

Exploring the role of place-based arts initiatives in addressing social inequity in Australia: A systematic review

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Abstract

The arts remain largely absent from place-based policy, planning and programming in Australia, despite a long history of working in place-based ways to create positive social change in communities. This systematic review aimed to address this absence, by providing a synthesis of evidence about the role that place-based arts can play in advancing social equity and addressing social disadvantage. Findings reveal a potential for the arts to create change across individual, community and societal levels, yet empirical evidence to support this potential is weak. Stronger evaluation frameworks that can support capturing the impact of localised place-based arts initiatives for translation into policy and practice are discussed.

KEYWORDS

arts, inequity, place-based, placemaking, policy

1 | INTRODUCTION

The arts have a long history of working in place-based ways with the primary purpose of creating positive social change in communities (Dunphy, 2015, 2018). There is a growing interest in the role place-based arts programmes can play in improving social outcomes for individuals and communities by addressing entrenched, complex social problems on a systemic level (Bartleet & Howell, 2021; Dunphy, 2018). This interest stems from not only the arts' inherently social nature (DeNora, 2000) but also its deeply embedded role in the lives of many Australians and overt place-based presence in local communities (Australian Council for the Arts, 2020a).

Social inequity is a growing issue facing Australian communities with key groups continuing to experience disparities across a range of life outcomes, including education, health, housing,

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work and employment, and community and interpersonal relationships, which has been exacerbated by global pandemics, conflict and climate disasters (Osborne et al., 2021). These disparities are associated with the unequal distribution of resources, opportunities and rights a person has based on their position within society and are thus unjust and avoidable (World Health Organization, 2021). An individual's social location (e.g. gender, sexuality, age, race/ethnicity, disability and age) intersects with social systems of power (e.g. racism, classism/poverty, sexism/patriarchy, homophobia and transphobia, and ablism) to further exacerbated inequity (Bowleg, 2020). Place is emerging as a key aspect of these intersecting social locations, further strengthening decades of research, demonstrating that where a person is born, lives, works and grows old has profound implications for their well-being (Bambra, 2022; Halliday et al., 2021; Marmot et al., 2020; World Health Organization, 2021).

Place-based approaches to addressing inequity were born out of the recognition that socio-economic disadvantage clusters around geographic locations and that collaborative and cross-disciplinary approaches allowing social support systems to work together are required (Agger & Jensen, 2015; Glover et al., 2021). Place-based approaches recognise that communities have unique needs and challenges, meaning that a one-size-fits-all approach is unlikely to be effective in addressing disadvantage (Peters et al., 2021). More recent place-based approaches are not always limited to geographical boundaries but can encompass a broader and more nuanced understanding of place that can transcend the physical (including digital and online places) and are about social connection and meaning-making (Basaraba, 2021; Fincher, 2021; Gattenhof et al., 2021).

Alongside place-based approaches to addressing inequity, the related concept of place-making has grown out of urban development and architecture as a specific discipline of practice and scholarship involving stakeholders across local government, urban planning, architecture, community development and the arts (Barns, 2018; Basaraba, 2021). Human beings have always been “making place,” but the “placemaking” field and terminology developed in the United States from the 1950s and has been growing in Australia since the 1990s (Hes & Hernandez-Santin, 2020). While the arts have always played a role in making place (Elliott et al., 2016; Gibson, 2010), the term “creative placemaking” has been rapidly adopted in policy contexts since 2010 (Basaraba, 2021; Cohen et al., 2018; Zitcer, 2020). Creative placemaking is about using the arts and culture to imbue spaces with meaning in ways that draw on a community's strengths and aspirations (Nursey-Bray et al., 2020; Webb, 2014). It can be seen as a tool for participatory action and policy development aimed at shifting systems of power that allocate resources (Arroyo, 2017). But creative placemaking can also be used as a tool for revitalisation aimed at attracting higher income tourists as opposed to resident-led development in ways that (re)enforce inequity, gentrification and displacement (Zitcer, 2020). The involvement of artists as initiators of creative placemaking has been an important step in facilitating community participation in placemaking, which has traditionally focussed on urban planning, architecture and design (Webb, 2014). There is also increasing recognition of the broader social and economic value that can be generated when places are designed with health, equity and well-being in mind (National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, 2022).

Cross-disciplinary literature coupled with grey literature describing place-based and arts initiatives in Australia points to a potential for place-based arts initiatives (including participatory artmaking through to exhibitions designed for an audience) to play an important role in building social equity (Dunphy, 2015). Yet, the arts and cultural practice remain largely absent in place-based policy, planning and practice decision making in Australia (Arroyo, 2017; Gattenhof et al., 2021). Author 2 is leading the Creative Change Project, funded by an Australian Research Council Future Fellowship. This project seeks to address the role community music can play in addressing entrenched social inequity in Australia, and this systematic review provides a foundational evidence base for this major national study.

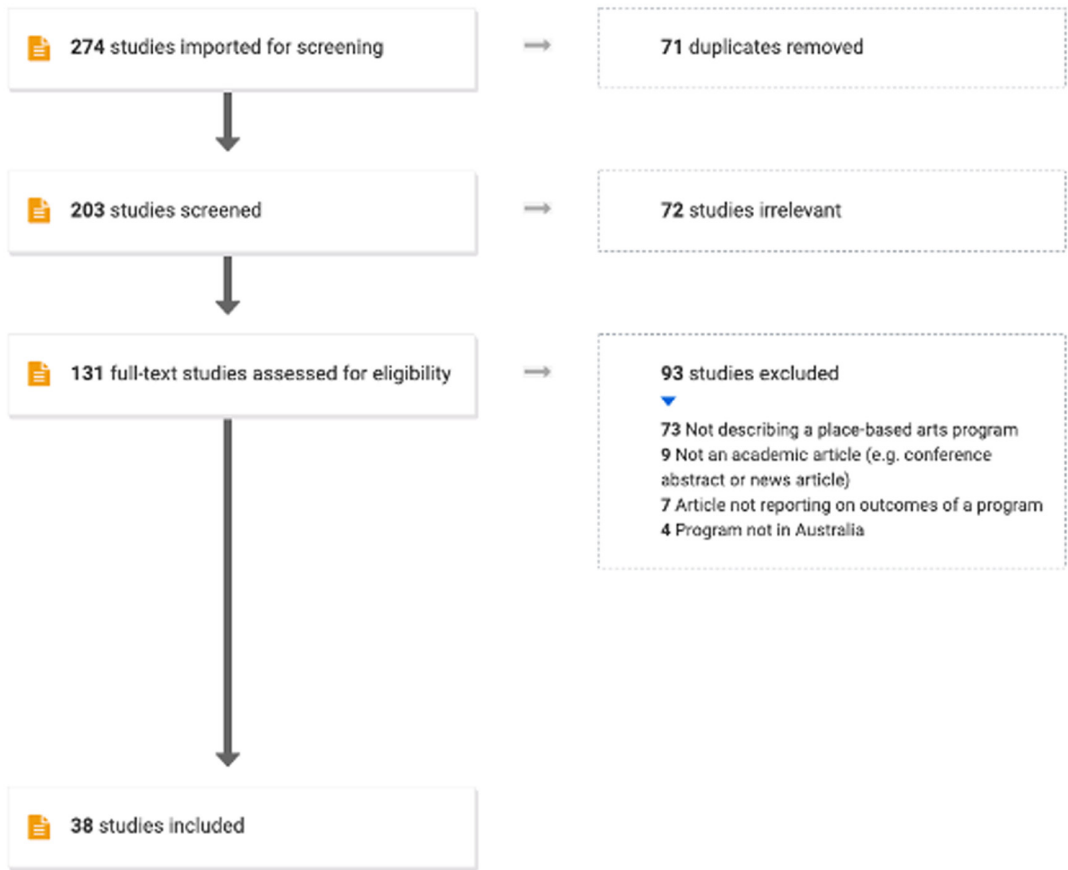


FIGURE 1 PRISMA-S search strategy flow chart.

TABLE 2 Inclusion and exclusion criteria.

Inclusion criteria	Exclusion criteria
Exploring a place-based initiative in Australia using a creative approach	Describing an arts-based initiative without reporting or discussing outcomes
Reporting on or discussing outcomes	Conducted in a country other than Australia
	Not full text (i.e. conference abstracts)

2.1 | Inclusion criteria

To ensure we captured the wide gamut of place-based arts initiatives, we included all articles describing initiatives that had a creative focus (coordinated top-down through to participatory and/or informal initiatives; Table 2). In recognition of the relatively small and emerging nature of this body of literature, we did not limit inclusion by methodological or quality assessment. This approach allowed us to capture a comprehensive picture of this exploratory field of scholarship. While this meant that a quality appraisal process was not appropriate, we have included a comprehensive discussion about the limitations of the identified articles. The first author completed the search strategy and initial screening in consultation with the second author. The first and second authors then independently screened the 131 articles, with discrepancies being resolved via discussion until consensus was reached. The third author reviewed the final inclusion.

2.2 | Data extraction and synthesis

A data extraction form was developed by the team, and data extraction was conducted by the first author and checked by the research team to support accuracy and consistency. See Appendix S1 for the details and summary of each included article. Given the diverse, largely qualitative and often process-based nature of the articles, we used a narrative approach to data synthesis (Petticrew & Roberts, 2006). The first author conducted initial inductive synthesis summarising and sorting outcomes into themes. Themes were discussed with the research team to collaboratively develop a final set of themes and subthemes. Each article was then reread and coded specifically for each theme. As we were interested in equity, we employed the socio-ecological model, which draws attention to the relationships between people, behaviour, well-being, place and the environment (Bronfenbrenner, 2000; Golden & Wendel, 2020). The socio-ecological model draws attention away from individual-only conceptualisations of well-being and allows for the investigation of societal factors and power structures that are foundational to disparities in life outcomes for groups with a population. As (Golden & Wendel 2020, p.2) highlight, employing the socio-ecological model is useful for understanding equity as it supports an epistemological shift that can “broaden conceptions of well-being, redress a history of inequitable valuation of knowledge and culture, [and] advance systemic and sociopolitical changes” (2). Consistent with the socio-ecological model, we organised outcomes across individual (micro), community (meso) and societal (macro) levels; this corresponds with the report by the Commission for the Social Determinants of Health, highlighting that intervention across micro, meso and macro levels is required to reduce inequity (CSDH, 2008).

3 | FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

We identified a total of 38 articles published between 2006 and 2022, including 25 peer-reviewed articles, 11 book chapters, one thesis and one substantial conference paper. The initiatives described were based in urban, regional and rural areas and differed in relation to the size of geographic space, population and at times conceptualisation of place; for example, digital online place and local government suburb jurisdiction were both a focus in different articles. The initiatives used a diverse range of art forms and most used more than one, including music/audio art/songwriting (10), photography (8), painting (6), performance and/interactive drama (7), creating performance spaces (5), digital art/digital artefacts/ digital storytelling/digital games (5), film (5), mural (5), sculpture (4), creative writing (3), dance (3), drawing/illustration (3), cooking (2), craft (2), gardening/planting (2), graffiti (2), walking (2), events unspecified (1), possum skin cloak creation (1), markets (1), wearable art (1), silo art (1), public infrastructure (1), mosaic (1), weaving (1), poetry (1), textile work (1) and portraiture (1). See Appendix S1 for specific art forms used in initiatives described in individual articles.

The research methods were largely qualitative with many articles reporting more than one method (Table 3). Methodology and methods were commonly not adequately described.

3.1 | Limitations of the identified articles

Many of the identified articles were not designed as evaluative studies but are practitioner and/or researcher reflections about initiatives. Given the small and exploratory body of literature, these articles were included as together they do illuminate important insights. However, these findings provide noteworthy and important areas for further research rather than empirical evidence. Evaluations of arts initiatives are commonly critiqued for limited methodological and methodological robustness, particularly in relation to small sample sizes, reliance on anecdote, minimal

TABLE 3 Methods of evaluation employed in identified articles to capture the outcomes of initiatives.

	Interviews	Practitioner reflection	Ethnographic	Photo-elicitation	Practice-led	Document analysis	Surveys	Focus groups
Anwar	x							x
Barnes	x					x		x
Barns		x						
Beer 2020		x						
Beer 2018					x			
Beer, Curtis 2018	x		x		x			
Budge	x		x				x	
Butler		x						
Coghlan	x			x			x	
Crowe	x		x			x		
Curtis	x		x			x		
Dekeyser		x						
Edensor			x					
Edwards-Vandenhoeck			x					
Gannon	x	x						
Gardiner	x							
Gonsalves	x							x
Gray	x		x	x	x		x	
Green						x		
Johnstone		x						
Joseph			x					
Lade					x			
Mackay	x							
Madsen	x		x			x	x	
Mason	x						x	
McGaw					x			x
Nursey-Bray		x						
O'Neil	x			x				
Potter		x						
Sampson				x				
Son	x							
Sonn 2015			x	x				
Sonn 2022		x						
Thomasson		x						
Tooth		x						
Vaughan		x						
Warr	x		x		x			
Yue	x		x					

discussion of methodological approach and inadequate reporting of data collection and analysis methods, lack of longitudinal data and limited exploration of the theory of change (Clift et al., 2021; Dunphy, 2015; Dunphy & Ware, 2017; Mughal et al., 2022). Each of these challenges is also apparent in the identified body of literature. Further, the identified articles describe disparate goals and reporting mechanisms, which pose challenges for drawing conclusions from the body of literature as a whole. Despite these limitations, this review points to important insights about how place-based arts initiatives may work across individual, community and societal levels to advance social equity in Australia.

3.1.1 | Reported outcomes

We synthesised the outcomes reported in the identified articles across individual, community and societal levels. Table 4 lists each identified article and outcomes reported across each theme; see Appendix S1 for more details. We have categorised findings across specific levels, but these do not represent rigid boundaries, and we draw attention to how themes relate and interact across levels. Figure 2 provides a visual representation of our themes.

Individual

In our application of the socio-ecological model, we use the individual level to capture direct outcomes for individual people participating in the reported initiatives. We identified outcomes for individuals across personal development, embodied learning and creative citizenship, well-being and social capital.

Personal development Identified articles describe participants developing technical creative skills related to digital artefacts, poetry and writing, craft, visual art, film and production, and sound-based art, which were important for developing a sense of mastery, confidence and empowerment. This skill development also appeared to support positive, social and economic outcomes, particularly through providing opportunities for participants to represent themselves as “diversely skilled professionals” (Mackay et al., 2021, 402). The initiatives described by the articles identified in this review further suggest the development of transferable skills among participants, including teamwork, concentration, flexibility, innovation and other learning capacities, time management and logistics, and communication. In addition to technical and transferable skills, three articles discuss shifts in approaches to professional work and other aspects of life that occurred as a result of participation. Such shifts can be integral for transformative change at community and societal levels, working not only to ameliorate poor outcomes for individuals but also to shift systemic approaches and assumptions that create inequity. For example, in reflecting on an initiative that involved First Nations' mapping of place in Southeast Australia using traditional First Nation's possum skin cloaks, McGaw (2014, 30) discusses how the initiative reorientated the way they understood “place” which had potential impacts on future work:

As an architect, I am seeing ‘place’ in new ways: as an entangled social assemblage shaped by law, economics and spirituality, as much as by topography, views, orientation and aesthetics.

Embodied learning and creative citizenship Embodied learning is a process by which the meaning of what is being learnt is grounded in body movement, action and perception of the learner (Nathan, 2021). The identified literature touches on how the arts can create an immersive experience that supports embodied learning. For example, Tooth and Renshaw (2009, 100) describe how an interactive drama initiative that focussed on environmental narratives

TABLE 4 Summary of outcomes under each theme reported in identified articles.

	Individual			Community						Society			
	Personal development	Embodied learning	Creative citizenship	Well-being	Social capital	Sharing place	Shaping place	Belonging	Community building	Resourcefulness	Challenging power	Development vs justice	Making place on stolen land
Anwar				X	X	X		X	X	X			X
Barnes						X						X	
Barns						X					X	X	
Beer 2020						X	X	X					X
Beer 2018	X	X	X	X		X	X						
Beer, Curtis 2018	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X			
Budge	X				X				X				
Butler	X	X	X										
Coghlan					X	X	X	X	X				
Crowe						X	X	X	X				
Curtis					X	X	X	X	X				
Dekeyser				X		X	X	X			X		
Edensor				X		X	X	X	X				
Edwards-Vandenhoeck				X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X
Gannon	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X					
Gardiner				X	X	X	X	X			X		
Gonsalves	X			X		X	X	X	X				
Gray	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X					
Green						X	X	X	X				X
Johnstone	X		X		X				X				
Joseph	X			X				X					X
Lade				X		X	X	X					X
Mackay	X			X	X	X	X	X	X	X			
Madsen	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		

TABLE 4 (Continued)

	Individual			Community						Society			
	Personal development	Embodied learning	Creative citizenship	Well-being	Social capital	Sharing place	Shaping place	Belonging	Community building	Resourcefulness	Challenging power	Development vs justice	Making place on stolen land
Mason	x	x	x		x	x	x		x	x			
McGaw	x	x	x			x	x	x			x		x
Nurse-Bray			x		x	x	x	x	x		x		x
O'Neill			x	x	x	x	x	x	x				
Potter						x							
Sampson					x								
Son	x				x	x	x		x				
Sonn 2015	x			x	x	x	x	x	x		x		
Sonn 2022	x		x	x	x	x			x		x		
Thomasson					x				x				
Tooth		x	x					x					
Vaughan					x	x	x						
Warr	x			x	x	x	x	x	x				x
Yue	x	x	x							x			

The colour shading separates each level of outcomes (Individual, Community and Society) to support readability.

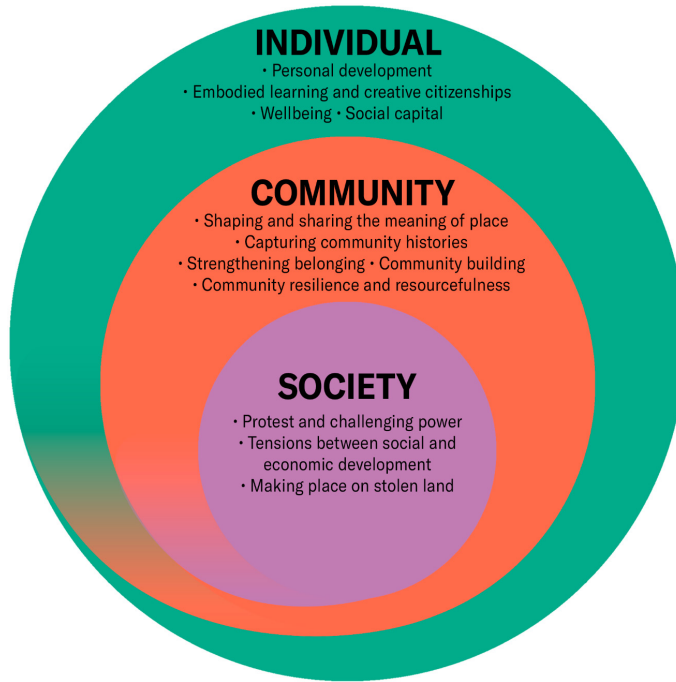


FIGURE 2 Visual representation of themes.

supported primary school students to deepen their attentiveness to the environment and develop connections between themselves and place (“as opposed to space”). In the identified articles, embodied learning facilitated through the immersive nature of the arts translated into care and connection with the environment and acts of creative citizenship (creativity and innovation promoting critical reflection and action related to social, political or cultural issues; Elliott et al., 2016). Articles discuss notions related to creative citizenship and describe ways place-based arts initiatives encouraged people to become engaged as “change agents,” “champions” and “advocates” for their communities (Madsen, 2019, 35). Articles highlighted how place-based arts initiatives encourage critical reflection and action on key social issues (e.g. environmental sustainability and First Nations rights) and motivate people to become active in contributing to the shaping and development of the places they live. Such critical reflection and social action are important for building equitable societies by drawing focus to rights and social and environmental justice (Amorim-Maia et al., 2022; Marmot et al., 2020). For example, in a study exploring a place-based arts initiative conducted with school students, authors report that a local river “became the ‘beloved’ of many of the students when they wrote poetry about it, danced it, sung it and performed it” (Gray & Birrell, 2015, 339). This connection facilitated an active care for the environment as the participants “threw themselves wholeheartedly into digging out invasive fireweed and lantana” (Gray & Birrell, 2015, 339).

Well-being Well-being is a complex concept that encompasses aspects of positive mental health, control of one's life, happiness and a sense of purpose, all of which contribute to thriving for individuals and communities (CDC, 2018; Ruggeri et al., 2020). Supporting well-being of disadvantaged groups and for people living in places of disadvantage is important for ameliorating the consequences of inequity (Dominguez & Arford, 2010). The outcomes related to personal development discussed above contribute to a broader body of knowledge about the role of arts in supporting well-being, including through building mastery, skills development, and learning and career opportunities (Clift & Camic, 2016; DeNora, 2013; Higgins & Willingham, 2017;

Sheppard & Broughton, 2020). The identified literature speaks to several other well-being-related outcomes, including mental health, joy, confidence and empowerment. For example, through interviews and focus groups conducted with a range of stakeholders exploring the role of arts in civic and social participation in rural towns Anwar McHenry (2011, 251) found:

For many respondents actively involved in the arts, it was an integral part of their wellbeing, providing both opportunity for socialising, self-expression, and “time out” from day-to-day stressors.

Outcomes related to joy are often overlooked in evaluative literature, but joy and happiness are important aspects of well-being associated with positive life outcomes and quality of life (CDC, 2018; DeNora, 2013; Higgins & Willingham, 2017; Huppert, 2009). In describing outcomes from a range of place-based arts initiatives conducted in regional areas, Sonn et al. (2022, 106) write:

Enjoyment and pleasure that results from participating in the arts is often not emphasised because the focus is on addressing social ills ... These projects delivered nuanced outcomes related to the meanings and processes of empowerment for project participants.

Well-being is also associated with positive relationships spanning from personal to professional (Huppert, 2009). Specifically, social capital can play a key role in well-being (Eriksson, 2011), as highlighted in the identified literature.

Social capital Social capital is about social networks and the benefits and value (or harm) that arise from them (Eriksson, 2011; Woolcock, 2001). Social capital can be categorised into bonding, bridging and linking capital that they each have distinct but overlapping functions, all of which are reported across many of the articles (Claridge, 2018). Social capital can play an important role in addressing inequity by enabling more equal access to resources that support positive life outcomes (Dominguez & Arford, 2010; Eriksson, 2011; Putland et al., 2013).

Bonding social capital refers to close relationships between people within a group or community, often with similar demographic characteristics, beliefs, norms and attitudes (Eriksson, 2011). The identified articles discuss how place-based arts initiatives can support bonding relationships by facilitating skill development and creative collaborations useful for strengthening artists' and community members' well-being and career development. For example, in describing the outcomes of a “makerspace” in an urban industrial setting, Budge (2019, 84) highlights the development of bonding social capital as highly valued:

One of the most common observations offered by staff and members about the Makerspace was its value as a hub for networking and collaboration. Multiple interviewees recognized the importance of not only a physical site and the tools available ... but also the ongoing interactions with staff and fellow makers. It was noted that makerspaces offer the potential for connections and collaboration outside of the formal learning institutions where they may be typically fostered.

This quote demonstrates the overlap between bonding and bridging social capital, which is also important for supporting personal development and career growth, key aspects of ameliorating the consequences of inequity for people experiencing disadvantage and marginalisation.

Bridging social capital represents weaker ties that connect people from different groups to provide knowledge, skills and resources (Eriksson, 2011). Nine articles discuss outcomes related to bridging social capital. These articles identified how place-based arts initiatives facilitated relationships between community members with different skill sets and who may not have otherwise

crossed paths. These relationships ignited new collaborations that “[opened] a door for local people to fulfil their creative potentials and emerge as leaders” (Mackay et al., 2021, p. 401). For example, describing an initiative that engaged local artists in creating sculptures in response to severe drought, Mason and Scollen (2018, p. 270) state:

Several professional public art practitioners were engaged to mentor the less experienced artists, assisting them in developing their skills and solving problems.

In addition to bonding and bridging relationships, identified articles also highlight opportunities for developing linking social capital.

Linking social capital is formal, vertical relationships between people across different hierarchies (Eriksson, 2011). Linking social capital is less explored in evaluations of place-based initiatives but potentially significant for shifting inequity (Agger & Jensen, 2015; Putland et al., 2013). In the identified articles, linking social capital was associated with occasions for community members to engage with professionals outside their immediate community, which created opportunities for career progression, exposure and exploring of new professional avenues. Madsen (2019) highlights that a key aspect of a creative placemaking initiative was establishing linking relationships between artists, the community and policymakers and funders to remove bureaucratic barriers, which began to address power imbalances between these groups. Such examples demonstrate the importance of linking social capital that supports vertical relationships and opportunities in places of entrenched disadvantage (Agger & Jensen, 2015).

Community

Community-level outcomes are those with the potential to reach beyond the individual in ways that may have implications for the wider population and place. The identified articles describe ways place-based arts initiatives are used to both share and shape the meaning of a place, including capturing the histories of place and challenging location-based stigma. Across the identified literature, this is related to developing and strengthening pride in place and, in turn, strengthening a sense of belonging. This sense of belonging contributes to community building, supporting key outcomes across individual, community and societal levels.

Shaping and sharing the meaning of place The articles identified in this review discuss how place-based arts initiatives are used to shape and share meaning attached to a place and what people value about a place with each other and outsiders. Articles highlighted shifting narratives about what it means to live in a place and also discovering new ways of being in and connecting with a place – turning “space” into “place.” Viewing a place differently allows people to imagine and explore new ways of using spaces in their communities and imbuing these spaces with meaning. For example, Edensor and Andrews (2019, 268) describe outcomes related to a project that invited residents to walk and dance along a maligned creek, with a creative video of the process being part of a light projection festival:

Through dance, the creek is reconfigured as a ‘loose space’ ... in which activities are not prescribed and a playful ‘prioritising of the non-cognitive and more-than-rational’ may occur ... the video seeks to further convey the pleasurable experience of using place otherwise, foregrounding the creek’s sensual and ludic potentialities, stimulating us to surmise how we might engage with the space.

Shaping the meaning of place in this way can have important implications for social equity by reimagining neighbourhoods and other places in ways that challenge dominant ideologies and place-based stigma (Webb, 2014). Beyond shaping place, capturing the meaning and value of place via arts-based methods can have important policy implications in relation to community and urban development, ensuring the experiences of marginalised groups are considered

(Sampson & Gifford, 2010). Sharing the meaning and value of a place can further contribute to developing and strengthening pride in place and a sense of belonging. Articles identified spoke to the way place-based arts initiatives have been used as a vehicle to present place in a positive light and with pride, which in two articles is linked to reducing location-based stigma. This is demonstrated by a quote from a participant of an initiative conducted with a low-income neighbourhood that resulted in a creative piece exhibited at a local gallery and at academic conferences:

The curtain looks great. ... I expected a flannelette curtain [stereotype of the neighbourhood]. I think it's great because it shows our area and it makes it look interesting and a bit vibrant. It doesn't mention flannelette at all, which is good. It doesn't say, 'this is our stereotype and here we are'. We can present our place well. (Warr et al., 2021, 282)

Through engaging residents in artmaking, this project “sensitised participants to commonplace, and even mundane, experiences of place,” which provided a space to develop “novel and complex representations of place” (p. 282), and the authors found that:

The imaginative resources of art may not be able to transform the material experiences of poverty – and [stigmatised] reputations are indeed sticky – but using [arts] to depict low-income neighbourhoods in nuanced and inclusive ways might begin to challenge distorting stereotypes and lessen harmful reality effects. (p. 283)

Building a sense of pride in place supported feelings of happiness and satisfaction, as did opportunities to (re)present place positively to outsiders. Edwards-Vandenhoeck et al. (2020, 178) discuss such outcomes as they describe the impact of a participatory, collaborative mural in Gija Country, regional Australia:

Gija residents commented that they felt the murals made their community look beautiful and that this enhanced their experience of their own public spaces. Residents expressed satisfaction and pride in the positive image the murals projected of Warmun to people visiting the community.

Sharing the meaning of place also contributes to creative citizenship. Through collaborative participation in the arts, communities can be engaged in dialogue with people from different backgrounds and with diverse life experiences. It is through such dialogue that communities can ask themselves who they are and who they want to be, the first step in achieving an equitable society (Arroyo, 2017). The outcomes related to shaping and sharing the meaning of place resonate with research suggesting empowerment and control at the community level is an important aspect of building equity (Marmot et al., 2020).

Capturing community histories Many of the identified articles highlight the important role that place-based arts can play in capturing and remembering the history of place. This is particularly important for bringing to light histories of colonisation and exclusion, without which achieving equity and social justice is not possible (Leitch et al., 2020). In the identified articles, history and sharing the meaning attached to place were important for “foster[ing] relationships within and between communities” (Sonn et al., 2015, p. 93), an important finding linked to community building and social capital. In describing an artists' camp used to support researchers in developing a deeper understanding of place, Vaughan (2013, 48) states:

For most of the researchers this was the first time that they had seen evidence of traditional modes of habitation. It challenged their understanding of how the land

had been occupied prior to colonisation, and how biased much of what they had been told had been. This encounter [had] profound effects on all. Our assumptions, even with the most liberal of intentions, were challenged, and our comprehension of this place was transformed.

This quote demonstrates the interrelatedness of individual, community and societal levels of action, illustrating how capturing the history of a place can affect individuals in ways that may translate into action that affects change at the societal level through shifting practices and assumptions that support the foundations of inequity.

Strengthening belonging Many of the identified articles highlight strengthening a sense of belonging and connection to place as important outcomes. The authors link the strengthening of belonging and connection to place to the following: pride in place, well-being, agency, connection to others (social capital) and understanding and caring for the environment. In describing three place-based arts initiatives conducted across urban areas, Nursey-Bray et al., 2020 provide one example of how the relationships between these outcomes may work:

In the process of visiting the exhibitions [people] start to build memory and identification with and for that place, which when repeated over a number of years, confirms the importance of that place. [Sculptures by the Sea] also binds the public in a sense of pride and belonging. (311) The link between the surf life-saving club at one of Adelaide's most popular beaches and the artistic community helps reinforce the attachment to Brighton as a place and pride in the city overall as a creative city. (312)

In discussing an annual jazz festival in a regional town, Curtis (2010) highlights how outcomes of a place-based music initiative reached beyond geographic boundaries and also beyond art to establish and foster a “sense of place and belonging” for residents and also for people not residing there:

Through its commitment to artistic freedom, Wangaratta has enabled those within the jazz community to feel that they belong at this place (108) ... catalysing non-musical relationships and a sense of belonging in a way that further cements the event's reputation. (110) ... The event is thus experienced beyond the physical boundaries of the festival. The role of the festival space is matched by its role in the articulation of symbolic notions of belonging, community and musical experience which go beyond both place and time. (113)

The benefits of identified outcomes related to belonging, pride in place and a sense of community may be understood through place attachment theory that demonstrates such feelings as important for fostering individual, group, and cultural self-esteem, self-worth and self-pride (Altman et al., 1992).

Community building The articles speak clearly to the role of place-based arts initiatives in building community. Consistent with broader literature, community building was associated with feelings of belonging, which supported and were supported by social capital (Putland et al., 2013; Webb, 2014). In discussing a range of place-based arts initiatives conducted across a number of communities in regional and remote areas, Sonn et al. (2022) state:

The [creative arts] workshops ... facilitated people coming together to get to know each other, to share what makes them unique and to discover what they have in

common.(108) ... [The] arts and cultural tools mobilised ... are designed to build capacity, name realities and construct collective memory, and strengthen bonds across generations. (114)

Anwar McHenry (2011, 248) supports this finding stating, “the arts can provide a way of facilitating and encouraging civic and social engagement amongst individuals who would not normally participate.” This also has important equity implications at the societal level, ensuring voices of marginalised groups are heard and responded to in programming and policy planning. Articles demonstrate how permanent installations and creative spaces, as well as reoccurring events, work to bring people together and establish a common identity, which can translate into practical actions that support a community. Crowe (2007, 388) used interviews and observation to illuminate how people involved in a community cinema in a regional town “were aware of the connection between the cinema and the community”:

[One participant] had already cited ‘community life’ as a reason why she likes living in Tumut, and the cinema provides her with a site through which to actively identify and construct meanings of community and feelings of belonging. Her identification also extends to the civic level: asked what it's like living there she replied, ‘I'm a dedicated person to Tumut’. (p. 385)

While participants in Crowe's study also discuss counter-narratives of exclusion related to challenges accessing the cinema as a community space, other articles also draw attention to ways place-based arts initiatives can breakdown stereotypes and assumptions (re)connecting people to places and each other. Consistent with broader literature (McCarthy, 2004), Barns (2018) highlight the way temporary installations can also play a role in community building through supporting connection with others, facilitating sharing the meaning of place and elucidating the history of a place.

Articles further draw attention to how place-based arts initiatives can contribute to resilience and resourcefulness at a community level, which is closely tied to developing creative citizenship as well as belonging and social capital—all important elements that support equity (Anwar McHenry, 2011; Peters et al., 2021). It is through strengthening connections and fostering collective imagination that communities can navigate challenges and envisage a better future (Arroyo, 2017).

Community resilience and resourcefulness Community resilience refers to capability to prepare for, respond to and recover from disaster. Four articles identified in this review discuss place-based arts initiatives facilitating community resilience in response to drought, flood and climate crisis preparedness. For some scholars, the concept of community resilience does not allow scope for transformative change that challenges the structures of power responsible for the unequal distribution of resources (i.e. inequity; MacKinnon & Derickson, 2013; Peters et al., 2021). This work calls for a shift in language to “resourcefulness” in order to recognise the importance of community empowerment and self-determination in making meaningful social change. For example, Beer et al. (2018) discuss the important role of participation in place-based arts initiatives for supporting collective action and social capital in relation to environmental sustainability. Drawing on a project that included the collaborative creation of a recyclable, biodegradable, biodiverse and edible performance space, Beer et al. (2018, p. 34) surmise:

The coming together to create something, ‘to make something happen’, is the very essence of community capacity-building for environmental sustainability. ... [I]t is our proposition that a community that is ecologically sustainable will have high levels of social capital, because eco-logical sustainability requires coordinated collective action...

Outcomes reported in the identified articles related to environmental sustainability have important equity implications given the “interconnected forms of social-environmental injustices that drive vulnerabilities” (Amorim-Maia et al., 2022, 101053). Viewed through the lens of community resourcefulness, the identified articles suggest a potential for place-based arts initiatives to also work to address equity at the societal level.

Society

At the societal level, we describe outcomes that have the potential for shifting the power relations, assumptions and norms that lie at the heart of inequity. Place-based arts initiatives may provide an avenue for challenging the status quo and questioning power relations that are responsible for the unequal distribution of resources and rights, including through reclaiming a place for First Nations communities and giving voice to excluded and marginalised groups/experiences. Yet, the identified body of literature also points to how place-based arts initiatives are used in ways that cement power relations with the potential to exacerbate, rather than ameliorate, inequity. This is brought to light through discussions related to tensions between community and economic development approaches as well as the problems of making place on stolen lands (Edwards-Vandenhoeck et al., 2020).

Protest and challenging power Six articles discuss the potential for place-based arts initiatives to be exercised as a form of protest and to challenge the status quo. Sonn et al. (2022, 114) highlight the way creative outputs illuminated a history of oppression and violence while also emphasising resistance and resilience, both integral aspects of transformative change:

The stories collected and archived so far are resources for Aboriginal communities but are also important counter stories that challenge wilful ignorance within the broader Australian community. The process of storytelling about oppressive realities and the various ways in which people resist, subvert, and survive oppression is a central part of the push for epistemic justice.

Similarly, Edwards-Vandenhoeck et al. (2020, 178) discuss how a collaborative, participatory community mural worked to “problematise placemaking” as an “act of decolonisation, a conscious attempt to destabilise power relations connected to race, identity, and land, and prioritise Gija culture, values, and place-based meanings.”

Other articles further describe how place-based arts initiatives have been used by First Nations communities to reclaim place in the face of ongoing colonisation. In an interview-style article between a Wurundjeri Elder and a non-Indigenous academic/architect, the authors describe a range of place-based arts practices (including public performances, murals and street-art, and sit-ins) that “Indigenous people in Melbourne [have] used to make claims over place” (Gardiner et al., 2018, 589). In reflecting on such temporal place-based strategies, authors write:

They are each profoundly symbolic markers and makers of place... Placemaking practices such as these make claims on urban space in the absence of land ownership. (596)

Yet, the identified articles also make clear the limitations of art alone for making transformative change, particularly in relation to economic benefits for marginalised groups and land ownership First Nations communities. As Gardiner et al. (2018, 583–584) continue, “[i]n the end, transitory placemaking practices are unsatisfying for Auntie Margaret, who yearns for the economic benefits that durable tenure to place would afford her people.” The identified articles further point to ways place-based arts initiatives have the potential to cement inequity and silence already marginalised groups.

Tensions between economic and community development

Identified articles suggest that place-based arts initiatives are sometimes designed or appropriated for commercial purposes and “place-promotion agenda[s],” which can work to exacerbate social inequity (Barnes et al., 2006, 347). Two articles point to how events that are implemented top-down can reinforce inequity and work to disconnect people from place. In an analysis of events as a placemaking tool, Son et al. (2021, 235) describe how “place activation plans” can be “used to change and discourage negative or unwanted behaviours in the place by encouraging positive behaviours or the use of the space to improve the experiences for all users.” While the authors do not extend their analysis critically, this quote raises questions about who defines “unwanted behaviours” and who is excluded in “all users.” Thomasson (2017, 199) draws on cultural geography theory to discuss how large-scale arts festivals can “divert attention away from social inequalities” and reveals “the power relations behind the continued investment in [place branding] that promotes the interests of the cultural elite while obscuring other residents.” In exploring such tensions between place-based arts initiatives, placemaking and (developer-led) revitalisation, Barns (2018, 66) concludes that:

Creative placemaking practice must seek to demonstrate a wider diversity of potentials, including, not least, the creation of inclusive places that speak to the possibilities of spatial [and social] justice.

While emerging literature suggests a role for First Nations knowledges and the arts in supporting both economic and community development (Bartleet et al., 2019, 2021; Sunderland, et al., 2022), discussions of spatial and social justice must centre on the fact that Australia does not have a treaty with First Nations peoples.

Making place on stolen land The identified articles acknowledge the problem of implementing place-based arts initiatives on stolen lands:

Questioning settler-colonial practices of placemaking and its effect on claims for land ownership, coupled with the knowledge that no formal treaties are in place with Australia's first peoples, this research also highlights the deeply troubling nature of attempts to ‘make’ place on lands ... that have ... been stolen from Australia's First Nation's people. (Edwards-Vandenhoeck et al., 2020, 179)

While articles suggest place-based arts initiatives may have value as tools to support reconciliation, international literature highlights that social equity cannot be achieved without acknowledgement and understanding of colonisation, displacement and dispossession (Webb, 2014). This demonstrates the importance of capturing place histories for making transformative change at the societal level. There may be potential for place-based arts initiatives to support reconciliation, a process essential to achieving social equity, but practitioners must “find modes of engagement that reconcile the tensions caused by historical yet enduring invasion of space and place” (Nursey-Bray et al., 2020, 305).

4 | CONCLUSIONS

This review contributes to international research pointing to the potential for arts to strengthen place-based approaches in ways that may support social equity (Engh et al., 2021; Lacey, 2016; Matsunobu, 2018). Yet, our review was constrained by several limitations. The systematic approach was necessary for synthesising outcomes and allowing us to identify gaps and areas for improvement required for the arts to be included in place-based policy and programming

decision making. However, this kind of review does not capture the plethora of grey literature describing other potentially impactful place-based arts initiatives across Australia. Scoping and mapping processes, such as that conducted by Bartleet and Howell (2021), can provide important insights that will be helpful for better understanding the scope and breadth of practice occurring nationwide. Key terms “place-based” and “placemaking” were useful and appropriate, allowing us to capture articles that specifically focussed on these central concepts. Yet, we acknowledge that much art and cultural practice that is site specific has not been captured in this review. We have drawn on this literature throughout to support our findings.

By bringing together placemaking and broader place-based literature, and drawing on social theory, our synthesis suggests that place-based arts may contribute to building equity through promoting individual and collective voice, capabilities, agency and resourcefulness. Advancing equity is inevitably a cross-disciplinary endeavour, and current place-based literature highlights the need to challenge siloed approaches that focus on a single issue or group without meaningful consideration of the structural causes of inequity (Blatz & Canada, 2022). Our review supports broader international literature suggesting place-based arts may be uniquely suited to this endeavour through its ability to work with communities to define and share their own values and aspirations, building both awareness and skills that could translate into structural change (Arroyo, 2017; Engh et al., 2021). Social capital, creative citizenship and community building are all tools for challenging systems of power (Arroyo, 2017; Engh et al., 2021; Webb, 2014). It is notable that our findings support literature identifying the potential for place-based arts to have implications that cement inequity, particularly when implemented via top-down approaches with economic-only goals (Sunderland, et al., 2022; Zitcher, 2020). Recent research demonstrates inequity across the arts and cultural sectors in Australia, with a national report highlighting challenges in relation to participating in and benefiting from the arts for women, First Nations people, people from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds, and people living in remote areas (Australian Council for the Arts, 2020b). Policy and practice must be cognisant of this and work with communities in ways that foreground collaboration and participation (Osborne et al., 2021; Peters et al., 2021).

The socio-ecological module is useful for investigating how the arts may work to positively affect social determinants that underpin peoples' ability to live fulfilled lives and be as healthy as possible, thus building more equitable societies (Golden, 2022). This model is not without limitations, including understanding how factors at each level interact and which are the most significant in specific contexts. The use of the model from a Eurocentric worldview has also posed challenges in certain contexts (Rowley et al., 2015). Using the socio-ecological model in conjunction with critical social theories, such as intersectionality (Heard et al., 2020), may support future investigations and evaluations of work exploring the arts and social equity. This will be particularly pertinent for understanding the role of the arts in positively affecting equity beyond only geographic place for key groups, including people with diverse genders and sexualities, people with a disability and people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds (Bambra, 2022).

While our findings suggest the potential for the arts to strengthen place-based approaches to build equity, we identified substantial limitations in the methodologies and methods used in the identified articles; many were not designed to rigorously capture short- or long-term outcomes. For policy and practice to effectively draw on and translate lessons from local initiatives, strengthening understandings through robust evaluation is required (Clift et al., 2021; Dunphy & Ware, 2017). To build a body of evidence that can inform robust place-based policy and practice, both the amount and quality of evaluative research demonstrating the equity-related outcomes of place-based arts initiatives must be increased. For project evaluations to be impactful at the structural level, the robustness and rigour of evaluations and reporting of qualitative data in particular requires strengthening (Clift et al., 2021). To support this endeavour, there is an emerging body of literature proposing evaluative mechanisms that move beyond emphasising economic outcomes and strive to capture nuanced impacts for communities (Dart, 2019; Dunphy, 2015;

Gattenhof et al., 2021). Further, evaluations that truly explore social equity must consider context and theories for change. For example, a capability focus (allowing people to do and be as they desire; Nussbaum & Sen, 1993) may be more helpful than economic metrics as it helps connect concepts such as social capital and skill development to social equity outcomes (Arroyo, 2017).

Frameworks that focus on relationships and domains of change (personal well-being, cultural, social, economic, civic and ecological) are promising for conducting rigorous and theoretically informed evaluations and need to be explored in future research and evaluation (Dunphy, 2015; Hes & Hernandez-Santin, 2020). Yet, it is important that evaluations of arts initiatives do not lose sight of the overall purpose and scope of an initiative while investigating separate dimensions of impact. “Narrating value holistically rather disaggregating it into its economic and cultural aspects” is essential for capturing “culture's value” (Meyrick & Barnett, 2021a, 33). While conflicting ontological and epistemological approaches commonly used in arts and policy make it challenging to translate research findings into policy (Sheppard & Broughton, 2020), this emerging evaluation literature can support practitioners and researchers to capture meaningful outcomes of place-based arts initiatives in ways that support integration into policy, planning and practice.

Across the identified articles, we observed disparate understandings and uses of key terms such as community, resilience, equality, belonging, social cohesion, place, arts and culture. Developing cross-disciplinary understandings will support endeavours to strengthen research. Similarly, comprehensive evaluation requires identifying what value means in context. Because value means different things to different stakeholders, mapping evaluations onto a community's self-determined aspirations is essential for uncovering the role of place-based arts in advancing social equity (Belfiore, 2015; Blatz & Canada, 2022; Dunphy, 2015; Gattenhof et al., 2021). Cross-disciplinary dialogue about what “value” means in relation to the arts is essential if we are to capture and understand the holistic impact that the arts are having in building a more equitable Australia (Meyrick & Barnett, 2021b).

While objectives of place-based policy approaches in Australia have historically focussed on empowering communities, including through active contribution to decisions about welfare services and public amenities, and encouraging participation in community life (Reddel, 2017), so far these efforts have been limited in their ability to truly engage citizens and thus disrupt foundational causes of inequity (Hart & Connolly, 2021). The arts should be more comprehensively integrated into place-based policy and practice in Australia; for such translation to occur, a stronger evaluation of local initiatives is needed.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

Emma Heard: Conceptualization; data curation; formal analysis; investigation; methodology; writing – original draft; writing – review and editing. **Brydie-Leigh Bartleet:** Conceptualization; formal analysis; funding acquisition; methodology; resources; supervision; validation; writing – original draft; writing – review and editing. **Geoff Woolcock:** Conceptualization; writing – review and editing.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT

The authors report no conflicts of interest.

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Dr Geoff Woolcock is an experienced Social Researcher, particularly interested in applying indicators of community strengths in socioeconomically disadvantaged communities and the factors that contribute to building child- and youth-friendly communities. His work with large-scale public and private sector organisations concentrates on developing measures of communities' strengths, closely collaborating with local communities. Geoff has considerable expertise in social and community service planning and evaluation, including social impact assessment and project evaluation, social capital and community capacity building.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Additional supporting information can be found online in the Supporting Information section at the end of this article.

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