

Peter Louca ([00:00](#)):

Good morning and welcome to the 2016 Adelaide festival ideas and today's sessions sleepwalking to the future. This session is proudly presented in partnership with laboratory Adelaide. Hello, I'm Peter Louca. I'm the executive director of arts south Australia, the state government agency, responsible for coordinating arts and cultural heritage in the state. Could I begin by acknowledging that today we are gathered on the traditional country of the Ghana people of the Adelaide Plains. We recognize and respect their cultural heritage, beliefs and relationship with the land. We acknowledge that these are of continuing importance to the people living today, and that we respect their elders past and present. Could I start with a little bit of housekeeping called you? Okay. Please switch your mobile phones to silent during the session or turn them off. And you're also welcome to connect during the festival to social media for it's not online, it didn't happen anymore.

Peter Louca ([01:02](#)):

So the tweet handle is at ADL F O I hashtag is eight hashtag ADL FOI, and it's also on Instagram at ADL FOI or hashtag ADL F I. Unauthorized recordings of any kind are not permitted during the session. Today's session is being audio recorded by radio Adelaide for broadcasts and future podcasts. And also just want to do one little notification of some program changes today. Indie Johari has had to cancel his appearance at the festival. Tim Dunlop, programmed at the Hitsville at five 15 will now speak at the open state hub, which is on the forecourt of the museum at 4:00 PM. So please note the earlier times and the festival apologizes for any inconvenience today will be addressed by professor Justin. O'connor the communications and cultural economy. Professor at the university at Monash university, Justin is in the school of media film, and journalism is the visiting chair of Shanghai, Joe Tong university, and has just published the platform paper after the creative industries.

Peter Louca ([02:23](#)):

And co-authored the cultural economy and new Shanghai out next year. He's also part of the cultural global cultural economy network. And you can get the platform paper at very good bookshops or the hub next door. Justin there's also has recently scrutinized the rhetoric of keto in terms which have led to the evolution of the cultural economy and will give us his well-informed view of the national international cultural policy crisis. In one of his latest published contribution, he contends that the public policy space in which art and culture could articulate a set of values has been radically attenuated by hitching a ride on the cultural economy. Train. This session is, is described as sleepwalking to the future. Subtitled why Australia needs a cultural policy. Australia is surrounded by a world in transformation, but is refusing to face up to it. Neo-Liberalism is collapsing all around us. Manufacturing and mining are in decline and agriculture. Agriculture or minor sector culture has at a federal level been reduced to a rump of state-funded elite arts, happy to see their poor colleagues go under. Justin will propose a way for culture to articulate a new sense of the change beyond disruptive innovation and allow us to re imagine the future, a very interesting topic for many people in Adelaide this morning. So I'd like to welcome professor O'Connor to the podium.

Justin O'Connor ([04:02](#)):

Thanks for that. Yeah. So good morning. And I suppose welcome to all those insomniacs listen to this in the future in radio Adelaide, perhaps. I, I'm very interested in this big spat between the millennials and millennials and the baby boomers, but I think I'm going to locate this speech in, I don't know what generation we are. We're, we're kind of between the baby boomers and generation X the best way I'd put it is between the sex pistols trials and the Nirvana's first LP. And it's really I would say we're, you

know, really beginning to get going in the late seventies and the eighties. We were the culture generation and for us the, we, we were at the end of a long kind of evolution from civic to political onto social citizenship. You know, that arc going back to the 18th century, the gradual expansion of democracy, and for many of us, and maybe many in the audience that we were now going to get some kind of cultural citizenship, part of, part of the social social citizenship, but a bit further beyond it.

Justin O'Connor ([05:18](#)):

And we've got this, we saw in the sixties and seventies, a real extension of the, of the, the structures of the state for, into education and health and now into culture. And it seemed to many of us that culture's time at comb. Now to my mother was always an economic argument there that somehow economic growth has expanded wealth and education and leisure. We were now going to get a chance the money and the time to spend it. And we are education educated enough to do it in a much more discerning manner. And the price of goods as a percentage of income was reduced. And now seem to be the time for kind of Mazlow's self-realization, you know, the top of the pyramid or what somebody else called post materialistic values and from Jack Lang in France, in the meter on government, through to the greater London council in the UK, right, the way through to creative nation in in the early mid nineties, in in Australia, there was this idea of of a moment for culture.

Justin O'Connor ([06:29](#)):

And it also seemed a point where these two great antagonists of modernity culture and economy had kind of come together somewhat. And that we're beginning to converge in very positive ways. And I think out of this came three arguments, three really key arguments, the first, which you maybe you'll all know, and I'm not going to dwell on was the idea that art was an economy. Do you remember those arguments? People like John Mayer, scoff, ah, Susan, just subsidy. We we're also economy and w there's many consultants doing multiplayer effects, showing that for every dollar spent on the arts, there was \$1.49 generated in spending in cafes and jobs and things like that. And of course this argument now perfectly valid in many ways, but argument led on to the kind of arts led regeneration moment. That's still with us perhaps symbolized by the Guggenheim effect in, in Spain.

Justin O'Connor ([07:27](#)):

So I won't talk too much about that. The second area is was cultural industries something that I first got into, and this was the idea that he was a new sector, a new growing sector that wasn't a source of growth, but also it may be even replacing the old industrial sectors, you know famously in the UK. They noticed that the music industry was bigger than steel those kinds of things. And it was driven by the rise of a small and medium size enterprise economy. The startups we call them now, but they would call SMEs and a new cheap technology, not yet the internet, but lots of cheap technology. Basically people could do stuff, make stuff in a way that really had been they hadn't been able to do to before. And so this was a sector to my mind that wasn't just a sector, was, you know, we all got our jobs and growth statistics there, but it wasn't just a sector.

Justin O'Connor ([08:27](#)):

It was a kind of democratic participation in action. It was part of this democratization of culture. People were participating in culture, not just as consumers, but also as producers producers. And it was based on networks based on projects, based on iterative locally-based, tacit knowledge, all those kinds of things. So it was a kind of benign economy. It was a good thing in itself, economically. This, these were good jobs, high skills with lots of positive spillovers for the places in which they happened. And they

were the cutting edge of the future, all other industry for becoming more and more like this. So in that way, the economy was becoming much more like a culture. And this is the third aspect of that convergence, because it was this sense that somehow so somehow the so some of the goods in the future wouldn't be based on basic functionality, but would be based on identity, expression of identity, expressivity creativity what at the time was called the [inaudible] of everyday life.

Justin O'Connor ([09:42](#)):

Great phrase that and it was this, the age old promise of, of, of bringing art back into our lives and transforming them into some kind of formal Endeavor Frederick Sheila spiel tree, you know, the drive to play. This was what was being handed out in front of us in this new cultural economy in many ways. So did we get there? Well, I wanted to use a read a quote I'll, I'll run through it quickly because you'll quickly pick up what it's saying. It's from 2013, I believe Stefan or Harney, right? Art is closer to people than at any other time in history people make and compile music. They design interiors and make over their bodies. They watch more television and more movies. They think deeply about food and clothes. They encounter, study, learn, evaluate languages, diasporas heritage. Is there a massive daily practice in arts, from underground music to making gardens to creative writing camps.

Justin O'Connor ([10:40](#)):

And there are productions of subjectivities, which are literally fashioned, which are aesthetic, which are creative. There's a massive daily register of judgment critique, attention and taste. And it seems to me that, well, here we are, we've done it according to this we're at that promised land from the late seventies, early eighties. Well, I want to look at those a bit closely in terms of these three claims. I mean, first of all, decided ups is closer to people than at any other time in history. But part of that I find is clearly correct. We could point to many things there, but again, without talking too much about the arts were an artist that probably knows more about it than me. There is, you know, there's no denying the contribution of the arts, contemporary arts, heritage arts to Australian cities, regions, and states, but at the federal level the profile of the arts is nothing less than shocking at the moment.

Justin O'Connor ([11:39](#)):

It's not just being a systemic defunding of the arts, but a massive process of de-legitimizing. And I won't go onto this cause I'm sure you're all aware of it. But if you read Alison Croghan's latest opinion piece in the, in the monthly, it gives this idea very clearly some deep de-legitimized as well as defunding is going on and I'd call it, I point in particular to the rise of big companies, the large arts companies that after the brand is called, began to pull up their drawbridges and make sure they were safe and leave the rest of your rock. Not all of them, but many of them we can see the rise of rise and rise of private philanthropy, which in some cases is good. And, and I think if David Walsh is really energizing intervention into Hobart, into Tasmania but in many others, we've seen the growing power of the corporate world as they reach into the very heart of the art system.

Justin O'Connor ([12:38](#)):

It's now accepted without almost without debate that the head of any advisory board or a board of trustees should be a business person. It's like, well, why not? Who else could possibly be qualified? And the arts, the artists and the small independent sector worse off than ever. In fact, they're growing Coles for, for, for money is increasingly dismissed of as welfare. And I actually heard somebody in the arts world quite recently say, Hey, why are these guys still looking for handouts? You know, so this is a real problem, I think, in the arts and I won't go into it that much. But coming to the cultural and what's

known as the creative industries, which is which was part of this should turn to culture reading that quote from Harney about all these proliferating activities and participation question I would ask is who is producing what content on whose platform with whose hardware and in what conditions and the answer to most of those questions would be well, they're been made, produced by and distributed somewhere other than in Australia.

Justin O'Connor ([13:54](#)):

We have, might have a huge proliferation of cultural consumption, but it's decreasing the share of Australia culture that is decreasing. And I think that Australian debates in the area of cultural industries, creative industries are woefully behind the rest of the world, including many developing countries. I worked for UNESCO sometimes they're behind in terms of the awareness of the support strategy infrastructure that's needed. And many of the advanced states, and I would think have creative Victoria here which I completely support. It's really quite exciting what they're trying to do, but they are too, they're freely admitted. They don't really know what to do with this definition of cultural creative industries. And I've got a long list, but I'll give you the highlights. You know, we look at the ongoing decimation of the ABC and the SBS as kind of potential world beaters, but let's cut them the NBN fiasco.

Justin O'Connor ([14:49](#)):

It's astonishing, what's that what's happened there with, we now have one of the slowest internet in the OECD countries, in a country that's fully aware of the tyranny of distance, the defunding of anything, approaching a coherent approach to film the CAC handed approach to Australian publishing recently the lack of anything other for the token funding for design, for fashion, for games, sector, those kind of sectors. And of course, what we now get getting innovation is as bypass creative altogether. And it's now, you know, basically creative don't bother unless you're a kind of handmade and of tech, you know, maybe digital info interfaces for data miners, that kind of things. So I say, you know, Australia sleepwalking into the future and actually sometimes it feels more like a pretty terrifying night drive you know, without them fancy classes the mining boom was passed with no legacy to speak of.

Justin O'Connor ([15:48](#)):

They could no way the difference to Norway. We left with this decline in mining sector and a parasitic real estate sector is as the leading edge of the economy all hooked up to the financial sector, which itself is thriving on these huge levels of personal debt, way, way above America in the, before the financial crisis. And of course, themselves predicated on inflated house prices, the financial sector in Australia, it's not worse than anywhere else, but of course, globally, only 15% of the trillions and trillions and trillions and trillions of money in the finance sector, only 15% ever gets out of it into real investment. And I really, I was reading Paul Mason recently, who was saying that no capitalist class in history as has been so unable to break out of the failing model. And and so kind of cynically doubled down on the, on the, on the, on the rent, seeking more financialization and already broken models.

Justin O'Connor ([16:48](#)):

I won't talk about Uber and things like that. So yet there's never been less concern left have been less concerned about working out how to get out of this out of this mess in terms of culture and how culture can contribute to it. So we've got, so I think looking back on this, when I first came to Australia 2008 asked two people where where's that where's this heart what's, what's the future. And somebody said to me, well, Australia could be like the Scandinavia of Asia. You know, we could be the real design powerhouse, the cultural powerhouse. We could really punch above our weight in those kinds of terms.

And, you know, maybe we still can, but I asked somebody else somebody had been living in a very famous professor of cultural studies. Who'd been working in Hong Kong. And she said she said, my image of Australia at the moment, she was thinking of China was a surfer with a huge, one of the huge waves about to break.

Justin O'Connor ([17:50](#)):

And she said, that wave is China. And this was 2008, 2009. And we're already seeing the arrival of massive investment, not just in houses, but in, in kind of creative spaces in online platforms, you buying up the media, you know, they've just purchased a large chain of cinema's last chain of theaters in north America. So there's a, there's an arrival of China, right. In our midst, that's going to really kind of confront us with our complacency about, oh, well, we're a cultural hub and we are not balanced liberal democracy. We will, of course will win. So there's really big problems there around it. But I, I just like move on to the third thing if I can, which is because I don't want to talk about particularly massive under investment in cultural industries. Which I think is, I think as a part of, but it's also about, it's about the link between culture and citizenship and, and it's somewhere in this in this idea of a, of a new promise of a new accommodation between cultural economy.

Justin O'Connor ([18:54](#)):

Because what we've seen recently is the mass in terms of pure producers working in this sector, we've seen a massive rise in precarity, you know, this precarious labor, low unionization, low pay, bad work, et cetera, plus a massive rise in the cost of health, education, and housing. You know, the idea that we know we've got the money to spend in our self-realization all that is eaten up by by these public service or previously public services, which of course have now being privatized in order to extract whatever profit they can be made out of them and creamed off somewhere else, probably some tax Haven. So the social itself is being opened up into forms of rent extraction in many ways. And some of the key dimensions of social citizenship, health education, public infrastructure disappearing, and where's that left culture. It's no surprise that we're actually teetering on the edge in that way.

Justin O'Connor ([19:55](#)):

And of course, on top of this come the robots, you know, if see, read all this in all the newspapers no day, but you know, the robots are coming for you, not just the unskilled, but for the professionals. And even Obama was reading a few days ago, even Obama's talking about a universal wage because work is now uncoupled from wages. And instead he's quotes an Israeli futurist who says, billions of people are likely to have no military or economic function providing food and shelter should be possible. But how to give that give meaning to their lives will be the huge political question. And I think that is the political question aside from giving people a livelihood producing you know, as a growth sector, how do we give meaning to lives? Because that is where tomorrow, where culture has always been in.

Justin O'Connor ([20:47](#)):

And I think what's, what's happened over the last those last 20 years is, is our language around culture has been eviscerated. We've got, we've reduced it to the questions of the growth of jobs and those things, which I think are important obviously. But the idea of what is the value of culture, what is, what language can we use to coach that value of culture has disappeared. Most cultural policy now outside the arts, the little island of the arts, most cultural policy. Now look read the recent UK. One is about how to PR PR proliferate content and platforms and stream it as efficiently as possible to the individual consumer. What they consume is between them and their credit card. So, part of what that quote I

made part of Harney's course very much about an individualized idea of a consumption, consumption culture. And it's implicating all sorts of ways with the kind of rampant growth of consumerism with it's never satisfied needs, you know, once you get to cultural needs, they're not never satisfied and they're rapidly accelerating turnover.

Justin O'Connor ([21:59](#)):

You know, think of thinking about a question now is how do we get back to some other concept as a culture? And I'll just give one last quote from Brian Eno, which I very much like his peer lecture from two years ago, a year ago. And he says, I'm starting now to propose the idea of culture as a sort of collective ritual or a set of cultural rituals that we're all engaged with. And this is why I think the arts are worth pursuing other than for GNP reasons. You know, the GNP or it reasons says, well, it's good to know we've all contributed 28 billion pounds. But the most important thing is that we have been together and that doesn't just mean the artists so-called. It means everyone. It means all the people actually in the community, everyone has been generating this huge, fantastic conversation, which we call culture.

Justin O'Connor ([22:52](#)):

And somehow it keeps us coherent, keeps us together. And it's these ideas of compensation conversation, ritual, collective that the moment that words that we need to push back into the debate around culture, not individual expressivity and creativity and choice. It's crucial as though those are weak because we've been engaged in a 40 year experiment to see if we can run a country, a world where the main social bond is up between homo economists and the market. That's the main way in which we go together. And of course that's falling down all around us. So the question is what, you know, how actually do we position culture to actually to begin to address those questions with, you know, we're when art first in the, really in the first, late 18th century, the separation about it's the idea of it being a separate realm was not some kind of elite ism by, you know, conspiracy of German romantics, but it was this idea that the world was undergoing such a massive transformation.

Justin O'Connor ([24:02](#)):

So it should just, you know, a dislocation of itself that some kind of response was necessary. And what are the [inaudible], those is in responding to industrialism the transformation of societies modernity. It became what what as a parent called, you know, artists were the antenna of the race. It became a way of responding to it, not just through the intellect, but through the senses, through understanding how we live. And I think that's exactly where culture is today. it's currently extremely marginalized, but it carries part of our response to what is set to be a massive pro period of transformation that not just Australia, the whole world is about to undergo. And we're also really blind in terms of mainstream political discourse. So finding our way out of it, feeling our way out of it is something that I think art and culture you've got to get centrally back into.

Peter Louca ([25:12](#)):

[Inaudible] We now have the opportunity to take some questions directed to Justin. And thank you very much, Justin, for that thought provoking introduction to the topic. We'll be taking questions and not statements. So we'll kick off in just a moment if you'd come to the microphones, which are located in the aisles, when making those questions, please that's in perhaps to contextualize, and you talked about the malaise that's happening federally and you touched on that and you talked about the major organizations really battering down the hatches and moving away. Fortunately in south Australia, we found that that wasn't our experience and that the major companies joined in solidarity with, with the

affected groups and have really rallied together. But what, what we find distressing is this Sisyphean task of trying to, to increase funding for the arts and cultural sector. And you've touched on how do we find value and meaning in that how do we, how do we develop the toolkit to convince policy makers and decision makers to make that funding case?

Justin O'Connor ([26:24](#)):

I think, you know, there is, there is a, there's always a space to say, look what we've done. You know, how much has been spent, what we've achieved. Everybody has to do that. And of course, culture is no different arts and culture is no different, but some, I think at the moment, that's, that's not going to work. Ben Elton made the point in in the last platform paper that you know, the deliberately celebrations, I think, was it 1 billion, maybe moderate, huge amounts of money were spent on that without the blink of an eyelid, because that's what we want. There's no impact statements. There's no dashboards, there's no tool kits. There's no metrics for that at all. And I'm not saying culture should go completely. Like, you know, here's a billion, don't say anything, don't come back. But at the moment, it's the language around culture.

Justin O'Connor ([27:12](#)):

That's, that's been stifled. I think that any value of culture might have outside it's outside of a, of an economic metric has been, has been really deemed out of, out of court. And yet other, other things such as, I mean, you think of defense itself or other things, other things are rules in. So I think on the one hand, it's a kind of a ongoing process of the economic charterization of a public policy. But on the other hand, there is that there is a clear sense that culture is no longer necessary for the modern system of governance. We have other ways of keeping people in a coherent social hole and, and I think that's a problem. So unless we begin to start to challenge the language and start thinking, coming up with a new narrative then no amount of metrics will make the slightest difference.

Audience member ([28:10](#)):

We have a question yeah, just to they're a bit over a hundred people in this room on a Saturday morning. Apparently we're not all at the shops. Would you like to speculate on why we're here in the sense, as opposed to the image of HomeAway economists economic was all as I prefer to call it the sovereign consumer, apparently that's the only relationship we have with the world where people aren't here for that reason. I don't think so. How does that work with what you were talking about talking about towards the end with working together conversation and so on?

Justin O'Connor ([28:49](#)):

I think, I mean, there's a presumed people here while it's not raining outside and actually it's quite a nice day and was a bit of smashed avocado on, on our foot, various cafes. But you've probably all got houses already. I don't know. But I think there is at all levels, there is a desperate desire to have a conversation, to engage in some kind of workout. What on earth is going on? We, we know that just reading the paper is a constant feel of, there is some real deep seated changes happening. I mentioned robots cause that's the latest of them. The social media, the way in which social media have altered thing, there's a whole range of things happening. And I think clearly at the political level that those questions are barely even raised as problems. You know what I mean? I don't have to illustrate that, but I think it's something like this, a festival or any kind of cultural event.

Justin O'Connor ([29:46](#)):

It, I think it brings people together and it brings people together because I feel there's this, there's a kind of evaluation of the social, of what it is to be connected, whether it's a place or larger entities evaluation of the social and a D and I kind of need to engage in that kind of public space, public conversation or public public activity in a way that the, the, the increasingly that the cultural industries don't want that to happen. And I think, and I've, you know, I've, I've dusted off my own volume of add-on or, you know, we threw it away when we were 20 or something. Oh, don't forget that. But you know, the idea that we have now got a massive system of distribution on an unprecedented scale, you know, we're not going on Friday nights to watch the cinemas it's all day, every day, 24 7 proliferation of channels of the possibility of what we channels of things to consume that that is now stands for our cultural policy on what on earth, what an earth is to say about the public spaces, space of that.

Justin O'Connor ([30:56](#)):

And I don't necessarily mean the physical public space, but the sense of what are we all watching, listening to? What are we all producing that, that sense of here we are as some kind of public, not a closed off xenophobic public, but some kind of open public where we've got a sense of common collective interest and engagement. Those kinds of things are not being served. I don't think by the way, in which the cultural industries are now and are set up and it sounds, and it, and I'm not saying back to, you know, state provision top-down provision or anything like that, but I'm saying they actually, the key factor is come your active viewing, be monetized. If it can't be monetized, that's a teak. And if that monetization could be aggregated to a certain point where it's more or less worthwhile, then that is perfectly valid and the whole system of culture should be built on that.

Justin O'Connor ([31:51](#)):

And if you try to say anything else such as the art, you know, that the arts have a value that are not immediately going to be accessed by pet the pain public, or in that easy way, just like education and things. But if you, it, that kind of disrupts that bond and many, you know, one of the reasons why the arts has lost legitimacy in certain parts of government is that somehow somewhere it's about producing value. That's not that interested in that kind of bond of the consumer and market. And that we're, I think that worrisome and that's a that's problematic. So I think people are here though, because here today, cause not just for me for the whole days here, we've got a chance to, you know, discuss things that don't get discussed in many other formats, but also it's a sense of doing it together. Be, you know, in common somehow

Peter Louca ([32:46](#)):

Now I've been reminded by the festival ideas overlords that 10 45 is our shut off time. So we've got about 10 more minutes before the session quotes. We have another question.

Audience member ([33:00](#)):

I was interested in what you were saying about culture as a ritual for society. And I'm thinking about as a maker it's part of a self-reflective process. So it's like when you're making something, you're feeding back something to society and it seems to me that there's something in that feedback loop, the arts are marginalized, of course, and we're marginalizing that feedback loop as well. So I'm just wondering if you want to speak to that.

Justin O'Connor ([33:35](#)):

Well I think that, I think a lot, the idea of ritual, because it's, it sounds so archaic these days. Or, or what did people say, oh, it's just a ritual. It's kind of a meaningless form, but I've worked a lot in China. And very interested in what's going on in China. And I decided very early on to try and break with this, basically, most Western, certainly the field of culture, most Western cultural consultants got to China to show them what to do, but this is the future. And we show him what to do. And in fact, it's anybody goes there. He quickly realized something else is happening there. And some of it's bad and some of it's good, but one of the really interesting things for me was this idea that there's this importance of ritual and it it's, it goes back a long time back to the origins of Chinese civilization and Confucius.

Justin O'Connor ([34:31](#)):

The idea that the repetitiveness of social form buying is part of the socially binding process. And I, and I, that's what struck me very much about Eno, trying to find a way to get out of this idea of the arts as creativity, therefore, their innovation, therefore, the new, of course that's important, but the arts ritual culture is also about what binders and some of those repetitive processes. And I mean, you know, those rituals that those forms of practice that we kind of share in common and mean something in common. I think art is part of that, but I also think, and it's the second part is that making these parts of that. And I still, I still can't understand why more people aren't worried by the fact that here we are in Australia, other countries are going through the same things, but here we are in Australia, we don't make anything.

Justin O'Connor ([35:27](#)):

And, you know, material things haven't disappeared from our lives, they're everywhere, but we do not make it. And I, I, from fashion to cars to other things that's a problem. I think that's an, that's not, you know, it's, it's a problem, economic clouding. But it's also a problem, I think in terms of who we are, if we're constantly surrounded by things that we never make even buildings we don't make any more ourselves do with the old component module parts brought in on, in container ships, what, you know, so who are we? So I think making rituals or making rituals of practice are part of what we are. And I think you know, finding a way the art culture beam finding the way back into that idea is, is something I think is really important. One more question.

Audience member ([36:18](#)):

Yes. I was wondering if you could comment on the so-called culture wars that have been going on in Australia recently, which looked to me like a frankly naked populist political paragraph, but I wonder if you'd like to comment on the relevance of that to culture

Justin O'Connor ([36:36](#)):

Well, culture, I mean, we all have our different take on cultural wars to my mind. It's a cook culture. Why was, is, is actually not so much between left and right, but between different parts of the right. And that sounds paradoxical. But what I mean is you know, somebody like Margaret Thatcher was that highly conservative person. You know, she really did believe in women with flowery hats, making tea up in Grantham, even while she was turning the whole world on its head. But she believes somehow in these kind of social values and, and Ronald Reagan, you know, flag patriotism, America's happy again, or is it good morning, America picket fences, all that kind of thing. And so there's a deep, in a proper sense of deeply conservative moment there, but of course what they were engaged in was something absolutely anti-conservative, which was an OPNET upending of many different dimensions of social economic and cultural life.

Justin O'Connor ([37:37](#)):

And from Oman, what, what, what the consequences of that was a kind of a right version of that. And right-wing version of that, that absolutely embraced the ideals of the sixties, that that's this kind of social, cultural, economic change. Men gay rights are free, you know, as it was, then you meant sexual liberation, equal gender equality anti-racism that there was no problem with that. And so I think both of those agendas as, as articulated in, in, usually in the right wing policy policies have got deep tensions for a long time that can go together, but they have deep, deep tensions between them. I think what we've seen in Australia is really a fallout between that. Not so much attacking the left, but it's, it's the more conservative and, you know, obviously Tony about the more conservative and attacking attacking this kind of more socially progressive liberal middle. And I think that's, that's something to do with the nature of change the way in which the way in which conservatism has actually been part of the being part of the disruption of social and cultural uncertainties and it's its own, winglets start in this kind of, let's put, put the brakes on really. So I'd say, I'd say the culture was in that, in that sense, really.

Audience member ([38:57](#)):

So Justin, why do you think culture isn't treated like other sectors health education for, for, for its purpose of public good?

Justin O'Connor ([39:08](#)):

Well, I think they both started, I mean, education health go back to the middle of the 19th century, I suppose that culture didn't really emerge, but it was there a little bit, but didn't really emerge till the end of the 19th century. And then of course really took off after in the thirties and 1945, especially. And it was part of the state. And the idea was that somehow a cultural policy, which kind of extends from education through the arts, through to public infrastructures, libraries, somehow this was an essential precondition for the free liberal citizen, you know, and it had all sorts of problems with that elite ism and classism and all those kinds of things, but that was seen to be part of what a modern state doesn't and that at some point in the last 40 years, that is no longer seen to be of any use.

Justin O'Connor ([40:02](#)):

And that's what, that's why I have about it with people talking about, you know, why are you cutting the art funding? You know, don't you realize how important we are economically. And, and it kind of misses the point because they are so no longer deemed to be anything other than a decoration, and they're not seen as core to what a state does anymore. Certainly not at the large federal level. We, you know, there are other ways of binding things together. So it's, it's actually, it's, it's one of the areas of the states that really has been seen as just not useful anymore. We don't do that anymore with health and education remain kind of state provision, although they're becoming increasingly privatized in their own ways. But I, I just think it's now seen, we can combine people together through the market and economic transactions rather than any kind of this symbolic ideological stuff. That's culture is

Audience member ([40:55](#)):

We've got about three minutes. So we'll take one last question.

Audience member ([40:59](#)):

Thanks Justin, for your thought provoking thoughts. Somebody who knows a lot more about cha current China than I do. I wonder, could you speak just for a moment on cultural policy? It seems to all be highly

dependent on government, which we'll talk about that, but what happens in China? What do, what does, what does the Chinese government do around the arts and funding and driving culture be interested if you could speak about that?

Justin O'Connor ([41:28](#)):

Well well, it's very schizophrenia. Because on the one hand they bought into the whole culture as an economic sector and they, they adopted the creative industries and some cities more than others. Shanghai's one of the big creative industry cities. So they see it as, oh, this is a way of catching up to the west and solar about SMEs and innovation and IP. And I, I tell them, well, that's actually not how it is in the west, but that's how they think it is. So they it's really, really eco, economically driven. And I get Chinese students with charts come off. I want to just chart, supply chains, things like that. On the other hand, there are areas that they call culture, that they actually got public culture that are in a separate parts of government. And this is the sensitive stuff. This is the print, the press, it's what we would call cultural industries, the press film, TV music, somewhere in the middle actually.

Justin O'Connor ([42:25](#)):

And this is very sensitive. It's sensitive in terms of core socialist values, Chinese socialist values, but also as Chinese soft power abroad. So it's, it's really torn on the one hand. It's dry. It wants to grow. This sector wants to compete with Hollywood in a very, very instrumental way. But on the other hand, it's clear that somehow this culture is part of what binds China together under the leadership of the Chinese communist party and like many things in China. They often give the truth to what we kind of buried in the west. And their concern is how can a society keep together if people are just consuming entertainment cultures all the time, how can we keep cited together under the communist party? But in fact, hidden, there is, I think is a question for the west is how do we keep our societies together if that's all we're doing? And so that's what I take from China that there's something in there. At least the questions, if not, there are not perhaps our answers, but their questions are something very relevant for us.

Peter Louca ([43:29](#)):

Thank you, Justin. Thank you all for being part of this session this morning. I'm sure you'll agree that Justin has provoked us and as an administrator and policy maker in the arts, it has been challenging for me. And I'm sure many people in the audience he's challenged us today about how we give meaning to lives. How do we position culture to address the question of the failure of modern economies? And Justin is throwing the challenge to arts to lead the response in that challenge. So thank you very much, Justin, for that session this morning. Some housekeeping just, yeah.