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# Beyond Fantasy:

# A Diverse Economies Approach to Reimagining How to Resource the Arts in Aotearoa

You either have to be crazy or rich to even attempt being an independent artist in this country.
— Dominic Hoey in Big Idea Editor, "Do You Give A D.A.M.N.?"

This is just the first cut, there are more to come… I was worried what would happen to the sector when Covid came, but this is much, much more concerning. Everyone should be very worried about what is going to happen to the performing arts in this country, and what is going to happen to us creatively as a nation.
— Louise Gallagher in Lynda Chanwai-Earle, "Art's Last Supper?"

Chief Executive Stephen Wainwright has declared 'We've heard your call for a different approach to arts funding and agree that it's time to do things differently'.
— Big Idea Editor, "Time To Do Things Differently"

Public commentators, researchers and even the national arts funding agency agree Aotearoa New Zealand's arts funding system is failing, and it is time to look for alternatives. The current problems with arts funding in Aotearoa go far beyond the brutal effects of the Covid-19 pandemic. Aotearoa adopted the British arts council model in 1963 and despite many social and political changes, the fundamental approach to resourcing the arts has changed little since (Mullen and Harvey 2022b). The established model has had clear benefits for the arts, but has not served all artists equally, has failed to deliver a sustainable income for artists and arts organisations, and has not delivered equitable access. Just before the pandemic, most people working in the creative arts earned well below the average median wage (Creative New Zealand 2019), arts organisations operated in conditions of radical precarity, and organisations working to improve access to arts participation lacked the resources they needed to fully meet the

need or demand for their work (Mullen, Walls, and Ahmad 2021). The government's temporary Covid-19 relief packages were substantial but did not bring a new approach (Mullen and Lythberg 2021). As the quotes above indicate, the situation for many in the arts in Aotearoa seemed untenable by 2022. This was backed up by a report on the sustainability of careers in the arts, released at the end of 2022 (Kantar Public 2022). The report shows the median income of creative professionals remained "considerably lower" than the average salaried worker (Kantar Public 2022, 7), and being part of the gig economy brought more disadvantages than benefits.

This article shares playful visions for alternative cultural policy and funding in Aotearoa. These ideas emerge from an ongoing research project examining the past and current arts funding system in Aotearoa and considering possible alternatives. We first outline limitations of the current system in Aotearoa and argue why diverse and community economies methodologies might help in the daunting task of rethinking that system (Gibson-Graham 2006). We consider the diverse ways states resource the arts elsewhere in the world before presenting two speculative fabulations (Haraway 2011) that depict arts futures, which might seem fantastical but are grounded in existing possibilities.

Each of the authors has been involved in the arts as practitioners and researchers. Jessie Anderson is undertaking a Master of Public Policy and is also a practising musician. Elise Sterback worked for ten years as a theatre producer and venue manager and is currently doing her doctoral research on cultural policy while engaging in advocacy and sector development. Mark Harvey (Ngāti Raukawa, Ngāti Toa, Clan Keith) is an artist, curator and researcher, with 30 years professional arts experience. He now focuses on advocacy, social justice, ecology and mātauranga Māori (Māori knowledge). Molly Mullen worked in theatre in the UK before moving to Aotearoa where she researches how arts funding and policy affects participatory arts practice. While our backgrounds are diverse, some common beliefs underpin this paper, including that states have a role in resourcing arts and culture.

**Arts funding in Aotearoa: Current issues**

In 2021, we set out to understand past and present arts funding and cultural policy in Aotearoa. To do this, we reviewed academic literature on Aotearoa cultural policy and analysed policy statements and initiatives from 2017 and 2020. Our review of the first term of the progressive Labour Government led by Jacinta Ardern has been written up elsewhere (Mullen and Harvey 2022b). Some of us also conducted research on policy and funding for participatory youth arts (Mullen, Walls, and Ahmad 2021) and arts funding during Covid-19 (Mullen and Lythberg 2021). Others of us have been working to understand the experiences and needs of artists through sector advocacy. Our findings resonate with other research, which found current cultural policy and funding to be fragmented, lacking a coherent strategy and often ad-hoc (Te Taumata Toi-a-Iwi 2021).

And while the arts practice ecology in Aotearoa is diverse and complex, we think it is possible to identify some cross-cutting issues, which we outline here to give a sense of why change is needed.

Other than brief moments in the policy spotlight, cultural policy and funding has remained a relatively low government priority for the last 15 years. The fifth conservative National Government (2008–2017) are remembered for their derision of and disinvestment in the arts (McAllister 2011), and for promoting private investments (Allen Consulting Group 2010) while freezing or decreasing state support. The election of the progressive Labour government in 2017 felt like a potential renaissance, with the Prime Minister as Minister for Arts, Culture and Heritage. But this feeling fizzled out as the arts were quickly side-lined by other policy priorities and Ardern gave up the portfolio in her second term (Mullen and Harvey 2022b). Meanwhile, increases to Creative New Zealand's funding are rare and sporadic (Wenley 2022) and the government continues to have no cultural policy or arts strategy. Very recently, following criticism from the sector, Creative New Zealand's Chief Executive has acknowledged there are problems arising from the lack of cultural policy and the arts funding model (Clarke 2023; Big Idea Editor 2022b).

So, what issues is the current funding model creating? (For detailed accounts of this model see Wenley 2022; Te Taumata Toi-a-Iwi 2021). One of the primary issues for individuals and organisations across the arts ecology is the lack of options for stable, sustainable income (Kantar Public 2022; Mullen and Harvey 2022b; 2022a; Wenley 2022; Mullen et al. 2021). The prevalence of short-term competitive grants means precarity has become the norm for all but a few organisations who receive regular funding directly from the Ministry of Culture and Heritage (Wenley 2022). A now well-known report commissioned by Creative New Zealand (2019) showed most people in the creative sector struggled to make a living, earning well below the median wage. A second report, produced in 2022, showed little had changed, with "only a quarter of creative professionals are living comfortably on their income" (Kantar Public 2022). These reports indicate multiple equity issues, with stark differences in income experienced by artists according to gender, disability, discipline and career stage. What is less explicit is the degree to which the funding model itself depends on the exploitation of artists' unpaid labour, including self-exploitation (Wood 2022).

Unpaid labour and multiple inequities seem to be built into the system:

> A colonial hangover of New Zealand's arts funding structure is that the New Zealand Symphony Orchestra (NZSO) and the Royal New Zealand Ballet (RNZB) are set up as crown entities and receive funding directly from Mānatu Taonga Ministry of Culture and Heritage (MCH) rather than going through CNZ. The NZSO receives more taxpayer money than CNZ's baseline funding ($19.7m for 2022/2023), while the Royal New Zealand Ballet gets the equivalent of half of CNZ's crown income ($8.1m) –

> valuing two arts organisations higher than entire art forms supported by CNZ. In comparison, the Government gives crown entity Te Matatini $2.9m (increased this year from $1.9m) to support kapa haka Māori performing arts, an inequity called out by Te Pāti Māori. (Wenley 2022).

The arts funding system in Aotearoa seems to be firmly based on Eurocentric and capitalocentric norms (Cameron 2022). Capitalocentrism refers to the pervasive assumption that capitalism is the inevitable and/or best mode of economy (Gibson-Graham and Dombroski 2020), as in the common use of the phrase 'the economy' to refer to a capitalist economy. In Aotearoa cultural policy 'solutions' to creative practice and work in Aotearoa are often capitalocentric, for example the continued justification for public subsidy of the arts being based on the contribution they make to GDP (Mullen and Harvey 2022b; Sepuloni 2023), and that making money in professional art 'markets' is the assumed-to-be-ideal mode of income generation for artists (Mullen and Harvey 2022b; Bohm and Szreder 2020).

Three further consequences of the current funding model are the disenfranchisement of artists and arts organisations, the erosion of artist's health and wellbeing (Tukiwaho 2022) and the model's complicity in harm to communities. Reports on funding for community-based arts have shown most organisations feel excluded from CNZ funds, and other funding does not allow them to fully meet the needs of the (often marginalised) communities they serve (Arts Access Aotearoa 2019; Critical Research Unit in Applied Theatre 2019). Sector advocacy groups, meanwhile, highlight the need for meaningful opportunities for artists to determine the aims or processes of cultural policy. It is evident that unstable working conditions and insufficient pay in the arts contribute to poor levels of wellbeing for creative professionals (Kantar Public 2022). And many of the funding sources on which arts organisations depend are based on profits from activities that harm communities, such as gambling or alcohol.

As we have noted previously, these issues do not exist because the system is broken. The system is doing what it is designed to do, which is not to support equitable or sustainable livelihoods. What is needed, we argue, is not just a revamping of this system, but a deep reconsideration of the value systems that underpin it. Funding landscapes can change rapidly. After the completion of this article, in late November 2023, Creative New Zealand announced a new funding model. A comprehensive explanation of the new model was published in *The Big Idea* (Big Idea Editor 2023).

**A diverse economies approach to reimagining how we resource the arts in Aotearoa**

The diverse economies approach to scholarship and practice originates in the work of feminist economic geographers J. K. Gibson-Graham (1996), the joint pen-name of Katherine Gibson and Julie Graham. Gibson-Graham (1996) drew on feminist, queer and post-structural theories, and anti-essential Marxism, to deconstruct taken-for-granted

ideas about 'the economy' and to propose an alternative approach to political economy. Their diverse economies approach challenges the often-paralysing form of political economy critique, which focuses on capitalism's inevitable expansion into all areas of life and its dominance over all other forms of economy. Gibson-Graham (1996) argue this capitalocentric approach has the performative effect of limiting economic imaginary, scholarship and practice. Instead, they set out to instigate a "*political economy of possibility*" (Cameron and Gibson-Graham 2022, 329).

Diverse economies scholarship seeks to expand the economic imaginary, the scope of possibility for thinking and doing economy, by approaching the economy as a space of 'radical heterogeneity' and difference, identifying existing ethical economic practices (which can and do exist anywhere in that diverse economic landscape), and looking for how such practices might "connect and cohere to build a different world" (Cameron and Gibson-Graham 2022, 330). This approach is grounded in a performative political ontology, a commitment to theorising and practicing in ways that put capitalism back in its place as one of many co-existing forms of economy while also making and expanding community economies. Community economies involve ethical negotiations about, for example, what is considered a resource, how resources are used and exchanged, and how any surplus is distributed, so that humans and the planet might survive well together (Gibson-Graham and Dombroski 2020; Roelvink et al. 2015). Community economies are not yet-to-exist perfectly conceived economic utopias. They are happening already, in different parts of the world, in different sectors, and at different scales, and are typically messy, sometimes fraught, experiments with whatever there is to hand in a particular place and time. But they share ongoing attention to and care for the interdependent livelihoods and wellbeing of people and planet.

Our project uses a diverse economies approach to imagine possibilities for state resourcing of the arts without limits. Specifically, without the limits of a capitalocentric assumption that alternative arts funding models will inevitably end up serving the interests of a homogeneously capitalist economy. This assumption has, we propose, made it almost impossible to propose a viable, yet ethical, solution to the problems of arts funding in Aotearoa. In contrast, Cameron and Gibson-Graham (2022) propose, "the state is a complex and diverse set of entities" and practices, some of which support individual, collective and ecological wellbeing. So, we begin by looking at what is already 'at hand' in terms of the diverse ways states resource arts practice. We then use the method of speculative fabulation (Haraway 2011; Stengers 2014; Truman 2019) to depict more ethical and just futures for arts funding in Aotearoa. Fictional writing as a method helps us envisage what possible 'community' arts economies could grow from already existing or proposed policies and mechanisms. It also offers a way to test out what kinds of state-arts relationships and infrastructures might help make community arts economies *more* possible and durable (Cameron and Gibson-Graham 2022).

**Alternatives in existence here and now**

So, what possibilities for resourcing the arts do exist already? In early 2022, we conducted a literature review focused on identifying the diverse ways other countries support arts practise that differ from the status quo in Aotearoa. 56 items of literature were initially identified and the 21 most relevant were shortlisted. These were annotated and organised into national cases and categories of policy support (drawing methods from DrewWylie 2019; McAndrew and McKimm 2010; Murray and Gollmitzer 2012). Below we present a summary of the findings from this review.

Recent critique of arts funding in Aotearoa has targeted the competitive grants schemes of Creative New Zealand, the national arts council. But there are a plethora of other ways states can support arts practise directly and indirectly. These have been categorised previously in reports by Arts Council Ireland (McAndrew and McKimm 2010) and the Scottish Parliament (DrewWylie 2019), and in Murray and Gollmitzer's (2012) critical review of international cultural policy. The Arts Council Ireland Report identifies a range of taxation schemes, including reduced tax on artistic goods and services to stimulate demand. It also highlights some targeted pension or retirement benefits for artists, including affordable housing. Multiple reports (Murray and Gollmitzer 2012; McAndrew and McKimm 2010; IGBK 2010) identify social welfare schemes aimed at supporting artists with intermittent and low incomes. The Artists Work and Income Act in the Netherlands is one example. This provided income support for new/emerging artists, and those experiencing a temporary drop in income, for up to 48 months in a 10-year period. Notably, artists were not required to seek other work while on this benefit. In 2017, Ireland introduced a similar social welfare scheme for artists and in 2021 introduced a limited basic income guarantee scheme. Indeed, there has been increasing interest in supporting the arts through basic income schemes in recent years, with discussions pre-pandemic in Scotland (Vanhee 2021; Scottish Parliament 2019).

Other direct support for artists includes the funding of education, training and professional development. Within this category, Murray and Gollmitzer (2012) include state support for arts in schools, tertiary degrees, research centres, cultural 'hubs', targeted pathways to employment, as well as life-long learning opportunities. Their review also identified policy interventions aiming to "enhance business and management skills of individual artists or small creative enterprises" (Murray and Gollmitzer 2012). The Ireland report identifies schemes where resources for the arts are leveraged from other policy areas - for example a French scheme that allocates 1% of funds for public building developments to artworks or activities. In our review, we also identified a category of schemes aiming to resource artists through providing spaces to work and create (DrewWylie 2019), and a small subset of literature on participatory grantmaking—although not always as state-led initiatives (Banks 2020; Gibson 2017; 2019; Husted 2021; Linares and Woolard 2021). States also support arts practice indirectly through, for example, laws relating to copyright and royalties, tax incentives for

people to invest in or donate to the arts, and government quotas e.g. for local media content (McAndrew and McKimm 2010).

Cultural policy intervenes in ways that make kinds of artistic practice more possible than others. Murray and Gollmitzer (2012) identify the ways in which international cultural policies in the 2000s were predominantly "directed at generating GDP from creative activities" (426), encouraging artists and arts organisations to be entrepreneurial and promoting private finance over social security. In the language of diverse economies, such cultural policy is capitalocentric, focused on "the peak of an iceberg . . . that is the glittering mainstream artworld" (Bohm and Szreder 2020, 527). But there are also examples of policy supports/instruments, both in existence and proposed, that take the goals of different artists seriously, consider the value of paid and unpaid, commercial and non-commercial creative work, and acknowledge the multiple contexts of artistic practise (Murray and Gollmitzer 2012).

**Speculative fabulations for funding the arts**

In this section we use the method of speculative fabulation, combining fact and imagination to write possible futures for resourcing the arts grounded in our situated 'past-presents' (Haraway 2011; Stengers 2014; Truman 2019). Donna Haraway (2011) sees storytelling, science fiction and speculative fabulation as a 'material-semiotic' process of worlding. Inspired by this proposal, Stengers (2014) focuses on the way science fiction creates 'dense' worlds through which the complex consequences of hypothetical scenarios/sets of conditions can be explored. Fiction has the power to affect our thoughts and feelings, and to enact the idea "that our world does not need to be what it is, does not need to be thought and felt as it seems to authoritatively demand" (Stengers 2014, 9). Similarly, Sarah E. Truman describes speculative fabulation as a method for "probing what could be", a mode of storytelling that "defamiliarizes, queers perception, and disrupts habitual ways of knowing" (Truman 2019, 31-32). Crucially, for Truman, speculative writing involves the creation of 'real' worlds from the situated knowledges of the writers.

The narratives below are based on the situated knowledges of Mark and Elise, their experiences as professionals in the arts in Aotearoa, and their research of arts funding and policy. The process for writing these stories was inspired by Truman's (2019) research, writing speculative fiction with young people in Cardiff. But it was also improvised. Elise suggested we begin by writing funding dystopias, thinking particularly about what the arts in Tāmaki Makaurau might be like in ten years' time if the proposed cuts went ahead and if the worst of the current funding context was accelerated (Truman 2019). While the dystopias were not intended for any audience, they became an important way to probe some of the questions we had about what is making the present unbearable for many in the arts. This helped us visualise in a more specific way what practices we might see in more ethical and just arts funding futures.

The SFs below were created through roughly four phases of drafting, sharing, feedback and redrafting. Haraway and Truman emphasise the politics and ethics of speculative writing, "it matters what stories we tell to tell other stories with" (Truman 2019, 40-41). If speculative writing can performatively bring about other worlds, there is responsibility to those who will "bear the consequences" (Truman 2019). Part of our process, then, involved questioning who - human and nonhuman - might be surviving well in each fabulation, and who might not (Gibson-Graham and Dombroski 2020). Each SF is accompanied by a brief exegesis.

**A possible arts-future under a Māori Doughnut Economics model, by Mark Harvey**

The day begins with our daughter Huia and I milking the cow we share with our whānau (family) and extended whānau who we live with, in our papakāinga (communal Māori land and village area). Huia grumps about it at first but she loves the milk and it's teaching her where we get our produce from. She has a good time joking away after a while. I have it with oats our community grows, while she and Jo, our other tamaiti (child) have it with eggs from the shared heihei (chickens). That chicken Sparrow is such a laugh, she thinks she's human. I walk our tamariki (children) over to the whare kura (the school buildings) just on the other side of our papakāinga near our veggie crops and fruit trees. I'll join them later when they want us parents to help with teaching some kapa haka (Māori song and dance).

I go to the studio where I share a space with my nephew and niece – she's a visual artist in drawing, painting and sculpture and he writes and makes drama, performances, live art and video installations. I make all sorts of arts projects, depending on the social and political contexts at hand – currently I am writing a script for a comedy series on a neoliberal politician who gets voted out and gets a job in an abattoir factory line, as well as developing workshops on how to fall over (useful for all sorts of situations). Sometimes we hold workshops in our space, like a recent one with our high school students on making traditional fish traps out of fallen kanuka trees from our forest. As with everywhere on our papa kāinga, we make no unwanted waste and what rubbish we do make, it all goes back into our ecology, through either composting, decomposition, or re-working and re-using. We make materials where we can, or exchange with other community collectives like ours. Even our digital tech and things like electric cars are re-purposed usually, otherwise they are made locally from locally sourced sustainable materials.

On the way to the studio, I look over at the harakeke crop (NZ flax). Aunty and uncle are showing some of our rangatahi (youth), our school-leaver-teenagers, how to cut it with the right tikanga (protocols). They're about to take it to our marae (main courtyard), just over there to prep it and to make tukutuku panels (for renovations we are doing in our wharenui, meeting house), and things like kete (baskets) and some new kinds of wall panelling for homes that my cousin has invented and designed. It's something our

ancestors did for many generations that we lost last century, but have regained, and it's thriving.

We are lucky. We have everything we need since they let us build our papakāinga on our tribal whenua (land) I reckon. Once they were convinced we could all make Māori doughnut economics work, the government gave us arts, cultural and building development funds to get it all going. Ours is very similar to all the other communities, including the many multicultural ones nearby, that have followed our communal and participatory approach, but from their own cultural standpoints that is. Some of them are Māori combined with other cultures too. What it means for us is that in addition to us earning money for our community and iwi (tribe/s) and hapū (sub-tribe/s), the taxes we pay go back into ensuring we all have enough to live on, through liveable incomes, benefits and sometimes universal benefits (like pensions and child support). At the same time, we're not extracting resources that destroy our environment and the fabric of our lives. We have enough of what we need to survive well, quality and healthy homes, community centres that we co-run, health, social and other services, in addition to free artist studios and presentation spaces, so long as we contribute back into our garden, look after and care for each other and restore our precious ecological habitats – in our case it's a ngahere (forest) and an awa (stream). Plus, we ensure we give time to our tamariki, rangatahi and each other to teach and learn from one another, and help to maintain and run our buildings and grounds. And the money or other surplus we generate goes back into maintaining and developing our facilities, homes and services or is exchanged for the goods we can't produce in our rohe (area).

After school we're going to plant kumara (sweet potato) with our tamariki and their cousins. Then we'll go set the tuna (eel) traps for tomorrow and we'll do some Māori martial arts – I reckon Huia is going to waste me again – we've been teaching her too well (!!!) It's going to be a good day.

**Brief exegesis**

Yes, I know this might sound like an election advert for the NZ Green Party, but I propose this future as a performative strategy that might contribute to making this kind of economy possible (Gibson-Graham and Dombroski 2020). In this future, funding has been distributed in participatory ways so that artists and their communities and tribal groupings have greater control and autonomy. The economy is informed by a Te Ao Māori (Māori world) perspective on the arts as never separated from other aspects of our lives (education, health and wellbeing, environmental activities and other cultural practices) but rather as a central thread that connects these other things. Aotearoa already has the resources to implement something like this and it builds on a number of existing collective iwi (tribal) and hapū (sub-tribal) based initiatives like Toi Ngāpuhi (2022), Ngāti Whātua Ōrākei (2022), Ngāi Tuhoe (2022) and as outlined by Waereti Tait-Wall et al. (2022).

Joanne Waitoa and Kelly Dombroski (2020) consider the extent to which diverse economies thinking aligns with Māori methodologies. They suggest:

> . . . both Kaupapa Māori and diverse economies research approaches are about respectful relationships that honour the aspirations of communities. (Waitoa and Dombroski 2020)

The arts economy in my fabulation is inspired by Manuka Henare's Māori economic model, which places mana (prestige, power, authority, spiritual power, charisma, status and influence, interconnected with health and wellbeing, belonging and identity), wellbeing and Māori self-determination front and centre (Dell, Staniland, and Nicholson 2018). I draw primarily on Juhi Shareef and Teina Boasa-Dean's (2020) Māori take on Kate Raworth's Doughnut Economics (2017). Shareef and Boasa-Dean state:

> [The] Māori view of doughnut economics that ensures the balancing of "the safe and just space for humanity to thrive and ecology to regenerate," with "ecological foundation" and "social wellbeing" for iwi/hapū in our rohe . . . (2020)

This regenerative circular economic model moves away from notions of economic growth and extraction. Ecology is at the centre (Hā Taumātangi, ecological foundation), wrapped around by the "safe and just space for humanity to thrive and ecology to regenerate" (Oranga Iho Nui), which is then surrounded by social wellbeing (Tūāpapa o te Ora, spring of wellbeing); (Shareef and Boasa-Dean 2020). In my fabulation, the arts are key to weaving these aspects together, for example in cultivating and making with harakeke, conveying ecological knowledge via kapa haka, oratory, song, pūrākau, visual art and other mediums. The fabulation envisages a circular economics model aligned with Te Tiriti o Waitangi (The Treaty of Waitangi), which is the founding legal document for Aotearoa as a nation state and a partnership between Māori and the Crown. For me, a just future for the arts allows for both Māori self-determination and space for people of other cultures to be included and to thrive.

**A possible cultural renaissance, by Elise Sterback**

"E oho, e kare" (Wake up, my darling). Pania wakes up to both of her mums sitting on her bed with her favourite pastries and coffee. She rubs her eyes and winds her long dark hair up into a messy bun. "Hari Huritau" (Happy Birthday), they say, smiling at her a little too eagerly for this early in the morning. Pania sits up in bed as they hand her a large wooden box, painted gold and fastened with an old, tarnished lock. She's really been looking forward to her 21st birthday ever since she found out her whānau (family) spent the first year of her life collecting things into a time capsule for her. What will be in there? So much has changed since she was born in 2022, it will be interesting to see what artefacts from the past have ended up in the box…

She sifts through photos of her as a baby, newspaper clippings, handwritten notes - it's strange just to see so much paper in one place. Strange, too, that many of the items are written in English, since Te Reo Māori became the main language spoken soon after Aotearoa became a republic. As she takes a gulp of coffee, she pulls out three items that seem particularly curious - and turns to her mums for more of an explanation.

The first is a printed ticket stub to a musical called *Hamilton*. "That was our first date night after you were born", says her Mum, smiling. The price printed on the ticket is $140, equivalent to almost $500 now. "You paid to go to the theatre?" Pania asks, incredulous. "Yes, we only went once or twice a year back then, can you believe it?".

Now they go almost every weekend to their local community theatre: The Burrow. Pania can't imagine her life without it - she grew up there. She and her friends, many of them queerspawn like her, would spend all day making costumes and props, or jamming together in the music studio, while her mums worked in the co-op gardens out the back. In the evenings, they would cook up a feast, watch a show, or just hang out, sometimes dancing and playing music late into the night. The Burrow was like their second living room.

They never paid to watch shows because they were part of creating them - everyone in the community was involved somehow. They brought things from home, made them, or sourced them from the Community Exchange Portal. There was an arts hub in every district and they all shared their surplus produce, household appliances, and unused instruments and production items with each other through the Portal. It was amazing what you could find on there.

She supposed something like tickets were still in use though - when they went to see a play or concert in the city. You could buy these with money, but most people just used their Culture Credits. Pania earned hers by helping out and playing gigs at The Burrow and her mums got paid in credits for the handmade pottery and jewellery they traded through the Portal. The city shows were made by professional artists who were on a state salary and who made the edgiest stuff she'd ever seen - experimenting with new technologies and busting social taboos. Pania always came back full of ideas for what they could do next at The Burrow. She planned to audition for the state arts programme this year so that she could become a full-time musician, giving back to The Burrow community as an Artist Mentor, and maybe eventually touring the world as a cultural diplomat.

The next item Pania held out from the box was a surgical mask. "We had to wear those almost every day the year you were born", her Māmā explained. As a Pandy Baby, born in the peak years of the global Covid-19 pandemic, Pania had heard many stories about that time, but couldn't remember much herself. "There was a lot of fear and uncertainty", said her Māmā, reflecting. "People were anxious, depressed, we all felt isolated and

lonely. Our health system was struggling to cope with the Covid cases, let alone addressing mental health issues."

As a more holistic understanding of hauora (health) was adopted from Te Ao Māori, doctors prescribed arts experiences - helping to connect people with activities and groups as a way to pre-empt the need for more serious interventions and expensive drugs. The Burrow ran programmes for refugees and retirees, which in turn provided a regular income of Culture Credits through government subsidies of participants.

Buried under a mound of papers, Pania spotted an old piece of technology at the bottom of the box. She lifted it out to show her mums. "What's this?" she asked. "It's a smartphone," they replied. "Everyone had one of these in 2022 before Amulites came along and replaced them." Pania touched the gem-like device hanging from her neck that she couldn't imagine living without. She knew the origin story well: it was a historic moment for Aotearoa. Amulites had been inspired by a device featured in the third Avatar movie, made by Weta Digital, a film production house in Aotearoa.

The global attention Amulites received led the government to place new emphasis on creative skills and the arts as drivers of an innovative economy. The Creativity Curriculum 2030 integrated arts approaches into all subjects and sought to make Aotearoa 'the most creative nation on the planet.' Pania had grown up mixing her own paints in Chemistry class; dancing geometry; and writing historic poetry. Pania's history teacher had described this era as a second cultural renaissance, like in the 15th and 16th centuries, where art intersected with science and human consciousness was flourishing. The difference this time was the central role of Indigenous cultures and the importance of relationships with the more-than-human world. Climate degeneration had begun to reverse, but there was still a lot more to do, and the creative skills of the Pandy generation was seen as central to this progress.

Pania closed the Time Capsule for now and climbed out of bed, giving her mums a hug before she hurried off to the shower. The Council of Artists had offered her band the chance to collaborate on a Ministry of Nature Kin project after their climate protest waiata (song) went viral, so she had a full day of composing to look forward to. She couldn't imagine a better way to spend her birthday.

**Brief exegesis**

I am one of the millennials described by Gibson-Graham and Dombroski (2020) as being fed up with a TINA (There Is No Alternative) stance to capitalism. I wrote this Speculative Fabulation (SF) soon after the birth of my first child, which cast a whole new light on the future for me. I have witnessed so many of my peers in the arts community discouraging their children from pursuing an artistic career, due to their first-hand experience of the struggle. Through my SF, I am bringing into being a world where my daughter is

encouraged to explore her culture and creativity at every stage of her life, and through doing so, contributes to the flourishing of her community, both human and non-human kin alike.

Like Mark's SF, I also anticipate a future where Indigenous self-determination leads to a re-centering of holistic thinking from Te Ao Māori. By drawing on more integrated understandings of hauora (Durie 1998; Pere and Nicholson 1997), we can leave behind the imperialistic policies that segregate culture and the arts from our daily lives and harness the arts to play a key role in the wellbeing of people and planet. The arts on prescription programmes in this SF reflect an already growing awareness - such as evidenced by the World Health Organisation (Fancourt and Finn 2019) - of the role of the arts in prevention and treatment of illness and therefore in reducing pressure on the critical care parts of the health system. As a Pākehā (New Zealand European) mum to a child with Māori whakapapa (ancestral ties), it is important to me to depict a future Aotearoa that is further along in its re-Indigenisation journey: one where our national cultural identity and cultural policies and practices embody the bi-cultural partnership between Indigenous and settler communities established in our founding constitutional document, Te Tiriti o Waitangi.

Rather than relying on a dramatic increase in public funding for the arts, this alternative future builds on what we already have at hand. Existing theatre infrastructure is repositioned to occupy a place in the heart of communities - a public space where a wide range of gatherings and exchanges take place. Our current model of user-pays arts participation, which privileges only those that can afford to participate and produces passive arts consumers, is transformed into a local sustainable community economy (Gibson-Graham and Dombroski 2020). Members barter with each other and receive the direct benefits of their unpaid labour - which is returned tenfold through the sense of belonging and opportunities for joy and self-expression the community economy provides. At a macro-level, the arts hubs reflect a 'scaling-out' or networked approach, favoured by diverse economies scholars (Gibson-Graham and Dombroski 2020), rather than a centralised model of arts provision.

In the professional arts sphere, competitive funding schemes are replaced with publicly funded artist training programmes and artist incomes. These programmes, combined with an arts-led approach to education, have led to a change in status for artists in the economy. Artists are teachers, mentors, innovators and diplomats, all part of the government's vision for Aotearoa as "the most creative nation on the planet." The Council of Artists represents a flip of the top-down Arts Council structure we currently have, to one where artists become self-determining of the policies and resourcing decisions that shape their work. Where government funding is unstable, an alternative currency like Culture Credits supports the resiliency of the cultural economy in times of scarcity. By assigning credits to unwaged and reciprocal labour and non-monetary resource exchanges, we reveal the value of exchanges that Gibson-Graham and Dombroski (2020) refer to as being below the waterline of the iceberg and therefore

invisible in a capitalist understanding of the economy. By making these activities visible we can better understand the true cost of producing creative work and correct the assumption that a low level of public investment is picking up the full tab.

When all the diverse economic strategies explored in this SF are layered across the arts ecosystem, there is less dependency on competitive funding to sustain the ecosystem, making it more resilient in times of scarcity. In other words, artists thrive when their full potential is fulfilled in service of a flourishing society.

**Final wrap up**

In Aotearoa, researchers, artists, others working in the arts, and even arts funders themselves are arguing that the country's funding systems and policies need to change to better support artists and their work. The current system, based on Eurocentric and capitalocentric norms, is not able to support equity in the arts, to give artists sustainable livelihoods, or to enable the arts to fully contribute to the multiple dimensions of well-being. In this article, we have proposed that change requires more than some evidence-based technical fixes, more even than a deep, collective examination of the values and norms that underlie the system. We do need these things. But, to get us out of endless cycles of adopting and adapting policies from elsewhere, we also need some leaps of the imagination, to playfully probe different possible ethical and just futures for arts practice.

A diverse economies approach, together with the method of speculative fabulation, offers, we propose, one way to expand the scope of possibility for arts funding by imagining how we might resource the arts without the limits of capitalocentric thinking. Using these tools, we have written our possible utopias, which build on what we already have at hand: existing cultural policy and arts funding models. While the fabulations express the situated knowledges of the authors, they both share visions of community arts economies where, informed by Te Ao Māori or Te Tiriti-based approaches, the arts play a holistic role in society, integrated with education, health, wellbeing, the environment, and across family and community life. Rather than depending entirely on increased public funding for the arts, our fictions envisage multiple, diverse kinds of support and infrastructures being provided by the state in close partnership with artists, iwi/hapū and communities.

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