GROWING POLICY: *GLASS HOUSE, ART, EVIDENCE*

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![Figure 1: Participants in Glass House, with Layers of Southeast Asia in the foreground (image credit: the author)](image)

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Many artists work on topics which relate to policy, from climate change to inequality, from biodiversity to artificial intelligence. This Clore Leadership/Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) funded project interrogates the notion that such work can lead to transformation in policymaking. It reflects on the extent to which art can influence how policy is made by looking at one artwork by one artist in particular: the author’s *Glass House* which took place in 2021. The overarching finding is that experiencing art affects how policymakers approach the policymaking process in the aftermath of exposure. Whilst the longevity of these effects has not been verified as part of this project, and requires more longitudinal work, this paper can develop the main finding into the following more specific points:

1. Artistic interventions such as *Glass House* can stimulate people and policymakers to generate new insight for policy from existing evidence. This promotes more sustained,
reflective (self-aware) and reflexive (aware of one's position in the world) engagement with what otherwise can be taken uncritically for granted.

2. *Glass House* suggests that art can enable a diversity of perspectives to be brought to bear on a policy issue. This includes inputs from more diverse people, including from different demographic backgrounds and different disciplinary backgrounds. This also includes diversity in the types and forms of thinking and approaches to processing information.

3. Initiatives such as *Glass House* provide interactive and dialogical spaces where diverse perspectives do not just co-exist in parallel, but are collectively developed in the ‘safe space’ provided. Time-based artworks in particular can create a forcing mechanism for listening, not just talking.

4. Art can help people prioritise forms of agency when otherwise they may be paralysed by the complexity and enormity of policy challenges. This is a general point as there are many complicated policy areas, but it has particular pertinence to climate change given what is often cited as the overwhelming complexity of solving this existential threat.

5. Art can provide a way for people to connect with emotions and to bring the affective and the cognitive aspects of information processing together, thereby resulting in more holistic approaches which may counteract the more ‘automated’, bureaucratised ways of thinking that might otherwise dominate policymaking.

*Glass House* had a strong participatory component which spawned new data to consider. This included a 30 minute discussion between participants, two completed artefacts per participant, an artwork which incorporated participants’ ideas as it grew through the duration of the exhibition and video interviews. These are analysed inductively as part of research for this report (Section 4, Key Themes from Participatory Component of Glass House and Accompanying Interviews). This report also takes a deductive approach to reflect upon the Art-Policy Matrix, the author’s previously developed conceptual model for considering the relationship between art and the process by which policy is made. This practical application of the Matrix brings out new insights (5, Analysis and Findings). The methodology used is described in the next section, before the context and details of *Glass House* are introduced. The two sections mentioned above follow before the concluding section brings the strands together.

This project was delivered through ‘practice research’. The production of Glass House was both a way of developing artistic practice and a way of conducting research. More precisely, it provided a way of testing concepts the author had developed in a previous AHRC/Clore Leadership-funded research project. This report thus draws to a close the third act of a three-part arc of research-practice-research. It aims to describe the findings from the practice research in particular for the role that art may play in policy. It aims to reflect and learn about the process of practice research. It aims to demonstrate practice research as a legitimate and important mode of insight generation that should be supported for deployment by makers, artists, and practitioners. By cultivating a shared grammar and vocabulary for such practitioners, this report aims to nurture a fertile environment for the kind of artistic interventions which can be revelatory for policymaking.