UNIVERSIDADE CATÓLICA PORTUGUESA

CARTOGRAPHIC CULTURE: MAPPING RELATIONS BETWEEN THE IRISH STATE AND IT'S 'CULTURESCAPE' FROM EMPIRE TO E-COMMERCE.

Dissertation to Universidade Católica Portuguesa to obtain a Master's Degree in Culture Studies (Arts Management).

By

Rhian O'Sullivan

FCH Universidade Católica Portuguesa

(September 2024)

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Abstract.

This thesis examines the interplay between political praxis and its cultural phenomena in the Republic of Ireland, tracing its evolution from the establishment of the Irish Free State to the present day. Beginning with a historical review of the relationship between the state and the arts, this research aims to highlight how historical decisions have shaped current frameworks, how the government's approach to cultural policy has evolved in response to social, economic, and political change, and conversely, how these changes have impacted Ireland's public culturescape at various key points. Following suit is a comprehensive mapping of Ireland's contemporary cultural policy framework, including its relevant practitioners and key strategies both national and supranational. This research ends with a rigorous critique of Ireland's pivotal cultural policy, *Culture 2025,* revealing critical gaps in need of addressing to foster a more inclusive and effective contemporary cultural policy landscape. Considering the duality of cohesion and fragmentation within the Irish cultural policy framework, this research contends that despite attempts to create an integrated approach, underlying structural issues continue to undermine policy objectives and hinder the effectiveness and inclusivity of cultural initiatives. Ultimately, this research explores the interconnectedness of cultural policy and politico-economic development in the hopes to serve as a comprehensive roadmap as to the complete trajectory of Irish cultural policy, a somewhat neglected field of research that is in want of closer examination.

Keywords: Cultural policy, Ireland, Culture 2025.

Esta tese examina a interação entre a praxis política e os seus fenómenos culturais na República da Irlanda, traçando a sua evolução desde o estabelecimento do Estado Livre Irlandês até aos dias de hoje. Começando com uma revisão histórica da relação entre o Estado e as artes, esta investigação visa destacar a forma como as decisões históricas moldaram os quadros actuais, como a abordagem governamental à política cultural evoluiu em resposta às mudanças sociais, económicas e políticas e, inversamente, como estas mudanças tiveram impacto na paisagem cultural pública da Irlanda em vários pontos-chave. Segue-se um mapeamento abrangente do quadro político cultural contemporâneo da Irlanda, incluindo os seus profissionais relevantes e as principais estratégias, tanto nacionais como supranacionais. Esta investigação termina com uma crítica rigorosa da política cultural fundamental da Irlanda, Cultura 2025, revelando lacunas críticas que precisam de

ser abordadas para promover uma paisagem política cultural contemporânea mais inclusiva e eficaz. Considerando a dualidade da coesão e da fragmentação no quadro da política cultural irlandesa, esta investigação sustenta que, apesar das tentativas de criar uma abordagem integrada, as questões estruturais subjacentes continuam a minar os objectivos políticos e a impedir a eficácia e a inclusão das iniciativas culturais. Em última análise, esta investigação explora a interligação entre a política cultural e o desenvolvimento político-económico, na esperança de servir como um roteiro abrangente para a trajetória completa da política cultural irlandesa, um campo de investigação algo negligenciado que carece de uma análise mais aprofundada.

Palavras-chave: Política cultural, Irlanda, Cultura 2025.

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Chapter 1: The State and The Arts.

Frameworks.

2.1 Introduction

This chapter begins with a concise outline of the methodological framework underpinning this research (2.2) before grounding it in its wider academic field (2.3). Subsequently, this chapter aims to identify and mitigate self-limiting psychosocial obstacles to impartial research through attempting to participate in processes of self-reflexivity (2.4). Following this, the chapter presents the theoretical perspectives that have inspired this research and its narratives (2.5). Lastly, this chapter offers a succinct roadmap to the reader, outlining the structure of the research chapters (2.6).

2.2 Ontological Interpretivism, Qualitative Epistemologies.

This research adopts an ontological approach grounded in interpretivism, an approach most appropriate for this body of work due to its exploration of subjective realities within the cultural policy and broader politico-cultural landscapes. This study's approach to data collection and collation includes a systemic analysis of primary sources which include both government and non-government policy documents, cultural artefacts such as visual art and literature, relevant public discourse available online, and media representations, including speech transmissions. In addition to primary sources, this research employs a range of secondary sources including academic journal articles, newspaper articles, and relevant books. While a crucial aspect of this study's interpretive method, the integration of these secondary sources also contributes to narrative-driven epistemologies that enhance

While the consideration and implications of pre-existing empirical data is an instrumental facet of this study's interpretive method, its incorporation also contributes to incalculable, narratory epistemologies. Therefore, this study is fundamentally underpinned by a qualitative methodological foundation. Indeed, consideration of this research's findings is primarily guided by discourse analysis techniques through which its primary sources and relevant histories are analysed in search of ideological or semiotic constructs, and underlying assumptions. This approach thus allows for a

nuanced inquiry into the narratives and attitudes that have both moulded and been moulded by policy decisions and indecisions.

2.3 Locating the Research.

This dissertation is situated within the multidisciplinary scope of cultural policy research, a field of inquiry that - given its fragmented and cross-sectoral nature - "exists in many contexts"[1]. As such, cultural policy research demands a combinative approach, one that draws from the political and social sciences as well as the humanities for its inspiration, articulation, and methodological construction.

This dissertation is informed by theory and practice stemming from the political sciences in its efforts to consider structures of power and hegemonic systems in relation to their constituents' 'culturescapes'. Additionally, this research offers new contributions to political science discourses through its critique of Irish cultural policymaking and politico-economic conditions. From the social sciences, this research employs economic and sociological premises relating to urban development and capitalistic processes, exploring how cultural policy either/ neither/both disrupts and/or consolidates these processes in relation to various environments.

Most extensively, the humanities - particularly political history, the literary and visual arts, and culture studies - play a pivotal role in this research. This study's interpretation of political histories provides the foundation for understanding cultural policy's evolution and present day instances, while relevant examples of Irish visual and literary arts movements offer an aesthetic lens through which to analyse said political histories. Lastly, critical engagement with culture studies research is intrinsic to this study's grounding rationale. Bennet has argued that "cultural policy becomes central to an understanding of culture as it has developed historically, as well as flagging practical means of intervening in the cultural field by recognising, and working with, the discursive and institutional force-fields through which cultural policy and administration provides a means of acting upon the social"[2]. This critical relationship is the research's primary *raison d'être*, and incorporating the rhetorical praxes of culture studies allows for the nuanced elaboration of its intersectional ramifications. Furthermore, grounding this research within discursive modes typical to culture

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[1] Scullion and García, 2005, 113.

[2] Bennett, 1992, 1998, in Flew, 2005, 244.

studies - particularly semiotics, ideology, placeness and spatiality - and, most crucially, considering them as such, allows for a sense of actuality, providing both writer and reader with a grounding framework of legitimacy that can tether a concept as bewilderingly vast and subjective as culture to something demonstrable and accredited.

2.4 Locating the Researcher - Self-Reflexivity

Attuning to researcher self-reflexivity - the "relationship between the knowledge and the knower"[3] is critical when approaching an interpretively contested a concept such as culture, and arguably all the more so when analysing the concept through an interpretivist lens. Distilling this research through a self-reflexive filter better-illuminates the personal biases and motivations that underpin it, as well as shedding light on pathways to recognising and mitigating the limitations of these same biases. This self-reflexive awareness raises several important considerations:

1. ***Subjective Truths:*** This research is bound to its own nature, and aims to analyse its objects of research using the same discursive frameworks that those objects have presented themselves through, and the researcher must remain vigilant in avoiding the resulting pitfalls of analytical circularity by ensuring that insights build laterally or progressively. Still, as such, this research is an essentially interpretive and qualitative body of work, and its author can make no claim of providing objective truth, or any attempts at doing so. Instead, this dissertation offers a critical engagement with its subjects without asserting any singular, objective interpretations.

2. ***Geographic Proximity:*** This research - which deals with notions of Irish national identity, superimposed by its relevant histories - has been written by an Irish person who has been taught those histories from Irish perspectives, and whose sense of belonging is in-part shaped by these identity discourses; here is the potential for a deep-seated bias to interfere. Additionally, this research incorporates a case study of Limerick city - a case study produced by somebody with longstanding social and psychological ties to the area, and whose close proximity to the region has the potential to influence a territorial dogmatism, or a myopic outlook. The aim is that, by maintaining a critical awareness of this personal affiliation to the research object, the research itself remains open-minded to findings that may go against the researcher's own pre-existing beliefs.

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[3] Parsons, 1995, 71.

Also - and again regarding Limerick city - this dissertation's case study tackles narrative discourses surrounding the some of Ireland's most disadvantaged communities. If conducting research that pertains to "an underrepresented tradition or group especially calls for self-reflexivity because of the insulating effects of good intentions"[4], any temptation to present as researcher-turned-spokesperson for a people whose lived reality is not shared by said researcher must be suppressed.

3. *Professional Implications:* This research has been conducted from the perspective of a culture sector worker who has intentions of pursuing a career in arts policy, and this research would never come to be were personal assumptions as to the innate value of the arts for society not a motivating force. The researcher's career aspirations must also be taken into account when considering job prosperity in this precarious sector wherein collaboration is crucial, and good graces can determine one's success. This consideration is most pertinent to this study's queries as to the legitimacy of government involvement in the culture sector generally, as the desire to work in said field brings with it the presupposition that such action is justifiable, as well as the risk of turning a blind eye to insight that the researcher may rather not know.

Despite this thesis remaining interpretivist in essence, and thus at the behest of the epistemological parameters ascribed by such an approach, challenging the potential issues and limitations posed by the researcher's background and aspirations through the continual praxis of self-reflexivity will better-facilitate the pursuit of non-partisan research.

2.5 Theoretical Perspectives and Conceptual Framework

Given the exploratory nature of this study, its analysis shaped by the research process itself, the imposition of a predetermined conceptual or theoretical framework was deemed incongruous for several reasons. Firstly, this research prioritises the dynamic interpretation of politico-historic and sociocultural phenomena, necessitating a chronological examination of relevant developments and a nuanced, case-specific interpretation of their underlying assumptions or patterns. In this context, the critical analysis of *emergent concepts* must take precedence over efforts to align findings with a predefined set of variables, enabling a more organic exploration of the subject matter.

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[4] Garrett, 2013, 248.

Additionally, the rigidity inherent to an airtight theoretical framework was determined as a hindrance to this study's adaptability in the face of findings embodying conflicting theoretical underpinnings, or findings capable of only approximating the constituent theories that did inspire and loosely guide this work as opposed to realise them; despite such findings' seemingly unruly nature, their inclusion is still deserved and need not be at the expense of this study's analytical legitimacy. Somewhat similarly, it was decided that the attention and resources spent in attempting to house this study's various, and at time disparate emergent concepts within a narrow critical framework would divert from the core objective of tracing, mapping and critiquing the complexities of the relationship between government policy and Ireland's culturescape.

Thus, championing dynamism and adaptability in response to the research process' emerging concepts has been deemed best practice in this instance, allowing for a more colourful exploration and nuanced elaboration of the evolving dynamics within this politico-cultural relationship. In a word, it has been determined that eschewing a rigid theoretical framework in exchange for a more case-based and open-ended analytical approach can not only contrarily tighten its findings' validity, but also allow for a deepened and broadened interpretivist ontology. With that said, prior to this decision an amalgamation of four theoretical perspectives - those of Benedict Anderson's 'imagined communities', the arts as political technology, cultural economisation, and techno-colonialism - was considered as this study's potential research framework. While their use as a conceptual lens was not wholly realised, their premises have considerably inspired and guided this research. Because of this, a brief synopsis of each theory seems a necessary inclusion:

1. ***Anderson's 'Imagined Communities':*** Benedict Anderson's seminal publication *Imagined Communities* (1983) has become a cornerstone in the study of nationalism and nation-building, having enjoyed such popularity among researchers of nationalism that its citation has become somewhat of a cliché within the field (Amerlsvoort & Pireddu 2022, 1). Indeed, Anderson himself - in the afterword of the publication's third edition - lamented that "Imagined Communities restfully occludes a pair of words from which the vampires of banality have by now sucked all the blood" (2006, 207). Cautious of the mere mention of this concept sometimes "becoming a substitute for analysis" (Wollman & Spencer 2007, 2), this research aimed to - and implicitly did - employ Anderson's conception of the nation as a biding "cultural artefact" (1983, 4) as a concept through which to consider cultural nationalism and nation-building as a social construct. The intention behind incorporating Anderson' theory of the

nation as a cultural artefact was to explore the intersections between collective imagination, cultural production, and reigning political outlooks.

2. ***The Arts as Political Technology:*** This critical theory is a heterogenous, umbrella concept that cannot be attributed to a single theorist. Adopting this theory requires giving credence to a seemingly strange affinity, namely that as disparate in temperament as the local artist and state politician may appear, their professional efforts result in a kindred effect; "politics and art, like forms of knowledge, construct 'fictions', that is to say material rearrangements of signs and images, relationships between what is seen and what is said, between what is done and what can be done" (Rancière 2013, 39). Furthermore, the proper testing of this theory requires an investigation as to the varying ways that political regimes co-opt or indeed subsume the arts, with the fascist 'Aestheticisation of politics' - as detailed by Benjamin (1936) and Sontag (1974) - being a popular example for researchers to turn to, or a more moderate argument centring around contemporary political actors' ventures into the cultural realm to achieve personal or socio-political objectives (Cummings and Katz, 1987, 351, in Langan, 2010, 14). While this theory was not explicitly incorporated, it did inspire this research's exploration of Irish cultural production under Ireland's 'Catholic Fascism', and indeed it's inquest into Charles Haughey's relationship with the arts in Ireland.

3. ***Cultural Economisation:*** Cultural economisation, or the commodification of culture, is a straightforward concept that essentially describes a process wherein the purposes and values of the arts are assigned through economic metrics, and managed in accordance to economic principles. This research posits that an over-reliance on economic approaches towards cultural policymaking and legislating has become a central tenet of the Irish government's approach to the arts, and points relating to this theory are included throughout this research, particularly when considering the policy landscape from the Celtic Tiger era onwards. Incorporating the works of academics in favour of appropriating the arts as an economic tool, such as Richard Florida's 'Creative Class Theory', as well as those skeptical of the notion in an Irish context (including but not limited to Slaby 2011; O'Brien 2022; O'Callaghan 2012) this research ultimately considers the changing shape and risks associated with contemporary perceptions of culture's purpose in relation to a nation.

4. ***Techno-colonialism:*** Techno-colonialism is an emerging concept, spearheaded by cultural theorist Mirca Madianou in their text "Technocolonialism: Digital Innovation and Data

Practices in the Humanitarian Response to Refugee Crises" (2023). Referring to "the convergence of digital developments with humanitarian structures, state power and market forces and the extent to which they reinvigorate and rework colonial genealogies" (Ibid.), the total absence of literature relating to techno-coloniality in Ireland - a post-colonial nation-made-tax-haven now home to many of the world's largest tech companies - is remarkable. While the term is not explicitly employed in this research, awareness of this theory has inspired this research to focus more closely on the interplay between hyper-capitalist conditions and Ireland's culturescape. Consequentially, this research concludes that American multinational corporations play a pivotal role in shaping Ireland's national cultural policy and its broader cultural landscape, highlighting the need for critical engagement with the forces of global capital on local cultural practices.

2.6 Structuring the Research.

This dissertation is comprised of seven chapters, the first being this one, 'Frameworks'. Following suit, Chapters 2 and 3 provide a historical review, tackling Irish cultural policy - and lack thereof - in from its inception as a free state. Chapter 4 and thereonout consider modern and contemporary Ireland, with Chapter 4 considering Ireland's culturescape under the reign of the Celtic Tiger and subsequent recession. Chapters 5 and 6 provide a mapping of the Republic's current cultural policy framework and a close critique of its overarching policy document, *Culture 2025*, respectively. Lastly, Chapter 7 provides a brief conclusion to the research, to be followed by a bibliography.

Chapter 2, 'From Thin Éire - The Role of the Arts in the Creation of a Nation'. This second chapter opens with a brief synopsis of the arts' foundational role in shaping the first semblances of an Irish national identity. Also, this chapter briefly touches upon the Anglo Irish Treaty, demonstrating the colonial asymmetries that it perpetuated in the hopes of instilling an awareness within the reader as to these asymmetries' unrelating endurance, to be kept in mind as the text progresses. Chapter 2 also offers an introduction to the attitudes towards the arts held by state and society following the establishment of the Irish Free State. This chapter also examines the influence of the Catholic Church over Ireland's political and cultural landscape, and conversely offers two examples of artists responding to this influence as this study's first 'micro' case study. The chapter discusses Éamon de Valera's and his administration's contribution to Irish culture through *Bunreacht na hÉireann*,

before ending with an introduction to the cultural landscape of post-war Ireland, Ireland's first arts legislation, and its establishment of the Arts Council.

Chapter 3, 'Art and Ambition - Ireland's Cultural Crossroads', traces Ireland's culturescape from the 1950's through to the 1980's, beginning with an introduction to Seán Lemass' Ireland and T.K. Whitaker's policy of economic expansion. This chapter also explores a changing Irish society through considering surrounding the Arts Council, and the events and implications of the *Rosc '67* international art exhibition. Furthermore, this chapter introduces Charles Haughey as a key figure in the development of relations between the state and the arts with two subchapters. This chapter also highlights the growing influence of multinational entities such as the European Union - also introducing its own cultural policy approach, as it stood then - and private corporations. Lastly, Chapter 3 considers the Arts Act of 1973 and a changing Arts Council under Colm O'Briain's auspices that saw notions of 'cultural democracy' enter the public discourse. Finally, Chapter 3 finishes with a second Haughey subchapter that better-illustrates his use of the arts in Ireland as political apparatus, setting the scene for the following chapter.

Chapter 4, 'Boom, Bust, Boyzone - Cultural Landscapes of Excess' offers an introduction to the circumstances behind the 'Celtic Tiger' before embarking on an analysis of the era's cultural output and the effects of 'the boom' on Irish identities. This chapter also considers the cultural repercussions of the subsequent recession, offering the second of three brief case studies, '4.4.1: Post-Tiger Arts'. Lastly, this chapter considers notions of cultural economisation in a rapidly corporatising nation, 'Ireland Inc.'.

Chapter 5, 'Mapping Ireland's Contemporary Cultural Policy Landscape', aims to achieve just that. This chapter analyses the roles of key cultural policy practitioners - both national and supranational - before considering their policies themselves. Chapter 5 examines the European Union's cultural policy framework in relation to Ireland, as well as providing an overview of *Culture 2025*, Ireland's first official national cultural policy framework.

Chapter 6, 'National Policy Assessment', exchanges this research's narrative style for a critical approach, offering a close assessment of *Culture 2025* with regards to its objectives, scope, ethos, and legislative underpinnings, as well as its contribution to cultural access and autonomy in Ireland. As part of this assessment the third and final case study, focusing on Limerick city's *National City*

of Culture Designation in 2014 is used to contextualise arguments posited by this research. This chapter ends with a brief assessment of a post-Covid cultural policy, the Department's *Basic Income for the Arts Pilot Scheme*, offering various academics' perceptions as to what it means for the sector going forward.

Ending this study with Chapter 7, this final section synthesises the research findings, drawing overarching conclusions about the evolution of Irish cultural policy. This concluding chapter considers how the development of the Irish political system's relationship with the arts throughout the study's given history has contributed to contemporary conceptions of cultural policymaking. Lastly, Chapter 7 offers suggestions as to what the future might entail for this facet of policymaking, and in turn the broader Irish cultural sector going forward.

Chapter 2: From Thin Éire - The Role of the Arts in the Creation of a Nation

Sociology never quite captures what Ireland was like. To know Ireland, you have to use the more precise sciences of fiction and poetry. - Thomas McCarthy

PAUL HENRY RHA (1876-1958)
Killary Bay, Connemara (1924-5)

2.1 The Anglo Irish Treaty and The Establishment of The Free State

The Irish revolutionary war ended with the instatement of the territorially and constitutionally ambiguous, "potentially highly unstable" (Cronin 2007, 401) Irish Free State through a peace agreement, the 1921 Anglo Irish Treaty; it is difficult to overstate how ceaselessly this treaty has impacted the island thereinafter. With Irish signatories chastened by the threat of "immediate and terrible war" (Lloyd George, 1921 in McGreevy 2021) should they reject the settlement, the deal was struck under duress with significant issues remaining unresolved. Ireland was to exist as a dominion of the British empire (Martin 2024) , with its government required to swear an oath of allegiance to the British crown, who retained access to three strategic ports. Meanwhile, Irish tenant farmers remained responsible for the payment of land annuities to Britain's

public debt, and the issue of Northern Ireland, and the contentions surrounding it, were largely sequestered (Ibid.). The treaty's contentious terms sparked a civil war between pro-treaty and anti-treaty paramilitary forces (Cunningham 2021), further complicating and aggravating the island's state of disarray and ideological turmoil. Prior to the treaty, the Second Dáil Éireann (26 August 1921 until 9 January 1922) devised the portfolio of a non-cabinet Minister of Fine Arts, with nationalist politician George Noble Plunkett appointed to the position. Plunkett oversaw his department for a total of nineteen weeks (Benson 1992, 25); following the treaty's ratification, the ministry was abolished, and would remain dormant for another sixty years (Kennedy 1990, 5).

The Irish 'Gaelic Revival' - the hugely influential cultural nationalist movement of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries that sought to reinstate Ireland's 'true' culture through the promotion of indigenous language, sport and the arts in an attempt to counteract the "demoralising influence" (Hutchinson 1987, 484) of colonialism's imposed cultural contexts - was a most persuasive soft power contributor to Irish independence. Visual artists including Beatrice Elvery and Jack B. Yeats, and major literary figures such as Lady Gregory, W.B. Yeats, and James Joyce emphasised the potency of placeness in their work, more particularly the incongruent differences between their conceptions of authentic Irish place and that which had been demarcated by British rule (Allison 2001, 55-58). Contrarily, the establishment of Irish Free State ushered in a reinvigorated cultural nationalism that considered 'the arts' in their traditional conceptions as "highbrow" (Durrer & McCall Magan 2017,4), and thus an Anglo (Benson, 1992,26), Protestant endeavour that was deeply imbued with elitist attitudes and "xenophobic suspicions" (Brown 2004, 135; Kelly 1989, in ibid., 5). This played out across the Free State's cultural landscape in a number of ways, one example being that, upon having achieved quasi-independence, Irish museums no longer wished to display materials "acquired by punitive colonial methods" (McAllister 2023, 90), opting instead for politically-motivated exhibitions of ancient Irish archaeological collections to instil notions of a cultural identity (Crooke, 2000, 1) along Gaelic, Catholic lines. Irish nationalist mythology touted the west of the island - Irish-speaking, geographically isolated, staunchly Catholic, parochial, and hence seen as a place uncorrupted by the imperial regime - "the locus of real Ireland" (O'Toole 1998, 14). This hegemonic ethos hence saw the Free State's political establishment tasked to "make the whole country as like the west as possible" (Ibid.). Despite the widespread sentiment that the arts were an elitist frivolity, cultural production provided a potent support to these sociopolitical efforts, their societal role "understood to be emphatically subservient to the political structures of Catholic nationalism" (Benson 1992, 26). Limited not only to visual

representations of the west such as those by painters Paul Henry or Charles Lamb, rural landscapes were mythologised in Irish literature, wherein "the city (i.e. England) [was …] degenerate, the wilderness was pure. " (O'Toole 1998, 28) Connemara, The Burren, the rugged landscapes and cultural constructs of 'beyond the pale'[5] have long-been a defining theme of the Irish arts (Kelly 1996, 11), so affixed to people's conceptions of what Ireland embodied that "since the very first reported moments of the existence of the country, Ireland has constituted a landscape. It doesn't appear as a land, but as a place artistically represented" (Guibert 2001, 121, in Morisson 2011, 179). These representations of place have, as Morrison argues, "contributed to the elaboration of an ethnoscape that has remained firmly etched in collective memory" (Ibid, 180).

While the historical roots of cultural policy - particularly the notions of cultural artefacts as being property of the nation and the state's responsibility - can be considered as also coinciding with civil uprising, namely the French Revolution of 1789 (Flew 2005, 245), and despite the persuasiveness of the arts in consolidating Irish people's sense of placeness, the government were both clueless and disinterested when it came to approaching them from a policy perspective, with barrister Thomas Bodkin being the lone producer and tireless advocator of arts policy proposals (Kennedy 1990, 11) throughout the nineteen-twenties. The government implemented but one major arts initiative during this period, with their decision to provide Dublin's Abbey Theatre with a grant-in aid marking the first subsidy of its kind in any Anglophone state (Ibid., 12). Beyond this singular support, however, proactive interest in the arts by either state or society gained little traction during this first decade of Irish, albeit limited, sovereignty. So much so was the level of disinterest in cultural policymaking that Ireland's earliest national cultural policy ethos may be best described as that pointed disinterest itself, its strategic model constituting the sheer absence of one. Although this policy wilderness was in-part due to the widespread sentiment that the arts were either an "ill afforded luxury or… a representation of previous colonial rule" (Compendium of Cultural Politics and Trends 2020), the Catholic Church and it's cultural philosophy also played a decisive role in shaping these tepid relations between the state, society, and their culture.

2.2 A Chronicle of Censorship.

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[5] 'Beyond the pale' is an idiom referring to something that is 'uncivilised and socially improper'. While it has since lost its specific historical context, it's etymology is rooted in the early days of Ireland's colonisation, 'The Pale' constituting a fortified boundary controlled by the English government that encompassed Dublin and its surrounds.

Since the early days of The Gaelic Revival, the Catholic Church anchored itself alongside Irish nationalist ideology (Cronin 2007, 406), a key supporter of the Irish independence movement. With the establishment of the Irish Free State in 1921 - the population of which was, at that time, 93% Catholic (Kennedy 1990, 13) - the Church, operating through the assertion that "affairs of the state were not strictly secular but *essentially religious*" (Cronin 2007, 406), so deeply entrenched itself in the country's sociopolitical mechanisms that it was (and, at times, remains to this day) difficult to decipher where the it's influence ended and the state's authority began. And so, beginning in 1923 with the Censorship of Films Act, laws that "very much mirrored a conservative interpretation of Catholic social teaching" (Harkin 2022, 85) were enacted in the Free State. This decade of "moral and religious rectitude" (Bury 2013) ushered in a pervasive and repressive regime that further intensified in 1929 with enactment of the Censorship of Publications Act, a ruling which poet Robert Graves subsequently accused of instilling "the fiercest literary censorship this side of the Iron Curtain" (Graves 1950, in Ibid.). Under the Censorship of Publications Act, any publication that dealt with issues of contraception or abortion (Harkin 2022, 85), sex and marriage (Bury 2013), and all other materials deemed 'indecent' or 'offensive' to the censorship board (Kennedy 1990, 13), were categorically banned. Now-seminal publications from some of Ireland's most celebrated writers, including Frank O'Connor and Edna O'Brien (Bury 2013), faced prohibition. With regards to the visual arts, the emergence of subversive modernist painting was denounced as "sacrilege" (Benson 1992, 26), a condemnation that alienated many Irish artists from their homeland. Many artists, who eventually felt stifled by their surroundings and its supposed newfound freedoms left the island altogether, while much of the remainder were biding as "embittered rebels" (Kennedy 1990, 13).

Trundling into the 1930's, the Irish Free State grew increasingly insular and disadvantaged, implementing policies of trade protectionism and attempting to only do business with itself despite the near non-existence of indigenous industry, widespread unemployment, mass emigration, a worthless currency, and all the while remaining deeply dependant on exports to Britain despite being in the midst of an economic war against it. While painters such as Paul Henry and Charles Lamb continued to develop the nation's visual identity through their idealised, bourgeois portrayals of 'unspoiled' western landscapes - landscapes which were, in reality, deforested and depopulated badlands - and radio emerged as a key promoter of Irish traditional music (Kennedy 1990, 31), societal attitudes towards the arts only grew more intolerant. The prevailing perspective, consisting of a monocultural and church-influenced interpretation, perceived artistic expression as something

"dangerous, likely to corrupt faith and morals" (Ibid., 13). And thus, The Catholic Church itself was the primary purveyor of cultural experience, with state celebrations existing largely as religious events (Ibid., 33).

2.2.1 Catholic Fascism

The Free State in the early thirties was marked by an mounting sense of unease amongst its populace (Cronin 1995, 314). In a 1932 issue of Motley, Dublin's Gate Theatre associated magazine, dramatist Micheál Mac Liammóir wrote of the "dual sense of trepidation and anticipation emanating from the political and artistic landscape of the fledging Irish Free State" (Mac Liammóir 1932 in Harkin 2022, 79), as IRA violence escalated, democracy was increasingly called into question, and - as was the case across much of Europe - "a situation favourable to the spread of fascism" emerged (Cronin 1995, 312-313). Indeed, as Cronin argues that "the links between religion and racism are deep" (Cronin 2007, 406), and the Irish Free State was essentially operating under a theocratic regime, fascistic political movements in the Free State naturally embodied distinctly Catholic characteristics, so much so that "the boundaries between what was clerical and what was fascist often became blurred" (Ibid.) in thirties' Ireland. Irish artists were variously attuned to these developments, with some - particularly poet William Butler Yeats - contributing to their spread, and others - this thesis considering novelist and playwright Mary Manning - somehow critiquing their growing foothold in spite of the era's stringent censorship laws.

Although the extent to which they were an *all-out* fascist movement remains contentious amongst historians (Harkin 2022, 87), the 'Blueshirt' movement is popularly considered the epitome of radical far-rightism in the Free State. Headed by Eoin O'Duffy - the I.R.A.'s Chief of Staff during the Irish Civil War, but who had grown to negatively perceive the paramilitary organisation as communist - the 'Blueshirts' embraced an extremist right-wing agenda closely inspired by those gaining traction in Europe (Cronin 2007, 402), adopting their blueshirt uniform akin to Mussolini's Blackshirts, and Hitler's Brownshirts. Beyond appropriating the aesthetic and ideological facets of continental fascism, the Blueshirts' manifesto was extensively informed by discourses stemming from within the Catholic Church in Ireland and disseminated through its 'Jesuit Journal Studies'. The Jesuit Journal Studies was a church-funded ideologue that "sought to answer the complex questions dominating Western society in the 1930's" (Ibid., 401), often through the subtle promotion of fascistic concepts such as eugenics and authoritarianism which the Blueshirts wholly embraced. Cronin argues that the Blueshirts were thus enabled by the Jesuit Journal Studies to

“present an ideology and a series of policies that were an essentially Catholic-inspired form of potential fascism”(Ibid., 403), and their widespread popularity and endorsement is testimony to the deeply oppressive sociocultural realities of the Free State.

Poet William Butler Yeats publicly and repeatedly endorsed Benito Mussolini, and advocated for a reimagining of Irish politics along the lines of the Italian fascist model (Harkin 2022, 91). Deeply attracted to the notion of an Irish ‘rebirth’, and skeptical of democracy, Yeats wrote (but later retracted) the lyrics to a series of marching songs intended for use by the Blueshirts (Cronin 1995, 313). In contrast, writer Mary Manning provided an oppositional, scathingly critical articulation of the contemporary political zeitgeist through her avant-garde first novel, *Mount Venus* (1938). The novel serves as a satirical caveat, outlining “the contours of an actively mobilising and militant right-wing element of Catholicism within the Irish Free State by focusing” (Harkin 2022, 80) - much like critics such as Walter Benjamin[6], and Susan Sontag[7] - “on its fascistic aesthetic vision for the nation” (Ibid., 87). While, as was mentioned, just how explicitly fascist the Blueshirts were is disputed, for Manning the centrality of their aesthetics - their uniform; their use of the Roman salute; O’Duffy’s personal aesthetic interests - was enough evidence to assign them as such (Ibid.). Through a humorous, retrospective reassessment of the Irish middle class’ political legacies - and the inclusion of a character so resemblant of republican revolutionary Maud Gonne that Gonne’s family threatened a libel suit (Reynolds 2016, 133) - *Mount Venus* illustrated how the Free State’s cultural climate constituted “fertile ground for the development of violent right-wing politics, even if such politics never quite succeeded” (Harkin 2022, 95). Indeed, despite the Blueshirt movement’s widespread popularity - boasting a membership of almost fifty-thousand people at their peak which, in what was then a population of 2.9 million people (Central Statistics Office, 1938), was no small feat - they “never made any inroads into electoral politics nor came anywhere near to capturing political power.” (Cronin 2007, 408) With that said, the Blueshirts’ electoral failings can be contributed to Taoiseach Éamon de Valera’s decision to wholly ban the organisation in 1933, only leading the group to merge with already established political party Cumann na nGaedheal to form the incumbent Fianna Fáil’s main opposition, Fine Gael. Fine Gael has since constituted one of Ireland’s largest and most politically powerful parties. This historical context is crucial for understanding the relations between the state and its cultural landscape henceforward; the merging

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[6] *The Age of Mechanical Reproduction*, 1936.

[7] *Fascinating Fascism*, 1974.

of Cumann na nGaedheal with the Blueshirts deeply embedded right-wing conservative, theocratic ideologies that limited the potential for diverse cultural expression, perpetuating a cultural landscape where modernist thinkers were marginalised, and critical voices were silenced.

2.3 De Valera and Bunreacht na Éireann

Considered a national icon, a revered figure in the War of Independence and the Irish Civil War, Fianna Fáil's Éamon de Valera was undoubtedly the electoral heavy-hitter of Irish politics during the early years of freedom. While de Valera's tumultuous, decade-spanning career as an Irish political leader is best left to the myriad of its existing chronicles, his long tenure in both office and opposition means that brief consideration of he and his party's attitude towards the arts is worth including. While de Valera saw the arts as "a luxury which the country could not afford" (Kennedy 1994, 17), and there remains the prevailing notion that his party were uninterested in arts support and policymaking, Fianna Fáil's approach to the matter was merely inconspicuous, and government files reveal that they did, in fact, discuss:

> "the provision in Dublin of a new national theatre, a national concert hall and a national cultural centre… schemes for village halls and libraries throughout the country, efforts to create a national film studio, a new national library, a cultural relations committee to promote Irish culture abroad, and attempts to improve industrial design" (Ibid.).

While these strategic aspirations were never realised under this government's auspices, in 1937 a new constitution - Bunreacht na hÉireann - was ratified on the same day as Fianna Fáil's reaffirmed electoral mandate. Article 1 stated that "the Irish nation hereby affirms its inalienable, indefeasible, and sovereign right to choose its own form of Government, to determine its relations with other nations, and to develop its life, political, economic and cultural, in accordance with its own genius and traditions" (Ireland 1990, 4), signalling a sincere political interest in cultural matters and the suggestion of a formal arts policy framework's eventual instatement. The years following Bunreacht na hÉireann's ratification were testimony to this preliminary hint at the political establishment's desire for arts governmentalisation's consolidation. Indeed, the period since The Second World War saw the arts becoming subject to closer attention from Irish governments and society; the rise in consumerism, as well as a more urban-centric and industry-aspiring socioeconomic reality were among the contributing factors to this change in the nation's attitude (Kennedy 1990, 51).

2.4 Post-War Ireland and the Establishment of the Arts Council.

Post-war Ireland was enjoying somewhat of "a cultural revolution" (Ibid., 53), with a huge uptake in both state and private sector sponsored cultural events programmed, many of which were centred around the previously shunned, so-called 'high arts'; Kennedy - although cautious of it being a potential overstatement - speculates that such a striking change in outlook "illustrates the underlying move away from the concerns of an Irish Ireland" in exchange for a internationalist and multifaceted sense of self (Ibid., 52).

This era of change brought with it the recognition from both state and society that, when compared to other countries, Ireland's arts policy framework was poor (Kennedy 1990, 53). With this recognition in mind, a 'cultural relations committee' was first established within the Department of Foreign Affairs in 1949 to strategise 'art as diplomacy' (Rafter 2022, 179). Thomas Bodkin - who had not ceased in his campaign for governmental arts support and subsidy - had finally found political backing from this changing outlook, and in 1948 was commissioned by a new inter-party government headed by Fine Gael's John A. Costello to investigate the state of the arts (Arts Council 2024) in what would, the following year and thereon out, come to be known as the 'Republic of Ireland'. In his resulting report to the Oireachtas, Bodkin lamented that "no civilised nation of modern times has neglected art to the extent that we have during the past fifty years" (Bodkin in Dáil Éireann 1951). Having considered the Bodkin Report, Costello - who sought to challenge the longstanding idea that investment in the arts was a waste of public money (Rafter 2022, 206) - introduced the state's first 'Arts Bill' to the Dáil (Houses of Parliament) in 1950.

Among the limited number of function-specific Irish cultural policy documents in the 20th century, The Arts Act of 1951 is arguably the most significant. While the omission of any explicit reference to artists themselves in the act (Cooke, 2011, 106) is notable, perhaps indicative of the still-prevailing sentiment that, as best expressed by one Seanad member during a debate as to the need for an Arts Act, "The definition of artist nowadays is a man with long hair or a woman with short hair; they seem to need no other qualifications than that." (Rafter 2022, 201) Indeed, Cooke argues that the 1951 Act's core rationale was to "prioritise the visual arts as the basis on which the design standards of Irish goods and services can be raised to allow them to compete internationally and to enhance the quality of the Irish tourism product" (Cooke, 2011, 101), as opposed to any desire to support art for it's intrinsic worth's sake. Ushering in the official introduction of the arts and culture into governmental consideration, the 1951 Arts Act established the Arts Council, or An Chomhairle Ealaíon, an autonomous semi-state agency. The Arts Council's primary mandate, as per

the 1951 act, was to "promote the knowledge, appreciation and practice of the arts" (Hadley et al. 2020, 3), and facilitate their improving standards (Arts Council 2015, 10). To achieve this, seven core activities of the council were devised:

I. Providing direct financial assistance or financial assistance by way of guarantee against loss to art organisations toward their artistic projects or programmes, such as exhibitions, plays, operas, drama festivals, recitals, productions, concerts, ballets, lectures and publications.
II. Mounting exhibitions of Irish artists in Ireland as well as overseas and bringing foreign exhibitions to Ireland.
III. Initiating and operating a programme of schemes, such as the joint-purchase or halls in rural areas schemes.
IV. Initiating and operating a range of awards whereby financial assistance is directly awarded to individuals by way of scholarships, fellowships, competitions or prizes.
V. Providing advice to government and government departments and its agencies on artistic matters. Members of the Council may also make representations to various bodies without their advice being sought.
VI. Administration of trust funds. The Arts Council, having accepted gifts of money to establish trusts of an artistic nature under the terms of Arts Act 1951, administers the funds of trusts, such as the William J.B. Macaulay Foundation, the New York Irish Institute fund and the Denis Devlin Memorial foundation.
VII. Provision of information service. The Secretary of the Arts Council answers general enquiries from Ireland and abroad about artistic activities and provides advice to the general public on artistic matters.

(Government of Ireland, 1951)

Another, somewhat covert motivation behind the Arts Council's establishment was, however, "the need to keep the arts 'at arms length' from political interference" (Kennedy 1990, 9). Nonetheless, the Arts Council's Director was to be appointed by the President, and its ordinary members appointed by the Dáil. The first Director, Patrick Little, was himself a Fianna Fáil politician, albeit one who had championed arts initiatives (including the establishment of an arts council) throughout the 1940's (Coleman 2009, 3). At the council's inaugural meeting held in 1952, Little was accompanied by both Taoiseach - which was, again, de Valera - and Costello, now leader of the opposition. Concluding his address to the council, Costello said that "there will be no nationality without art… It is the duty of every Irish Government to give every help to the arts and the application of art to industry" (Costello 1952 in Kennedy 1990, 68). Despite the political

establishment's professed conviction in the vital importance of the arts' synonymity to 'nation-ness', An Chomhairle Ealaíon struggled in its early years in the pursuit of its own justification with limited means, relying on members employed as unpaid volunteers to "direct public opinion towards an enthusiasm for what was hitherto been regarded as something dark and strange" (Little in Ibid., 65). Indeed, in spite of people's burgeoning interest in the arts, Ireland in the nineteen-fifties remained as a deeply restrictive environment for artistic expression, with most people's artistic proclivities fostered and shaped within the confines assigned by the conservative church and state's enduring regime of censorship and control. However, Ireland's first Arts Act - particularly its establishment of an Arts Council - offset a slow but certain change in terms of how people considered the arts in relation to themselves. Benson argues that, upon a government's decision to fund a facet of society with public money,

> "questions of the rights of all taxpayers to the goods involved will not be long in coming forward. And once that happens, issues of differential social class access and equality of opportunity become very important in the ensuing discourse, as do such questions as to the standing of popular culture vis-z-vis 'high culture' and the related question of an Arts Council's responsibility for 'standards'." (1992, 27).

In Ireland, the following years saw such debates emerge amongst the public, who would develop to consider notions of 'cultural democracy' and the idea that the arts - culture at-large - start on local, common ground as opposed to elsewhere, by others, and only for some. Indeed, the changing ethos of the 1950's laid considerable groundwork for the progression of arts policy in Ireland, with the decade closing under a new Fianna Fáil government led by Seán Lemass - with De Valera assuming the presidency - and a vision that saw change realised.

Chapter 3: Art and Ambition - Ireland's Cultural Crossroads

3.1 Seán Lemass and TK Whitaker

Seán Lemass' tenure as Taoiseach (1959-1966) heralded a transformative period in Irish society, and with that government policymaking. Dunne asserts that:

> "there was a tremendous significance in the departure of Eamon de Valera from the position of Taoiseach in 1959, to take up residence as President in Phoenix Park. De Valera was part and parcel of the foundation myth of the Free State, and symbolic of an era of struggle, hardship and self-denial." (2005)

The Lemass era, in contrast, was characterised by an emergence from the insular protectionism that had thus far epitomised the Republic's stagnating economy in exchange for the total embrace of global free trade, and market liberalisation. The driving force behind this new economic outlook was civil service wunderkind, Thomas Kenneth Whitaker's seminal report *Economic Development* (1958). Crucially, Whitaker's report emphasised the importance of encouraging "foreign investment in order to stimulate industrial development and provide new employment opportunities" (1958, 13). This was largely initiated through providing multinational corporations with generous tax breaks were they to relocate to Ireland, a development that has defined Ireland's economy and position on the global stage thereonout. While the arts - which Lemass supposedly had a relatively pragmatic, and supportive attitude towards - may have comprised a central tenet of the Taoiseach's personal aspirations for Irish society, his preoccupation with rapid economic development relegated these hopes to hopes alone (Kennedy 1990, 56-70). With that said, this new focus on liberal economisation had a knock-on effect on the state of the arts in Ireland, to the extent that the sixties have been dubbed a "watershed decade" for the cultural life of the state (Benson 1992, 27), with the arts reassessed along profit margins and distant horizons.

3.2 Arts Council Controversies

Building upon earlier initiatives, Sean Lemass' administration provided funding and support for cultural institutions including the Abbey Theatre, the National museum, and libraries across the country. Lemass' government also introduced television to the nation through Radió Teilifís Éireann, Ireland's national broadcasting service, and oversaw a considerable expansion in the Arts Council's activities (Kennedy, 1990, 65-90). The Arts Council at this time was, however, increasingly embroiled in controversies. Firstly, the council was subject to criticism due to it's

membership lacking in both diversity and key representations, with only one council member - composer Brian Boydell (Dervan 2018) - actually practicing as an artist. Furthermore, there was a total absence of anybody from the lower-middle or working classes on the council, nor a woman from any socioeconomic stratum (Benson 1992, 29). Also, art critic and historian Charles Acton lamented the council's seeming lack of any actual policy framework, saying that "it has made a possible a great number of events, large and small, which could not have taken place without its support, but nearly all of these have been of a hand-to-mouth, cheque-writing, nature without policy or permanency" (Kennedy 1990, 97). Such events were disproportionately held in Dublin, with the council condemned for their neglect of the rest of the country as a result. This carelessness as to providing cultural services 'beyond the pale' was perhaps indicative of their also widely criticised "symptoms of class bigotry, racial prejudice, and pernicious art snobbery" (Arnold 1970 in Ibid., 102). Indeed, the Arts Council appeared unwilling to consider the arts as anything but a middle class preoccupation, its liberal élitist position (Benson 1992, 29) unrepresentative of the wider country's population. Perceived correlations between 'art snobbery' and imperialism, and the historic contempt that such affiliations aroused were still palpable, with artist Michael Kane scornfully referring to the council as 'Unionist' due to its deepening working relationship with Northern Ireland's Arts Council (Kennedy 1990, 103). Taken together, these objections against the Arts Council's ethos and operations provide clear reasoning as to why, by the turn of the decade, prominent cultural commentator Bruce Arnold wrote in a letter to the *Irish Times* that "Art in Dublin is a vicious, spiteful and rapacious business. It is concerned with reputation, with money, with quite formidable clashes of personality, with lies, with deceit, with bribery and corruption" (1970, in Kennedy 1990, 97).

Particularly with regards to Arnold's accusation of corruption within the council, we must consider the council's secretary, Fr. William O'Sullivan, and the accusations against him pertaining to the misuse of authority when purchasing works for the Arts Council's collection. Critics claimed that public funds - £92,300 between 1960 and 1973 (Ibid., 96) - were being used to exercise private tastes, and tastes that were not in line with the wider art scene's long-term best interests at that. Indeed, O'Sullivan and his sub-committee were accused of prioritising the acquisition of works that were in keeping with international art trends that were produced largely by already established artists, and were "trying to put their money on the winning horse" (Ó Briain in Ibid., 102). Despite records showing that Fr. O'Sullivan's council "bought extensively among younger modernist Irish artists" (Benson 1992, 29), the organisation was still widely regarded as neglectful towards

emerging Irish talent and blind to the changing stylistic trends that such artists pioneered, particularly figurative painting. Beginning in 1966 with a debate on censorship led by Edna O'Brien (Project Arts Centre, 2024), Dublin's Project Arts Centre was established in response to the need for a dedicated space for avant-garde and experimental contemporary art. The centre platformed emerging artists that were underrepresented in the traditional Irish arts scene, artists whom Bruce Arnold felt that it was the Arts Council's duty to purchase works from (Kennedy 1990, 96). Many of this dissident centre's exhibiting artists were, however, among the aforementioned critics quoted in this research, which art critic Tony Butler rather brashly implied as being detrimental to their reputation in the eyes of the council. Following an exhibition featuring a number of such artists at the Project Arts Centre, Butler wrote - and was later threatened by the Arts Council with a libel suit for doing so - that they "will suffer for their courage, and their opening was notable for the fact that not one member of the Arts Council attended it… the purchases by the Council will be minute, if there are any, for our Establishment uses public money as an instrument of private resentment" (Butler 1970, in Ibid., 97).

3.3 Rosc '67

The criticisms directed at the Arts Council due to their preferences for 'winning horses' and bourgeois proclivities were, while also necessary and valid in their context, not only applicable to the Arts Council's tendencies but symptomatic of broader societal changes, with Benson noting that, "the Arts Council of the 1960's exemplified some of the more general clashes in cultural thinking and policymaking" (Benson 1992, 28) that the nation was then home to. Regarding the state's newfound focus on the pursuit of internationalism, *Rosc '67* epitomises this ideological turn in the context of the arts. *Rosc '67* was a state-sponsored international art exhibition held in Dublin the first of it's kind in Ireland (Ibid., 27). Showcasing modern art at the Royal Dublin Society's premises, and ancient Celtic art at the National Museum, 'Rosc' - an Irish word translating to the 'poetry of vision' - was the subject of extensive debate prior to its opening. While exhibiting works from 50 of the art world's most renowned modern artists, including Willem De Kooning, Pablo Picasso, and Joan Míro (Radió Teilifís Éireann 1967), *Rosc '67* entirely excluded works from modern Irish artists - Francis Bacon, Irish-born but with English parents, was not considered an exception - a decision that was criticised as being biased, based on the already well established Paris-London-New York art axis (Kennedy 1990, 95). Uproar against this curatorial decision was perhaps all the more magnified given the zeitgeist's withstanding cultural discourses; O'Toole has made reference to a "fear that stalked so many Irish artists and intellectuals in the 1960's" (O'Toole

2021, 568) that "Ireland would disappear as a distinctive cultural space" (Ibid.) in the face of modern internationalism. More so, the display of art that *was* 'Irish' in origin, namely ancient Celtic art, was all the more contentious. National monuments, such as Galway's Turoe Stone, were uprooted from their age-old sites and brought to Dublin, sparking uproar from archeologists and conservationists (Kennedy 1990, 95). Professor of Archaeology at University College Cork, Michael O'Kelly, deplored how "Examples of our ancient heritage, the majority of them religious monuments, are being used as a gimmick to support a selection of profane paintings, not one of which is more that four years old and none of which has been painted by an Irishman" (O'Kelly 1967, in Irish Museum of Modern Art 2017, 6).

Despite its controversies, *Rosc '67* opened to much fanfare and acclaim, inaugurated by Fianna Fáil's infamous Minister for Finance, Charlie Haughey. In his opening address, Haughey quipped that "Most worthwhile things are born in controversy, often even in conflict. I believe that when the dust settles this endeavour will be seen clearly for what it is and the benefits it has achieved for art and for Ireland will stand proudly forth." (Haughey 1967, in Kennedy 1990, 95) His words were prophetic; fifty-thousand people visited the R.D.S., and a further twenty-nine-thousand visited the National Museum, many of whom were international tourists art critics. Brendan Gill, an American journalist writing for The New Yorker, marvelled at the exhibition, reporting that "Rosc is one of the boldest and most illuminating international exhibitions of modern art ever held ... the new and the old salute each other over the centuries ... Dublin has provided the ideal setting for their astonishing encounter" (Gill 1967, in Irish Museum of Modern Art 2017, 6). The Irish public was itself also captivated by *Rosc '*67, with the event prompting cultural widespread discourse amongst people, many of whom were enthusiastically discussing the arts for the first time (Kennedy 1990, 95). The Department of Education, under the auspices of Donogh O'Malley - a man who revolutionised the Irish education system and saw the arts as a crucial facet to doing so - gave every school in the country the opportunity to visit the exhibition (Irish Museum of Modern Art 2017, 6), a policy that remained when it was decided to repeat the exhibition every four years due to its success (Kennedy 1990, 97). But beyond the exhibition an its surround discussions themselves, *Rosc '67* was a strong indicator of overarching developments in terms of the relations between state, society, and the arts in Ireland, indicating the "hunger for difference and for change" (Benson, 1992, 27) amongst people, particularly young people. *Rosc '67* also indicated, Kennedy posits,

> "the emergence of an art market based on international trends, the existence of a small but important group of private collectors of modern art, the conflict emerging between theories of art by the people

(community arts) as against art for the people, and, not least, the emergence of art as a subject worthy of serious public speeches by an ambitious and capable Minister for Finance" (Kennedy 1990, 96).

Indeed, *Rosc '*67, as it was inaugurated by Charles Haughey, can also been seen as marking the start of one of the most peculiar and intense affairs between an Irish statesman and his nation's culture; the following subsection 3.4, and in turn 3.7, aim to shed some light on these peculiarities.

3.4 Haughey I

Haughey was, indeed, an ambitious and capable statesman, building on premises from T.K. Whitaker's 1958 economic expansion programme during his reign as Ireland's Minister for Finance (1966-1970). Haughey possessed an "undoubtedly real" (O'Toole, 2007) sympathy for the arts, introducing an income tax and surtax exemption scheme for artists - the first of its kind, anywhere (Cooke 2011, 107) - under the 1969 Finance Act, provided their work was deemed to have cultural or artistic merit (Hadley et al. 2020, 3). Following his term as the nation's financier, he delivered an impressive speech in 1972 at Harvard University titled *Art and the Majority*, wherein he called for a "comprehensive policy for the arts in Ireland"; "I regard such a policy, with adequate financial provision, as an integral part of good government in a modern community. But there must be complete artistic freedom, and the government's part must be confined to creating the conditions within which art can flourish - to foster and not to control" (Haughey 1972, in Kennedy 1990, 105). While Haughey himself did not write this speech, instead discreetly outsourcing poet Anthony Cronin to do so (O'Toole 2007), his impassioned address, as O'Toole puts it, "won plaudits that were invaluable to a politician who was then… in disgrace" (Ibid.). Indeed, one cannot engage in a discussion of Charlie Haughey's political career - or garner any nuanced understanding of his approach to culture and the arts - without delving briefly into its scandals, of which there were many. The Arms Crisis of 1970 was arguably one of the more notorious during his stint as Minister for Finance; for the sake of succinctness, this research will briefly elaborate on this instance alone.

The late sixties saw violence in Northern Ireland escalate to become what is now known as the decades-long, culturally-centred conflict, 'The Troubles'. Haughey, was generally perceived as a part of Fianna Fáil's pragmatist wing, and as harbouring a fervent dislike towards militant Irish republicanism due to his hardline stance against the IRA - members of which he interned without trial - while in office as Minister for Justice. (Kelly 2012, 160) To provide aid to the north's Nationalist population, a fund of one-hundred-thousand Irish pounds was established, with Haughey as finance minister playing a leading roll in its management. Soon after, in a turn of events that

shocked the nation, Haughey was dismissed from Cabinet and awaiting trial, having been implicated in a covert operation that used the humanitarian aid funds to import arms for the provisional IRA (Williamson 2010, 199). Claiming prior governmental approval for the arms import (Kelly 2020, 167), Haughey was swiftly acquitted for fear of opening a pandora's box.

Considering the Arms Crisis scandal in the context of Haughey's approach to governing culture and the art is a revealing exercise. In spite of revelations that would typically end a political career, Haughty was re-elected, eventually rising Ireland's political ranks to their pinnacle as Taoiseach; the arts were instrumental to him achieving this, a key facet of his process of rehabilitative image making. Haughey's ghostwritten speech at Harvard - delivered at time when he was not yet safely back in the nation's good graces - is a prime example of this strategy. In *Art and the Majority*, Haughey emphasised the necessity of "creating the conditions within which art can flourish" (Haughey 1972, in Kennedy 1990, 105). This assertion championed conditions paradoxical to those stemming from the policies of liberalised trade and foreign direct investment dependencies that he himself was a key supporter of. Consolidating Ireland's position as the world's new voracious bastion of untethered capitalism meant the development of a socioeconomic reality that would be increasingly difficult for artists to live self sufficiently under; Haughey was most likely well aware of this, too. Reaffirming his supportive stance towards the arts during a 1973 Dáil debate, Haughey reiterated his commitment to the arts, stating that "the implementation of an enlightened comprehensive policy for the arts with adequate financial provision enshrined in it is an essential part - I use the word essential deliberately - of modern progressive government… I do not think we can any more have a situation in which we have economic planning and cultural laissez faire" (Haughey 1973, in Ibid.), but as O'Toole puts it, "in real terms, that support was minimal" (2007). Indeed, following Haughey's death in 2007, Fintan O'Toole wrote a scathing article for the Irish Times on the former statesman's cooption of arts supports for political gain, writing that "in a political culture with a deep and wide seam of philistinism at its core, Haughey's propensity to read some books and look at some paintings evoked an almost pitiful sense of indebtedness. But did it also buy a certain silence?" (Ibid.). This duality of Haughey's public posturing and real political manoeuvring warrants further consideration and thus, subsection 3.7 will return to this idea.

3.5 Momentum - Multinationals, EU Ascension, and the Arts Act of 1973.

In this new Ireland, as the influx of multinational corporations hastened, the country's corporate tax rate continued to decline to the point of impracticality, at which point the government only became

more inventive in their methods of attracting foreign direct investment. Much of the seventies were spent developing tax treaties with other nations, exploiting our lack of financial regulation as leverage therein (Barry & O'Mahoney 2017, 48-52). For example, Ireland had no thin capitalisation rules; corporations could be financed entirely by debt, with 0% equity, allowing companies to be worth nothing bar the money they had borrowed, thus enabling them to carry out a base erosion and profit shifting corporate tax avoidance tool, the 'Double Irish' trick. This was a legal loophole through which a multinational could offset the tax they pay by structuring 'investments' through an entirely debt-financed and, hence, essentially tax-exempt 'holding company' - which was, in true practice, the same corporation under a different name. Fuelled massively by this rampant debt financing of multinational corporations, this increasingly precarious economic model saw Ireland's GDP steadily rise (Irish Times 2020). The nation's capacity for extensive international borrowing, and its eventual ascension to the European Union in seventy-three, are a reflection of the multinationals operating out of Ireland.

Despite this, when Ireland joined the European Union - known then as the European Economic Community - it was still "very much as a poor relation" (Fagan 2002, 138) and, in a marked change from the ethos of self-sufficiency that characterised the Independence movement era, grew deeply dependent on the EEC's Regional Development Fund, a structural support for its 'peripheral' regions. The country went through a period of rapid socioeconomic development as a result, with people enjoying increased mobility and a consequentially diversified Irish identity that boasted an invigorated appetite for cultural offerings. The Union itself was undergoing similar changes; "If we were to do it all over again, we would start with culture" (Sassatelli 2007, 30) is an apocryphal quote accredited to Jean Monnet (Lamour & Lorentz 2019, 357), one of the Union's founders, known then as the European Coal and Steel Community. Nobody involved in the ECSC's creation actually held such sentiments (Shore 2006, 8) because to do so would have been politically insensible in the nineteen-forties and had the project's foundation not been economic in nature it would have failed (Mokre 2007, 31; Barroso 2004); the Union's early model excluded culture with every intent (Sassatelli 2008, 227). Today, the fable is debunked - still oft-quoted by the Union regardless[8] - with former French Minister for Culture Jack Lang having admitted to being its original source (Lähdesmäki 2021, 46). In reality, it was only in the same year as Ireland's accession that the Union - supposedly motivated by the oil crisis and a desire for reinvigorated integration - expanded the economic community's mandate, in a transformative decision to assess

[8] See, for example: Terracciano, 2014, 1.

its member states' "common heritage" (Shore 2007, 13). The resulting process culminated in the *Declaration of European Identity* and the subsequent Tindeman's report which established the link between the organisation and its subjects' identity (Sassatelli 2008, 228), the first semblance of a cultural policy concerning Ireland in an international context.

The Irish government's involvement in culture and the arts within a national perspective was also significantly deepening, notably through legislative development that shaped the cultural policy landscape. Building on its 1951 predecessor, the amended Arts Act of 1973 introduced film as a branch of the arts under its legislative remit (Arts Council 2015, 10), broadening the scope of cultural production as recognised by the state. The 1973 Act also facilitated heightened public accessibility to cultural outlets by laying the groundwork for local government involvement in the arts sector (Hadley et al. 2020, 3), and expanding the role of the Arts Council. The same year saw the instatement of a Fine Gael-Labour coalition government led by Fine Gael's Liam Cosgrave, also signified a shifting emphasis on official cultural perceptions. Taoiseach Cosgrave wanted to "place the artist at the heart of arts policy" (Cooke 2011, 106), resulting almost half of the Arts Council's positions being given to practising artists (Ibid., 107). The decision was considered controversial amongst some commentators, with Acton dubbing it "a gesture on the Taoiseach's part either of great courage of remarkable naiveté" (Acton 1974, in Ibid.) due to the supposed incongruence between creative temperaments and those required for objective policymaking, and the risk that the council could "concern itself too much with the encouragement of artists rather than the encouragement of the arts" (Ibid.). Despite these reservations, the decisions that stemmed from the 1973 Arts Act and Cosgrave's outlook reflected the state's increased sense of responsibility towards funding the arts (O'Brien & Clancy 2022, 45), thus signalling the nearing necessitation of a proper cultural policy framework. However, the insinuated policy framework was beginning to be shaped as one that would be "requiring economic outcomes in exchange for state support" (Ibid.), a trade-off that was increasingly incongruent with the Arts Council's changing ethos.

3.6 Ó Briain's Arts Council

By the close of 1975, Colm Ó Briain, one of the Project Arts Centre's founders and one of the sixties' most vocal critics of the Arts Council, assumed the role of its first full-time director (Irish Times 2020). Under his auspices - and with, notably, input from Portugal's Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation - the Arts Council was increasingly informed by critical theories of cultural democracy

(Benson 1992, 31). This concept promotes "the opportunity for everyone not only to see and hear wonderful things, but also to co-create versions of culture" (Wilson et al. 2017, 4), an ideal that challenged the primacy of 'high-culture' in Irish arts governance, instead envisioning the arts within a bottom-up support structure, and as a public good. In line with this changing ethos, Ó Briain expanded the council's mandate to support more emerging artists working in mediums that were typically overlooked by what had been a 'painting-centric' council (Irish Times 2020) (indeed, landscape painting had remained as the typical conception of Irish fine art by the nineteen-seventies) (Morisson 2011, 179).

Furthermore, over the course of his eight-year stint as director Ó Briain oversaw massive institutional overhaul, instilling an appreciation for community participation in the arts and the means through which to enable that participation, often through cross-sectoral cooperation. For example in 1976, the 'Richard's Report' suggested that the council collaborate with regional development organisations throughout the country to establish regional arts associations, the first being the Mid-West Arts Association (Kennedy 1990, 112). The council also worked with *An Bord Fáilte* (Ireland's tourism development authority, now known as Fáilte Ireland), and the *National Tidy Towns* competition to stimulate community arts practices (Ibid. 117). Ireland's cultural landscape - and not only in the capital - was in bloom; "new arts festivals, theatres, exhibitions and art centres were launched every year, such as Kilkenny Arts Week, Druid Theatre, and the Limerick Exhibition of Visual Art" (Ibid. 112) (now EVA International). This emphasis on accessibility and participation also trickled down to Arts Council funded bodies such as the Irish Museum association, whose 1977 constitution epitomised cultural purveyors' changing sense of purpose through its decision to transform museums' roll as the "passive repository of collections and temple of retreat to… an active cultural player and neutral space for discussions around identity and place" (Witcomb 2002, in O'Kelly 2019, 55). Ó Briain's council also worked alongside the Department of Education, sharing the late Donogh O'Malley's sentiments as to the importance of the arts being included in school curricula. The council's 1979 publication *The Place of the Arts in Irish Education* proved a key catalyst to the arts' better integration within the school system (Hadley et al. 2020, 3), listing a total of 119 recommendations (Kennedy 1990, 116) for the government's consideration.

However, many people regard Ó Briains's tenure as Director to have reached its zenith with the implementation of *Aosdána* (Irish Times 2020), formally established by the government in 1981.

Aosdána, translating to ‘people of the arts’, was envisioned as a quasi-artist collective and support structure, initially limited to no more than 150 artists, thought this cap has since risen to 250 (Cooke 2011, 108). The initiative would enable artists “whose work had made an outstanding contribution to the creative arts in Ireland” (Duncan 2023), namely in the fields of visual art, literature, and music, although this too has since been expanded upon to also include architecture, and choreography. State-funded, Arts Council-administered, and yet self-governing, *Aosdána* “constituted an entirely novel institutional expression of the value placed by the State on the importance of the creative artist to Irish society” (Ibid.). But we must ask ourselves what that value could have been, and to whom; Charles Haughey had returned to power, and this time as Ireland’s Taoiseach.

3.7 Haughey II

As was mentioned, Haughey had ostensibly demonstrated a fervent support for the arts and the establishment of *Aosdána* bore no exception, an organisation for which he himself took credit (Cooke 2011, 110). While Haughey postulated that *Aosdána* “has a resonance of the old Gaelic civilisation where the artist had a clearly defined position in the hierarchy of society… an elevated and respected position” (Haughey in Irish Times 1990), others had their reservations. In the *Irish Times*, Eavan Boland - one of Ireland’s most celebrated poets - expressed an apprehension shared between herself and some of her peers, arguing that Aosdána “threatens to displace the traditional relationship between the writer and the community, while not fully delineating a new one.” (Boland 1981 in Cooke 2011, 109). Cooke has dubbed Haughey’s take on Aosdána’s repositioning of the artist in society as combining “the romantic with the neo-feudal: the artist takes his place as a member of a courtly caste of talented free-thinking spirits, positioned just below the Chief.” (Cooke 2011, 110). Cooke’s mention of neo-feudalism, and arguably in doing so likening Charles Haughey’s societal status to that of a feudal lord, is worth some consideration. In a still-disparaged address to the nation in 1980 about “the state of the nation’s affairs” (Haughey 1980 in Irish Times 2018), Taoiseach Haughey declared that “as a community, we are living way beyond our means” (Ibid.); a near-decade of brutal austerity ensued. While Haughey assured that “apportioning blame, however, is not going to get us anywhere” (Ibid.), he lectured the Irish people in their spending and borrowing patterns while he himself had accrued a debt with Allied Irish Bank that totalled 1.143 million Irish Pounds (Irish Times, 1999) at the time of this address. ‘Champagne Charlie’, while letting the country ‘eat cake’, was overseeing somewhat of a banana republic.

While Irish citizens emigrated in their hundreds of thousands (Department of Foreign Affairs 2017, 3) in search of a decent living, Charles Haughey, O'Toole said, "invented his own country in the way that a writer does" (1992), often enlisting the help of writers themselves in doing so. Through the habitual praxis of what former Arts Council Chairman Kevin Rafter has referred to as Haughey's "fusing of the arts, cronyism and political vanity" (2022, 113), the Taoiseach searched for the appearance of legitimacy through commissioned script and support from writers, the prime example of this enmeshment in action having happened at, most curiously, Knock Airport (Ibid., 114) in the remote County Mayo. Situated in the middle of what critics dubbed as "a foggy, boggy site" (Hamilton 2017), plans to build an airport in the remote village of Knock appeared financially imprudent to observers, particularly for a country that was, to paraphrase Haughey, 'in need of tightening its belt'. But Haughey, who supported the plans for Knock Airport's development, was eager to further his image as "defender of provincial Ireland" (Maume 2013), and further motivated by substantial financial incentives from multi-millionaire Mayo meat tycoon and long-time Fianna Fáil donor Sher Rafique (The Sunday Times 2004). To lend artistic gravitas to the airport's inauguration, Haughey hired poet Paul Durcan as backup-through-verse. For the opening ceremony, Durcan was commissioned to write and recite *Hymn to Knock Airport* (1983), a title that alluded to the airport's proximity to Ireland's most famous Marian shrine. The poem, steeped in religious reference, reframes the 'foggy, boggy site' as someplace mystical, as the culmination of a sacred pilgrimage. "Come fly to Knock and walk on water" (Durcan 1983, in Rafter 2022, 118) charged Durcan to the soaking wet crowd at Knock Airport's inauguration, attended also by Haughey before he himself took off to Inishvickillane, his private island off of Kerry's coast.

Inishvickillane, purchased by Haughey for £25,000 (O'Sullivan 2013) - the source of much speculation about Haughey's wealth and business acumen - was also from where Haughey interrupted a holiday to travel back to Kerry's mainland for a local radio station's inaugural broadcast and engage in more 'cultural appropriation'. For the station's opening Haughey recited *Over the Waves*, a poem he said to have composed himself for the occasion, but was actually authored by poet Brendan Kennelly (Rafter 2022, 122). Indeed, such episodes encapsulate how, as O'Toole put it, "grand gestures and photo opportunities were always more important to Haughey than actual delivery" (O'Toole 2007), a scathing assessment that rings true when considering the general public's access to and engagement with the arts during his tenure. Indeed, a 1983 research report revealed that 39% of the Irish population knew nothing of the arts, and 40% had not attended

a single cultural event (Slaby 2011, 83) under Haughey's leadership. O'Toole's assessment gains further weight when considering Haughey's "unsophisticated" (Rafter 2022, 109), "self serving culture policy" (Linehan 2024) approach in relation to the artists to which he was so deeply indebted.

Despite Haughey's assurance at Harvard that "the implementation of an enlightened comprehensive policy for the Arts with adequate financial provision enshrined in it is an essential part of modern progressive government" (Haughey 1973, in Kennedy 1990, 108), by 1990 in an interview with the Irish Times he said that "I don't think you should be too concerned about structures and infrastructures. Art is very much its own thing […] so I don't think you should policy-ise it, if there is such a word, too much" (Haughey 1990, in Rafter 2022, 109). Haughey's preference was instead for discreet, sporadic offers of financial support that, while contributing to no coherent strategic structure, did elevate his position within the sector, offering him "a touch of class and an air of mystery" (O'Toole 2007), and "fed his own sense of importance as a medici for the arts" (Rafter 2022, 111). While this laissez-faire approach may read as unambitious, what Haughey wanted was the power for first-hand interference in the sector; he did not support the notion of there being a minister for the arts (Ibid., 110), instead attempting to have his own department as the overarching controller of arts policy (Ibid., 156). He placed mounting oppositional pressure on the Arts Council due to their cuts in funding (despite those cuts happening as a result of his own exchequer's budgeting), and even reportedly attempted to orchestrate Colm O'Briain's removal as the its Director (Kennedy 1990, 120), political moves that did not go unchallenged. For example, in defence of the Council against Haughey's apparent attempts to erode its autonomy, historian and archaeologist Máire de Paor insisted that "The only effective approach to State patronage of the arts is the one embodied in the principle of the Arts Council - an independent body which guarantees the freedom of the artist from political interference while managing State funds efficiently." (De Paor in ibid., 121). Also in relation to Haughey's domineering stance against the Council, composer Brian Boydell made the caustic remark that "You all know what happened when patronage of the arts in Russia was in the hands of Stalin and his henchman Zhdanov - the greatest creative talents were dictated to by those who knew nothing of the arts but who knew a great deal about political aggrandisement, with results which shocked the artistic world." (Boydell in Ibid.) But despite these staunch criticisms, the pervading beliefs that of all Taoisigh, Haughey had done "the most for artists" (Ryan 2003, in Lucey 2003), and the social clout that he garnered from such perceptions proved, as O'Toole put it, "useful assets for a cynical crook" (2007); for all of his critics in the

cultural realm, there were as many artists at the time who seemed largely unaware or unwilling to challenge Haughey through their work.

Indeed, O'Toole questioned whether Haughey's "much-vaunted patronage of the arts also contributed to the general failure of artists to function as any kind of national conscience during the Haughey era?" (Ibid.), although one could argue such a criticism has been directed towards artists throughout the history of the state (Rafter 2022, 128). Questions about the relationship between government support and artistic freedoms can be contextualised by the relationship between Haughey and Irish artists, a relationship for which artists have faced scrutiny. While Hugh Leonard's theatre production 'Kill' (1982) - in which "Haughey is satirised for his patronage of the arts" (Ibid., 134) - is a blatant example of a thinly veiled and intentionally loathsome representation of Haughey in the contemporary cultural output, Leonard has since been singled out as the only prominent Irish artist of the era to do so, with the rest accused of "keeping their heads down and taking the money, tax-free" (Lynch 2009). Furthering O'Toole's accusation, Anthony Roche wondered "to what extent Haughey has bought off the artists of Ireland; to what extent and degree the playwrights who have benefited – and they all have – are mired and implicated in the same financial double standards which the former Taoiseach promoted" (Roche 2011, 87). Roche has also speculated over the belated emergence of criticism against Haughey in theatre productions, particularly in how it only materialised following the European Union's emerging opposition towards Ireland's tax exemption for artists; "the liberal intelligentsia has welcomed the pressure brought by the European High Court on Irish legal practice in relation to such issues as the decriminalisation of homo-sexuality; their own tax-free status is another matter" (Ibid.). The aforementioned poet Paul Durcan, considered a fervent whistleblower of "the fault lines in Irish society" (Rafter 2022, 119) - having tackled themes such as the escalating violence in Northern Ireland; the dire state of the economy; the strengthening opposition towards the Catholic Church's enduring power, and the myriad of sociocultural debate that stemmed from that - was an ardent supporter of Haughey, despite the Taoiseach offering little productive contribution to these issues or the discourse surrounding them. As Declan Kiberd has remarked, "it would be difficult to imagine a Yeats or an O'Casey failing to use such material" (Ibid., 127).

Charles Haughey was a culture vulture until the very end, a trait exemplified by his *admittedly iconic* resignation quote from Othello when stepping down as Taoiseach in 1992 (Roche, 2011, 81), again riddled by scandal: 'I have done the state some service, and they know't… No more of that'.

It had been revealed that Haughey had been tapping journalists' phones (Irish Independent, 2023), that he had embezzled upwards of 45 million euros (Irish Independent 2006), that he had received countless corrupt payments from cronies, particularly property developers (Brown 2006) (one of which supposedly went towards refurbishing his aptly-named yacht, 'Celtic Mist'). Concluding his searing article, O'Toole determined that "for the arts in Ireland over the past 40 years, Charles Haughey's presence is almost as unsettling as it is for Irish politics" (O'Toole 2007), his reign being "indicative of the greed and debased ethos of the nascent Ireland" (2007). Indeed, despite his posturing, Haughey achieved very little in terms of cultural policy development, with critics as recently as 1990 still decrying Ireland's absence of any coherent arts policy framework, lamenting the scant instances of attempted half-effort (Pine 1990; Nealon 1987, in Linehan 2024). However, above all else, an Irish political culture steeped in greed and corruption would endure long after Haughey's departure, his reign instead encapsulating the "changing political culture […] and the legacy of tolerated dodginess[9] that led to some of the serious corruption of recent years, especially under Fianna Fáil." (Delaney 2013) This has only left Ireland's cultural landscape more vulnerable and at risk of misuse, as the following decades would demonstrate.

9 Meaning dubiousness, slyness.

Chapter 4: Boom, Bust, Boyzone - Cultural Landscapes of Excess

Where Have All Our Scullions Gone?
Rita Ann Higgins (2011)

It was hard hats and photo ops,
yella bellies and Gucci dreams
cutting ribbons on concrete schemes.
They were kissing babies
and talking roads,
they knew the bankers
would give them loads.

Why have one tunnel
when you could have two?
Or as any fool knows
two expensive tunnels
are better than none
bend over, spend over
let's have some fun.

4.1 Intro to the Celtic Tiger

By the mid-nineties and the beginning of the Celtic Tiger, Ireland was a radically different beast. Modern Ireland was in the process of dismantling the long-standing conservative bastions of its former 'Rome Rule', now allowing its citizens access to contraception, the option of divorce, and the absence of official persecution based on one's sexual orientation (Rafter 2022, 116). Official attitudes towards the arts were developing correlatively. A notable thirteen per cent increase in arts funding in 1993 (Ibid., 197), and the establishment of the Department of Arts, Culture and the Gaeltacht the following year - the first such department since Irish independence - signalled a government whose interest in the arts' perceived values was piqued. Michael D. Higgins - Ireland's current President and the Department's first minister - established the first explicitly autonomous state cultural policies. Higgins defined Irish cultural policy "according to theories of ethical memory and citizenship based on the works respectively of Charles Taylor, Jürgen Habermas, and Raymond Williams, whereby facilitating access to culture meant facilitating access to a more representative and complete historical narrative and facilitating participation." (Slaby 2011, 78) The establishment of TG4, Ireland's Irish language television channel, and reinstating the Irish Film

Board (Hadley et al. 2020, 4), were among the successes of these first policies which championed indigenous media in a push against "the colonisation of the imagination" (Higgins in Slaby 2011, 83). Beyond some natural reservations from the Arts Council about the potential for excessive governmental meddling in their operations, the ascension of the arts to a ministerial portfolio was warmly welcomed (Rafter 2022, 195). In Brussels, EU had also "reached a stage of its history where its cultural dimension [could] no longer be ignored" (Barroso, 2004), and was mobilising towards a more rigorous cultural policy approach. *Culture 2000* was launched, merging the pre-existing *RAPHAEL*, *KALEIDOSCOPE* and their analogous cultural programmes to constitute the Union's first cultural umbrella framework (Lähdesmäki et al. 2021, 48) under which Ireland would majorly benefit in terms of funding and experiential enrichment. More generally speaking, optimism was palpable across the country: the pubs were thriving with revellers, a peace process was underway in the North, disposable income was now a reality for many, and the country's new Taoiseach, Fianna Fáil's Bertie Ahern, was at the helm of a burgeoning economy that was expanding at a dangerous pace; halcyon days.

The Celtic Tiger saw a 7-9% annual increase in Ireland's real GDP, and Irish banks, who were aggressively promoting loans, amassed a combined balance sheet that amounted to five times the GDP figures (World Bank, 2024). Seemingly so far removed from the days of dependence and post-colonial asymmetry, Ireland was using 'sophisticated tools' like the OECD's aforementioned Base Erosion and Profit Shifting (BEPS) - 'The Double Irish' technique - to continually enable multinational corporations' essentially tax-free status. The economy thrived on the back of thin capitalisation, over-crediting, and risky debt management practices to endlessly expand the banks' balance sheets and the property market. Natural resources were outsourced to private multinationals regardless of public objection, the years of futile protests against the Shell corporation's gas acquisition off of the 'unspoiled' western shore (Vulliamy 2013) being a prime example of such. Alternatively, these resources were managed as commodities through profit-driven semi-state bodies, a fate met by countless Irish public goods and services during this era. Often, these semi-state companies' boards were, are, composed of the infamously insular and nepotistic cabals of business and finance elites in Dublin, many of whom hailed from entrenched political dynasties, and many of whom were mired in corruption scandals of their own (McConnell 2010; Bourke 2022). Taoiseach Ahern, described as the "quintessential clientelism politician" (Rafter 2022, 167) and infamously applauded by Charlie Haughey as "the most devious, and the most cunning of them all" (Haughey 1991 in Smyth 2008) presided over a system wherein corruption

was intrinsic to its operations, and the relentless pursuit of more money, more stuff remained the only sociopolitical rationale at Ireland's 'end of history'. The country had irrevocably changed, the arts were not spared.

4.2 Irish arts during the Celtic Tiger

Cultural development in Ireland saw inarguable benefits during the Celtic Tiger years. The Arts Council enjoyed a 400% increase in its funding (Slaby 2011, 77), as well as reaffirmed autonomy and expert authority under the 2003 Arts Act (Arts Council 2015, 10). Culture Ireland was established in 2005 as an autonomous semi-state body to develop an international platform for Irish arts organisations and individual artists. The European Union's structural funds were also contributing to the severe geographical disparities in terms of access to cultural outlets through it's financing of a broad network of arts venues across the country (Slaby 2011, 77). However, Ireland's culturesphere was beginning to be more explicitly regarded and measured in terms of its economic impact (Ibid., 83) - indeed, even the Arts Council was beginning to refer to its 'subsidies' as 'investments' (Slaby 2011, 84) - with results revealing that it was struggling to keep pace, "not only lagging behind socio-economic development" (Peillon 2002, 40) but beginning "to be seen as an obstacle to economic development" (Ibid.). Perhaps as a result, through what Patterson describes as Fianna Fáil's "Disneyfication of Ireland" (Patterson 2020), carefully constructed and bleakly anodyne cultural offerings dominated Ireland's artistic landscape. Riverdance, traditional Irish dance 'rejigged' for the global market, was doggedly promoted as the epitome of the Irish arts, as were boybands like Westlife - one of the members conveniently married to one of the Taoiseach's daughters - and Boyzone, innocuous, catchy pop merchants. In terms of the visual arts, sculpture and painter Graham Knuttel became emblematic of the era (Tipton 2023) with his critically shunned but, again, commercially successful works. His paintings, depicting a luxe gangsterism and booze-fuelled dubiousness in a digestible, easily marketable style, reflected the very spirit of the time - opulent and morally ambiguous. While a marked increase in public art commissions by city and county councils was an arguably positive development, its 120m tall poster boy, 'The Spire' installation in Dublin - colloquially known as 'the pin in the bin' - "can be seen to commemorate the Celtic Tiger boom because it, too, represents nothing" (Ward Sell 2019, 372).

The literary world was marked by a disconnect from its traditional penchant for lyricism and fierce critique - the charts were dominated by the "strangely antiseptic" (Ibid., 399) prose of Cecilia

GRAHAM KNUTTEL
'The Bankers' (2013-2023).

Ahern, another daughter of the Taoiseach's - and the modernist tradition was eschewed for a more realist perspective that too often shied away from setting fiction in the present (Ibid., 394). O'Toole - "having antennae that caught something disturbing in the relations between politics and the arts in Ireland well before the Celtic Tiger reached its climax" (Cooke 2011, 102) - described the boom as "resolutely unpoetic, its hard-faced greed posing an impossible challenge to the lyricism that is the first resort of Irish writing" (O'Toole 2011). But what Irish writing was in the first place, as anything had been, seemed lost in the annals of a time gone by; prosperity happened so abruptly that it had not been naturalised in the national sense of self in due time. Existing in perpetual poverty was "part of the national psyche, and it was confusing to be otherwise" (Morisson 2011, 181). As early as 1998, O'Toole could discern "that Ireland has become somehow unreal. In one way or another, very many Irish people have experienced a sense of the familiar becoming unknown, unrecognisable." The once self-perceptive, introspective Irish cultural expression had found itself overshadowed by the relentless pursuit of economic interests, leaving the nation disoriented as to what its cultural capacities represented beyond commerce.

4.3 Ireland's sense of self.

Indeed, O'Toole went on to lament how the Celtic Tiger years were damaging to the nation's culture because they did not offer its people "even a vaguely accurate narrative or image of who and where they were" (O'Toole 2011 in Cooke 2015, 104). McCarthy posits that "the idea of prosperity overwhelmed the idea of nationhood" (1997, 119), and having reached a point where devotion to church or state had become obsolete to many (Epinoux & Healy 2016, 24), the past - considered a dark and backward place - was abandoned. Opening his study of the era's psyche, *Enough is Enough* (2010), O'Toole posits that in this changed, amorphous landscape, the mere act of existing within such favourable economic conditions itself took shape as "a substitute identity" (2010, 3), one which "at its cheapest… expressed itself in a mad consumerism, in an arrogance toward the rest of the world, in a wilful refusal of all ties of history and tradition" (Ibid., 4). Attempting to make ancient history of living memory, Ireland's past was made "a bogeyman in a kind of rhetoric of binary terror" (Kirby et al. 2002, 47) , wielded by the zeitgeist's various talking heads. The options were as follows: "either you accept the deregulated ruthlessness of the market or you will be cast back into the eternal night of emigration and high unemployment" (Ibid.); the choice was obvious.

And so despite 'the boom' being irresponsibly financed, and catalysing the degradation of Ireland's environment and rural communities in cross-country careless abandon, it's impressive economic indicators fuelled an hubris never before witnessed on the island. Wages were rising, social housing was being built, public services were on the upswing, people could engage and participate in the wonders of cultural globalisation (Morisson 2011, 180) - all newfound luxuries that contributed to an alien sense of progress that saw everything expanding, surpassing, revamping, with a continental European veneer. As early as 2002, Kirby et al. remarked on how "what could be construed as the erosion of a sense of place, or the most distinctive aspects of a culture, is taken as an assertion of confidence and independence." (2002, 12) Indeed, the era finally saw the long-suppressed but eager wants to emulate imperial neighbours across the sea acted upon, with Irish people developing a taste for wine, coffee, dining out (Bonner 2011, 52), and exuding a "full-blooded cosmopolitanism" (Kilfeather 2005) that had been doggedly imported as opposed to naturally cultivated.

Despite, in real terms, the economy largely existing in the United States (Battel 2003, 104), somewhere along this frenzied race for over-accumulation, Ireland's artistically revered landscape evolved into a sprawling and haphazardly planned amalgamation of industrial and office developments, interconnected by an erratic network of motorways, "the sinews of sprawl" (Crowley

2006, 150). To O'Toole, the Irish motorway system represented "cultural impoverishment, a loss of values and the 'uglification of Ireland" (Ibid.), traversed by the residents of endlessly expanding suburbias as the banks and even semi-state media outlets (Patterson 2020) encouraged individuals to take out second mortgages on properties that they unknowingly could not afford. Despite considered critique from members of the public - "[the Celtic Tiger is] another shaggin' smoke-screen" (McCarthy 1997, 120)- to be against any of this was to be "naive, retrograde, irresponsible or ungrateful" (Kirby et al. 2002, 47) despite the glaring inequities and imbalances that underpinned the relentless progress.

The Celtic Tiger was packaged and sold to people as a "deceptively utopian" (Lorraine 2011, 212) rags-to-riches American dream, obfuscating "the injustice of past and present power processes" (Ibid.) that eventually prevailed over the era's baseless ethos and empty promise. The drastic wealth inequalities that emerged over the course of the boom were exacerbated further by the government's failure to channel its fiscal resources towards reducing that inequality, instead instigating policies that continually favoured multinational corporations and the country's wealthiest (Foster 2008, 10); by the mid-two-thousands these greed-fuelled asymmetries left Ireland in a deeply vulnerable position. While poet Michael D. Higgins had prioritised increasing cultural access (Slaby 2011, 83), and had been a fervent advocator for investment in the arts as means to prevent socioeconomic marginalisation, arguing that "the cultural space was wider than the economic space" (Higgins in Rafter 2022, 195), his arguments largely fell on deaf ears in the Oireachtas. Because of how Ireland's culturesphere had been commodified and distorted, once recession hit Ireland not only lost its monetary riches, but the legitimacy of its cultural outlook (O'Toole 2010, 4), leaving its tarnished new identity adrift.

4.4 The Recession

Late 2007 saw Ireland's budget fall short of a whopping €2.3 billion in tax revenue (Hickey & Smyth 2015), and the government belatedly confessing to a looming recession. Furthermore, the effects of the stock market collapse and international monetary crisis that followed in 2008 were only amplified in Ireland due to its bursting property bubble and myriad of reckless financial practices that the economy had relied upon suddenly resulting in a tidal wave of staggering, insurmountable debt. There were real fears that Irish ATMs would not dispense money in a matter of days following the crash (Bilenberg 2018), and the unemployment rate rocketed to 12.5%, the

second highest among the OECD's thirty-eight member states. In October of 2008, the government announced an almost 10% budget cut to cultural expenditure, with the Arts Council forced to contend with a 12% funding decrease, and national cultural institutions left with 20% less than the previous year (Slaby 2011, 77). In the midst of this crisis, Bertie Ahern resigned as Taoiseach, primarily due to his own penchant for brown envelopes; a torrent of financial controversies and corruptions pertaining to his unethical dealings with property developers and bankers (Rafter 2022, 180) were unearthed in the infamous Mahon Tribunal, eye-opening legal proceedings as to the enduring, endemic levels of systemic corruption in the state that had powered the Celtic Tiger that placed major public and political pressure on Ahern to step down. Succeeding him was Fianna Fáil's Brian Cowen, leading the efforts of piecing together a bank bailout that totalled €85 billion, a sum assembled from the 'the troika', comprising of the International Monetary Fund, European Union funds, and the European Central Bank (McDonald 2011, 66) in exchange for Ireland's economic sovereignty. Financial aid was also offered by several obliging countries - which, in an unfortunate return to old habits, included Britain, with the government also turning to Irish people's own pension reserves. Years of austerity, disenfranchisement, and staunch resentment ensued, and questions "that were as much about culture and identity as they were about economics" (Cooke 2015, 100) were continually dredged up, one such being "where had the artists been?" (Ibid., 103).

4.4.1 Post-Tiger Arts & The Return to Landscape

Just as he criticised artists during the Haughey era, Kiberd criticised artists during the Celtic Tiger, arguing that:

> "It would be hard to imagine a James Joyce or a Sean O'Casey passing up the rich pickings for an artist in such a profound social change, yet that, most incredibly, is what the current generation… with only rare exceptions, has so far done. There is no major celebration or corrosive criticism of these developments in good novels, plays or poetry" (2005, 276).

While the possibilities as to *where* socially critical artists were biding their time during the Celtic Tiger are manifold and largely speculative; perhaps obscured behind the 'Disneyfied' mainstream; perhaps reluctantly conforming to that mainstream in order to make a living; perhaps, like most of the country, experiencing change at too fast a pace to ever come up for analytical air, or "numbed into silence" (Cooke 2015 103) by the comforts of prosperity. What is definite is that, post-crash, their presence was indisputable, scrutinising, and fiercely counter-culture, possessing a bitter

“disillusionment with capitalism and its attendant aesthetic modes” (Ward Sell 2019, 397). 2008 marked the departure of not only Ireland’s lucky streak but also the self-assured arrogance (O’Toole 2010, 4) and “boom-time complacency” (Cooke 2015, 100) that accompanied it, as all at once, Irish people were psychologically contending with “the implications of a property bust based on greed and delusion, a series of exposés of political corruption, and revelations of the widespread sexual abuse of children by Catholic clergy.” (Ibid.) The prevailing artistic modes were suddenly incongruent to Irish - and particularly the rural West’s - psychology, and a compulsive “alternative art” (Ward Sell 2019, 398) took shape. While incorrigibly contemporary, this reactionary cultural output leaned on an old, aforementioned trope: that of the landscape.

Celtic Tiger Ireland’s acquisitive hysteria and vested interests sparked, as was mentioned, a feverish property boom that radically altered the face of Irish landscapes. Countless housing estates hastily “mushroomed in the Irish countryside” (Morrison 2011, 195), often visually discordant with their surroundings and developed in-line with the speculative desires of developers as opposed to the wants and needs of the communities that these displaced suburbias had been plonked in the midst of. Buchanan posits that this profit-centric approach to regional development “reshaped the way the Irish articulated narratives of property, land, community, ethnicity, and home” (Buchanan 2017, 51). The rush for development was so boundless that building sites themselves became “a part of the a part of a national landscape aesthetic, a reassuring sight at the periphery of peoples vision signifying the continued accumulation, contiguous economic growth, and consistent wellbeing of the Celtic Tiger.” (Morrisson 2011, 195) When the cash flow stopped in 2008 so did the construction, littering the country with what came to be known as ‘ghost estates’ - half finished developments abandoned to decay that amounted to some 43,000 would-be homes (McDonald 2013, 67). These houses, “well-known eyesores along the rugged landscape” (Morrisson 2011, 197), became a popular basis from which visual artists critiqued the boom, a cynical reimagining of Paul Henry or Gerard Dillon’s depictions of the indigenous cottages that had informed the nationalist ethnoscape (Ibid.). Artist and academic Anthony Haughey’s *Settlement* (2011) series is a key contribution to the genre. Dubbed “a positive political response to a world of negative equity” (Limerick City Gallery of Art, 2015), *Settlement* is an eerie collection of photographs that depict these estates as something almost otherworldly or supernatural, further alienating them from their environments while challenging the public’s identification with “the myth of the rural, poetic landscape that came to be the badge of Irish identity” (Morrisson 2011, 197).

ANTHONY HAUGHEY
Detail from 'Settlement' (2011)

In Dublin, Fergal McCarthy's *Liffeytown* (2010), a public installation comprising of huge red and green Monopoly figures bobbing on the river Liffey, also tackled Ireland's failed property fetishism through phantasmagoric landscapes. Listed as one of 2010's cultural highlights in the Irish Times *Liffeytown* offered a satirical denunciation of speculative development in the capital while

FERGAL MCCARTHY,
'Liffeytown' (2010).

possessing a consoling simplicity in the midst of inarticulable economic confusion, reducing, As put by McCarthy, “the complexity of the market to something as beautifully simple and cyclical as the level of the tide. It may fall as we rise.” (Public Art, 2011)

Irish writers too wove narratives of the post-boom landscape, with Buchanan listing Anne Haverty’s ‘The Free and Easy’(2007) and Donal Ryan’s ‘The Spinning Heart’ (2014) as notable texts to particularly focus on the disconnect between Irish people and Irish soil. These stories, Buchanan explains, “depict everyday rituals and routines as disconnected from a grounded relationship to the space on which communities construct their identities. Ideas of home, space, nation, and community are reduced to a system that uses land as a mechanism to accumulate capital.” (Buchanan 2017, 53) In reality, this sense of psychosocial disconnection was so pervasive that the idea of Irish nationhood itself came under intense scrutiny in artistic discourse, and in some cases, complete repudiation. For example, at a roundtable conference held in 2008 to discuss contemporary art in relation to these evolving ideas of Ireland, artist Sarah Pierce charged that “there are may artists, including myself, who find that nation as a legitimising force is actually, totally delegitimising” (Pierce 2008 in Epinoux & Healy 2016, 8). Curiously, Ireland’s own Taoiseach seemed to reach a similar conclusion.

4.5 Ireland Inc.

“Ireland is a brand” he said. “We must connect with that brand now and use it to give us the competitive advantage in a globalised world that is increasingly the same.” (Cowen 2010 in Rafter 2022, 180) Tellingly, Taoiseach Brian Cowen chose to make this statement during Harry Clifton’s inauguration ceremony as Ireland’s new Professor of Poetry (Cooke 2015, 101) in 2010; the wrong moment. Clifton’s subsequent acceptance speech was wrought with thinly veiled criticisms of the Taoiseach’s bold claim that, given the context, was equating poetry to an economic instrument of the state, which was itself merely a product. Clifton expressed his concerns about the arts in Ireland being reduced to “no more than a crush of market forces where the human mind becomes a commodity to be sold to the highest bider” (Clifton 2010, in Ibid.), and vowed to protect poets from “the kind of people who have too strong an agenda.” (Ibid.) Cowen faced further backlash following Clifton’s inauguration, with poet Derek Mahon denouncing ‘brand Ireland’ as a “dense and philistine” (Mahon 2010, in Rafter, 2022, 180) idea. Despite their sharp objections, these poet’s

words were to ultimately prove ineffectual in countering the prevailing narrative of 'Ireland Inc.', a narrative that increasingly informed the state's cultural policy.

The 2009 Report of the Special Group on Public Service Numbers and Expenditure Programmes reviewed expenditure across various sectors, including the arts, with the aim of reducing government spending where possible. In 2008, the National Campaign for the Arts (NFCA) evolved as a lobby group of artists and arts workers concerned about impending government cuts on culture and arts. In 2009, the NCFA organised a lobby and successfully curtailed the massive cuts that had been planned. This collective action of the NCFA demonstrated the lobbying power of the arts community in a way that had not been seen previously. However, the planned cuts in arts spending in 2009 (rumoured to be 50%) did eventually occur step by step over the course of the following five years. Despite Michael D. Higgins championing the notion that "You should in fact be investing in the arts at a time of non-growth if you were to prevent racism, if you were to prevent marginalisation, and also, if you were to avoid the double dividend of losing on citizenship twice over: you lost because you hadn't a job, and then you lost participation and so on…" (Higgins in Rafter 2022, 195), by 2013, the Department of Arts, Culture, etc etc total cultural expenditure had fallen by 26%, with the Arts Council's grant in-aid slashed by 35.2% (Slaby 2011, 79-80). At their worst, the report's austerity measures left prominent studios and galleries forced to cancel their exhibitions, music associations and ensembles having their funding totally withdrawn, and Ireland's most historically significant theatre, the Abbey, short over €1 million in comparison to its pre-crash grants (Ibid., 86). The report, often referred to as the 'McCarthy Report', all but undid the cultural policy framework that Michael D. Higgins had instated, reversing the autonomous state of culture and the arts as a policy portfolio (Ibid., 78) by superimposing the objectives of other departments to take precedence upon it, most extensively those of economic policy.

Despite the severity of the cuts to funding and the absence of responding compensation mechanisms put in place signalling a potential return the the old mentality that saw the arts as an ill-afforded luxury, Cooke has remarked on the recession providing the conditions that showcased the arts' capacity to nurture "economic wellbeing within Ireland and to maintain a positive image of the country abroad." (2015, 100), two perspectives that were expanded upon in 2009 through the international economic consultancy firm Indecon's *Assessment of Economic Impact of the Arts in Ireland* Arts Council-commissioned report, and at the Farmleigh I forum. Firstly, Indecon's report, produced in-line with the government's much-touted *Building Ireland's Smart Economy: A*

Framework for Sustainable Economic Renewal innovation policy, was largely devoted to an expression of how the arts and cultural industries could economically benefit other sectors in the name of bolstering a "strong knowledge-based economy" (Indecon 2009, 86). The report formally introduced the notion of "the creative industries" (Ibid.) to Irish cultural policy praxis, a term encompassing sectors far-removed from traditional notions of arts and cultural industries such as, conveniently, software development, thus enabling the expansion of Irish cultural policy's mandate to now cater to a traditionally antithetical culture of corporatism and profit-seeking. To underscore the arts' ability to improve Ireland's reputation on the global stage, Indecon drew on John Fanning's *The Importance of Being Branded: An Irish Perspective* (2006), itself inspired by Richard Florida's seminal 'Rise of the Creative Class', and a driving force behind the conception Cowen's 'brand Ireland'. The report argued that cultivating "a more creative reputation" (Indecon 2009, 91) achieved through arts policy could serve as a growth enabler to attract foreign direct investment and increase exports (Ibid.).

Similar reasoning was explored at Farmleigh I, "the defining moment in the overt economisation of cultural policy" (Slaby 2011, 85), and the first gathering of the Global Irish Economic Forum. A state-run conference held in response to the recession, Farmleigh I brought influential members of the Irish diaspora together in Dublin to discuss how they could contribute to the nation's economic recovery through strategic relations (O'Brien 2011) that would promote cultural diplomacy and the celebrity endorsement of Ireland's 'brand'. The forum concluded that the government should commission an arts festival in the United States as a means of image rebranding. This recommendation resulted in Culture Ireland's - Ireland's government agency in charge of disseminating Irish culture abroad - *Imagine Ireland* initiative, a year-long campaign (Wallace 2011) that sent over "a thousand artists to stage works across two hundred cities in the United States" (Slaby 2011, 86), including poet Séamus Heaney, the Druid Theatre company, and the National Chamber Choir (Wallace 2011). Chaired by actor Gabriel Byrne, who had been appointed as Ireland's first cultural ambassador that same year, the launch of 'Imagine Ireland' saw then-Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht Jimmy Deenihan sparking murmurs from the assembled crowd of Ireland's leading cultural practitioners upon saying that there was "a major onus on the arts to repair the damage" (Deenihan 2011, in Wallace 2011) caused by the recession. Byrne, when asked about whether he was concerned about the possibility of event - with a €4 million budget - resulting in little returns to Ireland, further emphasised the perceived potency of the

Irish arts-as-export, assuring that "This Government… understand that they have a huge asset, and that asset is culture, arts and heritage" (Byrne 2011, in Ibid.).

And so, the past decades have consolidated the justification for government support of the arts being increasingly tied to economic benefits. Opposing this development, Caust (2003) has argued that:

> Over the past twenty years the need to justify government support for the arts has been dominated by the desire to prove that 'art' has other benefits, particularly economic ones. It has been used as an instrument to justify investment into cities (e.g. the Cultural Capitals of Europe), boost employment, encourage export, support innovation and demonstrate leadership. By taking this approach the arts sector has arguably been diminished, divided and confused. Equating the making of the art with the selling of art undermines the process of the doing. (Caust 2003, 61, in O'Callaghan 2011, 187)

In response to these risks of cultural economisation, Bruce Seaman (2003) has advocated for a more nuanced understanding of culture's value that eschews justifying the arts' existence through economics - a process that Seaman sees as amounting to playing "their weakest card, while holding back their aces" (Seaman 2003). Instead, McInerney argues that "capturing cultural value is based on a range of potential value points such as aesthetic, spiritual, social, historic and symbolic value." (2019, 36). Despite the potency of such criticisms, the Irish political establishment only perpetuated the deepening links between culture and capital.

This seemingly singular preoccupation with the fiscal dimensions of the arts from 2009 onwards - although the culmination of a decades-long trend - was, Slaby argues, irreversibly catalysed by the recession, and only further entrenched and expedited by the rise to power of the business-oriented Fine Gael party in 2011 (Slaby 2011, 87). Ireland acquiesced to a non-political regime that centred around sovereign debt repayments to international banks who also sold much of Ireland's loan portfolios to U.S. investors (Byrne 2017, 8), most notably financial services giants such as J.P. Morgan and Goldman Sachs, private equity firms that also began to acquire Ireland's distressed debt and associated assets - often the mortgages and properties of "ordinary home owners" (Ibid., 9) - as vulture funds in the pursuit of massive short-term profits (Ibid., 6). During the same period, the amount of private investment from the United States into Ireland more than doubled (O'Toole, 2021, 566). In the same vein, Fine Gael embarked on the privatisation or semi-privatisation of several public services such as Ireland's national gas services, sold to an international consortium in

2014 (Taylor & McGee, 2014), as well as increasingly involving private developers and - through the HAP scheme established in 2014 - landlords (Irish Congress of Trade Unions 2023, 6) in the provision of social housing. It thus comes as little surprise that Ireland's cultural capital met a similar fate.

At the second sitting of the Global Irish Economic forum in 2011, Jimmy Deenihan urged the private sector to increase its participation in cultural support, entrusting them to mitigate the negative effects of the government's 15% decrease in funding for the arts that year through corporate sponsorship and philanthropic investment (Slaby 2011, 87). By 2014, any advancements in government's cultural support made during the boom years had been reversed, with the Arts Council's budget resembling its 2004 figures (Rafter 2022, 199), and while this 'mixed model approach' of public and private funding was promoted by the European Union as "a model of financial sustainability" (European Parliament 2011, 6), the inherently neoliberal ideology that underpins it has, for example, been shown to further exacerbate structural inequalities in the arts and culture sectors when applied to their policymaking, as evidenced in the United Kingdom (Greer, 2021). An example such inequality is the geographic disparity issue: the United Kingdom's adoption of the 'mixed model' approach has seen London's arts and culture sector benefit from private investment disproportionately to the rest of the U.K. (Slaby 2011, 89). A similar trend threatens Ireland, with "7 of the 9 national cultural institutions identified as Strategic Investment Priorities" (Turley 2021, 14) located in Dublin, wherein the greatest concentration of multinationals and 53.7% of the highest earners reside (Walsh 2023, 51). Michael D. Higgins' foundational policy ethos of an accessible and equitable cultural space faces a real challenge from a cultural funding model that is in-part informed by private interests. Indeed, one could argue that such a model, which remains in practice in Ireland, has the potential render a more precarious situation for the arts than elsewhere given the already illustrated, historically "uncoordinated, piecemeal approach of Irish governments" (Baylis 2004, 821) to the development of cultural policy provision - what Rafter has dubbed a "sorry history" (2022, 202). And furthermore, this issue is compounded by the persistence of a sociopolitical and economic framework that continues to rely on risky fiscal praxis, speculative tendencies, and chronic profiteering by multinational corporations; these entities, by no means legally bound to the provision of strategic and consistent investment in the arts sector, stand only to benefit from an increasingly explicit cultural policy emphasis on the nebulous notion of 'creativity'.

In 2017, the Joint Committee on Arts, Heritage, Regional and Gaeltacht affairs, tasked with shaping what would soon become Ireland's first official government cultural policy framework, *Culture 2025*, also testified as to the "piecemeal nature of the development of Ireland's cultural sector since the foundation of the State" (2017, 33) to the Oireachtas. The committee insisted on "the need for a comprehensive cultural mapping, starting at Government level" (Ibid.) as a means to make up for the "acknowledged research deficit" (Ibid.) plaguing the ever-more loosely defined Irish cultural policy sector. Slaby questions whether we can "still talk about cultural policy when the cultural content has become optional, and when the State is no longer the main stakeholder? And what becomes of the public-good remit when "art ceases to be about citizens and becomes about sponsors?" (2011, 88); such a comprehensive mapping of Ireland's contemporary cultural policy framework may act as a crucial first step towards exploring some plausible theories.

Chapter 5: Mapping Ireland's Contemporary Cultural Policy Landscape

5.1 Practitioners

In terms of policy practitioners, the Republic of Ireland's national framework is upheld by two primary models: the architect model, and the arm's length principle (Compendium of Cultural Policies and Trends 2020). In cultural policy, the 'architect model' essentially embodies an interventionist approach - typically rooted in welfare state ideologies - that allows national and local government to play a decisive and active role in the formulation and implementation of cultural policies through a department dedicated to their oversight (Craik 2007, 5), which in the case of the Republic of Ireland is currently the Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media (although this name changes with almost each election cycle). The department (DTCAGSM) is mandated to fulfil three key functions, as follows:

> "Firstly, it is directly responsible for national cultural policy and for the promotion and protection of Ireland's heritage, language, culture and the music and film industries, and the promotion of Irish arts globally [an affirmation of its embodiment of the aforementioned architect model]. Secondly, the Department works alongside other government departments with responsibility for key aspects of culture [the Department of Education being one, the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage another]. Thirdly, the Department oversees and provides funding to the Arts Council, the Heritage Council, Screen Ireland, Údarás na Gaeltachta, An Foras Teanga / the Language Body and various other programmes, bodies and organisations involved in the cultural and creative sectors." (Government of Ireland, 2020, 36)

It is this third key function that relates to the 'arm's length' principle. The arm's length principle is a cultural policy model that distributes government funding through autonomous semi-state agencies as a means, in-part, to literally - as Kennedy mentioned when discussing the Irish Arts Council's establishment - "keep the arts 'at arms length' from political interference." (1990, 2) These semi-state bodies - most particularly the Arts Council - also possess a respected authority in terms of national cultural 'policy-ising' to use Charles Haughey's phrase, and the proximity of its members to on the ground cultural praxis provides a legitimacy through lived experience that the government's more distant civil servants are assumedly less capable of deducing or applying their decision-making. Additionally, city and county councils, the voluntary sector, commercial bodies

and cultural institutions contribute to the development of cultural policy and services (Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht 2020, 34).

In terms of supranational actors, the practitioner most instrumental in Ireland's cultural climate in a governmental context is the European Union. The EU's cultural policy portfolio is primarily overseen by the European Commission, more specifically its Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture, and its legal basis for official engagement with its member state's arts and cultural sectors is enshrined in the Lisbon and Maastricht Treaties (European Commission 2018, 2), specifically under Maastricht's Article 128, now Article 151 (Littoz-Monnet 2012) following the 1997 Amsterdam Treaty's amendments (Sassatelli 2008, 228). This article outlines the Union's commitment to "contribute to the flowering of the cultures of the Member States" (European Commission 1992, 48) through exercising the principle of subsidiarity (Littoz-Monnet 2012; Shore 2006, 17). The subsidiarity clause is essentially a promise of self-restraint, with the treaty document assuring that the Union's involvement in it's member states' cultural policies "shall be aimed at encouraging cooperation between Member States and, if necessary, supporting and supplementing their action" (European Commission 1992, 49), granting itself no legal mandate to control the goings-on in their cultural spheres by instead implementing a policy agenda that merely serves as a compliment to national cultural strategies (Shore 2006, 17; Fazal 1996, 327). In turn, the Department for Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media is represented in Brussels through its cultural 'attachés' (Permanent Representation of Ireland to the European Union, 2024), representatives that liaise within the EU framework to ensure policy alignment and effectiveness, and it is also through the EU that Ireland engages with more global cultural conventions such as those from UNESCO (Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, 2020, 5).

5.2 Outlining E.U Cultural Policy.

The European Union's primary cultural policy strategy is its *New European Agenda for Culture*, with its implementation currently overseen by the Commissioner for Innovation, Research, Culture, Education and Youth, Iliana Ivanova. The strategy - ongoing since 2018 - features three strategic objectives: social benefits, economic benefits, and external benefits (European Commission 2018, 2), and is supported largely through the Union's *Creative Europe* funding programme. *The European Heritage Label*, the flagship *European Capital of Culture* festival, *ARTE TV*, and an array of cultural bodies across the region are supported by *Creative Europe* within the policy framework (European Commission 2021). In Ireland, *Creative Europe* operates through the Arts Council (The

Arts Council 2024). The Union's structural funds are also instrumentalized by the agenda, contributing to the maintenance and operations of architectural landmarks (Gordon 2007, 16) and their respective managerial bodies.

The *New European Agenda for Culture* also strategises cross-commission policy "synergies" (Ibid.), an example of such a project being the *Horizon Europe* programme, a research and innovation funding programme (Horizon Europe 2020, 1) that meets - according to the former relevant Commissioner Mariya Gabriel - at "the intersection of technology and culture… safeguarding our cultural heritage." (Gabriel 2021) Ireland was granted €1.2 billion in funding through the programme from 2020-2024 (Horizon Europe Ireland 2020). Another instance of the European Union's cultural policy intersectionality can be found in *The New European Bauhaus* scheme, its contribution to which Ireland was awarded an award for in 2023 (Creative Ireland 2023). The initiative considers culture, ecology and engineering, a creative and multidisciplinary movement that overlaps with the Union's environmental policy, supporting its *European Green Deal*. Such initiates being projected as central to the Union's cultural policies concerns is in-keeping with its cross-sectoral, multidisciplinary approach to cultural policy praxis more generally, perhaps due to its subsidiarity clause and need to maintain an official distance from its member states' national cultural policies. While Ireland participates in each of these initiatives, worth noting is that its rates of participation are lower than the majority of member states (Compendium of Cultural Policies and Trends 2020)

5.3 Outlining the Basic Income for the Arts Pilot Scheme.

A Basic Income for the Arts (BIA) scheme, a UBI-inspired welfare state redistributive tool (O'Brien & Clancy 2022, 43), was piloted in 2022 as both a pandemic recovery measure for the sector (Compendium Cultural Policies and Trends 2023), and an attempt at alleviating the longstanding financial stressors "that often force artists to abandon their creative work or take on multiple jobs." (McLaughlin 2024) Led by the DTCGSM Minister Catherine Martin, who has referred to the scheme as "a once in a generation policy" (Martin 2024 in DTCAGSM 2024), the initiative - its first budget totalling €25 million euros (Compendium of Cultural Policies and Trends 2023) - offered artists and arts workers a taxable basic income of €325 per week (McLaughlin 2024) for three years. The policy, which observers have noted as having "seemingly acknowledged the issues of financial precariousness" (Durrer et al. 2021, 30) that face artists, is a positive indicator as to the value that the government sees in the arts and, crucially, its producers. Of the over 9,000 applicants,

the successful 2,000 that are currently in receipt of the BIA (Ibid.) experienced improvements in their quality of work and life within six months of their first payment (Martin 2024 in DTCAGSM 2024) as demonstrated by ongoing research trials conducted by the Irish Government Economic and Evaluation services on behalf of the Department. On average, artists in receipt of the BIA payment spent eight weekly hours more on their practice (Feldkircher et al. 2023, 4) - in comparison to the control group (composed of almost 1000 unsuccessful applicants, the unsung heroes of the scheme) - and 9% more likely to make an adequate living for themselves through their creative practice alone. Regarding the quality of their personal lives, recipients of the BIA reported less instances of anxiety and/or depression than the control group, with their overall life satisfaction heightened in-part to the increased leisure time that the BIA has allowed them (Ibid., 5).

Despite these positive findings, the BIA scheme has not gone uncriticised, with O'Brien and Clancy lamenting the Department's decision to go against recommendations from on-the-ground consultants and advisors, instead assessing people's eligibility for the scheme in line with 'Culture 2025' by reverting to The Arts Act, 2003 for a definition of such (2022, 51), which O'Brien and Clancy consider as an exclusionary basis from which to approach the BIA that results in the establishment of an improper "hierarchy of labour" (Ibid., 52) that centres the artist-as-island at the expense of "a whole range of workers essential to the arts and entertainment sector such as gallerists, set builders and make-up artists." (Ibid., 51) Still, the overall consensus has been that the BIA scheme has been of benefit to the sector, with a notable number of cultural organisations - Visual Artists Ireland, the Irish Theatre Institute, and Poetry Ireland amongst them - having mobilised in the campaign 'Retain, Extend and Expand' (McLaughlin 2024), boasting a petition with over 5,000 signatures in favour of maintaining the BIA scheme. However, in response to questioning about the possibility of the scheme continuing beyond its pilot's end-date in 2025, Minister Martin provided a non-answer, stating that "although there may be a general election before the pilot scheme is finished it will continue beyond that, it will complete its three years, and I can tell you it will certainly be appearing in the Green Party manifesto because I absolutely believe in this. I think we're a nation, and I see it as Minister for Tourism when I go abroad on trade missions; what is there to present the image of Ireland? Its our dance, our culture, our creativity" (Martin 2024 in DTCAGSM 2024)

5.4 Outlining Culture 2025

It was only in the January of 2020, under the auspices of then-Minister Josepha Madigan, that Ireland's government published its first singular national cultural policy, 'Culture 2025'. This watershed development was designed with the aim to "provide a clear vision, strong foundation and policy framework for the continued vitality, development and viability of Irish arts, culture and heritage up to 2025" (Joint Committee on Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs, 2017, 4), bringing with it the promise of double the funding for arts and culture by 2025 (Hadley et al. 2020, 3). While not a fully comprehensive policy strategy per se, what 'Culture 2025' does offer is an attempt at fostering cohesion by setting out "the current state of affairs in a broad range of categories across the cultural sector, the aspirations the Government has for those areas, and the Government's commitments to achieve those aspirations" (Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht 2020, 4, acting as a unifying umbrella framework policy while it's aims "will be achieved through more detailed policies and implementation plans in specific areas" (Ibid.).

Legislatively, 'Culture 2025' is reliant on pre-existing statutes, most notably on Part 1, Section 2 of the Arts Act, 2003 for a working definition of 'the arts', which is as follows: "any creative or interpretative expression (whether traditional or contemporary) in whatever form, and includes, in particular, visual arts, theatre, literature, music, dance, opera, film, circus and architecture, and includes any medium when used for those purposes" (Government of Ireland 2003). Also, 'Culture 2025' draws on the Heritage Act, 1995 for its definition of cultural heritage. 'Culture 2025' also extends its scope to the broader - and at times, overlapping - 'creative industries', defined by the policy document itself as

> "industries and occupations which focus on creativity as a means to deliver commercial success, export growth and resilient employment for Ireland including: – advertising and marketing – architecture – crafts – design – fashion – film, TV, video, radio and photography – IT, software and computer services – publishing – museums, galleries and libraries – music, performing and visual arts." (Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht 2020, 7)

Tasked with considering the policy framework, in 2017 a Joint Committee on Arts Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs warned the Department of the dangers associated with a policy that does not "acknowledge the cultural, artistic and heritage rights of all our citizens and protect those rights through legislation and / or constitutional reform" (Joint Committee on Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs, 2017, 16); expanding on the sentiments of Michael D. Higgins - who at that stage had assumed the nation's Presidency - that the arts and their proper

facilitation through policy had the capacity to "prevent racism […] prevent marginalisation" (Higgins in Rafter 2022, 195), the committee implored that if mismanaged or neglected, "arts, culture, heritage, and the policies associated with them will become a political adornment at best, and a source of social division and a marker of inequality at worst." (Joint Committee on Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs , 2017, 16.) Heeding the committee's warning, a guiding ethos behind 'Culture 2025' is the Department's expressed belief in "the right of everyone to participate in the cultural and creative life of the nation" (Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, 2020, 6), echoing Higgins' imbuing of the Habermasian principle of communicative action into his policymaking. Indeed, 'Culture 2025' reiterates the argument that "cultural and creative participation can also contribute to community cohesion and reduce social exclusion and isolation, leading to more resilient and sustainable communities" (Ibid., 10), underlining the importance of this participation in the light of Ireland's increasingly diverse demographic makeup.

Another governing principle underpinning 'Culture 2025' is the Department's conviction in the "value of culture as a means of fostering a more sustainable future for Ireland, including through economic, environmental and social policy" (Ibid., 6), with the policy paper elaborating most extensively on the economic facet of this stance. 'Culture 2025' states that "a vibrant cultural environment is important in attracting foreign direct investment" (Ibid., 10), and that local authorities - who were possibly inspired by Florida's seminal 'Creative Class' theory (2002) - have deduced that an area's 'cultural vitality' is a 'key instrument' for attracting inward investment and that, in turn, residents with 'creative skills' represent prime candidates for positions with the corporations investing in said area (Ibid). Due to these supposed "wider business benefits for Ireland" (Ibid., 14) that such a creatively eclectic environment is argued to foster, 'Culture 2025' vouches for the Government's commitment to "encouraging strong mutually beneficial links between business and the arts community" (Ibid., 17), through exploring ways to "further promote private investment across the cultural sector" (Ibid.), affirming the continuation of Jimmy Deenihan's recession-prompted plea. Dispelling fears, perhaps, 'Culture 2025' assures that the Government aims to ensure that funding, regardless of its source, "rests on a solid base to enable the sector to protect our rich cultural heritage, and to harness the distinctive benefits of culture for both society and the economy." (Ibid) Another symbiosis between cultural policy and fiscal policy is found in 'Culture 2025''s promise that trade and investment policies from other departments will emphasise Ireland's creative reputation (Ibid., 14), but such alignments are not limited to economic strategies alone; analysis of the policy framework document demonstrates that a central, realising

feature of ‘Culture 2025’ is its reliance on the existing initiatives of, and collaborations with, other governmental departments and semi-state bodies.

One such department is the Department of Education. Indeed, a draft document for ‘Culture 2025’, ‘Éire Ildánach’, acknowledged that “public enjoyment of cultural activities is closely linked to education policy.” (Department of Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs, 2016, 6), and this linkage is further outlined in the final publication. ‘Culture 2025’ refers to the ‘Creative Youth Plan’ as within its sphere of considerations, a combined awareness-raising effort between the two departments as to “the importance of integrating the arts and creativity into education, not just as curriculum subjects but as resources for education and learning generally” (Department for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, 2020, 20) that was also under ‘Pillar One’ - ‘Enabling the Creative Potential of Every Child’ - of Creative Ireland’s own policy strategy (Ibid.). Creative Ireland - a five year programme established in 2017 under Leo Varadkar’s government to “much fanfare” (Linehan 2024) - refers to itself as an “all-of-government culture and wellbeing programme” (Creative Ireland 2024) that is also imbued with notions of participation and accessibility, centring itself around “creating pathways and opportunities for people and communities to unlock their creative potential” (Ibid.). The Creative Ireland Programme 2017-2022 is listed in ‘Culture 2025’ as the “primary implementation framework for the promotion and strengthening of culture and creativity throughout Ireland” (Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, 2020, 4), a prime example of the Department’s reliance on existing policy strategies. Similarly, the document states that “Arts policy, and contemporary arts policy in particular, will continue to be informed by the work of the Arts Council, and their strategy Making Great Art Work 2016-2025.” (Ibid., 5), and that the document’s policy approach to Irish arts and culture in an international context is informed by Culture Ireland’s ‘Global 2025’ (Ibid., 4). Additionally, ‘Culture 2025’ relies on the National Biodiversity Action Plan 2017-2021; Heritage Ireland 2030; Straitéis 20 Bliain don Ghaeilge 2010- 2030; the Audiovisual Action Plan; European Union policies such as its Creative Europe Strategy, and UNESCO cultural conventions.

Chapter 6: National Policy Assessment

6.1 Introduction

For proponents of a heightened governmental interest and involvement in culture and the arts, ostensibly 'Culture 2025' represents a significant step in the right direction. The policy document's rigorous emphasis on notions necessitated by Michael D. Higgins such as diversity, access, inclusion, and the intrinsic connection between a healthy culturesphere and a democratic society (Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, 2020, 2) is to be commended. Also to be praised is the due diligence that was evidently taken in terms of 'Culture 2025''s ideation and drafting, with the policy having been announced ten years prior to its official launch; the planning process initiated at a Royal Irish Academy colloquium with relevant stakeholders discussing a draft policy document in 2015; and followed by a series of nationwide workshops that garnered over six-hundred attendees (Hadley et al. 2020, 2), suggesting a broad and considered engagement with the cultural sector that sought genuine insight from its practitioners. However, issues and shortcomings remain when considering the policy framework's actuality; bearing in mind Hudson et al.'s four deduced contributors to policy failure, "overly optimistic expectations; implementation in dispersed governance; inadequate collaborative policymaking; and the vagaries of the political cycle" (Hudson et al., 2019), as well as locating additional contributors specific to the given policy document, this next section aims to outline *Culture 2025's* limitations, and in turn theorise a preferable policy model.

6.2 Rehashing

While marketed as the State's first proper cultural policy, much of 'Culture 2025' is composed of plans that predate it. Hadley et al. illustrate this tactic as being familiar to the government overseeing its implementation, referencing the 2018-2027 National Development Plan and the speculation that ensued following its release given its "marketing of a 116 billion euro investment […] that had previously been committed to projects and spun as new payments" (Magee, 2018, in Hadley et al., 2020, 10). One must question the legitimacy of any cohesion purported by a policy written in retrospect of its far-reaching range of sometimes disparate pre-existing strategies, contingent policies that were not necessarily subject to maintaining cohesion or dialogue with one another at the various times of their design. Through its expressed reliance on other, pre-existing

strategies, *Culture 2025* enables itself to express the Department's "key values" (Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, 2020, 6), "fundamental principles" (Ibid., 9), and *what* it hopes to achieve through the policy without having to actually discuss the mechanisms as to *how* it plans on achieving it. Treating 'Culture 2025' as a catch-all umbrella arguably lessens its potential impact and squanders the immeasurably promising opportunity to enact real progress, with Hadley et al. questioning "the extent to which such a policy approach seeks either to use pre-existing policy tools to develop a coherent overall vision, or to co-opt pre-existing measures into a framework which is more symbolic than strategic." (2020, 6)

Furthermore, among those pre-existing strategies are several that reach their terminus prior to the end of *Culture 2025's* course, the most pressing example of this being the Creative Ireland Programme 2017-2022, the "primary implementation framework for the promotion and strengthening of culture and creativity" (Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, 2020, 4). Despite the programme having been noted as being, "beneath all the PR woo […] a relatively modest series of educational and social initiatives" (Linehan 2024), its official non-existence at present is discrediting, a gaping hole in the umbrella of 'Culture 2025'. With the Creative Ireland Programme's strategy document having already expired some time ago, examination of their website reveals no suggestion of a replacement, nor does 'Culture 2025' offer any suggestion as to what it will turn to following 2022; has the 'strengthening of culture and creativity' simply been left adrift, to its own devices? Indeed, while Creative Ireland has inarguably maintained many of its operations, the only published policy-like document on its website relating to 2023 onwards is a 'Shared Island Initiative', a plan to "harness the full potential of the Good Friday Agreement to enhance cooperation" (Creative Ireland 2023) between Northern Ireland and the Republic. With the need for closer attention to the peace building capacities of a good cultural policy in the context of 'The Troubles' having been long-underlined by cultural actors and academics (Dowling 2008; Campbell & Jankowitz 2024; Bairner 2008; O'Kelly 2019; Durrer et al. 2021), it is a shame that this strategy is then, conversely, not featured in the Republic's primary cultural policy framework. Taken together, Hudson et al.'s third contributing factor to policy failure, "inadequate collaborative policymaking" (2019, 4), plays its part in the jumbled realities of *Culture 2025*.

6.3 Administrative Confusions

The 2017 Joint Committee on Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs recommended to the Oireachtas the "establishment of a Department of Culture by the end of the lifespan of *Culture 2025,* at the latest" (Joint Committee on Arts Heritage, Regional Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs, 2017, 32); while a general election might see this suggestion realised before the policy's end date, no sign of such a Department has yet materialised. In fact, since then - when the Department's name matched the sectors mandated to the Joint Committee - it has been named the 'Department of Culture, Heritage, and the Gaeltacht', and currently exists as the 'Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media'; this is not 'just semantics', but problematic for a couple of reasons. Firstly, Irish heritage, a key aspect of the policy document, is no longer the responsibility of the Department - which is why this study has devoted little time to discussing the passages in *Culture 2025* related to it - having been moved to the 'Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage'. So, what now? *Culture 2025* offers no suggestion as to any protocol in place should a major facet of the Department's overarching policy framework actually be transferred to a place beyond its official control. Furthermore, how does the removal of heritage from the Department's scope of influence or concern impact the cohesion so cherished in *Culture 2025*?

Similarly, tourism, sport, and media - although each catered to by their own separate policy strategies from within the Department, and thus perhaps representing a less pressing issue - benefit little from the cohesion offered under the Department's arts and culture policy framework. While hurling - a native sport - is listed by the Minister in the document's opening message as a part of Ireland's cultural tapestry (Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, 2020, 4); media is somewhat covered under the framework's Audiovisual Action Plan; and tourism is referenced in relation to the arts and culture's economic benefits, a closer consideration as to these sectors' overlap with cultural policy and the heightened capacity for symbiotic policy practicioning in accordance with these considerations was not feasible at the time of *Culture 2025's* launch. Point being as follows: how can a government Department create a dependable and indeed cohesive policy framework when the framework of the Department itself is, and has been, neither? It is perhaps in-part for this reason that *Culture 2025* puts forward a cross-governmental approach.

While *'Culture 2025'* positions its own Department as that with the primary responsibility for the its delivery, the policy document states that "culture and creativity are not just the responsibility of one Government Department" (Ibid., 3); this approach has historically struggled to stand up when put in

practice. While O'Regan has argued more generally that the scattering of cultural policy responsibilities across governments can result in "a series of developments which substantially wrest control of cultural policy from cultural policy institutions and their agendas to the instruments and agendas of other bodies and frameworks" (2022, 22), Whelan et al. have argued that the Irish Government's administrative structure in particular "is not well suited to the complexity of cross-departmental problematics" (2004 in Hadley et al. 2020, 6), in-part due to the relentless swapping, merging and reconfiguring of department mandates following each election cycle . As was mentioned, Hudson et al. have listed "the vagaries of the political cycle" (2019, 4) amongst the contributing factors to policy failure; should this be the case, Ireland's political system is chronically predisposed to underperformance when challenged with an "all of Government approach" (Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, 2020, 3). This all-encompassing agenda - requiring input from the DTCAGSM; the Department of Education; the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage; and the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment - is a tall order from *Culture 2025*, meeting the criteria of another two factors of policy failure, "overly optimistic expectations; implementation in dispersed governance" (Hudson et al., 2019, 4). Hadley et al. express a wariness towards the document's assertion that culture and the so loosely defined notion of 'creativity' "are integral to all aspects of Irish life" (Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, 2020, 3) and governance, lamenting that

> "From the politics of identity, to soft power and hotel bed nights via video games and break dancing, this articulation of "our culture" (p2) appears both all-consuming and avowedly instrumental. The fear then is that Culture 2025, through its broad incorporation of various aspects (language, arts, heritage and creative industries), struggles to say anything of significance about the promotion of culture in Ireland." (2020, 10)

Added to this list of external crutches on which the Department relies to deliver *Culture 2025* is a number of semi-state bodies; herein—while rooted in the same foundational problematic —emerges additional layers of adverse complication.

Culture 2025 relies extensively on various semi-state bodies in terms of both their own strategies and their operations, an amalgamation of actors that Hadley et al. see as "a disparate grouping with oftentimes very different goals" (Ibid., 6). The Arts Council's *Making Great Art Work 2016-2025* strategy is referred to as the primary point of reference for the Department's approach to the arts (Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, 2020, 5), framing *Making Great Art Work* as a

bona fide government policy when it simply is not, and nor should it be were the government to adhere to its own arm's length principle. Similarly, Radió Teilifís Éireann - Ireland's semi-state, public service broadcaster - is listed among the Government's means of "Supporting creative practice and cultural participation" (Ibid., 17). While RTÉ is legally obliged to consider "new opportunities for talent in music, drama and entertainment and in particular in respect of Irish culture" (Government of Ireland 2009, 74) under the Broadcasting Act, 2009, the same legislation enshrines a great deal of editorial independence (Ibid., 104), assuring impartial coverage that is free from political interference. Enlisting Ireland's national broadcaster - which has no political authority - as a vehicle through which the Government can reach specific policy goals is a slippery slope that can thus represent a conflict of interest, blurring the lines between RTÉ existing as a state-subsidised public service and it representing a de facto arm of the state, posing a threat to the independence granted to RTÉ in the pursuit of its own cultural programming. This departure from a policy bandwidth delineated by legislation and rules-based underpinnings, that it's architects strictly consider and adhere to throughout its elaboration, is not atypical within *Culture 2025*. Indeed, the legislative and regulatory standing of *Culture 2025* is somewhat scant; this can have considerable impacts on its legitimacy as a policy framework overall.

6.4 Legislation and Legitimacy

The Joint Committee on Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs warned the Department that "a policy without legislation is discretionary" (Joint Committee on Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs, 2017, 13); to what extent *Culture 2025* followed this advice is debatable. While it does feature legislation in as far as it incorporates the Arts Act, 2003, and the Heritage Act, 1995 to establish working definitions, *Culture 2025* lacks any real legislative framework to ground it - a significant shortcoming. Without any binding legal mechanisms, *Culture 2025* is technically unenforceable and, as such, "discretionary" (Ibid.) indeed. This is particularly problematic given that the policy is composed of a cross-governmental and cross-sectoral framework that includes dozens of actors. In the absence of legislative authority that ensures these actors' input or commitment to such, their roles and resources remain precariously untethered. Additionally, due to this absence of legal backing, the Department itself is legally answerable to no one, and faces little pressure in terms of providing accountability for *Culture 2025's* proper implementation or oversight in any official capacity. With this absence of any real legislation supporting the policy framework, *Culture 2025's* foundational raison d'être, fostering

cohesion, can really only be *hoped for* by the Department, as opposed to assured. Overall, the weak legislative underpinning of *Culture 2025* undermines its legitimacy, casting doubt on the document's overall credibility as a policy framework that means business. Such concerns are only further exacerbated by the Department's use of vast or vague terminology, and unsupported statements.

Indeed, while the Arts Act, 2003, and the Heritage Act, 1995 are employed to define the arts and heritage respectively, culture - in Ireland's cultural policy framework, mind you - is not offered the same legislative validity, despite it existing as the overarching object. Indeed, culture is defined by the Department as an amalgamation of 'the arts' as outlined in the 2003 Act; 'heritage' as defined by the 1995 Act as well as

> "Museums, archives and public cultural institutions. Library services and integrated cultural services delivered by local authorities. Built and natural heritage, including architecture, archaeology, biodiversity and landscapes. Intangible (or 'living') cultural heritage, including the Irish language, sport, customs and traditions. Cultural diversity and languages which have become part of Irish life in more recent years" (Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht , 2020,8)

; and lastly 'creativity' and 'the creative industries' as outlined by The Creative Ireland Programme and the Department itself, and already outlined in this research. Hadley et al. take issue with this all-encompassing definition in that it was derived from the Department Minister's portfolio which was, in turn, "derived from political expediency." (Hadley et al. 2020, 10) While it must be acknowledged that attempting to objectively define a term as fundamentally contested as culture would be a fruitless endeavour, nor is it any government's right or responsibility to do so, the "broad church" (Ibid.) that the Department's chosen working definition must cater to results in, they argue, "a document that does little to reflect on the future for Irish culture or offer any tangible supports for its development" (Ibid.). These delegitimising failings can be contributed not only to the expansive definition for culture offered, but the often empty and baseless rhetoric employed throughout the document in relation to some of its constituent parts, most specifically 'the creative industries' and 'creativity'.

For instance, *Culture 2025* asserts that "Culture and creativity are inextricably linked: artists, designers and creative practitioners across a range of disciplines are central to the evolution of a culture of creativity" (Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, 2020, 8) - while the

inclusion of a colon might imply a qualification or clarification of its preceding statement, what follows is a flowery non-explanation that leaves the reader with more questions that answers; for starters, what actually constitutes 'a culture of creativity'? To this, *Culture 2025* offers no insight. Indeed, *Culture 2025's* various assertions surrounding 'culture and creativity' - including their relevance to all government departments and their seemingly inexplicable yet irrevocable connection - remain unarticulated in any meaningful way. It is important to question why that is. If ambiguity allows for greater flexibility, who is it that does the bending and who or what are they bending to? Does the outcome of such an inquiry depend on who's asking? What is certain is that this indiscriminate interchanging of 'culture' and 'creativity' is particularly worrisome when considered within the context of *Culture 2025's* economic dimensions, due to their divergent and sometimes unrelated ramifications and consequences - ramifications and consequences that appear merely half-considered, and superficially addressed by *Culture 2025*.

6.5 Creativity and its Industries

Culture 2025, informed by the Creative Ireland Programme, defines creativity as "a set of innate abilities and learned skills: the capacity of individuals and organisations to transcend accepted ideas and norms and by drawing on imagination to create new ideas that bring additional value to human activity." (Ibid.) While this definition of creativity is certainly applicable to those working in the Irish arts and culture sectors, as well as its creative industries, the same could be said for any sector. Moreover, the presence of creativity within the arts, cultural, and creative industries arguably goes without saying; so why is it said? One potential reason is that it's inclusion as a central tenet better facilitates the Department's aspirations for an all of government approach due to its fluid and easily applicable nature. Another is that "The promotion of creativity frees cultural policy-makers from the increasingly burdensome notion of culture, which is inherently value-driven and has become problematic in a postmodern world." (Slaby 2011, 90) While the conceptually nebulous nature of 'culture' renders its policy-making process inescapably wrought with epistemological dilemmas, substituting it with 'creativity' for the sake of convenience runs the risk of policy misconstruing or co-optation by various stakeholders with divergent interests, or inadvertently diluting the "intrinsic value of culture" (Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, 2020, 6) that *Culture 2025* recognises as a core tenet. However, this second potential reason gives rise to a third, and most plausible rationale; Ireland - in line with much of Western Europe - is actively engaging in a what Flew dubs as a 'software approach' of cultural

policymaking, a strategy that "aims to create cultural infrastructure and other environmental factors to promote a creative economy." (Flew 2006, 243) Thus, with this in mind, *Culture 2025's* treatment of the 'creative industries' emerges as a focal point in terms of assessing its economic strategy.

Culture 2025 defines 'the creative industries' as "industries and occupations which focus on creativity as a means to deliver commercial success, export growth and resilient employment for Ireland." (Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, 2020, 7) The broad scope offered by this definition has arguably been of benefit to Ireland's audiovisual industries, who have historically been sidelined by the government's once-narrower perspective of what constitutes culture and the arts, despite workers in the sector certainly operating amongst and alongside arts practitioners. The audiovisual industry has instead been typically evaluated solely on its enterprise-related successes (Hadley et al. 2020, 8); its inclusion in *Culture 2025* - most notably under its Creative Ireland-led Audiovisual Action Plan - has the potential to provide the sector with more considered, relevant, and targeted supports and assessments. On the other hand, to quote Slaby's criticism from almost a decade prior to the release of *Culture 2025*, "the boundaries of the arts and cultural sector supported by the state have been blurred to extend to forms of expression devoid of any artistic or cultural intentionality" (2011, 87). In the case of *Culture 2025*, the inclusion of the "IT, software and computer services" (Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, 2020, 8) sectors, or those of product and industrial design appear naturally incongruous to a policy framework centred around culture, heritage, and the arts, irrespective of the arguments that could be made in relation to a digitalising culture, or indeed the artistry behind iconic products and their manufacturing. Indeed, Slaby's notion of "artistic or cultural intentionality" (Ibid.) seems a more fitting criterion; if sectors that hone in on their creativity for commercial gain have no conscious intent of impacting a cultural landscape, of what real relevance is a 'discretionary' cultural policy framework to them? And conversely, what novel insight or oversight can the Department offer these industries through policymaking? According to *Culture 2025*, very little. While the document makes a number of sweeping statements as to the "symbiotic relationship" (Ibid., 14) between traditional understandings of funded culture and 'commercial culture', or the "need to increase access to and participation in the arts, to boost our creative industries" (Ibid., 16), in terms of supporting this supposed symbiosis or the creative industries more generally, *Culture 2025* "lacks any real strategic intent." (Hadley et al. 2020, 10) beyond this expressed reliance on the public's participation to boost creative industries that it has taken upon itself to oversee, and again, pre-existing strategies and the

work of other departments. A policy document that praises the economic benefits of creativity without addressing the precarious working conditions facing many people in the cultural sector is something that "we ought to be somewhat wary of" (Rush 2019, 14).

6.6 Floridian Urban Regeneration

All though never stated explicitly, *Culture 2025* incorporates a perspective reminiscent of pop sociologist Richard Florida's seminal 'Creative Class Theory', as was mentioned previously. Florida's conception of the 'Creative Class' - eccentrics such as, he explained, "gays and rock bands" (2002, 1) that value difference - work in industries ranging from "technology to entertainment, journalism to finance, high-end manufacturing to the arts" (Ibid., 6), and their presence in a given region can determine its success; "places that succeed in attracting and retaining creative class people prosper; those that fail don't." (Ibid., 7) As the *Creative Ireland* programme was, *Culture 2025* was arguably informed by this theory given its reference to those with "creative skills" (Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, 2020, 10) as being attractive to companies considering relocation, and that their existence in said area can contribute to "a vibrant cultural environment [that] is important in attracting foreign direct investment." (Ibid.) While discourse surrounding the instrumentalisation of the arts and cultural policy for city branding and urban regeneration was not prompted by The Creative Class Theory, and has instead been prevalent since the late twentieth century (García 2004, 314), Florida's particular contribution remains highly controversial, with the sociologist having been vilified as "the ultimate champion of gentrification" (Wainwright 2017) by opposers who have largely debunked the theory.

While Florida has been celebrated for his theory's supposed capacity to reinvigorate once-dwindling cities (Ibid.) when enacted, critics of this approach have highlighted Florida's failure to recognise his subjects' attainment of college degrees as being the main incentivising factor to corporate investment in an area as opposed to their sexual orientation or culture vulturism (Slaby 2011, 81). Critics have also highlighted his "failure to engage with class implications, its advocacy for gentrification processes" (Rush 2019, 14), and his resultant "fuelling of urban inequality" (Wainwright 2017). Indeed, Slaby remarks on Florida's theory as being "informed by consultancy and with an urban-regeneration agenda in mind" (2011, 81) as opposed to a real understanding of those in any way involved in culture and the arts. In fact, the 2017 Joint Committee on Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs weighed in on the matter, arguing that "Using arts,

culture and heritage to drive regeneration comes with the caveat that it will drive up property prices and can displace local populations." (2017, 27) However, the resulting *Culture 2025* essentially purports the opposite, stating that "In urban areas, the development of vibrant cultural spaces can help reverse physical neglect and address social inequity." (Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, 2020, 10) The Department's most blatant attempt at this - Limerick's appointment as Ireland's first (and only) National City of Culture in 2014 - was also met with mixed opinions, and under Jimmy Deenihan's auspices the Department failed massively in terms of its support, ultimately (McGee 2014).

6.6.1 Limerick City of Culture 2014

A decision largely inspired by Glasgow's transformative success as the EU's Capital of Culture in 1990 (García 2004, 320), 'Limerick 2014' was a typical attempt at socioeconomic recovery through use of the arts. Limerick, Ireland's third largest urban area is "characterised by sharp spatial contrasts in levels of socio-economic wellbeing" (McCafferty 2011, 4), and is host to more deprived areas than any other Irish municipality (EY-DKM Economic Advisory Services, 2018, 6). Limerick was deeply affected by the Irish economic crash, worsened still by the fact that it "never really felt the boom as there was much economic stagnation during that period." (McGrory 2022, 84) Violence and drug misuse (Fitzgerald 2007, 5) have left their imprint on the city and people's perceptions of it, not only amongst residents themselves but national and even international observers, with *The Guardian* having published an article about the city headlined as *Hard times in Stab City* (2007)[10] at the height of 'The Limerick Feud' in 2007. While Niamh Brown, curator of Limerick's Ormston House arts centre, believed that 'Limerick 2014' "greatly impacted" (Brown 2022 in McGrory 2022, 87) the city, she also admitted that "some people may not agree with it or feel the same way" (Ibid). In the run up to its launch, former Limerick Theatre School director Richie Ryan argued that Limerick's residents felt "disenfranchised" (Ryan 2014 in Jacques 2014) from the festival's ethos and organisation, a sentiment also discovered during this research's examination of a Limerick 'thread' on what was then Ireland's primary online forum, boards.ie. One commentator lamented the festival's organisation as "Incompetent Irish political gombeenism [loosely meaning foolishness] part 9653 […] So what could have been a good news story and a

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[10] Note: Forbes Magazine used a similar headline for an article about Limerick in 2021, which was removed following backlash and (in Forbes' words) its failure to meet 'editorial standards'. See more: https://www.independent.ie/irish-news/news/forbes-magazine-says-stab-city-limerick-article-failed-to-meeteditorial-standards-40299127.html.

boost for the region has been sullied by incompetence, mismanagement and shleeveenism[11]. Business as usual." (Boards 2014), with another taking offence to the designation, criticising the festival's approach of suggesting to locals that they had "been awarded a prize as opposed to having been identified as uncultured yobbos.[12]" (Ibid.) One would imagine that this ill-feeling amongst some locals was only heightened after it was revealed that Chief Executive Officer for the festival Patricia Ryan asked a teenage music group from Moyross - one of the city's most deprived regions - to change lyrics to a rap they had composed. In correspondence with 'The Moyross Youth Crew' about the lyrics, which were "The city's looking rough when you're walking on the bridge; It's the city where we're tough, there's no place you'd rather live" (The Moyross Youth Crew 2013 in Hades 2014) Ryan stated that "it's really not the image we want to portray" (Ryan 2014, in Ibid). But if not their image, whose?

Indeed, the discontent voiced by locals and the evident disconnect between the community and the event intended to celebrate them can be attributed to a "top-down approach to cultural representation" (García 2004, 322), and what Balibrea has described as the "'totalling and coherent representation/meaning of the city' that is 'hegemonically constructed … for the foreign viewer'" (2001, 189-199 in Ibid.), thus risking the "alienation and displacement of the local citizen." (Ibid.) Nonetheless - and despite the original Artistic Director resigning from the programme just days into the year-long event due to a breakdown in communications with CEO Patricia Ryan (Bohan 2014) - Limerick's stab at the Department's National City of Culture initiative is largely remembered as a good thing for the city and it's people. Crawley, in his critical take of the festival, said that the fallout "rallied the artists and citizens of Limerick to reclaim their event" (Crawley 2014), touting a programme that "asked you to recognise Limerick's history, the good and bad of its reality, yet to look at the city in new ways." (Ibid.), and in response to a public survey conducted by the Government's Economic & Evaluation Service as part the Department's post-festival evaluation, 82.1% of respondents said that "they would speak highly of the year" (Department of Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs, 2016, 93). The relevance of such outcomes, as well as the overall planning and praxis of 'Limerick 2014' to *Culture 2025* is multifaceted; this research posits the most pertinent takeaways as being those related to the issues of participation and community engagement.

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11 Meaning untrustworthiness.

12 Meaning aggressive, unruly people.

Certainly, Limerick 2014 highlighted the essentiality of grounding place-specific policy initiatives within local contexts, with top-down frameworks of engagement that appear imposed as opposed to participatory running the risk of alienating local communities. *Culture 2025* does acknowledge that "Cultural and creative activities can enhance that sense of place and contribute to the well-being of *local* communities" (Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, 2020, 10), and its aforementioned inclusion of a vasty array of actors for its implementation could be argued as facilitating a bottom-up policy enactment that offers on-the-ground, regionalised actors room to manoeuvre within its framework and create better-tailored, place-specific instances of its delivery. However, strategic means of achieving policy cohesion on a local level are absent in the policy document, with no reference to any consideration of or collaboration with city and county councils, who indeed have their own 'arts offices', which in turn have their own published cultural strategies. Similarly, *Culture 2025* makes reference to the capacity for culturally vibrant communities to alleviate social inequality, helping to "reconnect those who feel disenfranchised." (Ibid.); the case of Limerick 2014 offered enlightening insight as to best practice in approaching such an issue. Indeed, the festival illustrated that success in this endeavour hinges not only on its mere existence, or its earnest hopes of urban reinvention, but on ensuring that its relevant community can actually participate in its realisation. Again, albeit a noble policy aspiration, *Culture 2025* falls short in elaborating how it or any of its relevant actors can meaningfully safeguard its governing principle, the belief that "everyone has the right to participate in the cultural and creative life of the nation." (Ibid., 2) This in turn, brings us to the last economic consideration in this research's analysis of *Culture 2025*, and indeed its last consideration entirely: access and autonomy through Irish cultural policy.

6.7 Access and Autonomy

Culture 2025 asserts that "everyone has the right to participate in the cultural and creative life of the nation" (Department, of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, 2020, 2), and that this is one of its governing principles. While the values of access and participation imbued in the policy framework's ethos are welcomed, this stance is inherently complicated by the strategy's expressed reliance on the private sector - a mechanism largely beyond the government's control - to supplement the arts and cultural landscape financially, and discounted by the Department's own elaboration of its public funding allocation. Beginning with this latter point, *Culture 2025* states its

reliance on the sub-policy *Investing in Our Culture, Language and Heritage 2018-2027* to meet its "commitments to improve funding structures" (Ibid., 4). Investigation of this strategy document reveals it to be centred around a declaration of indicative capital funding allocations as opposed to any strategy or suggestion surrounding the systemic reform of funding mechanisms that *Culture 2025* implies it to be through its expressed reason for dependence. *Investing in Our Culture, Language and Heritage 2018-2027*, while representing "a major step-change in the State's approach to cultural investment" (Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, 2018, 9), falls short in terms of equitable accessibility due to the massive regional disparities in funding that it details. Overall, the Culture strand of the strategy is awarded a commitment of €725 million in public funding over a ten year period, to be distributed as follows:

- Investment in National Cultural Institutions - €460m
- Investment in local arts and culture infrastructure nationwide - €40m
- Investment in the digitisation of our National Collections - €10m
- Investment in Media and Audio Visual Industry - €200m
- Galway European Capital of Culture - €15m (due to Covid-19, this festival never went ahead).

(Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, 2018, 18)

With the first three designations being the most relevant to the issue of public access - as well *Galway 2020* were it to have happened, and it didn't - let us preface this discussion by acknowledging the notable improvements in nationwide accessibility allowed by the investment in digitalising Ireland's National Collections, including its censuses and church records. Beyond this improvement, however, *Investing in Our Culture, Language and Heritage 2018-2027* offers little in terms of its funding allocation's capacity to broaden or deepen public participation. Indeed, while €460m is earmarked for National Cultural Institutions, only one of those institutions exists outside of the capital: the Crawford Gallery in Ireland's second city, Cork, promised €22m (Ibid., 21) in capital funds. In stark contrast, 'Investment in local arts and culture infrastructure nationwide' amounts to only €40m, and is not intended on contributing to new initiatives, but allocated to "secure existing investment" (Ibid., 32) and "ensure a regional balance" (Ibid.). In the Republic of Ireland, there are twenty-six counties, and €40m amounts to just over €150,000 per-county, per-year; given the historically under-resourced cultural climate of regions beyond the capital - indeed, only two other counties are home to a National Cultural Institution - such a figure seems insufficient in fostering heightened public access in more rural and regional communities, particularly given the

strategy's emphasis on safeguarding current investments as opposed to expanding its funding objectives to broaden access by financing new opportunities. In its current state, the Department's cultural funding strategy offers little support in lessening obstacles to arts participation for demographics with limited arts and cultural access, running the risk of private investment trends compounding these disparities that *Culture 2025* leaves unresolved.

Centring a commitment to heightened cultural accessibility within a policy framework that simultaneously acknowledges its Department's desire to explore more rigorous funding partnerships with the private sector - and with that the quasi-relinquishment of control as to who, what, or where will benefit from cultural investment - is paradoxical. This is not to suggest that a semi-privatised cultural funding mechanism is an inherently bad thing, merely that in the context of accessible public participation, a reliance on the private sector without a clear roadmap as to the direction of its cashflow raises concerns about the extent to which the government can guarantee universal access to the arts, running the risk of investment aligning with business interests over cultural equity. Given that *Culture 2025's* primary reference point for funding planning and praxis - *Investing in our Culture, Language and Heritage 2018*-2027 - makes no reference to private investment, such a roadmap appears yet unchartered. Given the existing geographical disparities in Ireland's cultural landscape, an over-dependence on private investment risks deepening these imbalances in resource allocation if corporate bodies' funding patterns favour the cultural climate of regions boasting promising economic returns, or pre-existing marketability. As was mentioned, *Culture 2025* itself acknowledges that "A vibrant cultural environment is important in attracting foreign direct investment" (Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, 2020, 10); if the entities that the Department aims to attract also have a significant hand to play in where is most attractive, already disadvantaged regions and their communities are at risk of a deepened divide in terms of cultural access, and the ostracisation or involuntary obsolescence of cultural praxis that does not serve increasingly cosmopolitan cultural market forces.

This tension is compounded, and veers into discussions of autonomy, by *Culture 2025's* overarching neoliberal underpinnings that enmesh Ireland's culturescape with its broader politico-economy. The language employed in the policy document resembles corporate jargon, with culture and the arts illustrated along the lines of "both import and export, production and consumption, all the flows of variegated capital that might be identified by a doggedly nationalistic cultural policy seen through a neoliberal econometric mindset." (Hadley et al. 2020, 11) One concern - long expressed by critics

(O'Callaghan 2012) - is that a policy which evaluates culture and the arts through use of economic metrics "at the cost of saying something meaningful about supporting culture itself" (Hadley et al. 2020, 10) can strip cultural practitioners of their artistic freedoms of expression by evaluating their worth against who or what it can cater to under the full rigours of the free market. Peillon has argued that an approach to cultural policy synonymous with economic advancement cannot provide Irish artists and arts workers who answer to this arrangement with "a basis for the critique of society." (2002, 47) for fear of biting the hand that funds them. In the same vein, *Culture 2025* wagers the arts as a type of soft power in the global context, most notably in its reference to harnessing Ireland's cultural connection with its diaspora to establish "relationships of extraordinary power" (Department of Culture, Heritage and there Gaeltacht, 2020, 12), and its intended use of culture as a means of "strengthening Ireland's global reputation" (Ibid., 13). While the promotion of Irish culture on the global stage is arguably something to be promoted, its explicit instrumentalisation as a tool for diplomacy risks challenging the arts' historic role as an oppositional force of institutional critique, neutralising its potency as a medium to question hegemonic power structures. Indeed, such export-oriented branding practices that signal a camp of policy beneficiaries expanded to include international observers and external investors, raise questions about the role of the artist in *Culture 2025*, and indeed the role of the arts in wider society. *Culture 2025* offers little in terms of answers, instead reaffirming the Department's belief in "the right of people to access, participate in and shape our culture" (Ibid., 10) without acknowledging how mechanisms it promotes as methods can, in fact, undermine the autonomy of said communities cultural offerings and experience.

Taken together, Hadley et al. provide conclusive food for thought in consideration of the paradoxes surrounding access and autonomy under *Culture 2025*;

> "What Culture 2025 perhaps wants to say – but doesn't – is that culture and creativity can (at best, and only to a small degree) ameliorate the socially eviscerating effects of late-stage capitalism. All the relevant buzzwords of a cultural policy forged in the heat of a neoliberal mindset are present and correct – the document will build "community cohesion", leading to more "resilient and sustainable communities" with improved "wellbeing"- without the acknowledgment that the need for such remedies is a by-product of policy documents in other areas of government." (2020, 11)

Based off of this assessment's findings, as it stands *Culture 2025* serves only to perpetuate the troubles that befall Ireland's cultural policy-scape.

Chapter 7: Conclusions

"On the one hand Ireland seems too connected to too many conflicting loyalties of place and on the other seems to melt away into the sea, as if the coastline that surrounds the country was merely a thin membrane that lets in all the flotsam and jetsam of consumer culture and lets out a constant flow of people" - Fintan O'Toole.

'The Little Green Fields' (1946-1950)
Gerard Dillon

And so, what is there to say? Having explored the Irish state's relationship with its cultural landscape, tracing and mapping it's contours from its inception as a free state to its present day framework, this research has highlighted three conclusive arguments. The first is rooted in history, the second reflects contemporary realities, and the third addresses a persistent thematic issue that, through its insidious adaptability, has withstood the test of time.

The first argument has been corroborated at countless points throughout this research and is best-synopsised by the Arts Council's Chairman, Kevin Rafter; "The state has for most of its existence failed the arts." (2022, 208) Indeed, with the relationship between the two having been marred by decades-long systematic neglect, misconstrual, and misappropriation, the Irish government has historically estranged itself from the cultural landscape home to those it represents. How the state

has historically neglected the arts can be traced back to its earliest days: the first governments' disinterest in approaching their support or policymaking, and continuous under-appreciation of Thomas Bodkin, the Free State's lone advocate for policy development in a decades-long empty field. By the fifties and the first semblances of progression - namely the Arts Act and the inauguration of the Arts Council - An Chomhairle Ealaíon was still operating with limited means and overseen by volunteers still required to justify their existence as such in the face of the persistent attitudes that considered their sector as dark and strange." (Little in Ibid, 65) With the ascension of Seán Lemass to the Taoiseach's office bringing with it the first glimpses of prosperity, culture and the arts were still relegated to the periphery of governmental concerns, possessing no benefits to the economic progress, garnering no benefits from the economic progress. Meanwhile the Arts Council itself - albeit semi-state, but semi-**state** nonetheless - was itself also neglectful of the nation's cultural production in as far as it had little interest in supporting cultural events outside of the capital, and the events it did support were largely of a of a "hand-to-mouth, cheque-writing, nature without policy or permanency." (Acton in Kennedy 1990,97) Furthermore, the makeup of the council under Fr. O'Sullivan was neglectful of the arts sector in as far as it featured but one practicing artist on its board, and was ignorant towards supporting or platforming emerging Irish artistry. It was, indeed, only artists themselves, most particularly the Project Arts Centre collective that instigated any critique or rectification of this marginalisation. *Rosc '67*, while being a hugely successful event in terms of heightening public interest in and access to the arts, also neglected to include Irish artists, platforming instead artists aligned with the narrow Paris-London-New York art axis.

Even under Haughey, considered as Ireland's Taoiseach most personally invested in culture and the arts, the field was still subject to "unsophisticated" (Rafter 2022, 109) and sporadic support that contributed to no cohesive strategy or structure, so much so that by 1983 39% of the Irish population were entirely unaware of their own cultural offerings (Slaby 2011, 83). Indeed, it was only in 1993 that an actual department was so-belatedly devoted to culture and the arts' structural funding and support. And yet still - as evidenced most in 2008 - economic downturn has seen cultural expenditure plummet; 10% in 2008; 26% in 2013, the most critical advancements made in cultural strategising undone (Ibid., 77-83). Furthering this, the state neglected the cultural sector during the recession in as far as Jimmy Deenihan's Department relinquished their mandated responsibilities to the private sector, entrusting them to cover what had been 15% of the department's funding budget (Ibid. 87). This "sorry history" (Rafter 2022, 202) is a major

shortcoming on the part of a government overseeing populace whose sense of identity and rationale as a demos has long been so tied to cultural contexts.

Regarding the issue of misconstrual, Irish artists and cultural practitioners have historically faced ostracisation and stigmatisation at the hands of the state and its misconstruing of the values and purposes of their efforts. Indeed, the establishment of the Irish Free State instigated a widespread conceptual distaste towards the arts that conflated them with imperial power; rather than adopting an official appreciation for indigenous arts practices, the Irish state instead allowed The Catholic Church to dictate the nation's cultural proclivities in a manner that deemed creative expression a dangerous and corrupting sacrilegious force. The censorship regime which resulted denied the nation access to literary works from James Joyce, Seán O'Casey, Edna O'Brien, Frank O'Connor, visual art from Harry Clarke, Mainie Jellett, and countless other modernist visual artists, works now celebrated as key contributors to independent Ireland's cultural canon. The alienation that artists experienced at the hands of this state-sanctioned cultural suppression created a camp of "embittered rebels" (Kennedy 1990, 13) that set productive relationships between the state and its cultural climate back decades. If not blasphemous or elitist, the misconceptions that governmental support for the arts was an ill-afforded luxury not worth considering, or that artists engaged in a frivolity not worth taking seriously represent historic failings of the state to properly construe the values of culture to its society. Debates prior to the establishment of the Arts Council encapsulates this misapprehension, with one Seanad member in opposition deriding the efforts of artists, lamenting that "I wish that we had not any modern art; they are not paintings. If anything at all, they are a puzzle." While such ideological disdain for the arts and its custodians may have softened with time, by the nineties the cultural sector was again subject to official misperceptions, now "an obstacle to economic development" (Peillon 2002, 40). In turn, Irish culture during the Celtic Tiger grew to be misperceived as merely that of consumerism, rendering a major identity crisis post-boom due to its loss of any real cultural outlook, as illustrated by O'Toole (2010). And even still, despite having been seen only yesteryear as a hindrance to the Republic's efforts at achieving economic hyper-success there was suddenly "a major onus on the arts to repair the damage" (Deenihan 2011, in Wallace 2011) of 2008 caused by corrupt statesmen, financiers, property developers, the list goes on; nowhere does it include artists.

In terms of misappropriation, here too exists a history as long as that of the state itself. Firstly, for decades the Irish state allowed for The Catholic Church to essentially dictate the country's cultural

experience, misappropriating the nation's culture climate as a means to ensure the continuation of its own hold over the populace, so much so that the church was Ireland's primary cultural purveyor. The Arts Council - indeed, when it's positions were largely filled by clergymen and politicians - has also been criticised for its historic misappropriation of the arts as a means to personal ends and the securing of vested interests, putting "their money on the winning horse" (O'Briain in Kennedy, 1990, 102) as a means to turn profit as opposed to support the sector democratically, and indeed its use of "public money as an instrument of private resentment" (Butler in Ibid., 76). There is, however, perhaps no better example of the misappropriation of Irish culture by the Irish political establishment than that displayed by Charles Haughey, and no better critic of this display than Fintan O'Toole.

O'Toole has slated Haughey's interest in his people's culture as merely an attempt to garner "a touch of class and an air of mystery" (2007). While Haughey would publicly preach that "the implementation of an enlightened comprehensive policy for the arts with adequate financial provision enshrined in it is an essential part […] of modern progressive government" (Haughey, 1973 in Kennedy 1990, 105), O'Toole reminds us that "grand gestures and photo opportunities were always more important to Haughey than actual delivery" (2007). In what Rafter has dubbed as the "fusing of the arts, cronyism and political vanity" (2022, 113), Haughey habitually misappropriated the arts to achieve his own political ends. Through the misappropriation of artists and their works, Haughey sought the legitimising veneer of elysian cultural value for the dubious capital project that was Knock Airport; Haughey claimed ghostwritten poetry and prose as his own works; Haughey misappropriated his own discreet and systemically incoherent promises and offerings of once-off cheques to actors in the arts and culture sector as part of a "self serving culture policy" (Linehan 2024) that was perhaps an attempt to politically sway a demographic typically opposed to the viciously capitalistic policy decisions that he was overseeing in other sectors, as well as - of course - to consolidate his stance as a "medici for the arts" (Rafter, 2022, 111).

Post-Haughey, the misappropriation of Ireland's cultural offerings merely changed its face. The Celtic Tiger saw Fianna Fáil embark on the "Disneyfication" (Patterson, 2020) of the Ireland's artistic landscape, promoting highly sanitised and at times cliché examples of Irish culture with a foreign consumer in mind as opposed to a local audience. Similarly, the recession era again saw Ireland's culture misappropriated by the government as an economic instrument of the state supposed to contribute to the national brand of 'Ireland Inc.' Indecon's government-commissioned

report, the transformative *Assessment of Economic Impact of the Arts* in Ireland furthered this notion by misappropriating the nation's culture as a tool to bolster other sectors. It was from this report that "the creative industries" (Indecon, 2009, 86) were formally introduced within governmental cultural policy discourses, hence opening up Ireland's culture and the arts to another gross misappropriation: their misuse as a soft facilitator for multinational corporatism and neoliberal profit-seeking.

While not detracting from the argument that the Irish state continuously failed the arts in Ireland for most of its history, before considering a second concluding argument it is worth noting that there are some definite exceptions to this bleak history. For example, in the 1920's - an era wherein the arts were largely shunned - the Irish government willingly went where no Anglophone nation had gone before through its decision to provide the Abbey Theatre with a grant-in aid, and despite the fierce censorship that shrouded Ireland in the 1930's, *Bunreacht na hÉireann* did make reference to the protection of cultural rights. It also must be stated that Haughey massively improved Irish artists' working and living conditions following the instalment of his novel artist surtax exemption scheme under the Finance Act of 1969, a scheme that was the first of its kind globally. Regarding the Arts Council, Colm Ó Briain's term as its director was of huge benefit to the public, underpinning the organisation with a new ethos that championed and facilitated widespread access and community participation. Similarly, another crucial advocate and needle mover is President Michael D. Higgins. During his tenure as the Minister for Arts and Culture, Higgins lobbied for a cultural policy that was proactive in terms of its capacity to lessen inequality and social marginalisation, a unique voice in the national official discourse in as far as he insisted that "the cultural space was wider than the economic space" (Higgins in Rafter 2022, 195). Indeed, this research has deduced that Higgins, along with Thomas Bodkin, Colm O'Briain, and current Minister Catherine Martin, have been - at least in the context of this study - the most influential figures in driving positive change at this strange intersection of state and culture. Their contributions to the field have advanced the relationship between between the Irish state and its cultural landscape to its present form, which - and this constitutes this dissertation's second concluding argument - is not a failure as it was historically. While still strained and wildly problematic in some respects, the Irish government now plays an active role in the protection and promotion of its people's cultural capacities, officially recognising the 'intrinsic value' of culture. Whether this increased government involvement in the arts is something to be celebrated is debatable; its history thus far has been one of mishap and misfortune, who is to say things are to improve? This research posits that

contemporary Irish arts policy, while fraught with contradiction and dilemmas, is itself testimony to improvement.

Today, the Irish government's efforts concerning culture are more rigorous and expansive than at any point in it's history. This study concludes that the state's contemporary improvements in facilitating the betterment of its people's cultural landscape is most evident in its engagement with the European Union's cultural policy framework, its post-Covid commitments to financially supporting the sector, and the newfound emergence of its own national cultural policy framework. Firstly, the Irish state's cooperation with the European Union's cultural policy framework, most particularly its *Creative Europe* programme, is of benefit to the nation's cultural landscape and practitioners for several reasons, the obvious being increased access to funding. For the period of 2021 until 2027, €2.4 billion is available through the programme to both public and private entities, with Limerick City and County Council itself benefitting from the funds in order to provide training to those interested in outdoor arts management or specialist creative skill such as aerial performance or production, sound and lighting (Ireo, 2024). Furthermore, the Irish government's participation in the Union's cultural policy framework enables access for both the state and society to an international network of both back and front end specialists in the cultural field, and also facilitates the continual expansion of conceptions of identity in Ireland, allowing for the further transcendence from the restraints of a narrow and homogenic nationalist identity in exchange for a broader recognition of more complex and multi-layered identities that better reflect Ireland's now diverse and multicultural population.

Domestically, the post-pandemic era has demonstrated incredible progress in terms of the state's approach to arts governance, one of the key policy innovations being the piloting of the "once in a generation policy" (Martin, 2024), Basic Income for the Arts (BIA) scheme. The initiative's weekly payment of €325 represents a landmark shift in terms of the state's recognition and empathetic understanding of the financial precariousness faced by artists and cultural workers. The scheme's benefit to its recipients health, creative output, and overall quality of life - as demonstrated by both its accompanying trials and the outpouring of support for its continuation from cultural organisations - is a triumph on the part of Minister Martin's Department. Another post-Covid success story from Martin's cultural administration is its securing of adequate funding for the Arts Council "for the first time in its history" (Rafter 2022, 208) in 2020. Since then the Arts Council's grant for 2024 has risen unprecedentedly to €134 million, the highest figure since its inception. The

surge in funding enjoyed by Ireland's cultural sector at present suggests the government's real departure from its longstanding systemic neglect and chronic disinterest. Further supporting this suggestion is - again, despite its faults - the arrival of *Culture 2025*.

The introduction of *Culture 2025* is arguably the most blatant indication of the Irish government's changing relationship with its cultural sector. While this research has criticised the policy framework in detail - and maintains that such criticisms are both necessary and valid - the mere existence of *Culture 2025* is, in itself, a significant progression on the part of the Irish state. For the first time in the nation's history, the government has articulated a national vision for the arts that underscores diversity, participation, access, and the government's commitment to fostering ideals as presented by Higgins, namely the role of culture and the arts in reducing social disenfranchisement and the flourishing of both individual's and communities' wellbeing. While not without its shortcomings, *Culture 2025* is the culmination of an interest and effort from the Irish state unlike anything presented previously. And lastly, it is worth acknowledging that this study does not wish to claim that the issues within *Culture 2025,* the issues that continue to hinder Ireland's cultural landscape, those that have plagued it historically - they are not the fault of any one Taoiseach, Minister or administration. Indeed, the third and final concluding argument from this research is that the relationship between the Irish state and its cultural landscape has been, and continues to be, delineated by external imperial powers.

The Gaelic Revival, despite its emergence prior to Irish independence, is the key starting point for this discussion as the sense of unity and connectedness that it inspired was an instrumental driving force behind the eventual establishment of the Irish Free State (Hutchinson 1987, 486). The cultural nationalist movement is can be seen as an embodiment of Isaiah Berlin's musing that nationalism festers following the "infliction of a wound on the collective feeling of a society" (1991, 21), with the Gaelic Revival's central tenet having been to rid the island of colonialism's "demoralising influence" (Hutchinson 1987, 484) and dismantle the 'ignoble' British imperial cultures and customs. Through the promotion of indigenous cultural activities and the works of the zeitgeist's artistic community, the Gaelic Revival, rather than merely championing notions of 'Irishness', can be seen as an attempt at championing a sense of 'un-Britishness', thus aligning with Berlin's perception of nationalist identities as being forged in opposition to historical trauma. Thus, the Irish Free State, while conceptually steeped in the ideals of strong rural placeness and fierce defiance, remained irrefutably defined in relation to the imperial power structures it had wished to escape, the self-expressed identity of 'otherness' inadvertently but incorrigibly centring that which

it wished to disentangle from. The state's culture was thus borne from its relationship to imperialism, and its attitude going forward only furthered this enmeshment.

Indeed, Ireland over the course of its first decades was home to a deep disdain or pointed apathy towards the arts from both the state and vast swathes of its society, again in-part due to typical artistic practices' supposed proximity to "highbrow" (Durrer & McCall Magan 2017, 4) Britishness. This antagonism and disinterest towards the arts - rather than opening a cultural vacuum or instigating a productive reconsideration of what the arts meant *in Ireland* - saw essentially total control of their production conceded to the Catholic Church. While by no means an imperial power in any conventional sense, the Catholic Church is another example of a vastly powerful external entity with what was once a dominating influence over Ireland so extensive that the nation's culture was again circumscribed by a hegemonic power structure whose control was all-seeing but its centre elsewhere.

From the 1950's onwards, we see the emergence of new imperialistic forces providing an instrumental impetus into the shape of relations between the Irish state and its cultural landscape, namely the United States of America under the banner of liberal multinationalism and global free trade. Indeed, and particularly evident since the Celtic Tiger era, the Irish state has grown to increasingly see its people's culture as a commodity, as a soft power, and as an incentivising tool for multinational corporations. Particularly with the government's newfound emphasis on the 'creative industries', cultural policy now not only strategises means to attract investment in other sectors, but explicitly caters to these corporate entities, allowing the Irish cultural landscape to be indirectly delineated by the wants and whims of Silicone Valley and beyond. Compounding the frustration of this situation is a news story which came to light in September 2024; the European Union *demanded* that the Irish state retrieve the €14bn in unpaid tax owed to it by Apple. The Irish government - its net debt still standing at €181bn (Campbell 2024), and largely owed to the United States - was aware of the unpaid billions that Apple was withholding, billions that could reduce this debt by nearly 8%, but was essentially too afraid to ask, and with good reason. U.S. multinationals employ 15% of the population, with 10 U.S multinationals alone paying 53% of all corporate payroll taxes (Drea 2013). The days of dependence and imperialist asymmetry are closer than they appear.

From it's authors own experience as an Irish person, this research can - albeit anecdotally - attest that the last number of years have seen the Gaelic Revival's ideals of what Ireland is enjoy a

massive cultural resurgence, and the arts have been an instrumental facet of that revival. Screen media like Rich Peppiat's *KNEECAP* (2024) or Colm Bairéad's *An Cailín Ciúin* (2022) are two majorly successful Irish language films, with the former especially centring around the age-old notions of Irish otherness from Britain. Furthermore, listening to Irish traditional music and attending the typical live music sessions of western countryside pubs, shunned as backward and 'culchie'[13] by city dwellers for decades, are now markers of good taste, signalling a young person that's culturally 'with it', as musical artists such as Lankum and John Francis Flynn reimagine Irish traditional music to connect to the modern-day listener. TikTok feeds are flooded with tender montages of Ireland's rural west coast, and suddenly Dublin's hippest bars are filled with young people wearing what were only recently considered as the 'terminally cringeworthy' Aran sweater by the very same cohort. This occurring alongside a growing awareness of the United States' power over the nation is, I would argue, no small coincidence. Point being as follows: just like the state itself, Irish culture continues to be determined by imperial conditions, making the relationship between the state and its society's culture deeply impacted by the memory and enduring realities of subordination and servitude. And lastly, as so often has been the case for this research, Fintan O'Toole provides the most apt closing remark to foster some food for thought: "This is the paradox of the Republic of Ireland in the aftermath of the British Empire… Its sovereignty is a power that can be exercised mostly by giving it up." (O'Toole 1998, xvi/xvii)

[13] A derogatory term used by Irish urbanites to describe country people.

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