Śledzie and Soda Bread:

Are Intercultural Events Truly Intercultural?

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Summary:

Intercultural events, particularly one-off 'fun-days' present displays of cultural stereotypes where dialogue is superficial undermining inter-community interaction. Local funding policies may also contribute to the lack of diverse and long-term (trans)local dialogue.

Abstract:

This article argues that particular intercultural events hinder, rather than foster the cohesion of heterogeneous local communities. Intercultural events range from intimate one-off or long-term interactions to large 'fun-days'; the latter entice local communities to congregate in contrived spaces. Intercultural 'fun-days' encourage translocal communities to display their material culture as a gaze for local-born actors. I argue that intercultural fun-day displays of material culture are unrepresentative of a nation or translocal individuals. Does *śledzie* (herrings) represent Poland or soda bread, Northern Ireland (NI) or? I consider that one-off intercultural events maintain and perpetuate divisions which they attempt to heal, rather than encouraging intergroup understanding of (trans)local groups' lifeworlds. Additionally, publicly funded intercultural events are required to demonstrate that grants are suitably spent and well-managed in line with predetermined variables. Therefore, cultural funding policies may inadvertently favour organisations with bureaucratic expertise, over small community groups with rich (trans)local knowledge.

The perspective of body *hexis*, based on participant observation at intercultural fun-days in NI, make it possible to problematise them as

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insufficient to engender cohesion between (trans)local communities. Conversely, I argue that genuine intercultural appreciation is possible and sustainable when (trans)local communities dialogue together.

Key words: intercultural, body hexis, translocality

Anthropologists, and no doubt other researchers, experience research fields as sites yielding or withholding information. Researchers' experiences within the field often raise questions about what initially appears to be an incidental observation, yet when interrogated, provides a potent, divergent knowledge source. For example, my initial PhD research theme was an anthropological consideration of migrants and their mental health. I sought to understand wider aspects of translocal (migrant) people and their lifeworlds in places where they might mingle[1]. I anticipated that observing intercultural events would provide partial insights into translocal peoples social interactions as they moved within spaces outside their quotidian lifeworlds. I thought, perhaps naïvely, that during intercultural events there would be meaningful interactions between people from differing backgrounds.

The rationale for this paper is to initiate debates around my central theme of whether intercultural events can become mutual dialogic spaces, fostering genuine intermingling of people of differing nationalities. Through a consideration of what takes place during community events, labelled as intercultural, I will consider whether they encourage interaction or reinforce cultural stereotypes, perpetuating existing intercommunity boundaries rather than slowly dismantling them.   While the envisioned purpose of intercultural events is to bring people together that might not usually interact, the witnessed effect is that '[t]he use of materiality to represent a [translocal] migrant community, while novel or entertaining, reinforces difference' (Marshall, 2020). My observations were a methodological basis for exploring interactions and (un)relatedness, symbolic of how intercultural events, in the

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context of my research can perpetuate boundaries and divisions between local and translocal people, resulting in a superficial understanding of other lives. Typically, during an intercultural festival, single instances of international material culture is displayed – popular national food, folk dances or henna tattooing. Yet, limiting a translocal group[2] to displays of sociomaterial culture is reductive, perpetuating the perception that representations signify a culture's totality. It is only through genuine understanding as a discursive means for mutual appreciation of other lifeworlds where peoples' attitudes and perceptions of each other are changed - previous perceptions are somewhat collapsed and "difference" becomes complementary rather than Othered. I argue that without genuine understanding, interaction and exploration of sociocultural characterisations are left unchallenged. Through Bourdieu's (1990) perspective of body hexis, I will explore whether intercultural events provide genuine understanding of translocal people, or a glimpse into their lives for local-born people. This paper questions whether intercultural events foster interactions of diversity within communities or are they merely entertainment with displays to gaze on the exotic, translocal Other? Afterall, *śledzie* (herrings) are no more representative of Polish culture than soda bread represents Northern Ireland (NI) (ibid).

I refer to people as translocal rather than transnational, because people settling in another country embody more than their birth-nation, they also move with past local perspectives to new places of life. Translocality is defined by Conradson and McKay where:

> relational topologies have been refigured on a transnational basis [and that] localities continue to be important as sources of meaning and identity for mobile subjects (2007, p. 168).

Although I will consider the events I attended alongside other academic's writing on similar occurrences through a cultural policy lens, I will also discuss

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them as an anthropologist. As Kayla Rush argues, the anthropologist as an outsider, for example, to cultural policy, 'has the potential to see with fresh eyes that which those others might take for granted—to bring to the discussion another perspective' (2020, p. 84). Anthropological observations consider more than what is observed then objectively documented. The anthropological gaze enables us to unsettle the moral, social and structural presuppositions that we observe, including our own. The anthropologist Vincent Crapanzano evokes the anthropological gaze when he wrote, 'I've come to prefer the puzzlement generated by the montage to the complacency offered by the easy explanation' (2004, p. 4). As an anthropologist entering the cultural policy arena, it is evident that an alternative view can contribute to debates within the discipline. I will contribute to cultural policy debates by considering intercultural events as social gatherings where sub-surface divisions exist. The events I attended were non-political, nor were they seeking to bridge sectarian divides which many events and projects in NI attempt to do. Rather, the events addressed a peripheral concern – the ephemeral nature of engendering 'community' as a structural cultural policy exercise. I will address the policy influences on intercultural events in the section, Policy Space, below.

It is not the intention of this article to dismiss events where people from various nationalities are brought together. Well organised, participatory events can yield long-lasting, meaningful interactions. However, in terms of arts management, intercultural events must be mindful that,

> [w]hen building bridges between distinct groups, the acknowledgement of difference is part of the process. To make this classification clear, it is tempting to resort to collective identities and cultural stereotypes through the use of easily recognisable images. Whilst this can be valuable and desired in tourism, it is less well received within arts and cultural sectors where its usage is seen as lazy and lacking in creativity especially within contemporary practices (Jhunjhunwala and Walker, 2020, p. 161).

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Within the event space, where and how bodies emplace themselves, uncovers their connectedness to the socio-material environment. Observing event participation develops an alternative mindset, active to how and where people position themselves in relation with others and their sociomaterial material environment. One means of observing is through Pierre Bourdieu's perspective of body hexis which is

> political mythology realized, *em-bodied*, turned into a permanent disposition, a durable way of standing, speaking, walking, and thereby of feeling and thinking (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 69-70, emphasis in original).

Thus, over time, dispositions become unconscious ways of interacting with people, the natural and built environment around us. Bourdieu continues, arguing that bodies display social divisions (ibid, p. 70). When we observe groups through the perspective of body hexis, it is possible to determine social preferences and avoidances and subsequently, whether interactions are encouraged, or hindered. For example, where are people gravitating to or away from, and how do their bodies display (un)relatedness? Physical, bodily positioning is then a proxy for peoples (un)willingness to interact with their translocal neighbours, symbolising their attitudes and closeness to in- or out-groups. It is at intercultural events, which are socio-politically constructed spaces, where various people with diverse backgrounds mingle, allowing ethnographers a concentrated viewpoint that would not be possible in everyday disparate locations.

Intercultural Events

Cultural policies often refer to how events benefit a community or communities with intercultural aspirations. As a starting point however, we must be mindful that the term community[3] is contested by cultural policy authors (see Bauer, 2000, Paquette and Beauregard, 2018, McCandlish and

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McPherson, 2020) as well as anthropologists (see Abu-Lughod, 1991, Werbner, 2008, Grønseth, 2013 and Amit, 2013). Maruška Svašek argues that the collective term, community, 'assumes that certain groups of people are single units whose members all share the same outlook and identity' (2018, p. 216). The issue for event organisers is that attempting to bring together or integrate a community is problematic from the outset because people residing in an area loosely defined as a community, display and embody variation within and between themselves. A generic event, therefore, will bring a community together, superficially. The challenge for event organisers is to acknowledge that community represents diversity which in turn questions event organisation by those who decide how funding is distributed/spent on the basis of policy fulfilment.

Colloquially, the terms festival and event are used interchangeably. However, events and festivals have distinct nomenclatures. Wilson et al. define festivals 'as *public, themed celebrations that are held regularly*' (2017, p. 4, emphasis in original). However, 'a special event is a one time or infrequently occurring event outside the normal range/programme or activities of the sponsoring or organising body' (Getz 1997 cited in Wilson et al., 2017, p. 4). Defining an intercultural event can take two approaches – what events are or what they should be. Since the purpose of this paper is to initiate debate around intercultural events, I will attempt a description that fulfils the former in the context of my research. On an objective level intercultural events are one-off occurrences designed to encourage a diverse range of people within an undefined geographic locale to participate with or observe sociomaterial displays from the people who occupy that area. Intercultural events range from small gatherings in community centres to large open-air events, enticing local-born people with traditional displays by translocal groups.

A consideration of the purpose of festivals can challenge similar manifestations to events. The term festival can be problematised, particularly

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when they refer to the previously discussed constructions of community. Donald Getz et al. describe festivals as 'celebrat[ing] community values, ideologies, identity and continuity' (2010, p. 30). Ros Derrett states that 'festivals contribute to SOC [sense of community] because these events allow community members to share a purpose' (cited in Van Winkle and Woosnam, 2014, p. 23). Conversely, Chris Gibson and John Connell warn that music festivals, 'may promote social cohesion and a sense of belonging, but may just as easily alienate local people and discourage their participation' (2012, p. 90). Gibson and Connell tease out how festivals actively exclude certain people and groups. Therefore, scholars are not harmonious in how they conceive of festivals and by inference, events. Indeed, festivals and events exclude certain people or groups because they do not identify with the theme and purpose or are prohibited from attending due to costs and location. Festivals and events then are contested spaces, ideologically and physically uniting or excluding people.

Event Spaces

Events are temporarily constructed spaces and their purposes can fall broadly within the spectrums of dialogue (participation) or entertainment (observation), relational or unrelational. Cornwall discusses how spaces can be opened for dialogue which

> depends on how people take up and make use of what is on offer, as well as on supportive processes that can help build capacity, nurture voice and enable people to empower themselves (2008, p. 275).

Furthermore, 'the contrast and the relationship between spaces that are created through invitations to participate and those that people create for themselves' (Cornwall, 2000, cited in ibid, p. 275) highlights how spaces can be curated by people who may hold organisational power for attendees, an etic approach or an emic approach where people create their own dialogic

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spaces for their purposes. Being mindful that spaces are a 'field of relations' (Olwig and Hastrup, 1997, cited in Jiménez, 2003, p. 193), there will also be un-relationality. The balance of un/relationality is dependent on who and for the event space has been created.

I attended several events in 2019 and 2020 before the pandemic halted gatherings and the possibility of further ethnographic research. I will discuss my observations of people at two event spaces[4]. One event was organised by a housing association, promoted as an 'Intercultural Fun-Day'. The second event, 'Your Community Neighbours; A Multicultural Celebration Evening' (YCN), was organised by a community association. Incidentally, promotional materials were distributed in English only, already excluding some people.

The intercultural fun-day took place in a large Belfast park. The day was grey and overcast, quite usual for NI. Despite the weather, large numbers of individuals and families were drawn to the event. The main thoroughfare was lined with food stalls – Hungarian, French, Polish, and Caribbean. Games and activities for children and a DJ took place on an adjacent grassy area. Various groups performed throughout the day – a Chinese dragon display, Irish dancing and a Samba band. On a sparsely visited site, somewhat distanced from the main activities was the National Voices Marquee (NVM). According to a brochure, no longer available, the NVM 'provided [attendees] with the opportunity to increase their understanding of cultural differences'. In reality, the NVM lacked visitors. The organisers yelled out to the crowd to entice attendees. In the end, most people who came to listen to the speakers were from the organisation itself, evident by their branded sponsorship t-shirts or comments that they were part of that organisation. I asked one of the speakers how they felt their talk had been received; dismissively she replied "no one came. This is not the place to talk about why people have moved here." The peripheral location of the NVM and lack of interest symbolised

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translocal voices and their positioning within what was labelled an 'intercultural' event.

The YCN event took place on a very wet and windy evening in a local community centre in a mid-Ulster town. Promoted as an opportunity to interact with neighbours, the YCN had the potential to contrast with the intercultural fun-day as it appeared to be an encouragement to meet other people. I anticipated that the event would be relatively informal, enabling people to mingle, to become familiar with their neighbours. The hall was arranged with tables laden with food provided by Polish, Lithuanian and French groups, all positioned at the back of the hall. In front of the food tables were several rows of chairs, arranged in a wide semicircle around what would be the performance area. The formality of the occasion began with an introductory speech from the organiser, telling the audience that several groups would perform and there would be a chance to chat with each other later in the evening. The first group to perform was a Lithuanian dance team who introduced one of their dances: "our first dance is about a swarm of bees, which is common in Lithuanian folklore – it symbolises hard, collective working." After the Lithuanian performance, a young, local ballet troupe performed several pieces; Slovakian then French dancers followed. The French team encouraged members of the audience to join in, which a few did, reluctantly. The Lithuanian and French groups were the only instances when the meaning behind the performance was briefly explained or interaction encouraged, albeit briefly. No further appreciation of a group's heritage or current lifeworlds in NI was provided. The lack of meaningful interaction highlighted how the performances were to be gazed upon rather than containing insights or interaction, which might have given credence to the evening's rationale, to meet other neighbours.

After several dances, the organiser announced a fifteen-minute break, to "enjoy the food and chat with your neighbours." The constrained space between the chairs and the food tables restricted movement and chat –

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people moved cheek by jowl. I kept my distance and chatted with one of the Lithuanian dancers who was looking forward to retiring to Lithuania in a few years' time. After around ten minutes, people returned to their seats to socialise with their friends and family. I approached the two people in charge of the Polish food. "*Cześć* (hello)," I said, "have many people talked with you about Poland or Polish cultures?" "No", they replied, "they're just here for the food." We exchanged wry grins and chatted about their lives in NI.

Observing the event space reveals peoples relations and un-relations to the assemblages in a constructed sociomaterial environment: food stalls, performances, friends, family and translocal groups. It was clear what was significant or insignificant as people queued for food at the events: familiar food was preferred over the unfamiliar. Familiar food at the fun-day were French crepes and the Hungarian stall providing hot dogs and burgers where the queues were lengthy. At the park event, a stall with Polish *śledzie*, cheese with *chrzan* (horseradish) were mostly avoided. On the Polish and Lithuanian stalls, bruschetta like snacks and sweets were preferred over *pierogi* (dumplings) during the YCN event. The queues of people concentrated around stalls or tables with familiar food, avoiding the unfamiliar, signified how peoples' intersubjective positioning displayed social divisions (see Bourdieu, 1990, p. 70). Using the perspective of body hexis, I observed how peoples social positioning towards the familiar and away from the unfamiliar indicated the extent to which divisions exist. Divisions may be due to simple gustatory preference or the extreme, xenophobia. Thankfully, xenophobia was not apparent at the events I attended. If food signifies a division rather than xenophobia, overcoming divisions is not insurmountable. Thus, observing peoples' body hexis reveals the sources of division and potential resolutions.

Compared with the park event, the layout of the YCN hall and the schedule was inconducive to interaction, even if attendees intended to do so. As the focus was on the performances, only fifteen minutes was allocated to any

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potential interaction, indicating that the organisers had set the agenda rather than adopting a participatory approach. Non-participation, according to Sherry Arnstein has 'been contrived by some to substitute for genuine participation' (1969, p. 217). According to Arnstein's ladder of participation, the events outlined here place translocal groups at the lower rungs – non-participation or tokenism (ibid). To enable genuine and meaningful interaction, Arnstein argues, groups must be enabled 'to negotiate and engage in trade-offs with traditional powerholders…obtain[ing] the majority of decision-making seats, or full managerial power' (ibid). The question remains, can full, meaningful partnership be achieved? In relation to policies when applied to events, Sarah White discusses how 'participation is a process, its dynamic overtime must be taken into account' (1996, p. 11). White considers that being present does not necessarily lead to voices being heard (ibid. p. 7). Cornwall argues that 'it is often far from obvious that most participatory processes do not *and literally cannot* involve 'everyone'' (2008, p. 276, emphasis in original). Full participation is not practically possible due to the multitude of voices, and we cannot manufacture a participatory utopia. Members of a community may not want to raise their voice which can lead to the perpetuation of dominant narratives shaping events. Why people do not want to raise their voice must be questioned, and if possible, resolved before intercultural gatherings are conceived. Reluctance to participate is multifaceted because of structural and intersubjective barriers. For example, language, xenophobia, or reduced social and cultural capital. However, it is possible to begin to create dialogic participation, foregrounding excluded voices acknowledging the existence of structural and social barriers. As White (1996) may argue, dialogic events are long-term, thus undermining the notion of an 'event'.

Mary Moynihan (2019-20) examines how meaningful participation can be engendered. In her analysis of the policies of the Arts Council Ireland / An Chomhairle Ealaíon, Moynihan discusses how that government body includes the development of diversity within organisations, and importantly, under the

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auspices of engagement, where there is a need to 'determine actions required to address barriers to participation' (Moynihan, 2019-2020, p. 7). Nevertheless, words on a policy document must, as Moynihan discusses, lead to meaningful action, addressing structural and social barriers to participation (ibid). Moynihan's argument can be applied to events that encourage participation from unheard and structurally excluded voices, creating truly interactive spaces and genuine understanding. Durrer and Henze paraphrase Marginson and Sawir (2011) when they rightly argue that 'intercultural understanding [is] the ability to know, accept, value and empathise with alternative perspectives and perceptions of the world' (Durrer and Henze, 2020, p. 8). The backdrop of Marginson and Sawir's intercultural understanding perspective should serve as a maxim for intercultural events. Returning to my anthropological roots, an event or festival that engenders genuine understanding is a liminal zone, and as people emerge, they 'go home…The festival [event] continues in the social memory and the affective links and sense of belonging the common experience has generated' (Picard, 2016, p. 607-8).

There is a positive, yet arguably superficial consequence when translocal groups' material culture is observed by local born attendees – visibility. A member of an Eastern European dance group told me, "dancing at events makes us visible." The visibility of translocal groups brings them out from the social periphery, out of the shadows – but only for an instance and only one facet of their lifeworlds. Mirela, a Romanian community worker described how, during one event, she encouraged local-born adults to take part with a dance *hora* [traditional folk dance] and for (trans)local children to draw with each other. "With initial interactions," Mirela said, "you have to engage…When people are having fun, it's easier [to engage with them]." Mirela envisaged the initial interaction would be a first step for more immersive (trans)local interactions. However, without the encouragement to engage, to understand each other, as Mirella did, interactions can be stilted.

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Thus, meaningful interactions, which may need an element of gentle coercion and when managed well, can result in positive social change. Combining an entertaining event which enables another group's visibility can be an initial endeavour to create awareness that their translocal neighbours exist. However, interaction must continue beyond moments to merely gaze on the entertainment.

It would be naïve to suggest that intercommunity events are doomed to fail on the interaction front. It is impossible to educate a dominant social group about another group's sociocultural perspectives during a time-constrained one-day event where dialogue is fleeting. Nevertheless, providing instances, specific to translocal group perspectives, has positive and potentially sustainable consequences. Svašek's perspective of '[c]reating [c]ommon [g]round' (2018, p. 218) is a useful perspective on which to build events. She describes a *Diwali* celebration in the Indian Community Centre (ICC) in Belfast. The event was hosted by the ICCs over fifties group and attended by local residents of similar ages. Common ground was created despite the unfamiliarity of the space and the significance of *Diwali* to the visitors. A Hindu devotee described *Diwali* as 'one of India's most famous festivals and as important as Christmas in Ireland' (ibid, p. 220). Framing a celebration in terms of one that could be understood by the local-born audience created genuine understanding and common ground, of its importance. Because, the event was interactive, verbally and through activities such as a quiz and handling material culture, how to tie a sari, genuine inter-community understanding was initiated. The ICC event aimed to 'create understanding between groups that had different cultural backgrounds' (Svašek, 2018, p. 219). The ICC event demonstrates how participation at the top rungs of Arnstein's ladder, enable people to hold and maintain decision-making control. Traditions, decided by the ICC's members, are foregrounded for the visitors rather than being side-lined to the periphery, perpetuating their existence in the shadows.

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Bringing translocal people of out the shadows was illustrated by an event organised by Belfast City Council – The Living Library, which captures a missing-link from the events described previously. In the Living Library, '[e]ach person is a book telling their individual story, history and struggles' (Community Relations Council (CRC), 2019). The Living Library is an instance where an event can be an effective dialogic space for genuine understanding of translocal lifeworlds. The 'book' I chose was Gabriella who had moved from Romania to NI in 2008. We talked about her experiences of interethnic violence and how she tried to make herself inconspicuous to avoid further tensions. She also spoke about growing up under the communist dictator Nicolae Ceaușescu. I was concerned that my questions might arouse unhappy memories for Gabriella, or they would be seen as prying. However, Gabriella answered my initial general and mundane questions about moving to and living in NI with personal and heart-breaking detail. Yet, Gabriella did not linger in the shadows. Her agency enabled her to build a new and happy life in NI despite the xenophobia she faced when she first arrived. It is important that we consider the phenomenological aspect of translocal people rather than problematising their lives through a priori perspectives. Grønseth reminds us that 'the sense of self, as it improvises, moves and connects with others, that we experience (new) wholeness, identity, well-being and success' (2013, p. 10). Gabriella's sense of self is as true for local-born actors as it is for translocal people, that is, not a paternalistic 'them' and 'us' dualism.

Returning to the perspective of genuine understanding, I left Gabriella with a small, yet thought-provoking understanding of her lifeworld. Gabriella's scenario would be difficult to replicate during an event that showcases stereotyped displays over interaction as we often tend to forget translocal people's own agency (see Grønseth, 2013). Personal interaction is critical to engender meaningful interaction. The living library, like the ICC event,

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enabled people to come together in a meaningful manner where neither party forced control over their interactions. People, rather than policy, influenced the event format.

The Policy Space

Current cultural policy paradigms influence events that are funded directly or indirectly by national and local government. Funders often require event organisers to measure the economic benefits to a community. Gianna Moscardo, Judith Mair and Michelle Duffy argue that economic measurements of success cannot be used to consider successes such as 'social capital, community and capacity and therefore community well-being' (Mair and Duffy, 2015, p. 289, see also Bourdieu, 1985, p. 723 and King and Cruickshank, 2012). Focusing on the tangible economic impacts of an event or festival foregrounds a monetarised agenda, undermining the rhetoric of creating community cohesion. Qualitative, ethnographic methods can enable the social impacts of events to be deeply explored, with the additional benefits of potentially bringing community members together. Furthermore, we must consider who sets the measurement parameters. Power holders decide what is measured, which is interpreted by those in receipt of funding following universalist measurement tools, ironically applied to encourage diversity. I argue that imposing what and how an event is organised and measured does not capture the full picture of whether intercommunity interaction was achieved. A consideration of the language and evaluating measures of funding bodies reveals their priorities, raising the question whether the diversity of voices within a community are included.

Cultural policy in NI is dominated within the frame of Catholic/Protestant integration after decades and ongoing sectarian divisions. Ramsey and Waterhouse-Bradley argue in the context of inward migration of people who do not fit into the dominant two-community conceptualisation of NI (Roman Catholic and Protestant), that '[d]emographic changes, however, are visibly

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absent or disproportionately attended to by community cohesion and cultural policy' (2018, p. 198). Durrer and Henze also argue, when 'foster[ing] intercultural understanding…particular "voices" and ideologies may dominate' (2020, p. 8). Furthermore, particular voices and ideologies within the context of NI cultural policy are pulled and influenced by sectarian division. Economic agendas are easier to measure because consensus under that outcome are easier to achieve compared with subjective cultural policy outcomes based on decades of sectarian divide (Ramsey and Waterhouse-Bradley, 2018, p. 195). Translocal voices therefore continue to be peripheral within cultural policy due to the domination policies that seek to address historical divisions in NI.

There is another aspect to events which, when exposed, questions their organisational rationale, policy influences and funding from above. Events are organised by various formal and informal bodies (see Einarsen and Mykletun, 2009) and individuals - a full typology is outside the scope of this paper. However, briefly, the events I witnessed were planned by organisations with direct and indirect funding from government bodies. Thus, the events fell within the formal policy sector with varying degrees of structural control. If an event is organised to satisfy a groups funding, we must consider how funders influence event organisation. Andrea Cornwall (2008) writes of 'invited spaces' concerning participation which I consider can include events. 'Invited spaces', Cornwall argues 'are often structured and owned by those who provide them, no matter how participatory they may seek to be' (2008, p. 275). Where the creation of invited spaces are heavily mediated by policy and funding, event space are shaped on hegemonic terms. Cornwall argues that there is an alternative invited spaces model which can be created by an informal group of people with 'an entirely different character from most invited spaces' (ibid). Thus, invited spaces can be structured to enable dialogue, as with the Living Library and the ICC. However, funding based on policy agendas may exclude smaller community

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groups from curating invited spaces by those who know the people who occupy it and their agenda for local change. Furthermore, small community groups may lack the resources and expertise of larger organisations to access funding. Therefore, policy includes as much as it excludes if they do not have the resources to compete within the funding marketplace (see Purcell, 2002, p. 100).   It is necessary, then, to examine the policies behind an event and the (funding) policies that shape them.

NI's Executive Office operates a funding programme, Together: Building a United Community (T:BUC). The fund provides grants to 'properly constituted community groups and voluntary organisations' (The Executive Office, 2020, p. 3). T:BUC is clear that applications for a grant must be made by eligible groups, and that '[a]pplications from individuals…will not be considered' (ibid, p. 5). Additionally, T:BUC have a predefined defined set of four 'Priorities and Outcomes' (ibid, p. 12), the fourth priority is 'Our Cultural Expression' (ibid). Our cultural expression is defined as '[i]ncreased sense of community belonging (widens contribution beyond community background) [and] Cultural diversity is celebrated' (ibid, p. 12). The priorities are accompanied with predefined outcome measurements, such as 'I feel a sense of belonging to my neighbourhood' (ibid, p. 16). Other funding is not as stringent as T:BUC, for example, the CRC's aims are encouragingly discursive and grass-roots focused. CRC grants enable, for example,

> opportunities for groups to extend their knowledge and understanding of others' cultures, belief, and traditions [and] challenge stereotypes of their *own* and other communities in order to acknowledge and address difference (n. d.).

CRC's language is purposeful, encouraging tangible insights with other perspectives. CRC also challenges local-born people to address their attitudes, rather than emphasising that marginal groups come into the fold of the dominant group. Nevertheless, applications for a CRC grant are required

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to align their outcomes with that of T:BUCs. Thus, what an event must demonstrate is not controlled by (trans)local people, but dictated by policy. Policy may seek to create integrated communities, however, predefining what or how that is expected to materialise is counter to barriers to engender dialogic interactions. That is, emic, not etic interactions within a community.

Discussion

I have argued that intercultural events display intercommunity dissonance and can inadvertently perpetuate Othering by means of exotic performances, reinforcing ethnic stereotypes rather than dismantling them. I certainly do not advocate for entertaining events to be disregarded. Events where people in a locale have positive experiences as a distraction from the vicissitudes of everyday life are legitimate uses of public funds. However, the events which I have described often fail to consider active dialogue with of minority groups, those an event intends to foreground. Certainly, translocal groups become visible, however, visibility does not equate to genuine understanding. Participation by groups excluded from the planning and purpose of an event, are physically and metaphorically side-lined, repeating their subaltern place in society. Funding, when it is linked with policy priorities, often governed by the current politics of local or national government, represents a top-down model that influences the nature of truly intercultural events. Creativity is possible within a model based on extraneous policies. However, creativity and interaction are stifled by delivering against hegemonic cultural policies deemed most concerning or immediate by the incumbent policy makers. Furthermore, because particular measurable objectives are also set from the outset, this too influences what events are intended to "deliver" under the current cultural policy paradigms. Fundamentally, funding organisations must reconsider the impact of policy on groups that attempt to deliver initiatives that foster interaction. The constraints of providing evidence that a project has met predefined, measurable objectives cannot continue when it hinders

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projects that encourage genuine understanding between and within diverse groups. A policy shift towards a community's concerns and priorities must therefore be encouraged.

Describing events as intercultural gives attendees the impression that what they are witnessing is a display of culture - a superficial method of interaction in name only. Sociocultural groups' lifeworlds are impacted by ethnic tensions, job precarity and out-group isolation, themes which are excluded from the events I attended; perhaps such inequalities are too uncomfortable or inappropriate for a community event. Avoiding the reality of people's lives in a (trans)local environment, positive and negative, undermines the true diversity of a heterogeneous community.

To engender long-lasting and meaningful intercultural interaction, events, organized in that in mind, should be focused on actively bringing people together, facilitating dialogue. Certainly, there will be people who cannot or are uninterested in attending an interactive event who may not drive attitudinal change. Interested people can be a resource to challenge derogatory and stereotypical assumptions within their families, work or other settings, which may influence those previously ambiguous to real interaction. Funders too have a responsibility to remove limiting factors such as requirements that a group should have a formalised organisation structure or that 'outcomes' are quantitively measured against predetermined, policy demands. The policy space must actively facilitate the voices excluded from determining full participation that leads to genuine understanding, acknowledging diversity within a community. Subaltern voices must be allowed to influence the shape and impacts of the event and future, long-term interactions.

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[1] Medical anthropology and cultural policy may appear an incongruous match. However, Crossick and Kaszynska (2016) reference several instances where the arts and health can be incorporated to improve well-being.

[2] Unless otherwise referenced by authors or policy documents, in this paper I refer to groups as an organised collection of people, such as a dance troupe, choir or community organisation.

[3] NB: in NI, the term intercommunity often refers to interactions between Roman Catholic and Protestant groups.

[4] Festival names and places have been changed to ensure confidentiality.