

Locating the Contemporary History of Everyday Participation

UEP Histories Symposium, Leicester
24 April 2015

Andrew Miles
University of Manchester

Fascination with the mundane

- Surge of interest in the 'everyday' since 1945
- History from below - People's History, Annales, Alltagsgeschichte, The New Social History
- Leisure Studies, Sociology of Everyday Life
- But what is 'everyday life'?; why has the 'ordinary' - once disparaged and hidden from view – been brought to light; how do we connect this with 'participation'?
- With respect to the British case, going to present one type of answer, three inter-related parts - the shifting relationship between: cultural value; class formation; and ways of knowing

Culture and power

- From the 1950s, challenge to the taken-for-granted status of everyday life in official history and the public sphere
- Site where private concerns confront public issues and where power is negotiated (Mills 1959, Martin 2003)
- Recognised as an arena of both conformity but also challenge
- Articulated particularly clearly in the domain of cultural consumption
- Adorno and Horkheimer, 'The Culture Industry. Enlightenment as Mass Deception' (1944)
- Countered in the work of e.g. Lefebvre (1947, 1961, 1981, 1992), De Certeau (1984). And In the UK by Hoggart (1957) Williams (e.g. 1977) and the CCCS at Birmingham

Cultural capital, classes and elites

- Pierre Bourdieu (1984) – cultural taste and participation an embodied form of capital which is deployed as a key marker of social distinction and power.
- The intellectual aesthetic associated with the ‘high-brow’ arts therefore not an expression of a detached, universal discourse but a form of relational social endeavour enacting discrimination through a particular disposition.
- In 1960s France, modernist avant-garde aesthetic championed by intellectuals and artists, pitted against the hedonistic aesthetic of the industrialists
- However, both repudiated the everyday world of the popular and vulgar – a ‘culture of the necessary’ which characterised the French working class

The rise and decline of the British High Culture system

- Annan (1991, 1999) postwar ‘coming of age’ of the ‘intellectual aristocracy’ which dominates until the 1980s (Griffiths et al 2008)
- Oxbridge dons, intellectuals and professionals at heart of the postwar ‘cultural state’ - Arts Council and BBC - centred on Bloomsbury (Miles and Savage 2012)
- Different to France - a fusion of modernism and gentility – though similar distaste for the grubby work-a-day world (Savage 2010)
- From the 1960s this formation challenged by the emergence of new technical middle class formation

The Challenge of the 1960s

- 1960s – modernising moment of the Wilson Labour government – expose the nefarious dealings of the establishment, seen as the culprit for Britain's economic and social failure
- Part of emerging technocratic concerns to subject social life to inspection and scrutiny
- New technical interventions, including the modern social science apparatus – sample survey, in-depth interview, Mass Observation
- Seek to mobilise and make explicit the everyday and the mundane
- New language of merit, qualification and technical expertise
- Gentlemanly model could no longer operate as the unquestioned, unquestionable point of departure for cultural value

The Democratisation of Culture?

- Demise of the High Culture system has coincided with the rise of the 'Cultural Omnivore' (Petersen and Kern 1996)
 - Pluralistic taste but a new form of distinction? (Warde 2007)
- New Labour Cultural Policy – democratise access, show value for money, instrumental concerns
 - Funding concentrated on traditional forms patronised regularly by only a small minority (the 8%)
 - Working with 'deficit model of participation' (Miles and Sullivan (2012)
 - Rise of the cultural intermediary but the profile of traditional groups in the culture state while reduced remains strong (Griffiths et al 2008)

Table 5: *Occupational backgrounds of Arts Council board members (percentage rounded by cohort)*

Occupational group	Period of tenure at Arts Council	
	1960s & 70s	1980s & 90s
Literary ^a	24	15
Artists ^b	15	8
Artist academics ^c	7	1
Academics	14	14
Arts executives ^d	13	16
Lawyers	6	1
Media	6	8
Politicians	5	3
Businessmen	5	10
Civil servants	1	4
Architects	3	4

Notes: a – editors, writers publishers; b - mainly painters, actors, musicians; c- e.g. musicians who become professors at the Royal College of Music; d – museum, theatre directors etc.

Can culture ever be ordinary?

- An emerging Cosmopolitan Cultural Capital? (Priour and Savage 2014)
- The politics of classification and the new snobbery (Savage et al 2015)
- Urban service workers and the displacement of everyday histories in the shadow of the Creative City

I don't think living in Broughton as a whole has much to do about my sense of belonging, 'cause its just more of like oh I live here and I feel It's very convenient to town. But I feel like I just belong in the city 'cause of the whole, erm, cultural diversity

...Along this road it's like a lot of families, you know, who've got kids and stuff, so it's generally fine, we don't have any trouble with neighbours and that. Yeah, so we see them round and about and say hello and that. But then like you turn round the corner, and all of a sudden like it's completely different and you see like a lot of, erm, unsavoury characters should I say.

...my sister ...was saying like she thinks that, because they're regenerating this area, a lot more richer people will start moving in and living in, so, erm, I think--, I think with all the developments that are happening it's just going to be a nicer place.

Paul (BR) – customer relations – 20s

We're losing our history, there's got to be some history to show younger ones. I remember Salford Docks, being excited as a girl, seeing the ships in. Young ones today, okay you've still got the dock office there, you know, to let people know it was a docks, but no, I think the cranes should remain. You know, it's all very well, you know, Salford Quays, but a lot of people round here wouldn't even think of venturing round Salford Quays, because it's not them. They are very working class, they wouldn't go to Salford Quays. Salford Quays is for the posh.

Sheila (BR) – careers adviser – 40s

Well it's the buildings and [mumbles] they're throwing buildings up now [mumbles]. They putting the old with the new and it don't mix. They're opening it for the yuppies now, aren't they, just taking over. I mean the history's gone with knocking things down and all what they're doing...The [outsiders 1:51:47] is putting their money, they don't know, they're not thinking about the history, they're not connected with the country, with the town.

Michael (BR) – retired taxi driver – 70s