

## Nations in Labour: Incorporating National Narratives in Sociological Models of Cultural Labour

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**Abstract :** This essay presents labour as a performatively national phenomenon from a cultural perspective. Considering Engels' proposition of labour as the epicentre of development of social structures and communities, it theorizes the formation and sustainment of group identities through labour identities. Taking labour in the cultural sector as the starting point case study, the essay further enunciates such labour and labour identity as a form of engaged citizenship. In doing so, this piece hopes to arrive at a potential contemporary understanding of labour as having a central and dynamic role in cultural organization and citizenship. A parallel goal is to de-link sociological models of cultural labor from narratives of art and culture as something that stands separate from the 'real world' and the economy and exists in precarity. Combining discourse from cultural sociology, performance studies, and economics and grounding it in historical archive, the essay makes a primarily discursive theoretical contribution. Taking North American theatre organizations as the exemplifying starting point, this project positions cultural workers not solely as workers in a professional industry but as active citizen-subjects who are deeply involved in their society's democratic processes. The resulting discourse can be used to shape more effective labour policies, as well as help art and cultural organizations find more effective organizational structures to engage the arts in the economic, political, and social spheres.

**Keywords :** arts labour, cultural sociology, national identity, performativity

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