From Streets to Silos: Urban Art Forms in Local Rural Government and the Challenge of Regional Development

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INTRODUCTION

The tiny rural Australian town of Brim (pop. 171) in the Shire of Yarriambiack, north-west Victoria, is the beginning point for what became a major tourist destination and model of intergovernmental rural cultural development policy in Australia. The Silo Art Trail is a series of large painted wheat silos spanning a cross-regional route of more than 200 kilometres. It was driven by a strategy to attract regional, national and international tourism. While the realisation of the Silo Art Trail was a co-production between three tiers of government—local, state, and

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217

federal—as well as corporate investment, its origins lie in a rural local government initiative. Moreover, as the Trail has grown from the first silo art work in Brim in 2015 to now encompass 11 silos and their towns, local government continues to be a driving and shaping force in building capacity and profile for the Silo Art Trail.

Yarriambiack's prominent role in establishing the Silo Art Trail reflects the growing importance of local government contributions to overall cultural development in Australia (Flew & Kirkwood, 2021; Wisdom & Marks, 2016). Local governments are significant agents in cultural policy because their closeness to communities is valued by higher levels of government for its contribution to achieving significant impact (MacKay et al., 2021, p. 2). At the same time, the Silo Art Trail is an example of the potentially problematic nature of a project driven by local government but with a profile and influence that reach well beyond its local confines and that necessitates the involvement of other government and corporate agencies with different priorities.

This chapter has two goals. After describing the Wimmera-Mallee region that is home to the Silo Art Trail, the chapter discusses the ways in which silo art reflects the values of changing rural economies and communities and its apparent alignment with public cultural policy objectives. Following this discussion, the second part of the chapter throws a spotlight onto the distinctions, and sometimes dissonance, between local rural government agendas and those of other agencies involved in cultural policy development and implementation. It examines how certain policy behaviours contribute both to the power that rural local government holds in a co-productive arrangement of agencies operating in a cultural policy area, and also to the tensions within such arrangements.

Scholars have identified that local government is often 'maligned and overlooked' (Stevenson, 2020, p. 121) because of its apparent low level of resources and narrow reach in comparison to its federal and state level counterparts. However, cultural policy scholars increasingly recognise the significant impact that local government cultural policies can have on their communities (e.g. Flew & Kirkwood, 2021; Wisdom & Marks, 2016), particularly in contexts in which policy-making and public funding from higher levels of government are politically compromised or in decline. Robinson, for example, describes a shift in the balance of funding from Australia's federal and state governments to local governments for museums, identifying this trend as the 'municipalisation' of culture (Robinson, 2018). However, much of this existing work on local cultural policy has

been dominated by studies of urban local government or that of large regional towns (e.g. Glow et al., 2014; Johanson et al., 2014; Stevenson, 2020).

Scholarship on rural cultural policy is needed because, as MacKay et al. have observed, cultural policy administered by urban centres (at either a state or Federal level) continues to be heavily shaped by urban perspectives and structures (2021, p. 7) without appropriate consideration for how local perspectives might inform objectives or measures of success (Badham et al., 2015; Mahon et al., 2018). As this chapter demonstrates, local government occupies an increasingly important place in cultural policy because higher levels of government and private corporations have reason to depend on it to help achieve their own policy objectives. This is particularly the case in relation to rural local governments and cultural policy priorities.

These insights were generated through our study of the establishment of the Silo Art Trail on behalf of its initial state funding agency, Creative Victoria, and based on interviews conducted with 11 representatives from local, state and corporate funding agencies, as well as observation of mainstream and social media's significant engagement with the Silo Art Trail. Media engagement exponentially grew alongside the Trail's development from one small community's efforts to put itself on the map to become a national tourist phenomenon, and a key aspect of regional development strategy in the state of Victoria.

Background to the Silo Art Trail

Yarriambiack Shire and the Wimmera-Mallee

The Silo Art Trail was initiated by Yarriambiack Shire Council. Australian governmental authority is organised in three tiers—federal, state and local. Each tier holds particular responsibilities and powers, with the relationship between the first two—federal and state—outlined in the nation's Constitution (1901). Between them, these two tiers oversee responsibilities such as immigration and defence (federal), health care and education (state), while the third tier is responsible for administering infrastructure and community services at a local level, such as local amenities, local road maintenance and waste management. In Australia, this tier is usually referred to as a city council in an urban context, and a shire council in a regional or rural one. The terms 'regional' and 'rural' are often used

interchangeably in Australia simply to refer to geographic areas outside the major cities (e.g. Creative Victoria, 2019). However, in this chapter, the term 'rural' is used to identify a region in which agriculture is the dominant industry.

Yarriambiack Shire Council oversees an area comprising 14 towns and a population of just over 6880 constituents across 7326 square kilometres, an almost four-hour drive from the state's capital city, Melbourne (ABS, 2016). Its tiny and dispersed population represents less than one person per square kilometre. It straddles the Wimmera-Mallee region, an agricultural heartland of Victoria and a significant producer of wheat and other grains. The traditional owners of the land that Yarriambiack incorporates are the Wotjaboluk/Wudjubaluk people, who have inhabited this region for at least 40,000 years. The arrival of colonisers in the early nineteenth century devastated First Nations communities, many of which were displaced onto church-run missions until these were disbanded in the early twentieth century. Colonisation established agricultural communities around small family-run farms which transformed the landscape, deforesting native bush and draining a complex ecology of ephemeral wetlands that made this already semi-arid region vulnerable to drought and soil erosion (Broome et al., 2020).

In the late twentieth century, massified corporate agricultural holdings began to replace family-run farms across rural Australia, introducing machine-based technologies and reducing the need for labour. This trend informed the decline of population numbers from rural towns. Between 2008 and 2018, for example, Yarriambiack's constituency dropped by over 700 individuals, or 10 per cent (ABS, 2019). As communities have shrunk, so too have job opportunities and the amenities and resources previously needed to sustain them. Consequently, there is significant social disadvantage amongst Yarriambiack communities along with an ageing population and ageing infrastructure. Over half the current employment in the Shire is provided by agricultural industries and health care/social service provision (Yarriambiack, 2020). Yarriambiack's experience mirrors other agricultural communities across Australia and globally, where the consequences of economic decline and related social transition in rural areas are visible in lower than average incomes, low levels of school completion, the loss of youth to urban centres, poorer health outcomes for residents, a lack of quality available housing, and poor internet connectivity, coupled with the innate vulnerability of a drought-prone environment (Duxbury & Campbell, 2011; Farrugia et al., 2019; Cunningham et al.,

2020; Yarriambiack Council Plan, 2021–2025). Adding to these disadvantages, several of Yarirambiack's towns are classified as 'remote' according to the Accessibility/Remoteness Index of Australia, indicating an extremely small population (under 50, and Yarriambiack holds several towns under 15) and as a consequence, 'very restricted accessibility of goods, services and opportunities for social interaction' (Queensland Government, 2021).

Research from the United Kingdom has shown that national governments tend to consider lower socio-economic communities as less capable creative producers in their own right than wealthier communities, and instead to see them as 'the recipients of a prescribed set of cultural or creative activities produced by others' (Symons & Hurley, 2018, in Mackay p. 10). This tendency is also prevalent in the historical relationship between cultural policy and rural Australia, in which Federal and state government strategies for rural areas have predominantly involved touring urban artworks to those areas. However, given the pattern of declining rural populations and job opportunities and the consequent impact on local wellbeing in rural areas, all three levels of government now look to a range of strategies to arrest such decline by funding cultural interventions for specific communities. Amongst the three levels of government, there is a growing emphasis on cultural initiatives that are co-commissioned or developed within the local community rather than simply toured, because they are seen to generate economic activity by attracting tourism and building liveability in rural towns that helps retain or grow their population (Anwar McHenry, 2011).

Grain Silos and Arts Trails

The Silo Art Trail comprises a regional driving tour that features painted wheat silos situated in 11 agricultural towns across Yarriambiack Shire and the adjacent Buloke Shire. Silos are tall cylindrical forms for the storage of bulk grains, most commonly wheat. These were established as a communal infrastructure to service the farms in a local area, and held social as well as industrial function as loci of meetings at harvest time. Private agricultural company GrainCorp, established in 1916, constructed and still owns most of the silos in the Wimmera-Mallee region. At its height in the mid-twentieth century, GrainCorp had 650 active silos across Australian wheat belts in five states (GrainCorp Community Foundation, 2021).

Silos are visually iconic throughout Australian grain-growing districts, usually flanking the entrance to a township, and always positioned along the railway lines that were once the lifeblood of rural communities. The rise of road transport saw railways decline as the primary means of market access, and state government economic rationalisation meant the end of many passenger services that connected these towns. As family farms gave way to large-scale agribusiness and technologies for self-storage improved, producers established new silos in key locations with a much greater holding capacity. As a result, there are many hundred decommissioned silos across Australia, including in the Wimmera-Mallee, falling into disrepair (Interview 2).

The prominence and iconic status of the wheat silo in rural communities, coupled with their enormous blank surfaces, means they attract creative repurposing. Creative interventions with silos in Australia include movie screenings (Quambatook, Victoria) and light projections (Natimuk, Victoria), but by far the most common mode of creative engagement is the permanent silo mural. Unlike touring art works, these silos represent permanent installations in place. At last count, there are 49 painted silos in Australia's eight states and territories, with 21 in Victoria alone (Australian Silo Art Trail, 2021). Silo art is large-scale muralism, undertaken in aerosol paint materials and usually featuring bright colours and striking imagery, mostly of local human and animal residents. While the themes are developed within communities with the aim of representing those communities, they are frequently painted by well-known street artists, some internationally renowned. The 11 current works in the Silo Art Trail are therefore not unique: the first silo art work in Australia was in Northam, Western Australia, and completed ahead of the silo in Brim, while there are other branded silo art trails across Australia, including the FORM Public Art Trail in Western Australia and North East Victoria Silo Art Trail.

Public muralism attracts the interest of public cultural policy agencies because it appeals to a range of common policy objectives. By beautifying abandoned or under-maintained buildings and providing local communities with a visual expression of their collective identity, public murals hold the promise of regenerating public spaces, raising community pride and increasing liveability and the wellbeing of the communities that live around them (Gunn, 2020; Martinez-Carazo et al., 2021; Morris & Cant, 2004; Robinson, 2018; Thompson & Day, 2020). These artistic interventions in place, or acts of 'creative placemaking' (Forte & De Paola, 2019, p. 1; Markusen & Gadwa, 2010, p. 3), are broadly positioned as regenerative

strategies which positively contribute to the built environment and a community's public space, particularly in physically degraded and socially disadvantaged areas (Forte & De Paola, 2019).

Moreover, mural art offers cultural policy agencies an opportunity to help shake off the common reputation such agencies have for funding the art form tastes of wealthier audiences and thereby contributing to cultural elitism (e.g. Morris, 2019). Mural art tends to be both physically and conceptually accessible. With no public charge involved, for example, silo art represents a free outdoor gallery that can be meaningfully experienced with different degrees of audience investment. As Gunn writes of the Silo Art Trail, 'even being in the car and just driving past the sites can be enough to understand the significance of the works' (Gunn, 2020, p. 28). The perceived accessibility of silo art, in addition to its physical situation in the open air, and lack of engagement restrictions beyond the ability to move between sites, is connected to the aesthetics of the art itself. The spectacular nature of silo art can 'bridge the gap of incomprehension between the arts establishment and the majority of the public' (Morris & Cant, 2004, p. 2).

Ultimately, silo art is a form of street art. While street art was originally a subversive, counter-cultural practice associated with 'delinquent, anti-system' behaviour and 'usually carried out without permission' (Crespi-Vallbona & Mascarilla-Miro, 2020, p. 5), it has been transformed by a public embrace of murals and other forms of site-specific art that adorn public walls and infrastructures. This has resulted in tourist industries based upon the counter-cultural cache of street art, which have paradoxically institutionalised the practice. While initially responding to visitors wanting to engage with a dynamic and organic art form in pre-gentrified urban zones, the popularity and endorsement of street art as a 'fully developed art movement' (Andron, 2018, p. 1040) has also made it central to strategies for place branding and tourism, particularly in cities and towns transitioning from the economic impacts of industrial decline (Markusen & Gadwa, 2010).

The rise of tourism around silo art in rural areas therefore sits in an international history of mural-based tourism growing since the 1980s (Forte & De Paola, 2019; Jażdżewska, 2017; Koster & Randall, 2005), and represents a particular evolution of street art from its origins as a political expression of marginalised and disenfranchised urban communities to an enabler of rural, cultural and economic renewal. Policy interest in silo art acknowledges that rural communities, like their urban

counterparts, experience industrial change and its economic and social consequences, that they too are saddled with the decaying infrastructure of earlier industry, and that cultural policies have a role to play in positively intervening in these trends. It also showcases the movement of mural-based tourism from its origins as a 'window' into ephemeral and unpredictable subcultural production, to a designed experience predicated upon commissioned and highly structured works intended. In the case of silo art, this experience is designed to give outsiders insight into the culture, history and values of the regions they pass through, providing an eye-catching tourist drawcard.

Establishing the Silo Art Trail

The Silo Art Trail began on the initiative of Melbourne-based street art agent Juddy Roller (aka Shaun Hossack), who contacted GrainCorp seeking to facilitate a landmark silo art work in the Wimmera-Mallee region. GrainCorp put Hossack in contact with Yarriambiack Council and in turn the Brim Active Community Group, which then worked through Juddy Roller to commission Brisbane street artist Guido Van Helten to create 'Farmer Quartet', a rendering of four local farmers across an imposing six columned silo. Van Helten's large-scale photorealist style features affective close ups of bodies, particularly faces or hands, which highlight the lines and creases of hard working people and suggest the investment of labour and life in those places by everyday individuals (see Fig. 10.1).

The Brim silo was intended as a one-off work that would become a tourist focal point for the town; however its success in capturing media and tourist attention was a surprise for Yarriambiack Council: 'We didn't know what was going to happen… it was during a really tough season for the farmers and we just thought, let's do it. Its popularity caught everyone off guard … The police were involved because of traffic management. We had to create a carpark on the fly…' (Interview 1). Juddy Roller then suggested that Yarriambiack Council initiate a signature Silo Art Trail that would brand the region, making it identifiable and attractive to the tourism industry. Hossack continued to be involved throughout the Trail's construction, overseeing the appointment of six subsequent artists.

The administrative origins of the Silo Art Trail set the path for a complex mix of investments that could establish a trail of silos beyond Brim. Yarriambiack Council drove a collaboration with three state government policy/funding agencies, a Federal government policy agency and private

Fig. 10.1 Brim Silo, with Guido van Helten's 2016 mural 'Farmer Quartet', depicting four multigenerational farmers. (Source: Emily Potter)

company GrainCorp. Yarriambiack approached the state Minister for Creative Industries to seek financial support for a state-based Silo Art Trail and was ultimately granted co-matched federal and state monies. While there were three state government agencies (Creative Victoria, Regional Development Victoria and Pick My Projects) involved, in the interests of brevity, only the largest of these funding commitments—Creative Victoria—is discussed here. Private agricultural company GrainCorp provided the silos and additional production monies. The next section of the chapter explains the apparent promise of the Trail in relation to each funder's policy narrative and objectives, as well as what their decision to fund the Trail indicates about the scope of their policy area and its relation to cultural policy in the context of creative placemaking.

By early 2021, 11 silos across 11 Wimmera-Mallee towns were painted to feature local community lives. Van Helten's portraits of farmers set a theme for much of the imagery that followed. Many siloes feature single,

romantic portraits of local people dressed in agricultural work clothing. This is in keeping with Yarriambiack's aim that it should celebrate local communities and history. It also reflects Yarriambiack's policy that the artists determine the content. The history celebrated is the region's agricultural history, which is a white settler and colonial history. Despite a long and significant pre-colonisation history in the region (see Broome et al., 2020) and continued Indigenous residents, only one silo work (Sheep Hills) in the original commissioned works represented First Nations people and cultures, and none of the silos were painted by First Nations artists. The trail thereby provides an example of how creative placemaking prioritises some histories over others.

The towns that host these silos are all distinctly small communities, ranging from Rosebery (population 5) to Kaniva (803). It is therefore particularly notable that the region experienced a 400 per cent increase in visitors between the beginning of the Trail's construction in 2016 and end 2019 (Interview 4). The photogenic properties of the Trail attracted significant international media coverage, including in the Singapore Airlines inflight magazine, the Lonely Planet website, Mazda advertising and Australia Post postage stamps, which contributed to tourism. Increased tourism also attracted 20-odd new, often family-owned hospitality, tour and accommodation businesses, suggesting a revival of small businesses in the region (Interview 4). On this basis, Morgan, Edwards and Crow proclaimed that: 'We no longer frame regional Victoria as a place in decline. We now understand the towns of the region as potential sites for civic creative practice' (Morgan et al., 2020, p. 21).

'Switching on value': Collaboration Between Policy Agencies

All three levels of government—local, state and Federal—saw opportunities in the Silo Art Trail to achieve economic and social ends. Their collaboration meant that as a local government initiative, the Silo Art Trail became 'attached' to other policy areas across different levels of government, as well as the corporate sector. Gray has argued that local government cultural policy is particularly susceptible to policy attachment, or the practice in which initiatives in one policy area are driven by their capacity to fulfil the objectives of a second policy area (Gray, 2002, 2017). Policy actors attach cultural policy to social and economic policy areas, for example, when they identify ways in which the arts and culture may deliver on social and economic objectives, often because investing in the arts is

'relatively cheap' and because the arts appear to 'fill in the gaps caused by (neoliberal) policy' (Dewinter et al., 2020, p. 99).

The arrangement of policy agencies around the Silo Art Trail's establishment indicates policy attachment, but also a blurring of policy areas. Nicodemus argues that creative placemaking has 'expanded the concept of cultural policy and diversified stakeholders' (2013, p. 214). Whereas the emphasis of past cultural policy has been on subsidising the non-profit arts sector, and thereby reinforcing divisions between that sector and its commercial counterparts, creative placemaking's emphasis on vibrancy, livability and tourism emphasises cultural policy's shared values with other, non-arts government stakeholders. Often this effort relies on 'fuzzy' policy concepts, which allow political organisers to 'pull strange bedfellows together' (Markusen, 2003 quoted in Nicodemus, 2013) but which also run the risk of obscuring critical attention to unintended and potentially negative policy consequences.

The different government and corporate agencies were able to attach the Silo Art Trail initiative to their own policy agendas, partly because Yarriambiack Council lacked an explicit cultural policy with which to frame it (Ahearne, 2009). Such absence is not necessarily a hindrance to achieving policy objectives. Ahearne (2009) argues that the implicit cultural policies of both governments and multinational corporations in fact often have greater influence over their citizens' cultural lives than do explicit public policies. Wisdom and Marks suggest that 'local councils—in collaboration with communities and artists—are just as successful [as higher levels of government] at capacity building and value in the arts, despite non-existent or minimal cultural policy frameworks, because of their ability to foster participation and social cohesion' (Wisdom & Marks, 2016, p. 189).

On the other hand, Gray (2002) argues that a lack of explicit definition contributes to making the arts and culture a 'weak' local government policy area which gives cultural policy the 'characteristic of relative policy promiscuity' as a policy field that is easily attached to others (p. 81). The fact that Yarriambiack Council information about the Silo Art Trail is available only on its tourism website suggests this policy attachment, as the website explains that the silos 'have been strategically selected for maximum visual impact and to ensure that visitors have the opportunity to engage with multiple communities and outback tourism destinations' (Yarriambiack Council). Interviews with Yarriambiack Shire Council confirmed that their motivation for initiating the Silo Art Trail was to achieve

local transformation from a diminishing agricultural region to a vibrant tourist destination with a high national and international profile. However, they also sought to foster a sense of community identity. Yarriambiack aimed to create a drawcard for visitors that would generate economic opportunity *and* rejuvenate local identity after years of challenge and hardship. Critical to the Council's motivation was the opportunity to attract internationally renowned street artists to showcase their work in the area: 'We wanted to make sure that it was an actual gallery … that the artist would choose what they wanted to create' (Interview 1).

The private company GrainCorp too came to the project seeking specific outcomes. Its goal was to raise its profile amongst its communities and increase community engagement. Like Yarriambiack Council, GrainCorp was new to the business of funding arts and cultural initiatives on any significant scale. As a private agricultural company, it too lacked an explicit cultural policy.

The Federal Government's involvement in the Trail's development, on Yarriambiack's invitation, reveals interesting dynamics both between the Federal and local government agencies and within a single policy area (agriculture). At first glance, the Federal Government's involvement appears a clear and perhaps incongruous form of policy attachment. Rather than providing funding through the Office for the Arts, the Federal Government provided funding through the Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment (hereafter the Department of Agriculture), and specifically through its Drought Resilience Fund, which aims to 'enhance the public good by building drought resilience'. A stated criterion for receiving allocations from the Fund is that the benefits generated should be shared by many people, towns and/or businesses in drought-affected regions, rather than serving the commercial interests of a few companies, and that the beneficiaries of funding should create significant 'spillover benefits for society and the economy', beyond those achieved for private interests (DAWE, 2020).

As a key strategy of the Department of Agriculture, the Fund represents a blurring of policy boundaries. Whereas historically agricultural policies in Australia and elsewhere focused on providing direct funding or regulatory frameworks to assist or protect the nation's agricultural industries (Micoo & Vinodrai, 2010), the rise of neoliberalism has seen governments scale back these supports. When then presented with faltering economies such as those in Yarriambiack, governments have redirected funding to initiatives that support the communities that in turn support agricultural

production, rather than supporting the production itself. As a result, policy agencies with responsibility for rural development increasingly favour initiatives with 'public good' outcomes that are broader than those of the agricultural industries themselves. This policy emphasis is designed to retain workers by attending to the wellbeing of workers and their families, rather than simply to guarantee the availability of their employment. This shift in policy emphasis sees agricultural policy agencies seeking initiatives in other policy areas which are suited to achieving such outcomes, and creative placemaking provides an attractive opportunity.

As well as making cultural policy attractive to an industry policy agency, this emphasis on social and cultural development also makes local government attractive as a collaborator for such projects, because local government has a proximity to and understanding of rural communities that promises to increase the effectiveness of Federal policy decisions. The appropriateness of the Silo Art Trail, with its imagery of local residents painted against the living backdrop of drought-stricken wheat fields, is related to the fact that in Australia 'drought' is considered 'a cultural concept whose primary connotations are less related to rainfall than to an overarching mythic narrative of endurance' (Anderson, 2010, p. 156). The Silo Art Trail's presentation of works like 'Farmer Quartet'—born out of a consultation process with the Brim Active Community Group— celebrates the role of farming communities in this narrative of endurance and in so doing is seen to provide a 'public good' (Fig. 10.1). Drought resilience is presented in the framework of drought's negative impact on colonial farming practice and the endurance of the farming community, again noting the omission of First Nations peoples and culture in this representation.

The Department also recognised the potential 'spillover benefit' of the Silo Art Trail in that it could attract tourism and hence facilitate the development of associated businesses, such as hospitality. As such, paradoxically the Department's funding commitment reflected its recognition that industrialised agriculture in Australia's wheat belt is not sufficient to generate sustainable economic growth, and its interest in diversifying the region's economy beyond its own titular responsibility. Its involvement is evidence not just of policy attachment of the arts and culture to agricultural policy, but of a blurring of policy areas within a single agency: a traditional industry policy area (agriculture) adopted what traditionally would be a cultural policy initiative (the Trail) as an instrument to achieve

a traditional social policy outcome (community resilience) and economic policy end (sustainability of Wimmera-Mallee towns).

Yarriambiack's proposal for the Silo Art Trail also came at a time of state cultural policy's growing attention to rural and regional parts of the state. Creative Victoria was the only funder involved that explicitly has an established remit for cultural policy. At the time of Yarriambiack's request, Creative Victoria was in the process of establishing a major funding scheme called Landmark Works to realise its policy objective of developing creative production that was sufficiently 'large-scale, original and authentic' to 'generate a lasting legacy for their creators and the general public, along with benefits to the communities in which they exist' (Creative Victoria, 2019, p. 1). A common criticism of state and federal cultural policy in Australia is that it is historically focused almost wholly on the capital cities (Mackay et al., 2021). As a result, non-urban objectives are now written explicitly into state government policy. Creative Victoria (2019) identified that the Landmark Works programme would fund at least one project in regional Victoria. Yarriambiack's invitation to become involved allowed Creative Victoria to share the weight of this goal with a local partner. Because of the regional and rural emphasis in contemporary state government cultural policy and state agencies' stretched resources, rural local governments have become important collaborators for state governments to achieve their policy objectives.

As with the Federal Department of Agriculture, the collaboration between Creative Victoria and Yarriambiack also represents a widening of scope for a cultural policy agency. Creative Victoria's major responsibility has traditionally been to support the innovation and economic development of Victoria's creative sector. However, it now reaches into economic development more broadly and into tourism, reflecting a blurring of its own policy areas with others. The Landmark Works programme sought not just creative sector development but 'transformative' economic impacts on communities (Creative Victoria, 2019), such as through tourism and increased employment beyond the cultural sector.

It is evident from this discussion that there were several consistent and ostensibly complementary policy aims across the funding agencies. Yarriambiack's community pride objective and GrainCorp's community engagement objectives were consistent with the Federal Department of Agriculture's 'public good' aim, for example. Tourism and economic development drove Yarriambiack and Creative Victoria's investment alike. Such complementarity demonstrates how key policy concepts can be used

across different agencies and government levels to bring together different agencies. It also indicates a trend across government agencies, even at different levels, to adopt an ostensibly single set of objectives—usually associated with economic sustainability or growth, employment and community resilience—regardless of their stated portfolio.

However, tensions between policy agencies involved in the Silo Art Trail indicate that what was meant by these concepts varied according to the objectives of each agency. In one such case, this tension appears irreconcilable. Yarriambiack's interest in attracting tourism rested on the uniqueness of the Trail to the Wimmera-Mallee; any similar initiative beyond its region simply represented unwanted competition. 'We've started this movement that we wish we could have contained to the … Mallee region' (Interview 1). As an agricultural production company with investments across the nation, GrainCorp subsequently wanted to reproduce the silo art trail model in other municipalities—a desire shared by state funder Regional Development Victoria. In the words of the GrainCorp's Corporate Affairs Manager, the phrase 'Silo Art Trail' 'has become synonymous with this movement to bring tourists out to regional Australia' (Jess Simons quoted in Fuller, 2021). In 2017, Yarriambiack applied to trademark the phrase 'Silo Art Trail', seeking control over the driving tour concept and resisting the pressure of the more economically powerful funders to share it. The following year, GrainCorp lodged a successful legal argument to oppose the trademark on the grounds that the Trail is 'clearly inspiring to many local communities, many of which have been affected by drought' (Simons quoted in Vince, 2021).

This dispute indicates the tensions involved in bringing together multiple policy agencies around ostensibly common goals, particularly where their scope of responsibility differs. For a small local government, it demonstrates the risk of collaborating with partners that have a broader remit in which to realise such goals, as both GrainCorp and the Federal Department of Agriculture did. Local government cultural policy initiatives are intended to tell the unique stories of their communities in response to globalisation and economic rationalisation, which threaten to erode local communities in the way that agricultural industrialisation has eroded the towns in Yarriambiack (Robinson, 2018, p. 724). In principle, this is also the goal of the state and federal agencies that collaborate with local governments, and which rely on them to elicit those local priorities and stories. However, several factors act together to complicate this collaboration: the larger agencies' remit for communities across the state or

nation; the similarities between towns confronting the same predicament with the same kind of resources—in this case the industrialisation of agriculture and the decommissioned siloes; and—most significantly—the focus on tourism as an economic lifeline for faltering rural economies. Together, these factors encourage the larger agencies to seek to replicate successful initiatives elsewhere, which in turn threatens both the commercial and cultural uniqueness of the original, local initiative. So too does the fact that larger agencies, at least governmental agencies, are required to demonstrate that they make evidence-based policy decisions. Once an initiative is clearly a success, it becomes evidence on which to base future initiatives, with little incentive for them to vary the model.

This is a problem that local governments initiating creative placemaking will need to address. The earlier cultural policy tendency to prioritise the touring of artwork to regional and rural towns did not generate profile and income for those towns in the way that creative placemaking initiatives such as the Silo Art Trail do, but nor did it require them to demonstrate and uphold their local uniqueness. In addition, Gadwa Nicodemus (2013) describes creative placemaking as involving a practice in which proponents seek to expand the sources of arts funding by developing cross-sector partnerships founded on values that they share with non-arts stakeholders, such as local businesses. This description fits Yarriambiack's development of the Silo Art Trail well. But one of the inherent risks of this practice is that while the cultures of local communities may differ, the conditions they work within remain the same. Agriculture has both declined and industrialised across the nation. The same kind of industrial infrastructure is decommissioned and decaying across the nation. Sources of alternative revenue for rural towns are limited in the same way, making tourism the most promising of scant opportunities. While these conditions describe the circumstances of the small rural towns in Australia's wheat belt, a similar sameness is likely to apply to larger towns relying on, for example, a food and wine culture.

CONCLUSION

The Silo Art Trail is now a significant tourist attraction that has created notable impact in and beyond its region. It has drawn tourist and media attention, and injected money into the local economy that has allowed new businesses to flourish. According to the media, in some locations it 'really changed the fabric of the town', bringing people together in new

ways (Humphreys, 2017). It is cited as a driver of regional development through the creative repurposing of agricultural infrastructure elsewhere (Green, 2021). It is also a model for how a range of agencies across different levels of government with various interests and agendas enabled a single painted silo to grow into an enterprise of significant scale. It demonstrates that policy influence does not always trickle down from the highest level of government to the lowest but can also move from local level upward, and works against the tendency to impose urban-centric models on all government tiers of practice. Yarriambiack's desire to retain control—expressed through its lodgement of a trademark claim—reflects its resistance to the tendency for urban-developed policy to work against, or at the very least, marginalise local perspectives, knowledge and interest.

The Silo Art Trail is of additional interest for the attention it draws to how policy attachment can work across different levels of government, and to the blurring of policy areas across the different levels and portfolios of government as some goals—particularly economic development and community resilience—increasingly transcend individual agencies to become ubiquitous concepts across all areas. In this context, the Trail showcases the unique investment of a local council leading and driving a large-scale regional arts and economic development project, determined to maintain its power and influence as the Trail grows in size and attention. However, it also reveals the tensions between local and higher agency priorities. Conceived in the absence of an explicit local government policy framework, the Silo Art Trail became a forum for different agencies to play out competing objectives. In an effort to create an artwork sufficiently impressive to attract large-scale tourism, the council imported an urban art form to celebrate a story of a settler society, reproducing traditional patterns of cultural hegemony and affirming Deb Anderson's view that rural communities have 'a future only as part of a romantic past' (2010, p. 153).

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