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“Resilience” as a Policy Keyword: Arts Council England and Austerity

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Abstract

This article examines how “resilience” appeared and became embedded as a keyword in Arts Council England’s (ACE) policy discourse from 2010, initially in response to the financial crisis in Britain and the government’s call for austerity. The general dynamic of what we call *policy keywords* here is thereby exemplified, while throwing light on Arts policy making at a specific historical juncture in Britain. Some of the features of such policy keywords are considered here: in terms of connotative ambiguities and associations, definitions, and naming or branding practices. Their distinctive purchase in ACE’s “resilience” policies is analysed in the process. The policies were designed to reduce public spending by appealing to normative agendas which, in this instance, seemed contingent on a larger and immediate impetus and were derived from the field of “ecological economics”.

Introduction

The term “resilience” appeared as a government policy recourse amidst the financial crisis in Britain. The crisis was announced with the insolvency and nationalization of the Northern Rock Building Society in 2008, and eventually led into the “instant austerity budget” (Davey 2012, 16)

of the Conservative-Liberal Democrat coalition government from 2010. In the Conservative Party Conference of April 2009, David Cameron had launched their election campaign by declaring, “The age of irresponsibility is giving way to the age of austerity” (Cameron 2009) – it was to prove a successful slogan and Cameron took office as Prime Minister from May 2010. The phrase just quoted, “instant austerity budget”, was used by Alan Davey, Chief Executive of the Arts Council England, in a speech of November 2011 to explain why policy changes in the arts and culture sector had been necessary. By then, “resilience” had already surfaced as a keyword in British Arts policy, ostensibly in response to “austerity” (itself a keyword now, for a discussion see Gupta 2017, 232-36).

This article analyses the advent and career of the term “resilience” in British Arts policy circles from, mainly, 2010 to 2017. Those circles are naturally manifold; as a firm anchor therein, the focus here is on policy enacted by one significant government institution, the Arts Council England (ACE). The use of the term in various ACE policy documents (strategy statements, reports, notices, etc.) occupies the latter part of this article. Some conceptual clarifications are presented first. The policies in question concern the public funding and top-down management of, specifically, the Arts in regions within England (the Arts Council for UK was devolved into the four constituent nations in 1994, England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland). The remit of “the Arts” is indicated below.

This analysis is undertaken with two interwoven aims. At a general level, the examination of “resilience” thus exemplifies what we think of as *policy keywords*. We argue that such keywords do not merely state and actuate a definite policy direction, they are also used rhetorically to persuade of the policy and shroud its less savoury implications, and enable policy to be massaged and altered in seemingly consistent ways. At a specific level, the following analysis clarifies the underpinning principles of Arts policy making in Britain at a specific historical juncture, from 2010 to 2017. The policy direction set in this period is now firmly embedded in practice.

Before engaging with the analysis, a brief note on the status and function of ACE justifies our focus on it. ACE is a Non-Departmental Government Body at “arm’s length” from the UK government’s Department for Culture, Media and Sports, or, from 2017, Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sports (DCMS). This means that ACE is entitled to make decisions independently of but is ultimately accountable to the DCMS. ACE receives much of its funding

from the DCMS (in 2015-18, that was 1.1 billion GBP), with additional funds coming from the National Lottery (in 2015-18, 700 million GBP) and private donations (DCMS 2017, 15-6). The UK Lottery is operated by the Camelot Group with a franchise from the government. ACE's budget is spent on National Portfolio Organisations (NPOs), Major Partner Museums (MPMs) and Grants for the Arts and Strategic Funding. NPOs and MPMs concern large-scale museums, galleries, theatres and so on; other grants are directed to small-scale organisations, and individual and group projects. The regions covered are: London, Midlands, North, South East and South West. The governance structure is complex, hierarchical and generally representative of all regions and sub-sectors – further detail is irrelevant here. Insofar as funding is directed towards the “Arts”, the remit is evident in thematic categorisations of recipients: Dance, Literature, Music, Theatre, Visual Arts, Combined Arts (which includes arts festivals and centres), Museums, Libraries. In disbursing funding, the ACE follows certain principles of “public value” – another policy keyword which was subject to consultation and debate in 2006 (see Bunting 2006, and for a critical assessment Gray 2008). For the period in question here, the ACE was much in the news for being subject to stringent budget cuts. From 2010 the government grant to ACE was cut by 30% in real terms over four years, and, further, all culture bodies were asked to reduce administration costs by 50% (Davey 2012, p.16). After a sharp funding dip, in 2015-16 it was reported that the government's grant had decreased by -1.5% and real-terms arts expenditure by -3.6% compared to 2010-11 (Dempsey 2016). The immediate effects on Arts institutions and projects were severe.

This then is the “austerity” context in which the term “resilience” found its policy purchase. How that worked is examined in three sections below. The next two offer respectively some conceptual notes on *policy keywords* and on the passages of the term “resilience” before its entry into British government circles. Its career through ACE is taken up in a section after that, and followed by a brief note on the policy implications.

Policy Keywords

“Keyword” is understood here in Raymond Williams's (1983) sense. Keywords operate within a network of related words, where each word in itself is ambiguous in meaning, especially in ordinary language (Williams 1983, 15). When a keyword appears in ordinary conversation it seems to have several, often inconsistent, connotations but nevertheless appears to be unusually

significant or relevant. The ambiguity often pushes interlocutors to consult a dictionary, in the hope of reducing the keyword's ambiguity. Williams argues that the tendency to reach for a dictionary is simply an appeal to authority as well as a confirmation of the keyword's perceived significance: thereby the connotation that best suits one's agenda is chosen and inconvenient meanings ignored (Williams 1983, 17). Thus, such words are used to maintain their users' confirmation biases, and cherry-pick definitions. Because of this, keywords are sites of conflicts between contradictory shared meanings and worldviews. A word is a keyword if it is, firstly, ambiguous in meaning, secondly, frequently used to impose one worldview and exclude others without strenuous arguments, and thirdly, cannot be clarified or disaggregated without reference to other keywords (Williams 1983, 22-5).

Williams noted that keywords, though not belonging to "specialised disciplines", often travel into or "begin in particular specialised contexts" (Williams 1983, 14). Thus, in academic circuits keywords are often defined via existing academically defined terms (akin to appealing to the dictionary), so as to accord with particular investigative viewpoints. While such academic definitions seem rigorous, the keywords continue to court ambiguities in ordinary language; so, specialist uses accentuate their significance in ordinary language without dispelling ambiguity. Policy discourse could be regarded as a particular specialist communication circuit, which necessarily and constantly has to both communicate to and be validated by larger communication circuits, ultimately a general populace – so, in ordinary language. As such, policy discourse has a consanguinity to academic discourse, which it draws upon when expedient, but with a stronger commitment to public approval and pragmatic functionality. While policy-makers seek academic rigour in defining keywords, they also capitalise on their ambiguity in ordinary language more actively and explicitly than academics. Further, given that policy bears most immediately upon functioning institutions and the lives of populations, a repeated policy focus on any specific term is apt to make that term a keyword; that term is conferred a distinctively *policy keyword* character within a network of existing policy terms. Such policy keywords then disperse and accrue further significance within ordinary language circuits. They are reiterated constantly through the media, through various institutional and professional forums, through everyday conversations. Policy keywords then appear in and emanate from policy discourse through a distinctive dynamic. The nuances of this distinctive dynamic are examined with reference to 'resilience' below.

Williams' formulation and exemplifications of keywords have been occasionally updated (e.g. Bennett, Grossberg and Lawrence 2005) and finessed (e.g. Bigi and Morrasso 2012), but without particular reference to policy discourse. Insofar as updating goes, arguably Williams' sense of keywords is increasingly inflected by another sense of keywords: i.e. as the basic unit for search engines in digital text environments. In this sense, formerly stable indexical ways of organising knowledge have now largely given way to more fluid ways of structuring knowledge by keyword searches of text archives. The relationship between machine- and human-generated keywords seem to have a mutually enhancing relationship, with frequency counts and distributions at its heart (see Archer 2009). This offers some methodological opportunities for examining policy keywords, which, though touched on below, is not the theme of this article. We mention this as a related area of research which critical discourse analysts (CDA) have explored in relation to policy discourse (e.g. Mulderrig 2008). Our approach here may be thought of as within the field of CDA in relation to policy studies (for overviews, see Fairclough 2013, Farrelly 2015), with a distinctive methodological turn. The idea here is to track the advent, grounding and spread of a particular policy keyword, "resilience", and to analyse its implications in a specific context.

Ecological to Social to Policy

The earliest appearances of the term "resilience" cited in the Oxford English Dictionary (OED), from the early to mid-19th century, either have it as equivalent to "elasticity" in scientific usage (in studying materials, in physics), or, more pertinently here, as an individual or collective (national or communal) character trait: "The quality or fact of being able to recover quickly or easily from, or resist being affected by, a misfortune, shock, illness, etc.; robustness; adaptability" (OED 2019 website). In the 1980s "resilience" became, alongside and often interchangeably with "sustainability", a standard academic term in ecological studies (Holling 1973 is credited with introducing it), a field with which it is now particularly strongly associated. Ecology is the pathway through which "resilience" is understood as entering sociology and thereby the domain of policy. For the latter, more nuanced histories of the term are presented by those who are interrogative or critical of the usages to which it is currently put. Such historicist accounts cite consecutive definitions from representative scholarly publications, according to discipline, and try to discern their ideological import (in this vein Adger 2000, 349-52, was

mildly interrogative; Walker and Cooper 2011, and MacKinnon and Derickson 2012,255-58, straightforwardly critical -- the latter offers a table of definitions, 256). Through this career, “resilience” evidently moved from being a definable quality of materials (in scientific usage) and a normative quality of character (in ordinary language) via ecological studies to becoming a dislocated normative qualifier for almost any “system” (a catch-all keyword). As such, the term is variously defined by area (such as environmental, social, political, economic, cultural); or according to social formation (such as governmental or non-governmental, business, academic, community, charitable, local and global).

Keywords, as noted above, exist in networks, so the linkages are worth noting as we proceed. In the previous paragraph we have made two connections. “Systems” is so much a grounding keyword, so necessary to describe every other kind of keyword, that it is difficult to discuss as one itself. It however shows all the characteristics of a keyword in Williams’ sense (though it did not figure in Williams 1993 or similar collocations), and is used as such in specialist and especially policy circles under the guise of “systems theory” or “systems thinking” (Jervis 1997, 5-10, tries tackling this head on; Siskin 2016 in an ongoing and detailed way). The other term mentioned above is “sustainability” (“sustainable”), which often appears alongside or interchangeably with “resilience”. . It is rarely distinguished rigorously from the latter, though it is more widely used in specialist circuits. ”Sustainability” made its way from legal usage (in relation to arguments) into economics (in relation to financial health) and then to ecology, with which it is now even more strongly associated than “resilience”. Talbot (1980, pp.260-61) appears to have influentially introduced “sustainability” into ecology, though he was more focused on “conservation”. There are ordinary language nuances to the three terms – “conservation”, “sustainability”, “resilience” – which are relevant to their keyword impetus in various specialist discourses. In brief, ordinarily: “conservation” is coterminous with preservation and suggests maintaining something in a stable state; “sustainability” suggests giving something (like nourishment) to that which is to be kept alive or active; and “resilience” suggests an endemic quality of that which thereby withstands deterioration or erosion of its stability. Put otherwise, “conservation” and “sustainability” gesture toward active principles, whereas “resilience” appears as a passive (testable) condition.

Returning to the career of the term “resilience”: academic accounts usually present such keywords as originating from specific publications and scholars, as the references above indicate.

The driver for “resilience” as an ecological-sociological-policy keyword was however more at the behest of collective and institutional interests. The possibilities opened by the term became evident when “ecological economics” was established as a discipline (the ground set in Constanza ed. 1991 and Constanza, Norton and Haskell eds. 1992). As such, “ecological economics” centred on the management of natural resources, from where it was a short step to “resilience management” for any social formation and therefore of “resilience” as a cornerstone of policy making in general. The disciplinary grounding of “ecological economics” in institutional settings enabled that step to be taken. Therein the term seemed umbilically connected to ecology and yet releasable into all areas of social action irrespective of a direct ecological investment. In fact, the term “ecology” itself was loosened from its scientific moorings and started being used as a metaphor for all kinds of social systems (examined in relation to Arts in the next section). The trajectory of such institutional grounding was apparent where it took root early. This was, first, particularly in the restructured Beijer Institute of Ecological Economics in 1991 (established in 1977, see website), with funding from the Beijer Foundation and under the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences; and, second, by the establishment of the Resilience Alliance in 1999, with an interdisciplinary and international academic membership, supported by various scientific bodies and drawing upon a range of funding sources, particularly Foundations (see website). The linkages between social and ecological systems, and thereby of policy overlaps foregrounding “resilience”, emerged from a series of publications through these. Notably, a Beijer Discussion Paper by Berkes and Folke (1994) outlined a project for “linking social and ecological systems for resilience and sustainability”, which led eventually to publications arising from conferences held at the Beijer Institute and supported by the Resilience Alliance (Berkes and Folke eds. 1998; Berkes, Colding and Folke eds. 2003). The massaging of “resilience” into a general policy keyword originated here. A careful analysis of this is outside the scope of this article, but links to ACE’s adoption of “resilience” is taken up in the next section.

In brief, at this juncture “resilience” became a keyword at precisely the intersection of “ecological economics” – ecology *and* economics: connoting, on one hand, the powerful moral impetus of ecological concern (saving nature/life/the world itself) and denoting, on the other, the conviction that this could be done by “management”, ergo social policy-making rationalised by economic accounting. Tacitly, the passive sense of “resilience” noted above (as against

“conserving” or “sustaining”) meant that the onus of responsibility for policy seemed removed from the managers and put on the subjects or objects of management. The latter had to be “resilient” though only the former could determine how. Perhaps that’s one of the reasons why it proved so catchy in policy circles. Another oft noted reason is that the term, in ordinary language, suggested withstanding some threat (withstanding or recovering from some “misfortune, shock, illness, etc.” according to the OED definition). The recourse to “resilience” in ecological studies in the 1980s was due to a sense of growing environmental crisis. The generalization of “resilience” as a policy keyword extended that into a growing ambit of crises in the 2000s: a security crisis and terrorist threat after 9/11, overlaid by the financial crisis from 2007-2008 onwards, and later a perceived “migration crisis” from 2014 onwards, and more recently a “crisis of democracy”. “Crisis” became an overarching keyword itself, giving meaning and ever-increasing weight to policies in all directions under the keyword “resilience”: as Roitman (2014, 39) observed, “crisis is not a condition to be observed (loss of meaning, alienation, faulty knowledge); it is an observation that produces meaning”. Critical disentangling of the economic rationale from the ecological norm of “resilience” understandably came as its “keywordness” (to coin a suffixed form) became weightier and ubiquitous in the late noughties. An extensive debate on this unfolded within the circles of ecological ethics (a brief critical piece in *Nature*, McCauley 2006, marked an impetus); a broader political critique of “resilience” as coeval with neoliberal management at the end of the decade has been cited already (Walker and Cooper 2011; MacKinnon and Derickson 2012).

In British government circles there was a veritable explosion of “resilience” discourse, first after 2001 (following 9/11) and then particularly around 2008-2009 with the financial crisis and “instant austerity”. This is when it also hit Arts policy and ACE. A year-by-year keyword search of “resilience” and “sustainability” in the National Archives for UK government records from 2002-2017 (see website) tells the story effectively; the following table gives the results of items (webpages and publications) from the general government domain and the ACE domain:

Table: Usage of “resilience” in British governmental and ACE documents

| Year | Items in domain nationalarchives.gov.uk | | Items in domain artscouncil.org.uk | |
|------|--|------------------|---------------------------------------|------------------|
| | “resilience” | “sustainability” | “resilience” | “sustainability” |
| 2002 | 84 | 1143 | | |
| 2003 | 2120 | 14501 | | |
| 2004 | 68741 | 29278 | | |
| 2005 | 262446 | 29893 | | |
| 2006 | 478499 | 43377 | | 1 |
| 2007 | 110637 | 20349 | | |
| 2008 | 75051 | 142863 | 9 | 225 |
| 2009 | 2970406 | 870398 | 18 | 539 |
| 2010 | 3444020 | 2267314 | 33 | 544 |
| 2011 | 517818 | 1023278 | 29 | 25720 |
| 2012 | 249677 | 1245310 | 127 | 279 |
| 2013 | 101682 | 796041 | 2927 | 940 |
| 2014 | 168690 | 618145 | 3709 | 9873 |
| 2015 | 375390 | 815488 | 268 | 303 |
| 2016 | 173356 | 1124975 | 233 | 210 |
| 2017 | 188108 | 1182979 | 5744 | 5493 |

Evidently, “sustainability” has been the more common and older term in British policy circuits, and “resilience” a relatively late entry. However, “resilience” had caught on and at times overtaken the other term with extraordinary expedition, especially in ACE. The points at which the usage of either term peaks before tapering may be points at which policy drives are afoot. For reasons discussed in the next section, “resilience” can be considered the more weighty policy keyword, especially in ACE’s remit. This is partly because of the speed with which it has been foregrounded and more because of the distinctive ways in which it has been deployed.

ACE Policy

“Resilience” entered into ACE’s policy circuit as a keyword in 2010, with a strategic focus and definition. The term was more circumstantially used earlier: for instance, in a 2008 report on how to use the Arts for the benefit of young offenders (e.g. through educational or therapeutic programmes) commissioned by ACE and DCMS (Hughes 2008) “resilience” appeared principally in its received sense, as a desirable (individual) character trait. In the main, “sustainability” (“sustainable”) has been used circumstantially throughout in ACE documents,

premised on its received meanings, though with markedly increased frequency as financial crisis and austerity bit; its strategic focus came as related to “resilience” in 2010 too.

“Resilience” appeared alongside “sustainability” as a key policy thrust in a 10-year strategic plan released by ACE in November 2010, *Great Art for Everyone* (ACE 2010). This announced five “long-term goals” (the quotation below gives only the headlines):

Goal 1: Talent and artistic excellence are thriving and celebrated

Goal 2: More people experience and are inspired by the arts

Goal 3: The arts are sustainable, resilient and innovative

Goal 4: The arts leadership and workforce are diverse and highly skilled

Goal 5: Every child and young person has the opportunity to experience the richness of the arts (ACE 2010, 11, italics in original)

The headlines in themselves wove a net of policy keywords (“excellence”, “leadership”, “opportunity”, “innovative”) which could be usefully analysed, but that’s not to the purpose here. Also notably, the glue for such policy statements is a superlatively upbeat register: “excellence” itself is a normative extreme; it is not enough to be “skilled” but to be “*highly skilled*”; one does not merely “experience” art but such that art is *inspiring* and *rich* and *excellent*. Such hyperboles (a classical rhetorical trope) commonly characterise or qualify policy keywords, and gesture towards their functioning for public persuasion or advocacy – or straightforwardly, publicity. Goal 3 is to the theme here: “resilience” and “sustainability” were not quite defined but elaborated thus in the strategic statement:

It is clear that the future resilience of the UK arts sector is dependent on a sustainable mixed economy of increasingly varied income sources. However a model that relies on public subsidy as a catalyst for securing self-generated and private sector income may come under considerable strain in the short term. The need to reduce the UK public spending deficit over the lifetime of our strategic framework will have a major impact on the arts economy as a whole. (ACE 2010,18)

And further:

Why this Goal [3]? [...] With public investment in the arts reducing, it is also about developing resilience, as arts organisations extend their roles and responsibilities within the wider cultural landscape and civil and national life, including how they adapt and respond to climate change. [...]

What will we do?

- we will invest in the sustainable growth of the arts ecology – encouraging networking, collaboration and partnerships
- we will broker partnerships with other major public and private funders to secure greater impact from our shared investment in the arts
- we will work with partners, including government, to encourage and enable a higher level of private giving to support the arts
- we will encourage innovation through recognising the value of research and development in the production, presentation and distribution of art (ACE 2010, 33)

Instead of a *definition*, then, this significant ACE policy document introduced “resilience” (alongside “sustainability”) as a policy keyword with two *associations*, precisely at the juncture of “ecological economics”. On one hand, “resilience” proposed an austerity-driven financial management policy: using “public subsidy as a catalyst for securing self-generated and private sector income”. Interestingly, the proposal was not simply pushing to replace reduced public funding by increased private funding, but to exhort the sector to actively use reduced public funding itself as a means of raising more private funding. In a way then, the public funding was made conditional to private enterprise for which responsibility was passed on Arts organisations (and artists) – the latter had to demonstrate their “resilience” and thereby remain “sustainable”. The “we” that is ACE adopted a financial middleman position: “encouraging”, “brokering”, “enabling”, and in the metaphor of working as “catalyst”. On the other hand, the moral impetus of “resilience” was pushed by maintaining an association with its ecological provenance: directly, by enjoining attention to “climate change” on Arts organisations; and indirectly, by using ecology as a metaphor for Arts organisations themselves, the “Arts ecology” and “cultural landscape”. It is unlikely that many would have regarded “climate change” as a particular concern of Arts organisations, to be singled out from the many social concerns that such organisations may address; by simply naming it particularly the received moral weight of “resilience” as pinned on ecological ethics was given full rein.

This significant ACE document then mined the possibilities of the term “resilience” by using *rhetorical* ploys (in the sense most carefully unpacked in McCloskey 1998): locating it within a hyperbolic register, fitting it into an existing network of keywords, making associations rather than defining, with selective exemplifications (e.g. “climate change”), using loaded

metaphors (e.g. “Arts ecology”, “catalyst”). These had the effect of massaging a direction out of the ambiguity of “resilience” while shrouding the intent it signalled insofar as that may be resisted. This is a characteristic feature of policy keywords. Once the direction is set and connected to the keyword, it can be reiterated ad nauseam in further policy documents which concern implementation on the ground, region-by-region, subsector-by-subsector, institution-by-institution, area-by-area. The nuances of “resilience” negotiated through the above rhetorical ploys hardened into received meaning as the ACE (2010) strategy passed into practice across the Arts sector.

However, for that to happen, *definition* usually works more effectively than associations. Definitions are easily repeated, quoted, referred, and are themselves a useful rhetorical strategy. In policy discourse, definitions appear to bring clarity amidst ambiguity without quite dispelling the opportune manipulation of ambiguity. Defining “resilience” for the purposes of ACE policy posed some distinctive challenges and is therefore of particular interest here. Though it wasn’t evident in the November 2010 strategy paper, ACE had already commissioned a report, released four months earlier (Robinson 2010, July), proposing a relevant definition of “resilience”. This was by Mark Robinson, executive director of ACE from 2005 to April 2010 and thereafter director of a consultancy, Thinking Practice. He offered a definition and recommendations for the ACE (2010) strategy statement. Neither were substantively adopted, possibly because they caused some unease: the definition and discussion of “resilience” revealed potential tensions for the Arts field, though the associations of ‘resilience’ with financial management and scientific ecology were sufficiently fleshed out to underpin the strategy statement. For the Arts sector, meaningful definition of “resilience”, with its passive sense and grounding in systems theory, is apt to work against the grain of received conceptions of “the Arts”. The relevant understanding of the noun “art” here is as in the OED (sense 8a under definition I, “skill; its display, application, or expression”): “The expression or application of creative skill and imagination”. It is powerfully associated with norms of artistic independence and freedom, popularly regarded as best pursued without being constrained by convention, censorship or other extrinsic (e.g. political, commercial) control. These norms are often personified in “the artist”, as an embodiment of creativity, originality, genius and so on. Placing the Arts, with these connotations, within (*social*, not to speak of *institutional*, *economic* or *ecological*) systems perceptually courts undermining its received value (Luhmann’s 2004 attempt carefully put it as

an *autopoietic* system, and not wholly successfully at that), which liberal policy discourse can scarcely promote without causing unease. Robinson (2010) therefore had a challenging job, and his efforts were as revealing of the difficulty as of his determination to overcome it by various subterfuges.

Insofar as a definition went, Robinson chose a qualifier to go with “resilience” by way of fitting it to Arts policy: “adaptive resilience”. His own definition went thus: “**Adaptive resilience is the capacity to remain productive and true to core purpose and identity whilst absorbing disturbance and adapting with integrity in response to changing circumstances**” (p.14, bold in original). This emphasis was borrowed from ecological economic studies, and could be traced back to Berkes, Colding and Folke eds (2003, cited above). In their concluding synthesis of the contributions to this volume, the editors decided that:

The focus of the volume is the study of the adaptability of social-ecological systems to meet change and novel challenges in navigating ecosystem dynamics without compromising long-term sustainability. Throughout this volume, we argue that resilience is a key property of sustainability; that loss of resilience leads to reduced capacity to deal with change. (Folke, Colding and Berkes 2003, 354).

It also offered some prescriptions, usefully summarised in a table, for “Building resilience and adaptive capacity in social-ecological systems” (355). Robinson found his way to “adaptive resilience” in precisely this register and echoing the prescriptions (principally via Walker and Salt 2008, the above-quoted volume was not referred), but with some important nudges in keeping with its Arts focus. The definition elided any reference to what such “adaptive resilience” applies to, making no mention of social-ecological systems or even systems as such; it seemed a generalisation which could apply anywhere. Instead of gesturing towards a referent, the definition threw in three abstract nouns which seemed likely to resonate in Arts circles: “core purpose”, “identity”, “integrity”. Thus, the management of “adaptive resilience” in “changing circumstances”, it was suggested, would not disturb that which makes the Arts such. The question however remained: what would this definition apply to? To answer it, Robinson resorted to fleshing out what the phrase “Arts ecology” might mean (in a tentative section entitled ‘Towards an Art Ecology?’, Robinson 2010, 23-6):

The term ‘arts ecology’ has been heard much more frequently in recent years. In part, this may be down to fashion: an awareness of climate change, systems thinking and the

interrelatedness of things. It has, to a certain extent, replaced the phrase ‘arts economy’, which has fallen into some ill-defined ill repute, particularly since Sir Brian McMaster’s report on excellence placed greater emphasis on the intrinsic values of the arts, and on innovation, diversity and access whilst urging avoidance of top-down targets. (Robinson 2010, 23)

McMaster’s (2008) report notwithstanding, Robinson ploughed on to give some substance to the notion of an “Arts ecology”, principally through a figurative representation: a series of concentric circles with “individual artists” at the centre, “arts organisation” and “arts institution” in the two rungs immediately surrounding it, and then across several further rungs up to “economy” and finally “society” containing all the others (Robinson 2010, 25). Having done this, however, Robinson paused on the core of this schema, that embodiment of independence, creativity, originality etc. -- the artist:

the centre of this schematic version of an arts ecology is the individual, in particular the artist. Without that centre system – what artists are doing, how they are innovating and evolving – little change will occur elsewhere. Without either romanticising or patronising individual artists, it is important that policies to increase organisational resilience do not marginalise the creativity at the heart of the arts ecology. (The place of artists is interesting when considered through the frontline/back office lens: how do we properly acknowledge the roles of a playwright and a literary manager within most drama, for instance? Is either frontline?) (Robinson 2010, 24-5)

There is an obvious double-take here. This suggested that “adaptive resilience” can be managed across this entirety of the “Arts ecology” without significantly affecting the core; artists would continue “innovating and evolving”, and there would be no “marginalising the creativity at the heart of the arts ecology”. Then, in a parenthetical volte-face, Robinson seemed to make out that the artist (synecdoche “playwright”) is perhaps not all that central to the “Art ecology” after all, no more at any rate than “resilience” managers (synecdoche “literary manager”). Effectively, patronising lip service was paid to the romanticised artist while parenthetically undermining the artist’s centrality to the “Arts ecology”.

Robinson’s (2010) definition of “adaptive resilience”, while solidly to the purpose of austerity-led cuts with ecologically inspired moral verve, was also transparently uncomfortably placed in the Arts. Instead of going with the qualified phrase “adaptive resilience” or the

definition, in a modified version of the strategy statement, *Great Art and Culture for Everyone* (ACE 2013), a definition appeared which was different from and yet echoed something of Robinson's:

By resilience we mean the vision and capacity of organisations to anticipate and adapt to economic, environmental and social change by seizing opportunities, identifying and mitigating risks, and deploying resources effectively in order to continue delivering quality work in line with their mission. (ACE 2013, 31)

This maintained the generalising register of Robinson's definition but gave it a referent: "organisations" (effectively removing the complexity of both the "Arts ecology" and the "individual artist"). The definition seemingly qualified the kind of change which "resilience" would denote (and there was no Arts focus here, simply "economic, environmental and social"), and did not court an Arts vocabulary at all (leaving that to the vague "quality work in line with their mission"). This was the definition that then became set for policy purposes: "resilience" as an ACE policy keyword came with this definition reiterated at every level. It appeared numerous in further sub-sector strategy statements, project guidelines, minutes and records.

The ACE (2013) strategy statement also rephrased Goal 3: whereas in ACE (2010) that read, "The arts are sustainable, resilient, innovative", in ACE (2013) it read, "The arts, museums and libraries are resilient and environmentally sustainable". In contrast to the four bullet points under "What will we do?" re Goal 3 in ACE (2010), the same section in ACE (2013) had 13 bulleted action points (51-2) with quite specific directions. These adjustments concretised the implementation of Goal 3 as unambiguously about actively using and reducing public funding to increase private and non-governmental funding, with a special focus on "environmental sustainability". Six of the 13 points concerned financing, including: "encourage and enable more private giving"; "incentivise organisations to reduce costs", "build new markets and explore new sources of income", "explore alternative sources of non-grant income", "development of new and emerging business models for library services", "develop new markets through international touring". Five points put performance targets on Arts organisations to undergird the funding considerations, and to ensure that responsibility for "resilience" will always rest with the organisations. It would be up to organisations to demonstrate that they are so. One point addressed direct public funding, "Invest in the arts sector's buildings and infrastructure through capital investment"; and one the environmental aspect of the goal, "support arts and cultural

organisations to understand and reduce their environmental impact”. By the last point, the unnamed “Arts ecology” was no longer a metaphor but a field for actual environmental activism through Arts institutions, though the metaphoric use was to resurface later. That environmental concern occupied but one of 13 points showed that it was mainly there to continue to associate “resilience” with ecological ethics. By ACE (2013), “resilience” explicitly signalled an agenda of withdrawing public funding and thereby privatising the Arts comprehensively, or at least making public funding conditional to the private resourcing of the Arts. Shifts in defining “resilience” had gradually massaged that agenda into clarity and pinned its policy-keyword thrust down.

Between ACE (2010) and ACE (2013), in fact, an implementation process had taken place across the Arts sector. According to the table above, 2012-2014 shows particularly intensive use of the term “resilience” in the ACE circuit. Through this period another characteristic feature of policy keywords came into play: it became a word for *naming* and *branding*. This circumstance in fact differentiated “resilience” as the weightier keyword compared to the more prolifically used “sustainability”. There is a thin line between naming and branding: here, we take *naming* as simply a consensual and succinct way of referring to something (a person, product, project, organisation, etc.), and *branding* as a succinct way of referring to something to promote or market it. Naming may or may not lead into branding. In both cases, the word assigned to refer to something (name or brand) is to some degree dislocated from its intrinsic meaning. The assigned word seemingly comes to be possessed by that which is named/branded, either relevantly (which a brand aspires to) or irrespective of such relevance (as in simple naming). Thus, a person who is named Resilient will be referred as such irrespective of the meaning of “resilient”; and a product being branded Resilient would be expected to have some particular or aspirational association with the meaning of “resilient”.

From 2011 onwards, “resilience” was used as the name and/or brand at numerous levels within the remit of ACE. This occurred in two ways: either by simply naming certain initiatives and schemes with the word “resilience” in it, or by using “resilience” as a descriptor for existing brands. “Resilience” was used thus principally for ACE’s funding initiatives, and in every case it served to use (reduced) public funding as a springboard for private or non-governmental funding. So, ACE’s Building Resilience funding programme for organisations began from 2012, on themes anchored to “entrepreneurship”, “philanthropy”, “change management” and “intellectual property” (ACE 2016a). The Museum Resilience Fund was launched in 2015, for activity

“demonstrably linked to increased resilience and/or diversity” (ACE 2016b). A series of Catalyst funding programmes from 2014 were all anchored to the “resilience” goal of the ACE (2013) strategy. So Catalyst Arts funding from 2012-2015 was in synch with the Building Resilience scheme (ACE 2015, 1); Catalyst: Evolve from 2014 was to enable organisations to “attract more private giving”; Catalyst Small Grants “to build fundraising capacity and encourage more private giving to arts and culture resulting in improved financial resilience support” (ACE 2017a); Catalyst: Evolve grants “offering match funding to incentivise new philanthropic giving” (ACE 2016c). Under this rubric, organisations with a diversity agenda were offered Elevate grants to help them “increase levels of contributed and earned income” (ACE 2016d). Projects foregrounding – and grounding – “resilience” across the Arts sector were thus funded by ACE, such as: the Retail Resilience project through the Association of Cultural Enterprises (see website), 2015-2016; the Boosting Resilience: Survival Skills for the New Normal project (see website) led by City University London, 2016-2018. The ACE also launched its own programmes, notably: the Developing Cultural Sector Resilience (DCSR) programme, 2014-15 (CidaCo 2015); and Museums and Resilient Leadership (MRL) programme from 2015 (see MRL website). Further, the ACE commissioned reports to examine the case for “resilience” funding subsector-by-subsector, such as: for local authority museums (TBR 2015); on the UK museum workforce (BOP Consulting 2016); on libraries (in phases from 2012, reports at ACE Website, *Envisioning the Library of the Future*); on theatre funding (Hetherington 2015); livelihoods of writers of literary fiction (report forthcoming; see ACE website “Artist Resilience”). Each of these involved the appointment of managers bearing “resilience” in their formal affiliations, beginning with ACE’s Director of Resilience (appointed in 2013).

In the course of these policy implementations of the ACE (2013) strategy statement under “resilience and sustainability” (Goal 3), the term “resilience” gradually drifted predominantly into financial management, while “sustainability” became more the preserve of environmental action without losing touch with “resilience”. Under the latter, ACE mandated all its funded organisations to do environmental reporting for their programmes, and partnered with the non-profit organisation Julie’s Bicycle to support Arts organisations in reducing their “carbon footprint”. Accordingly, a report for the period 2012-2015 (Julie’s Bicycle 2015) gave measurements of the carbon footprint of ACE funded organisations in a section on “Building Resilience” (23-4), and observed that energy savings could both achieve lower detrimental

environmental impact and cost savings (25-7). Thus the austerity-led financial rationale of “resilience” neatly dovetailed into the ecological ethics of “resilience”. A couple of years later ACE was able to give a figure for financial savings from environmental initiatives in its sphere of funding, announcing: “The sector is more resilient: The reporting portfolio has managed to save £11 million since the beginning of the programme” (ACE 2017b, 6). The figure was obtained by supposing what the greater costs might have been had energy-saving measures not been taken.

In stock-taking exercises of ACE’s “resilience” policies through this period, the associations made with the keyword in strategy statements (ACE 2010 and 2013) were variously evoked – both as a move for disinvestment and privatisation and as linked to ecological concern. One such stock-taking report was entitled: *This England: how Arts Council England uses its investment to shape a national cultural ecology* (ACE 2014). Here “ecology” as a metaphor was self-consciously used to bolster the case for using reduced public funding to stimulate more private income: “To return to that metaphor of the ecology, we must invest carefully, ensuring that this investment has a beneficial effect across the whole ecology, in ways that will be experienced by the public” (ACE 2014, 33). The implementation of this strategy was accounted in a section on “resilience” (24-8). Another stock-taking exercise was DCMS’s *Tailored Review of Arts Council England* (2017). The emphasis here was strongly on “financial resilience” (to which a section was devoted, 29-31), with “environmental sustainability” (31-2) being kept somewhat apart. Of the 25 times that the term “resilience” appeared in the review, it was as “financial resilience” sixteen times, as naming a “resilience” programme four times, and in “resilience and sustainability” twice.

Policy Implications

An important implication to be drawn from all this is that the manipulation of language through the creation of keyword networks is a central process in policy making. It is as much part of the policy process as stakeholder consultation or agenda setting.

Joan Miró’s (2015) article on the attempted depoliticization of austerity during the 2011 elections in Spain demonstrates how control over language – “discursive depoliticization” (5) -- was central to the strategies of political actors. Miró argues that the main parties in government (the Spanish Socialist Worker’s Party, People’s Party, and Convergence and Union) used various

rhetorical strategies to make austerity seem inevitable and, therefore, outside the realm of democratic choice. Apropos of austerity, just as control of language in newspapers had been crucial to building consensus outside policy circles (among the public), control of language within policy-making circles was critical to building a consensus across government domains. The moralising/aspirational register of the resilience-sustainability-ecology keyword network described above for ACE policy worked to similar effect across various sectors in Britain, and indeed with the same austerity-based imperatives. The Arts policy circuit offers one illustrative context among many. The use of “resilience” as a policy keyword was one of numerous linguistic devices deployed to make the naturalness of privatisation and corresponding public disinvestment basic assumptions of policy making.

It follows that policy makers interested in countering this assumption will have to consider the role of language, particularly of policy keywords, carefully. Reorienting the policy direction would probably entail co-opting the meaning of “resilience” to a different agenda, and destabilising its association with private investment and public disinvestment. Possibly, an alternative vocabulary and a new set of keywords may also need to be introduced. MacKinnon and Derickson (2012, 263-66) make a similar proposal, arguing that centring “resourcefulness” instead of “resilience” might help to counter the implicit conservatism of the resilience-sustainability-ecology network. Policy that seems to be firmly set can be reset, and that would involve renegotiating existing keywords and generating new ones.

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