition to the utopian potential of pride and the recuperative qualities of shame, Edensor and Sumartojo (2018) have shown how such urban festivals provide sites of wonder and conviviality which allow locals to view place in new ways and to reconnect with their locales through defamiliarization and refamiliarization. Indeed, Edensor and Andrews (2019) contest the argument that festivals are merely temporary interventions in places, suggesting that the everyday experience of places contribute to the festival experience. Further, as several authors have noted (e.g. Edensor, 2000; Bell and Jayne, 2006; 2009; Jayne *et al.*, 2010; Gilmore, 2013), discourse around urban cultural policy tends to privilege the larger, often 'global' and 'metropolitan' cities, making Hull, which is smaller and arguably more 'ordinary' and 'off the map' (Robinson, 2002; 2006), a unique site for considering urban cultural regeneration. Oakley (2015:7) outlines some of these varying spatial patterns in the urban creative economy 'script', referring to Cameron and Coaffee's (2005) study of Gateshead which argues there is a distinction between cities where gentrification is driven by commercial capital and where what they call 'positive gentrification', is driven by public authorities. Cameron and Coaffee argue that the latter has more relevance in cities in the North East of England, where 'private capital

¹³ There is also a refrain in the discourse around Chemnitz2025, that the cultural mega event will act as an ideological cleansing to the AfD (Yorck von Wartenburg, 2020).

has to be dragged kicking and screaming into de-valourised urban locations through the initiative and investment of the public sector' (2005:45).

Such issues are perhaps made more acute as contemporary discourse moves to post-Coronavirus 'recovery' and Boris Johnson government's instigation of a 'Towns Fund' which aims to 'level up' the UK regions (Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government, 2019). Given that the economic context is still marked by the financial crash of 2008, which created new challenges for the development of culture-led regeneration, it will be important to follow the functioning of the 'Towns Fund'. For, as Shaw has pointed out (2017:630), previous funding streams and delivery mechanisms such as the Regional Growth Fund, Local Enterprise Partnerships and Enterprise Zones 'primarily operate[d] as instruments of economic development, rather than City-Region regeneration', raising questions about exactly what 'levelling up' and 'recovery' actually mean for policy makers. Thus, post-2017, culture-led urban regeneration in the UK seems to be in a process of 'downscaling' (Bianchini and Tommarchi, 2020) with emerging trends pointing toward smaller schemes, notably with heritage-led projects and perhaps a shift in emphasis from 'urban' towards towns and rural economies.

2.5.2 Brexit: Transforming the political landscape

On the morning of 24 June 2016, it was confirmed that the UK would leave the EU after 45 years of membership. The outcome of the previous day's referendum was seen by many as a surprise, and generated an 'outpouring of literary endeavours' (Evans and Menon, 2017:xii) that attempted to understand how the result came to be, and what it meant about British politics and society. As well as vast amounts of journalistic commentary and scrutiny, this included first-hand accounts written by participants (e.g. Banks and Oakeshott, 2016; Hannan, 2016; Clegg, 2017), non-partisan (and less so) analyses by observers (e.g. MacShane, 2016; Shipman, 2016; Dunt, 2017), and academic writing which, in the space of a few years, has multiplied to investigate Brexit from many different disciplines. For example, at a 2019 'Researching Brexit' conference held at the University of Durham, papers were presented to consider the consequences of Brexit on migration and belonging, the legal ramifications of leaving the European Union, the UK and international far right, Brexit and feminism, Brexit and risk in the rural environment, Brexit and the politics of identity, Brexit and the UK Constitution.

Brexit has spawned numerous sub-fields of enquiry and special issues, and at least two academic institutes were established to monitor its progress and impacts: the ESRC-funded UK in a Changing Europe, and the Birmingham City University based Centre for Brexit Studies which both produce significant output in terms of reports, data sets and public-facing activities such as conferences, podcasts, and media appearances. Further, the referendum result served as a reminder of Britain's entrenched Eurosceptic tradition, and of the acrimonious debates among the country's political elites over Britain's relationship with Europe. Britain joined the European Communities on January 1st, 1973, and within a year of membership, as George (1990) remarked, was regarded as something of 'an awkward partner',¹⁴ a theme common to many writings produced in the period of the UK's EU membership (e.g. Young, 1998; Wall, 2009; Gowland *et al.*, 2010; Norton, 2012; Liddle, 2014).

This heightened scrutiny of Britain's self-ejection from the EU, and the continuing emergence of Brexit-related social, cultural and economic theories is due in part to the fact that, as Watkins (2020:10) has pointed out, the Brexit vote 'divided' the country along sub-national, social, regional, class and generational lines. London, Scotland, Northern Ireland, the bigger cities in England, and young people generally voted to stay in the EU.¹⁵ Much of the rest of England, Wales (especially the small towns), and the elderly generally voted to leave. There are also contested opinions about the role of class in the vote. Whilst many early commentators focussed on the Leave vote being driven by disenfranchised low-income social groups feeling left behind by globalisation and austerity (e.g. Clarke *et al.*, 2017; Ford *et al.*, 2017; Goodwin and Milazzo, 2017), others advocated more attention to understand the views and feelings of the 'squeezed' middle and the role of Britain's fallen Empire in the national imaginary (e.g. Antonucci *et al.*, 2017; Dorling and Tomlinson, 2019; O'Toole, 2019).

Thus, issues of cultural pluralism are often cited as 'causes' of Brexit, with modern multiculturalism seen by some as a threat to social cohesion and security (Clarke *et al.*, 2017; Ford *et al.*, 2017; Goodwin and Milazzo, 2017). In these arguments, the Leave victory was

14 As it was then known, the European Communities was the collective term for the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC), the European Economic Community (EEC) and the European Atomic Energy Community (EAEC). The ECSC and EEC would later be integrated into the European Union under the Maastricht and Lisbon treaties in the early 1990s and mid 2000s.

15 Though turnout amongst young people was relatively low. See Sobolewska and Ford (2020) for detailed geographic and demographic breakdown of the vote.

influenced by matters of identity resulting in a tribalism that Goodhart (2017) argues is the key 'fault-line' in Britain and elsewhere. As discussed further in Chapter 5, such approaches fail to attend to the specificities and conditions of *local* places, and in particular the emotional dynamics of place. Further, this earlier Brexit literature erases 'some of the more finely grained nuances' of the ways in which diverse attributes of people and place combined (Hudson, 2020:1), not only to inform voting patterns, but also to constitute Brexit-based identities which would influence the subsequent political debates – a gap in the literature that this thesis partly addresses in its detailed consideration of Brexit in Hull.

2.5.2.1 Brexit emotions literature

There is a growing, academic literature that considers the workings of emotion through Brexit. For example, Vasilopoulou and Wagner (2017) examine the effects of fear, anger and enthusiasm in the UK towards the EU and how those emotions might influence voting behaviour. They found that fear increased citizens' desire to renegotiate their country's constitutional relationship with the EU, while anger increased their willingness to leave (Vasilopoulou and Wagner, 2017:400). They also found that angry citizens tended to express less nuanced and varied views on specific policies related to the EU, suggesting that this is due to differences in information seeking and information processing. Their research implies that campaigns which elicit anger are more likely to solidify existing Eurosceptic attitudes, whereas pro-EU groups that create enthusiasm will mobilise citizens in favour of European integration. However, when discussions about the EU elicit anxiety, citizens are more likely to have nuanced positions on specific EU policies and base their EU opinion on cost–benefit considerations. Therefore, campaigns that encourage fear and anxiety may mean that voters pay closer attention to the debate and decide more cautiously. The paper describes a need to consider how these emotional considerations may affect public opinion and behaviour and that doing so may help towards understanding the UK's decision to leave the EU. As discussed further in Chapter 5, Vasilopoulou and Wagner's paper is typical of much of the early work on the political studies of emotion and of the accounts of Brexit's emotional politics, in that the voices of citizens themselves are often missing, though there is an emerging body of work addressing this, such as Anderson *et al.* (2019) and Moss *et al.* (2020) which I discuss in more detail below. Whilst such studies may contribute explanations about an individual's voting behaviour, or how particular emotions influence political action, there is an absence of what these emotions and behaviours mean to the individuals concerned. As Manning and Holmes (2013:709) suggested, more 'empirical work is required to qualitatively flesh out the role of emotions in people's deliberations about politics'.

Taking a more qualitative approach to help such considerations, Anderson *et al.* (2019) apply readings from affect studies to a series of interviews and focus groups, presenting a uniquely rich diagnosis of Brexit feelings. They elucidate multiple ‘collective uncertainties’ as normalized, dominating ‘structures of feeling’ in the post-referendum period and wider geo-political landscape (Anderson *et al.*, 2019:258). The emotions of Brexit are nuanced and intensified by a lack of temporal certainty – we are post-Referendum but pre-Brexit, the date of which remains unknown and ever shifting, thus creating an ‘impasse’ that generates multiple feelings of uncertainty to be ‘in’. Similarly, Closs Stephens (2019:1) ‘feels [her] way’ into how ‘emotions work to shape individual and collective bodies, through racial and gendered discourses of nationhood’. She too draws on debates around affect in the humanities and social sciences and argues that ‘attending to affect can shift our understanding and engagement with the politics of intensified nationalism at work in Brexit’ (Closs Stephens, 2019:1-2). She calls for the need to find ‘other ways’ into understanding the politics of Brexit, and that ‘engaging affect invites us to address the heightened political emotions that played out in people’s homes as well as on the street’ (Closs Stephens, 2019:2).

Whilst such qualitative academic analysis of Brexit feelings remains rare, there are many examples of Brexit-related emotions in the media. Cromby (2019), for example, discusses the problematic and stereotypical figuring of ‘angry’ Leave voters in such examples, offering an analysis of the short film called *Why They Voted Leave* (Sky News, 2016) which presents ‘pithy, emotive assertions and extreme-case formulations’ such as:

We're a dustbin ... we're a dustbin for foreign people

All our resources are pushed to the limits—schools, hospitals, NHS, everything

Our country's so small as it is, we should be concentrating on our children
(Cromby, 2019:62)

Thus, the vocabulary of Brexit studies has quickly accrued a few problematic tropes, such as Goodhart’s ‘somewhere’/‘anywhere’ binary, and the broad ‘left behind’ concept which are often engaged in discussions of places ‘like’ Hull – by which I mean former industrial, peripheral places at risk of the ‘crap town’ epithet (see Chapter 4).

For Goodhart, ‘Somewheres’ are rooted in a specific place or community, socially conservative and often less educated; characterised by an unease with the modern world, they have a nostalgic sense that ‘change is loss’ and the strong belief that British leaders are to put the interests of Britons first (Goodhart, 2017:12). In his sympathy for ‘Somewheres’ Goodhart persistently caricatures ‘Anywheres’ as a one-size-fits-all metropolitan liberal elite, reminiscent of Theresa May’s ‘citizen of nowhere’ rhetoric at the 2016 Conservative Party Conference (May, 2016). This is to assume that all those who look outward are automatically disconnected from the people around them, failing to acknowledge that ‘Anywheres’ come from and live somewhere too. Bloomfield (2020:92), within his critique of Goodhart (and others he views as exponents of a socially conservative ‘Blue Labour’), argues that they deliberately ignore both the ‘central class division and also the rapidly evolving nature of the working class itself’, preferring to direct a nationalistic culture war at ‘the metropolitan elite’ (ibid). Bloomfield notes that this is a ‘Stalinist’ trend, evident elsewhere in Europe, and that the core values of any progressive movement—liberty, equality and solidarity—are under threat by such polemics.

I agree with Bloomfield. Indeed, Goodhart’s insistence that the views of ‘Somewheres’ have been overlooked for decades, disregarded by the ‘Anywheres’ who hold political and cultural power is simply not true. Authoritarianism, one of Goodhart’s ‘Somewhere’ traits, has been seen in UK politics in the ‘prison works’ mantra of Michael Howard, and more recently, in the ‘hostile environment’ Home Office policies. Claiming that ‘Somewhere’ views are marginalised in collective life, Goodhart fails to address how the language of such policies are echoed and reinforced by much of Britain’s national press. Gavin (2018) quotes Liz Gerard’s work which ‘illustrates the very negative and often shocking tone of UK newspaper anti-immigration coverage, 2011–2016, and its crescendo preceding the Brexit vote, emphasising “out of control” “growth” and “soaring”, “rocketing”, and “stampeding” “influx” of immigrants, involving “swamping” to “crisis point” the UK’s “crowded isle”’.¹⁶ Other systematic assessments of UK media coverage also observe persistent focus on ‘floods’, ‘invasions’, ‘waves’ and ‘swarms’ of immigrants, or ‘large numbers’ (KhosraviNik *et al.*, 2012; Philo *et al.*, 2013; Spigelman, 2013; Cheregi, 2015). Stocker (2017), has shown how the *Daily Mail*, the *Sun*, the *Daily Express*, the *Daily Telegraph* and others have distributed little else, contributing to

¹⁶ See <http://www.sub-scribe2015.co.uk/whitetops-immigration.html#.W0lvmU3mpv7> and <http://www.subscribe.co.uk/2016/09/the-press-and-immigration-reporting.html> [Accessed 10 April 2021].

the ‘mainstreaming’ of the far-right’s xenophobic rhetoric in contemporary British politics. As I discuss in Chapter 5, despite a lack of public scrutiny over such language (and its encoded, often classed values), it has become embedded within post-Brexit ‘Leave’ and ‘Remain’ identities and the ensuing ‘culture wars’ over issues such as the Black Lives Matter movement and the Coronavirus lockdown.

A more nuanced reading of Western contemporary tribalism is found in Amy Chua’s *Political Tribes* (2018), which argues that American leaders have failed to recognize tribal affiliations and rivalries, or the existence of a repressive ‘market-dominant minority’ (pg. 46) that controls major sectors of the economy. Although Chua does not directly reference Meffesoli’s ‘neotribes’ (1995), it could be argued that her work builds upon his theories, and that societal cohesion has splintered recently ‘into ever more specific subgroups created by overlapping racial, ethnic, gender, and sexual orientation categories’ that feel threatened by one another (Chua, 2018:184). An inclusivity, hailed by the left, has evolved into exclusivity as groups seek to exert ‘exclusive rights to their own histories, symbols, and traditions’ (Chua, 2018:186). Chua argues that in the contemporary United States, divisions that would once have been understood as class based have been reinterpreted as cultural, even when they are not ethnic, and that to understand such tribalism we must acknowledge the impact of inequality and the wedge it has driven between America’s whites. As Chua observes:

“Coastal Elites” have become a kind of market-dominant minority from the point of view of America’s heartland, and [...] market-dominant minorities invariably end up producing democratic backlash (2018:164).

Like the US case, Chua argues that ‘poor whites’ have often been ‘blamed’ for the Brexit result. However, as Bhambra (2017) and Younge (2016) point out, this category is a constructed one (often by media framings such as that described above), and the debate over whether Brexit should be understood within cultural backlash politics or in the context of socio-economic inequality ‘misses the ways in which it must also be read in relation to the histories of the British Empire’ (Closs Stephens, 2019:17).

The narrow Leave victory instigated a fractious period of disagreement and a protracted, often emotionally volatile parliamentary debate as to the timing and manner of ‘Brexiting’ or whether it would happen at all. This was in part, because the referendum result came to represent a ‘revolt of the provincial classes’ (Hudson, 2020:2) against what was framed as a

'metropolitan', 'liberal elite' (e.g. Shipman, 2016). Additionally, the period leading up to the referendum and the post-referendum debates were marked by 'fake news', dis-information and a growing distrust of experts (Moss *et al.*, 2020; Walkerdine, 2020). The anxious 'impasse' (Anderson *et al.*, 2019) was further complicated (and extended) by Theresa May's decision to call a general election in 2017, which resulted in the Conservative party losing its parliamentary majority and, ultimately, two years later, to her losing her job. She was replaced as Prime Minister by Boris Johnson in 2019, who immediately pressed for a general election under the slogan to 'get Brexit done' and fulfil 'the will of the people'. The December 2019 general election was de facto a one-issue referendum about the timing of Brexit and the details of the UK's post-Brexit relationship with the EU, though it also highlighted a bitter feud in the Labour Party, itself divided over the leadership of Jeremy Corbyn and the dominance of the socialist left. Johnson won a substantial parliamentary majority and the mandate to remove the UK from the EU on 31 December 2020. This is, broadly, the political context and timeframe of my thesis.

Chapter 3 Methodology

3.1 Researching civic imaginaries, a multi-dimensional approach

Core to the project is the documentation and analysis of Hull's civic imaginaries. How did people in Hull imagine their collective futures and how did these imaginaries enfold with, and what might they reveal about the cultural politics and cultural behaviours of the city? In particular, what impact have the 'transformative' events of Hull2017 and Brexit played in these processes? To investigate this, it was vital not only to analyse the authorised narratives presented through UKCoC programming, political speeches, and other official sources, but to reveal the intangible and tacit meanings, buried deep in the imaginations of the city's inhabitants. Official stories can dominate, and become more widely read or accepted than others; and some have better access to the means of communication. Additionally, 'stories inscribe boundaries that socially include some and exclude others' (Collie, 2011:425). This reintroduces the question of power and, important to a project concerned with the civic, differences of power. The interdisciplinary methodology I shall describe in this chapter has enabled a multi-dimensional approach to these complicated questions. I have worked creatively across and between disciplinary boundaries to question conventional methodologies, taking perhaps a non-canonical and experimental epistemology. These methods have allowed me to gather in-depth empirical findings from 'hard to reach' communities who are rarely included in academic research. I suggest that this has supported a focus on the project's learning *outcomes* rather than reinforce any disciplinary setting – an approach which Donaldson et al. (2010) refer to as considering ontological rather than epistemological dimensions of complex, or 'messy', problems.

The advent of Postmodernism, especially Derrida's theories of deconstruction ('there is nothing outside the text' (2016:163)), and Baudrillard's *simulacra* (1994), have brought considerable implications for the *doing* of geography, with practitioners questioning the disciplinary focus on text, symbols, and images. This project is concerned with the non-representational as well as what can be understood through signs and symbols. As Dewsbury et al. elucidate (2002:438), representation 'is perhaps more usefully thought of as incessant presentation, continually assembling and disassembling, timing and spacing; worlding' and Thrift's development of non-representational (or *more than* representational) theories (NRT) have drawn attention to these performative aspects of representation (Thrift, 2003; 2008). Whilst some critical geographers have taken issue with NRT (e.g. Cresswell, 2013:235), particularly Thrift's (2004:81) declaration that it will 'overturn much of the spirit and purpose

of the social sciences and humanities', for my considerations of the civic imagination, there is a usefulness in NRT's relational thinking, as well as incorporating ideas of performativity. I do not suggest forgoing ocular or sign-centred understandings of representation, but to open out considerations of the term, and its applications, to include more than 'talk and text' (Nayak and Jeffrey, 2013:291).

Nearly three decades ago, Fenno (1990:128) commented that 'not enough political scientists are presently engaged in observation'. As Flinders (2020) suggests, little has changed. Indeed, Kapiszewski et al. (2015:234) conclude that 'political science has yet to embrace ethnography and participant observation wholeheartedly'. This has created, a '*double absence*: of politics in ethnographic literature and of ethnography in the study of politics' (Auyero and Joseph, 2007:9). Despite a burgeoning Brexit literature, which includes titles such as *Brexit: Sociological Responses* (Outhwaite, 2017), it is surprising that relatively little qualitative, ethnographic work has been undertaken. As Mondak and Canache attest (2014:26), virtually all political processes 'unfold at multiple interrelated levels' and understanding political behaviours requires 'that we account not only for the person's political orientations, sophistication, and psychological dispositions but also for aspects of the individual's social networks and contexts, for characteristics of the candidates, and for elements of the national political arena'. Further, they suggest that 'the real purchase may come only once we link our understanding of the actions of the individual voter to political phenomena that occur at the collective level' (ibid). In other words, we should consider the processes of broader political culture. This, I argue, is an opportunity to demonstrate the fruitfulness, and the 'greater depth of understanding' that can be derived from qualitative research (Berg, 2001:2), especially when attuned to the non-representational. These arguments and challenges are developed further in Chapter 5.

Similarly, the 'cultural turn' in multiple disciplines has tended to focus on the urban landscape as *text*. Many 'readings' of urban artistic practices primarily foreground semiotic analyses to highlight the intentions of creators and planners, often drawing conclusions with little empirical foundation – especially those derived from 'the public' – which might include affectual and other more than representational dynamics. As McGuigan (2003:677-678) argues in his account of London's Millennium Dome and the New Millennium Experience, 'it is important to look [...] in the round [...] by taking into account the multiple determinations and agencies in its production, representation and consumption'. McGuigan notes the multiple

potential approaches to cultural analysis, arguing for a 'combined approach [...] in order to grasp the ontological complexity of a specific phenomenon' (see also Kellner, 1997). For McGuigan (see also McGuigan and Gilmore, 2000; 2002), this means attending to discursive issues with dialogical and ideological critiques, which is a partly textual process - exploring not only texts about the Dome but also the Dome-as-text (Bell and Oakley, 2015:70). This means reading its contents grounded in knowledge of who 'wrote' it. It also adds other 'readers', such as visitor experiences, which, in Bell & Oakley's reading of the analysis is 'arguably one of the most revealing parts of the study' (ibid). As a comparable object, Hull2017 lends itself to such multidimensional analysis. My participants discussed Hull2017 events with various degrees of reflexivity, at times repeating the official messages and at others making their own meanings. Discussions often took highly personal turns, reflecting everyday concerns, individual, family and community histories. These ongoing concerns and their associations with Hull2017 suggest an open-endedness to the initiative, beyond the key performance indicators of official monitoring and evaluation. Like the Millennium Experience, Hull2017 contains similar elements 'amenable to discourse, text, process, and practice approaches' (Bell and Oakley, 2015:70), making multidimensional analysis suitable for achieving a fuller picture of its multiple meanings. Indeed, cities and urban events are often noted for their invitation to interdisciplinarity and multidimensional approaches (e.g. Petts *et al.*, 2008; Baerwald, 2010; Levitas, 2013). Additionally, the research about local imaginaries is exploratory and impressionistic, with a considerable lack of parameters – demanding of more than representational and other experimental methods.

Anchored primarily in 'close encounter' ethnography, and attentive to feminist methodological principles (e.g. Haraway, 1988; Rose, 1997; McLean, 2014), my project works with qualitative material drawn from semi-structured interviews and focus groups with three key groups: Hull residents, Hull2017 actors (by which I mean artists, producers and policy makers) and Hull political influencers (a senior council officer, a local MEP and a local journalist). This enabled me to 'access experiences' (Kvale, 2007:xi), eliciting rich and 'thick' descriptions (Geertz, 1973:26), to capture first-hand accounts and convey these from the perspectives of participants. The focus on emotions through the research was not originally an aim. However, given the rapidly changing and heightened political context in which the fieldwork took place, interviewees frequently became emotional, in ways that demanded attention. The fieldwork therefore tried to establish also whether the rapidly changing and heightened political context were the main reasons behind interviewees becoming emotional or whether there were also other reasons. Thus, the fieldwork and analysis developed inductively, allowing space for

experimentation with innovative methods. While working with traditional ethnographic practices, I shall discuss in this chapter the incorporation of novel developments on original techniques, including drawing interviews, timeline interviews and the theatre talks method.

Additionally, the project incorporates critical artefact and critical discourse analyses, including the semiotic and aesthetic analyses of Hull2017 events, Hull2017 marketing materials and policy documents, EU referendum campaign materials, local government policy documents and analyses of representations of the city in the media. It also incorporates participant observation methods in its detailing and analysis of a new play about Brexit performed in the city by Hull-based Middle Child Theatre Company. Analysis of secondary quantitative data, such as electoral results and demographic information, is also utilised to set the scene and broader context. These approaches allowed me to formulate a 'complex, holistic picture [...] in a natural setting' (Creswell, 1998:15).

3.2 Participants

My participants are aged between 16 - 86 and, as suggested earlier, were recruited for their contributions to one of three groups: Hull residents, Hull2017 actors and Hull political influencers. Residents were initially recruited via a survey or from my 'deep hanging out' (Walmsley, 2018) with organisations such as Middle Child Theatre Company, the Freedom Centre and the #TheHullWeWant project. The other two groups, largely consisting of cultural or political professionals, were directly approached to take part after desk research, due to their specific insider knowledge. With all three groups, snowball sampling aided recruitment of further respondents. In accordance with standard ethics procedures, all responses from the Hull residents' group have been anonymised to avoid personal identification. With their permission, respondents from the other two groups are mostly identified by name. However, on occasions when potentially sensitive political or professional information was divulged, I followed University of Hull guidelines in ensuring confidentiality and anonymity to protect informants from deductive disclosure (Kaiser, 2009). This matters because the thesis relates conflicting views about Hull 2017, and it is imperative not to jeopardise my participants' professional relationships.

3.2.1 Hull residents

Coming to a definition of 'Hull residents' and therefore who, or who not, to include in this study, was not as straight forward as I first assumed. This is due to the overlapping governance

structures of the city and the way the EU Referendum was conducted, meaning that Hull's Westminster parliamentary constituencies, arguably the more familiar units of Hull's political landscape and boundaries, do not exactly map onto the less familiar EU Referendum voting districts.¹⁷ Further, as Chapter 4 discusses, the everyday geographies of the city itself and the unbounded, often hybrid nature of city imaginaries, further complicates a simple definition of 'Hull Residents'.

Similarly, there are many other people who work, shop, play, study or otherwise benefit or contribute to the civic life of Hull but who live just outside the city boundary. These people might also identify as having Hull civic imaginaries, have vested interests in the Hull Brexit vote and attended Hull2017 events – but did not contribute to the 67.6% result. This includes residents of Anlaby and Cottingham to the west of Hull, and the villages in the East Riding just a few miles north and east of the city. One might argue that to include these voices, the sample range should extend to include participants who self-identify as having a Hull civic imaginary. However, this poses practical problems in terms of how wide to cast the net. For example, my brother now lives in Melbourne, Australia - on the other side of the world - but lived and worked in Hull until his mid 20's. From afar, he still takes a keen interest in Hull's political and cultural life – so should his views be included? If so, the methodological and ethical and practical implications of the study are vastly extended beyond the capacity and resources of a PhD. Therefore, as a significant element of this project focusses on the much quoted 67.6% leave result, I decided that the civic imaginaries to be investigated should be limited to those who were eligible to vote within the Kingston Upon Hull EU electoral district on 23rd June 2016. I have included the voices of some who were ineligible to vote, such as those who were under 18 at the time of the referendum, and non-British citizens who were ineligible to vote, but reside in the city. Respondents from these groups are clearly identifiable as such throughout the thesis.

¹⁷ The local government district of Kingston Upon Hull comes within the European Parliamentary region of Yorkshire and the Humber. This district is very similar to the Hull Westminster constituencies but does not include the Hessle ward to the west of the city – part of the Westminster parliamentary constituency of Kingston Upon Hull West and Hessle. Thus, whilst many inhabitants of Hessle may consider themselves to have Hull imaginaries (indeed, the north bank of the iconic Humber Bridge, a focal point for 'Hull' celebrations and site of a number of Hull2017 events is actually located in the Hessle ward), they did not contribute to the 67.6% Kingston Upon Hull leave vote. Instead, their votes contributed to the East Riding of Yorkshire EU voting district. That said, in terms of Brexit politics, the East Riding voted similarly to leave, although at 60.4%, by a less pronounced margin than Hull (see Chapter 5).

A short recruitment survey was created which enabled me to identify potential respondents willing to engage in further research (see Appendix 2). The survey web address and introductory materials (including ethical provisions) were initially promoted through the One Hull of a City Facebook group, which has approximately 30,000 members. The survey asked questions allowing me to classify respondents according to demographic groups, as well as the first part of their postcode – allowing me to identify their local government ward and assist in ensuring a geographical spread across the city. Thus, recruitment was non-coercive, allowing respondents to self-identify as willing participants. I then contacted respondents by email or phone to arrange a suitable time and venue for the interview or focus group.

A pilot version of this process was also undertaken, with the survey link posted to the ‘closed’ Facebook group for the Spencer Tunick *Sea of Hull* art project which took place in the city in 2016. This group has approximately 800 members and I received 100 complete survey responses. The *Sea of Hull* art project included many participants from outside the city, thus not all those willing to take part were eligible for inclusion in the study.¹⁸ However, Chapter 5 includes some survey data from the eligible *Sea of Hull* respondents.

3.2.2 Hull2017 actors and political influencers

These two distinct groups consist of individuals connected in various ways with the production of the Hull2017 initiative, its overall curation and management (including marketing and funding), governance, and those responsible for events such as artists, producers, and venue managers. I also interviewed individuals with public-facing roles in the political life of the city, able to contribute relevant insights, especially in relation to the Brexit debates. As the project developed, I was also introduced to and interviewed ‘interested’ parties – such as representatives of the Humber Local Enterprise Partnership, local community centres and local social services and social enterprises. These respondents do not fit neatly into any of the defined respondent groups and are listed together at the end of Appendix 1. Potentially key respondents were identified through desk research, the snowballing technique, and my existing networks within the city. Data from these groups has been interpreted considering the

¹⁸ Two-thirds of respondents (67%) to the *Sea of Hull* survey were not from Hull.

informants' affiliations, any personal and professional stakes and validated through cross-referencing with the data collected from desk research and policy documents, as well as with the information gathered from the other interviews.

3.3 Data collection methods

3.3.1 Interviews and focus groups

Interviews and focus groups were carried out in a semi-structured format (Longhurst, 2003), following a predetermined set of questions, phrased to encourage open-ended discussion that allowed for spontaneous topics and issues to arise.¹⁹ As Boyce and Neale advise (2006:5), such interview guides are 'the instructions that are followed for each interview, to ensure consistency between interviews, and thus increase the reliability of the findings'. The aim of the interviews was to generate rich qualitative data that would enable me to answer my key research questions. The responses from the Hull Residents Group form the core empirical evidence, around which major themes of discussion and further investigation, such as interviews with Hull2017 decision makers and Hull political influencers are based. The interviews and focus groups were audio-recorded and transcribed by me for analytical purposes. Each transcription was coded to establish the thematic categories which provide structure for the later discussions. By the final interviews, no new codes were emerging and were instead corroborating and reinforcing existing themes. I took this to indicate data saturation.

3.3.1.1 Creative methods

As Harper (2002:13) has argued, images can evoke 'deeper elements of human consciousness' than words, and 'exchanges based on words alone utilise less of the brain's capacity than exchanges in which the brain is processing images as well as words'. To reach some of those 'deeper elements' of my participant's imaginaries – and perhaps to give the non-representational some symbolic (and therefore discursive) form, the interviews and focus groups were supported by a range of creative research methods. I shall provide references and further details below, but briefly here, these included photo elicitation, and various drawing activities. Occasionally, participants would request alternative inroads to their feelings and imaginations, choosing instead to compose poems or mind-maps. Rather than rigorously apply

¹⁹ See Appendix 3 for a typical interview schedule.

one single creative method to all fieldwork encounters, I amassed a 'toolkit' of creative activities, and suggested, rather than imposed their inclusion. This allowed participants free choice of expression – which also included the option of not engaging with the creative methods if they so wished.

Such varied practices produced a significant volume of creative artefacts, rich with qualitative data. However, it quickly became apparent that the amount of data within the artefacts themselves, was in some ways, surplus to the needs of this study. Therefore, for the purposes of my thesis, the artefacts are of less importance than the conversations they provoked. As I discuss below, these creative activities enabled my interviewees to express themselves more freely and expressively than in a conventional interview setting – especially when trying to explain choices behind their creations. Therefore, in this section, rather than explaining each creative method in detail, I briefly outline my approaches. That said, given the centrality of the theatre talks method to the generation of data incorporated into Chapters 4 and 5, that specific method will be given more attention.

Photo elicitation

Photo elicitation is based on the simple idea of inserting a photograph into a research interview and using the image as a prompt for discussion (Harper, 2002). I would show participants images of key Hull2017 events (which are discussed later in Chapters 6 and 7) as well as images of Hull2017 marketing materials. As Clark-Ibáñez (2004) has described, this process stimulates respondents' memories in different ways than through purely verbal-based interviews and in ways potentially unknown to the researcher. For example, when I showed images of *We Are Hull*, the opening event of Hull2017, many participants would immediately produce open or bright facial expressions such as smiling, and warm 'ahh' or 'yeahhhh' sounds before verbally articulating their positive memories of the event. In one focus group, when these images were shown, participants spontaneously applauded and cheered – evidence of the powerful emotional impact that event had on Hull residents, as I will discuss in more detail in later chapters.

Drawing methods

Drawings were incorporated into the fieldwork in several ways, providing 'an integrated approach that involve[d] visual and word-based research methods [as] a way of exploring both the multiplicity and complexity that is the base of much social research interested in human

experience' (Guillemin, 2004:273). Given the ontological position that knowledge is produced rather than pre-existing or fixed, Guillemin (2004:274) further argues that through 'the act of drawing' as well as 'the drawing itself', meaning can be made. Therefore, in the *process* of producing a drawing, the drawer is simultaneously constructing knowledge *about* the drawing. Further, for Rose (2001:32), 'visual imagery is never innocent; it is always constructed through various practices, technologies and knowledges'. As such, drawings, like other forms of visual imagery, can inform how people see the world and are 'intricately bound up with power relations, social experiences, and technological interactions' (Guillemin, 2004:275). At the beginning of each interview or focus group, I would introduce the idea of drawing as a way for participants to express their thoughts and feelings. Some participants would doodle throughout the session, subconsciously sketching their thoughts to produce a collage of images that we could later discuss (e.g. Figures 3-1 to 3-2).

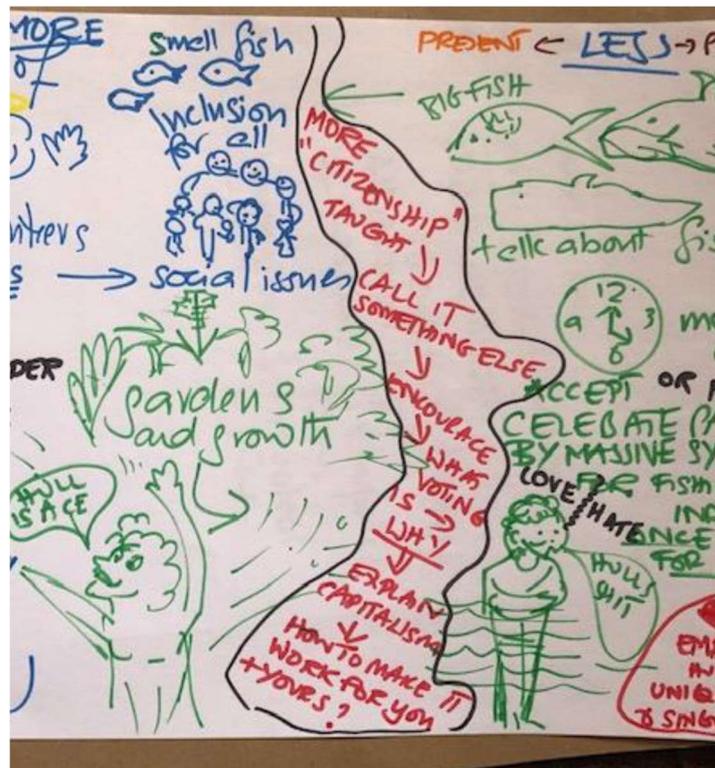


Figure 3-1 Focus Group doodles, Rosie, 2019



Figure 3-2 Focus Group doodles, Patience, 2019

Some participants, who for various reasons struggled to find the words to convey their ideas, found the drawing method a helpful way to express themselves – often creating patterns or scribbles with carefully selected shapes and colours, which I could then ask about and relate back to my research concerns. For example (and as I discuss in Chapter 4), Figure 3-3 below, shows Hilde’s abstract drawing which supported her thoughts about Hull’s geographical and mental isolation and prompted her to think about what an ‘ideal’ version of collaboration with metropolitan ‘centres’ might be.

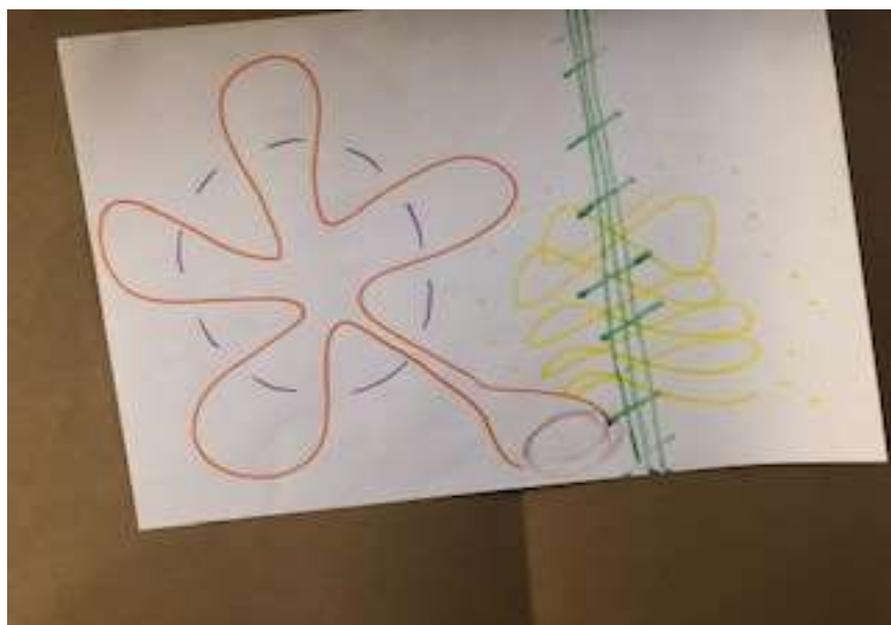


Figure 3-3 Interview drawing, Hilde, 2019

Another pictorial method employed in this study is the life-map or timeline drawing (Figures 3-4, 3-5), which as Neale (2012) states, is a 'good tool to think with' as it can simplify complex ideas and open up 'sensitive life experiences, encouraging self-reflection [...] in ways that would not be possible through a verbal exchange alone' (Neale, 2018:104). Participants were invited to draw a simple map or timeline of their life (or of Hull if they preferred) and to highlight key milestones, events, and turning points. Some participants chose to draw mind maps with loops and wandering journeys, others chose more formalised straight lines representative of linear, sequential time. Crucially, the technique can be used to explore the future as well as the past (Thomson and Holland, 2002; Gordon *et al.*, 2005; Worth, 2011; Neale, 2012; Neale, 2018), and encourage prospective visioning with a freedom beyond purely verbal interactions, though always based on an understanding (however partial and subjective) of the participant's history.

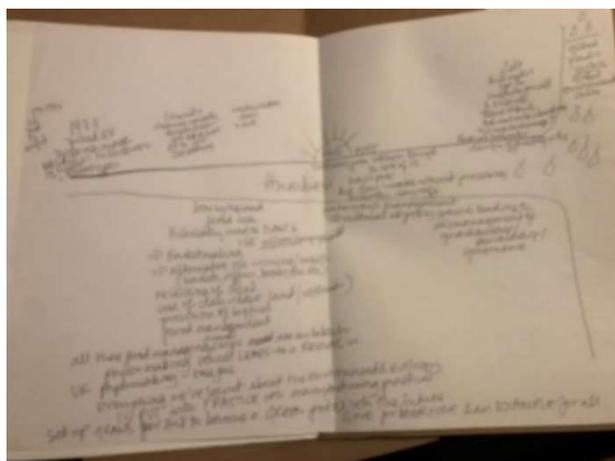


Figure 3-4 Life map interview, Angela, 2019

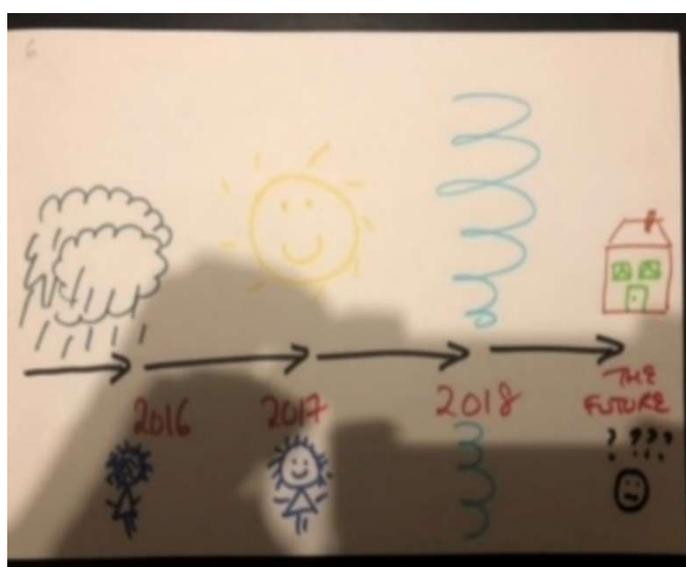


Figure 3-5 Time line interview, Kathy, 2019

3.3.2 Auto-ethnography

To address some of the phenomenological aspects of shame and pride, I occasionally incorporate personal reflections and first-hand accounts of my own feelings and experiences - an auto-ethnographic approach, which I understand as 'a self-narrative that critiques the situatedness of self with others in social contexts' (Spry, 2001:710). These appear within blue boxes throughout the discussion chapters. I adopt this method, to tease out the temporal aspects of emotion and feeling, and to document the significance of 'being there'. In my personal reflections (particularly of Hull2017 events), as well as in my conversations with participants, emotions frequently surfaced as certain moments, images, or sensations were remembered. I suggest that the intimacy of autoethnography will enable the reader to get closer to the somewhat chaotic messiness of feelings that Hull2017 and Brexit sometimes evoked. Thus, I aim to illustrate the embodied experience of emotional and affectual processes whilst remaining (I hope), mindful of Spry's advice that 'good autoethnography' is not simply a confessional 'but a provocative weave of story and theory' (Spry, 2001:713). Also, as Denzin argues, 'the tale being told, should reflect back on, be entangled in, and critique this current historical moment and its discontents' (Denzin, 1992:25). Therefore, whilst in the more personal sections, I acknowledge my recollections to be fractured, partial and situated, I continually relate my own experiences to those of my respondents, as well as the literature.

3.3.3 *Us Against Whatever*

Early in my PhD studies, I was introduced to Middle Child Theatre Company who were seeking advice for a production which was to become *Us Against Whatever*. Director Paul Smith had commissioned playwright Maureen Lennon and dramaturg Matthew May to explore the issues underlying Hull's Brexit vote. It presented a fitting and timely opportunity for me because they wanted to address Hull's Brexit story in ways that would not alienate any 'side' of the debate, whilst attempting to come to a sympathetic understanding of the city's recent history and political culture. Concerned by a polarising civic discourse that was surfacing in the city, through and after the EU Referendum, Middle Child wanted to create a production that would foster a constructive dialogue with their audiences. As Remain voters, the company was also aware that their opinion regarding Brexit was at odds with most of the Hull electorate, and that the production should approach the topic sensitively. As Smith told me:

It doesn't feel like there are many theatre companies based in cities that voted to Leave. If you look at where most theatre companies are, they're in cities that voted to Remain. So, I feel like we've got a fairly unique point of view on it. I think

in London you're fairly safe that your audience are probably generally gonna agree with you [...] if you're anti Brexit. Here we just have to be really smart about it. Because we can't make a piece of theatre that calls the whole city idiots and that says that they didn't know what they were doing. We have to be more nuanced. I think that's a really important part of this show (Interview, 2018).

Furthermore, they planned to address and represent Hull's Brexit feelings by incorporating voices from the city's Polish community (see Chapter 4), and in a form designed to provoke productive and potentially recuperative discussions amongst audiences. Thus, in examining Hull's political culture and what the Brexit vote might mean for the future of the city, Middle Child were working creatively in a way that complemented my research, and the play itself, made a potent artefact for analysis by my participants, acting as a catalyst for discussions that would reveal further layers of Hull's civic imaginaries. Middle Child generously allowed me to follow the play's development, inviting me into the creative process, which included reading early drafts, attending a workshop performance at the National Theatre Studio in London, and to sit in on rehearsals and performances. This observational work took place over a year, from March 2018 to May 2019. The performances of *Us Against Whatever* in Hull took place over the final week of March 2019, the original date the UK was due to leave the EU. However, due to the 'Irish backstop' element of Theresa May's Brexit deal being unacceptable to many Conservative and DUP MPs, May's deal was rejected, meaning that the Brexit deadline had to be extended. May resigned on 24th July 2019 after MPs voted down the deal for a third time. As the suitably dramatic newspaper headlines from March 29th 2019 demonstrate, the context of *Us Against Whatever's* performances, was at a highly turbulent period in the Brexit process.²⁰

Theatre is a potentially powerful methodological tool for researching imaginaries due to its ability to 'inspire thought, critical reflection, emotional engagement and personal transformation' (Rossiter *et al.*, 2008:130). Despite this, formal ties between theatre and non-drama based research are relatively recent (Gray, 2002). Denzin (1997) has made a strong case for the use of performance in social science research, citing the ability of performance to question and deconstruct the notion of a singular 'truth' by recounting narratives from

²⁰ As Lyons (2019) describes in a review of the pro-Brexit media from that day, the *Daily Mail* led with 'One last chance', the *Daily Express* with 'Darkest hour' and the *Daily Telegraph* with 'Day of reckoning'.

multiple perspectives and angles. By engaging audiences on a cognitive and emotional level, and by using both verbal and non-verbal forms of communication, theatre has the potential to enhance understandings of complex emotional, interpersonal, and psychological dynamics involved in the development of collective civic imaginaries. *Us Against Whatever*, and its very time-space specific content, provided a unique basis for a qualitative research approach that revealed the kind of linkages we might require to understand the actions of individual voters 'to political phenomena that occur at the collective level' (Mondak and Canache, 2014:26).

3.3.2.1 Theatre talks

The Theatre Talks method was developed as a qualitative audience research method in the early 1980s, to analyse the relationship between theatre productions and the response of audiences (Sauter *et al.*, 1986). These original Theatre Talks took place immediately after the performances, giving the participants an opportunity to reflect on the experience and to listen to other points of view (Hansen, 2015:344-345). I have developed and adapted the method to suit the purpose of my research and its practical circumstances.²¹ Participants in a traditional Theatre Talks method would usually be welcomed by the facilitator. However, I chose not to engage with research participants that I encountered at the performances (other than to say hello) as I did not want to influence their opinions of the production. Another deviation from the 'pure' method, was that my participants were not required to attend the same performance. This was to facilitate schedules as much as possible and because the actual discussion would not take place immediately following the performance but at a slightly later date.

The talks themselves took a form that closely resembles a conventional focus group, although a few participants who could not attend were interviewed independently. In keeping with the Theatre Talks method, they were quite unstructured, which allowed the participants the

²¹ Participants for this element of the study were recruited from my existing Hull Respondents Group. I also engaged a small number of further participants via a post-show online survey. The link was distributed by Hull Truck and Liverpool Everyman Theatre marketing departments to audiences of *Us Against Whatever* between March 21st and April 3rd, 2019. Sixteen respondents provided contact details for future research and several Theatre Talks focus groups and interviews took place comprising these respondents and my existing Hull Respondents Group. Free tickets were used as an incentive. My funds were limited to one ticket per participant, which may have resulted in the loss of potential participants who had to fund tickets for their companions, especially those who may have felt cautious attending a theatre event due to social uncertainty of attending an unfamiliar activity.

possibility to address the questions and issues raised in the play most important to them. A core principle of the talks was that all perspectives are valuable, and that different people have different perspectives on theatrical events. As facilitator, I maintained an appreciative approach to all contributions and stressed that the experience of each of the participants was valued. Importantly, I made clear that the process was not about whether the participants had understood the production correctly. This was to prevent them from feeling foolish – something which might confirm or provoke negative attitudes towards going to the theatre (Scollen, 2009:7-8). Since the purpose of the Theatre Talks was to give the participants an opportunity to share their thoughts with each other and through that process reveal their thoughts about political culture in the city, especially regarding Brexit, I remained as passive a facilitator as possible, other than to introduce questions or at times to probe respondents a little further to elucidate their answers. The talks were audio-recorded and transcribed by me for analytical purposes, and the participants were anonymised in the subsequent transcription. Each transcription was coded to establish the thematic categories which provide structure for the later discussion.

The play provoked strong reactions from my participants, inspiring contributions that plainly demonstrated the agency of audiences in constituting meaning and identity which can arise within the space of performance. The data elicited (particularly for Chapter 5) demonstrates the strength of the Theatre Talks method as a tool for investigating imaginaries. For, despite the prompt for discussion being a theatrical representation (for example of a winning football goal), which in a more conventional format might be expected to lead to a conversation exclusively about football or Hull's sporting history, the respondents all took their responses in unexpected directions that revealed something (and something connected) of their personal thoughts and 'raw feelings' about the city and about the city's sense of self.

3.4 Analytical approaches

My analytical approach was inductive, incorporating a coding process which led to 'theory emergence and theory affirmation' (Richards, 2005:106), primarily based in Critical Discourse Analysis (Wodak, 2001; Fairclough, 2011) and Thematic Analysis (e.g. Braun and Clarke, 2006). 'Critical Discourse Analysis' (CDA) is a process which sees 'language as one element of a social practice' (Fairclough, 2000:158), that aims to understand how language is articulated together with other elements. As Hastings argues (1999:93), CDA, and Fairclough's work in particular, is 'highly relevant to the study of the exercise of power, and specifically transformation, in a

multisectoral “partnership” setting’. Fairclough (1995) has shown that there is a dialectical relationship between social practice and discursive practice and thus a close connection between changes in the use of language and social change. CDA is therefore of relevance to this thesis, which looks at various sites of power in terms of governance (i.e. local, national, and supra-national governments), and at personal and organisational levels – particularly with respect to the ‘transformative’ events of Hull2017 and the 2016 EU Referendum. Further, CDA looks at change in terms of how the combination of discourses, genres and styles which make up the language elements of a social practice, change over time.

I took a pragmatic ‘jackdaw’ approach advocated by Thompson (1981:290), rather than a singular or ‘pure’ method, in an iterative process that moved back and forth between different levels of abstraction to develop from description to interpretation. Such a method of qualitative analysis has been characterized as ‘a loop-like pattern of multiple rounds of revisiting the data as additional questions emerge, new connections are unearthed, and more complex formulations develop, along with a deepening understanding of the material. ... [It is] fundamentally an iterative set of processes’ (Berkowitz, cited in Srivastava and Hopwood (2009:77)). Thus, it is useful to conceive of this analytical process as a ‘conceptual ladder’ or ‘scaffolding’ (Mills, 1959:43; Neale, 2018), through which I moved iteratively up and down - drawing on empirical data at the lower levels to create summary and descriptive memos, which formed the basis for higher-level understandings (Jacob, 1987; Tesch, 1990; Richards, 2005; Neale, 2018). As Neale (2018:110) explains, ‘at the higher levels, new insights can be tested against wider knowledge and evidence (external verification), before moving back down the scaffolding to check them against the original data (internal verification)’. Engaging with pre-existing theories and evidence in this way, my emerging accounts remain empirically grounded.

3.5 Engaging ‘Hullness’

As well as making use of established and novel research methods as described above, there is nevertheless a certain degree of subjectivity which I have been aware of as the researcher while conducting this research. Academic research projects can ‘bear an intimate relationship to the researcher’s life [and] personal dramas [can] provoke ideas that generate books and research ideas’ (Oakley, 1979:4). Given my intimate history with Hull, and my identification as a Hullensian, my own ontological interests have directed the topic of this project for its ‘substantive interest relating to [my] own experiences’ (Mason, 2002:13). My research is

unequivocally affected by my relationship to Hull, my past experiences, and my interpretation of how the city is viewed by others. My position is therefore interwoven from its inception.

Although I no longer call Hull home, I was born and raised there and care very much about the city. Many of my family still live there and I have a strong sense of belonging, considering myself both 'insider' and 'outsider'. Politically, I am a sceptical 'Remainer' who would have preferred to see the UK remain in a reformed EU, and I cast my ballot in an East London borough, where I live, which voted 78.5% to remain, whereas Hull voted 67.6% to leave (The Electoral Commission, 2016). I was conscious of these elements of my being through the research and aware that they might awaken in some potential participants, suspicions of me as a political, metropolitan, socially liberal 'other', perhaps resulting in a reluctance or refusal to engage. At the same time, I can recover my Hull accent whenever I wish (my 'oh' sounds are still flat much of the time anyway); I have a sense of humour recognisable to other Hullensians; and I know the city and its histories intimately, especially the Holderness ward and neighbouring vicinities of the Hull East Westminster parliamentary constituency. Ultimately, whilst aware that the way I perceive my own position does not necessarily equate to the way it is read by others (Beswick, 2019:76), I still *feel* Hull even though I left twenty years ago. In practice, my first-hand knowledge, allowed me to not only effectively communicate with participants, but, as Lahlou et al. suggest (2015:217), to 'share to some degree their own "emic" perspective (in the participant's own terms)'. Therefore, my research benefits from a position of lived, at times, intimate knowledge.

Chapter 4 Kingston Upon Hull: End of the line feelings

I think it's a mantra for Hull: Hull is its own republic (Neil, Focus Group, 2018).

4.1 Introduction

Geographically isolated on the north-bank of the Humber Estuary, Hull has long been noted as idiosyncratic and somehow 'apart' (Brown, 1926; Horobin, 1957; Atkinson, 2012; Tommarchi and Bianchini, 2020). In 1926, Rudmose Brown described the development of Hull, noting that due to 'its isolation from other great cities [...] No other city in England has developed a higher degree of civic consciousness and pride of place' (Brown, 1926:319). In the early Twentieth Century, then, Hull's stand-alone image and identity was for some, its source of pride. This situation was to change in the later Twentieth Century, as the city experienced the negative impacts of de-industrialisation, compounded by a morale-slumping reputation. As early as 1955, when Philip Larkin came to Hull to take up the post of head librarian at the university, he grumbled in a letter to his friend DJ Enright: 'I'm settling down in Hull all right. Every day I sink a little further' (quoted in Walsh, 2018). After four months he wrote: 'What a hole, what witless, crapulous people' and to other correspondents, he complained that Hull was 'fish smelling'; 'a dump' and...'I wish I could think of just one nice thing to tell you about Hull – oh yes, well, it's very nice and flat for cycling' (ibid). Notoriously, the 2003 *Idler Book of Crap Towns*, ranked Hull the 'crappiest' (Jordison and Kieran, 2003). The city's official full name, a derivation of King's Town upon Hull, was bestowed by King Edward I in 1299. However, the royal prefix is widely rejected by those who identify Hull as home, to the degree where Heaton, in a 2011 *Guardian* article, denounced the 'full' name as 'a tattoo on the city's face' (Heaton, 2011).

In this chapter I briefly survey the city's history, geography, politics and culture to provide a context of the place, and of the place in time. I draw out aspects of the city's relationship with Europe as well as trace a contemporary portrait of Hull's recent political and cultural behaviours, highlighting key events and features. In comparison with other places, Hull has received limited academic attention, and as will become clear, the 'sense that the city's contributions and endurances have not been widely recognised' (CPPI, 2018), is a common refrain throughout this thesis - perhaps borne out in the relatively scant literature. Threaded throughout are narratives and cycles of civic pride and civic shame which will recur in later chapters. Emotions which act as powerful markers and motivators in the Hull civic imaginary.



Figure 4-1 An ironic point to Hull on the BBC weather map. Image from Boulton (2016)

4.2 Hull's civic origins

The city's origins can be traced to the initial settlement of Wyke, which was founded by Cistercian monks from nearby Meaux Abbey in the late Twelfth Century (for detailed histories of Hull see: Allison, 1974; Gillett and MacMahon, 1986; Starkey *et al.*, 2017). Its growth was shaped by the Humber Estuary and the River Hull which enabled the town's port to establish. In 1299, a charter was signed by Edward I and signs of a civic awareness developed from this point onwards, derived in part from the rules and customs of its medieval guilds, including the wealthy Hull Trinity House, which was associated with maritime business and controlled navigation in the Humber (Starkey *et al.*, 2017:9). The city's subsequent development, due to it being a strategic and successful transshipment point, facilitated the movement of cargo and people from smaller vessels travelling to and from the heart of England and onto larger, seagoing ships destined for the ocean (Kermode, 2002). Merchants grew wealthy from this trading, enabling the town, and its sense of community and civic identity to develop.

A port city of central importance to national and international trade and exchange, Hull has played unique and crucial roles in the histories of Britain and northern Europe for over seven hundred years. Oft-celebrated events which reinforce the mythology of Hull as a city of trailblazers includes rebellious action in 1642 by the city's governor, John Hotham, which prompted the English Civil War (providing inspiration for Hull2017 play *The Hypocrite*), and William Wilberforce's pivotal role which led to the abolition of slavery in the British Empire. In

the Nineteenth- Century, Hull was a world leading whaling port and consequently became home to the world's largest distant-water fishing fleet. It has been a site of passage and refuge for economic migrants and those fleeing persecution, past and present (e.g. Evans, 2001). In the 1930s, it was the place where anti-fascists battled Oswald Mosley's blackshirts and home of Amy Johnson, who defied gender expectations to fly solo to Australia. Hull has also been a fruitful site of creativity, producing leading writers, poets, artists, dramatists, actors and musicians.

Due to its location, Hull was a key point of trade for the Hanseatic League and its identity as a trading town was reinforced by the merchant's families of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries who nurtured a growing civic pride as its profile and reputation grew (Jackson, 1972). The city's renown was exported in this period via the sons of merchant families who were posted abroad to act as ambassadors for the city in major European centres (Robinson, 2010:17). By the time Hull had been granted city status in 1897, elegant and leafy suburbs were shaped by, and for, the middle and upper classes, some of whom (such as Thomas Ferens and James Reckitt) commissioned further parks and public institutions. The council also created additional sites for the arts and learning, and new civic structures such as the Guildhall and City Hall (figures 4-2 and 4-3), indicated a 'fin de siècle confidence and [...] civic pomp [that was] breath-taking' (Jones and Matthews, 2016:131; Starkey *et al.*, 2017).



Figure 4-2 Hull Guildhall, 2006, Photo David Wright



Figure 4-3 Hull City Hall, 2008, Photo David Wright

4.3 Changing buildings and boundaries

Hull's flat terrain is oriented along the river banks, spreads into the hinterlands and is marked by an East, West and North separation, in which East and West are separated by the River Hull and the related industrial area. Residents' identification with neighbourhoods in the East, West or North zones is marked through associated cultural and sporting assets such as Rugby League – with the East of the city supporting Hull Kingston Rovers and the West supporting Hull F.C. This river-based tribalism also extended to job related hopes and futures: West Hull's young people typically found employment within the fishing industry; those in the East more associated with the docks. The fabric of Hull has undergone significant alterations over the years: the 1930 regeneration of Queen's Dock as Queen's Gardens, the 1972 construction of the Humber Bridge, the development of Victoria Dock residential estate in the late 1980s, and the 2015 demolition of the iconic Rank Hovis flourmill on the bank of the River Hull. Many of my older participants remember Queen Victoria Square, site of key Hull2017 events, as the main shopping hub in the 1970s and 1980s. However, an increase in internet shopping and the opening of the St Stephen's Centre close to the bus and railway station has exacerbated the demise of this part of town. Many shops nearer Queen Victoria Square have now closed, leaving units empty and boarded up. Major retailers such as British Home Stores, House of Fraser, Marks and Spencer and Boots as well as several high street banks, until recently, took up prominent sites and, as a report in the *Hull Daily Mail (HDM)* shows, the number of empty stores is increasing (Kemp, 2019b).

In the years leading up to the UKCoC year, Princes Quay had major investment of around £12 million to extend its number of retailers and restaurants and there is also evidence of growth in new independent retail units in the area since 2017 which create 'greater variety, distinctiveness and quality' in the city's retail offer (CPPI, 2019). Examples include the refurbishment of Trinity Market – now a popular destination for city workers and weekend shoppers purchasing lunch from world food stalls, and of the late Nineteenth-Century Paragon Arcade with its boutique clothes and homeware shops. In September 2020, £1.75m of government funding was announced to give Hull's high streets a 'new lease of life' and to 'help them recover from declining footfall and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic' (Historicengland.org.uk., 2020). Part of the High Streets Heritage Action Zone programme, delivered by Historic England, the initiative aims to 'unlock the potential' of the high streets, fuelling economic, social and cultural recovery (ibid).

In addition, the administrative location of Hull has also altered due to shifting parameters of what is and is not included within its boundaries. Drypool became a part of the city in the thirteen hundreds, Newington and Marfleet in the early nineteen hundreds, and more recently Bransholme in the nineteen-forties. Surrounded by smaller villages, the city forms the urban centre of the East Riding region. Due to the growth and merging of the city and the suburban villages, territorial borders are to some extent undefined. The resulting underbounding has been problematic for Hull over the years, leading to weak partnership dynamics and poorly developed institutional capacity for strategic economic development (Gibbs *et al.*, 2001). It is a crucial factor to understanding its current socio-demographic statistics and low standings in some league tables and worthy of closer attention here.

4.3.1 Humberside

In 1974, the Ridings of Yorkshire were divided into North, West and South Yorkshire and two new counties were created: Cleveland and Humberside (Elcock, 1975). Humberside consisted of the area on either side of the Humber estuary with Hull at its centre. The larger area to the north was previously part of the former East Riding of Yorkshire; most of the south was part of Lincolnshire (Bax and Fairfield, 1978). The county was bounded on the north and west by North and South Yorkshire with the River Derwent marking its western edge, and on the south by Nottinghamshire and Lincolnshire. The Humberside coast runs from north of Bridlington down to Spurn Point and across the Humber to a point south of Cleethorpes. Gibbs *et. al.* (2001:104), describe the Humber sub-region, with its 'disparate mix of industries, towns, cities

and rural areas' as being a 'particularly "messy" entity', rather than a 'coherent territorial ensemble of production structures'. Not only did this impact negatively on the economic development of the region, it also affected its sense of identity. A few older respondents recall Humberside as being a nondescript entity which further divorced them from the 'true' Yorkshire of, for example, Leeds, York and Sheffield, whilst at the same time forced allegiances with places south of the river, such as Grimsby and Cleethorpes, which some did not desire.



Figure 4-4 Map showing the boundary changes after the local government reform in 1974, (from Sharp, 2019)

The abolition of Humberside in 1995, resulted in four successor unitary authorities:

- Kingston upon Hull
- East Riding of Yorkshire: Beverley, East Yorkshire, Holderness, and northern Boothferry
- North Lincolnshire: Gnanford, Scunthorpe and southern Boothferry
- North East Lincolnshire: Great Grimsby, Cleethorpes

For some in Hull, such as Terry Geraghty, former leader of Humberside County Council in the 1980s, this action 'set the region's economy back 30 years' (quoted in Young, 2020b). Where

those in neighbouring authorities claimed that Humberside's governance privileged the Hull area, Geraghty argued that on their own, the smaller councils could not 'afford to do anything' and that the centralisation of Humberside with 'one chief executive, one chief finance director, one technical services director, one education director, a social services director and a leisure director' was a more powerful entity (ibid). Thus, the dissolution of Humberside revealed frictions between the neighbouring councils, much of it down party political lines, and exacerbated by increasingly shrinking finances.

In 2014, HCC sought to extend their administrative boundaries to the west and to the east of the City of Hull and into the East Riding, establishing a commission of inquiry to examine the case (Staite *et al.*, 2014). ERYC 'unanimously resolved that the Council would strongly resist any attempts by HCC to expand its administrative boundaries into the East Riding' and held a referendum to gauge public feeling (Eastriding.gov.uk., 2014). When asked if 'the boundaries of HCC be extended to include Anlaby, with Anlaby Common, Bilton, Cottingham, Elloughton cum Brough, Hedon, Hessle, Kirk Ella, North Ferriby, Preston, Swanland, Welton and Willerby', a resounding 96.5% said no (ibid). Thus, whilst many inhabitants of the East Riding travel into Hull for work and leisure, their school, GP and other services are more locally operated by the ERYC. Thus, tensions around authority boundaries exist, which some in Hull, with its much higher levels of deprivation and associated issues, feel negatively impact city-wide school league tables and other indicators of 'success'.

Such tensions are also bound in experiences of snobbery, which some of my participants described being exhibited toward them and the city by those who live in the East Riding. Especially inhabitants of Beverley, where its 'expanding number of middle-class jobs', its proximity to Hull and its 'attractiveness as a place to live' meant that Beverley grew economically beyond local and national averages and therefore became out of reach for many in Hull (Ramsden, 2011:8; see also Ramsden, 2015). Often in my interviews, if respondents referred to Beverley, they would say the word with a cod upper class accent and look down their noses to comedically indicate an assumed superior status. As Beswick points out (2020:268), snobbery is 'an affectively experienced phenomenon' within class discourses. Further, for a working-class city such as Hull, Morgan argues that the classed weight of judgements passed by snobbery is intensified, because 'of numerous other slights [experienced] in the past and anticipated in the future' (Morgan, 2019:96). Morgan suggests that shame is a powerful and common response to snobbery and, as I discuss in Chapter 2, shame is intimately bound with

notions of identity. Thus, shame exists as an embodied feature of Hull's relationship with its nearest neighbours, and in terms of class, Beverley is shorthand for Hull's wealthier, more refined 'other'.

4.4 Civic shame: Hull's troubled twentieth century

The civic consciousness and pride of place that Rudmose-Brown emphasised was diminished by the bomb-damage suffered in World War II. Whilst scholarly and popular attention has focussed more on the stories of London and Coventry, the impact of the Blitz in Hull was significant. Between June 1940 and March 1945, more than 80 air raids devastated the physical and social fabric of the city (Geraghty, 2002:7). Only 6,000 of the city's 93,000 homes escaped bomb damage with much of the city centre damaged beyond repair, and at least half of Hull's population were made homeless at some point during the conflict (Tiratsoo, 1991:132; Thoms, 1996:197). It is perhaps in this period that Hull's burgeoning sense of self as a 'forgotten' or 'overlooked' place might be located (e.g. Tomlinson, 2020:2). Indeed, my research participants across the generations recall as a snub that Hull was omitted from the national narratives during WWII. In particular its unnamng by the BBC news at the time, which instead referred to it as a 'north east coast town' (Geraghty, 2002). It has also been argued that the failure to implement the visionary re-planning of Lutyens and Abercrombie to rebuild the city as a beacon of modern urban development also damaged the city's pride (Atkinson, 2012:11). As Atkinson has argued, 'the devastation, re-planning and reconstruction of Hull since 1940 impacted upon the city, its cultures and its identities for decades afterwards' (2017:267).

The fishing industry has contributed hugely to the shaping of the city's fortunes, with its personalities and narratives deeply embedded in Hull's post-war cultural and social imaginary. Byrne (2016), evocatively describes the bustle and close community of Hull's fishing industry in the 1960s, a particular moment in time when industrialism was fundamental to British national identity. Like coal to Newcastle, Hull was synonymous with fish, and it was impossible to imagine a future when the lively neighbourhood would not depend or thrive because of it. Located primarily in the Hessle Road area, to the west of the city centre, the rhythms, myths and personalities of this neighbourhood are still major features of Hull's contemporary understandings of place, perhaps at the expense of histories from other parts of the city – especially those of the east and north. Compounding this difference is a spatial imbalance of cultural assets in the city (Hughes, 2018). Related to this is the cultural dominance of 'the

Avenues' area, with its concentration of relatively high earning, culturally active residents. It is a leafy neighbourhood, with numerous independent shops and cafes, popular as a base for academics and students as the University of Hull is nearby. Cultural workers and other educated professionals such as teachers and doctors also live in the area.²² Similarly located in the west (though demographically quite different to Hessle Road, which, although much changed since its heyday in the 1950s and 60s, continues to be a home for more low-income families), this area, and the wider HU5 postcode to which it belongs, is known for high attendance at cultural events. By contrast, there is no such densely concentrated area of affluence in the East or North of Hull.²³

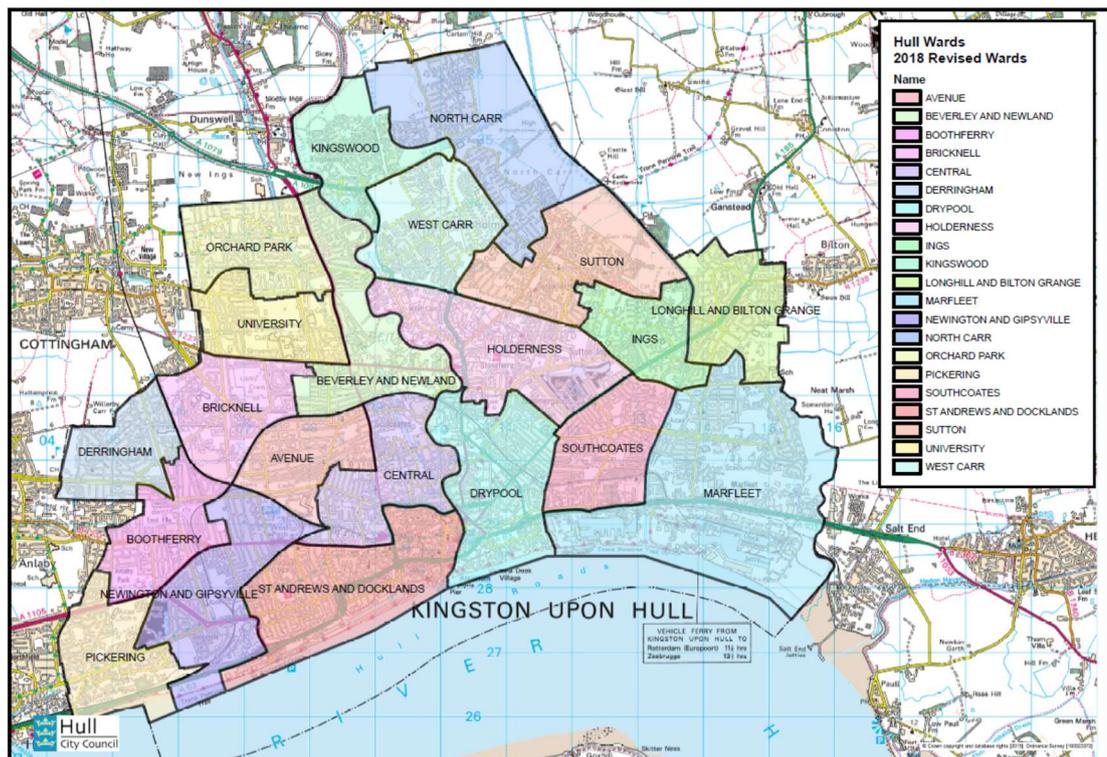


Figure 4-5 Map of Hull showing Ward boundaries. Source: Hull Data Observatory

²² Using information from the 2011 census, the Hull Data Observatory (HDO) shows that the two wards with the highest percentage of households categorised as 'Affluent Professionals' are Avenues and University. The only ward in East Hull to have *any* 'affluent professional households' is Sutton – with 2.4%. On the other hand, whilst households categorised as 'low income public renters' can be found across the city (the highest percentage are in East Hull's Longhill ward at 60.6%), the Avenues and neighbouring Newland, have no households in this category. Whilst it would be incorrect to generalise East Hull as being more deprived than West Hull as there are pockets of deprivation citywide, it would be accurate to assert that within a relatively poor city, the west has more areas of concentrated wealth than the east or the north. The information is available on the HDO Website: http://109.228.11.121/IAS_Live/dataviews/tabular?viewId=151&geold=6&subsetId= [Accessed 30th April 2020].

²³ With the exception perhaps of Kingswood, which is in the North of the city.

By the 1960s and 1970s many of the docks became obsolete and the heart of the city was marked by acute evidence of Hull's formerly important but now absent industries. Aggravating feelings of loss and regret, empty office buildings across the city served as visual reminders of the city's inability to sustain alternative employment (Burgess, 1978). In 1975, and in the context of the North-Atlantic cod-wars,²⁴ long-time Hull East MP, John Prescott campaigned 'No' in the European Economic Communities Membership Referendum, for fears that continued membership at that time would 'kill' Hull's fishing industry (Prescott, 2013).²⁵ Whilst there is no data evidencing Hull's vote in isolation at that referendum, the Humber region voted 67.8% 'Yes' (Butler and Kitzinger, 1976:268). Yet, many older people view the resulting Common Fisheries Policy as the cause of the industry's decline, turning the 2016 referendum for some, into an opportunity to reverse the actions taken over 40 years before.²⁶ As Pauline, an eighty-six-year-old Leave voter from the East of the city said to me: 'Look at what they did to fishing in Hull. I didn't want to be 'in' in the first place' (Interview, 2019). For Pauline, 'they' are the distant and suzerian EU, and should be resisted. Further, as a life-long Labour voter, Pauline's comment is typical of the ideological distance between residents like her and the local Labour MPs who all campaigned for Remain. Indeed, former MP for Hull West and Hessle, Alan Johnson, played a crucial role in the 2016 Referendum as leader of Labour's Remain campaign.

Through the 1980s in Hull as elsewhere in Britain's industrial cities, Thatcherism represented a particularly aggressive programme of neoliberal restructuring, with policies to deregulate state

²⁴ The Cod Wars were a series of confrontations between the United Kingdom and Iceland on fishing rights in the North Atlantic. Each of the disputes ended with an Icelandic victory. As Byrne describes, in Hull, the result was 'catastrophic', as the city had 'limited opportunities for adaptation' (2016:256).

²⁵ The EEC Membership referendum took place on June 5, 1975 to gauge support for the country's continued membership of the European Communities, which it had entered two and a half years earlier on 1 January 1973. The referendum question asked: 'Do you think that the United Kingdom should stay in the European Community (the Common Market)?' Therefore, a 'No' vote, was a vote to leave. 22 years later, Prescott would serve in what was to be one of the most pro-EU governments since the UK entered into the union.

²⁶ As Byrne explains, 'Britain's membership of the Common Market meant that any rights to fish in third country water negotiated by the European Economic Community must be shared between member states. In the decade that followed, only small quotas were secured for the traditional grounds of the North-East and North-West Atlantic' (2015:103). For British trawling companies this was a problem, as (although Britain had secured the largest percentage share of the total catch in EEC waters), 'the allocation of opportunities for the British distant-water fleet to fish in third country waters was relatively poor' (Byrne, 2015:103).

control over major industries, and to dismantling Fordist labour relations and Keynesian welfare programmes (Friedman and Friedman, 2008; Peck *et al.*, 2009). In Hull, this policy agenda had immediate and devastating effects, from which it has struggled to emerge, and the widening gap between it, and an affluent London can be analysed as a localized version of the Global North and the Global South divide, revealing neoliberalism's production of socio-economic inequality across geographical scales (Friedman and Friedman, 2008). Thus, in its post-war experience, Hull has been described as the 'nearly city' (Jones, 1998:301); and with its civic pride dented, the city began to gain a series of less salubrious reputations. However, as I shall discuss, this negative image has paradoxically, and often humorously been assumed into the identity of many Hullensians as a badge of (dis)honour.

Writing in 2013, sociologist (and Hullensian) Mark Featherstone declared: 'ask anybody [...] what life is like in Hull [...] and they will tend to respond in the same way: "it's crap"' (Featherstone, 2013:180). 'Crap' serving as shorthand for the political, social, economic and cultural situation of the city at that time. Yet, this stigmatisation can also bring about its own sense of pride. An entrenched parochialism perhaps, which Gillian, a retired school teacher, described to me as:

There is a sense that the city is really special. Spiritually, it is about *us*. Nobody cares about us. We're put down as a crap town. People make bad jokes about us in the media and I think, there is that kind of spirit in the city that can be either incredibly brave. We *are* a bit different. We are Hull. But there is also a kind of weakness in there that saps confidence (Gillian, Focus Group, 2019).

Expressions such as 'crap town', whilst perhaps intended to amuse, diminish the experience of poverty in Hull to 'classism', and imply that the main problem with poverty is stigma. Thus, since the 1980s successive government policies to combat poverty have been primarily focussed on eliminating stigmatising attitudes, rather than reducing distributional inequalities, and, above all, creating a non-exploitative society (Scambler, 2018; Tyler, 2020). The stigmatising rhetoric of waste or excrement continues to the present day, and through the following chapters I examine how in various ways this is normalised, contested and lampooned within the culture of the city.

Numerous league tables and poverty reports appear to offer quantitative proof of this 'crapness', with Hull often at, or near the bottom of socio-economic indicators (or near the top of those measuring negative aspects). For example, in 2017, Centre for Cities found Hull's

employment rate of 67.3% the eighth lowest in the UK, with the third highest benefits claimant count in the country (Centre for Cities, 2017). Similarly in 2017, Hull had the second lowest 'high level qualifications' and the eleventh highest 'no formal qualifications' amongst the working aged population and average weekly earnings of £461.60 when the national average was £524.50 (ibid). It is argued that Hull's poor economic performance is related to its 'stand-alone' situation in East Yorkshire, its problematic relation to the regional economy and a chronic skills shortage (ibid). The Marfleet ward, situated along Preston Road to the east of the city, was recently defined as the 'most deprived' food desert in Britain, where poverty, poor public transport and lack of large supermarkets mean that residents have severely limited access to affordable and healthy groceries (Corfe, 2018). It is a key site of my fieldwork, where I met Jan Boyd, CEO of EMS, a local social enterprise charity, who illustrated the day to day life in Marfleet as:

A lot of people that live here don't leave this area at all. They'll go as far as Asda - Mount Pleasant, they'll go down Holderness Road. But they won't necessarily leave the immediate area of Preston Road. A lot of people don't have cars so they don't have the transport to do that. So I don't know how informed they are about what's happening in the outside world or if they're solely relying on looking at the internet and the *Hull Daily Mail*. We do have a number of people who struggle to read and write. We have some poor literacy skills in the area. So maybe they don't take notice because they can't. I suppose you could listen to it on your phone but again, I don't know how many people have got smart phones that enable them to do that. It comes down to money at the end of the day and if you haven't got any you're limited. They tend to have the older phones. And we do have a lot of people that regularly pawn their phone and then go back and retrieve it a couple of weeks later. That's very prevalent in some people. We get quite a lot of offenders, ex-offenders, we get a lot of people with addictions as well. People recovering from addictions (Interview, 2019).

The affectual consequences of the circumstances Boyd describes, permeate the Anywhere/Somewhere and 'left behind' debates and thus, I shall argue in Chapter 5, inform the context for Hull's clamours of 'change' and its decisive Leave vote in the 2016 EU Referendum. It also perhaps provides the emotional climate in which top down, hierarchical and quasi-authoritarian policy implementations (as I will argue were employed by the Hull2017 leadership in Chapter 6) are allowed to flourish unchecked. It also neglects the acutely felt identities in which the 'hidden injuries' (Sennett and Cobb, 1972) of working-class experience (such as snobbery) continue to be enacted.

4.5 Shame and power

Yet, who decides what is, or is not, shameful, and who – or what should *be ashamed*? What issues are at play in the denials or recognitions of civic shame? These questions raise issues of power again, as shame is, in effect, the result of a *critical gaze*, either from the self or an ‘other’ (Dearing *et al.*, 2005). This critical gaze reveals flaws, which:

Shock [...] our sense of worth that comes either from realizing that our values are shoddy or from discovering that we are deficient in a way that had added to the confidence we had in our excellence. Either is a discovery of something false in the good opinion we had of ourselves, and such self-discovery spells loss of self-esteem (Deigh, 1983:229-230).

Thus, shame is the emotional core of the experience of stigma (or snobbery) and tends to fuse beliefs of being flawed and unlovable (Tangney *et al.*, 2007; Luoma *et al.*, 2012). In my fieldwork, expressions of shame at coming from, or living in Hull, are common, and often couched in the language of waste or ‘crapness’. Sometimes, respondents contested the stigmatising labels, particularly those who were not born in the city, whilst some respondents who were born and raised in Hull would demonstrate hallmarks of an internalized shame – though this is not as straight forward as it might at first appear. For example, Sharon Darley, a community arts worker from Hull, told me:

We had two Irish lads with us from Belfast a couple of years ago painting murals [...] They said the one thing that you would never find in Belfast was a Belfast person slagging Belfast off [...] even no matter how dark and bad it got in Belfast. Belfast people would stand up for Belfast. Well, I don’t think you get that in Hull. People say, ‘I’m from Hull and Hull’s shit’. They said you would never get a Belfast person saying, ‘I’m from Belfast and I think Belfast’s shit’. They said... that was the *first* thing they noticed about this city... that we were *all* very, very eager to say how shit our city is [...] I think that’s a culture thing that’s developed in Hull. I think Hull as a city... you’re talking about an isolated estate in an isolated city... Cos we’re so off the beaten track, aren’t we? You have to go [*makes funny hand gesture and noise like skidding off course*] to get to Hull (Interview, 2018).

Here, Sharon’s excretory language articulates the negative feelings of territorial stigmatisation associated with Hull. The observation of the ‘Irish lads’ in her story - that a Belfast person would not ‘slag off’ Belfast – might initially seem to emphasise Hull’s low self-esteem (which is certainly still functioning) though something more complicated is also occurring. I agree with Featherstone (2013) who describes such behaviour as an example of resilience against stigmatisation, where ‘negative civic pride [...] takes the practical form of a sense of unity in social exclusion and marginality’ (p.182). Thus, rather than the city’s inhabitants thinking Hull is so shit, they have given up defending it (as the Irish lads understood it), Hull’s supposed shitness becomes a mode of bonding, providing connections which others may not

understand. It might be shit but it's *our* shit, and a marker of 'true' residents of the city who can say 'we're shit, and we know we are' – but only to each other.

But what exactly do people from Hull think is so shit about the place? Here is an extract of a conversation that goes some way to unpicking the issue: Rob, an ex-taxi-driver in his mid-60s, has lived in Hull all his life. He grew up on Hessle Road and now lives on the Thornton Estate. Lee is in his early 40s from Somerset and has lived in East Hull for the past 11 years.

Rob: It's amazing the number of people that do have a downer on it [...] the number of people you pick up and go 'it's a fucking shit town this'. I must admit I sometimes went along with it. Cos I'd picked up, Tuesday, Wednesday night a group of lads...'Where's the best place to go for a Tuesday night?' And I'd say [...pause...] Leeds.

Lee: Loads of places would do that. That's just a banter thing.

Rob: But there is nothing to do in the city mid-week (Focus Group, 2019).

In this example, Rob typifies the culture of negativity that Sharon had described, reinforcing his passengers' criticisms that Hull is shit, because, unlike Leeds, it has little in the way of mid-week night-time entertainment.

In a later focus group, after the participants aired similar views and stories (using similarly crappy language), I asked them what it would take for Hull to be 'not a crap town', expecting them to offer concrete suggestions about what they would like to see changed in the city. However, to begin with, they struggled to form coherent sentences, and instead tried to articulate what a 'not crap town' might *feel* like, repeating phrases such as 'buzzing', 'buzzy' and 'lively'. When full sentences emerged, they described busy Wednesday afternoons in Sheffield, exciting nights out in Leeds and the excellent shopping in York. For example:

Ruth: Vibrant, lots going on, lots of money.

Rosie: People around between five o'clock and eight o'clock in the city. Keeping businesses going and enjoying the city itself.

For Ruth and Rosie – and for Rob, a 'not crap' city is (and *feels* like) somewhere else, and in their descriptions of these other places and experiences, they are pointing to what (for them at least) Hull currently lacks. Indeed, by using words such as 'buzzing', 'buzzy' and 'lively' one

might argue that they are pointing to the kind of creative city advocated by Florida (2004), and perhaps an indication of how much the top-down language of his brand of creative city rhetoric has penetrated.

Occasionally, participants would challenge the 'crap town' concept, whilst acknowledging the problems the city faces. Such as Gillian, who suggested that:

The issue is that it's not a *crap* town, it's that it's a *poor* town. What would make it not a crap town for me would be to not see people living rough on Newland Avenue anymore, not to see grafitti and vile litter, it would be not to see people on the street who have clearly not got enough money and are having to use a foodbank. For me...it's no different to what any other town in the North or Midlands have to endure (Interview, 2019).

As Gillian says, many cities have issues with homelessness and poverty, yet, where Hull is perceived as failing, Sheffield, Leeds and York are viewed more positively (from Hull) because of their entertainment and consumer offers. Thus, 'crap' has become a stigmatizing catch-all for several deficits in Hull, and in the process, 'boring' and 'unpopulated' become synonymous with 'poor'. As argued earlier, this again diminishes the experience of poverty in Hull to 'classism', and implies that the main problem with poverty is stigma - not poverty itself. Such issues reveal tensions inherent around the cultural economy of small cities (e.g. Edensor, 2000; Bell and Jayne, 2006; Bell and Jayne, 2009; Jayne *et al.*, 2010) and we can begin to see how the political cultures of Hull, share similar affective dynamics with the city's cultural behaviours – as I shall explore further in the proceeding chapters.

4.5.1 Shits and giggles

Difficult to capture in transcription, however, is the sense of humour which attended these recollections. Sharon's final statement about Hull being 'off the beaten track' was followed by her making a lurching physical movement and the sound of screeching car tyres, as if turning a particularly sharp corner at high speed. A highly performative and comic gesture, which made both of us laugh. I understood this as a shared recognition, of the extremity of Hull's peripheral mental and physical geographies – and of the extra effort needed to reach the city from outside. Similarly, in telling his story, Rob assumed the manner of a Les Dawson or Peter Kaye type stand-up comedian. Where the passengers expected him to name a Hull nightspot, he instead, after a pause for comic effect, directed them 60 miles west. It was, I suspect, not quite a true tale and one he has practiced over time and re-telling, to hone the delivery of the

punchline. All of which stressing, albeit in a humorous way, that for a good night out, Leeds is superior to Hull.

Short's (2005:63) analysis of 'Irish' jokes (where the Irish are marked as stupid in comparison with the English joke teller) is of relevance here. For Short, the joke is a 'sly' political attack, which serves to make the Irish nation inferior to the English and a 'potent way of sub-humanizing' the Irish in order to distance them from the 'space of civilised society' (ibid). Whilst I am not claiming that Hull has been the butt of jokes on the scale of the Irish - the stigmatisation of places such as Hull through jokes which highlight their perceived crapness, similarly demonstrates the potential threat such places pose to the established order. Short identifies the 'rapid and large-scale industrialisation of the nineteenth century' as the origin of these strategies of class based stigmatisation, with the urban working classes being seen as a source of mystery and fear (ibid). He posits that 'so-called civilised societies perhaps need a wilderness [as it] acts like a Freudian sink of repressed and forbidden feelings [...] an atavistic reservoir of very strong positive and negative imagery' (Short, 2005:65-66). In this formulation, Hull's physical geography (flat, isolated and peripheral) its socio-economic situation (boring, unpopulated and poor) and occasionally its odours have provided a range of 'comic' material.²⁷

Thus, the self-deprecating humour I have described, perhaps demonstrates an internalisation of Hull's shame – though, in its unifying function, somewhat complicated. 'Laughing it off' is a tactic the city has learned to endure its humiliations, form 'in group' bonds and solace away from the shaming 'other'. Assuming Sharon and Rob viewed me as an 'insider', I wonder if they would have responded similarly if speaking to an 'other'. As Francis (1994:156) points out, humour is

Not just a play on words, but a virtuoso cultural performance. Only those with the common cultural understandings that allow them to fully share the definition of the situation can produce and appreciate humour created in any given setting.

²⁷ *The Idler Book of Crap Towns* (Jordison and Kieran, 2003) claimed that Hull smelled of death. I distinctly remember the smell of sewers in the summertime near Paragon Station, and the various industrial aromas near the East bank of the river Hull, especially the smell of chocolate from the cocoa factory.

By collectively defining the city this way, Hullensians are in some way taking ownership of their 'diseased' nature, and deflecting the 'taint' of stigmatisation (Tracy *et al.*, 2006). This pride in being shit, becomes a parochial resistance to the wider social, economic, political and cultural environment, which may be understood, via Wacquant (2007), as a fatalistic brand of social resilience. It is a shared characteristic to remind fellow Hullensians that they are a special breed of individuals, capable of withstanding the city's woes and the snobbery felt from Beverley and the East Riding (and the socio-economic league tables). Such behaviour complicates the observation that Hull is 'unusually sensitive to its image [as] unfashionable, smelly [...] and [...] the butt of popular humour' (Atkinson *et al.*, 2002:27). For, whilst the city struggles, repeatedly to develop an identity away from the stereotypes, it continues to make light of its situation, albeit in a form that replicates and reinforces the myth that Hull is shit.

Nevertheless, if we understand 'shitness' as Hull's structural disadvantage and accompanying social and cultural decline, it was a leading factor in its UKCoC bid strategy. For, as discussed in Chapter 2, such cultural initiatives are perceived by city leaders as opportunities to revive fortunes and, given the transformative and celebratory agendas embedded in UKCoC documentation (see Chapter 6), 'shitness' can be exploited as a badge of dishonour in an ugly contest where the winner is the one who can prove they need the title the most. Yet – how does such an economically instrumental approach to shame impact the psyche of a city, and what happens if the promises of transformation fail to meet expectations?²⁸

4.5.2 Green shoots?

In 2013, a few months before Hull was announced as winning the UKCoC bid, HCC, ERYC and Associated British Ports (ABP), together with partner organisations including the University of Hull, launched Green Port Hull, 'a vision for the future of the port as a hub for renewable energies' (Tommaschi and Bianchini, 2020:189). As Jonas *et al.* show, such climate change initiatives can provide 'selective opportunities for local political actors in structurally disadvantaged cities to build new alliances across local government, business and civil society in order to attract "green jobs"' (2017:197). This appears to be happening in Hull and is a source of renewed optimism in the region. German-headquartered company Siemens Gamesa,

²⁸ Though it is worth noting the case of Derry/Londonderry, whose 2013 designation had more locally specific ambitions concerning reconciliation and intercultural dialogue (McDermott *et al.*, 2016).

located a new wind turbine manufacturing facility at Alexandra Dock, which contributed to a re-launching of the local economy with the creation of 700 new jobs, 96% of which were filled by Hull residents, and (with ABP), invested over £310 million into infrastructure (Bounds, 2016). Additionally, between 2014 and 2020 Hull will have received £99.48m in European Structural and Investment funding (ibid). Although beyond the remit of my study, it is interesting that Hull should have voted in such high numbers to Leave, given that it received these significant funds from the EU. This could be for many reasons, for example it is perhaps a case of the EU not being able to 'buy loyalty' in Hull, or that such funds were invested in the city too late to inform positive perceptions of the EU, which had for decades been treated with scepticism in the city after the decline of the fishing industry. Or, as Gibbs *et al.* (2001) have argued, weak partnership working and limited local government capacity across the Humber region, perhaps resulted in under-bidding for EU structural funds as well as restricted the effectiveness of the funds the region was granted.

Due in part to the UKCoC year as well as this significant investment from the green energy industry, some commentators suggested changing fortunes for the city and that somewhat of a discursive shift was underway.²⁹ However, given that Hull remains one of the most structurally disadvantaged places in the UK and that much of the post-Brexit economic forecast for the city is either unknown or negative, my research suggests this optimism has struggled to prevail.³⁰ A situation that will be compounded by the fallout from the 2020 Coronavirus pandemic and the expectation that Hull faces the worst economic impact and the slowest recovery in the UK (Norman and Petrie, 2020).

²⁹ Chapter 6 shows how the media output which repeated the narrative of Hull2017's success, often simply reproduced soundbites from the UKoC organisers (see for example, BBC News, 2017). In many ways, Hull2017 was perceived a 'success' because the organisers (and their funders/ media partners) said it was.

³⁰ HDM journalist Angus Young has summarised some of the potential threats to the Hull economy post-Brexit, suggesting that the city would not benefit from the government's proposed Shared Prosperity Fund intended to replace the EU's Regional Development Fund – which currently has a £90m spending programme in the city: <https://www.hulldailymail.co.uk/news/hull-east-yorkshire-news/brexit-hull-how-set-lose-1800397> [Accessed 22nd Sept 2018].

4.6 Politics and culture

4.6.1 A Labour city

Until recently, Hull's post-war political culture has been marked by a strong, almost unbroken loyalty to the Labour Party at both national and local government levels.³¹ As a number of participants have remarked: 'pin a red rosette on a donkey and it would win in Hull' and as a child, I remember a certain pride at the strength and prevalence of Hull voices in the Labour Party, which were often in stark contrast with the upper-class, "southern" or "posh" tones of Margaret Thatcher and the Conservative Party, whose policies had such negative effects on the city. For generations, the Labour Party have held the city council and all three parliamentary constituencies. Perhaps unsurprisingly, this faithfulness has also brought a collective antipathy toward right-wing organisations, individuals and the Conservative Party in particular, contributing to a tribe-like political identity and the city's frequent inclusion in depictions of 'Labour heartlands' and 'Labour's Red Wall' (e.g. Harris, 2019; Shone, 2019). Many local politicians have held senior positions in the Labour Party, perhaps most noticeably, John Prescott, the former East Hull MP, who bridged 'Old' and 'New' Labour through the 1980s/90s and into the new millennium, making a significant contribution as Deputy Leader and Transport Secretary under Tony Blair's premiership.³² In the Spring of 2020, Karl Turner (Hull East) and Emma Hardy (Hull West and Hessle) were both junior shadow ministers, and Diana Johnson (Hull North) was named 'backbencher of the year' in 2018 by the Political Studies Association, as well as being made a Dame of the British Empire for charitable and political service in the 2020 New Year Honours. As well as Prescott, Kevin McNamara and Alan Johnson long held seats in the city. The former serving as Shadow Secretary of State for Northern Ireland under Neil Kinnock, and the latter a senior member of the Blair/Brown governments.

However, with the city's 'Leave' vote and the massive losses at the 2019 General election which saw the majorities of all Hull Labour MPs considerably dented, Labour's stronghold in the city is

³¹ The council had been led by Labour since the early 1970s until 2002. They led as a minority administration between 2003 and 2006. Between 2006 and 2011 it was led by a Liberal Democrat administration. In the 2011 election Labour regained control of the council.

³² Prescott's passionate speech to the 1993 Labour conference in which he supported John Smith's one-member-one-vote proposal is credited by many for helping to persuade delegates to back modernisation of the party – at the time seen to be stuck in the 1970s, with too much power controlled by the unions; a further 'barnstorming' speech helped win over the left of the party, engaging activists to support Tony Blair, which led to the 1997 landslide victory (Habberley, 2006; Hodges, 2015).

depleted. Indeed, it is likely that the Conservatives, despite running relatively low-profile campaigns, would have won in Hardy and Turner's constituencies, if the Brexit Party had not stood, and only a small percentage of their vote turned blue. An unthinkable outcome less than a generation ago. These results indicate that dissatisfaction with all three Hull MPs was probably due to Brexit and was felt city-wide. Yet, whilst turnout across the UK was on average 67.3% (itself a decrease of 1.5 percentage points from 2017), in Hull, turnout was markedly lower.³³ Nearly half of those eligible to vote, did not, and were it not for Chorley, the constituency of the incumbent Speaker of the House of Commons, the three Hull constituencies would be top-ranked for lowest turnout, and the least politically active city (in 'official' politics at least) in the UK.³⁴ Even at the EU Referendum which saw a relatively higher turnout nationally, Hull (at 62.9%) had the lowest voter turnout in the region (The Electoral Commission, 2016); and in the 2014 and 2018 Local elections, Hull (at 26.8% and 25% respectively) had the lowest turnout in the country (The Electoral Commission, 2018b), prompting local councillor Phil Webster to comment that people in Hull 'have lost faith in politics as a whole' (quoted in Young, 2018).³⁵

Chapter 5 explores the affective dimensions of Hull's political cultures, including the emotional impacts of Brexit, and the emotional atmosphere's which led to the 2019 General Election vote. I suggest that Webster, quoted above, may be correct, and that Hull's dwindling turnout, contributes evidence that some neighbourhoods in the city are, or are becoming, anti-political spaces. Additionally, Chapter 5 details that most of my Leave participants were Labour voters, disappointed with the party's Brexit position. Many of them (and many Labour Remain voting participants too) were very dismissive of Jeremy Corbyn, who only two years previously during the 2017 General Election campaign trail had received a 'rock star reception' in the city (Campbell, 2017a).³⁶ However, anti-Conservative tribalism remains, with many respondents

³³ Specifically, the figures were: in East Hull, 49%; North Hull, 52%; West Hull, 52% (McInnes, 2020).

³⁴ Hull East had the lowest turnout, Chorley second, Hull West third and Hull North fourth. However, by tradition, no-one opposes the Speaker of the House at a general election. Thus, turnout in their constituency is often lower than the national average.

³⁵ In local council wards of Marfleet, turnout was as low as 13% (Campbell and Young, 2019).

³⁶ Indeed, at the 2017 general election, all three Hull MPs received increased majorities (Electionresults.parliament.uk., 2017), prompting one respondent, a Labour activist who remains loyal to Corbyn, to conclude that 'the negative press and successful campaign against him after 2017, meant that on the doorstep in 2019, people parroted the phrases they heard from the media' (Interview, 2020).

saying they 'could never vote Tory' (or similar), although some would consider voting for the Brexit Party or UKIP. This rejection of Labour's representative dominance in Hull, potentially speaks to trends identified in the literature on the 'mainstreaming of the far right' and the 'rise of the Right' amongst the working class (Winlow *et al.*, 2016; Stocker, 2017). However, my research would heed caution on this hypothesis before supposing Hull's Labour vote is lost indefinitely, or that it necessarily indicates an ideological shift rightwards. Instead, my data suggests that 'change' of *any* kind is longed for, and that recent votes in Hull, were votes against the status quo. Perhaps indicative of what Anderson *et al.* (2019), have called a 'negative hope', in that things *might* be better once the UK leaves the EU, but that things certainly could not get much worse .

4.6.2 Hull's cultural sector

Hull has generally been considered a cultural 'cold spot' in terms of audience size and depth of provision in comparison with larger and wealthier Northern cities such as Leeds and Manchester (Umney and Symon, 2019). As such, class discourses, and their inherent snobberies, also circulate in discussions about Hull and 'Culture'. This was particularly so in 2013 when Hull won the UKCoC bid, with some responses posted on Twitter as follows:

Hull??? City of Culture??? Oh my aching sides!!!

If Hull can be UK City of Culture this year then anything is possible.

Hull? City of Culture? Have you overdone it on the shots last night?³⁷

Comments of a similarly ridiculing nature greeted Glasgow and Liverpool's ECoC denominations in 1990 and 2008 respectively (Boyle and Hughes, 1991; Garcia, 2005; Boland, 2008; 2010a; García, 2013). However, where their ECoC years have been shown to have lasting economic benefits and increased positive perception (García, 2013), it remains to be seen if the same after-effects can happen to the same extent in Hull.

³⁷ These tweets were quoted in a 2018 presentation given by Jacqueline Gay from HCC, screen shots can be viewed here (3rd slide): <https://www.local.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/WS1%20Tourism%20and%20destination-making%20-%20Jacqueline%20Gay.pdf> [Accessed 12 Jan 2021].

Further, such comments are not unusual in research into working-class arts engagement and participation, as Beswick shows in her analysis of the language of the ‘non-engaged’ who are perceived ‘in ways often stereotypically associated with the working-classes – as uncultured, uneducated, reactionary, materialistic and inward-looking’ (2020:267-268). Beswick posits that ‘the shame of being seen and positioned in this way by arts institutions might contribute to why people in this group are “non-engaged”’ (Beswick, 2020:268). As Skeggs points out, working-class people are cognisant of how they are seen and judged by ‘middle-class institutions and authority’ and, ‘are fully aware of how cultural distinction and classification work in the interests of the powerful – legitimating inequalities so that privilege cannot be contested’ (2012:283). I include these observations not to categorise all of Hull as ‘non-engaged’ or ‘working-class’, but to introduce how formulations of the city *as* working class and non-engaged contribute to discourses of shaming which I will explore further in Chapter 6.

At the same time, Hull is also noted as unusual, compared to most UK councils, in that it maintains a dedicated arts office with four staff (Umney and Symon, 2019:10). The Council has direct control over some key cultural institutions including several museums, the New Theatre and City Hall.³⁸ However, given the cuts to local government budgets since 2010, the capacity to develop these assets from within the council has been significantly reduced. Additionally, as Grabher observes, ‘festivals and events are a crucial asset in the city’s cultural infrastructure’ (2020:32). Humber Street Sesh, The Big Malarkey, and Pride in Hull are three of the most popular, and the annual Freedom Festival claims to be one of the leading international arts festivals in the UK (Freedom Festival, 2020).³⁹

³⁸ The museums are: Spurn Lightship, Hands On History Museum, Streetlife Museum, Wilberforce House, Ferens Art Gallery, Arctic Corsair, Hull Maritime Museum and the Hull and East Riding Museum. In relation to the city’s size, the density of archives and museums is above the national average which ‘can be seen as an indicator for the historical relevance of the city’ (Grabher, 2020:31).

³⁹ Humber Street Sesh is an annual outdoor music festival taking place around Hull’s Marina. In 2019, the two-day festival showcased over 200 bands and acts, supporting local, emerging musicians and artists (Visit Hull, 2020); Pride in Hull is the annual *LGBT Pride* celebration, with a parade through the city centre and a day-long music festival; The Big Malarkey Festival is a children’s literature festival, held on a colourful tented site in East Park, it was first delivered in 2017 as part of Hull2017 and features writers, illustrators, poets, performers and puppet-makers (The Big Malarkey Festival, 2020).

The majority of cultural venues and facilities are located in the city centre, as are the locations of iconic buildings, such as Hull Minster and Wilberforce House, the birthplace of William Wilberforce, MP. The establishment of the contemporary art gallery Humber Street Gallery as part of Hull2017 contributes significantly to the visual arts landscape in the city, although, as Chapter 6 describes, the scope and scale of its programming post-2017 has become increasingly limited. Several key cultural venues and facilities can also be found in West Hull such as the university campus and ArtLink, a community arts organisation. However, the East and North of the City accommodate only a few such cultural organisations and venues, such as the Freedom Centre on Preston Road, a local community hub that includes a library, gym, performance space and café. However, Julian Rice, CEO of the Freedom Centre informed me that, other than the annual, locally produced pantomime, most events attract small audiences (Interview, 2018).

As a comparatively poor city, spending pressures (especially since 2010 and the austerity measures imposed by the Conservative led governments) have led to several independent local cultural organisations closing. Thus, cultural work in Hull has been described as 'innovative but unstable' and where 'amazing things have happened and then people have left elsewhere, because there's no sustaining' (Umney and Symon, 2019:10). Even during 2017, major cuts at Hull City College closed full-time degree courses in visual arts (formerly Hull School of Arts and Design) and dance, and in 2020 the University of Hull disbanded the Culture, Place and Policy Institute (CPPI), set up to oversee Hull2017 research and to 'stimulate research on cultural activities, cultural policy and culture-led urban and regional development across the University' (Hull.ac.uk., 2020). Soon after 2017, the University of Hull also closed down the flagship Culture Campus initiative which had been created to maintain the momentum gained from the City of Culture year through creating cultural partnerships, and enhance the cultural programme on campus. They have yet to announce an alternative cultural strategy beyond the introduction of new Creative Industries undergraduate courses and it is not clear, what, if anything, will replace Culture Campus or the CPPI, putting into question the university's cultural strategy, and its abilities and commitments to the long term impacts of Hull2017. The networks of the CPPI, the University more broadly, and Hull School of Arts and Design (HSAD) have had a strong influence on the local artistic community. As Grabher (2020:32) notes, HSAD and the University of Hull have been of great importance for the city's cultural infrastructure, as many members of the local artistic community have been either educated in or affiliated with the institutions. By comparison, theatre has grown relatively strongly, with nationally regarded production companies including the long-

established Hull Truck as well as the more recent Middle Child, The Roaring Girls, Bellow and Silent Uproar.

4.6.3 'Hullness'

'Hullness' alludes to Hull's distinctive sense of place, its image of itself and how it is known by others. Acknowledging the concept as 'slippery, fluid [and] shifting', Atkinson has traced a history of Hullness from the late nineteenth century (Atkinson, 2012:22). In the same way that 'Englishness' or 'Welshness' relate to their respective nations, Hullness incorporates the tangible and intangible dimensions of Hull's local identity. Briefly here, and to give examples of work on the 'ness' of another regional place identity: Boland has detailed Liverpool's 'Scouseness' which, amongst other traits, he claims is unique for its humour, radical politics, its accent and dialect, and its extensive reach in popular culture beyond the city boundary (2008; 2010b). Additionally, Wilkinson et al. (2019), have playfully explored how the 'scouse brow' is an everyday act of Liverpool's creative place-making.⁴⁰ Hullness, to use Raban's terms (2008), is therefore a consideration of both the 'soft' and 'hard' elements of the city, the representational and non-representational. It appears in my fieldwork through discussion of landmarks such as the Humber Bridge (figure 4-6), Reckitt's chimney (figure 4-7) and the Bankside Gallery (figure 4-8); in the 'crap town' reputation which dominated its pre-UKCoC identity; through complaints about infrastructure, especially Hull's road conditions, traffic flow and public transport system, the rapid disappearance of high street shops and weak night-time economy. It also includes remarks about the city's long history of left politics, that, as I have discussed, the Labour Party may no longer be able to take for granted.

⁴⁰ The Scousebrow, is a distinctive shaping and styling of the eyebrows, characterized by dark, thick, highly artificial looking brows. It was brought to public attention through the British scripted-reality television series, based in Liverpool, *Desperate Scousewives*. There is an association between the Scousebrow, working-class women of Liverpool, and celebrity culture. For Wilkinson et al. (2019) this is arguably part of the middle-class, right-wing media coverage, or, 'demonisation', of the city of Liverpool and its people.



Figure 4-6 The Humber Bridge, 2008, Photo, David Wright



Figure 4-7 The River Hull and Reckitt's Chimney, 2012, Photo, Jonathan Thacker

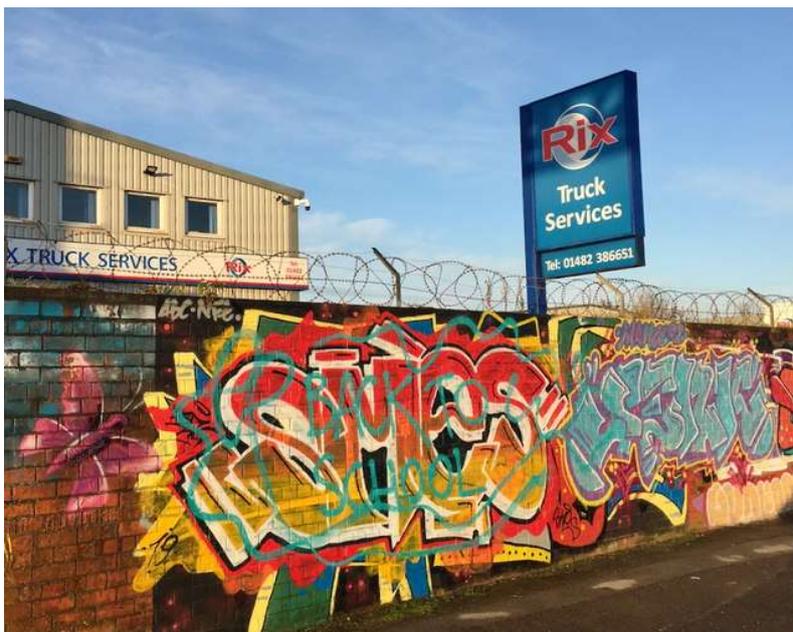


Figure 4-8 Wincolmllee Street Art, 2019, Photo Paul Harrop

Hullness is also the sound of the Hull accent with its flat, elongated vowels, for some a source of shame and for others a proud identity signifier. For many participants it is the taste of chip spice and the sensory whirl of Hull Fair (figure 4-9). As my respondents' attest, Hull's inner life is riddled with contradictions: simultaneously inward and outward looking, proudly independent yet lacking in confidence. It is, as Larkin described in his poem, *Here*, elusively 'out of reach' (Larkin, 1971). Such 'out of reachness' of course, is not peculiar to Hull. It pertains to many places, but particularly to peripheral towns and cities, whose histories and contemporary narratives are increasingly being shaped and reshaped in the name of 'recovery' or 'regeneration'. Globally, such reshaping is happening at a greater pace than ever before, an effect of what Harvey (1990b) has termed 'space-time' compression, in which the technologies of modernity (such as the internet, high-speed air-travel and interconnected global banking and trade) accelerate the pace of life, compressing our understandings and experiences of space. In her famous essay, 'A global sense of place', Massey explains how this speeding up has resulted in the internationalisation of place, resulting in rapid change and growth (1991). Perhaps it is this ever (and increasingly paced) changing nature of cities that drives attempts to articulate understandings of place. Yet, as I shall describe below, despite being a university city with established port infrastructure, one might argue that Hull's post-WWII decline is a result of having changed and 'internationalised' less quickly than neighbouring cities such as Leeds, Sheffield and Newcastle. A slower pace of change that for some, has its advantages as well as disadvantages.



Figure 4-9 Hull Fair, 2016, Photo Oddlegs

Where Massey's Kilburn High Road of the early 1990s was a melting-pot of international cultures, languages, and cuisine, turn of the twenty-first century Hull, with its more homogeneously white, working-class British demography, perhaps resisted some of globalisation's trends. Several participants describe the experience of the city as somewhat like 'going back in time'. For example, the owner of a take-away falafel stall in Trinity Market told me that when he first opened in 2016, many passers-by would mistake his speciality Middle Eastern fare for a standard sandwich shop. When he explained to them what falafel was and where it was from, potential customers 'would turn their noses up and walk away', expressing, he felt, their aversion to try something new or slightly different (Interview, 2017).⁴¹ Similarly, most shops across the city, close at 5 or 6pm, and a commonly held complaint is that there is very little to do in the evenings, and far from the '24 hour city' images projected by London or Manchester.

On the other hand, there is also the sense that through such resistance, Hull retains its sense of locale, and is less standardised than the increasingly anonymous, replicable 'non-places' of super-modernity (Augé, 1995). As two international residents of the city described, Hull's sense of place is not so global:

Monica: I thought England is quite posh and then I came to Hull and OH MY GOD. The first question to my boyfriend then was: 'Why don't they have teeth'? I was the only foreigner on the estate and I had people coming up to me saying 'just say something cos you sound funny'. I didn't understand some of the words. It was a shock of how poor, and lack of ambition, how much drugs, alcohol, how neglectful the families are. That's what I saw in 2007 and 8 (Interview, 2019).

Hilde: It's informed by me encountering people here in Hull. Speaking about regeneration quite a lot. This kind of unique identity that Hull owns. It has its own sort of island situation [...] This weird vibe of the island of Hull and the further outside or beyond Hull (Interview, 2019).

This 'island situation', is both physical and imagined. Despite being relatively close to larger cities such as Leeds, Manchester and Sheffield, Hull suffers a certain degree of isolation due to relatively poor rail and road connections. A direct and frequent train service to London, operational since the early 2000s ('Hull Trains'), has improved the city's connections to the capital by avoiding the need to change at Doncaster (saving between thirty – sixty minutes on

⁴¹ It is worth noting however, that within a relatively short space of time, the shop, Falafia, has become a very popular eatery and has expanded to include a delivery service.

the London to Hull journey), as well as upgrading the carriages and making for a more comfortable experience. However, the poorer quality and much smaller ‘buses on rails’, prone to technical faults and delays, continue to operate across many of the northern connections.⁴² By rail, Hull now feels ‘closer’ to London than it does to Liverpool,⁴³ and for many in the city (see Rob and Sharon’s stories earlier), feels more ‘end of’, rather than ‘beginning of’ the line.

It is perhaps difficult to counteract such a pessimistic imaginary, when the issues of poor transport connectivity between Hull and the rest of the north of England raise significant questions about the city’s potential for success within the Northern Powerhouse initiative (and as a ‘world class visitor destination’ – see Chapter 2). As Albert Weatherill, chair of the Hull Chamber of Commerce’s Shipping & Transport Committee argued in January 2021,

Hull is the only major city in the North of England which does not have a direct rail link to its hub international airport, at Manchester. This puts us at a huge disadvantage when attempting to attract inward investment from international businesses [...] the existing rail connections are so dismal. We would like to see the rail network provide similar high-speed travel, instead of the second-rate services that are currently inflicted on the Humber region [...] to give Hull and the Humber the better services and economic boost we so badly need, allowing us to play our full part in the Northern Powerhouse, rather than be left in the sidings! (quoted in Laister, 2021a)

Such sentiments clearly demonstrate the frustrations felt by local leaders at the promise of ‘levelling up’, which, without genuine regional devolution – including devolved fiscal control – remain as rhetorical gestures from Westminster governments, who since 2016 have arguably initiated policies of increasing re-centralisation (Giovannini, 2018).

4.6.3.1 Diversity

Hull’s population, which had grown considerably during the Industrial Revolution until the 1930s when it peaked at about 300,000 inhabitants, has steadily decreased in the second half of the 20th century, growing slightly of late due to considerable flows of migrants and

⁴² Known as ‘buses on rails’ because they were based on the body of Leyland National bus, Pacer train carriages came on to the railways in the 1980s. Intended as a cheap stop-gap on lines where passenger numbers were in decline; some were famously exported to the Islamic Republic of Iran but were soon scrapped there in favour of more modern models (Campbell, 2020).

⁴³ With an infrequent, direct train service Liverpool – Hull, journeys on this route typically take between 3-4 hours and require 2 or 3 changes.

refugees, bringing the current total population at about 260,000 inhabitants. Until the early 2000s, post-war Hull had seen little settled immigration. At the 2001 census, nearly 97% of the population was of white British ethnicity, with Hull's overseas-born residents mostly international students (Krausova, 2013). The introduction of a Home Office dispersal system in 1999 meant that Hull began taking in asylum-seekers and diversification processes intensified due to increased global migration, particularly from Eastern Europe and the expansion of the EU in 2004. According to Migration Yorkshire, in 2018, the diversity of Hull's population was suggested by the following indicators:

- The non-British population comprises 11% of the community, above the Yorkshire and Humber regional average of 7%.
- 13% of the community in Hull were born outside the UK, above the 10% Yorkshire and Humber average.
- Around 6,400 pupils at school in Hull have a first language that is not English or 17% of primary and 14% of secondary pupils; both figures are increases on the previous year, but just below the regional averages.
- 13 in every 1,000 new GP registrations in Hull are made by people who previously lived abroad, compared with a regional average of 9 per 1,000 (Migration Yorkshire, 2019).

Thus, the make-up of Hull is changing rather rapidly, which for some indicates a long-overdue cosmopolitanising of the city. This position was reflected somewhat in comments made by Council Leader, Stephen Brady, who viewed the rise in immigration as a positive trend which supported:

The ambitions of the City Plan that creating new jobs, building new houses, improving the public realm, and improving educational attainment is creating a city and neighbourhoods where people want to live and work [...] Not only is Hull becoming a city where people are more likely to stay and raise a family, but that Hull is now actively attracting people to it; either for the first time or as a returning resident. The belief in Hull at the moment is fantastic and this can be attributed in part to the confidence being the UK City of Culture has generated and it's heartening that people are choosing to make Hull their home (Brady, quoted in Ottewell, 2017).

For Brady, immigration is welcomed as part of a wider change agenda for the city, and a sign that it, and UKCoC, go hand in hand as evidence of the city's success and rising aspirations. For others though, immigration is a source of anxiety, which a few of my research participants speak fearfully and angrily about. Occasionally using racist terminology such as referring to the Spring Bank area of the city as 'Springbankistan' for its high proportion of Kurdish immigrants. As elsewhere in England and Wales with high Leave votes at the 2016 Referendum,

immigration was a key motivator (e.g. Ashcroft and Bevir, 2016; Winlow *et al.*, 2016; Goodhart, 2017; Stocker, 2017; Dorling and Tomlinson, 2019). Thus, in instrumentalising (ethno) cultural diversity to promote the economic positives of cultural regeneration, Brady's comment above perhaps misses the point – and the opportunity to demonstrate leadership about the benefits and challenges of cultural pluralism in an age of austerity.

4.7 Summary

In this chapter I have briefly reviewed Hull's history and geography and pointed out the features of key neighbourhoods and points of tension that will feature later in the thesis. I have outlined how its unboundedness has caused frictions with neighbouring authorities, potentially to the detriment of the city's economic development as well having affectual consequences such as the shame felt by some Hullensians in response to snobbery. With the concept of Hullness and through an introduction to the city's political culture and cultural infrastructure, I have folded in empirical data, findings and analysis to show 'how the land lies' for the following chapters which will revisit these issues, identities and institutions within the context of Brexit and UKCoC. Throughout the chapter, I have indicated key moments and concerns which have stirred instances of collective civic pride and shame, contributing to the city's complicated and at times contradictory sense of self.

Until the mid-1970s, the economic and cultural identity of Hull was connected to maritime industries that provided a proud sense of itself and a sense of security and future. Most particularly the fishing, and the commercial docks. In post-industrial Hull, the stigmatizing negative impacts of neoliberal globalisation, coupled with the anxieties around accelerated immigration provide some context to the majority Leave vote at the 2016 EU Referendum. This momentous political act, plus the struggles over identity and belonging which arose in preparation and through Hull2017, have rendered the city's meaning open for contestation. For many years, the city has battled to shrug off the 'crap town' reputation, and Hull2017 provided an ideal opportunity to present a new identity to itself, the rest of the country and the world. However, as I will argue in the next chapter, despite a long history of left politics, a strong network of grassroots social enterprises and community development initiatives, there are signs that an anti-political culture is taking root in some of the city's neighbourhoods. Thus, the agendas driving Hull's refashioned image and identity, not least its politics, are perhaps not receiving adequate public attention and the following chapters will show that the city's critical

public sphere is rather limited. To the extent that, other than one or two lone voices, there is a relative passivity amongst the activist left, and little evidence of an active counter-culture that might stimulate productive critique of city leaders (cultural and political), or galvanise collective resistance to an increasingly populist authoritarian national government.

Chapter 5 Pride, shame and Brexit

5.1 Introduction: Brexit, emotion and place

In her 2015 Maiden Speech to the Houses of Parliament, MP Jo Cox observed that ‘we are far more united and have far more in common with each other than things that divide us’ (Cox, 2015). Yet, within less than a year, Brexit would stir such extreme passions in the UK population that on 16 June 2016, one week before the referendum, Jo Cox died after being shot and stabbed multiple times in Birstall, West Yorkshire. Witnesses testified that during the attack, the perpetrator had cried out ‘This is for Britain’, ‘Britain independent’, and ‘Put Britain first’ (BBC News, 2016; Cobain and Taylor, 2016). As Fieschi describes, Brexit had revealed divisions ‘made so deep and glaring by a referendum campaign that had been ugly and brutal – to the point of unleashing murder’ (2019:117). However, where for almost four years between 2016 and 2019, Brexit sustained a dramatic, ‘real-time’ televisual, print and social-media spectacle, it has more recently been overtaken by an avalanche of other similarly affective events, most significantly, the economic, health and social impacts of the Coronavirus pandemic. Throughout 2020 and into 2021, this has led to Brexit becoming somewhat of a side-show, and the much needed public conversations to address its divides appear to have been swept under the carpet.

Brexit negotiators reached a last-minute agreement during December 2020, delivering a new EU-UK partnership which set out the rules applying from 1 January 2021. This was arguably met with relief by many, that the feared ‘no-deal’ scenario had been avoided, with many government supporters praising Prime Minister Johnson for what they saw as his personal political victory (e.g. Bower, 2020; Hall, 2020). As Malcolm Relph, Brexit lead for HCC, told me, for a port city such as Hull, ‘no deal’ was the Council’s ‘prime concern’ due to worries ‘about stacking lorries on the M62’ and other logistics which would cause ‘inflationary pressures in the system’ (Interview, 2019). Yet, though the December 24th 2020 compromise avoided painful tariffs and a dangerous rupture in relations, it is a much harder form of Brexit than Johnson articulated during the referendum campaign, and most analysis continues to sideline the national emotional fallout from 2016. As Fieschi has questioned:

One wonders whether the acrimony between the two sides (Leave and Remain), the still-born deals, the miscommunication, the sense of a great unravelling of British politics and a shaming of its political landscape for ego, greed, and incompetence can really be entirely disconnected from the death that marked the campaign’s lowest point (Fieschi, 2019:117).

To 'sweep under the carpet', describes a process of actively ignoring, denying, or concealing from public view something that is embarrassing, unappealing, or damaging to one's reputation. It is synonymous with shame, one of the most intricate and important emotions that is neglected in current Brexit research. As Munt argues: 'Shame itself is often repressed because to acknowledge shame is to (unwillingly) invoke shame' (2000:534). In a highly controversial political context such as Brexit, such a repression or 'sweeping under the carpet' is perhaps an understandable action by those in power tasked with delivering 'the will of the people'. However, given the territorial stigmatisation of Hull throughout its modern history, I will argue that this civic form of shame contributed to the emotional politics of Brexit in the city, and that we need to examine modalities of Brexit shame and shame-avoidance more scrupulously. We must remember it is those in power who have manoeuvred Brexit in the first place, and their strategies of emotional governance through which such a political culture has arisen.

The continued political salience of 'Leave' and 'Remain' can be seen in the opinion polling of post-EU Referendum events, which frequently include the binary Brexit nomenclature in the demographic segmentation of results (e.g. Yougov.co.uk, 2020; Zorzut, 2020). Thus, whilst Brexit as the object *itself* has become less prominent in public debate, its aftermath continues to resonate in the tribal emotional attachments to Leave and Remain senses of belonging. As evidenced in the extreme, through the words and actions of Jo Cox's killer, such emotions are powerfully connected to place, and my research suggests that in Hull, the dominance of the emotions of place have played key roles in the city's contemporary political culture.

In this chapter I outline emotions as powerful political forces, and establish how they have worked through my respondents at micro (individual) as well as meso (collective) levels. I focus on civic pride and shame, key emotions to our senses of placemaking, belonging and community. I show how they enmesh with Brexit in the Hull civic imaginary to provide new empirical data and novel analytical insights. Through the voices of my participants, the chapter sets out some of their confusing, ambiguous, awkward, and at times painful manifestations and how they worked to inform imagined futures. I argue that considerations of these emotions can develop a more detailed picture of Hull's contemporary political culture and deepen our understandings of recent political behaviours in the city. Further, I argue that the

'Leave'/'Remain' identities made during, and in the aftermath of the 2016 Referendum, strongly inform Hull's post-Brexit civic imaginaries. Building on my critique in Chapter 3 of the overly positivist approaches to understanding political behaviours, this chapter responds methodologically to recent calls to find 'other ways' of understanding the politics of Brexit (Closs Stephens, 2019:2), and, by incorporating responses to a theatre production, engages affect to investigate the heightened political emotions that Brexit prompted.

Before proceeding, I wish to reflect briefly on what this chapter is *not* doing. Firstly, my goal is not to 'explain' Hull's 67.6% Leave vote, although my research may offer insights that illuminate this. As Chapter 2 described, considerable ink has been spilled narrating the possible whys and wherefores that led to the 2016 referendum result – much of it contradictory - and I see no reason why Hull should not be understood as a microcosm of the UK, or rather, England, as a whole. Especially those populations outside the larger metropolitan centres such as London and Manchester, where Leave arguments are arguably articulated more strongly. Indeed, as I shall discuss, my Leave voting participants cited many of the common and already much analysed reasons posited for leaving the EU, such as (as they saw it): reclaiming lost sovereignty, curbing immigration, and wanting to send a protest to Westminster and Europe for their discontent at an unjust global economic system that has resulted in extreme wealth for some and precarity for many others. Equally, Remain voters spoke of wanting to retain freedom of movement, the positives (as they saw it) of cultural pluralism and of their fears for the negative impacts Brexit would wreak on the economy.

That said, by exploring Hull's experiences of Brexit - a national policy dominated by narratives of national identity and belonging (however contested) - this chapter presents new empirical data elucidating local articulations of national feelings and nationhood. This follows a lineage of scholarly work on nationalism and national identity which has located feelings and affects in studies of mundane, banal, and iterative embodied practices and performances (eg. Billig, 1995; Edensor, 2002; Jones and Merriman, 2009; Merriman and Jones, 2017), or multiple subjectivities and lived experiences of 'imagined communities' (Anderson, 1983). As Merriman and Jones (2017:602) argue, 'relational and collective affiliations are central' to many formations of national identity, emphasizing 'that there is always something excessive and mobile about national forces and affects' which may be 'partially located, grounded or sited – taking hold of particular bodies, in particular places, at particular times'.

Edensor (2002:186) has shown how national identity is 'not only located and experienced at renowned symbolic sites' but equally asserted at local levels. My research, through its investigation of local spaces inhabited by 'ordinary' people, teases out some of Hull's local connections and signifiers of Englishness, Britishness or Europeanness, that testify to the 'scaling of national identity' (ibid) – and, one might argue, supra-national identity. The national is therefore linked to the local in numerous ways and in this chapter I show how Hull's local media, local sporting achievements and everyday understandings of community and heritage are also bound in conceptions and representations of the national. Further, this local 'nationness' is understood through the affective forces and atmospheres that enlivened my research encounters, which were frequently characterized by highly specific, 'subjective relations and tensions' (Jones and Merriman, 2017:607).

Secondly, I am not claiming that Hull's Brexit vote ran *purely* on emotions and that these emotions distorted or biased people's rational, cognitive grasp of objective reality. The participants in this study often speak eloquently and rationally about their feelings, and of the objective social conditions that make them feel the way they do. Rather, I am interested in how Brexit is informing the ways in which people are thinking about their collective futures - how they imagine Hull and their places within it, in a post-EU membership era. Crucially, given the dominance of pride and shame in my research encounters, I am interested in the roles they play. How they are working through the political cultures of the city to effect multiple and sometimes competing post-Brexit imaginaries.

As Müller has warned (2017:15), there is a danger in relying on 'loaded terms' such as frustration, anger, and resentment to explain the apparent surge in backlash politics. Such an approach has the potential to produce caricatured accounts of those who participate in or uphold such political positions, and have at times become stereotyped as an unindividuated mass of the angry, fearful and 'left behind'. This chapter includes some discussion of the media's role in perpetuating these characterisations, and of their impact on my participants and the broader public sphere. I also suggest that much of the political science which had traded on such generalisations in their analyses of political disaffection, often fails to acknowledge *why* feelings matter. As Flinders (2020:24) argues, feelings remain 'real' to individuals, irrespective of how 'irrational or difficult to understand they might seem to

external observers who do not feel the same way'. As this chapter will show, and as Busher et al. (2018:4) have indicated, anger and fear are not, and should not be considered, the sole preserve of broadly anti-liberal or anti-establishment political formations. Thus, my aim here is to build on recent work on politics and emotions (e.g. Closs Stephens, 2016, 2019; Anderson et al., 2019; Moss et al., 2020), by integrating existing theoretical perspectives with the 'views from within' that reflect not only private or personal interests but also the interests, affects, practices and aims of groups, communities, institutions, and even perhaps, a city (Sullivan, 2015; Busher et al., 2018:402-403).

5.1.1 Introducing Hull's Brexit feelings

In the years immediately following the EU Referendum and UKCoC, there was much *feeling* about what the future might hold for Hull. Especially as the transformative power of culture was a central narrative through Hull2017 (see Chapters 6 and 7), and that hosting UKCoC would somehow change the city for the better. Similarly, when discussion turned to Brexit *and Hull*, feelings ran deep. Again, often prompted by consideration of the changes that leaving the EU might bring. This chapter details many of those feelings, and argues that to understand political emotions and feelings one necessarily has to undertake research at the level of individuals. Research which is largely missing from existing Brexit literatures (see Chapter 2).

To illustrate their range and intensity, I introduce three particularly redolent responses here. The first from Monica - a cultural worker from Poland who was ineligible to vote, the second from Gillian - a retired school teacher who voted Remain, and the third from Jackie - an unemployed single mother who voted Leave. They describe their feelings about Brexit in the following ways:

Monica: Losing hope was like dying pride. A quiet cry for hope. It was hopeless because [...] whatever outcome there's gonna be we haven't got much else to say about it now. Because the unknown still carries on for three years that hope died down (Interview, 2019).

Gillian: I've tried so hard throughout this whole process to understand what was happening in our city and also in our country [...] Yes, I'm a Remainer. But I'm just desperate for people who voted Leave, and I'm trying to understand how that's come about and if there might be any ways of us trying to resolve that. Because

it's really shocking and profoundly distressing, really, what's happened. So, yes, I'd felt very low (Focus Group, 2019).

Jackie: The people that say we will suffer...I don't think we will. We're a strong country. We actually import more than we export so the people of Europe aren't gonna want us to come out with no deal. So, I think that we'll do alright. We'll struggle for a bit when we first come out. People will find their feet. I think we'll be absolutely fine (Interview, 2019).

For Monica, the future is unknown but suffused with hopelessness. Similarly, for Gillian, despite her desire to reconcile with a city that voted against her wishes, understanding seems out of reach, to the point of distress. As one might expect, the only positive view of the city's post-Brexit future here comes from a Leave voter, and Jackie's view was typical of my Leave respondents more temperate language to describe post-Brexit futures. Where Gillian and Monica's language is arguably more emotionally charged – for Jackie, the future will be 'alright' and 'absolutely fine'. This is not to say that my discussions with Leave voters were all unemotional. As I will explore later, Leave voters could express their views very passionately – often in response to fears that their vote was being disrespected or ignored, and that their hopes and dreams for Brexit might never happen. Thus, my work captures Hull's everyday Brexit feelings at a time which Anderson et al. (2019:6) explain was an 'impasse between decision and possible exit' and that 'rather than one single geopolitical event', as the name would suggest, 'multiple Brexits coexist' (ibid). They explain that:

Each Brexit is a manner of relating to present uncertainty in a way that entangles Brexit with residual, dominant, and emerging affective conditions and formations of nation, identity, and belonging (ibid).

As this thesis illustrates, the 'residual, dominant and emerging affective conditions' in Hull are manifold and complex with pride and shame insistently recurring.

Further, by focussing questions and prompts on the impacts of Brexit in Hull and taking 'Brexit' out of the conceptual realm of terms such as 'single market', 'backstop' and 'customs union', which are somewhat removed from everyday lived experiences, it sharpened my participants' responses. It *placed* Brexit, its rationale and potential consequences, in an identifiable locale, a civic space, where issues of belonging, identity and connection were more immediately understood and felt. Especially so, in the post UKCoC context where narratives of change and

disruption circulate. Thus, without disputing the importance of nationalism and *national feelings*, I suggest that regional and civic feelings also play key roles in the Brexit discourse – and that Hull makes a potent case-study, echoing David Harvey’s (1993) argument that localised identities, especially when conflated with race, gender, religious and class differentiation, can develop dynamic bases for *both* progressive political mobilisations, *and* reactionary, exclusionary politics (see also Paasi, 2003). This seems to have happened in Hull, as Harvey foretold. Although, one’s position on Brexit determines whether it was a progressive or regressive move.

5.2 Brexit numbers

Given the dominance of quantitative approaches in Electoral Studies (see Blatter, 2016), a vast array of theories about the 2016 Referendum result and what it reveals about UK society and values have proliferated based solely on numerical data (see Chapter 2). As Flick has argued (2018:11), such methodologies can ‘lack relevance for everyday life’ because they are ‘not sufficiently dedicated to exactly describing the details of a case in its concrete circumstances’ and that ‘the study of subjective meanings and everyday experience and practice is as essential as the contemplation of narratives’. Even when qualitative data is used in the burgeoning sub-field of Brexit Studies, it is often in the form of large-scale opinion surveys analysed at a national level (Clarke et al., 2017; Goodhart, 2017; Goodwin & Milazzo, 2017; Sobolewska & Ford, 2020). As economist Jo Michell, from UWE Bristol, commented to me, ‘the numbers have only got us so far’ and that many of these dominant Brexit accounts, arrived at through positivist, disciplinary specific means, only tell part of the story, resulting in some generalised and contradictory conclusions (Interview 2020). Via more interpretivist routes and crossing disciplinary boundaries in order to explore Hull’s civic imaginaries, this chapter attempts a greater depth of understanding. That said, it is nevertheless important to state the core 2016 referendum data from which the rest of my investigations derive – which is the aim of this section.

On the 23rd of June 2016, the following question was put to the electorate of the UK: ‘Should the United Kingdom remain a member of the European Union or leave the European Union?’ (The Electoral Commission, 2018a). Overseen by the Electoral Commission, the vote took place under the provisions of the European Union Referendum Act 2015 (The Electoral Commission, 2018c). The overall result is detailed in Table 1.

Table 1 Result of the EU Referendum, June 23rd 2016

	Votes	%
Leave	17,410,742	51.89%
Remain	16,141,241	48.11%
Registered voters/turnout	46,500,001	72.21%

Source: Electoral Commission (2018)

Except for Northern Ireland, the EU referendum vote was not counted by parliamentary constituencies. Thus, the local government district of Hull was included in the Yorkshire and Humber regional count, where 42.29% voted Remain and 57.71% voted Leave (Electoralcommission.org.uk, 2018). However, estimated votes for each constituency have been generated through a demographic model (Hanretty, 2017; 2018), and it is estimated that Hull's combined Brexit vote was 67.6% Leave, making it the second-highest pro-Leave city in the UK after Stoke-on Trent (see Table 2). Additionally, of these cities, Hull had the lowest turnout. For later chapters, it is worth noting that Stoke-on-Trent and Sunderland were both bid cities for UKCoC2017, and that Coventry, host city for UKCoC2021, with 55.6%, was the tenth-highest pro-Leave city. With socio-economic profiles not unlike Hull's, they share similar experiences of post-industrial decline and accompanying stigmatisation.⁴⁴ Whilst beyond the remit of this thesis, they offer significant potential as comparators for future investigations into the civic imaginaries of 'left-behind' places.

⁴⁴ Eg. All are frequently described as a 'crap towns' (see Gilbert, 2017b; Telegraph, 2017; Murray, 2019; Parker, 2020).

Table 2 The five highest Leave voting cities in the UK

City	Total Votes	Turn-out	Votes			Percent of votes	
			Remain	Leave	Margin	Remain	Leave
Stoke-on-Trent	117,590	65.70%	36,027	81,563	45,536	30.60%	69.40%
Kingston upon Hull	113,355	62.90%	36,709	76,646	39,937	32.40%	67.60%
Wakefield	175,042	71.10%	58,877	116,165	57,288	33.60%	66.40%
Wolverhampton	117,936	67.50%	44,138	73,798	29,660	37.40%	62.60%
Sunderland	134,324	64.80%	51,930	82,394	30,464	38.70%	61.30%

Source: Electoral Commission (2018)

Table 3 shows the entire Humber region voting strongly to Leave and that in relation to its near neighbours, Hull appears not to be an outlier where Brexit is concerned. What is noticeable, and to which I return later, is the city's relatively low turnout.

Table 3 Hull and its neighbours' EU Referendum turnout and results

District	Voter turnout, of eligible	Proportion of votes	
		Remain	Leave
East Riding of Yorkshire	74.90%	39.60%	60.40%
Kingston upon Hull	62.90%	32.40%	67.60%
North East Lincolnshire	67.90%	30.10%	69.90%
North Lincolnshire	71.90%	33.70%	66.30%
Selby	79.10%	40.80%	59.20%

Source: Electoral Commission (2018)

Finally, Table 4 shows the Referendum vote by Hull's Westminster parliamentary constituencies, which also indicates the respective local government district wards. Whilst all three constituencies voted to leave, we can see that East Hull did so most strongly, and, with an estimated 72.6%, is one of the most pro-Leave constituencies in the country.

Table 4 Brexit vote in Hull

Constituency	Wards ⁴⁵	Estimated EU Referendum Result
Kingston Upon Hull East	Drypool, Holderness, Ings, Longhill, Marfleet, Southcoates East, Southcoates West, Sutton	72.6% Leave
Kingston Upon Hull North	Avenue, Beverley, Bransholme East, Bransholme West, Bricknell, Kings Park, Newland, Orchard Park and Greenwood, University	59.9% Leave
Kingston Upon Hull West & Hessle ⁴⁶	Boothferry, Derringham, Myton, Newington, Pickering, St. Andrews	67.8% Leave

Source: Hanretty (2017; 2018), from Electoral Commission (2018)

Such electoral data has made Hull an occasional site of interest for national journalists and high-profile politicians, particularly for its potential to highlight the value differential in Labour held constituencies. As a ‘typical Red Wall’, Northern Leave city, Hull contrasts strikingly with the metropolitan, ‘Remain’ enclaves of London, many of which during the period of this study were held by senior Labour front-benchers.⁴⁷ Soundbites such as ‘Too much Hampstead, not enough Hull’ (Burnham quoted in *the Guardian*, 2016), and ‘more concerned about Hoxton than Hull’ (Farage quoted in Drewett, 2019) being a common recourse (see also Newstatesman.com, 2019). These comparisons are intended to stress the cultural differences between constructed binaries such as North/South, Anywhere/Somewhere, Liberal/Conservative, and can be understood as forming part of a wider ‘culture war’ which has accompanied Brexit and is a key theme of this chapter. However, in their lack of substantive

⁴⁵ Ward information gathered from Hull Data Observatory. Available at: http://109.228.11.121/IAS_Live/ [Accessed 1 Aug. 2018]. Ward level turnout and result data exists for some districts in the UK, however, none is available for Hull or the East Riding. Thus, this is the most ‘local’ data available.

⁴⁶ In the EU Referendum, the votes from the Hessle ward (of the West Hull and Hessle constituency) counted towards the East Riding of Yorkshire district total.

⁴⁷ Indeed, key figures have neighbouring constituencies which all voted significantly for Remain: Jeremy Corbyn’s Islington North borders with Emily Thornberry (Islington South and Finsbury), Diane Abbot (Hackney North and Stoke Newington), and Keir Starmer (Holborn and St Pancras) who were, respectively, Shadow Foreign Secretary, Shadow Home Secretary and Shadow Brexit Secretary. Thus, a geography of centralised power can easily be projected, which arguably, Corbyn struggled to discourage.

inquiry or analysis I suggest that they offer more to alliterative editors than any genuine approach for understanding. This is not to deny that differences do not exist. As SurrIDGE (2018; 2020a) has shown, the left in British electoral politics has become fragmented over the past decade and those with economically left values are increasingly divided by cultural attitudes.

Yet, such rhetorical gestures have great power. Buckledee (2018), has shown that such linguistic strategies were a hallmark of the Brexit campaign and I argue that, where Hull is concerned, the picture is more problematic than the basic media portrayals. In fact, to borrow from Butler (1996:87), 'disjuncture between utterance and meaning' lies at the heart of Brexit discourse, and that (again, from Butler) through interpellation of such language 'certain social existence of the body becomes possible' (1996, p.5). Butler argues that interpellation 'does not "discover" this body but constitutes it fundamentally' (ibid). Further, whether the subject accepts or contests its terms of address, this 'force of interpellation continues to work' and 'force itself upon [the subject], to delineate the space [the subject] occup[ies], [and] construct a social positionality' (p.33). Consequently, the subject endures the trauma of being brought 'into a linguistic world' that 'precedes [the subject's] will' (p.38) and, in effect, is "'put in one's place" by such speech' (p.4). In other words, without the oppositional language of Leave and Remain on the referendum ballot, such divergent identities would quite possibly not exist. As my research demonstrates, in Hull, such constructions of local identities through interpellating Brexit language, and their contrary framings in the media to 'anywhere' metropolises, produce powerfully emotional responses, which continue to play key roles in differing civic imaginings.

5.3 Brexit, emotion and power

Embodied in the passionate outbursts from participants and audiences on television programmes such as BBC Question Time and in the vox pops features on TV news segments, Brexit emotions were broadcast into our homes relentlessly between 2016 - 2019. An exasperated Theresa May cried through her resignation speech and Boris Johnson triumphed joyously as her successor, soon (and repeatedly) to spark fury from MPs at his use of language.⁴⁸ In the weeks after the Brexit vote, leading psychotherapist Susie Orbach, wrote

⁴⁸ Fury at Boris Johnson's use of language has become frequent. Here I am thinking of September 2019 when he was repeatedly challenged in parliament over his use of the word 'surrender' to describe

that it was ‘all people wanted to talk about’ in her therapy room (Orbach, 2016). Patients shared feelings of shock, fear, dismay, shame, anger, alienation, and of ‘mourning what one didn’t realise one quite had’ (Orbach, 2016). Social media updated us on the *mood* of the electorate or the *feelings* of key political groups. For example, on October 19th, 2019, the date the Letwin Amendment was passed in Parliament, the mood in Downing Street was ‘bullish’, the DUP felt ‘betrayed’ and anti-Brexit protestors were ‘jubilant’ (BBC News, 2019a; Murphy, 2019; Tominey, 2019).⁴⁹

The fast-paced nature of the post-Referendum processes, and the even more rapid shifts from one event to the next might be said to have generated somewhat of an emotional whip-lash effect and an atmosphere of spiralling anxiety. When ‘Get Brexit Done’ emerged as the Conservative Party slogan at the 2019 General election, a few of my respondents describe that it perfectly summarised their emotional exhaustion. For example, Kathy, a Remain voter spoke of her feelings as follows:

Brexit has gone on and on forever. I try to keep each day, listening to the radio in the car, to keep on top of what’s going on. And it’s like a sort of whirlwind. And where it leaves us in Hull, I think I’d be just like (she pulls a face like the Edvard Munch *Scream* painting) really [...] My son now is about to graduate and all of this seems like a very long time. There’s been silly people debating all this stuff down in Westminster and it’s just gone on and on and on and on. [My son] went to University and he’s moved on and *we’re still fucking there!!* When is this change gonna come?! We’ll get another extension, another extension (Focus Group, 2019).

Additionally, Clair Atherton from Headstart Hull, an organisation that supports children and young people’s wellbeing and mental health, described to me the impact of this anxiety on the

legislation passed earlier in the month which aimed to block a no-deal Brexit. Labour MP, Paula Sherriff, made an impassioned intervention, reminding Johnson of the power of his words, and that similar language was spoken by the murderer of her friend and colleague Jo Cox. BBC political editor Laura Kuenssberg described the scenes as an ‘absolute bear pit’ (BBC News, 2019b).

⁴⁹ Proposed by Sir Oliver Letwin, the motion to amend the UK Withdrawal Bill ensured that Britain would not ‘crash out’ of the European Union without a deal later that month. It had the support of opposition parties and Conservative rebel MPs. Initially a deep blow to PM Johnson, it was one of the manoeuvres which led to the dissolution of parliament and the ‘releasing’ of the Brexit deadlock through the Conservative landslide victory at the the 2019 General Election.

people she works with. As a workshop tool, Clair would ask primary school groups to write their worries onto a piece of paper and then throw them into a waste paper bin designed to look like a black hole:

There will be two or three things [said] around Brexit in every group. And it's not necessarily got a lot of information attached to it, because they're just writing it and they think it's just literally so that they can throw the worry away. But it might say: 'I'm sick of Brexit, I don't want to hear any more about it', or it might say 'I don't want Brexit' or it might say, 'no more Brexit'. So we don't know what their fears or their feelings around that are necessarily, but we just know that it's something that's distressing them and that it's something they want rid of. But when you think about how many times a day you hear about Brexit I can totally understand it. Even if they're just sick of it, you know, they're just sick of hearing about it. And in one group... We were in a primary school [...] and one young man decided that he wanted to put the lid of the bin on his head and he said, 'I am the black hole'. And he said, 'I will tell you what is bad' [...] And then he just kept going 'Brexit! Brexit! Theresa May! Brexit! Theresa May!' And these are like 10 year olds. So they're sick of it. Why should they even be thinking about that? (Interview, 2019).

Knight (2020a), suggests that 'we humans are not built to deal with such rapid change', and muses on Toffler's phrase 'future shock' in which 'too much change in too short a period of time' is overwhelming and results in disconnection, stress and disorientation (Toffler, 1970:4). For Knight (2020a), 'it's as if we've been living in a kaleidoscope. No sooner does one chicken land, then another, and then another'. As such, the term 'Brexit fatigue' has been coined (e.g. McKay, 2019), and there are reports that worrying about Brexit can lead to depression and even psychosis, with the Mental Health Foundation posting a help page on their website titled: 'Top tips to deal with Brexit anxiety' (Foundation, 2019).⁵⁰ In this context of frantic 24-hour news cycles and social media alerts, Davies (2019) suggests that instant reaction takes precedence over considered judgement, and Crouch (2017), that people are trusting their feelings and emotions instead of evidence and facts. A phenomenon amplified

⁵⁰ For media reports on these phenomena see for example: https://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/entry/brexit-anxiety-very-real-issue_UK_5c51ba25e4b00906b26f92ba [Accessed 26th Oct. 2019] and <https://www.newscientist.com/article/2218173-a-mans-acute-psychosis-appears-to-have-been-triggered-by-brexit/> [Accessed 26th Oct. 2019].

through the media swirl around COVID-19 in 2020/21 and the emergence of numerous conspiracy theories, anti-mask advocates and lock-down sceptics – many of which were propagated by far-right groups (Crawford, 2020). Such interpretations have led political scientists to rethink voters' partisan attachments to parties, as Curtice (2018:16) puts it:

Brexit has stirred up a degree of political passion of which, in the wake of the long-term decline in the strength of party identification, voters had long since seemed incapable. Perhaps the decline in party identification has always been more a consequence of a growing inability of parties to secure the affection, loyalty and commitment of voters than, as widely assumed, the emergence of a more rational, sceptical electorate that was no longer willing to invest emotionally in a political party or cause.

Thus, emotions have played key roles through Brexit, which as Ford et al. (2017:17) have noted, can be seen as a symptom of longer-term social changes that have 'quietly been reshaping public opinion, political behaviour, and party competition in Britain as well as in other Western democracies'. In fact, once the process of 'Brexiting' had begun, instead of healing divisions, Busher et al. (2018:406) observe that:

The hopes—of the cheerleaders from both sides of the referendum are looking increasingly wide of the mark. Instead of Leavers' visions of a country united in enthusiasm about a future defined by recovered sovereignty, and instead of Remainers' visions of a country united in regret about stepping over the Brexit precipice, the country remains deeply divided.

Similarly, for Ramswell (2017:217), Brexit has 'morphed into a battleground of derision and division' so that 'Remainer' and 'Leaver' as well as their more derogatory variations, 'persist as salient political identities that now cut across all areas of public life' (Busher *et al.*, 2018:406). Emotions are a crucial part of these identities, and, mindful of the fact that emotions are socially created and culturally contingent (Ahmed, 2004b), I suggest that a more nuanced understanding of them, that draws on lived experiences, might better explain the developments in political culture (and especially *local* political cultures) that we observe in the present as the 2016 Referendum slips further into history. Crucially, for the broader arc of my investigations in Hull, they also help to understand people's future imaginings and how we might learn to move forwards across such divides.

Responding to the Orbach *Guardian* article, the author Zadie Smith rebukes a ‘Londoncentric solipsism’ and, aligning with Ford et al. suggests a useful consequence of Brexit is that it openly reveals ‘a deep fracture in British society that has been thirty years in the making’ (Smith, 2016). This figuring of ‘Remainers’ as middle-class urbanites, ashamed at the results of the referendum has been (as I discussed further in Chapter 2), oversimplified by Goodhart (2017) to argue that the pro-EU vote belonged to people from ‘anywhere,’ whilst people from ‘somewhere’ voted to leave. However basic and contentious this geography might be, it was soon adopted by Theresa May in her October 2016 conference speech to the Conservative party. In her formulation, ‘anywhere’s’ became ‘citizens of nowhere’ (May, 2016), and the multiple feelings, subjectivities and histories at work in the account of shame sketched by Zadie Smith were reduced to a geography of ‘us’ and ‘them’, thereby reproducing and reinforcing the geographies of division built into the binary referendum question. Such manoeuvres by May epitomise Heaney’s (2019:224-225) observation that ‘emotions themselves have become a new and increasingly important resource for, and source of, political power in the twenty-first century’.

5.3.1 Populist feelings

As mentioned earlier, this system of ‘us’/‘them’ division along cultural lines has a totalitarian precedent, which, in Nazi Germany, was given intellectual credence by the likes of Carl Schmitt, whose writings have come to attention again in recent years (e.g. Neumann, 2015; Koskeniemi, 2016; Booth and Baert, 2018; Kalyvas, 2018; Scheuerman, 2019). As Scheuerman (2019:1171) claims, ‘there is evidence from Europe and elsewhere that right-wingers versed in Schmitt’s ideas are helping to shape populist movements’ and that arguably, Schmitt’s preference for an authoritarian populist ‘reinterpretation’, of the late Weimar democracy can be seen in the actions and arguments of Donald Trump and senior Brexit figures, especially those of the radical free-market right, such as Nigel Farage and Jacob Rees-Mogg. Scheuerman describes Schmitt’s conception of democracy ‘as a mode of identity politics [...] requiring the realisation of a substantial sameness or “homogeneity” and a clear delineation vis-a-vis threatening political “enemies” (2020:1173).

Müller (2017), shows that in populism, homogeneity can take many forms, where who exactly gets excluded and how, whether Mexicans by way of a wall or Muslims by way of a religious test, can vary from day to day. Another similarity can be seen in the fact that Schmitt’s and Farage’s rhetoric (and Boris Johnson’s for that matter) rarely, if ever, features ‘normative

tools' that might help circumvent or quell, reactionary and 'deeply anti-universalistic interpretations of homogeneity' (Scheuerman, 2019:1173). Indeed, the emotional appeal of populist discourse is key to its polarising effects, so that populism 'would be unintelligible without the affective component' (Laclau, 2005:11). As Gross (2019:11) explains, this is 'democracy's ever-present and constitutive other: what democracy can transform into if its commitment to government of the people, by the people, for the people turns 'the people' into an undifferentiated block'. Drawing on evidence from the British Election Study, Norris and Inglehart show that populist authoritarianism as a character trait, is statistically significant as a predictor of voting Leave and supporting UKIP (Norris and Inglehart, 2019:390).

We must be careful not to catastrophise, though the lessons from history are stark, and whilst most of my Leave respondents were clear that their motivations were not based on racist views of immigrants, throughout my field work I have heard the following spoken by some: 'There ain't no black in the Union Jack' and 'They might be born in a stable but they're not a horse'.⁵¹ As well as less derogatory (but equally homogenising and exclusionary) complaints about 'too many immigrants' and demands to close the borders. For instance:

Once they say free movement of people that's it you can shove off. Cos we can't afford it. We're full. You know about the state of the health service, and I rang today at nine o'clock for an appointment at the doctors and there wasn't one. Which basically means they've got nothing until after next week. There's too many people (Rob, Focus Group, 2019).

I have also been told stories of intimidation by the English Defence League outside a Referendum polling station in the city and within a community meeting following the Brexit result:

I remember the day of the referendum very well because my daughter came through to Hull to vote and there was a load of EDL supporters outside of St. Vincents who were being very racially abusive to a woman in a hijab (Kathy, Focus Group 2019).

When I was at that horrendous debate that turned into hell on earth, I had to debate with this EDL person. (*Rosie puts on an angry voice*) 'And another thing', he said, 'The EU are gonna have armies against us. Our boys are going to have to

⁵¹ The first comment was a common post-war racist trope, especially in the 1960s and 1970s in response, by some, to immigration from the Caribbean to the UK by the Windrush generation. The second is a derivation of the offensive phrase used in attacks by the BNP in recent years: 'A dog born in a stable isn't a horse'.

be fighting their armies'. I said, 'hey – hang on. We have a veto. Our country has voted no each time. We have a vote in it, you can't just say that anybody will do it against us. If you're *there*, you'll have a vote.' And he didn't have any answer to that, because I knew my stuff on that one. But the counter arguments were just... unbelievable stuff (Rosie, Focus Group, 2019).

As I shall discuss below, such emboldening of the far-right has engendered an atmosphere of despair amongst some Remain voting residents, and of fear and anxiety amongst some immigrants.

Whilst Rob's response above, might initially appear to support the 'cultural backlash' theory, which depicts Brexit, and other populist movements, as the protest of those who feel culturally 'left behind' (Eatwell and Goodwin, 2018; Norris and Inglehart, 2019), the development of his argument, encapsulates Fieschi's observation that economic *and* cultural explanations for Brexit are 'deeply intertwined' (Fieschi, 2019:19). Fieschi quotes Martin Sandbu, who notes that:

The big economic changes that have transformed Western societies during the past three to four decades have worked against one particular group of the population [...] the low skilled [...] the uncredentialed, and those lacking social connections to economic gatekeepers (ie. the elite), against those loyal or tied to places in decline, against those less comfortable with changing themselves or the change in the world around them, and finally against individuals with more traditional conceptions of men's and women's work (Sandbu, 2018:35).

Sandbu's cultural and economic indicators here point to residents such as Rob and others in Hull that I have spent time with who are 'united in their expectations [...] united in their disappointments' and increasingly, 'united in their political, social and cultural demands' (Fieschi, 2019:19).

Thus, emotions as resource for power were baked-in to the 2016 Referendum and a repeated refrain circulated in news reports that voters would have to choose between their heads and their hearts (e.g. Hewitt, 2016). Although they denied the characterisations, the two main campaigns, Britain Stronger in Europe, and Vote Leave, were nicknamed 'project fear' and 'project hate' for their mobilisation of negative emotions. The Remain campaign for their pessimistic economic forecasting, and the Leave campaign for their anti-immigrant rhetoric and spectacular, populist messaging. For Richard Corbett, former leader of the European

Parliament Labour Party, representing the Yorkshire and Humber region, the strategy of the Remain leadership was 'a big problem' and that

The way the then government had called it, ran the campaign in a very complacent way thinking "this is going to be easy", and portrayed it entirely in terms of the negatives which were dismissed by the other side as scare tactics - project fear - without talking about the benefits of the European Union at all. I thought this was heading for disaster (Interview, 2020).

As Moss et al. have argued (2020:1-2), such negative feelings (to which they also add anger, nostalgia, and resentment) are understood to be 'particularly powerful and disruptive for established democratic norms'. Yet, supporters of Trump, Brexit and nationalist parties across Europe are often perceived to be drawing upon these negative feelings in place of expert knowledge (Crouch, 2017; Hochschild, 2018; Fieschi, 2019; Norris and Inglehart, 2019). In addition to ethno-nationalist attitudes and support for authoritarian, populist parties and politicians, various writers have noted the strengthening of citizens' emotional attachments to group identities reduces opportunity and desire for collaboration and compromise, increasing intolerance and political cynicism (Iyengar *et al.*, 2019; Hobolt *et al.*, 2020). However, in December 2020, prior to the EU-UK post-Brexit trade deal announcement, there was emerging evidence to suggest a decreasing emotional investment in Brexit as a consequence of the Coronavirus, and that Leave voters particularly, were less confident in the government's ability to handle it (Kuper, 2020).

This last point is, of course, applicable to both extreme left and extreme right identitarianism (Gray, 2018). Or perhaps where Brexit is concerned, entrenched Leave or Remain positions. An anonymous survey response illustrates the impact of this process on one voter in Hull:

I considered the pros and cons and concluded that I didn't mind [voting] either way. Long-term, I feel the difference will be negligible, so I was going to abstain as a rare 'informed neutral'. However, the nastiness and sanctimoniousness of the Remain campaign in the final few weeks of campaigning changed that. The way they attacked people who were thinking of voting Leave - as a middle-of-the-road person, that included me - as stupid, racist and regressive repulsed me so greatly that I voted against the option they supported. The Leave campaign was unpleasant, of course, but Remain became utterly horrible.

Here, this 'informed neutral' who was initially going to abstain, felt compelled to vote Leave due their perception of 'nastiness and sanctimoniousness' from the Remain campaign, which they felt was an attack on their tribe. When asked how they would vote if there might be a second referendum, this respondent replied that they would still vote Leave as they found the

'Remain campaign [...] to be just as unpleasant now as it was back then', although they do not indicate where their knowledge of such Remain views has originated. Nevertheless, for this individual, their voting behaviour is established in the identity that arises from *not being a Remainer* rather than any substantive benefits of leaving the European Union.

5.4 Hull's Brexit imaginaries: *Us Against Whatever*

I turn now to a discussion of the feelings, emotions and critiques of respondents who attended a theatre performance of *Us Against Whatever*, created by Middle Child Theatre Company, and performed in March and April 2019, at the Liverpool Everyman and Hull Truck Theatres. It occurred at a particularly fraught moment in the Brexit timeline that was ultimately to bring about the downfall of Theresa May as Prime Minister and see Boris Johnson rise as her replacement. Chapter 3 detailed the play's history, how it contributed to my data collection and how its incorporation into my project enabled me to capture a snapshot of Hull's Brexit feelings. I argued that incorporating theatre and performance as a methodology can reveal rich and unique qualitative data of value to human geography, political and social sciences. Its inclusion in this study therefore provides an innovative contribution to existing Brexit research. Here, I briefly describe the play's synopsis, not to offer a critique of the production, but as a springboard for later discussions to illustrate and analyse the Hull civic imaginaries that it elicited.

Us Against Whatever begins before the lights go down. On passing through the vestibule of Hull Truck Theatre, the audience are greeted by Hull2017 volunteers, performing their cheery Hullness, costumed in bright blue jackets and backpacks. The actors, dressed in black and white Gothic cabaret costumes are in the foyer and bar areas, chatting with spectators in English and Polish. This interaction continues into the auditorium, and as we take our seats, a huge neon sign at the back of the stage declaims: 'This will never not have happened'. A reminder of the impact of the EU Referendum, whatever outcome the Brexit negotiations might finally deliver. It also suggests that what we are about to witness is a 'one-off' event and that anything might happen. Black and orange Hull City F.C. scarves are strewn around the seating and some eager audience members don them playfully, entering into the spirit of the occasion. Others move them away, fearing a moment of audience participation that might put them in the spotlight. As the show starts (for real), a white-gloved MC welcomes us to watch this play about Brexit before yelling 'Fuck it. We don't wanna talk about Westminster or Farage or Brussels. We want to talk about us. Here. Cos we're the bit that matters' (Lennon, 2019:5).



Figure 5-1 *Us Against Whatever*, 2019, Photo Sam Taylor, Permission Middle Child Theatre

5.4.1 Act One : This will never not have happened

In the first act of *Us Against Whatever*, two key events took place: Dean Windass' last-minute goal of 2008 which propelled Hull City Football Club into the Premier League, and the death of the father of the play's protagonist, Steph. The former, staged to the lyrics: 'Dean Windass lifts you from the gutter to the stars' was accompanied by an anthemic musical refrain, often repeated throughout the show as a melodic reminder of good times past. It was presented as an occasion that brought harmony, and the hope to believe that anything is possible. A narrative which foreshadows later promises of transformation for the city, like the expectations of renewal from City of Culture and Brexit. The latter was presented as a consequence of the reality of everyday life in a 'crap town', experiencing long-term decline. With Steph's dad's illness caused by poor diet, lack of exercise and stress after he is laid off from work. Thus, Steph might be understood allegorically as the embodiment of Hull (or at least Middle Child's depiction of it), and that in the play, her words and actions reflect those of an authentic or true version of the city. Steph's story is Hull's story, and vice-versa. Act One was therefore a representation of unity through good times and bad, and characterised Hull as a proud city of togetherness. It was perhaps, a deliberately romanticised and somewhat heroic vision of a 'somewhere' community. As my respondents attest (and as Act Two was to portray), triumph and togetherness can be enacted parochially, operating as highly selective and uncritical and can result in intolerant and exclusionary behaviours. These themes will be discussed in more detail below.

5.4.2 Act Two: Change is gonna come

Act Two was set in the months leading up to the June 2016 Referendum. It traced the parallel paths of Steph as she struggles to make ends meet, her best friend Tara who has completed a university degree about to move to Leeds, and Anna, a Polish immigrant. In a scene that a number of my non-British participants found upsetting for its accurate depiction of their real-life experiences, Anna was told at a job centre interview, that despite her impressive qualifications, 'people like her' can only achieve menial jobs in the UK, that she should banish all career aspirations and sign up to be a cleaner. The extended climax of the play took place in the early hours of June 24th 2016, heralded by the bongs of Big Ben and the first ITN News report declaring that the Leave vote had won. A shocked Tara questions how anyone could have voted Leave and mocks those who put their faith in Nigel Farage. She is surprised to learn that Steph voted Leave, which precipitates a heated exchange, in which Steph exclaims that:

I don't give a shit about Europe. Or Westminster or any of them. I don't trust any of them. Any of it. If you asked me did I wanna leave the House of Commons Tara I probably would have voted yes, I'd get rid of all of them cos I don't think they give a shit about us [...] at least they're [Vote Leave] pretending, right, noticed we exist [...] So yeah, lets get rid of it. Alright. Lets burn it all down and maybe this time when we've got control we can build something where we matter alright (Lennon, 2019:51).

Personifying 'real-life' Brexit divides, Steph's revelation remaps her for Tara according new tribal co-ordinates, forcing an unreconcilable cleavage between them. In a separate confrontation, a drunk bigot emboldened by the result and offended by Anna's Polishness, spits on her and tells her to 'go home'. The play ends soon after, with a short epilogue in which the MC acknowledges that although resolution seems impossible, it might be found not in 'our difference or our past, but the future that we build together' (Lennon, 2019:59). Breaking the fourth wall, she, and the rest of the cast, appeal directly to the city of Hull to 'build a story that isn't obscured by fear or loss' (Lennon, 2019:59).

In its attempt to give voice unjudgmentally to the people of a Brexit city who support a decision mired in controversy and far from complete, *Us Against Whatever* leaves itself open to the criticisms of those who want answers. Though the MC pleads for hope, the prevailing mood is that the possibility of reconciliation is unlikely. At the end of the performances I attended, many people stood and cheered in support and appreciation of the performers' efforts if not necessarily for the Leave vote itself – and I did observe several not joining in this display of collective praise. Indeed, at one performance a man firmly sat on his hands in protest.

5.5 Cultural politics of Brexit shame

My discussions with participants about the play took place through the Summer of 2019 - another turbulent period in the Brexit developments which culminated with the Letwin Amendment (see footnote 47). My data shows a hard-lining of Brexit identities, yet also a cynicism and sense of hopelessness in political processes, similar to those expressed by the character of Steph and in the play's epilogue. In this penultimate section, I work through these issues - which we might understand as the cultural politics of Brexit shame – and how it plays out within Hull's political culture.

5.5.1 Shame for the other and the self

The relationship between individual and collective responsibility for emotion was a constant negotiation in the interviews and focus groups, with many respondents describing feeling 'shame' or 'embarrassment' for the actions of others. Most particularly of those in power. I illustrate this with an extract from a discussion following *Us Against Whatever*, at which Angela, a Leave voter, described her feelings as follows:

Right now I'm just feeling so embarrassed with the way this whole situation's gone. And this government. It's embarrassing me. I'm quite afraid actually. It's not a particular party. It's the whole government administration and I think it's appalling. I would still be inclined to vote Leave [...] In my opinion there should have been a working party or a committee of all people, cross party or whatever you want to call it, to look at the best way out of it. And I just think it's been handled really badly. I'm just ashamed and embarrassed by the politicians and the way they've acted. In all parties [...] I was always politically active. I've always been a member of the Labour Party. I was a member for 35 years. I've always been in a trade union. But now, I can't say I'm affiliated to either party – or any of the three parties. Just, mixed up when it comes to who I think is best to be in charge (Focus Group, 2019).

While telling me this, Angela spoke quietly and thoughtfully. It was a moment of down-beat and somewhat deflated reflection, perhaps even of grief. That her desire for action as expressed at the ballot box had been thwarted by those in power – especially the party she had been a member of for 35 years. It is clear from her response that she retains commitment to her Leave views, and that her feelings stem from the process, rather than her political belief. I asked her if she might vote for the Brexit Party at the 2019 General election, and her answer was that she did not know, adding 'I don't know enough about it at the moment' (Interview, 2019). Similarly, Linda, a Remain voter, told me that she is also 'embarrassed that the system as it works so far, isn't effective at governing for crises, be it Brexit, climate change, or flooding. They're just not capable' (Interview, 2019).

At the same time, whilst I had many survey responses from Leave voters (though only approximately one third of the total amount), and spoke to many informally, very few were willing or able to speak to me in the more extended setting of a recorded, semi-structured interview or focus group. Given that Hull voted Leave by such a considerable margin, the

reluctance from Leave voters to engage with my research was surprising. Qualitative researchers have long-reflected on issues of power in research engagements (e.g. Manderson *et al.*, 2006; Mellor *et al.*, 2014) and it is possible that some Leave voters from lower socio-economic groups may have felt uncomfortable engaging with research in an academic setting for reasons of social and educational capital. Whilst this might explain a reluctance from some Leave voters in Hull, it does not offer a full picture. When this trend became apparent, I began to ask the Leave voters who *did* meet with me for longer conversations, why that reluctance might be. Their responses suggested a fear of being shamed, and as I explore below, they recounted painful personal experiences with family and friends, negative media representations of Leave voters and vitriolic social media comments from Remain sympathisers.

Whilst most participants, whatever their vote, describe stories of the emotional labour involved in maintaining friendships across the Brexit 'divide', such as 'biting a lip' when a work colleague mentioned that they voted in the opposite way to them, or avoiding the topic of Brexit in conversations until they knew for certain they were not 'in the enemy camp', it is only from Leave voters that I heard stories of direct abuse as a response to their political choice.⁵² For instance, Angela recounted:

I remember 23rd of June 2016 because I had just booked a holiday on a canal boat for me and my husband, and my son and his wife. And my son couldn't speak to me for the four days that we were on the canal boat. Because I'd voted to leave. He didn't speak to me other than 'throw the rope', so that I could tie the boat up. It was awful. His idea was that people over a certain age shouldn't have been allowed to vote because it's the younger generation's future and that the older generation were voting to leave for the wrong reasons. And also, it was having my husband talk to me like I was an idiot because I'd voted to leave. And it was very difficult in the family. And no matter how I voiced my opinions I was always disrespected. But again, when I was talking at work a couple of weeks ago, I mentioned I was coming to this focus group... My supervisor said [*in a taunting voice*]: 'Oh Angela's a Leaver', and most of the people I work with are Remainers. But people haven't been nasty with me at work. It was only with one or two friends and with the family that I found it annoying that they didn't think I was

⁵² This is not to negate the abuse directed at immigrant groups as I discuss elsewhere in this chapter. Nor to claim that Remain voters have received no abuse at all (the murder of Jo Cox MP being an obvious example). My point here is to distinguish, as far as my respondents are concerned, between the two political tribes of Remain and Leave – and that my Remain voting respondents did not report experiences of personally directed abuse in the same way as Leaver voters.

intelligent enough to make my own mind up [...] My son was very rude to me and my opinions (Focus Group, 2019).

Thus, due to such experiences, the Leave voters who did attend face to face meetings with me, were not surprised that I had struggled to reach more of them and the phrase ‘coming out’ emerged in later interviews as a way to describe the experience of openly revealing their Leave identities. Again – it is surprising that in a city that voted Leave by such a large margin, one would feel the need to ‘come out’ as a ‘Leaver’.

A shortened version of ‘coming out of the closet’, ‘coming out’, is a metaphor commonly understood to describe LGBTQI+ people's self-disclosure of their sexual orientation or of their gender identity - and it is in queer theory that much work on shame and pride has taken place (see Chapter 2). As Munt (2000:533) explains:

Lesbian and gay identity structure is characterized by the binary opposition of pride/shame. Pride is dependent on shame; pride is predicated on the – sometimes conscious – denial of its own ostracized corollary, shame. Cognisant of our outlaw status we have imposed a heterodoxical sense of pride as a strategic deployment [...] but its counterpoint of shame is no less (or more) real.

Crucial to Munt’s understanding is the inclusion of ‘outlaw status’ which maps intriguingly onto a Leave voter’s ‘coming out’ in that the Leave vote was often framed through the referendum campaigns as unorthodox, powerless or as an ‘underdog’ in terms of Britain’s status relative to a fictional European super-state, and the narrative of imperial power dominating the Brexit discourse (Fisher, 2016; Dorling and Tomlinson, 2019; O’Toole, 2019). Indeed, O’Toole (2019) elucidates the paradox of ‘heroic failure’ and the importance of self-pity for the more ardent ‘Brexiters’. Also important in this respect, was the successful way the Leave campaign caricatured Remain advocates as elitist tyrants who, especially after the result, wished to subvert democracy and ‘the will of the people’ (e.g. Tombs, 2018; Stuart, 2019). Yet, given the emphatic Leave majority in Hull, an arguably anti-EU national media over decades (see Gavin, 2018), and, via the 2019 General Election, a landslide government with a pro-Brexit agenda, it is curious as to why such a sense of closeted shame prevails amongst Leave voters in the city – which I examine in more detail below.

5.5.2 Shame and populism

Salmela and von Scheve (2017) have shown that shame is a crucial, though neglected factor in left and right wing populism, and O’Toole (2019) argues that turning shame into pride without

actually removing the underlying *causes* of shame, such as poverty, unemployment and low educational attainment is a key populist strategy. Thus, it is perhaps via this populist dynamic of Brexit that we might come to understand Hull's feelings more deeply.

For Salmela and von Scheve, emotions and feelings play an important role in 'perceptions and judgments of belonging to a group that is "winning" or "losing" in processes of modernisation and globalisation' (2017:571). In their analysis of support for right-wing populist parties they refer to Betz's theory of resentment or ressentiment (1994; 2005), which suggests that electoral support for populist parties:

Mainly comes from those who are left behind and experience (a) fear and insecurity about their identity, work, and entire life; (b) alienation and displacement at the loss of social bonds; or (c) disappointment and distrust in politics and the workings of democracy (Salmela and von Scheve, 2017:571).

As I am demonstrating, emotions and feelings figure centrally in the rhetoric of Brexit, which, though a 'Left Brexit' or 'Lexit' argument does exist, it has been articulated relatively weakly and in the broader public discourse, the Leave campaigns were primarily right-wing populist in their framing of issues such as immigration, national culture and in their arousal of emotions such as fear, anxiety, anger and powerlessness. As Laclau (2005) states, the appeal to these very emotions is built in to the operations of right-wing populism and, for Salmela and von Scheve, are the result of a repressed shame which mutates into anger and resentment.

If Angela was unsure of how she might vote, I spoke with other Leave voters, many of whom were also 'lifelong Labour supporters' and certain they would vote for either the Brexit Party, the Conservatives or would abstain. Rob, quoted earlier, was to vote UKIP, and Jackie said that she:

Will probably go for the Brexit Party. Because I definitely don't want Jeremy Corbyn as leader [...] I've always been a Labour person because they always seemed quite good. I mean, being from a farming background...Labour used to be for the working man. They seem to have lost that a bit (Jackie, Interview, 2019).

Jackie told me that, living on Marfleet, and being a full time carer for her daughter, food poverty and reforming the Universal Credit system were her major concerns. When I asked her what she knew of the Brexit Party's positions on those issues and what they might do if elected

to power, she smiled cheekily before confidently responding: 'I don't. I've not really looked into it. Mine was a protest vote more than anything' (Interview, 2019). Here, I think Jackie epitomises what Anderson (2019:14) has termed 'negative hope', in that through Brexit, 'a better future [...] might or might not materialise but [...] would hopefully end something bad or rupture the otherwise smooth workings of external forces' that, in Jackie's words have 'screwed up a lot of people' (Interview, 2019). For many Leave voters I spoke with, Brexit became an opportunity for change when their faith in the institutions of democracy was lost, and (to paraphrase Anderson, 2019:14), there were few other sources of hope that they felt they could believe in. Thus, by way of Betz and Laclau, I understand both Jackie and Angela's resentments as a repressed shame that potentially opens them to the appeals of the populist right.

5.5.3 Belonging: 'You're alright cos I know ya'

As Chapter 4 introduced, some participants who were not born in Hull describe various experiences of being 'othered' in the city. They recount incidents of direct abuse, or less obvious everyday discriminations that have resulted in their devising new versions of themselves in order to 'fit in'. Post-referendum, these experiences became more acute, reflecting an element of truth in the staged assault on Anna in *Us Against Whatever*. For example:

Everyone was apologising to me the next day [after the referendum]. But I was not surprised by Hull to vote Leave at all. Facebook took a massive part of the political campaign. I was only disappointed by my neighbour. She said: 'I'm not gonna vote cos I don't know anything'. And we had these big discussions. Then on Facebook she put 'I voted OUT'. So I replied and made a joke: 'Shall I pack my bags then?' And she took it seriously, she said: 'It's not about you Monica, it's about the foreigners, blocking up our NHS. My children are not safe with all these immigrants.' So I got angry and I said: 'So do not send your children to my house cos my house is "dangerous"'. And it took her three weeks to apologise. I said: 'Listen, democracy gives you a right to vote. And it's anonymous for a reason. If you haven't got the guts to stand by your argument, then don't open your mouth at all cos I'm ready for a debate.' I got really upset cos it was just nonsense what she said (Monica, Interview, 2019).

Hilde: I do see the UK in general and Hull specifically, very cut off from European dialogue. I see the situation of the referendum as a barrier for the future for me. Especially in Hull, where its barriers are quite rooted and strong [...] My relationship with Hull becomes like this constant wave going forward and back. I don't know if I can still make a life here in terms of how easy the regulations are gonna be. How difficult life's gonna be. Specifically in Hull how things are gonna be as an EU citizen. Because hate crime is happening. And you hear shit sometimes. When you're in quite a particular location and you have an accent that doesn't sound British, or not even Hull-British. So my situation is a bit on the edge. I feel it is cutting off the island from the continent. And I feel caught in that situation a little bit. I wish I wouldn't be (Interview, 2019).

Here, as explained by Monica, we see that her neighbour will say one thing to her face and another on social media. Monica is able to point out the illogical nature of her neighbour's reasoning, her neighbour's lack of knowledge and the hurtful impact of the political messaging her neighbour has uncritically accepted. It would seem that her neighbour, despite admitting that she did not 'know anything', was still prepared to vote in a way that would significantly disrupt Monica's life. As Hilde points out, such instances of xenophobia create barriers resulting in immigrants like her feeling unwelcome. In Hull, this is particularly rooted in the accent, where aural signifiers of 'Hullness' often override all other in-group characteristics, leaving little, if any room for hybrid identities. This last point is poignantly reinforced by Martina, a Dutch respondent, married to a British national, who described, through tears, the crushing emotional impact of experiences which resulted in her feeling like a 'second-class citizen':

At the moment it feels quite difficult. I'm split in two. That's how I'm feeling [...] I'm exhausted by the uncertainty. It's so tiring. It's never off my mind. It's really wearing me out and grinding me down (Martina, Interview, 2019).

Whilst neither Martina, Monica nor Hilde were born in Britain, all three are caucasian and therefore, the sound of their accents becomes a crucial 'out-group' signifier of which they were all aware. On the other hand, my next respondent, Karen, is of mixed-race heritage, and though she has a distinct local accent (having been born and raised in Hull), explained to me that because of her darker skin, she often feels very 'visible' in the city (Interview, 2019). Karen works in community development on some of Hull's poorest estates and told me that she has

experienced many instances of exclusion and racism, which, as for Martine, Monica and Hilde, the EU Referendum had brought to the fore. Karen's testimony on this subject is worth stating here in full for her ability to capture the tensions in her sense of belonging:

I think that Hull is a friendly, welcoming place. When you think of other places you don't always get a warm welcome. And I think some people portray the marginalised areas negatively. If you came to some of those areas and you're 'different' you might not get the same response. It's like: 'You're alright cos I know ya'. But since Brexit, and when poverty is creeping in, and unemployment. When we were bidding for City of Culture, people were saying: 'We don't want no more migrants here'. We are a welcoming city but there are things lingering, and you do hear them in the deprived areas. You don't see anything really culturally diverse in those areas. It's changing slowly. Yes, we are more culturally diverse in Hull now, which *is* a good thing. But that doesn't mean to say that things are OK. That because we're more culturally diverse that everything's great and it's all nicey nice. That just tells me that it's all quite challenging. And in a city that has high levels of unemployment, that's challenging again. I was a minority. Growing up on [my estate] there was about two families who were from an ethnic minority background. They're encouraging ethnic minority people to go into politics, but it's at a time when there are a lot of challenges relating to people from ethnic minorities and how they are seen. In the area where I live, a lot of people know me, so they might vote for me cos they know who I am. But if it was in an area that doesn't know me, if it was an area that turned out to vote Brexit, why are they gonna vote for me? It shouldn't be like that. It shouldn't be that it was all about race or migrants but you can guarantee that they wouldn't vote for me (Interview, 2019).

For Karen, community in Hull is at one turn 'warm' and 'welcoming' and at the other, insecure and irrationally fearful. To be fully accepted, one has to be completely 'known' by the insider group. Karen is accepted, perhaps despite the colour of her skin, because she is 'known' on other terms, whatever they may be. However, the more precarious the economic situation of the in-group, the more they need to know before an outsider can be admitted. Further, whilst diversity in the city as a whole may be increasing, which for some is a positive sign of Hull's development in a globalising system (see Council Leader Steven Brady's comments in Chapter 4), Karen recognises that this is not necessarily welcomed by residents in areas that have not benefitted from that system. Thus, Karen's experience and insights speak to Salmela and von Scheve's (2017) theory stated earlier, and through her words we see that in some Hull

communities, individual-level emotional dynamics – namely repressed shame, mediate between macro-level social and cultural transformations such as globalisation and modernisation.

5.5.4 Anti-politics and local media

Perhaps unsurprisingly, it was a challenge to record extended conversations with those who chose not to vote or those who were entirely uninterested in politics. Though I did speak to a small number who told me that they deliberately abstained in the EU Referendum (rather than being ineligible) due to feeling ‘apathetic’ and ‘fed up’ of the constant atmosphere of anger. Such as Richard, who told me that :

Up to, and after the referendum it’s been years of shit. You know: financial crisis, continuing political crises. Stuff like that. Then you kind of get to a point where you go: ‘It can’t get much worse’. Well, it’s got *more* chaotic. I just don’t have...I mean even...I just don’t have...I’ve become apathetic to everything. Completely. And I think if there was another referendum. It would pain me to have to vote, because I just think it’s been...shit (Focus Group, 2019).

As this thesis shows, ‘shit’ is a word often associated with Hull, and for Richard, extends to his experience of politics, which has been so angry and chaotic to the point of him withdrawing from the process altogether. Indeed, as the extract of his testimony above demonstrates, his feelings are beyond language. An otherwise articulate young man, when talking about Brexit, Richard cannot find the words to describe the level of his feeling: ‘I just don’t have...’ (the words).

Additionally, during my fieldwork in the Marfleet ward (see Chapter 4), I observed bitter anger from Leave voters who thought their vote was being ignored by those in power. I commonly heard key Leave campaign phrases such as ‘Leave means Leave’ and ‘Will of the People’ as well as complaints about ‘bloody immigrants’. However, what I focus on in this section, is the significant number of people who said that they were uninterested in Brexit, including some who said that they did not know what it was. At first, I found it surprising that such a high-profile political event would not register in the community – and that when I began conversations with ‘What do you think about Brexit?’ I received responses such as: ‘Is that that Theresa May thing?’ and ‘is it to do with Universal Credit?’ Further, some respondents did not know who Theresa May was, which suggests evidence of very low political knowledge.

Several respondents in Marfleet associated Brexit with Universal Credit, fearing that a ‘bad Brexit’ might negatively affect benefit payments. I have found no source for this fear. Especially as (for UK Citizens at least) there is no linkage of Brexit with the UK welfare system and therefore no change to benefits. When I probed further, I found that ‘bad Brexit’ was understood in different ways: i) That Brexit itself is bad and should not happen (ie. the UK should remain in the EU); ii) ‘Bad’ Brexit is the opposite of a ‘clean break’ Brexit (ie. leaving with as few ties to the EU as possible) which at the time of my field work was how Leave advocates promoted their position (e.g. The Brexit Party, 2019). Either way, these discussions revealed a real fear and confusion from some in this community, that political processes would have significant economic impacts on their already precarious incomes. It therefore nuances understandings of some of the more vociferous anti-Remain views I heard there. For, from their position (despite being incorrect), a ‘bad Brexit’ might reduce benefit payments and lead to further economic hardship.

Such feelings perhaps, have contributed to Hull’s dwindling General and Local Election turnouts (see Chapter 4). My experiences in Marfleet therefore add to the growing evidence of an increasing abandonment of established democratic processes by many of Hull’s electorate. An often-overlooked dynamic of the Brexit vote in the city, is that at just under 63%, Hull’s turnout was one of the lowest in the country. Figure 5-2 gives a visual representation of the Brexit vote in Hull, incorporating the ‘did not vote’ group – showing that almost as many in the city did not vote as voted to Leave. It is perhaps, what some observers have argued is the outcome of several decades of ‘anti-politics’ (Mulgan, 1994; Clarke, 2015; Schedler, 2016; 2017; Glaser, 2018).

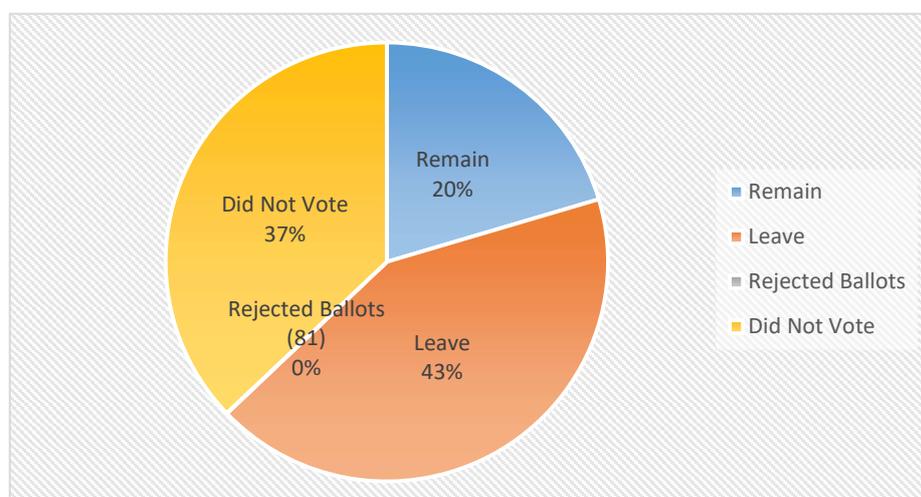


Figure 5-2 Breakdown of Hull’s Brexit vote, source Electoral Commission.

'Anti-politics' names a collection of political sentiments – such as hostility or negativity to politics – and a set of political actions:

That seek to abolish the political domain by replacing collective problems with self-regulating orders (e.g. the market), plurality with uniformity (e.g. 'the people' of populism), or contingency with necessity (e.g. 'there is no alternative' or 'TINA'); and activities that seek to replace the communicative rationality of the political domain with another rationality e.g. science and technology or moral absolutism (Clarke, 2015:190).

In her challenge to anti-politics, Eliane Glaser argues that we need to 'remember what politics is, to realise what we've lost' (2018:8). For Glaser, right-wing populists have stoked a pervasive antipathy to politics, leading to a 'parlous state of politics in its organised form', which is 'detrimental to us humans in our individual and collective lives' (2018:7). Heaney (2019), argues that this ideological void creates the conditions of possibility for emotion to become the driving force of politics - a shift which means that political competence becomes tied to the ability to manage emotions and that the expression (rather than repression) of emotion, becomes a source of political capital.

Aftab (2018) makes interesting observations about the role of local media throughout the Referendum campaigns, such as a general trend for promoting Britain's history of isolation in Europe and a general focussing on narratives of immigration and sovereignty. However, there has been no research which details the role of local media throughout Brexit by region or locality. Such work would make an important contribution to the literature and our understandings of the role of local media in local political cultures. This is of particular relevance in Hull, where the local daily newspaper, the *Hull Daily Mail (HDM)* has been dubbed the 'Hull Daily Heil' by some, for its repeatedly printing the views of far-right campaigners and for its online content (Hull Live) which has been criticised for framing stories in order to outrage and 'gaslight'. Such as a story in 2020 about a local policeman that minimised complaints of racism made against him (Standley, 2020), in order to encourage clicks and comments on the *HDM* website and social media pages.⁵³ In March 2020, the newspaper was forced to issue an apology after it published an article written by a reader calling themselves Will Wright, which accused people with ancestry from the Indian sub-continent and the

⁵³ For details of the complaints see the 10th December, 2020 Twitter feed of @nohateintheHDM [Accessed 6 Jan 2021].

Caribbean of having 'divided loyalty'. It also criticised 'militant gay groups', 'political Islamists' and 'anti-British ideologies' (for more details, see Sharman, 2020).

Such action by the *HDM*, is a right-wing populist subversion of Hall et al.'s (1978) theory of 'primary definition' which I suggest worryingly reinforces Hull's growing antipolitical culture. Hall et al. suggested that a key way in which the media engage in ideological discourse favourable to the dominant forces in society is by privileging the voices of politicians, employers, the police and so-called experts who become 'primary definers' of events, and whose 'primary definition sets the limit for all subsequent discussion by framing what the problem is' (1978: 59). In Hall's version, the media reproduces societal hierarchy as a structure of access 'systematically skewed in relation to certain social categories' (Hall, 1986: 9). News media in particular, can privilege 'the interpretations of the powerful' not because of any conspiracy but because 'the hierarchy of credibility perceived by journalists reflected the structures of power in society' (Manning, 2001:138). As Harcup (2003) summarises, despite the very different styles adopted by different media outlets, remarkably similar 'public images' are often produced, which together act to foreclose discussion before it can go beyond the boundaries of the dominant ideological field (Hall et al., 1978: 118). This results in 'a powerful and compelling form of rhetorical closure', involving the reproduction of 'public images' – clusters of impressions, themes and pseudoexplanations – in place of an analysis of underlying structural forces in society (ibid).

Other than *The Yorkshire Post*, the *HDM* is the only locally produced news outlet with significant readership. It is therefore important to recognise how its recent output has contributed to the production of a 'public image' similar to that of the populist right wing national tabloids such as *The Sun*, *The Express* and *The Daily Mail*. Beyond outright fascistic views such as Will Wright's, Owen Jones argues that there is a broader right-wing strategy of victimhood that 'does not need to be based in reality to be successful' as 'rightwing politicians have long understood better than their leftwing counterparts that politics is more about sentiments than facts' (Jones, 2020). Indeed, after the backlash to the Black Lives Matter protests in the Summer of 2020 and the emergence of an 'All Lives Matter' counternarrative, the tribal nature of this debate has been exacerbated. Often dominated by media voices from the political right, who also featured prominently in the Leave campaigns (e.g. Murray, 2020; 2020c). Jones suggests that as part of the contemporary culture-war, it is 'better to be seen as the victim than the aggressor' and that despite their obvious position of power in politics,

business, think-tanks and the media, rightwingers have begun to portray themselves as ‘the defiled victims of a dangerous rabble’ which has become ‘an effective silencer, forcing their opponents on to the backfoot, and to debate on their terms’ (ibid). If true, this strategy would underpin O’Toole’s (2019) argument that the Leave campaign orchestrated images and narratives of a victimised Britain which must free itself from alleged EU tyranny.

Whilst Jones’ hypothesis is convincing, there is as yet, little empirical evidence to back up the claims, and I can imagine some of my Leave voting respondents who identify as former life-long Labour voters, taking issue with being branded right-wing. Brexit may have begun as the obsession of a small minority, primarily on the radical right, yet it has transformed British politics for the foreseeable future, and, as Müller (2017) argues, we must not allow analyses to be reduced to some kind of ‘inarticulate political expression on the part of the supposed “losers in the process of modernisation”’ (p. 17). Thus, more research is needed to understand this element of contemporary UK political culture more fully, though I propose that the continuing narrative of Leave voters as powerless underdogs will appeal to many in Hull, where the over-riding mythology is of the city as isolated, left-behind and overlooked; and that as a result of this, shame (though unacknowledged) remains firmly embedded in the civic imaginaries of many.

5.6 Summary

Politics in Western democracies is described as becoming increasingly emotional (Heaney, 2019), and in this chapter I have aimed to nuance understandings of how recent political culture in Hull has informed and is informed by, two key emotions of place: pride and shame. To help bring this chapter to a conclusion I draw on Anish Kapoor’s image *A Brexit a Broxit: We All Fall Down*, which depicts Britain brutally and deeply cleft down the middle (see figure 5.3). The earthy-fleshy, open wound is painful to look at, yet invites the same gory desire that compels us to stare at road traffic accidents and other scenes of human tragedy. When the image was published in *The Guardian* in 2019, the brief accompanying article focussed on the bloodiness of the damage and the impossibility of it ever healing (Jones, 2019). Brexit thus becomes a national crime scene or political thriller - a dramatic spectacle to be consumed ‘real-time’ in today’s era of 24-hour news and I have evidenced through this chapter some of the individual and collective impacts on the Hull civic imaginary. Ultimately, I argue that

populist operators have capitalised on these emotional vulnerabilities, most particularly a repressed civic shame, to stoke racism and other forms of division.



Figure 5-3 *A Brexit, A Broxit*, 2019, Anish Kapoor (from Jones, 2019)

For Ahmed, ‘emotions are the very “flesh” of time’, that ‘through emotions, the past persists on the surface of bodies’ [and] emotions open up futures, in the ways they involve different orientations to others’ (2004b:202). She depicts shame as a wound to the body’s surface and argues that in the national context (her example being Australia), shame is recognition of ‘injustices committed against others’ and thus potentially, a form of nation building (2004b:102). Crucially for the present political moment, Scheff warns of the denial of shame, stating that most societies can be seen as ‘conspiracies to deny all shame’, and that this lack of acknowledgement is the ‘decisive source of interminable conflict’ (1994:290, 288). However, ‘if shame is acknowledged it turns out to be an ordinary emotion, painful but bearable’ (Scheff,

1994:288). For Tomkins, shame 'must itself be hidden as an ugly scar is hidden, lest it offended the one who looks' (1995:172). Thus, there is something potentially recuperative in shame. As my respondent Rosie suggests:

Maybe it's got so bad that it's like a boil that's got to burst. And then we get rid of the pus. And then you can see where and what you feel in a few years (Rosie, Focus Group, 2019).

However painful, the lived realities of civic shame, and the feelings of discontent that led to the Leave vote in places like Hull cannot be ignored. Hull residents, despite having been significant beneficiaries of EU funding and the more recent business investments that come from the close political and economic relationship with the EU, voted Leave in part against the perceived irrelevance of European institutions seen as distant, unconnected and unaccountable, yet with a pervasive influence. Westminster too, is criticised for being too big, too unconnected from 'real' people, and too much of a closed shop of political classes living and making policy in the London 'bubble'. For many in Hull, and as the Middle Child play expressed, London is as distant and seemingly irrelevant to day-to-day life as Brussels.

Further, the December 2019 General election was lost by opposition parties stood accused of blocking the 'will of the people' who just want Brexit 'done' in order to resume 'life as normal'. The winning Conservative Party had been in government for nine years prior, and had implemented well-publicised policies of austerity that included cuts to the NHS, education, policing, local government, the introduction of the hugely controversial Universal Credit (with its increased claimant sanctions, benefit cuts and delays), all of which led to the *British Medical Journal* accusing them of the 'economic murder' of 120,000 people (Watkins *et al.*, 2017). It is perhaps remarkable, that they succeeded in convincing the electorate that a vote for them was a vote for 'change'. I suggest that Jones (2020) is correct, and that through Brexit (and subsequent, manufactured 'culture wars'), the Conservative Government is engaged in a strategy of emotional governance which plays to feelings of victimhood.

Through the framework of the civic imaginary, I have investigated some of these feelings as they relate to Hull and Hullensians. To understand such political behaviours further, it is vital to look in more detail at the role of emotional governance and how it connects with local issues, identities, and feelings. As I shall discuss further in the next chapter, 'change' in Hull became subsumed into the agendas of its UK City of Culture year and understood emotionally

as a transformation from shame to pride. I suggest that Brexit and other populist movements operate in a parallel way. The emotional attachments to Leave and Remain positions are similar to the partisan identities in the USA and I have shown how in Hull, this affects political identities, how people differentiate themselves from alternative groups, and perhaps most importantly, how it contributes to political decision-making processes and emerging political, and anti-political cultures.

Yet, with the ongoing Coronavirus emergencies, and emotional fatigue due to the political turbulence since 2016, prior to a final deal being negotiated, polls showed that a majority of people thought Brexit was a bad idea (Kuper, 2020). Further, many, including Richard Corbett, point to the difficulties faced by the Johnson government in delivering all that they promised Brexit would:

Their message certainly was simple and that's possibly beginning to rebound on them. It was a very clever campaign during the referendum. It was saying to people: 'This will be easy. No problem'. In fact it's proven to be rather difficult with all kinds of problems they kept quiet about. They said it would save lots of money that would all go to the NHS. In fact it is costing a fortune. They said that wonderful new trade deals would be ready on day one with countries across the rest of the planet. That is far from being the case. It is the *opposite* that's the case. So, in fact it's Leave voters who are entitled to say: 'Wait a minute - this isn't what I was told. This isn't what I was promised. This is not what I voted for.' That could be their downfall (Corbett, Interview, 2020).

Perhaps, we can 'move on' from Brexit in a cohesive and progressive way, through a reframing of the debate from a politics of identity and its resulting affective polarisation, to a politics of ideas (Lilla, 2017). An important stage of that process will be to attend to the impacts of collective emotional shifts such as those as witnessed in Hull in recent years.

Chapter 6 Was that Hull? UK City of Culture and the Hull civic imaginary

6.1 Introduction: Pride in Hull

A prime objective of Hull2017 organisers was ‘to improve perceptions of Hull as a place to live, work, study and visit’ (CPPI, 2018:9). Among key findings of the University of Hull’s Main Evaluation Report (CPPI, 2019:26-27), the following outputs are noted:

- In 2018, 71% of residents agreed they were proud to live in Hull. A drop of 4% from 2017, but an increase of 1% from 2016
- Hull2017 compares favourably with ECoCs in generating levels of pride amongst residents
- 46% of the UK suggest that 2017 has changed their perceptions of Hull, and 3 in 4 visitors to the city said 2017 changed their perception of the city for the better
- Eight in ten audience members say 2017 provided them with a different experience of the city
- 70% of audiences said 2017 made them think about Hull’s contributions to the world

Such data would suggest clear evidence that residents’ perceptions and positive feelings about Hull were temporarily enhanced compared with their perceptions before the city secured the UKCoC title in 2013. The Preliminary Evaluation Report acknowledges that wider developments which occurred in the city over the UKCoC period could have contributed to these shifts, including major investments by firms such as Siemens Gamesa, Smith & Nephew and Reckitt Benckiser, all of which ‘contributed to raised confidence in the city’ (CPPI, 2018:118).

Additionally, public realm redevelopments in preparation for 2017, played an important role in increasing residents’ pride, and these latter elements are contributory factors, ‘part of a “perfect storm”’, with the major change in attitudes and perception considered to be primarily attributable to the impact of UK City of Culture (CPPI, 2018:118).

Wood (2006), argues that notions of positive perception and civic pride can be problematic endeavours in evaluation exercises, particularly as the concepts are acutely subjective and lack definition. Indeed, there is no clarification provided of either term in the report, and only limited detail as to what these concepts might mean to respondents. I suggest that a more

nuanced approach is needed in the evaluating of pride and place perception that involves greater critical exploration of the mechanics of civic pride, its role as a tool of emotional governance and how it works through an event such as UKCoC. How is pride generated, why, and can it be sustained?

Taking a panoramic view, this chapter addresses my first two key questions: 1) How, if at all, does UKCoC inform the civic imaginaries of Hull; 2) How do civic pride and civic shame interact in these processes? It works in collaboration with the following chapter, which will 'zoom in' to investigate how the issues introduced here operated at an individual event level through the analysis of three UKCoC public art works. I outline how Hull2017 'imagined' the city, and through the voices of my participants, consider what impacts these imaginings have on the civic imaginaries of Hull. Given the timeframe of my research, I also include discourses, concerns, and cultural artefacts from the immediate legacy period of early 2018 to early 2020. Underpinning all of this, is an awareness of civic pride being more frequently and more explicitly written into local government policies (Collins, 2017), and a trend of emotional governance initiatives such as the 'well-being index' of the UK Office for National Statistics and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's (OECD) key priority of 'Measuring Well-being and Progress'. Fortier (2010:22) suggests that such modes of governing can be understood as 'affect becom[ing] a mode of categorizing, classifying and coding' populations. As mentioned in Chapter 1, Boris Johnson's post-Brexit government have announced multiple 'levelling up' policies in which pride is positioned as a barometer of economic success. Section 1.3 of 'The Levelling Up Prospectus' (March 2021) states that 'Prosperity can be measured in many ways. However, for many people, the most powerful barometer of economic success is the positive change they see and the pride they feel in the places they call home'. Thus, there appears to be increasing political value in the emotion. Yet, pride can be manipulated to engender feelings of belonging that may render critical questioning problematic (Wood, 2002), and I am interested in *why* cultural producers, particularly those closely involved with representing place and especially the *lived* place, seem intent on generating and mobilising pride in their audiences. Why do city leaders and project evaluators advance the measuring of pride and claim that increases of it are evidence of success? Ultimately, what is to be *done* with all this pride?

6.1.1 Placemaking and imagined geographies

Tompkins (2012:189), describes the ‘imagined city’ as a ‘version of the city rather than an “un-real” or fictitious city’. She cites Blum’s (2003:20) allusion to the significance of the ‘imagined city’ and that ‘the city – truly an imaginative object – shapes and is shaped by the uses made of it in trying to conquer, master and in some cases, destroy its legibility and limit its powers as a central locus of collective life’. Considerations of the imagined city, then, can be brought to bear and might subsequently alter considerations of the lived place. Mindful of the power dynamics in Blum’s explication, and of the ‘entrepreneurial discourses and representations [which] focus on the need for [urban] revitalisation, reinvestment, and rejuvenation’ (Brenner and Theodore, 2002:372), it is vital to question the ‘imagined city’ and the multiple arenas in which such imaginings operate. Who is doing the imagining, why, and with what consequence? ‘Official’ voices, such as those of politicians and celebrities, often dominate, becoming more widely read or accepted than others; and some have better access to the means of communication. This reintroduces the question of power, and, important to a project concerned with the civic, differences of power.

Additionally, as Della Porta and Diani explain (2006), identity is a social process in which notions actors develop of themselves are continuously being confronted with images that other social actors (such as institutions, sympathetic or hostile groupings, public opinion and the media) produce of them. Through Hull2017, representations of differently imagined, yet locatable, ‘Hulls’ and Hullensians were presented, offering unique opportunities for audiences to engage with the culture and politics of the city, often presented under the rubric of ‘transformation’. These representations continued to circulate after 2017: as images or slogans posted on street furniture or empty retail units around the city centre, and in city promotional materials (see figures 6-1 to 6-3); or in the case of *Blade*, as an ‘ex’ Hull2017 artefact.⁵⁴ Such visual reminders are becoming less omnipresent than in the years immediately following UKCoC, and this fading from sight perhaps mirrors a dwindling enthusiasm and pride that Hull2017 once evoked. We might understand such a process through Derrida’s notion of hauntology (1994), together with Mitchell’s notion of the image as dead and alive (2010). So

⁵⁴ Although in Chapter 7, I argue that its re-siting alters its status from *Blade* to ‘a blade’ - or ‘the blade formerly known as *Blade*’ – and is a symbolic ‘haunting’ of Hull2017.

that Hull is now 'haunted' by Hull2017 with its memorial images, as both representation and presentation, simultaneously dead and alive.



Figure 6-1 Hull2017 promotional materials in an empty cafe window, 2018, Photo, Author



Figure 6-2 'Philistines' quote and *Made in Hull* image, 2018 Photo, Author



Figure 6-3 'Change is happening all right', 2018,
Photo, Author

Similarly, Lacy (1995:180) observes that effects of artworks can often

Continue beyond the exhibition or performance [...] and are magnified in the audience that experiences the work through reports, documentations, or representation. This audience includes people who read about the artwork in newspapers, watch it on television, or attend subsequent documentary exhibitions. They expand the reach of the work and [...] a part of this audience carries the artwork over time as myth and memory.

Lacy's description of the power and reach of representation is apposite for Hull2017, which facilitated experiences, images and artefacts that live on in the memories, imaginations, and feelings of Hull residents. They become revealed in the everyday when conversation turns to 'Culture' or are provoked by the revisiting of places and spaces which hosted UKCoC events. It also lives on in the continuing rhetoric of 'change', which, as I shall discuss, develops a more critical tone when applied to the year's emerging legacy. To borrow a phrase from *Us Against Whatever*, Hull2017 will never not have happened, and its resonances continue to be felt.

The main evaluation report's 'Placemaking' section concludes that the external image of Hull which emerged from 2017 in the press and other media 'shows an impressive combination of different aspects, bound by the idea of being misunderstood and the need to find a new place

in the imagined geography of the nation' (CPPI, 2019:33-34). Much of this was achieved through the city's success in linking its name with the UKCoC title, being always mentioned as the next or former UKCoC (ibid). The Hull2017 bid motto of 'a city coming out of the shadows', is recognised as a major theme in media articles, and a recurring, pride-inducing phrase often recounted by my respondents. However, expressions or slogans such as 'putting in the spotlight' and 'coming out of the shadows' are potentially more problematic than they first appear. Whilst being potent emotional cues, they have associations with the subordination, appropriation, and occlusion of working-class cultures, and, I will argue, in relation to Hull2017, prove to be empty signifiers. Yet, the significance of emotion, and especially the dichotomous pull of pride and shame in these procedures is crucial.

6.1.2 Hull2017: Key themes

Throughout 2017, Hull hosted 'over 2,800 cultural activities, installations, and exhibitions' (CPPI, 2019:11). Divided into four seasons, official marketing promised a year that would 'challenge preconceptions and show people what Hull is really made of' (Hull UK City of Culture, 2017). At the beginning of the year, the *Made in Hull* season focused on aspects of the contributions that the city has made to the world through the arts, industry, people and ideas; throughout Spring, *Roots and Routes* focused on Hull as a gateway to Europe, as a place of movement to and through, and on the celebration of migration, flux and internationalism; the Summer months explored concepts of freedom (the season was titled *Freedom*) and Hull as the birthplace of abolitionist William Wilberforce; finally, *Tell the World* claimed to look forwards 'in an attempt to redefine the city for a digital future, building a legacy from the UK City of Culture year' (CPPI, 2018). However, as I will discuss in Chapter 8, it is questionable what cultural legacy remains from 2017 and how successful the initiative was in 'telling the world'.

Despite these themes and impressive claims, there were some notable absences from the programme, such as opportunities to explore the narratives and impacts of Hull philanthropists and their shaping of the city's institutions and architecture, such as J. Arthur Rank, Thomas Ferens and the Reckitt family; the city's notable adventurers responsible for the exploration of New Zealand, Canada and the establishment of Vancouver (Robinson, 2010); John Venn and other Hull-born or based innovators of science and engineering. Crucially, as I shall discuss, questions have been raised as to how inclusive the year was, with young people 16-25 feeling the 'least engaged' (CPPI, 2018; 2019), and, other than the *Hull Gada* (a month-long installation in Princess Quay shopping centre celebrating Polish poetry) a relatively limited

platform for the city's immigrant communities – especially the Kurdish community. Therefore, in the following observations about this curation, I introduce the key themes of my analysis - which often interact or work in tension with each other.

6.1.2.1 Change and criticality

Hull2017 organisers observed that negative preconceptions about Hull existed which should be challenged and rectified through performing ('showing') an authentic version of the city ('what Hull is really made of'). By the end of the year, the city would be able to 'tell the world' of its new identity ('redefine'), and that this new identity would sustain new futures ('building a legacy'). Embedded in these statements is a transformative rhetoric common throughout Hull2017. An ambition to recast the post-war, post-industrial, 'crap town' image and 'shithole narratives' (Butler *et al.*, 2018), of a working-class city in economic decline, into something more advanced, outward facing ('tell the world') and forward thinking ('digital future'). It aligns itself within the neo-liberal culture-led urban regeneration framework outlined in Chapter 2 (e.g. Florida, 2004; Landry, 2009). Yet, as Fairclough has shown (2000; 2011), slogans such as 'Change is happening', transform 'change' from a verb into a noun, and it becomes an event rather than a process. Such nominalisation results in the backgrounding of method and foregrounding of outcome, deliberately omitting the subject and object, and removing any question of agency or acknowledgement about *who* is affected. Thus, what specifically is changing and importantly, *how*, is unclear. Analysing the language of Hull2017 is therefore an essential part of getting to grips with its transformative agenda, as I explore later in this chapter. For many of my participants, this reimagining of Hull as 'more than a shithole' (to quote one respondent), was largely deemed (or *felt*) to be a success, and I will show how this is diversely expressed. However, the feelings of renewed pride and status experienced in the immediate glow of 2017 have been problematically muddied with disappointment and frustration in the post-city of culture period, with some questioning if the positive futures that UKCoC promised, will ever be realised.

6.1.2.2 The gaze of the self and the other and Hull and the centre-periphery

Within the programme outline, Hull is both inward and outward looking. It celebrates the city's stories and people, whilst simultaneously promoting itself as a 'Gateway to Europe', in conversation with 'the world', and thus aligned with the cosmopolitan ideals of liberalism, openness and freedom of movement. Ideals perhaps restated in the intentions behind the *Freedom* season, which play to Hull's self-image as a rebellious and independent place, largely

based on its role in the English Civil War (see for example McDonagh, 2017). These inward/outward, parochial/cosmopolitan binaries play out in numerous, messy, and sometimes inconsistent ways, especially within the context of Brexit, whose arguments were also in circulation throughout the year as discussed in the previous chapter. As with the cultural politics of Brexit in Hull, they are at times bound in issues of victimhood – where Hull is a forgotten or overlooked city, reasserting itself against a neo-liberal, globalising present. This, despite a relatively significant number of Hull MPs taking high government offices in the past. These agendas are epitomised in the Hull2017 bid tag line ‘a city coming out of the shadows’ which echo the discourses of working-class colonisation and omit the ‘ugly’. Thus, Hull’s geography as a city on the edge is highlighted. A geography that is as much imagined as physical, with civic pride and shame being key motivators crucial to deepening our understandings of Hull’s sense of place.

6.2 Hull2017: An abundance of pride

The £32.8m UKCoC project brought together a curated cultural programme, including events and activities directly commissioned by The Culture Company - the delivery organisation of Hull2017, as well as those produced by existing arts and cultural bodies in Hull (CPPI, 2018:8). Highlights of the commissioned works included the inaugural *Made in Hull*, a weeklong, multi-site event which saw buildings across the city centre lit up with epic sound and video projections such as the spectacular *We Are Hull* (figure 6-4). This was immediately followed by the installation of *Blade*, an enormous, off-shore wind-turbine blade displayed in Queen Victoria Square (figure 6-5). For many, these pieces dramatically transformed internal and external perceptions of the city and are discussed in more detail in the following chapter, along with *I Wish to Communicate With You*, a large-scale community arts project, in which the Thornton Estate tower blocks were turned into beaming walls of coloured lights (figure 6-6).



Figure 6-4 *We Are Hull*, 2017, Photo, Author.



Figure 6-5 *Blade*, 2017, Photo, Author



Figure 6-6 *I Wish to Communicate With You*, 2017 Photo Paul W Reynolds

Other notable commissions included *The Height of the Reeds*, a sound walk across the Humber Bridge, evoking the history of sea travel from Hull, seafaring links with Scandinavia and the bridge as a symbol of home;⁵⁵ and *Skin*, an exhibition of works by Lucien Freud, Ron Muek and Spencer Tunick, whose *Sea of Hull*, one of the only works with a genuinely international media reach (CPPI, 2018; 2019), invited thousands of people to be photographed naked at city landmarks. The staging of the photographs actually took place in 2016 and therefore were not technically commissioned by or even initially conceived for UKCoC. They are part of a larger, ongoing project by Tunick, which involves him producing dynamic images of naked bodies, often in huge numbers, at iconic sites around the world. Yet, it is remembered by many as the unofficial ‘start’ of the cultural festivities and represents a crucial turning point in feelings for some about the city. For example, Hilde, a post-graduate student, excitedly connects the intense media coverage of Hull at this time, with her changing feelings for the city:

This is when Hull became cool. This is when I had this feeling that some kind of movement is happening, some kind of dialogue is happening. It was full on [...] Hull’s opening itself up. That’s something that was so stunning [...] So it was

⁵⁵ Composed by Arve Henriksen, Eivind Aarset, Jan Bang and Jez Riley French. It featured the chorus and orchestra of Opera North with voices of Hull-born actors Maureen Lipman and Barrie Rutter reading verse by Norwegian poet Nils Christian Moe-Repstad.

amazing to part of that experience. I'm *in it*. We were all doing something crazy. Making a memory (Interview, 2018).

Other large-scale projects included *Flood* by James Philips and Slung Low Theatre Company, a year long, multi-platform project that told the story of what happens to Hull when the world is destroyed by rising sea levels.⁵⁶ The *Look Up* programme of temporary art made for the city's public spaces, commissioned works displayed in car parks, streets, and public squares, including work by Bob and Roberta Smith, Tania Kovats and Claire Morgan. The *Back to Ours* festivals, attempting to engage communities and locate events away from the city centre, presented work in community halls, schools and shopping centres, including children's theatre, stand-up comedy, and cabaret. The *Land of Green Ginger (LOGG)* events saw artists working in neighbourhoods outside the city centre 'to tell a magical citywide story through acts of wanton wonder' (CPPI, 2018:45). As part of this overarching narrative, mysterious objects appeared in wooden crates at different sites across the city stamped with the words 'To Hull: From Land of Green Ginger', and a fictional investigative organisation, The Green Ginger Fellowship, was 'called in' to investigate their contents, unearthing a host of 'strange objects, riddles and clues', which comprised the individual art/performance works at each site (Visithull.org., n.d.).⁵⁷ Yet, where UKCoC organisers claimed *LOGG* was a key element in their community programming and that all its elements were activations of the community and community stories (e.g. Brennan and Unwin, 2018), on closer inspection, some of the projects had nothing to do with their locations at all, and had all been presented previously in different cities, albeit with slightly adapted forms and titles. Thus, whilst Hull2017 featured many place-based, or

⁵⁶ *Flood* was told in four parts. Part one was a short online film which acted as prologue to the story, parts two and four took place live on Hull's Victoria Dock, part 3 was filmed and aired on BBC2. It was performed by a professional cast along-side 100 Hull2017 volunteers who formed the community casts in the live performances.

⁵⁷ The works were presented in a series of 'acts': Act I – *7 Alleys* by Periplus in East Park, was comprised of music, fire, live performance and pyrotechnics; Act II – *The Gold Nose of Green Ginger* by Joshua Sofaer at North Point Shopping Centre, Bransholme told the legend of The Gold Nose of Green Ginger (actually a small object on display in a glass case) and its return to Bransholme; Act III – *The Longhill Burn* by And Now at Eastmount Playing Fields, saw the Longhill community gathered together for a night of music, dancing and the lighting of a huge bonfire; Act IV – *Re-Rediffusion's Voice Park* by Aswarm in Pickering Park invited audiences to play with the 'collective power of Hull's voice', as they explored alien looking objects that repeated sounds back at participants; Act V – *Micropolis* by Davy and Kristin McGuire at Springhead Pumping Station showed a 'bustling city in perfect miniature'; Act VI – *Land of Green Ginger Unleashed* by Macnas took place in Hull City Centre, calling back 'The Land of Green Ginger' in a night of 'magic and mysticism, populated by the dark, delirious and delicious' (Visithull.org., n.d.).

site-specific projects (see Chapter 7), several of my participants conclude negatively, that *LOGG* was 'off the shelf' (though not entirely), and therefore not strictly community engagement. Here, we see an instance of discontent at UKCoC management's hype language and their proclivity to overclaim, which I shall discuss in more detail later.

Owned and managed by HCC, the New Theatre, is a large, commercial touring venue, which through 2017 hosted performances by the Royal Ballet, the National Theatre and a play titled *The Kings of Hull* by John Godber. This latter event being notable as one of the few UKCoC commissions which referred explicitly (though briefly) to Brexit, with the titular King family agreeing to not discuss the subject for fear of upsetting and angering one-another. Hull Truck, the city's only producing theatre venue (of which Godber is a former artistic director), took more of a key role in presenting stories about the city and its histories.⁵⁸ Richard Bean's play, *The Hypocrite*, co-produced by the Royal Shakespeare Company, and Maxine Peak's *The Last Testament of Lillian Bilocca*, which was staged at the Guildhall, were the fastest-selling shows in the theatre's history (Hulltruck.co.uk, 2018). Both productions narrated the lives of two Hull 'trailblazers', trading on the mythology of Hull as a place of anti-establishment rebellion and independence. Indeed, containing phrases such as 'layman is the expert' and 'the fool is now the king', *The Independent's* reviewer noted *The Hypocrite's* post-Brexit timeliness (Brown, 2017). Also at Hull Truck and commissioned for UKCoC, was Amanda Whittington's *Mighty Atoms*, which evoked the spirit of another Hull fighter (literally), the boxer Barbara Buttrick. Whilst all these productions, to varying extents, played on the home audiences' sense of place attachment and belonging through the incorporation of 'in' jokes about accents, locations and histories, this latter piece appealed directly to the city's UKCoC moment with its story of six Hull women defiantly battling to keep their inner-city pub-come-community centre from closure. Their proud togetherness, being a metaphor for the modern history of the city itself, capturing the revived spirit of Hull in its UKCoC year. Indeed, the play's final lines rang with the collectivising clamour of civic pride: 'Heart. Faith. Spirit. Strength. Our city – our culture – our home [...] this is who we are' (Whittington, 2017:104).

⁵⁸ Whilst in recent years several smaller independent theatre production companies have become successfully established, they are dependent on existing venues for performance spaces.

Under the banner of UKCoC, Hull also staged the first UK LGBT+ Pride, the first BBC Prom outside London, and showcased a range of community projects. Such as *Greatfield 60*, a celebration of six decades of life on the Greatfield Estate; *Square Peg*, an exhibition of work by local disabled artists; and *The Sixteen Thousand* installation at C4Di which involved Hull children making individual bricks that collectively represented the 16,000 children aged 0-5 in the city that year. As if sealing approval on the entire enterprise, despite a disappointing year for Hull City Football Club in 2017 and amid bitter battles between supporters and club owners, the chant on the terraces to visiting fans was: 'You're only here for the culture' (Fred, 2017).⁵⁹

At the end of 2017, Lubaina Himid was announced as the year's Turner Prize winner from the city's Feren's Art Gallery, which had re-opened after a £5m refurbishment. Hull New Theatre also received a £16m upgrade (though delays to the works meant that it only re-opened mid-way through 2017) and many of the city-centre's major thoroughfares and pedestrian areas were rejuvenated as part of a capital investment project costing over £100m to improve the fabric of the city in readiness for its year in the spotlight (Conn, 2017). Humber Street, the much-vaunted regeneration project, is a development of disused dock buildings near Hull's Old Town and Marina, which has rapidly become a focal point for contemporary arts and music events, boosting the fortunes of bars, restaurants and shops close by. One of the most significantly positive economic impacts of City of Culture was probably in Humber Street, which experienced a 12% rise in footfall in 2019 compared with 2018 and with 'more than 20 new businesses' opening there between 2016 and 2019 (Kemp, 2019a).

⁵⁹ Despite the Allam family having overseen the club through its most successful period, relationships with fans soured to such an extent that an orchestrated 'Allam Out' campaign was formed. Key points of dissent included the Allam's proposal to rename the club 'Hull Tigers', the introduction of an unpopular membership scheme which saw the removal of concessions for OAPs, disabled carers, students and children, as well as a perceived lack of transparency over Allam's other business interests, their relationship with HCC and their arrangements regarding ownership of the club and KC Stadium. An 'Allam Out' website details these (and other) complaints (www.allamout.co.uk), and the *HDM* featured a report discussing the fans boycotting of home games in protest of the Allam's running of the club (Colman, 2019). My interviewee's (especially the football fans) mentions of the Allams tends to be negative, although they are also praised for their philanthropic contributions to the city, including a multi-million pound donation to fund construction of the state of the art Allam Medical Building at the University of Hull, opened by Queen Elizabeth II in November 2017.

The role of the media in changing the city’s external narrative was central to the UKCoC placemaking strategy, and it is estimated that the advertising value equivalent of this coverage would have been more than £450m across print, online and broadcast (CPPI, 2018:113). The programme particularly benefitted from partnership with the BBC which included extensive coverage of the year across the network and saw a ‘significant amount of the organisation’s resources leveraged towards Hull’, such as documentary programmes, engagement projects and the inclusion of Hull on the national weather map (CPPI, 2018:113). This last element is repeatedly referred to by my participants, often speaking joyfully about ‘feeling seen’ by the rest of the country. *The Guardian* newspaper is also noted as having made a significant contribution to coverage of the year, with a total of 131 pieces between June 2016 and December 2017; after the BBC, they were the national media outlet who consistently covered the project the most (CPPI, 2018:113). Locally, the *Hull Daily Mail* played an integral role in ‘communicating the stories and narratives of key events to audiences’, contributing to enhanced participation and engagement (CPPI, 2018:113).

6.2.1 Feeling seen

Table 5 shows the answers from *Sea of Hull* survey participants when asked: ‘How would you describe your thoughts and experiences of the year to a person who had never heard of Hull or City of Culture before?’

Table 5 *How would you describe your thoughts and experiences of the year to a person who had never heard of Hull or City of Culture before?*

A	B	C	D
Pride in relation to the city being seen anew	Pride in celebrating Hull	Pride in community	Responses not relating to pride.
I am a 2017 volunteer and dedicated a huge amount of time to be part of the story of my amazing city of Hull that came to life after being in the bad press for years. I am so proud of all that happened in 2017 and hope it continues for many years to come	This was a celebration of my city and its people. Remembering and rejoicing in its history, diversity and culture.	Pride, unity, community, togetherness, proud	Be more open minded
Brings out the best in the place and people and uncovers hidden gems	It was fantastic for the city of Hull	Amazing experience that pulls a city together.	Brilliant

The events brought so many people to the city centre from all over the world and created an atmosphere that hull had never had before.	It's changed the city and its people for the better, there are so many wonderful places to now visit in Hull	Great for the city, has increased community spirit, morale and pride in the city.	There was something for everyone even my uncultured sceptical husband saw some events and agreed that were amazing
It shone a positive spotlight on our city and provided opportunities to get involved with and see things you'd never imagine possible			Exciting, unpredictable, game-changing
Fascinating array of things to do and see. put hull on the map and raised the city's self-esteem and pride.			Eye-opening
A positive year that made hull visible			Enlightening educational exciting fun and opened my eyes to everything that Hull has to offer and a must place to visit.
A year of events which give a city a series of chances to enrich native lives, attract new admirers, reinvent itself and project a wholly positive presentation of itself			Lots of exciting and creative things going on, and they still are.
This brought Hull to the attention of lots of people and opened up the city to experiences Previously not available.			Something for everyone. You can chill and watch or have a laugh and join in. Whatever you choose - have fun!
The year when a Northern city with a lacklustre reputation allowed itself to dream big and put on a fabulous show for the world to see.			A brilliant opportunity to try new things and see new places
Hopefully you and many others now know Hull is a far better place than you thought it was.			A city that has worked hard to change and improve for the people of the city and those coming to it
			Promoted the city to a world audience.

			If you want to engage with it you experience something new; if you don't there is no problem about it
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The sixteen answers in columns A-C directly state or allude to pride, and (discounting the very final response) the statements in column D, can be understood as 'positive' feeling responses. Thus, three formulations of civic pride can be understood as being expressed: pride in celebrating Hull (column B), pride in community (column C) and, most commonly, pride that UKCoC enabled the city to be seen anew (column A). Here, participants refer to Hull's historic 'bad press' and 'lacklustre reputation' being no more, as well as a new 'atmosphere' that has 'raised the self-esteem'. These replies are notable for their language of visibility and performance, with comments such as: 'brings out', 'uncovers', 'shone', 'spotlight', 'put Hull on the map' and 'made Hull visible'. The responses in column D, employ similar language, and although these participants do not mention pride per se, for them the year was still 'enlightening', 'eye-opening' and 'promoted the city to a world audience'.

The high number of responses in which pride is derived from Hull's new reputation might be understood through psychology's 'Advertisement-Recalibration Theory', in which:

An audience detects new information about an individual that is at odds with the audience's current level of valuation, they recalibrate the value assigned to that person either upward or downward, with correspondingly positive or negative effects on their disposition to aid or defer to that individual (Sznycer *et al.*, 2017:1875).

Applied to Hull, 'the audience' are non-Hullensians, the rest of the UK and the world, who, after Hull2017, now perceive the city differently and more positively. Indeed, as the main evaluation report evidenced, 46% of the UK suggested that 2017 had changed their perceptions of Hull and 3 in 4 visitors to the city said 2017 changed their perception of the city for the better (CPPI, 2019:9). The audiences registering of Hull's achievements recalibrates its value of the city upwards. As a result, Hull has also recalibrated its own model of how much others now value it, and this is reflected in the responses in column A. In this adaptation, the city has recognised the way this new attribute (the success of Hull2017) has increased how others value it ('is a far better place than you thought it was'). It also helps explain Hilde's feeling 'cool' mentioned earlier, and the thrill of being on the BBC weather map, satisfying (at least in part) a collective need in the city for validation, recognition, and status.

At the same time, many of these survey responses reproduce the official Hull2017 narratives ('change the city for the better', 'something for everyone', 'shine a spotlight'), and one might interpret them as simply parroting UKCoC marketing which, often through selective quoting of the evaluation reports, use such claims to justify the massive project costs in the local and national media (e.g. Young, 2019a). As such, one can see the powerful trickle down effect of the promotional materials, so that for many in Hull, UKCoC was felt to be a success, simply because they were told so by the Hull2017 organisers through the media. As I shall explore in detail in the next chapter, much of this success was uncritically accepted in part due to the enormous swell of civic pride generated by events which took place in the opening season.

This relates to Chapter 5's discussion about the absence of an effective public sphere in the city. The infrastructure and opportunities for encounters with difference are limited in Hull and face-to-face, 'open' debates that might encourage a broader range of views, are, as in many other places, increasingly reduced to tribal confrontations or take place on social media (such as the One Hull of a City or the Hull Live Facebook pages) and result in confirmation bias (Knobloch-Westerwick *et al.*, 2017). Such limited views are then replicated in homogeneous social and family settings, a situation exacerbated by the Coronavirus lockdown, which has made large gatherings of people illegal and forced reconceptualisations of public space and the public sphere (e.g. Bongardt and Torres, 2020; Fuchs, 2020). Of course, mass gatherings have continued through the lockdowns, such as the protests in support of the Black Lives Matter movement. However, they retain their tribalism in a homogeneity of thinking, an issue I explore further in the thesis conclusion.

6.2.2 Limited critique

Thus, it is perhaps unsurprising that in answers to the next survey question, 'what was missing from Hull UK City of Culture 2017 or what would you like to have seen more of?', all but two respondents answered either 'nothing' or re-stated events and programming elements that they particularly enjoyed such as there being more children's activities, or more 'spectacular' and 'pyrotechnic' events such as *Flood* and *Made in Hull*. A small number of respondents mentioned practicalities such as wanting 'more free parking', and that they would have liked better advertising or increased ticket availability for events they had missed due to not knowing about them in time, or because they had sold out quickly. Such replies reinforce the

perceived success of Hull2017 in that respondents wanted more of it and that it should have been more easily accessible. Overall, there were few concrete suggestions for improvement, and only two explicitly critical voices.

The two critical observations from the *Sea of Hull* survey respondents were:

- 1) Hull was the butt of the joke, the arse end of the world, the wrong end of the M62... until we were sold a dream that we could be bigger better and more prosperous. It was a lie, a clever lie dressed up in spectacle but a lie all the same. The people to have benefitted are those that moved in the higher echelons... the story was written before the year began and every detail was tightly controlled and honed to hit each and every PR metric [...] More critical thought on the role of art and culture in society [was needed] from the city rather than outsiders imposing their ideas and notions of what acceptable culture is. There simply was no post-event discussions or analysis it was all 'Everything is great and if you say otherwise you will be shot down for appearing to be being disloyal to your home.'
- 2) Better slogan; better curation of programme (related to slogan); more critical events; less self-congratulatory attitudes of the team; less focus on the year as a spectacle and more focus on supporting and enhancing existing infrastructures.

Together, these responses might be generalised as follows:

- 1) The 'transformation' of Hull was scripted, and the script overpromised.
- 2) The production of the script was 'tightly controlled' for marketing reasons, at the expense of local cultural initiatives.
- 3) There was a relative absence of critical thought in the programming (perhaps because of point 2).
- 4) Critical thought and critical responses were actively discouraged, replaced instead by self-congratulation.
- 5) Not everyone benefited from UKCoC, with support perceived as favouring 'outsiders'.

As Boland reminds us (2010a:629), City of Culture initiatives 'mean different things to different people', yet, public contestations to the dominant narratives of Hull2017 have been relatively limited. Especially in comparison with critiques of similar events elsewhere, such as Glasgow's ECoC year which saw a high profile and sustained campaign by the Workers City group and others, for their perception of the city being gentrified 'at the expense and exclusion of local residents; and that the entire event was intricately tied up with the needs of big business

rather than those of culture, let alone the people of Glasgow' (Reason, 2006:76). Such criticisms of the CME experience are not limited to Glasgow. For example, in Cork, the group 'Where's Me Culture?' was established in reaction to a perception that aspects of culture through its year as ECoC2005 – including the local music scene – were neglected by the official programme (O'Callaghan and Linehan, 2007), and Turku's ECoC2011 was critiqued by the subversive 'Turku European Capital of Subculture' movement (Lähdesmäki, 2013). The nearest Hull has come to such outspoken public protest, is through the statements and artistic interventions of Richard Lees, who has described the year as 'UK City of Brexit Culture' for, amongst other reasons, its failure to include the city's ethnic minority communities, which Lees argues, represent Hull's 'genuine cultural transformation' of the last fifteen years (Lees, 2018; 2019). As I discussed in Chapter 2, Lees is correct in that the cultural make-up of Hull is changing rapidly, which for some indicates a long-overdue cosmopolitanising of the city and opportunities to diversify – though for others is a cause of concern.

The images below show some of Lees' agitprop works, in which (with reference to the Stevie Smith poem) he explores the fate of a lone critic (figure 6-7), the transactional (economic) agendas of cultural-led regeneration (figure 6-8) and the role of policy makers, playing with themselves whilst they play with the city (figure 6-9). In his correspondence with me, Lees explained that the puppeteer in figure 6-9 represents Martin Green, C.E.O and Artistic Director of Hull2017, and equally, that there is no co-incidence that the background to figure 9 is eponymously green.



Figure 6-7 Richard Lees, *Not waving but drowning*, 2017, Screen print, Reprinted with permission of Richard Lees



Figure 6-8 Richard Lees, *Transformation*, 2017, Screen print, Reprinted by permission of Richard Lees

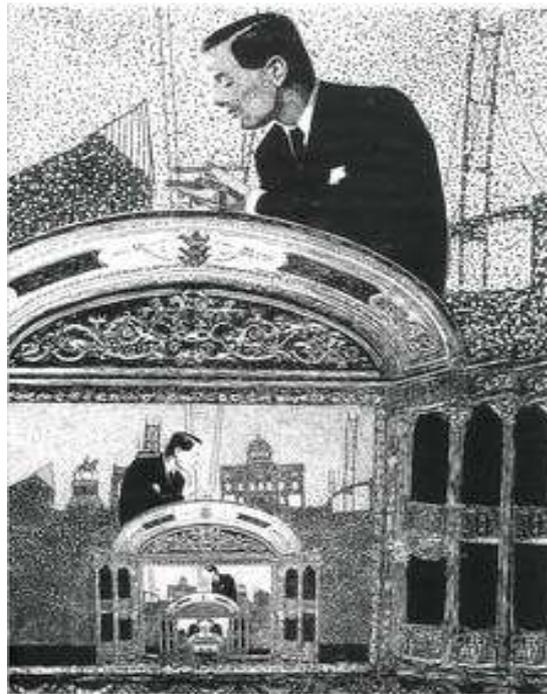


Figure 6-9 Richard Lees, *The City of Culture*, 2017, Screen print, Reprinted by permission of Richard Lees

Such coded critique can also be seen at work in figure 6-10, which appeared in the radical art magazine, UKUNST.



Figure 6-10 *Untitled*. Anonymous Artist in Hull. First published in UKUNST: Edition 005, Jan 2020. Reprinted with permission.

In this image, the colour green provides the background for a tirade of accusations directed at Hull2017 and specifically, Martin Green. Based on the famous 1970s Pepsi Cola marketing

campaign,⁶⁰ the invective work spills out complaints that are commonly aimed at cultural regeneration projects such as UKCoCs or ECoCs (e.g. Peck, 2005; Pratt, 2011; Borén and Young, 2013; O'Brien and Matthews, 2015; Pritchard, 2018), with its final line further excoriating Green and his appointment as director for Festival 2022, dubbed by many as the 'Festival of Brexit' (e.g., Brown, 2020). I address a number of these complaints below, but for now, wish to draw attention to the anonymity of the piece, which is yet another example of critical voices in the city, whether actively stifled or not, feeling that they cannot speak openly about Hull2017 and further evidences Hull's weak public sphere. Michael Barnes-Wynters, editor of UKUNST suggested that this phenomena might be because (to him), Hull is 'not a radical city [...] it's not a city of dissent' and that its arts scene lacks a critical, provocative culture (Interview, 2020). Instead, for Barnes-Wynters, Hull is a 'gentle city [...] with no edge to it whatsoever' (ibid).

Funding and promoting large-scale arts and culture events in an era of austerity are challenging endeavours. It must be recognised therefore, that Green and his senior Hull2017 delivery colleagues certainly succeeded in terms of fundraising and controlling the positive public narratives about the year. However, I have spoken with many freelance creatives in Hull through the course of this research who (off the record) told me that they felt bruised by an aggressively top down approach by Hull2017 management. Indeed, a member of the Hull2017 board acknowledged that many trustees, as well as senior members of HCC, were 'in thrall' to the Hull2017 leadership, whose managerial style often relied on 'forceful personality' (Interview, 2020), perhaps demonstrative of Nisbett and Walmsley's (2016) notion (via Weber – see Chapter 2) of the 'romanticisation' of charismatic cultural leaders. Given that the success of CMEs has increasingly relied on private sponsorship, which is itself often arrived at through building successful personal relationships, persuasion and charm, it is not surprising that top-down, autocratic charismatic cultural leaders will rise to the fore. One might therefore have some sympathy for Hull's political and administrative leaders, who 'primarily enforce rules' whilst 'cultural leaders [...] find principled and imaginative ways to transgress those rules that inhibit the emergence of cultural sovereignty and creativity (Omer 2005, cited in Leicester 2007, 18).

⁶⁰ An example of which can be viewed here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jB8rnZ-0dKw> [Accessed 12 April 2020].

Whether or not Green and colleagues found ‘principled’ ways to transgress rules is perhaps the key point of contention. Whilst sensitive to the multiple challenges facing leader of such a high profile and high stakes projects, I argue that a deliberate and systematic restriction of critique took place through 2017, which operated in four distinct ways. Firstly, non-disclosure agreements (NDAs) were common practice within the Culture Company.⁶¹ Every employee had to sign one, as did those working with ‘sensitive’ Hull2017 materials including researchers. I experienced this myself when taking part in a ‘remixing’ event as part of the *Cultural Transformations* conference in 2018, where my participation was only granted after signing the NDA. As a number of my research colleagues have experienced, these arrangements have proved to be barriers for accessing ex-Culture Company employees, or for their inability to speak freely on the record for fear of breaking their contractual agreement not to.

Secondly, as seen earlier in this chapter, critical voices were figured negatively as ‘philistines’ and ‘cynics’ who should (in Phil Batty’s words - original bid team member and Director of Public Engagement for the Culture Company) ‘get on board or go to Leeds’.⁶² As a result, a number of arts workers in the city have said to me that if they did not ‘get on board’ with the official Hull2017 ethos, they were excluded from the process. This was felt keenly by those involved with the UKCoC bid from its inception. For example, Andy Pearson, artistic director of Hull based creative producing company E52 said that:

We created the document that won the bid, which was pretty much put together by people who made their work in Hull or were very knowledgeable about the city [...] what happened when they appointed the Culture Company was that most of that was jettisoned and Martin Green [...] came in with his own particularly unique style and [...] if you said anything that challenged them, you were seen as being anti city. You were not behind your city if you called anything into question. So I think a lot of us who felt disenfranchised by the whole process just felt – well we can’t really do anything (Interview, 2020).

⁶¹ NDAs are a feature of the corporate and business worlds designed to stop employees and workers sharing information either during or after their employment. Intended to limit the sharing of embargoed materials such as trade secrets (in the case of Hull2017, programming details in development or raw evaluation data) their use has been extended to the gagging of abuse claimants, such as victims of workplace bullying, other harassments or witnesses of activities, illegal or otherwise, that might bring the employer or brand into disrepute.

⁶² Batty said this in his speech at the 2018 University of Hull *Cultural Transformations* conference. Whilst delivered with tongue-in-cheek humour, there is no doubting the autocratic nature of this statement.

Pearson also described a process of 'golden handcuffing' in which he believes critical voices from the arts sector were given small project grants to 'keep them quiet' (Interview, 2020). It is unclear whether this was the Culture Company's intention, but the 'silencing' effect was also explained to me by Vickie Bissett, former director of Artlink, who, as an independent community arts organisation in the city with a reputation for supporting politically charged work, might have been expected to be one of the leading critical voices of Hull2017. Bissett recalled a conversation with a Hull artist who suggested that 'Artlink should be the organisation to head up' a critical response to Hull2017, especially for artists that are 'dissatisfied about what's going on' (Interview, 2020). However, Bissett had just accepted a £150k grant from UKCoC to lead a year-long disability arts programme, so 'was not in a place to be able to do that' (Bissett, Interview 2020). However, she reflected that if the conversation with the artist had happened 6 months earlier then maybe Artlink could have led such an initiative: 'Maybe it needed a smallish organisation that was under the radar, that wasn't particularly "wanted", maybe that could have helped to bring about some [critical] focus and direction' (Bissett, Interview 2020).

Thirdly, as Pearson reports, and as a number of other participants attest, there was a lack of critical programming during Hull2017. By this I mean that the majority of the output was celebratory and appeared to actively avoid critical content. Additionally, as the survey participant quoted earlier in this section noted, there was also perhaps a surprising lack of post-event discussions, or other post-show activities to extend participation and open wider conversations about events, the city and the year. Given the deliberate avoidance of critique elsewhere, it might be that such events were not included to minimise platforms at which critical voices could have been raised. Several participants speak of the lack of a 'fringe' scene in Hull2017, around which critical voices might have coalesced. Whilst the One Hull of a City Facebook group provided a forum for complaint, it was not a platform for action and much of the dissent remained 'online'. It is also worth noting the somewhat difficult position of the University of Hull, which, as an anchor institution became one of the principal strategic and programming partners of Hull2017. This may have created difficulties for the university to retain independence in its other central role as evaluator of the project. This has lessons for future cities/capitals of culture about the feasibility of the dual role for local universities as project partner *and* evaluator.

Finally, some respondents suggested that the very public relationships of UKCoC and city leaders with the Hull2017 volunteers, contributed to the uncritical culture. Occasionally described as ‘ambassadors’, the volunteers were also referred to as an ‘army’ and the ‘voice of the people’, in which their enthusiasms and pride at being highly visible representatives for Hull and Hull2017 were mobilised (e.g. Visit Hull, 2015; Tait, 2018). Their brightly coloured uniforms, indicating that a Hull2017 event was nearby endowed the volunteers with a confidence and permission to speak to the public. My own encounters with them were marked by their positive, persuasive outlook and infectious passion. Morpeth (2020:249) has argued ‘that through their “interventions” as cultural mediators [the] volunteers enabled people to discover new narratives of the city beyond the grand narratives of senses of loss and decay that have previously been expressed’. This new sanctified version of Hullness was, some respondents suggested, achieved in part by the volunteers being appropriated as ‘foot soldiers’, working to spread Culture Company narratives and trained to dispell dissent. Green and other senior figures were often photographed with them, visually reinforcing their alliance (figures 6-11 and 6-12).



Figure 6-11 Green & Hull2017 volunteers (Winter, 2017).



Figure 6-12 HCC Leader Stephen Brady with Hull2017 volunteers (Winter, 2017).

In his study of the *Opsinjoren* community involvement program in Antwerp, Belgium, Loopmans outlines similarities to this reaction to the Hull2017 volunteers, where:

A double tension arises from the deployment of citizens for the government of public space: First, between the visions and expectations of active citizens themselves and the goal of the program; second, between the expectations of active and 'passive' residents. Managing and attenuating this double tension is and will remain a principal challenge for the professionals running the program (Loopmans, 2006:2).⁶³

As Loopman's describes happening in Antwerp, the Hull2017 volunteers (and by extension, the Culture Company) could be interpreted as partially appropriating public space to exert control over 'their place' in it. In contrast to the top-down approach of the Culture Company, narratives which attempted to question, counter, or to engage with Hull2017 in a critical way,

⁶³ Opsinjoren is a branch of the *Opzoomeren* initiative, developed in Rotterdam in the early 1990s and subsequently exported as a 'best practice' to other Dutch cities and abroad. Like its Rotterdam forerunner, Opsinjoren draws on the involvement of active neighbourhood residents in public space management to address new collective problems (aggregated under the common denominator 'liveability') that cannot be regulated efficiently 'from the centre'. However, unlike the Hull2017 volunteer programme, the Opsinjoren active citizens not only stimulate participation but also contestation (Loopmans, 2006:2).

struggled to emerge. Thus, Hull's 'in the moment' critical response to UKCoC remained largely unspoken and unheard – and another opportunity missed to invite critique into the city's public sphere.

These problems are perhaps due to the minimal UKCoC delivery guidance. In comparison with ECoCs, which have more distinct guidelines for programming and governance, UKCoC policy is scant. Immler & Sakkers (2014:16) note that after policy changes to the ECoC in 1999 and the introduction of the selection criteria of the *European Dimension* and *Cities and Citizens*, the overall ECoC programme argues that:

The European dimension is most visible when the ECoC candidates reflect their own history as a part of European history, particularly when hinting at their involvement with the major ideologies of the 19th and 20th centuries, such as National Socialism, Communism and Colonialism'.

The inclusion of 'ideology' in the ECoC initiative, and its encouragement for cities towards re-inventing their identities and re-narrating their histories within a European context, whilst not *necessarily* critical, at least opens the potential for criticality.⁶⁴ Additionally, the publication of revised guidance in 2019 to the process and criteria for bidding ECoC cities 2020-2033, has perhaps benefitted cities with 'outreach' as a focus. Such as Chemnitz2025, which promises to increase community 'capacity building' and 'activate [a] "silent middle"' (Commission, 2020).

After reviewing available policy documents, I can find little evidence of the UKCoC programme containing such a boldly stated political dimension which might encourage critical engagement in curation and delivery (UK City of Culture Working Group, 2009; DCMS, 2014). Requirements of the host city to explore British cultural identity are limited, and there is nothing which specifically refers to cities/or UK's involvement with 'major ideologies'. What is frequently stated however, is that the nomination should be used to attract economic investment, and that the year should be a celebration. In the 2009 DCMS *Working Group Report*, the word 'celebrate' (or a derivative) appears nine times, especially in relation to British cultural or

⁶⁴ Though one might note the omission of Capitalism as a major 19th/20th century ideology here. Perhaps indicating that the ECoC programme assumes capitalism as normalised in the 21st century, and therefore beyond critique.

artistic excellence.⁶⁵ A typical example is: ‘To celebrate the contribution of UK and international artists and their work’ which appears twice, as well as ‘emphasis on cultural excellence and celebrating local and UK artists’ (UK City of Culture Working Group, 2009:10, 18). Whilst the later (2014) consultation document has less celebratory language, agendas of culture for ‘change’ and arms-length curatorial guidance remains, with the following programme aims stated:

- encourage the use of culture and creativity as a catalyst for change
- promote the development of new partnerships
- encourage ambition, innovation, and inspiration in cultural and creative activity
- align the cultural excellence of national arts organisations to support the year with cultural highlights that will attract media attention, encourage national tourism and change perceptions (DCMS, 2014:4)

Thus, ‘winning the title and hosting a year of cultural events’, will help cities to:

- attract more visitors
- increase media interest in the city
- bring community members together
- increase levels of professional artistic collaboration (DCMS, 2014:4)

Whilst the ECoC ‘European dimension’ has been questioned as potentially propagandising (e.g. Aiello and Thurlow, 2006; Immler and Sackers, 2014; Lähdesmäki, 2014), it at least invites opportunities for producers to include socio-political critique within their programming.⁶⁶ This is possibly taken for granted in UKCoC policy (or simply unwanted), and even though the guidance document does not state it explicitly, it could still be achieved, as some argue occurred in Derry/Londonderry in 2013 (Devlin, 2016; Boland *et al.*, 2019). Either way, Hull2017 did not take up that remit, choosing instead to focus on narratives and dramaturgies of uncritical celebration and abstract ‘change’. A dogma that Andy Pearson described as ‘saccharine’ (Interview 2019), and that the anonymous artist above states as ‘brain numbing bullshit’. One might even question where the ‘UK’ of UKCoC was to be found in the Hull2017 programming – with very little inclusion of companies or narratives from Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland.

⁶⁵ ‘Celebrate’, ‘celebrating’, ‘celebration’, ‘celebrations’.

⁶⁶ Though, as Aiello & Thurlow illustrate, the corporate ideologies of ECoC host cities often win out (2006:153).

6.2.3 Legacy – sustaining pride

'Ambitious' legacy plans to 'build on the outcomes of the City of Culture year', included Hull City Council's ongoing commitment to invest in culture, a major funding announcement from the National Lottery Heritage Fund to enable the £27.4 million redevelopment of Hull's historic maritime assets to be realised (which situates Hull as 'Yorkshire's Maritime City') and the completion of a new 3,500-capacity music and events space, Hull Venue - currently named Bonus Arena for sponsorship reasons (CPPI, 2019:14-15). Absolutely Cultured, the renamed organisation which evolved from the Culture Company in May 2018, remains permanently in Hull, tasked with delivering the legacy of Hull2017. Funded by HCC and other public bodies such as Arts Council England (ACE) as an 'arms-length' cultural agency and producer, Absolutely Cultured therefore remain a key focus of attention within the Hull cultural sector. They continue to run the Hull2017 volunteer programme, the Humber Street Gallery (HSG), and to stage large scale outdoor events, many of which are free and unticketed. They collaborated with the BBC in 2018 to deliver the *Contains Strong Language* national poetry and spoken word festival, and with the PRS Foundation in 2019 to bring back the *New Music Biennial* to Hull. They also claim to be developing the local cultural sector, although as I shall discuss, this is somewhat contested.

The legacy curation of HSG has been arguably eclectic and wide ranging in terms of subjects, forms, and diverse artist backgrounds, including socially engaged art, punk art, and the relationships of art with the environment and technology through exhibitions of fine art, photography, multi-media installations and digital artefacts. However, the programming of Absolutely Cultured's larger, exclusively outdoor events have all been celebratory in their content and largely based on the telling of 'local' stories or myths.⁶⁷ Whilst such large-scale

⁶⁷ Major projects by Absolutely Cultured include *Dominoes* (2018), by Station House Opera and produced by ArtsAdmin, which 'took over' Hull with a 3.5km domino run utilising over 12,000 breezeblocks described as 'a moving sculpture, both playful and epic' (Absolutely Cultured, n.d.); *Home Town Story* (2018), written by Louise Wallwein and directed by Mark Murphy, a site-specific journey through the back streets of central Hull incorporating poetry and performance; *Urban Legends: Northern Lights* (2018), brought together artists from the UK and Scandinavia to create an outdoor event featuring projections and atmospheric soundscapes which drew inspiration from the connections between Hull and the countries and mythologies across the North Sea in Northern Europe and Scandinavia; *The Witching Hour* (2019), by Periplus, produced in collaboration with Wirral (Liverpool's 2019 Borough of Culture) was an immersive, outdoor project designed to 'connect people and inspire imagination, [exploring] stories of local wise women, magical mythical characters and childhood memories from East Park in Hull and Birkenhead Park in Wirral' (Absolutely Cultured, nd).

acts of coming together can foster increased senses of community spirit and belonging which are key elements of civic pride, I suggest that the relentless inward gaze of Hull's 'official' cultural producers, especially when delivered so spectacularly, risks embedding the city's more proprietary and parochial feelings. Thus, the trend of presenting inward-looking, uncritical cultural narratives continues. Given this, one might expect evaluations relating to the knowledge of local history and heritage to show a suitably positive correlation. Yet, the main evaluation report found that despite such events repeatedly re-narrating the city back to itself, the proportion of residents rating their knowledge of Hull's heritage as 'high' has actually decreased (CPPI, 2019:19).⁶⁸

Further, many respondents report feeling disappointed that the year 'fizzled out', and that Hull2017 legacy schemes have been given neither the thought nor funding they require. This adds some detail to the 4% drop in civic pride between 2017 and 2018 noted in the main evaluation report (CPPI, 2019:9). The post-2017 'slump' felt in Hull is not an unusual phenomenon for cities hosting cultural mega events, with reports of collective 'morning after' depression and 'circus leaving town' feelings noted elsewhere (Garcia, 2005; Smith, 2006; Asle Bergsgard and Vassenden, 2011). Yet, dissatisfaction and criticism has been directed at Absolutely Cultured for 'costing too much and delivering too little' (Interview, 2020) and some in Hull's cultural sector perceive a lack of effective leadership within the organisation, which may be due to its high turn-over of senior management, and a much-reduced budget, resulting in the redundancies of nine staff members (Young, 2019b).

This is compounded by a weak collaborative ethos amongst other key stakeholder organisations. To illustrate this, I was told the story of three senior administrators from Hull's cultural sector, each representing different, though closely related, organisations at a 'partnership building' event in Reykjavik, Iceland. It transpired that none of them knew that the others would be attending until they encountered each other there. My respondent suggested that had these individuals had a better working relationship and only sent one representative, not only could time and costs have been saved, but Hull would have presented

⁶⁸ This is in comparison with 2017, when 66% of Hull residents and 74% of East Riding residents reported that their overall knowledge of the history and heritage of Hull increased as a result of the Hull 2017 cultural programme (CPPI, 2018:184).

a more united and collaborative account of itself. It was further noted that the three representatives did not 'work well together' and behaved 'competitively and unprofessionally'. This was suggested as being typical of the lack of collegiality between some senior managers from Hull's cultural sector. Mistrust amongst those specific individuals was intense, due to their histories of competing for jobs, audiences, and resources:

The biggest problem is that people compete and are not able to collaborate. I think the way it's not sustained is because after 2017 they've created a few cultural companies that haven't worked together. We've got Absolutely Cultured here, Back To Ours there, Hull Truck, Hull City Arts and Leisure. They don't work together. I think they should talk to each other more [...] I think if there was a bit more collaboration that would be better for everybody. They're competing for funding but that's not the only thing...it's about who's doing better. It's ego (Interview, 2019).

Additionally, for cultural workers in a relatively small city such as Hull, one always sees the same faces in the same places (Interview, 2019). By this, the respondent means that much of the informal labour of the Hull cultural sector, such as networking and meetings, takes place in the same few cafes or bars, largely on Newland or Princes Avenue. There is often a difficulty in speaking openly in case of confidential information being overheard. This is of particular relevance when also considering the precariousness of freelance cultural workers in the city.

Umney and Symon (2019:3-4) cite a wide range of literature observing problems of low or unpaid cultural work exacerbated by labour oversupply, risk-laden and unpredictable portfolio careers and reliance on insider contact networks. However, these case-studies rarely, if ever consider the context of smaller, peripheral setting such as Hull. Beyond the scope of this thesis, I suggest the conditions of cultural work in Hull would be important to investigate further. Thus, negative personal histories based on cultures of competition, have created barriers to collaboration, which in turn impedes vision and effective organisational steering. The consequences of this for the sector, and for the city, were sharply noted by a further respondent, who observed that after 2017, 'Hull is caught in a vicious circle, that somehow if it doesn't break out of, there is no hope for the future. People who should be on the same side are arguing and fighting amongst themselves' (Interview, 2020).

That said, Absolutely Cultured is not the only organisation with the resources to spearhead this responsibility. Yet, the conspicuous absence of other key individuals and organisations has perhaps opened space for more grassroots voices to emerge and receive a greater share of

attention than they otherwise might.⁶⁹ Despite these ‘green shoots’, I suggest that the lack of a co-ordinated cultural identity for Hull, has contributed to the post-2017 feelings of disappointment and pessimism. Hull’s cultural sector does not seem to be as united as is needed to effectively imagine and collectively communicate what Hull’s post 2017 legacy is or could be. One might rightly ask: who is responsible for driving Hull’s cultural policy? Indeed, speaking in 2019, Martin Green noted that there is still no-one at HCC appointed with such a portfolio, saying:

The key thing that is missing out a lot of the time [...] is the policymaking and what happens in the council. The biggest failure in Hull post-2017 [...] is that there is no one with the title Director of Culture in the City Council (Green, 2019).

In many ways, it is clear from the Hull2017 board meeting minutes that Green fulfilled this function during his tenure in the city, and that as well as having overall responsibility for commissioning Hull2017 events, directing Hull2017 marketing strategies and stakeholder relationships (including funding from public and commercial partnerships), he also contributed to the city’s 2016-2026 cultural plan and the planning of other longer-term initiatives. Thus, Green was a central decision maker in the formulations and presentation of visions of the city leading up to, through, and beyond its UKCoC year and therefore a key contributor to the Hull civic imaginary. Indeed, if the sector is struggling to advance post-2017, due to a stasis or reluctant leadership, it is worth investigating Green’s style and strategies further.

6.2.4 Martin Green’s ‘representative claim’

Martin Green had a unique platform as spokesperson for Hull within the cultural and broader civic realm, making numerous media appearances, interviews, and public addresses at conferences. His pronouncements frequently expounded on the transformative power of culture which would bring the city and its residents into the spotlight. His views also extended to the city’s political behaviour, with (as described in Chapter 1) the suggestion that Hull may

⁶⁹ Such as Hack and Host and Ground (both artists collectives), Feral Art School (a not for profit, co-operative of artists and educators offering ‘alternative’ short courses), the journal of Hull visual culture *Critical Fish*, the ACE funded Creative People and Places *Back to Ours* project, Bankside Gallery (a co-ordinated network of outdoor graffiti and street-art sites near the city centre along the bank of the river Hull), Beats Bus (a peripatetic community arts Hip-Hop project led by Steve Arnott, the subject of Sean McAllister’s documentary film *A Northern Soul* and Wrecking Ball Press (an off-beat publishing house, producing the work of writers and poets such as Barney Farmer, Dean Wilson and Vicky Foster). Hull’s independent theatre scene is particularly thriving with companies such as Middle Child, Silent Uproar, Bellow and the Roaring Girls producing critically acclaimed work, as well as Ensemble 52 and the Pub Corner Poets developing innovative performance work and a vibrant spoken word scene.

not have voted in such large numbers to leave the EU had UKCoC happened prior to the referendum (quoted in Clavane, 2017). I suggest that the importance afforded to Green's statements by some in the city, and their consequences for Hull's post-2017 civic imaginary, can be understood through Saward's (2010) notion of the 'representative claim'.

The theory of the representative claim has much in common with the concept of 'framing' discussed in political science. A process by which politicians shape (or re-shape) an issue to fit with political ideology, the positions held by voters and other actors and prevailing political norms (Benford and Snow, 2000). Saward (2010) sets out that each claim has a 'maker' – literally the speaker of the claim; a subject, put forward as the representative; an 'object', the group to be represented; a 'referent' (the wider pool from which the object is drawn); and an 'audience', who, crucially, can accept, reject or ignore the claim. A claim therefore follows this pattern:

A maker of representations ('M') puts forward a subject ('S') which stands for an object ('O') that is related to a referent ('R') and is offered to an audience ('A') (Saward, 2010: 37).

Using this formulation, Saward describes how an MP might make a representative claim:

The MP (maker) offers himself or herself (subject) as the embodiment of constituency interests (object) to that constituency (audience). The referent is the actual, flesh-and-blood people of the constituency. The object involves a selective portrayal of constituency interests (Saward, 2010: 37).

The formal electoral process – the winning of an election – is the legal and procedural basis for the MP's claim to representation. However, the process of making claims, in practice, is more complex. During the election campaign, and while in office, politicians make claims setting out who they represent and how. The acceptance of these claims is an agreement by the represented that their politician does indeed represent them. The question of what is, or is not, in the interests of those represented is explored and refined through the making and accepting (or rejection or ignoring) of claims. There is no pre-determined spatial, temporal, or other boundary to the claim. Politicians can claim that it is in the interests of the people they represent, to consider the needs of future generations, citizens of distant countries or, indeed, other species. Neither is representation limited to the formal political sphere. Any individual or group can make a claim to representation. Saward gives the example of the singer Bono claiming to represent people in Africa who, Bono asserts, 'have no voice at all' (Saward, 2010: 83). These claims to representation interact with, shape and are shaped by the claims made by

elected representatives. Seward's theory has been used to analyse representation in the EU, whose institutions work alongside, but do not replace, national legislatures, thereby raising problems of complexity and legitimacy (see, for example de Wilde, 2013). The UK's referendum decision to leave the EU could therefore be interpreted as UK citizens *rejecting* representative claims made by European institutions.

Thus, it is possible to recognise Green as having emphatically claimed the space of cultural representation in Hull during his time in the city, and it is important to interrogate this. As Fairclough notes in his analysis of Tony Blair and New Labour, 'the communicative style of leaders is now recognised as a crucial factor in political success or failure' (2000:4). Green also has a distinctive rhetorical style, and in this section, I show how he effectively performed Hull's sense of place and its symbols of belonging back to the city, taking temporary ownership of its 'voice'.

Many research participants described Green as 'charismatic' and of being 'a showman' – but a small number of interviewees also referred to him as a bully. In an interview with me, Green acknowledged his distinctive style, describing his modus operandi as 'informed recklessness' and expressing his hopes that the city would 'carry on with increasingly outrageous ambition' (Interview, 2017). Such an approach directly aligns with the literature on charismatic cultural leaders (e.g. Nisbett and Walmsley, 2016), and I have witnessed first-hand Green's ability to hold a considerable degree of power and influence. For example, when interviewing him in a city centre café, I observed his popularity with customers and staff whose manner toward him was as with a beloved celebrity, his presence evoking an atmosphere of excitement and positivity. He knew many of the café staff by name and appeared approachable, open, and friendly. He used camp language and humour ('breaking the rules' - as a charismatic cultural leader should), and these performative expressions, coupled with his height (Green is very tall) and Essex accent (not often heard in Hull) brought their own brand of spectacle to the city.

Indeed, as one interviewee concluded, Green did understand that:

Events [like Hull2017] need chutzpah and Hull had never seen or experienced anything like that before [...] City leaders recognised that it was a short cut, that it was something the city needed. It was a way of making a big event work' (Interview, 2019).

Thus, Green's approach was considered by many to have had some positive effects. For example, Robert Mitchell, chair of the Hull Philharmonic Orchestra observed that: 'Hull2017 gave us the freedom to be more ambitious' (Interview 2018), Julian Rice from the Freedom Centre spoke of a 'new strategic confidence' in the city (Interview, 2019), and Paul Smith from Middle Child Theatre Company acknowledges a debt to Green for his 'pushing' them to 'dream of projects' much bigger than they had previously (Interview, 2018). Concerns, however, were voiced about how this 'ambition' can be sustained, and several participants questioned who had responsibility for driving the legacy of 2017. For Mitchell, an immediate issue being the lack of a central booking and events database that could help build on momentum, which (in 2018) he observed was already diminishing.

Yet, there was little constructive dialogue through the UKCoC, about whether and how Hull needed to change with the focus throughout being to stress how 'change is happening'. This was achieved not through a simple process of informing, but through promoting the initiatives of change, such as Hull2017 itself. As I discussed in the introduction to this chapter, this continued through 2018 and 2019 in the form of iconic Hull2017 imagery posted on the windows of empty shop units. Thus, 'change' becomes inevitable and nominalised (Fairclough, 2000:26), with no specification as to who or what is changing, and hiding from view the process and structures of change. In foregrounding effect, a performance of change occurs, which also hides from view the necessary questions of agency and causality. Despite Green's prominent visibility, his role as a 'responsible agent of change' (Fairclough, 2000:26) becomes blurred, contributing to a further construction of change as inevitable.

Such tactics (one participant described them to me as methods of 'seduction') can be seen in the many interviews and presentations Green gave, such as this 2015 interview with *the Guardian* newspaper:

Because somewhere in everything you do, overtly or hidden, is the voice of this city. You don't force it; it arrives. The programme arrives because it starts telling you what it needs to be [...] By latching on to the unique stories of Hull – its geography, relationships with other cities – you find its unique voice, which again builds its confidence (quoted in Caird, 2015).

Here, he is making claims to *know* Hull's 'unique' voice. A strategy he repeats elsewhere, for example in an interview with the *New European* in which Hull has (in Green's words) 'refound its identity in the world' (Clavane, 2017). In these examples, through Hull2017 (and by

extension, Green himself), Hull has been *found* – or rather, it has come to him (‘it arrives’) and that now he has it, there will be confidence. It is probably true that Green did spend a lot of time talking to many people in the city in preparation for Hull2017, though I suggest that in deliberately blending their voices with his own, and in stressing that through his endeavours, the city will be transformed, his ‘informed recklessness’ is more problematic than he perhaps understands. Additionally, his use of the word ‘unique’ plays to Hull’s desire for status, identity and the pride/shame dichotomy that is embedded in these narratives of change. To be ‘unique’ is to be one of a kind and to stand out from the crowd. It is being put in the spotlight and being seen on the (weather) map. Such a desire for uniqueness should be understood, according to David Harvey as a ‘heightened sensitivity of capital to minute differences in the geographical conditions of different places’ and that in this moment of postmodernity ‘the desire of individual places to assert their uniqueness and distinction’ is, ironically, commonplace (Harvey, 1990b:296). Thus, what exactly *is* unique about Hull, Green never actually says.

Perhaps inspired by Green’s example, shortly after 2017, senior figures from HCC reiterated references to Hull’s ‘voice’. For example, at the 2018 *Cultural Transformations* Conference, Jacqueline Gay, Head of Communications for HCC stated that ‘we’d found our voice again’, and Matt Jukes, HCC Chief Operating Officer wrote in the *Yorkshire Post*:

I think we are being more vocal about our city and everything it has to offer and people are seeing it because we are giving them the opportunities and the desire to come and see us. That’s what’s changed. I don’t think there has been a fundamental shift in the way the city thinks of itself either, but we have presented ourselves much more visibly to the world outside and to our residents and businesses. We have a great platform to do that from, and now we are using this impetus as a foundation on which to take the city even further forward (Jukes, quoted in The Yorkshire Post, 2018).

Both examples here recall Hull’s UKCoC bid tagline of a ‘city coming out of the shadows’ and its recent history as a neglected or forgotten place waiting to be rediscovered. In her conference address, Gay also summoned pride in the Hull2017 volunteers and that they were ‘the stars of the show’. This strategy mobilises the volunteers in a very particular way, which, whilst most probably intended as celebratory, puts them to work as an idealised (and uncritical) version of Hullness back to the city, demarcating Hull2017’s spheres of social, symbolic, and physical space. This can also be seen in the ‘Welcome to Hull’ banners at Paragon Station and in other city promotional materials which feature images of the Hull2017 volunteers (figure 6-13). It can also be seen in the highly orchestrated images of the volunteers by artist Julia Vogl, whose

exhibition *Grains of Scandalous Blue* represented ‘their pride, energy and endless enthusiasm [which] captured the spirit and personality of Hull across a magical 365 days’ (Humber Street Gallery, 2018).⁷⁰



Figure 6-13 'Welcome to Hull' banner at Hull's Paragon Station. 2019, Photo author

Still, what exactly does Hull have to say with this newfound voice? When asked to describe Hull's 'unique voice' in an interview with *The Arts Desk*, Green replies:

Hull has contributed great ideas to the world. In terms of pop it's brought us the Housemartins and Everything but the Girl, and also Basil Kirchin, the godfather of ambient music, and the collective COUM Transmissions, which featured Genesis P-Orridge and Cosey Fanni Tutti before they formed Throbbing Gristle. Those are names that people might not have heard of, but they've greatly influenced our cultural lives. This is a city that questions everything, that has a wonderful, wry sense of humour, and that doesn't take the establishment line. If you look at Hull geographically, it's a stand-alone city: on one side it has nothing but water, and on the other side it doesn't have close neighbours either. So that's allowed it to grow up as quite a counter-cultural, alternative place (quoted in Kettle, 2017).

On first reading, this might appear a rather comprehensive list of Hull's distinctiveness. Many of those personalities did come from, or had close ties to the city, and the description of Hull's geography is accurate. However, as Fairclough points out (2000), listing syntax results in the dilution of differences between the listed, excluding deeper potential relationships and meanings which one might find in other discourses that do not set up such equivalences - or

⁷⁰ Images from the exhibition can be viewed here: <https://www.yorkshirepost.co.uk/arts-and-culture/capturing-spirit-city-culture-volunteers-1765554> [Accessed 16 May 2021].

use them in purely promotional ways. Noting the immediate shift from ‘ideas’ to celebrities, lots of places have produced pop singers, musicians and artists (they have to come from *somewhere*) and there are many other places with similarly ‘stand-alone’ geographies, such as Aberdeen, Inverness, Aberystwyth, Carlisle, Norwich, Holyhead, Derry-Londonderry to name a few.⁷¹ Also, the claim that its geography is responsible for its ‘alternativeness’ lacks empirical basis and fails to acknowledge that places less geographically isolated, such as Brighton, Liverpool, Manchester, Coventry, Bristol, Glasgow, Sheffield and London, have celebrated and arguably more credible histories of counter and alternative, subversive political cultures. That leaves the central claim that Hull ‘questions everything [...] has a wonderful, wry sense of humour, and [...] doesn’t take the establishment line’. Firstly, I suggest that it would be unwise for any public figure to describe the place they claim to represent as not having a sense of humour; secondly, as my thesis is evidencing, Hull would appear *not* to ‘question everything’, and, finally, given its recent voting behaviour, Hull’s reputation for ‘not taking the establishment line’ might also be questioned. I suggest though, Green is simply turning the populist trick of evoking an ‘establishment’ in the first place. ‘Unique’ therefore, becomes an empty signifier, lacking any tangible narrative on which a sustainable legacy strategy might be built – and despite the rhetoric, I conclude that Green’s style contributed to a UKCoC year that was more transactional than transformational.

6.3 Summary

In this chapter I have summarised the key activities of Hull’s year as UKCoC and explored its dominant narratives which continue to circulate in, or ‘haunt’ the city. I focussed particularly on the organisers’ limited understandings of and their claims toward the ‘transformative power of culture’ (Belfiore, 2011). Specifically, that being UKCoC would alter the negative perceptions of Hull to both outsiders and inhabitants. Through a series of spectacular installations and events, programmed early in the year, The Culture Company immediately set about working on people’s emotions which were monitored and reflected back to the city through the local and national media. Yet, they were not designed to register negative feelings, nor able to record disinterest. This is particularly problematic for civic pride measurements, as these evaluation strategies ‘treat emotions and feelings as substances that

⁷¹ Though even the celebrities are curated. For there is no mention of the ‘great ideas’ of other famous Hullensians such as William Wilberforce, Winifred Holtby or Amy Johnson and their contributions ‘to the world’. Here, Green is deliberately selecting the city’s more obscure Avant Garde in order to frame it in a particular way – as ‘forgotten and undiscovered’.

derive from a community that is already assumed to exist' (Closs Stephens, 2016:185). Such processes operationalised the abundance of civic pride that Hull2017 generated, and I have argued that such 'affective governing' (Fortier, 2010), was performed for short-term metric success, without thought for the long-term effects on inhabitants.

I have also shown, that by repeatedly leaning on the civic pride of Hull's citizens, the UKCoC organisers left little room for critique, and that pride itself can limit critical thinking entirely. Indeed, UKCoC organisers demonstrated an intolerance of dissent and took active measures to silence critics. Despite claiming to have initiated community-based discussions and conversations, Hull2017 achieved consent not through broad dialogue, but through managerial methods of promotion and narrative control. It treated Hull residents not primarily as citizens, but mainly as consumers, and as a result, pride was carefully scripted from without – rather than allowing it to flourish from within. In a city whose modern history has been marked by the negative social impacts of de-industrialisation, recessions, and austerity politics, and has faced the territorial stigmatisation of 'crap town' jokes – such behaviour by self-described 'reckless' cultural leaders is, I suggest, not the most responsible or recuperative long-term strategy for the sustainable revival of feelings of belonging.

Despite this, many research participants, when asked about the future of the city post-2017 remained hopeful and it is important to remember the lived experiences and meanings that UKCoC enabled. For instance, one young man from the Warren focus group session, who observed:

PARTICIPANT 3: I have high hopes really. I feel like it's going to be colourful.

MICHAEL: Any particular colours?

PARTICIPANT 3: Well, all the colours that we can see.

Thus, for some, Hull's UKCoC year raised public discussion about the city, providing a chance for it to be reimagined with a limitless optimism that chimes with Dolan's 'utopian performative' (see Chapter 2):

Small but profound moments in which [an audience is 'called'] in such a way that lifts everyone slightly above the present, into a hopeful feeling of what the world might be like if every moment of our lives were as emotionally voluminous, generous, aesthetically stirring and intersubjectively intense (Dolan, 2010:5).

One success Hull2017 can therefore claim is to have challenged the worst images of the city (CPPI, 2019). It not only projected the refurbishment of the city centre and promoted more and better cultural activities, it also raised the question of whether its poor reputation had ever been a fair judgement. However, it missed opportunities to challenge the regimes that generated such damaging judgements and perhaps overpromised the benefits any new identity could truly deliver.

That said, Hull2017 ultimately failed to articulate *any* new substantive identity for Hull – perhaps also due to ‘running out of steam’ in the final season, which had originally promised to ‘redefine’ and ‘tell the world’ (see section 6.1.2) compounded by the unsteady transition from The Culture Company to Absolutely Cultured. Other cities (admittedly larger, more central/core and therefore more resourced and perhaps more ‘narrative rich’) have used CMEs to put community development and social inclusion at the centre of their agendas. For example, in their ECoC years, Helsinki used the slogans ‘a City of Children’ and ‘a City for All’ and Rotterdam ‘Vital City and ‘young@rotterdam’ (Turşie, 2015). There were, and still are options for Hull. For example, it could develop a more cohesive narrative around its importance and potential as a Green Energy hub, which, given the city’s precarity in the event of rising sea levels shows a surprising lack of imagination and foresight. Doubly so, for as Tommarchi and Bianchini point out (2020:197), in the Hull City Plan, both ‘culture and renewables are the two key aspects for the future of Hull’.

As the main evaluation report states, this in turn invites the question of whether the changes in media coverage reflect a real and deep shift in public opinion (CPPI, 2019). This question is particularly pertinent as the press has ‘proved itself to be unresponsive to marginal or critical points of view’ and focused ‘almost only on “stand-out events” and quoted mainly high-profile people from the municipality or from Hull UK City of Culture 2017 Ltd, with few exceptions’ (CPPI, 2019). Finally, the critical capability of the press could in some cases be questioned, as it often reproduced data provided by Hull City Council or by Hull UK City of Culture 2017 Ltd itself, with little or no analysis. As one participant put it, this bombardment of positive images was ‘too much of everything. But all of it on the surface. Nothing really going any deeper’ (Hilde, Interview, 2019). Thus, despite its claims to ‘tell the world’, the initiative missed opportunities for a more outward looking programme and deliberately assuaged critique. Hull2017 might have taken advantage of its ‘spotlight’ more progressively and thoughtfully by questioning the politics behind place shaming strategies it has historically been beholden,

rather than implicitly accepting them through its claims of 'overcoming' and 'changing the narrative'. By not interrogating or making visible regimes of territorial stigmatisation and instead, eliciting an uncritical pride, Hull2017 has only 'papered over the cracks', and left a rather limited impact on the wider Hull civic imaginary.

Chapter 7 *Made in Hull*: Dramaturgies of shame and pride

If you make it feel like a Hull Fair ride they'll fucking love it. And they did (Sean McAllister, 2019).

7.1 Introduction

Building on the discussions of the previous chapter, which looked at the institutional and policy contexts of shame and pride through Hull2017, here I concentrate my investigations on how those issues operated through and arose from three high profile UKCoC public art works. Presenting multi-dimensional views, I relate their encoded narratives and myths to the political, social, economic, and cultural changes occurring in Hull. My focus on the emotional dynamics of these meanings – in particular the emotions of place - aims to build on diverse literatures which argue the implications of culture in the process of urban regeneration. Such literatures commonly critique ‘the impression of affluence, vibrancy, conviviality and change’ that city of culture and similar initiatives create (Hall, 2003a:216), while at the same time occlude the lived realities which can be quite different to the ‘carnival mask’ (Harvey, 1990a:421). However, these literatures can be open to accusations of elitism or over-abstraction and rarely, if ever, take into account the lived experiences of art in the public realm by incorporating views and feelings ‘from the ground’. Experiences which, as I will show, can be tightly interwoven with the affective dynamics of place.

As Chapter 2 described, critiques of cultural mega events typically focus on the hegemonic neoliberal understanding of ‘creative cities’ and ‘creative class’ (e.g. Florida, 2004). Edensor and Sumartojo (2018:112) argue that such criticisms can often characterise the festival spectator as being ‘seduced into passivity by the overwhelming spectacles’ and that such ‘overgeneral assertions’ have at times been too frequently and easily applied to critiques of urban festivals. Via Livingstone (2013), they call for greater attention to the active role played by audiences who can carefully ‘consider artistic installations, refer to prior experience, or feel challenged and confounded’ (2018:115). They suggest that ‘festivals can stimulate alternative, critical, and creative responses that militate against such unsubstantiated assertions, offering moments of communitas, expressiveness, and defamiliarization’ (ibid). My empirical data indicates Hull2017 can be simultaneously conceptualised as a ‘space of hope’ (Harvey, 2000) which provided opportunities to regenerate the social life of local communities, whilst also performing as a ‘civic spectacle to attract mobile capital and affluent tourists’ (Waite, 2008:515-516). This chapter attempts to traverse these potential contradictions.

Central to the discussion, is my claim that Hull2017 implemented a dramaturgy of affectual transformation from shame to pride in Hull residents. By 'dramaturgy', I mean the art or technique of dramatic composition or theatrical representation as understood in theatre and performance studies (e.g. Fuchs, 2004). This is different to, though forms the basis of, Goffman's use of dramaturgy as sociological perspective, where '[a]ll the world is not, of course, a stage, but the crucial ways in which it isn't are not easy to specify' (Goffman, 1956:78). Goffman considers that a performance is 'all the activity of a given participant [...] which serves to influence in any way, any of the other participants' (1956:26). In this way, 'dramaturgy' becomes a useful metaphor for the strategies of Hull2017 in that it helps us to think of the initiative as a performance, which has an audience and, importantly, an effect. I recall my earlier arguments from Chapter 6, which critiqued the Hull2017 leadership for their construction of tightly scripted and controlled strategies to 'evidence' the transformative power of culture (Belfiore, 2011). As the previous chapters have shown, desire for change was a prominent feature of Hull's civic imaginaries and a keen motivator of its recent political and cultural behaviours. Thinking about the Hull2017 project as a dramaturgy allows me to look at the events as further strategies, which 'performed' together affectually, to create the *feeling* of 'change' through the bodies of Hullensians.

I suggest that these bodies, hungry for civic pride, were then exploited as impressions of a 'changed' city within promotional materials to sell Hull as a tourist destination or investment opportunity. In this reading, Hull2017's engagement with pride is a superficial process of governing by emotion, which successfully scripted residents' emotional transformation during a year long marketing campaign. In doing so, it reduced the multiple, contesting histories and emotions of place into one, readily consumable image. Yet, whilst remaining critical of this closed and calculated dramaturgy which figures Hull residents as subjects to do culture 'on', the very act of hosting a monumental endeavour such as UKCoC and the stagings of numerous, spectacular events, generated in many Hullensians, responses of wonder and amazement. Feelings which are perhaps akin to what Bianchini et. al. (1992) have described as 'urban enchantment', with the potential of restoring confidence in the city and its inhabitants. For Bennett (2001:5), 're-enchantment' heightens the senses to 'notice new colours, discern details previously ignored, hear extraordinary sounds, as familiar landscapes of sense sharpen and intensify'. I will describe how some events defamiliarised the city in this way, to create a new sensory and affective experience of Hull's spaces, potentially challenging 'normative uses and feelings' (Edensor and Andrews, 2019:264).

As such, many of my conversations with Hull-based organisations and residents contained positive, future-thinking phrases such as ‘if we can do this, imagine what else we can do’. Perhaps this temporary re-enchanting of Hull, is the utopian version of pride that Dolan describes as facilitating the *means* for imagining alternative modes of being and belonging (2010). Her ‘utopian performative’, which sees theatre and performance (and, I would argue – all the arts) as unique sites for ‘experiment[ing] with the possibilities of the future in ways that shine back usefully on a present’ (Dolan, 2010:113). Dolan suggests these moments can provide space in which ‘people constitute themselves as citizens’ which may also ‘model civic engagement in participatory democracy’ (2010:90). Thus, cultural practices can offer hope to a community of spectators by affording opportunities for civic engagement (Dolan, 2010:23). Dolan’s argument for revitalizing humanity, also centres on the utopian “‘what if’”, and on theatre and performance as a site for exhibiting and inspiring social change (2010:13).

The workings of pride and shame through Hull2017 events is therefore a thorny and ambiguous terrain, and I set out here to reveal their interactions and tensions within the affectual processes of urban transformation. I do this through the critical analysis of three large scale public art events which took place in the opening months of the UKCoC year: *Made in Hull*, *Blade* and *I Wish to Communicate with You*. I show that their dramaturgies of shame and pride successfully transformed Hull in the minds of many, from ‘crap town’ to proud city, virtually overnight. Scrutinising the affectual dynamics of these events is especially important, when, as discussed in the previous chapter, Hull2017 management so rigorously prevented critique or dissent in the wider public realm. I argue that the Hull2017 creative programme worked concurrently with these anti-critical strategies to form an organised process of emotional governance.

Additionally, it is crucial to look beyond the purely local to acknowledge the broader contexts of the works I will discuss. Though Hull is often described as being ‘apart’, it does not exist in a vacuum, and Hull2017, with its very public commemorations of identity, occurred at a time of significant shifts in national and international political and cultural geographies. As discussed in Chapter 2, urban imaginaries are often shaped by national (and supra-national) politics and cultures, either through their alignment or opposition. The shift to the political right in the UK, and with it the rise of authoritarian neoliberalism (Stocker, 2017; Glaser, 2018; Govil and Baishya, 2018), is often accompanied by an increased tendency of coercion (Burak, 2017), that ‘directly challenges and seeks to control culture and cultural policy in support of particular

political discourses' (Borén *et al.*, 2020:4). Thus, my analysis attempts to relate Hull2017 artefacts to these wider settings: especially the issues that the 2016 EU referendum (and subsequent general elections) raised in Hull concerning cultural identity, cultural and political representation, and political participation. If the previous chapter focussed on the *Hull* of Hull UK City of Culture, here I hope to recognize that such initiatives, and the contesting narratives around them, are also active in constituting identities on other scales.

The core of this chapter then, is based on critical artefact analysis, a form of investigation that is currently scarce in the literature on Hull2017 (though see Nicholas, 2019), and, surprisingly rare in the literatures of other major CMEs (though see Harvie, 2013a). I argue that such attention is a necessary contribution, as Cities of Culture initiatives can be understood as potential speech acts which help to imagine the sort of *living* city that is so 'difficult' to rebuild (Jacobs, 2016). As Donald notes, constructing the living, symbolic city is 'difficult' because 'the city exists in that complex living, not just in [...] architecture or design' (1997:187). To take account of this 'living' in Hull, my analysis therefore incorporates the responses made by my research participants, media commentary and reflections from the creators and producers to bridge the relationships between the symbolic and the real.

7.1.1 *Made in Hull*

The three works I discuss were central to the UKCoC year's re-imagining of the city: all three featured heavily in the publicity and marketing materials during the initial months of 2017 and all three remain as key imagery in Hull2017 memorial materials (see previous chapter). Significantly, the works I focus on all took place in the opening season, *Made in Hull*, which, according to the *Hull City of Culture Strategic Business Plan* (The Culture Company, 2015:33), was designed around the claim that, 'Hull knows about its contribution to the world, now it's time everyone else did'. However, of the 40 events promoted in the opening season brochure, only 48% can be identified as 'local projects', as Jackson has shown (2018:42). Thus, we might question exactly *how* 'Hull' the season really was, and further, to the ways in which, through the season, Hull's past and future was re-visioned. All of the projects I shall discuss directly included the participation of Hull residents, yet were externally curated or had substantial creative involvement of artists that were not from the city. My observation here is not to suggest that these external contributions were inappropriate or unwelcomed, but rather to highlight a concern that the city's internal voice in practices of regeneration was at risk of

distillation. Indeed, given the repeated claims of Hull having refound its voice (see previous chapter), its dilution in the opening season is striking.

7.2 Public and site-specific

In my analysis, I consider all three works to be in various ways 'public' and 'site-specific'. It also helps to acknowledge the 'readymadness' of *Blade* which is vital to its potential meanings. The following section outlines my understandings of the terms and their relevance, before a more detailed discussion of the works themselves.

7.2.1 Public art

As Hall notes (2003a:224), there has been much debate and disagreement surrounding the definition of public art. Yet it remains a common feature of city planning as a platform from which to commemorate local, civic, and regional identities. Zebracki offers a 'general' definition of 'public art', describing the term as referring to:

Either permanent or temporary artworks, including social and contextual art practices [...] which are commissioned for openly accessible locations, that is, outside conventional settings such as museums and galleries. Public art is peculiar in that it integrates the site as part of the content [...] which makes the ontological nature of public art complex and contested (Zebracki, 2013:303).

Thus, in its spaces of production, public art writes on the symbolic landscape of cities (Cosgrove and Daniels, 1988), while it is read and rewritten by its publics in particularly situated spaces and times (Haraway, 1988; 1991). Deutsche (1988; 1991; 1992) problematises this formulation further through her reading of the public sphere as a social rather than physical space and views art as being 'public' in three ways: first, by *addressing* a public, for example by raising issues of relevance or interest; second, by becoming *significant* in the everyday lives of a public; and thirdly, by *intervening* in the public realm, for example by critiquing the processes of urban change. Thus, public art can serve several purposes, such as (among others): propaganda, creative self-expression, community dialogue, enhancement of the physical infrastructure and environment, demarcation, celebration, and transformation of place.

Public art and sculpture are central to many landscapes of urban regeneration and this was particularly so in Hull during 2017, much of which explored aspects of the city's history and

identities.⁷² Hall & Robertson (2001:13-14) argue that, like ‘sense of place’, ‘civic identity’ is a widely deployed rhetoric in public arts advocacy, particularly in high-profile or prestige developments. Advocates of public art often claim that it can enhance civic identity, which in turn is said to produce positive social benefits (e.g. Conway, 1989; Douglas, 1993). Further, contemporary representations of ‘the civic’ through public art programmes can ‘recast from within identities currently emergent as a tradition of transformation’ (Hall, 2003b:216). Such claims suggest that public art can be active in the development of tangible networks and community links, promoting social development and cohesion. Indeed, the ‘Hero’ Evaluation Report for the ‘Look Up’ initiative (of which *Blade* was the star attraction) produced by the in-house Hull2017 organisers, makes exactly these claims, containing celebratory sections (albeit brief and with little to no analysis) entitled ‘Creating Connections to the City’, ‘Creating Connections in Communities’ and ‘Challenging Audiences’ (Unwin, 2018a:208-211).

With main entrances to the Princes Quay Shopping Centre, Ferens Art Gallery, Hull City Hall, the old Dock Offices (now the Maritime Museum) and as site of the remains of Beverley Gate where John Hotham refused entry to King Charles I, Queen Victoria Square is arguably the city’s civic centre. As Edensor (2000:8) states, such spaces are particularly symbolic [...] and are the sites of contestation over their meaning, representation and use.’ Dominated by Victorian era architecture as well as by a central monument to Victoria herself, the square epitomises Hull’s faded civic pomp (see Chapter 2). It is a space accustomed to large public gatherings, such as the culmination of the annual LGBT Pride march, the switching on of the Christmas lights, and in June 2020, the site of protest in support of the Black Lives Matter movement as well as the anti-lockdown protests in late 2020. That *Blade* and *We Are Hull* were situated there, is of crucial importance to the role both pieces played in the minds of many, to re-imagine the city.

⁷² Such as *The City Speaks* by Michael Pinsky, an interactive work which ‘functioned as a 21st century Speakers’ Corner [as] spoken words were translated to text and relayed on the west tower of Hull’s tidal surge barrier’ (Unwin, 2018a:44); *The Train Track and the Basket* by Claire Barber - a series of digitally printed vinyl panels installed on 14 arched windows at the main entrance to Paragon Station which explored ‘transmigration and the notion that craft skills and belongings cross routes of passage, as well as people’ (Unwin, 2018a:44); and *Washed Up Car-Go* by Chris Dobrowolski which consisted of three ‘ordinary cars, whose interiors had been replaced with a high tide line of three beaches around Hull’ which ‘invited people to reflect on plastic pollution’ (Unwin, 2018a:44).

Deutsche (1998) argues that urban space is both a reflection of the inequitable forces of capital and active in perpetuation of these forces, and she refers to much public art produced in the West, as 'technocratic' (1991:49). A term which Hall (2003a:223) understands as being not 'concerned with disrupting, exposing or intervening in prevailing processes of urbanisation, but rather working within them and solving problems and producing "better" cities'. Deutsche (1991:49) argues this results in a humanizing and beautifying of urban space, which may address community needs and create senses of place but ultimately perpetuates the inequitable consequences of capital accumulation. Instead, she advocates for public art which seeks to disrupt, expose or critically intervene in such processes, to achieve what she calls 'alternative space', and the imagination of genuinely better, just, urban futures (1991). Thus, in Deutsche's view, many prominent examples of what is commonly regarded as public art are not public at all and instead more the products of artistic egos and aestheticizing strategies, rather than attempts to engage with issues of relevance to a public. My critique of Hull2017's closed affectual dramaturgy tends to align with this view.

Similarly, Phillips also highlights the critical 'blandness' of much contemporary institutional public art, which she attributes to the complex procedures through which they are produced, and their relationships to sponsorship by corporate capital (1988). Phillips argues that the 'machinery' of public art production has avoided challenging, critical interventions in the public realm for fears of how it might be received and describes the negotiations of complex bureaucracy, policy briefs, and selection procedures (such as competitions) that the production of public art typically involves. Thus, the artistic outcomes of these processes 'tend to be unprovocative [...], offering neither critical reflection on its setting nor artistic risk' (Hall and Robertson, 2001:20). Additionally, Knight (2008:2) suggests that:

At its most public, art extends opportunities for community engagement but cannot demand particular conclusion, it introduces social ideas but leaves room for the public to come to their own conclusions.

These considerations are pertinent to my examples, which were presented without accompanying curators' notes, or other interpretative guides (other than their official press-releases and brief artist statements available on the UKCoC website), leaving the public to come to their own conclusions.

Finally, the reliance of public art on corporate sponsorship has become one of the mechanisms by which commercial capital accrues cultural caché and legitimacy, and through this can ‘inscribe difference and exclusion into the urban landscape’ (Hall and Robertson, 2001:20). Thus, public art can present selective versions of civic histories, myths and identity which are at odds with reality and can be read within the context of the reproduction of social justice and injustice. Yet, it plays a significant promotional role in the foregrounding of ‘cover shot’ images circulated through local, national, and international media. This is a crucial consideration in my upcoming analyses, for the examples I focus on have become dominant images in, and of Hull.

7.2.2 Site-specific art

Given that they featured so monumentally in, or near, Hull’s civic centre, I argue that to investigate the selected Hull2017 works, is also to provoke consideration of the city itself. Located in Queen Victoria Square, both *Blade*, and *We Are Hull* required obviously ‘situated’ viewing experiences (see figures 6-4 and 6-5, previous chapter) , whereas *I Wish to Communicate with You*, though easily viewed from within the Thornton Estate, could also be seen from afar (figure 6-6 previous chapter). Several participants recall catching glimpses of the colourful tower blocks from the train as it neared the station and one participant said they saw it whilst on a boat on the Humber. Thus, the three works can be termed ‘site specific’, for as Kwon (2002:77) states:

The specificity of site-oriented works means that they are conceived for, dependent upon, and inseparable from their locations. The scale, the size, and the placement of sculptural elements result from an analysis of the particular environmental components of a given context.

This echoes Richard Serra’s response to the public debate, and legal action, over the removal of his *Tilted Arc* sculpture. Providing a key definition of ‘site-specific’, Serra concluded that ‘to move the work is to destroy the work’ (1994 [1969]:194). Whilst the blade that comprises *Blade* was not ‘conceived’, is not ‘dependent upon’ and was very much separable from its location (seeming therefore to contradict Kwon’s definition), its very out-of-placeness transformed the blade *and* Queen Victoria Square into *Blade*, an art-work to be understood in and of the specific space and time it was located. To make the point explicit, *Blade*’s meaning would have changed entirely if it had been in a different place or space (or time) - what for example, would it have meant placed next to the Reckitt’s chimney? Or on the top of a Thornton Street tower block? Would *I Wish to Communicate with You* have been understood less as a community response to social exclusion if the lights were not situated in that specific place with its histories of isolation and stigmatisation?

One might reasonably argue that the individual works comprising *Made in Hull*, could have been installed anywhere in the city without altering their inherent meanings. Indeed, Budworth's *Hollywood Icons* images were exhibited elsewhere under the banner of UKCoC in 2017, and the *105+dB* sound installation by Invisible Flock at Zebedee's Yard (down Whitefriargate around the corner from QVS) had previously been seen/heard in Ghent, Leeds and Lille and subsequently in Qatar and Gateshead. I suggest though, that the entire *Made in Hull* project effectively turned the city-centre into a venue for performance, recalling Lefebvre's (1996) notion of the 'theatre city' in which the audience and actors are the same, and that in the works (and the walking between), spectators became collaborative participants, functioning in Zaiontz's terms as both 'sight' of artistic attention and the physical 'site' of performance (2012:167). To continue the theatrical analogy, the multi-site nature of *Made in Hull* introduced new routes, scenographies and viewpoints through the city centre, devising a trail of temporary artistic landmarks which re-organised the urban environment by endowing new physical and symbolic meanings on those spaces and locations. As I will detail, many participants describe these experiences of walking new pathways to familiar places as triggers for their own memories, stories and experiences, which entered into dialogue with the individual art works.

Finally, for Kaye, site-specific art 'works to *trouble* the oppositions between the site and the work' (2000:11 original emphasis), and therefore:

'The site functions as a text perpetually in the process of being written and being read, [...so] the site-specific work's very attempt to establish its place will be subject to the process of slippage, deferral and indeterminacy in which its signs are constituted' (2000:183).

While such 'slippages' are a central, significant trope of site-specific work, they complicated simple definitions of the components of the genre, as well as the form as a whole (Birch and Tompkins, 2012:1). That *I Wish To Communicate With You* was a direct attempt to draw attention to a stigmatised place in a stigmatised city, that *Made in Hull* was the opening (and spectacular) gambit of the year and *Blade* the flagship commission of a larger series, the sites of these works was not simply the locale of Great Thornton Street or Queen Victoria Square, but psychogeographically, the entire city. Thereby creating a dialogue at the beginning of 2017 between the pieces and the city's people.

7.2.3 Ready made

Ready-made is a term coined by Marcel Duchamp and refers to artworks that are literally objects that already exist, demonstrating the principle that ‘what is art is defined by the artist’ (Duchamp, 1917; Tate, 2019). Choosing the object itself becomes a creative act, cancelling out the useful function of the object makes it art, and its presentation in the gallery (or in the case of *Blade*, in the public realm) gives it new meanings. Duchamp’s approach has influenced subsequent generations of avant-garde artists, including Andy Warhol, Damien Hirst and Tracy Emin. Whilst a detailed engagement with Duchamp’s impact on the development of artistic movements is beyond the remit here, his work and that of his successors, has provoked significant interrogation of the very idea and foundations of ‘art’. Indeed, many of my participants describe *Blade* as prompting such discussions based around the question ‘Is it really art - and if so – why’?

For *Blade* artist Nayan Kulkarni ‘from the moment [the wind turbine blade] left the factory it became the artwork’ (Interview, 2020). Therefore, one must ask: what new meanings are made when a giant wind turbine blade is placed in Queen Victoria Square in 2017? Similarly, one might ask, what does it mean for the Thornton Estate to be lit so audaciously, and what does it mean to project a city’s history on the very fabric of that city? In such questions we come to deeper understandings of all three pieces (which were revealed in a season titled *Made in Hull*) not only as ‘Ready Made’ but also as ‘Home Made’ – potentially layering each with further feelings of pride in the ‘homegrown’ or ‘local-talent’.

7.2.4 Everyday understandings of Hull2017

These definitions help problematise the publicness and site-specificity of Hull2017, providing frameworks for me to discuss my three examples. Whilst my thinking about the Hull2017 artworks begins with this art-critical approach, it is important to acknowledge that it does not take account of the various ways in which audiences engage with public art and the spaces in which they are situated. Deutsche and Phillips principally critique the intentions of the artist, planners, and policy makers, which as Hall argues (and is surely vital in debates concerning the *public*) ignore the ‘actual engagements that take place between art and a public and accept that these engagements, regardless of the intentions of the producers of art, define art as public’ (2003a:224). Whilst Deutsche’s conception of ‘alternative space’ is of value to this project (comparable to Dolan’s ‘utopian performative’, perhaps), her critique misses the significance of public experiences of art and instead focusses on the more exclusive decoding

of symbolic meanings which rely on educational and cultural capital. Such advantages are not necessarily available to all who commission, create or engage with the finished works, and therefore neglect the ways in which, once created through signification, public art might be incorporated into the practices of everyday life or intervene in the production of space (Hall and Robertson, 2001). It also perhaps neglects the self-awareness of artists and curators themselves, who are capable of reflecting on their position within the systems wherein their work is made. For example, Kulkarni recalled to me a meeting in which he was asked: 'What is the difference between *Blade* and advertising?' To which he responded:

What is the difference between *City of Culture* and advertising? This whole thing is a really complicated piece of marketing, regeneration and social development [...] Yes, *Blade* is doing all the things that Cities of Culture are accused of. Regeneration, third way funding of the arts etc, but it's *pointing* at them. And everyone's loving it (Kulkarni, Interview, 2020).

Despite Kulkarni's understanding of the issues and ethics of making such a spectacular work as *Blade*, it is debatable how much it was *understood* as a pointing device – a limitation he acknowledged himself, as I discuss below.

If public art is argued as being a vehicle for the articulation or 'making visible' senses of community (Hall and Robertson, 2001:10), then it is important to make community opinions visible. We return then, to questions of power and representation that have preoccupied this thesis: who or what is being made visible by whom, and with what consequences? My contribution to this debate is to investigate some of the affectual dynamics of public art through Hull2017, and through this, reveal understandings of their interplay with the city's civic imaginary.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, respondents' perceptions of the artworks and their knowledge and feelings about their sites are often intertwined, and it is hard to disentangle to what extent the perceptions are shaped by the whole (the artwork *and* the site) or by the artwork in and of itself. Additionally, my empirical data contains a plethora of opinions about Hull2017 artefacts, which cover their aesthetic, social and cultural-symbolic roles, often in relation to their sites. Overall, however, except for respondents who were professional arts workers, academics, or who had close associations with Hull2017 (such as volunteers), an important observation is that initial perceptions were often expressed in platitudes. That said, the respondents who could not formulate a judgement of the aesthetic merits of Hull2017 events and artefacts,

often because they considered themselves not qualified to judge, were the most interesting research participants, and my fieldnotes evidence repeated attempts to provoke respondent's engagement with the *content* of the art works, rather than their broader contexts. For example, I would often probe – 'what does/did it *mean*?' to elicit understandings of the work's potential meanings beyond the purely superficial, though in many cases, more critical engagements were unforthcoming. Yet, as I will show, participants were often comfortable in expressing their *feelings*, demonstrating that the pieces worked affectually – particularly within the domains of pride and shame.

I return then to Edensor and Sumartojo's cautioning (2018:129), expressed at the start of this chapter and their conception of the festival as a 'sensual, material realm' in which 'affective experiences' might prompt us to reimagine our surroundings and histories. As discussed, writings on public art have been accused of being distant or remote from those who experience them everyday, often failing to capture the 'moment' or 'moments' of a work in all its emotional intensity. Thus, I attempt to place my own critical analysis in conversation with the 'everyday' emotional articulations of Hull2017 events, presented by 'ordinary' audiences. In doing so, I hope to present a multi-dimensional understanding of the pieces' potential meanings, as well as their affectual impacts on the civic imaginaries of Hull.

7.3 The works

In this section I describe the form and content of each piece, and summarize the publicly available contextual materials such as artist statements and commissioning rationale. I also begin to introduce comments from my research participants, which will illuminate my later discussions on Hull2017's affectual dramaturgy and influence on the Hull civic imaginary.

7.3.1 *We Are Hull*

We Are Hull was a spectacular fifteen-minute multimedia sound and light installation by Zsolt Balogh, with soundtrack by Dan Jones. It was the centrepiece of the inaugural Hull2017 event, *Made in Hull*,⁷³ which featured among the senior creative team several Hullensians including

⁷³ This could cause some confusion: the opening season and event were both titled *Made in Hull*. The specific event I analyse and discussed with participants, was *We Are Hull*.

Sean McAllister (curator) and Rupert Creed (writer). The entire *Made in Hull* project consisted of eleven multi-media installations at eight sites across the city centre, and ran from 1st-7th January 2017, with an invitation to attend sent to every home in the Kingston-Upon Hull local authority area - a total of 118,500 households (Unwin, 2018b:2). Over 340,000 people are reported to have attended (CPPI, 2018:36), which suggests that people attended more than once and that many people attended from beyond the city boundary. The 'Hero' Evaluation Report for *Made in Hull* explains that it was:

Designed as a large-scale and comprehensive celebration of the city [...] to present the story of Hull in surprising and stunning ways [...] a statement of intent of how Hull 2017 intended to (re)position the city, engage in meaningful ways with its communities, and produce innovative and inspiring major events with their own legacy (Unwin, 2018b:2).

Highlights of the week included *Hollywood Icons* by Hull-based Quentin Budworth in which iconic moments from Hollywood films were recreated with people from the city at sites familiar to Hull locals; *Amuse Agents* by Preston Likely (also from Hull) was an 'inconvenience store' shop window covered with joke advertisements; and *Arrivals and Departures*, an epic, stop-frame animation by Imitating the Dog, was projected on the vast side of Hull's aquarium, The Deep, detailing the stories of how Hull's distinct character and culture has been formed over time by the different peoples who have passed through and those who have stayed.⁷⁴

The week-long *Made in Hull* venture generated hugely positive reactions in the local and national media. Many commentators picked out *We Are Hull* specifically for its epic and affective showcasing of Hull's history (e.g. ITV News, 2017; Johnson, 2017; Parveen, 2017). The Hero Evaluation Report found that *We Are Hull* was 'most commonly described as a highly emotive experience' and that 'these emotions were a reaction to how the history was brought to life by the artwork' (Unwin, 2018b:19). My research attests to this, making *We Are Hull* the focus of my analysis here. Though it is worth noting the cumulative effect of witnessing/participating in *all* the *Made in Hull* pieces, and that the experiences I shall describe, especially the co-creation of civic pride, were solidified and amplified through experiencing *Made in Hull* in its entirety.

⁷⁴ *Arrivals and Departures* was underpinned by the work of University of Hull historian Dr Nicholas Evans, who researches Hull's migrant history and the 'impact those people have made on the city and further afield' (Evans quoted in Culturenet.co.uk, 2017).

As I joined the gathering crowds on a cold January evening, images of all kinds of clocks, digital and analogue, were projected onto the buildings of Queen Victoria Square, counting down the minutes and seconds before *We Are Hull* began. I remember feeling many emotions, including excitement, curiosity, and a certain amount of cynicism. The combination of performative elements at work in *We Are Hull*'s prelude, the music, the lights the crowd, activated a kind of shame/pride awareness in me. An anticipatory dread. I felt previously dormant shame/pride sensations rise to the surface, and negative thoughts such as 'Will they pull this off?' and 'Please don't be shit' competed with 'This looks amazing!' and 'Come on Hull!'. It was becoming difficult to be objective. As the projected clocks counted down from ten to one, I, with the rest of the crowd, vocalised their descent. Submitting to the non-conscious, visceral attachments of pride that Wood (2002) has warned against, I (we) had been successfully primed for what was to follow.

Through a series of dynamic film and animation sequences, *We Are Hull* brought to life a whistle-stop tour of Hull's recent history.⁷⁵ Beginning in darkness, Neville Chamberlain's radio broadcast announced that Britain was at war with Germany. Images of the Hull Blitz appeared on the buildings which suddenly seemed to burst into flames - a moment which elicited gasps of shock and tears from some spectators. Other key moments included: Hull Fair, the triple trawler ship sinkings of 1968 in which fifty-eight men drowned at sea, serving as a reminder of Hull's maritime sacrifices, and Dean Windass scoring the winning goal that took Hull City Football Club into the 2008 Premier League for the first time in the club's 104-year history. This latter event drawing a huge roar from the assembled mass.

My participants, though they often call it 'the light show', 'the first week', or 'the lights', rather than its official title, all recognised *We Are Hull* as having a significant impact on them, and many referred to it as their favourite event of the year. Here, for example, are two typical reflections:

⁷⁵ A video of the City Hall projections can be viewed here, where it is also possible to hear the responses of the crowd: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a-8_vZe4a1Y>.

It made me so emotional. Because when it said 'We Are Hull', I thought 'I am bloody Hull'. It's one third of my life I lived in this city. All my adulthood. How I hate it and how I love it and how it changes from day to day. And all these people. Experiencing art and culture together it was so emotional (Monica, Interview, 2019).

I remember seeing the light show. In front of the City Hall. I just remember being really impressed with how it was just all put together and pulled off (Warren Focus Group Participant 3, 2019).

In addition to the praise expressed here, it is worth noting that many other participants similarly appreciated the technical complexities of this project, and how such an ambitious feat had been 'pulled off'. As I shall discuss, these responses were often shared in an excited or surprised manner, making it clear that for them, *Made in Hull* might *not* have been pulled off, and indeed – that in some way, they had steeled themselves for disappointment.

Towards the end of the presentation, an assemblage of famous, contemporary Hullensians merged with those of the near and distant past in a visual rollcall of Hull's influential sons and daughters. William Wilberforce, Amy Johnson, Philip Larkin, Lilian Billocca, John Prescott, The Beautiful South, Barbara Buttrick. Gradually, less familiar, 'ordinary' faces appeared: citizens of everyday Hull, montaging with their celebrated forebears. Nurses, firemen, knitting grandmas, school children, Sunday football teams, rugby supporters, shop workers. Having witnessed the city in flames minutes earlier, the effect of this sequence was stirring. Projected onto the civic buildings of Queen Victoria Square, the faces of Hull's *polis*, past and present, were granted iconic status. Heightening the effect, the musical soundtrack achingly approached its cinematic conclusion and eventually, at the brassy finale, the words 'WE ARE HULL' were emblazoned on the buildings in block capitals. Phoenix-like, Hull's inhabitants had risen from the ashes and were given brief, flickering presence. For once, at last, we were in the spotlight for something positive, and on a cold January evening it generated a feeling of warmth - I felt *proud* of my city.

7.3.2 *Blade*

The 'humanisation of public spaces within the city' (CPPI, 2018:127), was to continue through the first season of 2017 and the momentum for UKCoC which *Made in Hull* had instigated, was capitalised on with the installation of *Blade*. Conceived by artist Nayan Kulkarni, *Blade* was a 75-metre-long wind turbine blade, placed on display in Queen Victoria Square. It was the first of the *Look Up* series of major art commissions for Hull's public spaces designed to 'make

people look at and experience the city in new ways' (Taylor, 2016). The 28-tonne structure was delivered from the Siemens factory where it was made four miles away and remained on show until the 18th March 2017. It was visited by an estimated 420,888 people, making it the most visited single event of the year and generated a significant amount of media and social media attention (Unwin, 2018a:11, 30).⁷⁶ According to the *Look Up Hero Report*:

Blade was 'clearly the most successful artwork in creating a sense of place for residents and visitors that experienced Look Up [...] As such, public art commissioners can learn from the example this artwork set. It created theatre as it was installed; created an intervention within an area of high footfall; and had a clear and tangible link to Hull and industry' (Unwin, 2018a:161).

A few weeks after *Blade's* arrival, I made several visits to view the monumental sculpture. Sleek and pristinely white, *Blade* cut brazenly through Queen Victoria Square. Its colour, material and minimalist form juxtaposing the Italianate and neo-classical facades of the buildings that surrounded it. Its scale obscured the previously imposing monument of Queen Victoria herself. Confident and proudly asserting its place in Hull's civic centre, *Blade* disrupted the physical flow of the city and demanded negotiation. I, along with fellow viewers investigated *Blade's* materiality, temperature and timbre by tapping and rubbing it.

Local media reported various responses from those who experienced the installation and much of this discourse focussed on what they likened *Blade* to: children described it as a sea creature or a giant tooth, and some adults talked of its abstract grace (Campbell, 2017b). All of my participants spoke positively of it, with many in awe at its vastness and for its altering of their physical experience of urban space. For example, Hilde thought it was 'such a beautiful object. So beautiful. Especially between those buildings' and that it was 'the first time [she] noticed those buildings properly' (Hilde, Interview, 2019). A young person from The Warren focus group session, said they 'just thought it was amazing that it was in the city centre, and in the way' (Participant One, Warren focus group, 2019). Such responses demonstrate the success of *Blade* as a novelty which encouraged Hull citizens to see and experience the familiar architectures of QVS anew. For many in the city, the sheer scale and theatricality of *Blade's*

⁷⁶ That 420,888 people deliberately 'visited' *Blade* is perhaps questionable, given that it was situated in the main square of the city centre which is frequented by a relatively large number of people anyway. It is reasonable to assume that a significant number of people saw it by chance.

appearance made it something to be proud of, in particular for how it spoke to a city looking toward a new future and a route away from post-industrial dissatisfaction.

For example, at the time of *Blade's* unveiling, Hull City Council Leader, Stephen Brady declared:

It is a fantastic accolade to have the largest handmade object in the world right here in our city centre and it is sure to bring visitors from far and wide. *Blade* will set off our newly transformed public realm and symbolises Hull's cultural and economic regeneration. We are proud to be supporting this (quoted in Campbell, 2017b).

Brady's enthusiasm was understandable, for, as I discussed in Chapter Two, by introducing 700 new jobs (96% of which were filled by Hull residents) and investing £310 million into infrastructure, Siemens Gamesa are perceived by many to be key partners if Hull's fortunes are to be revived (Bounds, 2016). Yet, Brady's assertion of *Blade* as a totemic symbol of economic regeneration perhaps overlooked potentially deeper meanings embedded in the work - a decoding that was also typical of *Blade's* reception by my interviewees and focus groups participants.

Essentially, beyond its scale, surface, and obvious branding, much public discussion of the blade *as art* ceased when *Blade* (intended *as art*) began. This is perhaps unfortunate, as Kulkarni told me that his intention was to critique the 'relationship between the city and an outdated, stagnant mode of industrial production' (Interview, 2020). Yet, due to its astonishing presence, and its appearance within the 2017 year, any reading beyond the celebrational 'became impossible' (ibid). For Kulkarni, the entire public conversation was about 'City of Culture' as a positive celebration of place - and that ultimately, UKCoC is 'a platform to talk about the platform' (ibid). A similar view was also expressed by Wayne Steven Jackson, whose performance piece about memory and placemaking *Now/Then* ran through the summer of 2017. Jackson observed that in 2017, 'even if I had wanted to make something that meant anything other than being part of City of Culture, the audience *made* it about City of Culture' (Jackson, Interview, 2020). These artists' observations then, suggest that *any* creative work framed by a City of Culture year will be limited in terms of its reception due to its very association with the UKCoC initiative and the broader meanings, hopes and desires of the city's inhabitants. Given that Hull's UKCoC strategy focussed on celebrating and selling the city, it is unsurprising that critical engagements were unforthcoming.

7.3.3 *I Wish to Communicate With You*

The Thornton Estate, site of *I Wish to Communicate With You*, is within walking distance of Paragon Station and the main shopping areas, slightly west of Hull's city centre. Its construction began immediately after the second world war and was completed in the 1970s. The area has a history of housing refugees that continues to this day: it was home to many Jewish people in the late 19th century, and currently accommodates residents from Syria, Iraq, Sudan and other sites of conflict. Known for crime, prostitution, and drug dealing, it has developed a negative, though improving reputation in the city, which my participants understood as:

It's dangerous. It used to be quite dangerous and full of crime, but in recent years, it's gotten a lot better. I know this cos I had to research it (Participant One, Warren FG, 2019).

It's like any inner-city council estate. It's not had the best reputation. But also not everyone who lives there is a crack head. Not everyone who lives there is on heroin or is a single mother or on the dole. Everyone is individual (Andrew, Interview, 2018).

Italian artist Silvio Palladino, community arts worker Sharon Darley and lighting consultant James Bawn created a large-scale installation in the earliest built housing, known locally as 'Australia Houses' – a circular five storey housing block off Porter and Adelaide Streets, with a communal garden in the middle.⁷⁷ Partly funded through the UKCoC Creative Communities Programme and developed from Palladino's time as artist in residence with the estate-based Goodwin Development Trust the previous year, colour tinted filters were fitted in each block's communal lighting areas and placed over the windowpanes of individual flats. The title takes inspiration from Hull's connection with the sea and the international maritime signal flags used to communicate with ships. At night, with the lights switched on, the tower blocks were transformed into a beaming wall of coloured lights. Its bold, saturated shades dramatically altering the appearance of the buildings to act as a beacon for the estate, a stigmatised site in a stigmatised city, calling out to the rest of Hull and beyond.

⁷⁷ For a detailed history of the building of the estate see: https://UKhousing.fandom.com/wiki/Thornton_Estate [Accessed 5. Oct. 2019].

Schivelbusch (1988) has shown how since the 19th century, artificial lighting has transformed the practical, aesthetic, and commercial properties and potentialities of urban spaces, and (Edensor, 2012:1106) details how artificial urban lighting has been

Utilised to enhance safety and mobility, facilitate surveillance, foster domestic intimacy and style, broadcast commercial advertising, fashion signposting, selectively highlight buildings to reinforce state and corporate power, promote festivity, and generally expand the uses of the city at night.

Elsewhere, Edensor has argued that urban illumination typically has an unequal geographical distribution 'with an unevenness in brightness, quality and purpose' (2015:428). He shows how light projected onto buildings is most often associated with local or national state functions, heritage sites, monuments and memorials, 'reinscrib[ing] the identities and values of the powerful on space' (ibid). This process of bestowing status through light casts other sites into darkness, 'effectively manufacturing a reduction in urban difference and complexity [resulting in] unlit material absences such as areas assigned the status of "ghettos" and "slums"' (ibid).

By illuminating the Thornton Estate so daringly, *IWTCWY* attempted to subvert these strategies and bring into light a space once thought of as marginal and excluded. In many ways, it symbolised the central objective Hull2017 had set for the city: 'to come out of the shadows'. Yet, where the artificial lighting, so central to *We Are Hull* illuminated the city's spaces to create an atmosphere of festivity, wonder and pride - mingling affects, emotions and sensations to produce social interaction, my experience of *IWTCWY*, despite its title, objectives and location, was significantly more solitary. At night, with estate residents out of view in their private, domestic spaces, the site was *unpeopled* and the absence of social interaction thus offered little opportunity for genuine communication between the local community and outsiders - though this aspect of the work was not remarked upon by any of my participants.

Böhme (2010:29) points out how urban lighting has developed along with the broader modern expansion of aesthetic experience, and that together with telephony, film, and photography, electric light has a 'technological uncanny' through the production of a phantasmagoric urban realm, producing 'defamiliarisation, uncertainty, and fascination, constitutive aspects of modern experience' (Edensor, 2012:1106). At the Thornton Estate, this resulted in a theatricalisation of space through lighting, produced oneiric and phantasmagoric qualities that

so impressed my respondents. If *Blade* was understood by my participants as a spectacle of engineering, *IWTCWY* - despite its relative technical simplicity - was similarly valued by many as a spectacle of lighting technology.

Thus, the complex and multiple ways in which light transforms space was central to how the Thornton Estate (if not its inhabitants) became reimagined by my participants. For example, one informant explained how he thought *IWTCWY* was a 'very good idea' because 'it brightened up something that was very dull' and that 'it engaged with part of the community that were less likely to engage' (Lee, Interview, 2019). Indeed, for Sharon Darley, the project was about 'raising aspirations, self-confidence and improving the quality of life for a community blighted by bad press and negative assumptions' (Life., 2017). Thus, *I Wish to Communicate with You* was another attempt to use art as a way of re-imagining lived space in the city, typifying the utopian urbanist's desire for better ways of being and living. A desire which reveals the 'gap between present conditions and desired alternatives' (Blomley, 2007:58). The objective of the piece was not only to challenge outside perceptions of the site, but also to reinvigorate residents' own sense of place. By turning a previously marginalised and excluded site into somewhere celebrated within the city's imaginary, *IWTCWY* aimed to contribute a renewed sense of confidence and community spirit on the estate.

7.4 Making Hull (feel) great again

Due to its spectacular appearance and its appeal as a 'cover-shot' image, it might be easy to critique *I Wish To Communicate With You* as a cynical 'art-washing' gesture, where creative practices are used to 'smooth and gloss over' social inequalities or function as a public relations tool, by 'pacifying local communities' (Pritchard, 2017). Or, to quote Darley, who was conscious of such potential accusations, as 'shit rolled in glitter' (Interview, 2018), that would do nothing to genuinely improve the lives of Thornton Estate residents, or facilitate the progressive forms of communication that the title alludes to. However, especially after the 2017 Grenfell Tower disaster and years of cultural representations which have demonised social housing in the UK (Boughton, 2018), I argue that the *doing* of *I Wish To Communicate With You* was a brave act of reaching out from a place of vulnerability, isolation and stigmatisation. As Darley explained, residents had agency in this project by choosing to participate and pick their own colours after a simple process of invitation and consultation that went something like this:

Sharon has a box of lighting gels. Purple, Blue, Green, Yellow. She knocks on the door of a flat. It opens.

Sharon: *(After explaining what the project is)* So...D'you wanna take part?

Resident: *(Thinks. Then...)* Yeah.

Sharon: What colour d'you want?

Resident: *(Takes some time to decide before committing to a choice...)* Blue.

Sharon: Alright then. See you next week.

A simple act of creative decision making that Darley claims recovered a moment's respite from the monotonous 'poverty beige' and benefits forms that the residents routinely encounter at the job centre, health centre or in and around the estate. Crucially, according to Darley, only three residents chose not to take part, indicating overwhelming support for the project from the community. Of key relevance to this thesis, Darley told me that her favourite piece of feedback from a resident was: 'It's made me feel a bit less shit' (Interview, 2018). Such a blunt statement might describe how many Hullensians felt about the city thanks to Hull2017, and it might describe the way many Coventry residents feel about their city after Coventry2021. But what was it that made that resident feel 'a bit less shit' and what can we learn from such accounts? In this final section I explore the sentiment further, and relate its potential meanings to Hull's complicated and changing sense of self.

In many ways the three works I have focussed on in this chapter generated in audiences and participants senses of wonderment and something akin to 'experiential shock' (Haedicke, 2012:103). This is similar to Bakhtin's (1968) formulation that the carnival experience is the ideal merging of utopia and reality, a uniquely experiential space full of the pathos of change and of renewal. Such experiences can challenge habitual ways of responding and thinking, and are powerful factors in Hull2017's dramaturgy of 'transformation' at the individual and potentially collective levels. In some ways, Hull2017 itself was a carnivalesque year of disorder, with the massive number of events, unusual for Hull, interacting with and at times against, the regular rhythm and flows of the city.

As the opening work of Hull2017, *We Are Hull's* prelude of clock count-downs further enhanced the feeling that this was not only the place to be, but the time. As Massey explains, it is 'irretrievably, here and now' (2005:139), as all places exist in time and can be understood therefore as a process rather than 'fixed'. Such a timely gathering in Hull, calls to mind Butler's idea of the performative assembly, where, in times of precarity 'acting in concert can be an embodied form of calling into question the inchoate and powerful dimensions of reigning notions of the political' (2015:9). After decades of economic decline and accompanying senses of shame, the communities of Hull had assembled, many with the expectations of transformation that UKCoC promised to bring.

As discussed earlier, my positive feelings prior to *We Are Hull* were accompanied by a negative sense of foreboding that Hull2017 might turn out to be a failure. Occasionally, my research participants would expand on similar feelings of anticipated disappointment, reflecting on their surprise or shock that the opening UKCoC week dramatically exceeded their expectations. For example:

I was a bit dubious at first because everything that the city council produces, it's not been always the best. But our lass dragged us along cos I wasn't really keen on going at first. I thought it would be rubbish (Andrew, Interview, 2018).

My interview with Andrew is notable for the detail in which he described how his regular, weekday activities were disrupted by his partner's desire to experience *Made in Hull*. In a downbeat, repetitive monotone, he talked of being tired after work, having to drive to pick her up (presumably against his will) and of his difficulties finding somewhere to park. His relating of this part of his *Made in Hull* experience stressed the mundanity of his feelings at that time. His feelings were to change however:

We walked into the town. And we were looking just to get into Queen Victoria Square just as one of the *Made in Hull* things had finished. But it was five minutes to the next one. So, we stood there, and we counted down and it was absolutely amazing. The music, the sound, the lighting. And, yeah, it was awesome to the point where I kinda filled up at a couple of points. It really, really got to me (Andrew, Interview, 2018).

Indeed, as Andrew described his feelings that night, tears formed in his eyes. I asked him what it was about *We Are Hull* that made him have such an emotional reaction:

ANDREW: My family come from Hessle Road. So we have this massive long association with the fishing industry. And when I was talking, I got the image of the trawlers that were being battered by the sea. And one sank. And it reminded me of a story that my grandad told me once. When he heard a distress call. He

was the nearest ship. And he got to the ship. And just as they were getting people off... They were transferring people off and it was sinking. They were transferring people off that ship onto his and just before they got the last sort of five or six people on, it just went straight down into the sea. It's a city that has always been associated with the fishing industry which it's always gonna be. But that's gone now, and it's never gonna come back although some people that you talk to think it's gonna come back any day. It's great that they've showed that. But it's gone and I think sometimes we are going on a bit too much about it and still make a big thing about it. Hull's a bit more than being a city that's been remembered for fishing. A lot more's happened since then. You should never forget where you've come from. You should never forget your past, but you've got to look forward as well.

MICHAEL: So you think that feeling was a feeling of saying goodbye. Of casting something off?

ANDREW: In a way yeah. In a way. But also it could have been a different story. It could have been my grandad that went down. It could have been my uncles that went down on that ship. It was a dangerous job. All for fish.

Andrew's emotional, highly personal reflections on *We Are Hull* was a response I became familiar with during my research encounters. Indeed, most participants relished informing me of their emotional associations with one or more of its narrative elements, and I came to understand their reactions as a catharsis - the purging of emotion through art.

Catharsis is a common feature of popular theatre, and achieved through aesthetic operations to conclude on a note of freedom and feelings of renewal and restoration (Berndtson, 1975:235). It is closely related to the concept of *pathos*, which 'permeates all instances of populist communication' (Hidalgo-Tenorio and Benítez-Castro, 2021:5), and as discussed in Chapter 5, often emphasised in the populist's reliance on feelings of dissatisfaction and disillusionment (Betz, 1994; Inglehart and Norris, 2016; Müller, 2017; Flinders, 2020). I suggest that Hull2017's appeals to the city's sense of pride by provoking memories of sufferance and stigmatisation was a deliberate and exploitative strategy, and that *We Are Hull* mobilised emotion to 'evidence' the transformative power of culture.

Yet, in exploring the city's chequered past, the piece enabled audiences to collectively remember and acknowledge their local and personal histories. This process set in motion a circular relationship between the piece's creators, the narrative, and the spectators, in which memory, imagination and reality were all engaged. Walter Benjamin (1968/1999) recognised the relationship between the creator and the receiver of narrative and how this pattern of

exchange was altered by the desire he saw as the ultimate wish of the receiver to become the teller. This reversibility, as suggested by Benjamin, may help in evaluating what was happening in *We Are Hull* and how it so powerfully affected me, Andrew, and many others in the audience. *We Are Hull's* dramaturgy reversed Benjamin's account of the teller as producer, as the receivers were *also* the tellers. The narratives were our stories. The inclusion of everyday Hullensians took the reversal of Benjamin's teller/receiver relationship even further by deepening the already strong sense of ownership by the local audience.

Whilst *Blade* did not explicitly celebrate or otherwise represent Hull's history, I have described how it was understood as an encore to the opening week's projections and encapsulated the narrative of Hull as a changing city. 'Plopping' a giant piece of Siemens Gamesa into unavoidable view and passage, I have described how it transformed QVS into what Klingmann terms a 'brandscape' (Klingmann, 2010), that outshone the Victorian architecture of its setting, making the previously heralded industries fade into insignificance. As Deutsche explains, given that public art participates in 'the production of meanings, uses and forms for the city [...] it can help secure consent to redevelopment and to the restructuring that constitutes the historical form of advanced capitalist urbanisation' (1998:56). Despite Kulkarni's attempt to critique such corporate approaches to cultural policy, the UKCoC platform – especially in its Hull2017 formation - rendered it an empty spectacle, emblematising neo-liberal capitalism's ability to invade and dominate every aspect of public life and privatise it (Meek, 2014).

Yet, for many of my participants, *Blade* was understood as more than a static monument and celebrated as what might be described 'engineering as performance'. This is particularly related to its surprise appearance in the city centre and the complex transportation through Hull's narrow streets. For example, Lee, who was on a nightshift in the area, told me that he was 'one of the first people to know it had turned up', and that he:

Drove down straight away at six-am before it was even parked up. It was in Savile Street at that point, waiting to come in. I must admit I was quite fascinated by how the frig they'd got it there [...] That fascinated me. It was still a big wind turbine blade to me, but it was a good talking point (Interview, 2018).

Here we can understand the affective power of *Blade* as a status symbol for Lee. In addition to lauding its technical complexities, by stressing that he was one of the first to know about it, Lee is associating himself with something exciting to narrate to others. As a proud messenger of its arrival, he became a performer in the wider dramaturgy of *Blade* as a theatrical event:

It got people talking [...] And it brought attention to the city. My dad picked it up on the news. He was fascinated by it. So much so that when he came up for Christmas last year, we drove down to see where it is now for him to have a proper look at (ibid).

Thus, Lee's experience with *Blade* was sustained beyond its installation in QVS in 2017 and the object at its new site (outside the Siemens factory where it was originally fabricated) perhaps takes on a new symbolic meaning. As *Blade*, it was a forward-looking symbol of hope and regeneration, as a blade, it acts as a memorial to Hull2017, a spectral reminder of the city's moment in the spotlight. Whilst accruing for Siemens Gamesa however, some of the cultural cache that Phillips (quoted above) proposes.

A clear example of *Blade* as catalyst for *lived* change in the city came during a conversation I had with Clair Atherton, who remembered a young man she was working with that had been having 'a really hard time, yet':

Because of City of Culture, really now wants to be an engineer. He went and saw the blade and was really really intrigued. He was like, 'Wow, how did they get that in the city centre? The size of it. It's amazing'. He is doing really well now. He's just matured, like massively, and feels like he has a future in Hull. And I think a lot of that is down to City of Culture. It has given some hope to Hull and the future of young people (Interview, 2019).

It is noticeable that this young man wanted to become an engineer, not an artist – and earlier in my interview with Clair she had spoken of knowing 'many young people in the city' who would complain that Hull had very few employment opportunities other than a job at the council or as a teacher. Thus, *Blade* was remembered less by my participants as an artistic intervention, in which meanings might or might not be decoded, but rather as a totemic symbol of manual, industrial labour. An understanding which perhaps stems from the 'readymadness' of the blade and Hull's deeply embedded identity as an industrial, rather than creative city.

7.5 Summary

Pride in Hull through 2017 was something to be 'returned', and despite the occasional futuristic imagery, such as *Blade*, often couched in the language of the past. For ACE Chair, Nicholas Serota, 2017 was a year which instilled 'in local people a *renewed* pride in Hull's history and confidence about its role in the world' (2019, my italics). However, there was little

to no consideration of the causes of Hull's low self-esteem, nor any exploration of its consequences other than the feeling itself. An opportunity was therefore missed, in which the UKCoC year might more honestly and productively have attended to the city's socio-economic wounds rather than simply paying lip-service for emotional effect. Instead, much of the Hull2017 programming instrumentalised Hull's shame for the elicitation of an emotional response - the cathartic swell of civic pride. A pride which could then be measured, quantified, and incorporated into justifications (often uncritical) of the continued funding of culture-led regeneration.

Presenting Hull's history chronologically through *We Are Hull*, and immediately following it with *Blade*, supported the Hull2017 dramaturgy of change and transformation. Further, in *We Are Hull's* foregrounding of specific events, it reinforced their legitimacy as items to be included in the city's narrative and the ways in which it was to be remembered in the future. Whilst such performative interventions spurred the affectual transformations I have described, such feelings are difficult if not impossible to sustain. As the previous chapter showed, the regular rhythm of Hull resumed toward the end of 2017 and its 'feeling' of change lost momentum, resulting in a loss of pride and a frustration that UKCoC legacy had not been effectively accounted for. As a result, whilst Hull2017 temporarily helped many people feel better about the city (which may itself lead to positive action), it perhaps did little to develop alternative, future-facing narratives.

In arguing for the potential efficacy of attending to shame, my intention is not to denigrate the political and social efficacy of pride, especially as I've suggested that the ethos of pride, at least in part, through all three projects, but especially in *IWTCWY*, enabled the acknowledgement and disavowal of shame. Further, the discourse of pride has been, and still is, enormously powerful in addressing stigmatisation of many kinds (e.g. homophobia, racism and mental health), effecting legal and social change and providing a positive sense of identity and community for many (Fortier, 2005; Berkel *et al.*, 2009; Silverstone, 2012; Hoffman, 2019). Rather, the uncritical and often cursory engagements with pride and shame of many Hull2017 events, missed opportunities to consider how these emotions might also be harnessed in the service of individual and collective healing. In doing so, Hull2017 might have created space for the production of alternative identities and communities beyond those marked by aspects of 'good' cities (such as Liverpool, Leeds and Glasgow) which have transformed 'successfully' from industrial peripheries to cultural centres.

As I showed in Chapter Five, the defence of traditional Hull values of solidarity and tolerance is a common refrain amongst my participants. Such self-mythologising is not uncommon in city/capital of culture initiatives (Boland *et al.*, 2019) and it can be difficult to know if we are dealing with invented traditions, and sentimental idealisations which owe their origin and power to the workings of political rhetoric or collective false memory. Or whether this sense of imagined community draws on real historical material, structures of life and labour which have been dismantled by the processes of de-industrialisation but are remembered selectively to dramatize feelings of loss. Either way we are still left with the question of their symbolic function in the present - and stories alone, without policy implementations to boost investment in jobs, housing and education will struggle to do more than offer new *images* of the city.

For all Hull2017's claims of social inspiration, Chapter 6 showed how the initiative increasingly relied on populist rhetoric and this chapter has illustrated how it engaged cathartic, nostalgic narratives in order to provoke feelings rather than thought. It is important then to scrutinise the affectual dynamics of Hull's year as UKCoC, especially when it so rigorously prevented critical or dissenting voices. The opening events of *Made in Hull* might have provided a strong platform for continuing discussions about the city, however they were not succeeded by a coherent sense of where the city could be going. Perhaps there is simply too much of the neoliberal project embedded in Cities or Capitals of Culture, as, despite the claims of Hull as a radical and rebellious city, a fixed, sloganistic and somewhat superficial approach ensued, couched in the language of hype and city boosterism. In the current political climate (as discussed in Chapters 4 and 5), such approaches can result in the uncritical acceptance of the simplistic, spectacular messaging of both populist culture and populist politics. Messaging that has been emboldened by Brexit in the UK and Donald Trump in the USA. Right-wing populists have become notably anti-city, as shown in their demonisation of the so-called metropolitan elite and in their anti-multicultural, anti-immigrant rhetoric (Forkert, 2019). This raises significant questions for organisers of CMEs, CME commissioned artists (and cultural workers more generally) as to their responsibilities to the contentious issues of the moment.

Chapter 8 Conclusions

'This is what Hull needs, but this was before Brexit. I can't believe how ironic we are. "City of Culture!" And here we are, in the next breath we're like: "Kingston Upon Hull – Leave". Contradictory' (Karen, Interview 2019).

8.1 Civic imaginaries of Hull

This project has engaged with timely debates and global phenomena, such as rising anti-political sentiment, populism, localism and the cultural politics of emotions driven by local and national policy makers. Drawing on an innovative methodology including ethnographic methods and interdisciplinary theories of affect, emotion and the non-representational, I have focussed on the dominance of civic pride and civic shame within the Hull civic imaginary, and how they are entwined in the public articulation of politics and culture in the city. I have argued that analysis of Brexit and other recent political 'shifts' such as the dislocation of 'traditional' Labour voters can be deepened by acknowledging the role of emotion in processes of placemaking and belonging; and revealed how these same emotions can be awoken or suppressed through processes of cultural representation and participation.

In doing so, I have made original contributions to the study of CoC mega-events and their impact on the wider political culture of their host cities. My thesis also furthers understandings regarding the roles of civic pride and shame in local political culture, local cultural behaviour and local cultural policy making. Whilst many CoC studies refer to programming policies, broader curatorial trends and contexts (e.g. Garcia, 2005; O'Callaghan and Linehan, 2007; García, 2013; Cunningham and Platt, 2019; see also Chapter 6), in Chapter 7 I have added to the relatively scarce analyses (e.g. Nicholas, 2019) which attend to the creative or artistic *content* of events – and what they might *mean* - especially to residents. In its use of performance for political science research, this thesis also contributes to the qualitative research methodologies literature. As Chapter 2 explained, much of the published research on Brexit has relied heavily upon quantitative methods, with qualitative accounts relatively scarce (though see Anderson *et al.*, 2019; Closs Stephens, 2019; Moss *et al.*, 2020). Through engaging creative qualitative methods, my thesis has produced richly descriptive first-hand accounts of how civic pride and shame permeated Hull's contemporary political culture and are analysed with the help of an innovative conceptual framework. This has added nuances to, and sheds new light on aspects of the Brexit debates, especially those which attempt to speak for the 'left behind' or 'left behind places'. Such debates often consider the UK's relations with the EU

exclusively at the national level, whereas this study is one of the first to address the subject at the scale of the city.

My attention on the affective dynamics of Hull's cultural and political behaviours aligns with emerging cross-disciplinary research which seeks to understand the role of emotions in the shaping of contemporary society (e.g. Crouch, 2017; Curtice, 2018; Burkitt, 2019; Heaney, 2019). However, as I argued in Chapter 2, much of this work is rarely researched through ethnographies of actors at the local level (though see Closs Stephens, 2016; Anderson *et al.*, 2019; Moss *et al.*, 2020) and has resulted in caricatured, polarised and contradictory views of the 'left behind', 'red wall' or 'metropolitan elites'. By employing ethnographic methodologies, I have highlighted the complexity of intentions, responsibilities and legacies of those with the power to make us *feel* – whether through the rhetorical appeals of place and belonging in political campaigning or in the representation of place-based narratives during a cultural mega-event. I agree with those who assert that politics in Western democracies is becoming increasingly emotional (e.g. Heaney, 2019), and my thesis has aimed to nuance our understandings of how recent political culture in Hull has informed and is informed by pride and shame.

I began with the observations of others (e.g. Clavane, 2017), that Hull's UKCoC status was somehow incompatible, or at odds with, its 67.6% vote to Leave the EU - and that this indicated some kind of contradiction within or between its political culture and cultural identity. That Hull's sense of self during the period of Brexit and UKCoC was inconsistent or illogical, was also expressed by many of my participants, as the quote which begins this chapter shows. In Chapter 1, I outlined two competing 'solutions' that were offered to explain this seemingly awkward or illogical behaviour: on the one hand, Martin Green, director of the Hull2017 programme, claimed that Hull 'refused' the narratives of Brexit as inward looking or protectionist and that 'Brexit doesn't stop cities being [...] outward-looking' (quoted in Clavane, 2017). On the other, local artist and activist, Richard Lees (2018), felt that Hull's UKCoC year excluded the city's immigrant communities and had renamed the endeavour 'UK City of Brexit Culture'. Of course, both statements are somewhat simplistic, belying the more complicated reality. In many ways, via empirical means, my investigations set out to reveal those complexities, unpick the assumptions and to examine in a more nuanced way what had happened in Hull, and what it might mean for the future of the city.

To do this, by drawing on diverse literatures across multiple disciplines, I have constructed ‘the civic imaginaries’ of Hull as a conceptual framework and analytical tool, within which the arts, humanities, social and political sciences intersect. This has facilitated exploration of the political consequences of cultural representations and the cultural roots of political participation. To draw out civic imaginaries allows us to evaluate the communities we inhabit in the present and the events we experience. Civic imaginaries respond to and express cultural traditions and symbols, and ‘come alive’ in groups (Baiocchi *et al.*, 2015:23). I have argued that it is in this realm that Hull residents have attempted to make sense of the alternate positions, narratives, and futures presented to them through the Hull2017 and Brexit events. In turn, Hull’s civic imaginaries can contribute to our understandings of Hull2017 and Brexit.

This conceptual framework enabled the development of innovative and creative place-based methodologies, to explore new questions concerning the role of emotion in political culture and cultural behaviour. Primarily engaging ‘close encounter’ ethnographies, I worked with qualitative material drawn from semi-structured interviews and focus groups with Hull residents, Hull2017 actors (artists, producers and policy makers) and Hull political influencers (a senior council officer, a local MEP and a local journalist). Working inductively, I experimented with innovative techniques, including drawing interviews, timeline interviews and the theatre talks method in partnership with Hull-based Middle Child Theatre Company. These techniques created flexible and reflexive opportunities to allow participants to share their perspectives about Hull and express their hopes and fears for the future. They allowed me to ‘access experiences’ (Kvale, 2007:xi), and to elicit rich and ‘thick’ descriptions (Geertz, 1973:26), including voices from ‘hard to reach’ communities such as the Marfleet ward and Thornton Estate. Whilst the civic imaginary is a somewhat utopian endeavour, the creative methodologies provoked ways to circumnavigate ‘the tyranny of the possible’ and imagine alternative paths forward (Duncombe, 2012:xlii). They also provided a vocabulary through which to elucidate micro and meso levels of social action and experience, and analyse the complex interplay of politics, culture, place, and emotions in Hull throughout the UKCoC and Brexit processes.

Having summarized the broad outline and themes of the thesis, next I shall return to two of my central research questions:

- How, if at all, do UKCoC and Brexit inform the civic imaginaries of Hull?
- How are civic pride and civic shame engaged in these processes?

This is followed by a consideration of the future opportunities and challenges for Hull which will be fashioned not only by the Coronavirus pandemic and the Johnson government's Levelling Up agenda, but by significant changes to local cultural and political structures, policies and personnel. After setting out this landscape, I propose some policy implications arising from my findings as well as suggestions for future academic research. Finally, and to conclude, I consider my final research question, which opens routes to new investigations concerning the civic imaginary as epistemology:

- What can we learn about Hull's political and cultural behaviours through the Brexit and Hull2017 moments by exploring the city's civic imaginaries?

Thus, research questions 1 and 2 will be addressed throughout section 8.2. while research question 3 is discussed in sections 8.3 and 8.4.

8.2 Two transformational events (or pride comes before a fall)

In the years immediately following the EU Referendum and UKCoC, there was much *feeling* about what the future might hold for Hull, with both Hull2017 and the Leave campaign having made great promises bound in the exciting possibilities of transformation. The period between the referendum result and the Conservative victory at the 2019 General Election which emphatically endorsed a firm 'Leave' agenda, has been described as a period of anxiety and impasse (Anderson *et al.*, 2019). In Hull, with the addition of UKCoC, we might also describe this time as a period of advent, that 'through hope cut, or broke, other relations' with Hull's 'past and future' (Anderson and Holden, 2008:144). For Remain voters there was a tension in the simultaneity of pride at the city's achievements through 2017 which might be negated by leaving the EU. Likewise, they reported a sense of alienation, that the place that produced Hull2017 could also have voted for Brexit. Thus, rather than Hull2017 continuing their hopes of a more cosmopolitan and outward facing city, the ongoing Brexit saga had suspended or eradicated them.

The transformative power of culture was a central narrative through Hull2017 (see Chapter 6), and that hosting UKCoC would somehow change the city for the better. In many ways, one of

the greatest successes of Hull's UKCoC experience was that it won the bid in the first place. Regardless of the shortcomings I have explored, such as its poor legacy planning and contested delivery model (see Chapter 6), the side-lining of local artists and the questionable, uncritical 'transformational' rhetoric (see Chapter 7), Hull will forever be able to say it was a UK City of Culture. Indeed, it was hailed a success before it even began (see Hull City Council, 2016:3), and whilst I maintain that such hubristic self-congratulation has created new problems for Hull, it is perhaps understandable when its post-war history has contained more knocks and defeats than 'wins' or victories. Thus, one might conclude that Hull2017 had in some ways re-activated a more confident and aspirational shift in the city's collective thinking (a 'strategic confidence' as Julian Rice put it – see Chapter 6).

We might therefore sympathise with local policymakers and politicians, especially as when the Hull2017 bid was being devised, no one could have foreseen the anti-globalist, anti-liberal populism that was to emerge. Thus, whilst remaining critical of Hull2017's claims to be an innovative and transformative project, it was very much a product of its time. City leaders might have looked to Lille's 2004 ECoC experience, which 'concentrated on the implementation of a complex radial structure' of cultural policies that created new models of 'polycentric culture-based development' processes – in effect a self-sustaining neighbourhood level plan which proved to be highly successful (Sacco and Blessi, 2007). In comparison with Lille, Hull2017 was a traditional festival delivery, concentrating on existing models to attract inward investment.

Such a strategy depended on the discourse of boosterism and technologies of spectacle – such as epic sound and light displays or the audacious (yet undercover) transportation of enormous objects through the city centre (see Chapters 6 and 7). Obtaining UKCoC status might have been a victory for Hull, but it has done little to counteract the geographic imbalance of the economic system within which it is situated – as seen by the expectation that Hull faces the worst economic impact and the slowest recovery in the UK to the 2020 Coronavirus pandemic (Norman and Petrie, 2020). Further, a report published by youth charity Impetus in April 2021, showed that around a third of disadvantaged young people in Hull (at 34%) are not in employment, education or training (NEET) and risk 'falling through the cracks' (Lepper, 2021). The Coronavirus crisis then, perhaps reframes the debates entirely as to whether Brexit and Hull2017 will contribute to a reversal of Hull's socio-economic crises. But what I argue here, is that the relentless attention to civic pride has distracted from the structural inequalities that

led to Hull's decline in the first place. Instead of attempting to refine civic pride metrics, we might question the ethical value in measuring civic pride *at all*.

Thus, Hull2017 operated in ways that restricted critical questioning, and its dramaturgy of pride and shame, mobilised and manipulated the city's sensitive self-identity. I suggest that rather than *informing* the civic imaginaries of the city in a way that might encourage growth from within, UKCoC management and city leaders *controlled* them (as a theatre or film director might) through a form of emotional governance - to stir civic pride within residents whilst also constraining critics. This populist tactic resulted in an 'us/them' divide being drawn between Hull's grassroots artists and the cultural decision makers (such as senior Absolutely Cultured producers or HCC arts officers) that remained difficult to bridge, even into 2021. Whilst many of the Hull2017 management and city leaders claimed that Hull had 'found its voice again' (see Chapter 6), my research has identified a growing culture of secrecy and even fear in parts of the city's cultural sector, which remains relatively small, fragile, and underfunded.

Given the city's links with William Wilberforce, its twinning with Freetown Sierra Leone and hosting of the Freedom Festival - a key theme of Hull2017 was 'freedom'. The ability to critically engage in open debate is a sign of a healthy and dynamic cultural ecology and a crucial element of the democratic public sphere. Rather than accept the silences which have developed in Hull, I argue that a more open, constructively critical debate about the future role of culture and cultural leadership is needed. The University of Hull might have contributed more robustly to this debate, beyond their initial research investment (including the provision of funding for this PhD thesis), which ended abruptly in the spring of 2020. A lack of thought leadership in this arena, or even a coherent cultural strategy from the University of Hull post-2017, has perhaps added to the disappointment, frustration and sense of not being heard by many in the city's cultural sector. It is also perhaps stark evidence of the impact of Hull's growing anti-political culture, and of how easy such a culture can be manipulated by charismatic, quasi-authoritarian populists – whether in cultural or political guise. Alternative strategies which promote geographies of hope and a more thoughtful, horizontal approach do exist – perhaps serving as reminders of 'what might have been' in Hull. Thus, whilst potentially progressive avenues of local cultural and urban policy exist in such a revival (see for example Oakley, 2015; Shaw, 2017; Oakley *et al.*, 2018), I observe that, so far at least, such routes remain largely unexplored by leaders in the city, which perhaps suggests that Hull2017 had a rather limited impact on the wider Hull civic imaginary.

Though my thesis has focussed on the specifics of Brexit *in Hull*, it supports the assertions of many commentators, that leaving the EU is a continuation of long-term political and social trends in the UK (e.g. Jennings and Stoker, 2017). Cutts et al. (2020), have shown that Labour's weakening relationship with its working class base was a long time in the making (as discussed in Chapter 4, it is perhaps surprising that no Hull MPs supported the Leave campaign) and that therefore, despite being received as a 'shock' by many, the Brexit result and the dismantling of the 'Red Wall' by the Conservative Party under the leadership of Boris Johnson was no such thing. As Finlayson (2017) noted, Brexit became a campaign of 'anti-political politics organised around resentment at past losses and scepticism about promised futures'. Commentators have theorised, and come to quite different conclusions, that a loss of tradition, a diminishing global status, a romanticised past plus a nativist, nationalist anxiety were all set against the perceived arrogance and myopia of a distant political elite (Goodhart, 2017; Dorling and Tomlinson, 2019; O'Toole, 2019). As Prime Minister Johnson and senior government figures, supported by the right-wing media, continue to turn to powerfully emotive tricks that play to the 'deep story' of a glorious, past Empire, more research is needed to understand this element of contemporary UK political culture more fully. Though I propose that the continuing narrative of Leave voters as powerless underdogs will appeal to many in Hull, where, as I have shown through my empirical findings in Chapters 4 and 5, the over-riding mythology is of the city as isolated, left-behind and overlooked; and that as a result of this, shame (though unacknowledged) remains firmly embedded in the civic imaginaries of many.

With the lived realities of Brexit coming into focus, voters may well punish parties and politicians that fail to deliver on election promises. It remains to be seen exactly how much of a long-term turn from the Labour Party the past few elections have actually been and, importantly for this thesis, what might be the longer term consequences to voters political feelings when they dislocate from a political tribe. This raises questions of home and belonging within a political tribe and it will be important to research whether voters 'stay put' or 'move on' (Ahmed *et al.*, 2003), and what emotional boundaries are being crossed when applied to mobilities and transferences of political fidelity.

Hull2017 might have provided a platform to thoughtfully explore some of these issues, yet it instead attempted to reconcile the irreconcilable – as seen in Martin Green's claim that Brexit

does not mean cities cannot be outward looking (in Clavane, 2017). Via Fairclough (2000:44), I understand Green's strategy here as a version of the New Labour 'Third Way' style which 'draws attention to assumed incompatibilities while at the same time denying them'. In doing so, Brexit and cosmopolitanism are constructed as equal and having equivalent weight and it is easy to be carried along by such rhetoric, and the 'pervasive patterning' (ibid) of the language which perhaps conceals the contradictions and failures. Thus, in attempting to reconcile themes which have been regarded as antagonistic (i.e. in saying that Brexit and cosmopolitanism are no longer in conflict), Green avoids engagement with the tensions around *both* subjects and misses the opportunity to question what being a 'Brexit city' might be. It misses the opportunity to acknowledge shame, which as I argued in Chapter 5, is vital for Hull to move forward. Such an engagement might perhaps have challenged the London metropolitan view of 'the North' and the 'typical' Brexit voter – as well as drawn Hull into a discussion with itself about the role of immigrant communities and the accusations of parochialism that have historically been levied against it.

As Lees has pointed out (2018), this might have happened had Hull's immigrant communities had more of a presence throughout UKCoC programming. It might then have revealed some of the hopes and fears which led people to vote for Brexit – or which have resulted in Hull developing one of the lowest voter turnouts in the country. As discussed in Chapter 4, whilst average turnout by constituency at the UK 2019 General Election was 67.3%, in Hull, turnout was markedly lower - with nearly half of those eligible, failing to vote.⁷⁸ By this data, Hull is perhaps the least politically active city (in 'official' politics) in the UK. A sentiment repeatedly expressed by many of my respondents (both Leave and Remain) as analysed in Chapter 5. However, whilst some focus on the breach of Labour's 'red wall' by a series of Conservative electoral victories (e.g. Harris, 2019), I suggest that low turnout as a signal of anti-political apathy and mistrust of political processes is the greater threat to democracy than an ideological shift to conservatism.⁷⁹ Thus, any claim that Hull2017 might have had a major civic impact are untrue, and an opportunity for the city to have a holistic and critical rather than a purely celebrational cultural festival was missed. Indeed, I suggest that Hull2017 was far more

⁷⁸ Hull East, 49%; Hull North, 52%; Hull West, 52% (McInnes, 2020).

⁷⁹ The same might be said of Hartlepool, which in 2021 saw a Conservative gain from Labour. However, at approximately 43%, it also saw a 15 percentage point drop in turnout from the 2019 General Election – itself one of the lowest turnouts in the country (Hartlepool Council, 2021).

transactional than transformational and has contributed to somewhat of a critical vacuum in the city - leaving it in a rather weak position to respond to the ideological onslaught of the Johnson government.

8.2.1 Civic pride and civic shame

Chapter 1 introduced pride and shame as significant forces within Hull through the Brexit and UKCoC period, heightened by the multiple uncertainties of the post-referendum 'impasse' (Anderson *et al.*, 2019), and the promises made by city and cultural leaders that UKCoC would transform Hull for the better. This theme of momentous political and cultural change was similarly understood by Middle Child Theatre Company, whose production of *Us Against Whatever* (see Chapters 3 and 5) set the lyrics 'a change is gonna come' and 'this will never not have happened' to the show's central, recurring musical motifs. Hull's sensitive self-image has grown to be a crucial dynamic of the Hull civic imaginary, and the task of transforming shame into pride a key objective of city leaders. Although Hull's journey via UKCoC from 'crap town' to 'proud city' has become somewhat of a trope for policymakers and journalists, it is not so straightforward as the city branding might declare. Phenomenologically, both pride and shame require the gaze of the 'other', and my empirical findings develop literatures (e.g. Deigh, 1983; Munt, 2000; Sartre, 2003; Tarnopolsky, 2004; Guenther, 2011), indicating that for many Hullensians, the Other has been the faceless, stigmatising structures of late-capitalism implicit in socio-economic league tables and *Crap Town* joke books.

My concern here is underpinned by the evidence that civic pride is being more frequently and more explicitly written into local government policies (Collins, 2017), and a trend of emotional governance initiatives such as the 'well-being index' of the UK Office for National Statistics and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's (OECD) key priority of 'Measuring Well-being and Progress'. As Fortier suggests (2010:22), such modes of governing can be understood as 'affect becom[ing] a mode of categorizing, classifying and coding' populations. Yet, pride can be manipulated to engender feelings of belonging that may render critical questioning problematic (Wood, 2002).

Thus, whilst there may be many positive long-term benefits from the civic pride Hull2017 generated, I suggest that it was a missed opportunity to 'hold a mirror up' to ask more

probing, thoughtful questions of the city and the country. This is a function of the arts (but not only of the arts), which ‘can be used to provoke, to catalyse, to enable and inhibit the way that people engage with the world around them’ (Doeser, 2016:3). We have seen in recent years and months what might be called a ‘civic turn’ with arts organisations, universities and museums questioning what their roles and contributions to the civic sphere might be, and I agree with Doeser, who further suggests that civic spaces should be ‘animate[d], enhance[d] and enable[d] [through] processes by which people exercise their rights and responsibilities as members of communities’ (ibid). Yet, I have detailed through this thesis examples of artists and organisations who have feared negative effects on their funding or career opportunities should they speak critically about the city or its UKCoC year. Equal recognition is vital for a healthy democratic society and its absence can inflict real damage. Withholding recognition is a form of subjugation and can lead to the formation of second-class citizens. This perhaps helps explain the anger felt by those who thought Hull2017 *erased* local voices. That said, for Michael Barnes-Wynters, editor of art magazine *UKUNST*, Hull is ‘not a radical city [...] it’s not a city of dissent’ and its arts scene lacks a critical, provocative culture (Interview, 2020). Instead of a critical civic arena, for Barnes-Wynters, Hull has ‘no edge to it whatsoever’ (ibid).

As Dolan has argued (2010), pride can provide the mechanisms for at least *imagining* alternative modes of being and belonging; and seemingly small interventions can make important contributions. My PhD has been informed through my associations with two social activist initiatives: #thehullwewant and Time-Bank Hull who attempt to ‘reinvigorate solidarity, care and connectedness alongside the need to rethink poverty for making the good society’ (Hughes, 2018:3). Based on a ‘we-not-me’ ethos, they aim to ‘build a shared vision with a sense of relational connectedness’ in order to overcome the Thatcherite TINA mantra (‘There is no alternative’) (Hughes, 2018:3). Similarly, as the continuation of the successful Hull2017 volunteer programme has shown – especially in the volunteer-led projects such as the 2019 *Chatty Hull*, which saw volunteers all over the city commit small acts of kindness, *there is an alternative*. Such an ethos takes *love* and *loving*, which (via hooks, 2000), in the current political climate of increased individualism and consumerism, has itself become a radical act. hooks explains that loving is not simply a feeling; it is a practice – a way to choose to act. Radical love overcomes fear. It disrupts and subverts power and creates new possibilities for life, peace, and community.

Attending to shame with such care - or radical love - can be recuperative for a place and its people (e.g. Scheff and Retzinger, 1991; Tomkins, 1995; Munt, 2007; Silverstone, 2012; Schaefer, 2020). The lived realities of civic shame, and the feelings of discontent that led to the Leave vote in places like Hull – as well as the post-2017 ‘fallout’ within the city’s cultural sector - cannot be ignored, however painful. Through investigating Hull’s civic imaginaries, I have been able to detail these deep feelings in the city and relate their impacts on political and cultural behaviours. ‘Change’ in Hull became subsumed into the agendas of its UKCoC year and understood emotionally as a transformation from shame to pride and I have suggested that Brexit and other populist movements operate in a similar way. I have shown how in Hull, this affected political identities, how people differentiated themselves from alternative groups, and perhaps most importantly, how it contributed to political decision-making processes and emerging anti-political cultures. I argue that to understand such behaviours further, it is vital to look in more detail at place-based policy making (including cultural policies such as UKCoC) and their inherent emotional governing and other affective dynamics. In the current political context, place-based policy making risks depoliticizing as well as sanitising place, reducing local critical public spheres to place promotion for the tourist gaze or inward investors.

Thus, my thesis has developed understandings of Hull’s negative sense of self and everyday feelings of territorial stigmatisation, beyond the ‘crap town’ stereotype. In doing so, it has also revealed how such feelings were enlisted, perhaps even exploited through its UKCoC experience. With their newfound civic pride, many of my participants, *felt* Hull2017 to be a success. Hull2017 did raise *some* public discussion about the city and provided a chance for it to be reimagined for tourists and investors, as well as to assess the role of cultural policies in tackling urban problems. One success Hull2017 could probably claim, is to have challenged the worst images of the city (CPPI, 2019) and to have raised the question of whether its poor reputation was ever a fair judgement in the first place.

Though I do not agree entirely with Lees’ re-titling of Hull2017 as ‘UK City of Brexit Culture’, I do understand both Brexit (in Hull) and Hull2017 to be of a local political culture that is increasingly populist and anti-political. The fact that Hull has a relatively inactive critical public sphere risks the city remaining in a state of collective ‘reflexive impotence’ (Fisher, 2009:21); aware of the flawed natures of capitalism and the cyclical behaviours it enforces, yet unable to enact change. A more active, forward thinking civic imaginary might overcome such a malaise, and processes of ‘conscientisation’ are therefore vital and urgently needed (Freire, 1968).

Through a praxis of action, theory and reflection – such as has been adopted by many exponents of community development, and community artists (see Jeffers and Moriarty, 2017), political apathy and the neo-liberal status quo can be challenged. As Pontes *et al.* (2019:7) have shown, ‘extending citizenship education beyond the classroom and into the community’ is key to reversing political disengagement, and they argue for the ‘collaborative role that schools and non-governmental organisations can play in [...] supporting citizenship education and active citizenship’. This is something that *Generation Hull*, Hull’s Local Cultural Education Partnership would be well placed to lead on.⁸⁰ As Boris Johnson’s post-Brexit government announce multiple ‘levelling up’ policies which enlist pride as a barometer of economic success, there appears to be increasing political value in the emotion.⁸¹ But what are the impacts of such policies on the communities whose pride is so eagerly sought? This is a critical lacuna my research has begun to address.

8.3 Looking to the future

8.3.1 COVID shock

At the time of writing, it is only possible to speculate about the long-term impacts of the COVID-19 outbreak, and the subsequent restrictions it has posed through social distancing measures, on mass gatherings and public attitudes towards cultural activities. Yet, there is already a large emerging literature which describes how it is not only a medical pandemic, but also a socio-political event that is ‘disrupting our social order’ (Teti *et al.*, 2020:1). In a ‘post-COVID’ world, the very meaning of a ‘city’ carries new associations and implications that raise many questions for Hull. Writing in 2000, Castells reflected that futurologists have long predicted ‘the demise of the city, or at least cities as we have known them until now’ (2000:462). This thesis has indicated the pre-COVID challenges for Hull city centre in reimagining itself - and the changing attitudes to public space, together with the impacts of the economic downturn that many countries are experiencing, suggest a potentially profound

⁸⁰ Local Cultural Education Partnerships (LCEPs) are cross-sector, strategic partnerships that work together to unite and improve cultural education for children and young people in their local area. See <https://www.generationhull.com/> [Accessed 27 June 2021].

⁸¹ Section 1.3 of ‘The Levelling Up Prospectus’ (March 2021) states that ‘Prosperity can be measured in many ways. However, for many people, the most powerful barometer of economic success is the positive change they see and the pride they feel in the places they call home’.

reframing of the public realm, including its iterations within culture-led urban regeneration schemes that have been at the core of this thesis.

COVID-19 has exposed flaws in, and complicated the dominant assumptions underlying culture-led regeneration, especially its purported links to economic growth, since the long economic downturn brought on by the financial crash of 2008-2009. The Black Lives Matter movement, #MeToo and other vigils for women's rights have re-focused attention on the importance of public space, community and conviviality, which, as Oakley (2015:15) has argued, are 'elements of cultural value and place-making that have often been overlooked in the focus on new, built infrastructure'. These points revisit older arguments about the 'right to the city,' (e.g. Lefebvre *et al.*, 1996) which have driven the concerns of this thesis.

Given this situation, and when it is clear that international travel damages the environment (Lim and Flaherty, 2018; Flaherty and Holmes, 2020), and that the Coronavirus pandemic has exacerbated the collapse of urban retail and cultural tourism (Bereitschaft and Scheller, 2020), one might question the credibility of some of the cultural policy aims from Hull leaders who maintain that it is to be a 'world-class visitor destination' or a 'world class cultural city' (e.g. Corner and Munn, 2021). Such claims find a political parallel in Brexit's 'heroic failure' (O'Toole, 2019), for, as suggested in Chapter 2, there is limited evidence to suggest that the 2013-2023 City Plan's ambition of Hull becoming a 'World Class Visitor Destination' can be met. Despite the increases in tourism seen in 2017-2018, Hull still ranks relatively poorly as an international visitor destination (CPPI, 2019:39). One might therefore expect an alternative approach from decision makers other than doubling down on projects conceived pre-COVID. Yet, as late as September 2020, the *HDM* reported that a new cruise terminal for the city would still go ahead at an estimated cost of £73m and bringing potential detriment to the environment (Young, 2020a).

That smaller-scale cultural events and organisations had the flexibility and adaptability to swiftly resume cultural activity immediately after the first wave of COVID-19 proved to be crucial. Should they be financially supported and more connected to cultural decision-making in the city in a more sustainable and effective way than they were in the aftermath of UKCoC, Hull's independent and grassroots artists might contribute toward achieving the 'creative city'

as it was initially and more progressively conceived – to deal ‘with the obstacles hindering the development of a “good” city’ (Landry *et al.*, 1996:1). That *now* is the moment for a radical shift in thinking for Hull’s cultural policies is made more acute as the funding and governance landscape of the region is expected to change significantly over the next few years. For example, in addition to the newly formed Hull & East Riding Cultural Compact,⁸² there is speculation over the formation of a combined Hull and East Riding Authority possibly starting in 2022 (Young, 2021a), and of a new Hull & East Riding Local Enterprise Partnership (Laister, 2021b). Additionally, the new Arts Council Strategy, ‘Let’s Create’, (effectively delayed due to the Coronavirus) which runs until 2030 and a potential re-configuration of National Portfolio Organisations in 2022 add to this rapidly changing context. Collectively, they all offer numerous opportunities and challenges for independent, grassroots, and freelance creatives in Hull and the wider region.

That *real* change is possible through these initiatives is perhaps heightened by the changing leadership in the region. Among the ‘new faces’ to assume key posts in 2021 are Dominic Gibbons (Managing Director of the Wykelands property group) – chair of the Cultural Compact; Lee Pitcher (Head of Partnerships at Yorkshire Water) – who is the new chair of Absolutely Cultured; and Darren Hale – who has taken over from Steven Brady to be leader of the Labour Group in HCC. Hale’s appointment is of key relevance to this thesis, as his early announcements indicate a shift both economically and socially leftwards – particularly in terms of environmental and cultural policies (Young, 2021b). As Chapter 4 discussed, there are long-held tensions between the Hull and East Riding authorities, often due to party political differences. It will therefore be interesting to observe how such power dynamics play out and what their consequences will be to local decision making, especially in the context of ‘levelling up’ which has seen funding shift from metropolitan centres to small towns and hinterlands. There is a danger perhaps, that in partnering with the East Riding, Hull’s already scarce resources could be redistributed out of the city.

⁸² An ACE initiative ‘designed to support the local cultural sector and enhance its contribution to development, with a special emphasis on cross-sector engagement beyond the cultural sector itself and the local authority’ <https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/publication/review-cultural-compacts-initiative> [Accessed 11 April 2021].

These new formations should be understood within the wider context of the Johnson government's 'Levelling Up' agenda, which, although written into the 2019 Conservative Manifesto,⁸³ comes at a time when COVID-19 has revealed, and often increased, existing structural, geographic inequalities in the UK. Indeed, Centre for Cities (2021) has reported that areas in the North and Midlands with weaker low-skill service-based economies have seen the greatest economic damage, making levelling up places like Hull 'at least four times harder' than elsewhere in the UK. According to the government, the Levelling Up Fund will 'invest in infrastructure that improves everyday life across the UK, including regenerating town centres and high streets, upgrading local transport, and investing in cultural and heritage assets' (gov.uk, 2021). Future research is needed to investigate the new political narratives being shaped around this agenda, and exactly how emphasis on 'stronger towns' will rebalance the UK economy. The Industrial Strategy Council, led by Bank of England chief economist Andy Haldane, has observed that with almost 180 levelling up policies and commitments in the government's 'plan for growth' it 'spreads itself too thinly', which 'begs questions about the scope and scale, and hence likely success, of this plan' (Industrial Strategy Council, 2021:5). At present, it is not entirely clear what a level playing field looks like in terms of schooling, accommodation, or wellbeing. Indeed, as Hanretty points out (2021), what does 'Levelling Up' actually mean, and how will we know if it has succeeded?

The findings of my thesis would suggest that we should pay close attention to the affective dynamics of such policies, which, built on the promise of 'regeneration' and 'recovery', seem to be a further form of hope as emotional governance (Anderson and Holden, 2008). If such schemes are successful in harnessing senses of civic optimism in areas targetted for 'levelling up' funds, what might happen to political participation and other forms of civic engagement? Practical and appropriately resourced solutions to increase and strengthen grassroots activity and social infrastructure is vital for sustainable community development and enhancing civic life (Klinenberg, 2018; Hopkins, 2020), and a critical public sphere is vital in a representative democracy for holding local (and national) decision makers to account. The rhetoric of hope and pride through the 'levelling up' policies suggests however, that changing *feelings* is higher on the policy agenda than instituting meaningful, lasting *material* change through effective policies of (for example) increasing local empowerment and fiscal redistribution.

⁸³ For example, see pages 2, 7, 25 – 27, 36 (The Conservative and Unionist Party, 2019).

8.3.2 Policy implications

As the final Hull2017 evaluation report observes, Absolutely Cultured found itself in a ‘difficult position’ at the beginning of 2018, partly due to the relative weakness of the concluding season of the 2017 programme and perhaps ‘also due to exaggerated expectations and a certain lack of clarity in the city’s cultural sector’ about its role and remit (CPPI, 2019:67). The report also points out that the post-2017 legacy plan developed by Hull UK City of Culture 2017 Ltd. and bequeathed to Absolutely Cultured was ‘at one level visionary and ambitious, but also rather vague in terms of resources, responsibilities and delivery mechanisms’ (ibid). As my research shows, this compounded frustrations in the city’s cultural sector – especially amongst grassroots and independent creatives – about the legacy of 2017. For many of the people I spoke to, their view was that Hull2017 failed to strengthen Hull’s cultural infrastructure. It is clear that lack of trust is still an issue and that a culture of collaboration needs developing. A stronger, more confident collective legacy might therefore emerge if the city’s grassroots organisations can be nurtured to deliver their own agendas rather than support the status quo.

Key to rectifying this, will be a more connected and robust network for freelance creatives and small cultural organisations – who have been hit particularly hard by the Coronavirus (Florisson *et al.*, 2021). There are various models that Hull might consider, such as COoL (Creative Organisations of Liverpool), the CHAOS network in Southampton (Creative, Heritage and Arts Organisations of Southampton) and F-13 in Coventry. The Bradford Cultural Voice Forum (BCVF) is a particularly successful advocate for the grassroots and independent creative sector in West Yorkshire. With modest financial support from the local council, responsibilities for chairing, hosting and administration are shared between freelancers and an NPO organisation, ensuring that the sector feels connected and that change can be effected ‘from the bottom up’.⁸⁴ Partly as a result of my doctoral research, I am involved with setting up such a network which aims to connect and advocate for grassroots creatives across Hull’s existing culture and economic development networks, by establishing a dialogue with organisations including the LEP, the LCEP, the Hull and East Riding Cultural Compact and, in the wider region, Culture Forum North – a network of partnerships between Higher Education and the cultural sector across the North of England. The network also aims to develop more holistic and inclusive evaluation processes, embracing de-brief sessions that allow all voices to be heard. The

⁸⁴ Thank you to Pete Massey and Jessica Farmer (ACE North) for this information, as well as Alex Croft, creative director at Kala Sangam in Bradford.

network (as yet unnamed), has been received positively by Hull's grassroots and freelance creatives.

Additionally, I suggest that within the planning of cultural mega events, policy makers should consider imaginative ways in which legacy is fully embedded within the whole approach. This will require robust structures of networking, planning and local government leadership – so that local authorities, cultural producers, business and other stakeholders such as public health specialists, environmentalists and the education sector can unite around a clear vision for place. To help achieve this, Cities of Culture might consider employing senior teams for two or three years beyond the delivery period, as well as safeguarding legacy funding, so that 'legacy' can be sustainable and some continuity with the delivery year can be maintained. This would go some way to ensuring that legacy is 'baked in' to the initiative in terms of follow-up stakeholder relationships, event curation, research and wider place-based cultural development.

Finally, beyond satisfying funders, what is meant by, and what is useful, in using emotion as an object of measurement? Hull2017 showed increases in positive perception in the city and increased civic pride – but we do not know how residents understood those feelings and what it might have meant when they waned post-celebratory year. We need a more nuanced approach towards this work and perhaps should explore some of the consequences of cultural mega events mobilising civic emotions in the first place. Why do we measure pride and not shame? Why not measure both? Or frustration? Where others have argued for improved metrics in this area (e.g. Wood, 2006), I ask why we should measure pride *at all*. These issues might require the kind of critical approach to evaluation and monitoring that is unfeasible under current modes of delivery – at least for official partner institutions – where the reputational and economic imperatives of 'singing from the same hymn sheet' and working towards the same outcomes mean that critical voices are often not welcomed. Could UKCoC documentation be developed so that bid processes involve more than the celebration of place? This might provoke more critical cultural engagement and would make an important contribution to improving the health of Hull's public sphere, perhaps bringing some trust back to political processes and collective decision making.

8.3.3 Suggestions for future research

This work could be built on in many ways. It could be 'scaled up' or adapted to include different UK cities and towns, as well as cities from other countries and continents. My thesis has narrated and analysed the place-based specificities of Hull's Brexit and UKCoC moments. However I suggest that they have relevance beyond, and that Hull, an 'ordinary' (Robinson, 2006), 'structurally disadvantaged' city (Jonas *et al.*, 2017), potentially contributes to our understanding of other structurally disadvantaged cities across the UK, the rest of Europe and North America that have expressed similar (anti)political sentiments. In particular, I suggest that the civic imaginary is a useful concept to understand the shifting senses of identity that occur in places undergoing change or crises such as the political and cultural re-imagining of Hull between 2010 and 2020. Thus, there are potentially wider implications to my research, and the findings and methodologies outlined here could be tested and developed to explore recent political and cultural behaviours elsewhere.

Avenues of exploration might include comparing or relating Hull's mega event experiences with other places within the UK such as Liverpool and Coventry, or looking at the relationship between mega events and political cultures with international comparators such as European Capitals of Culture like Chemnitz or Matera. As mentioned in Chapter 1, Chemnitz is an interesting case study due to its political culture: in 2017, almost a quarter of residents there voted for the far-right Alternative for Germany party (AfD), and in 2018 it was the site of violent anti-immigrant protests. In 2025, Chemnitz will host the European Capital of Culture, seen as an opportunity by local leaders 'to show a lot of the unseen' and to 'give the city a boost' (Yorck von Wartenburg, 2020). Matera (as ECoC2019) is also interesting due to its reputation as Italy's 'national shame' in the period immediately after WWII, especially related to the 'Sassi' (literally 'stones', where many residents lived in caves for centuries until the late 1960s, thus making 'sassi' a byword for squalor). Following a long culture-led regeneration process (one milestone was in 1993, when Matera became a UNESCO World Heritage site), the 'Sassi' are now a source of tourist revenue, having been turned into exhibition spaces, hotels, and bars, capitalizing on what was once a source of shame. Such international comparisons might also address the concerns of specific groups, and I suggest an important area in this regard would be to develop understandings and impacts of Hull2017 and Brexit (as well as the international comparators) on the futures of young people in the city.

My project has touched on issues relating to the management and leadership style of cultural mega events – an under-researched object of study. Future work might look at different aspects of the management styles of cultural mega events (e.g. through a feminist lens, or with a specific focus on the affective dynamics of cultural leadership) and of the impacts of management style on the implementation of legacy strategies. A key question might be to ask what alternative forms of governance such high profile, short term and fast paced events could take. I suggest that this is of importance to cultural workers in places like Hull, where being part of a relatively small cultural ecosystem raises questions around currencies of trust, knowledge sharing and ‘speaking out’ – especially over time – when some key decision makers have been in post for decades. Thus, sociological research of Hull’s cultural sector would make an important contribution to understanding the longer term impacts of cultural mega events on smaller cities and towns. What learnings from Hull2017 and Brexit have actually taken place on the ground, and how are these learning shared beyond the city?

Finally, where I have argued that Hull2017 abandoned explicit politics in its programming, it will be interesting to investigate how future CoCs grapple with the ‘thorny issues’ of their time. As the controversial Festival UK 2022 draws nearer (whose senior leadership team comprises many Hull2017 personnel), it will be important to trace its engagement with issues such as nationalism, migration and place shaming, and to analyse how, and with what effects, its claims to bring unity, joy and hope to a divided populace are attempted (Brown, 2020). Such a research project might focus on the role of emotional governance, which is increasingly evident in the emerging post-Brexit UK policy landscape. A key question will be to ask how societies can, and should, deal with the negative emotions and feelings that motivate support for the new radical right. One way is suggested by Flecker (2007:245) who emphasizes

The importance of policies directed at reducing feelings of insecurity and injustice through concrete measures of providing secure and stable employment and income resulting in satisfactory living conditions and subjectively meaningful integration into society.

We also might want to consider further, as I suggested in Chapter 5, what is the role of emotion in processes of political dislocation. Collaborations with environmental psychology to study people/place relations such as those advocated by Devine-Wright (2015) would make important contributions in this area, and there are interesting insights to be gained from psycho-social approaches to political culture (e.g. Richards, 2007; Yates *et al.*, 2020).

8.4 Civic imaginaries: A research agenda

One of the key contributions of this thesis is its experimentation with the 'civic imaginary' as a conceptual and methodological framework. It has revealed the potential qualitative avenues that researchers might take to explore the everyday realities and understandings of political shifts – and helps develop new questions to address the broader societal impacts of cultural mega events. At a time when some monitoring and evaluation units are advocating more intricate social impact metrics to demonstrate the success of CMEs, often with 'civic pride' as a 'key outcome' (e.g. Needlands et al., 2020; 2021), my thesis has shown how in Hull, such emotions contributed to the uncritical acceptance of Hull2017 as a 'triumph' at the expense of more thoughtful and potentially recuperative, forward thinking civic conversations. I suggest that such cultural populism is akin to the 'anti-political' populism that marked some elements of the Brexit debate. Thus, despite Hull's claims of rebelliousness and 'freedom', exploring the city's civic imaginaries has shown how its recent history has been dominated by a relatively weak critical public sphere in which top down quasi-authoritarian approaches have been allowed to flourish.

There is much potential then, in developing the civic imaginary concept further, and applying it to other places and contexts, especially to ask questions about the broader political cultures within which Cities of Culture (and Cities of Culture research) take place. Local civic cultures, senses of belonging and local structures of feeling are different in different locations - and the civic imaginary creates a vocabulary and geographically specific process to 'work out' these intangible yet influential forces on place. It is an inductive methodology that acknowledges the realities of power, and exposes the discrepancies of power in traditional Cities of Culture research and evaluation, where powerful stakeholders are able to impose questions that reflect their own interests. Attending to the civic, though itself a term not without contestation (see Chapter 2), means that collective identities and concerns can be brought to the fore in ways that include alternative perspectives and agendas to the 'top down' style of policy making.

With Hull as a case study, I have shown how mass participation in a cultural programme does not automatically mean increased engagement in political processes. Given that Coventry as UKCoC2021 is promoting itself as a 'proud' city of 'radicalism, activism and reinvention' (Souza, 2021) containing events such as the CVX Festival which foregrounds youth arts activism and *Castaway*, a 'major outdoor theatre show' exploring the environmental crisis, it will be

interesting to see if these initiatives have any influence on the wider public sphere.⁸⁵ In many ways, Coventry's political culture is not unlike Hull's: as mentioned in Chapter 1, it voted to leave the EU and is also struggling with low and decreasing voter turnout. At the 2021 local elections, Coventry's turnout was 32%, with some wards as low as 15% (Coventry City Council, 2021). Thus, Coventry2021's focus on activism and radicalism, in the context of such low political engagement, provides a test case of the role culture might play in enabling democratic participation. It remains to be seen, but perhaps Hull2017 is the last of more 'traditional' models of cultural mega event delivery, which relied on mass participatory spectacle and a highly scripted, 'depoliticised' rhetoric of cultural transformation. As it is promoting smaller and more critical interventions, perhaps Coventry2021 might prove to be the first of a new model of cultural mega event that resists the top-down approach, and it will be important to follow how civic pride is understood by commentators in this context. As this thesis has shown, exploring civic imaginaries can develop understandings of pride and other civic feelings, beyond the narrow applications typical of 'traditional' cultural mega event evaluations.

My approach has perhaps been limited by an assumption that the civic imaginary is a universal phenomenon - in other words, that all respondents have the same ability to think prospectively and have the facility or capacity to imagine futures in the first place, let alone articulate them. This is not the case. To give one example, when unable to respond verbally to some of my questions, I asked a participant to represent their imagined future through a doodle or any kind of abstract drawing. After several attempts, they drew a series of question marks in the corner of the sheet of paper. For her, the future was precariously unknown, with the day to day challenge of surviving on state benefits making it difficult to satisfy basic needs and to think beyond the short horizon her finances afforded. For her, the future involved negotiating a poorly timetabled yet increasingly expensive public transport system. It was about completing formal education whilst also being the primary carer for her father and younger sister which made her very tired, and interrupted her ability to concentrate on coursework tasks. It was difficult, impossible perhaps, for this participant to relate Hull2017 or Brexit to any of her more immediate concerns. Some people are unable to think about the future in the terms of this thesis at all due to issues of low financial, social or other forms of

⁸⁵ For the Coventry2021 programme see <https://coventry2021.co.uk/coming-soon/> [Accessed 4 July 2021].

capital that ease existence and mobility in modern British society. When I asked the young woman I have described in this paragraph how she might vote at the next general election, she sighed as if annoyed or irritated, then sat quietly for a moment before saying: 'I've got absolutely no idea what I'd be voting *for*'.



Figure 8-1 Focus Group participant doodle, 2019.

There is a danger then, that despite the rhetoric of 'levelling up', should powers be further consolidated in Westminster, not devolved, it would compound Hull's sense of disenfranchisement and could resume cycles of place shaming and stigmatisation and hasten the already spiraling decline of political participation. The construction of a more critical local public sphere is therefore vital for places like Hull to expose (and then negotiate) the gap between rhetoric and reality of neoliberal 'regeneration' and 'recovery'. Indeed, in the wake of COVID-19 and the increasing attempts to divide socially liberal from socially conservative through so-called 'culture wars',⁸⁶ Freire's conscientisation may be needed now more than in 2016 and the EU referendum. If voters on all sides of the Brexit debate are feeling a lack of control and powerless to change things for the better, then we need new thinking and new ways of doing politics. Indeed, the bookshelves are heaving with manifestos which envision

⁸⁶ For example the March 2021 report by the Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities which found no evidence to support 'the well-meaning "idealism" of many young people who claim the country is still institutionally racist' (Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities, 2021). The report was called 'government-level gaslighting' (Walker, 2021), and has been largely discredited by the academic community.

returns to 'responsible' politics, post-capitalist politics, fully automated luxury communism and other (predominantly left) utopias (e.g. Frase, 2016; Bregman and Manton, 2018; Glaser, 2018; Monbiot, 2018; Bastani, 2019). Whatever our futures, the empirical material narrated and analysed throughout this thesis shows that the *specificities* of place need to be at the heart of public policy to make them more relevant and more accountable.

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Appendix 1 Research participants

Surveys

- The **Sea of Hull Survey** was made available to respondents via web-link through Online Surveys between August – October 2018. Participants were recruited from the ‘closed’ *Sea of Hull* Facebook Group which has approximately 800 members, comprising participants of the large-scale public art project by Spencer Tunick. The group is administered by Ferens Art Gallery. **This survey generated 100 responses. A third of these were from the Hull area and their data incorporated into the thesis.**
- The **One Hull of a City Survey** was made available to respondents via web-link through Online Surveys from 27 Oct 2018 – to March 2019. The link was posted several times on the One Hull of a City Facebook Group, through my own networks (including old school networks, direct emails to contacts in the city and snowballing). The survey contained screening questions to ensure all respondents are from the Hull area and over the age of 18. **This survey generated 193 eligible responses.**

Interviews and focus groups

Across all cohorts there were 52 participants as follows:

Hull residents group

(24 in total)

Name	PROFILE				
	EU Ref Vote	GENDER	AGE	POSTCODE	POLITICS
Richard*	L (now R)	M	25-34	HU5	Lab
Lee*	L	M	35-44	HU9	Lab/Lib Dem
Andrew*	L	M	35-44	HU7	Lab
Matthew	L	M	45-54	YO18	Con/Lib
Jackie	L	F	Not provided	HU8	Lab/Brexit Party
Angela	L	F	65+	HU13	Lab/Lib
Pauline	L	F	65+	HU9	Lab
James	R	M	35-44	HU7	Lab
Graham	R	M	45-54	HU3	Lab
Pete*	R	M	55-64	HU5	Lab/Lib
Phil	R	M	65+	HU11	Green / Independent

Ella*	R	F	35-44	HU5	Lab/Green
Kathy*	R	F	55-64	HU5	Lab/Green
Linda*	R	F	55-64	HU3	Lab
Gillian*	R	F	55-64	HU5	Lab
Rosie*	R	F	65+	HU5	Lab/Green
Patience*	R	O	35-44	HU3	Green
3 Young People from the Warren	DNV (too young)	1M, 3F	18-24	All Hull postcodes	
Jim *	DNV (but L sympathy) -	M	65+	HU3	Lab
Hilde	DNV (R sympathy) - ineligible to vote	F	25-34	HU5	Not eligible to vote
Monica	DNV (R sympathy but ineligible to vote)	F	25-34		
Martina	DNV (but R sympathy) - ineligible to vote	F	45-54	HU5	Lab/Green

*Participants with an asterisk have been interviewed twice or attended two focus groups. The first session was to talk in detail about Hull2017, the second was to discuss Brexit.

Hull2017 actors

(13 in total)

- Madeleine O'Reilly – freelance theatre director and artistic director of Assemblefest
- Lee Corner – chair of Absolutely Cultured
- Martin Green – CEO and Artistic Director of Hull 2017
- Richard Lees – artist and activist
- Sharon Darley – community artist (formerly Goodwin Trust)
- Robert Mitchell – chair, Hull Philharmonic Orchestra
- Andrew Pearson – Artistic Director, Ensemble 52
- Susan Beulah – Freelance artist
- Michael Barnes-Wynters – Independent creative and Producer

- Nayan Kulkarni – *Blade* Artist
- Anonymous – Board Member of Hull2017
- Anonymous – Senior International City of Culture Consultant 1
- Anonymous – Senior international City of Culture Consultant 2

Middle Child Theatre Company members

(5 in total)

- Paul Smith, Artistic Director
- Maureen Lennon, Playwright
- Matthew Butcher, Dramaturg
- Jamie Potter, Communications Manager
- Mungo Beaumont, Executive Producer (to 2018)

Political influencers

(3 in total)

- Richard Corbett, Labour MEP
- Malcolm Relph, Brexit Lead for Hull City Council
- Anonymous – Local journalist

Other Hull-based individuals with experiences and thoughts of value to the project

(7 in total)

- Jan Boyd, CEO, Environmental and Management Solutions, Hull
- Julian Rice, CEO, Hull Freedom Centre
- Clair Atherton, Participation and Co-Production Officer, Headstart Hull
- Karen Okra, Community youth support worker and board member of several Hull organisations
- Magda Moses, Cultural producer, Art Link
- Gemma Aked & Laura Barley from Humber LEP
- Victoria Bissett – PhD student and former director of Art Link

Appendix 2 Sample survey questions

Section 1.

These questions are interested in finding out more about exactly who participated in *Sea of Hull*.

1. Do you live in Hull or the East Riding?

- Yes. I live in the Hull catchment area.
- Yes. I live in the East Riding catchment area.
- No. I live in _____

2. If you answered no, please briefly explain if you have a connection with the Hull or any other reasons that influenced your decision to participate in *Sea of Hull*.

3. Are you:

- Male
- Female
- Non Binary/Third Gender
- Prefer not to say
- Other _____

4. Which age group do you belong to:

- 18-24
- 25-34
- 35-44
- 45-54
- 55-64
- 65+

5. Please describe your ethnicity

6. Do you consider yourself to have a disability?

- Yes (please give details) _____
- No

7. Your highest formal educational qualification is:

No formal qualifications
GCSE / O Level
City and Guilds / NVQ Level 2 or 3
AS / A Level
Professional level diploma, NVQ Level 4 or 5, BTEC Higher
Bachelor Level Degree
Post Graduate Certificate
Masters Level Degree
PhD

8. Please write the first part of your postcode. We do not wish to know your full address. This is only to identity which postal area you live in.

Section 2.

Throughout 2017, Hull hosted the UK City of Culture. These questions ask for your thoughts about the year.

9. How many events did you attend?

0
1-5
5-10
10-15
15+
30+

10. Please list the Hull2017 events you remember attending.

11. Your favourite Hull City of Culture event was:

12. Thinking about the entire City of Culture year: In a few words, how would you describe your thoughts and experience of the year to a person who had never heard of Hull or City of Culture before?

13. In your own words, what did you think was missing from Hull2017 or what would you like to have seen more of?

Section 3.

These questions ask about your political views.

14. How did you vote in the 2016 EU Referendum?

Leave
Remain
Spoiled ballot
Did not vote
Do not wish to say

15. In your own words, briefly mention your reasons for that choice.

16. If a second referendum was held today, how would you vote?

- Leave
- Remain
- Would spoil ballot
- Would not vote
- Don't know
- Do not wish to say

17. In your own words, briefly mention your reasons for that choice.

18. How did you vote in the 2017 General Election?

Labour
Conservative
Lib Dem
UKIP
Other _____
Spoiled ballot
Did not vote
Do not wish to say

19. If local council elections were to take place today, how would you vote?

Labour
Conservative
Lib Dem
UKIP
Other _____
Would spoil ballot
Would not vote
Don't know
Do not wish to say

20. Which of the following best describes you:

I normally vote Labour
I normally vote Conservative
I normally vote Lib Dem
I normally vote UKIP
I normally vote for another party not listed
I am a floating voter
I normally spoil my ballot
I normally do not vote
Do not wish to say

That's the end of the survey. Thank you for your time. It may be useful to my research to interview some *Sea of Hull* participants in person. If you consent to a follow up interview, I will contact you to arrange a suitable date and venue. This could be at Hull University or, if this is not convenient somewhere else. The interviews will be audio recorded and may be used in my thesis.

Would you agree to a face to face interview to discuss some of your answers further?

- YES (If yes please provide a contact email or telephone number)

- NO

Would you agree to take part in a focus group to discuss some of the issues raised in this project further?

- YES (if yes, please provide a contact email or telephone number)

- NO

Appendix 3 Typical interview schedule

Incorporating a range of creative tasks as described in Chapter 3, the first part of the interview would normally be based around the following three questions:

1. How do you imagine your future in Hull post-Hull2017?
2. How do you imagine your future in Hull post-EU Referendum?
3. What do you wish for Hull? Do Hull2017 and the EU Ref help that vision?

The second part of the interview would consist of discussions around the following Hull2017 events or subjects:

- Made In Hull
- Sea of Hull
- I Wish to Communicate With You
- Blade
- Poppies
- Hull2017 marketing materials and public statements