
Meanings and Measures of Community Wellbeing in Local Cultural Policy **PhD Project Information Sheet**

Local governments in Australia and New Zealand have long contributed to the cultural life of their communities through the provision of libraries, community halls, public art, festivals, community arts programmes, and other cultural facilities. Yet the place and purpose of cultural policy at the local government level is neither clear nor certain. Not only is a common definition of culture hard to come by, but there are various competing rationales for supporting creative activities, and a myriad of other actors and agencies shape cultural community outcomes. This research examines how local governments in Australia and New Zealand respond to the challenge of developing and implementing cultural plans and programmes in this complex environment, and how they evaluate progress towards abstract goals such as community cohesion and cultural vitality.

The research considers, in particular, the potential for the discourse of community wellbeing and the development of community indicators to offer useful tools for local cultural governance. Measures of human wellbeing are increasingly being discussed by politicians, and put forward by local and international organisations, as a way to clarify and quantify the fundamental goal of government. Tensions arise over attempts to define and measure community wellbeing, however. This project investigates how forms and measures of community wellbeing are interpreted and evaluated by agents of local authorities, alongside other knowledge and evidence frameworks.

The researcher is interested in both the theory and practice of local governance and is carrying out fieldwork at various sites in Australia and New Zealand. This entails collecting and analysing policy documents related to the fields of community development, arts and culture, and recreation or leisure, from local governments, other governmental departments and agencies, and policy networks. It also involves interviews with policy officials, managers, analysts and advisors about their organisation's policies and practices and the evaluation frameworks they have developed and/or implemented. The contribution that participants make will help to develop further our understanding of various approaches to policy-making and evaluation, particularly related to the intangible goals and outcomes of cultural policy, and the actual and potential applications of community wellbeing goals and measures in local governance.

Should you wish to participate in this research, or would like any further information about it, please contact Emma Blomkamp, the PhD researcher, on the number or email given below.

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