How is carnival art used to create participation in Cities and Capitals of Culture in the UK?

Angela Chappell,
Independent researcher, UK

Louise Ejgod Hansen,
Aarhus University, Denmark

Abstract:
The paper examines the application of carnival arts activity within the 3 UK city of culture (CoC) bids and delivery within CoC programme as well as the perceived value of these within a policy and programming framework aiming at creating large and diverse participation. We built our analysis of three case studies: Derry/Londonderry City of culture 2013; Hull City of Culture 2017; Leeds 2023 (L2023) European city of culture (ECoC) bid. The essay explores the rationale of the city of culture leaders/programmer's decisions to use carnival arts engagement via: interviews with key artistic personnel and analysis of strategic document and CoC bid and media articles.

Key words: Carnival arts, UK City of Culture, ECoC, participatory arts, engagement

Introduction

As large scale cultural projects with the aim of engaging large groups of citizens both European Capitals of Culture and UK Cities of Culture include different kinds of mass spectacles as a part of their programme. This happens e.g. in opening shows engaging large numbers of participants. In this article, we look at these out door arts spectacles as ways of encouraging participation in CoCs by analysing three recent UK-based examples: Derry/Londonderry City of Culture 2013, Hull City of Culture 2017 and the Leeds bid for the European Capital of Culture title in 2023.

We frame this by looking into both the European and the British cultural policy with main attention given to the British perspective. Our interest is in the way in which these

mass spectacles are seen as a way to create participation in the CoC-programme by both policy makers and programmers. Critical attention will be given to the processes of recognition of these folk/popular art forms and the way in which they are perceived as being particularly suited for the engagement of minority groups and others with a low participation in the more traditional art forms. We focus on the genre of carnival art, an art form than combines folk tradition and ethnic minority engagement. We argue that this combination represents a potential from a policy as well as a producer perspective and that this is closely linked to the aim of achieving broad participation on a large scale. We also discuss whether this means that carnival arts are being strategically included in the programmes to achieve this goal or whether CoCs are ways in which carnival arts moves closer to a full recognition of it as an art form.

The theoretical basis for our analysis is the concept of participation which, as it has become increasingly widespread and positively connoted concept have developed a variety of different meanings, depending amongst others on the values contributed to the concept.

We thus link the cultural policy agenda of participation with our analysis of the role of carnival arts in the three case studies. We present carnival art as a popular folk tradition and thus in opposition to the concept of high art. It is also – perhaps especially in the UK context – associated with black/minority groups from e.g. the Caribbean diaspora. We examine the implications of this in a cultural policy context as well as in the programmes of the three COC-cities.

Our research questions are thus:

- How does the three UK-based CoCs use carnival art as a part of their programme as a method to engage a broad and wide audience?
- What is the purpose and values behind the inclusion of carnival art from a policy and programme perspective and what are the challenges of this?

Since our aim is to discuss the role of the genre of carnival art within the CoC-context, we do not give particular attention to the precise definition and demarcation of this genre to other, similar genres such as Mela or parade. We are aware that there are differences and that these differences reflect different cultural contexts and values. However, in this article it is our interest to analyse the role that carnival art is given in the CoC programmes and we thus focus pragmatically on the cultural content that programmers interpret as carnival arts within a cultural policy context.

After an outline of the concept of participation, which will be the theoretical framing of the analysis, we proceed to the presentation of our method, which is a qualitative case study based on document analysis and interviews. Here we present the three cases as well as discuss the research ethics connected to the study. Our analysis begins with an analysis of the policy framework in which we argue for the relevance of a national cultural policy framework for UK City of Culture programme as well as the European Capitals of Culture programme. We then proceed to the analysis of the three cases in which we focus on one

particular example of carnival art within the three programmes, the intention of the programme organisation with the inclusion of carnival art and on the local context in which this is done. We end our article by critically discussing the findings.

Participation

In recent years, participation has been at the core of cultural policy in UK as well as in Europe in general. This can be seen as a result of a legitimacy crisis coming from the fact that the demographic profile of the users of publicly subsidised culture is distorted towards the socially privileged groups. This is so despite more than fifty years of public cultural policy has had it as an aim to counterbalance this distortion (Mangset 2012, Stevenson, Balling and Kann-Rasmussen 2017). In recent years, cultural institutions and projects are increasingly being expected to legitimize themselves by attracting a high number of audiences and/or a wide range of audiences (Jancovich 2017). Several different strategies have been developed to achieve this objective: Greater focus on marketing, including segmented marketing models, out-reach activities such as education and locating cultural activities in other places than the traditional art institutions (Kawashima 2006, Hansen 2010). Other approaches influence the cultural content to a greater extent, these include participatory approaches to art production in which groups (e.g. from a particular community) co-producing of the event with the professional producers and the inclusion of a wider range of art forms than the traditional high art, especially traditional folk art and culturally diverse art.

In a broader perspective, the agenda of participation is an agenda of power (Carpentier 2015). In a cultural policy context, the power dimension of the participatory agenda has led to questioning of the definition of arts and the need for a widening of the recognised art forms to include genres that engage other audiences than the traditional white upper middle class. This debate has been ongoing since the introduction of the concept of cultural democracy in the seventies and has definitely not settled yet. Nevertheless, one result of this is that state cultural bodies such as Arts Council England have slowly expanded the list of genres to be included in their definition of arts and culture. This can rightly be acknowledged as a step towards cultural democracy and as recognition of a broader range of contemporary art form practice. More critically also as an instrumentalisation of these art forms meaning that they are included in the cultural policy framework because of their ability to attract a diverse audience We will return to both perspectives in the discussion at the end of the article.

Participation in CoCs

The role of different sorts of large-scale outdoor events within CoCs can be seen within this context: As a mean to increase audience numbers and to engage a diverse audience. As CoCs are major events with a high level of public spending as well as political attention, these events are expected to legitimize themselves in different ways. This includes different kinds of economic impact, but increasingly also social impact including the way in which the

CoC create broad participation and engagement. Policy expectations include both a general high level of attendance as well as the ability to engage diverse groups of citizens. A common strategy for this is to engage citizens in co-creational practices both in the application phase but also in the development of the cultural content of specific projects and events. Another way is to focus less on the co-creational aspects of participation and more on the ability to attract a large and broad audience to mass spectacles suited for the creation of the idea that something special is going on, something out of the ordinary.

As with other mega-events such as the Olympics, CoCs often mark the opening of the year with a spectacular outdoor opening ceremony functioning as a marker or a transition aiming to create the experience of and expectation to an extraordinary year.

Taking a look at the selection criteria of respectively the ECoC and the UKCoC gives us an impression of the role of participation and of these large-scale events. At a European level several of the selection criteria for European Capitals of Culture that are relevant. A part of the criteria of 'Cultural and artistic content' it is stated that 'the range and diversity' as well as the 'ability to combine local cultural heritage and traditional art forms with new' will be taken into account (https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/creative-europe/sites/creative-europe/files/capitals-culture-call-applications_en.pdf, s. 4). Although neither the overarching category of outdoor nor the genre carnival art forms are explicitly mentioned, nothing excludes these from being part of the programme. Regarding participation the criteria of 'Outreach' it includes:

> the creation of new and sustainable opportunities for a wide range of citizens to attend or participate in cultural activities, in particular […] the marginalised and disadvantaged (p. 5)

In a UK context the guidance for UKCoC it is stated that:

> We expect programmes to be able to appeal to a wide range of audiences and to increase participation in cultural activities. (DCMS UK City of Culture 2017: Guidance for Bidding Cities, January 2013)

All three cases are British and can thus be discussed within a UK context. The European framework for the Leeds 2023 is rather broad and does not contain specific guidelines regarding e.g. genres, as it is the case at DCMS (Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport). Even though only two of the three cases are UK Cities of Culture, we find it relevant to analyse and discuss the cases within a UK context. We see two reasons for the relevance of this: The first is that the ECoC scheme can be understood as a rather broad framework within both national and local agendas can influence the way in which a particular city enacts the title. This is in line with the fact that the subsidy from the European Commission is delimited to the Melina Mercouri Prize of 1.5 millon Euros. This means that the specific ECoC will always be influenced by the aims and agendas of the national and local main

funders. The second is that the UKCoC was developed as a result of the positive experience of the first two British ECoC's, Glasgow 1990, a city that paradigmatically set urban regeneration on the ECoC agenda, and Liverpool 2008, the success of which was the direct inspiration for the UKCoC scheme. The roots of the UKCoC makes it fair to assume that there are indeed similarities between the framing of participation across the two programmes and examples of large scale outdoor and community arts being utilised for public engagement within both Glasgow and Liverpool programmes.

The policy framing for Carnival Art

One of the genres of outdoor spectacles that are often presented as mass spectacles (whether it is the opening ceremony, or other large-scale events during the year) is carnival. Carnival has served the function of marking the extraordinary – the contrast to everyday life for centuries (Bakhtin 1941). In Europe, there are strong traditions of carnival which tend to be based around historic practice and definitions: pre- Lenten festivities associated with catholic faiths. Traditions migrated to the America's and Caribbean through European empirical expansion and emerged as emancipatory art form – masquerading or 'mas' practice following the abolition of slavery 1833 (Hill, 1997; Chappell, 2017). Carnival arts professional practice has emerged globally from traditional folk/amateur practice in the 20th century.

As it is positioned as being both a traditional folk-art form and a minority art form it is no surprise that it is only relatively recent during the mid-1970s that carnival as a part of the broader concept of outdoor arts was recognised via funding and state subsidy by Arts Council England.

At Arts Council England 'Outdoor arts' is a genre that emerged post millennium via art form definitions. Carnival, celebratory and participatory arts are recognised as sub art forms:

> There are specific areas of work within the overarching definition of outdoor arts, including (but in no way limited to): street arts, tented circus, carnival, celebratory and participatory arts, spectacle, community arts and art in the public realm. (Arts Council England: New Landscapes-Outdoor arts development plan 2008-11, June 2008)

The inclusion of these art forms can be seen as a move from a narrower definition of the concept of art towards a broader and more inclusive one.

That outdoor arts in general and carnival in particular are art forms that engage a different and broader audience is supported by data around carnival attendance and participation in England which has been analysed from 2005- 2018 by the DCMS who recognise carnival as a cultural activity within their annual Taking Part survey. 2015/16 analysis reported 10.6% of respondents attended a carnival during 2015/16 which is ranked 8th amongst 21 artistic genres notably higher than traditional art forms: ballet, opera, crafts

exhibitions, jazz and other outdoor arts: culturally specific festivals, circus and street arts. Attendance was also higher among adults from other black and minority ethnic groups for carnival in 2016/17 analysis. Similarly, the Audience Agency: Year 2 Outdoor Arts report highlights:

> Outdoor arts attract a more diverse and wide-ranging audience, with those audiences being more representative of the population as a whole compared to other art form sectors and that outdoor arts are important contributors to civic pride with 70% of people interviewed strongly agreeing that the event they attended was good for their local area's image. (May 2015)

This provides a strong rationale for CoC to programme carnival as this genre is likely to combine a high audience number with reach to more diverse audiences.

Methodology

The primary research for this paper is a series of semi-structured and transcribed interviews with key stakeholders to inform the case studies of Derry/Londonderry 2013, Hull 2017 and Leeds 2023. Persons interviewed included lead CEO or Artistic Directors of CoC/bids, lead producers to artists for each case study event. The interviewees were selected based on them having the similar roles/functions in each city/event. Altogether six interviews were conducted which included questions regarding the interviewees role, their opinions of the rationale for inclusion of carnival arts and understanding, definitions of the art form. They were also asked to describe carnival arts use within the CoC including the value of participatory elements and its perceived impact. The interviewees were selected on the basis of representing a range of professional roles within the CoC bids or projects from high level directors, Council officers, partners to creative producers and artists involved with strategic planning pre- and post-bid as well as actual delivery and post event evaluation.

The interviews explored how the three cities used or in the case of Leeds 2023 intended to use carnival arts within the cultural programme. Given this purpose, neither audiences nor potentially critical voices outside the programming organisations were included in the interviews.

The interviews combined formal questions with an informal interview process allowing for flexible conversation in which the interviewees could express their own ideas and speak openly and broadly around the topic and issues raised. Potential interviewees where approached via email initially with introductory explanations about the research to measure interest and commitment to take part as well as soliciting suggestions of other key stakeholders, potential interviewees.

The research was informed by key policy documents for each CoC: bids, strategic plans, local authority policy/context again giving an impression on the role of carnival art in the programme and in the strategies for each of the CoCs.

All interviews were conducted by Angela Chappell with transcriptions shared and agreed by interviewees. It was stressed that the purpose of the interviews was to deepen the understanding of the role of carnival art and not e.g. to evaluate whether the inclusion of carnival art in the programmes was successful or in accordance with definitions, guidelines and criteria of Arts Council England for whom Angela Chappell works. Nor was it related to any monitoring of and Arts Council funded organisations or project work or decisions around funding. Despite that, interviewees might have been reluctant to state any critical comments in relation to the role of the Arts Council England or might have adjusted their narratives to fit to that which is implicitly wished for by Arts Council England. The interview material shows a variety of statements and the cases illustrate different uses of and attitudes towards carnival within the three CoCs indicating that for the purpose of this study, the position of the interviewer has not been problematic.

Presentation of the three CoCs

The three cases are:

- The past delivery of Derry-Londonderry 2013 the first UK City of Culture
- The recent delivery of Hull 2017 – UKCoC
- The aspired delivery of Leeds, 2023 ECoC bid

Derry-Londonderry is the capital of the North-West region of Northern Ireland, and thus a part of a province with a turbulent history of civil war between Protestants and Catholics until the Good Friday Agreement 1998. Even after this, the community remained divided based on decades of terrorism and hostility. The Derry-Londonderry 2013 bid intended to use the arts as community engagement recognizing the potential use of culture for reconciliation. Within the bid *Crack the Cultural Code* their cultural programme included four Components: (1) Unlocking Creativity; (2) Creative Connections; (3) Digital Dialogue; and (4) Creating a New Story. Derry-Londonderry 2013 had a previous history of using carnival arts within three existing high-profile carnival events: St. Patrick's Day carnival, Halloween carnival, 'carnival of colours' street arts festival as well as the annual 12th July parades. Carnival arts is also recognised by Arts Council Northern Ireland within strategic policy definitions as a participatory arts practice. The Derry-Londonderry bid aimed to build on previous use of carnival arts programming scaling up to a more significant carnival arts artistic offer of national significance.

The Hull 2017 programme was split over four seasons: Made in Hull, Roots and Routes, Freedom and Tell the world. The programme reflected the history of Hull. An aspect of this was the former prosperity of the city based on shipbuilding and fishing trades that in the 17th and 18th centuries made Hull a major port for exporting lead, grain and wool. Also, the fact that Hull was the birthplace of MP William Wilberforce became central in the programme. William Wilberforce played a key political role in the movement to abolish the

slave trade in Britain and its colonies in 1807. Hull does not have a strong history of carnival arts other than via its Lord Mayors parade. And although there was inclusion of outdoor arts within the programme and opening/closing spectacle ceremonies programmed by Hull CoC Company much of this was described as outdoor theatre or spectacle. During the delivery process, demand for community led carnival activities grew, stimulated by the organisation Hull Carnival Arts. Eventually Hull International Carnival was established as a part of the Hull Freedom Festival, hosted within the Hull 2017 community engagement programme rather than in the main programme.

Leeds City Council began preparing their bid in 2014 and established an independent steering group to shape this. In October 2017 Leeds submitted their *Weaving us together, 2023* bid referencing Leeds textile industry legacy as a metaphor – creating bonds that do not break, facilitating unions that last, celebrating the unique and distinctive fibres of their culture and bringing communities together. This included a focus on the diverse population of the city. Following the vote to leave the European Union in June 2016, the European Commission decided to exclude British cities from the ECoC scheme. Leeds's ambition for its bid has been to build on the diversity of its population and to reach and engage diverse audiences across the city. The city has a strong legacy of carnival activity. There was an obvious rationale to include carnival arts, communities and events within the bid and programme. Leeds has steadily supported it carnival and other diverse festivals in the last 4 years to increase capacity and scale.

All three cities build on their local history thus stressing that the local context for CoC influences the programme and assumedly also the way in which participation and engagement is approached. A commonality is that all three cities emphasis participation and the way in which culture can unite (Derry-Londonderry), connect to freedom for all races (Hull) or bring diverse communities together (Leeds). There is a clear difference in the way in which the three cities have previous experiences with carnival art, and experience that also influences the way in which carnival art is integrated in the programme. In the next part of the article, we will have a closer look at some of the key outdoor art events in the three cities to show the role of carnival in this as well as the anticipated outcomes.

Return of Colmcille – bridging divided communities

In Derry-Londonderry the major event *The Return of Colmcille* included carnival art in the second and fifth of the altogether six chapters. By telling the story of the patron saint of the city in a way that engaged citizens across the divided city, it was the aim of *The Return of Colmcille* to:

> Ensure a sense of ownership of the celebration by offering opportunities to participate to as many people as possible.

The emphasis on use of carnival and participatory arts as a tool for reconciliation was subtle and played out via unity against a fictional aggressor and celebration of neutral themes celebrating the cities identity via parade sections costume, floats and music:

> A driving element was a unifying parade and the new peace bridge … it was important to have a balance of stories from all the cities communities … the showdown on the river Foyle was for all the people to unifying against a common threat. (John Wassell, *Return of Colmcille* Producer, Walk the Plank, 2018)

Northern Ireland has a strong history of parades that play a large part in both communities' traditions but have also contributed to tensions by the nature of their themes and locations of their march routes. John Wassell reflects on this

> Parading has a difficult and contentious history in Northern Ireland, the *Return of Colmcille* was an opportunity to retell stories of Derry-Londonderry through a non-sectarian procession and interlinked events.

The *Return of the Colmcille* parade had a role of unification and was a unique opportunity for both communities to participate side by side and Derry-Londonderry 2013 was a tool to facilitate this Shona McCarthy CEO of Derry-Londonderry 2013 states:

> it was about a determination to bring those who are on city edges of the city's art and cultural life to bring them into the centre of it and involve them.

In Derry-Londonderry events like this was used to the balancing of tensions between citizen, using carnival arts to unite communities with strong sectarian parade traditions. The use of carnival was thus closely linked to the strategic objective of reconciliation. Here the participatory approaches of carnival arts offered opportunities to broader, neutral cultural expression for communities demonstrating the value for the role and use of carnival arts to redress or counter a cultural form such as the strong sectarian parade traditions in the province that are both highly political and contested in that context. Within the case study carnival arts offers a 'safe' or somehow 'neutralised' art form and event model that is presented within a familiar parade format familiar to both sectarian communities perhaps with a conscious decision to detract from reference to the word carnival which has historic links to catholic pre-Lenten celebrations.

Hull International Carnival – at the periphery of the programme

The Hull 2017 commission *Land of Green Ginger* parade had very strong elements of carnival arts within a street theatre format: 250 local volunteers and participants took part with 70 volunteer performers. *The Land of Green Ginger* was directly supported within the main Hull

2017 programme. Another event, *Hull International Carnival* developed as a grass root initiative struggling to find its way into the official programme.

Given the role that the history of the abolition of slavery was given within the Hull 2017 programme, it seemed obvious to fit in carnival art, linking it to its emancipatory heritage. However, the inaugural *Hull International Carnival* was not featuring heavily within the Hull 2017 programme. Hull Carnival Arts was given a small grant to develop the event using carnival arts and it further expanded in 2014 via increased artistic support by Hull Freedom Festival Producer Walk the Plank. As such the *Hull International Carnival* rather than being a core part of the Hull 2017 developed as a grass root initiative based on the growing interest from local Black and minority ethnic community and cultural activists linked to Hull's Black History Month: Martin Chenga and Dr Tapan Mahapatra prior to 2017. They aspired to create *Hull International Carnival* as a new carnival and opportunity for culturally diverse communities to participate in Hull 2017. Pax Nindi HIC Producer, 2017 explains:

> there is a commonality of carnival traditions and interest from diverse communities living within Hull a common experience of carnival from migrated homelands … an opportunity to celebrate and express cultural traditions and arts in a parade for Hull audiences.

This is further confirmed by Hull Freedom Festival Director:

> The work within Freedom Festival is interesting because we talk a lot about freedom … identity and cultural bias … with carnival we can represent the communities … to get those different communities all together demonstrates there's an appetite for carnival. (Mickey Martins, 2017)

Hull International Carnival is thus an example both of the challenges to include and recognise carnival arts within an arts programme, but also of the potential of the art form for diasporic communities reaching local and visitor audiences. Director of Hull Freedom Festival concurs that the festival theme of freedom was an appropriate format and host for Hull International Carnival recognising the need to represent and include wider migrant communities.

Leeds West Indian Carnival – well-established city event

Leeds has a strong history of Caribbean carnival as it is home to *Leeds West Indian Carnival* – the oldest authentic Caribbean carnival in UK and Europe (Farrar 2000, Lopez, David Foster, Rahim Ingrid; Thomas, Davlin, 2015). *Leeds West Indian Carnival* began in the streets of Chapeltown, a suburb south of the city in 1967 and celebrated its 50th anniversary in 2017. Leeds City Council has a strong working relationship with *Leeds West Indian Carnival* and track record of investment as they see carnival as a major city event. Council Leader Judith

Blake referred to the carnival as a 'gem in the city's cultural crown that makes a strong contribution to the cultural life of the city and towards the 2023 bid.'

Leeds West Indian Carnival is a unique historic celebration for Black and ethnic minority diasporic communities in the city since 1967 its role was pivotal within Leeds 2023 bid as a key event. Cluny Macpherson from Leeds City Council describes proactive build-up of *Leeds West Indian Carnival* within the profile of city and benefits

> which has increased confidence in the city with diversity being recognised as its strength … carnival helped to internationalise the city as carnival is universally understood and appreciated globally.

Here we see an example of a cultural event that is well established in the city and thus recognised for its ability to contribute to the diversity as well as the quality of the cultural programme. In the context of the bid process, this was used strategically by the City Council as one of the strengths of Leeds thus also recognising carnival art as a key element in the programme.

Recognition of carnival art in the three CoCs

The three case studies illustrate a variety of approaches of the inclusion of carnival arts within CoC bid development and programme. They each demonstrate different approaches to carnival arts delivery and the value of the art form in terms of its programme profile and rationale for inclusion.

In all three CoCs carnival was recognised for the opportunities for participation offered by carnival for diverse or fractured communities either through existing events, new carnivals or via integration of carnival arts into other outdoor arts events/spectacles.

There was consensus from the interviewees that large-scale carnival events are essentially an outdoor arts practice that is highly visual and aural that can reach large scale audiences of regional, national and global significance. They ascribe the value of engaging communities as both participants and audience to the art form and acknowledge that this align to most CoC priorities for local involvement. Carnival is seen as a tool to bridge divided communities and create social cohesion as it is most clearly stated in the case of Derry-Londonderry.

But artistic directors and programmers had varying interests in and experience of using carnival arts which potentially influenced the way it is integrated in the programmes. Each case study demonstrated a different rationale from their city of culture leaders in programming to include carnival arts.

Both Derry-Londonderry 2013 and Leeds 2023 bids and forecast programmes intended to build upon existing carnival activity and engagement recognising the ability of the art form to engage all communities and foster cohesion and reconciliation. In both cities, carnival was a part of the main programme thus also signalling that carnival is an art form on equal terms with other traditional art forms. Hull 2017 predominantly programmed

carnival within its community engagement programme reflective of the popularity and growth of carnival arts locally partially stimulated by Hull Carnival Arts and ambition of diverse community groups to create a new international carnival increasing their visibly and cultural representation within 2017.

The position of carnival art as a newly recognised art form came through in all three cases. There was a general understanding of the genre of carnival by those interviewed who all worked professionally within the arts and culture sector. Carnival is seen as being embedded in British culture historically through civic and folk movements via Afro-Caribbean and diasporic carnivals established since the 1960s and indigenous celebrations prior. There was also an acceptance that this is a genre in which there is a blurring between grass roots cultural expression and professional arts practice. It was stated that this results in huge difference in artistic quality and perceptions of the art form. This is seen as a challenge in regard to the recognition of carnival as an art form. From an artist's perspective Liz Dee, Hull Carnival Art explains carnival has a place within the outdoor arts sector but lacks status

> Street theatre is the poor relation to theatre, carnival is poor relation to street theatre and community arts – an amalgamation of the two poor relations in terms of under invested and lack of artists recognition.

She also highlights carnivals role as a key participatory art form with its accessibility for all communities – regardless of class, background.

John Wassel goes on to express that carnival arts can be considered a low-quality community arts or amateur folk activity: 'a few withies and sparkle'. Traditional carnival arts can fall into that category in its simplest form and if it is not well resourced it can provide a cheap spectacle which could explains its use within community programming of CoCs.

All interviewees concurred that as a professional art form, carnival is still a niche art form with a small sector professionalised and larger voluntary arts delivery. This is a part of the explanation why it is little known or appreciated outside the circles of those artists or communities who practice it. Cluny Macpherson alludes to the fact that there is little critical awareness or review of carnival arts unlike other art forms like theatre, visual and dance which probably affects its status and recognition.

Discussion

All three cases demonstrate that carnival is integrated in the programmes of CoCs and is seen as an art form with the potential to create broad participation. Carnival is thus perceived as a democratic participatory art form which offered opportunities for those engaging to interact with resident artists' agents. Within the CoC frame it is conceived as an art form with the potential of creating social cohesion and reconciliation. In a cultural policy context in which participation and inclusion of a diverse audience is a highly prioritised

target, the inclusion of carnival might be a strategic choice to achieve these targets and thus legitimise the relatively high amount of public funding for these major events.

However, carnival arts suffer from a low profile and status compared to more traditional or 'elite' art forms. Professional and amateur practice may appear simultaneously but differ in perceptions of artistic quality-concurred by the interviewees. Despite the fact that carnival art was recognised as an art form by Arts Council England back in the 1970s, it still lacks recognition and is confronted with the notion of 'lower artistic quality'. The question is whether the inclusion of carnival art in the CoC programmes might contribute to the recognition of the art form by demonstrating the artistic value of these events. There is no doubt that the scale and ambition of carnival events within the CoCs has a potential to influence this, the fact that carnival becomes a part of a broader cultural program points towards this. Are we here yet? Probably not. The interviewees still raise the question about the artistic legitimacy of the art form, indicating that the move towards a broader, more inclusive concept of art is a slow process.

Biographical notes:

Angela Chappell is Relationship Manager, Combined Arts North and national lead for Carnival and Mela; Arts Council England since 2010: BA Honour's Graduate in Fine arts, UCLAN. Freelance career specialising in UK Caribbean Carnival 1986-1993. She has published articles and photographs for *Soca News,* academic papers on carnival arts and supports academics accessing information around Arts Council England archives.
Contact: angela.chappell@artscouncil.org.uk.

Louise Ejgod Hansen is Associate Professor at Dramaturgy, Aarhus University. She is an experienced research with a track record of applied and basic research within the fields of theatre, participation, audience development etc. Since 2013, she has been Project and Research Manager of the evaluation of Aarhus as European Capital of Culture 2017.
Contact: draleh@cc.au.dk.

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