INQUIRY INTO THE CIVIC ROLE OF ARTS ORGANISATIONS

PHASE 2

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?
Society is at a crossroads. In such uncertain times the arts have much to offer: as places of learning, spaces where people can come together, platforms for unheard voices, and the means through which we can think about difficult issues.

Through this Inquiry, we aim to connect all those who believe the arts are central to society and want their arts organisations to play a ‘civic role’. Our ambition is to build a movement of change-makers, with impact in their local communities, across the UK and internationally.

We are not alone in believing in this agenda. We’ve compiled an extensive bank of case studies showcasing innovative practice from arts organisations around the world to inspire those interested in these ideas. Many others are working in this area, from the Paul Hamlyn and Baring Foundations, from universities to the British Council and Arts Councils themselves. The Cultural Cities Enquiry is considering how culture can be more effectively resourced across the UK, to ensure that it continues to enrich our cities and the lives of citizens. And the Inquiry into the Future of Civil Society has laid bare the urgent need for a new PACT: a radical change in Power Accountability Connection and Trust.

To survive and thrive in this new era, arts organisations must evolve to keep pace in our changing world. Our case studies show what is possible. Those receiving public investment will be called to articulate more clearly the value they bring. Now is the time to rethink our relationships within our communities. Tomorrow is too late. We believe our Inquiry proposes ways forward. But only by sharing delivery will we produce a whole that is more than the sum of its parts. As we begin this next phase of our work we want to hear from, and work with, organisations who show courage and want to embrace the future.

Andrew Barnett  
Director  
Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation (UK Branch)
The Inquiry into the Civic Role of Arts Organisations seeks to promote the valuable role that arts organisations do and could play nationally and in their communities. Consultations with arts organisations about our Phase 1 research have shaped what we plan to do next. Phase 2 will deliver plans you have helped us develop.

This summary outlines the feedback we received on our findings and sets out our next steps. In brief:

- We identified six areas for consultation: defining the civic role; barriers and levers for change; supporting the development of practice; capacity building; funding; and influencing public policy.

- Our priorities for action in Phase 2 are:
  - supporting trustees to think about the civic role
  - encouraging and supporting more organisations to showcase exemplary practice through fellowships and/or awards
  - making connections that share innovative practice and learning, nationally and internationally
  - providing evidence of impact to boost more flexible funding
  - fostering partnerships that maximise impact
  - influencing national policy and strategy.

- Work we have already begun with partners in Phase Two includes:
  - Creative Civic Change: a new £4m funding initiative for local communities using the arts to make positive social change where they live.
  - Co-Creating Change: a national network to support and share co-created models of ‘arts for social change’.
  - HEY100: a pilot in Hull and East Yorkshire for place-based leadership development that brings together people from social and cultural organisations.
  - International Study Visits: we piloted a week-long study exchange for emerging cultural leaders from four countries and are looking to scale this up.
  - Governance Now conference: we were part of a national event for arts and culture sector professionals exploring how governance is essential in promoting a civic role.

Read on for more detail.

We plan to fund strategically, galvanising networks and groups that will embed ‘the civic’ into arts organisations, arts funding and arts policy.
Rethinking Relationships revealed the lack of a common language and classification system for the civic role performed by arts organisations. We looked at outlining this role in flexible ways that could reflect the diversity of both practice and aspirations. Rethinking Relationships suggested that *principles* are preferable to *definitions* — they are inclusive and harness aspirations.

To help explain why this role is important, we drew up five *metaphors*. We felt these provide a useful framework for discussion with a range of arts organisations and stakeholders. These metaphors describe arts organisations as:

- **Colleges** — places of learning
- **Town halls** — places of debate
- **Parks** — shared spaces open to all
- **Temples** — places of enlightenment and solace
- **Home** — places of belonging.

We identified nine operating *principles* shared by arts organisations with a strong civic role:

- **Demonstrate strong and effective leadership and governance.** The civic is part of the DNA of their directors. It is not an ‘add on’. It is how they deliver great art. Their boards of trustees are fully committed to the civic and engaged in creating links with other local civic organisations.

- **Are rooted in local needs.** These organisations understand their role in their localities. They are aware of and respond to opportunities to work with other community partners, including those from other sectors to meet local needs.

- **Develop community agency.** The local community plays a significant role in determining the artistic programme.

- **Build capability.** These organisations are effective in developing community skills, capabilities and creativity.

- **Build social capital.** Often significant volunteering opportunities are provided. Sometimes these organisations focus on encouraging kindness, empathy and understanding of others.

- **Champion artistic quality.** This is quality in both process and artistic output. These organisations tend to believe that, to have a positive social impact, the art produced must be of the highest possible quality.

- **Champion diversity.** They aspire to fully represent their communities, to tell untold stories and to give a platform to people and issues which may often be ignored or insufficiently recognised.

- **Provide challenge.** They encourage discussion and debate, often on difficult issues. They challenge prevailing orthodoxies and ways of working.

- **Are open and reflective.** They engage in ongoing reflection and dialogue, and are open to challenge.

(These principles were heavily influenced by the Our Museum programme from the Paul Hamlyn Foundation.)
What did you think?

Organisations identified with the principles as characteristic of both their current work and their aspirations. Some said it was refreshing and useful to see artistic work in a holistic form rather than delivery-based or economic. However, several respondents felt that organisations might assume that, if they ‘tick the boxes’ of these principles, there will be no need to examine their work at a structural level.

Many respondents agreed that the metaphors:

- Reflect the purpose of arts organisations’ work
- Are a useful way of communicating the roles and value of arts organisations
- Are frames that allow us to broaden the conversation and engage new voices.

However, feedback also highlighted how the metaphors are based on places or buildings. Some organisations that aren’t building-based were concerned that because the metaphors all share the same basis in place, they imply that a system of comparable and measurable outcomes can be applied to all civic role arts work in a similar way. We believe metaphors can imply what happens in a place beyond the function of a building.

**NEXT STEPS**

We share the concern that a civic role must not become a tick-box exercise. The work can be upheld in the ethos and at every level including trustees of an arts organisation. This is one of the key tenets that we will carry into the next phase of our work.

We aim to support the production of guidance and tools for the boards of arts organisations to support them in considering their organisation’s civic role. (See Section 4, *Capacity building*, page 10, for more on this.)

The civic role of artists

One question came up repeatedly in Phase 1: ‘why aren’t you focusing on the civic role of artists?’

The Inquiry’s remit is publicly funded arts organisations in England. We feel duty-bound to question how and on what public money is spent. However, we do not feel the same way about individual artists. We believe the way artists spend their energy and creativity is entirely up to them, although we’d be delighted if this movement inspired the wider arts sector.
Rethinking Relationships outlined eight barriers to change.

- **Leadership**: Many leaders do excellent work, but they can be overstretched and under-supported.

- **People and skills**: Producers, curators and artists may need training and support to co-produce with communities.

- **Partnership working**: Creative partnerships with community organisations exist, but for many organisations this remains largely an aspiration.

- **Funding**: Work with communities often sits uncomfortably within conventional arts funding and evaluation processes.

- **Growth and replication**: Organisations want to replicate their models, but may worry about weakening community roots or artistic quality if they grow.

- **Business models**: Adopting a civic role requires working in new ways but can also open access to more mixed funding.

- **Diversity**: Ensuring that participants, staff and definitions of 'the arts' all reflect the demographic makeup of the community the arts organisation works in can be a challenge.

- **Language and communication**: With no common language for the civic role, it can be difficult to describe and promote.

### What did you think?

The barriers resonated widely with arts organisations, especially smaller groups. However, feedback also made it clear that these barriers are interrelated. For this reason, our work does not focus on these topics individually, but consideration of these is integrated throughout our thinking and plans.

**Barriers to the civic role are interrelated:** responses must address this
**NEXT STEPS**

Our Phase 2 work focuses on those areas that have the most potential and that consultation identified as priorities.

We want to work with others to connect the next generation of leaders, enable them to bridge different sectors, give them time to reflect and learn together, and inspire them with practice from the UK and abroad.

Arts organisations can reconsider their purpose and emphasise their role within communities. Indeed, many were founded with this as their guiding philosophy. This requires community-aware and engaged trustees from different backgrounds who ask the right questions. We plan to test ways we can support trustees to connect, think about these issues and plan ahead (see page 10 on *Capacity building*).

We are seeking partners in developing training and funding projects that encourage the arts sector to adopt and demonstrate best practice, for example:

- a training programme for artists, curators and producers working in social contexts
- a reflective ‘self audit’ for arts organisations to understand in detail the role they currently play
- practical tools for trustees of arts organisations
- investigate the potential to support fellowships or awards for exemplary practice.

**Arts and civic society under the lens**

We are far from the only organisation considering these themes. Some of the exemplary work happening in this field is:

**Creative People and Places** – putting people in the lead in choosing, creating and taking part in exciting art experiences in the places where they live. Developed by Arts Council England (ACE) with an investment of £37m from the National Lottery, the programme first ran between 2013 and 2016. ACE has committed a further £17m for the existing 21 projects to deliver new activity for a further three years.

**The Warwick Commission on the Future of Cultural Value** – was a one-year investigation into the social, economic and artistic value that culture brings to Britain. The Commission was launched by the University of Warwick and led by Vikki Heywood CBE, Chair of the RSA.

**King’s College London** – is at the forefront of research into the impact of the arts on health and wellbeing.

**The Baring Foundation** – supporting participatory arts with people over 60 through its Arts and Older People programme (2010-2017).

**64 Million Artists/get creative** – encouraging people to use their creativity to make positive change in their lives and the world around them. It has worked with schools, universities, cities, workplaces, cultural institutions and health and government bodies to explore ways of reconnecting people with their innate creativity.

**Our Museum** – an initiative by the Paul Hamlyn Foundation which sought to make museums and galleries more active partners within their communities.

**Cultural Cities Enquiry** – This UK-wide enquiry brings together cities, UK Arts Councils and leaders from the cultural, education, design, development, hospitality and technology sectors. It will look at how culture can be more effectively resourced across the UK, to realise its full potential to benefit cities and citizens.
Rethinking Relationships showed that good practice is not widely communicated, is often ignored by critics, and not well understood. Consequently, learning on methodology, structure and behaviour is not shared and so the work rarely spreads.

What did you think?

Feedback confirmed our findings that time and resources are spent ‘reinventing the wheel’ and trying to work around similar hurdles that others in different regions are also facing. As a result, good practice is rarely scaled up or replicated nationally or internationally.

The role of boards also emerged as important here, in ensuring civic practice is threaded throughout an arts organisation, starting from its mission.

We want to act as a catalyst for international dialogue and inspiration

WORK UNDER WAY: International exchange

Local context matters, but there is inspiring practice beyond our shores. We are already supporting With One Voice, a global network of arts organisations working with homeless people. Our bank of case studies (available on our website) includes over 20 international examples from countries including Kenya, New Zealand and Singapore. In 2018, we also piloted a week-long study exchange for emerging cultural leaders from four countries. We plan to think even more internationally, making connections and sharing what we learn across borders.
**NEXT STEPS**

We want to share proven approaches from the UK and internationally that arts organisations might follow to develop their civic role. We are seeking funding partners to help us develop models. We want to examine how arts organisations could play a ‘connector’ role, in partnerships with the social and commercial sectors and public authorities.

We want to invest in innovative civic arts practice and find project partners to:

- Support arts organisations that help communities develop entrepreneurial skills or establish creative enterprises
- Test radical and new thinking in organisational learning and change.

We want to step up our international work and act as a catalyst for international dialogue and inspiration. We will:

- Launch an international exchange programme in 2019
- Investigate hosting a major international conference in 2020
- Investigate laboratory approaches, such as the inspirational ‘Inclusive Culture Laboratory’ model from Exeko in Montreal.

**INTERNATIONAL CASE STUDIES**

We added 40 more case studies to our ‘bank’ of innovative and inspiring practice, with a focus on featuring more international work.
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CAPACITY BUILDING

Rethinking Relationships identified capacity as the most significant limitation to fulfilling a civic role. The need for stronger networks and access to leadership training were identified as the key capacity issues.

What did you think?

Feedback confirmed that capacity is a major issue, especially for smaller organisations and those using substantial amounts of volunteer work. Peer-to-peer networks were repeatedly mentioned as a ‘missing ingredient’. Feedback also recognised that leaders needed more support and better networks to captivate and cultivate expertise.

A civic role is as much about mission as it is about practice

WORK UNDER WAY:
Co-Creating Change Network

This national network aims to bring together people from cultural organisations as well as individual artists and producers to share practice and create work. We are supporting Battersea Arts Centre, with co-funding from the Paul Hamlyn Foundation and Arts Council England, to establish the network. We believe this project will build capacity, connect leaders and share examples of innovative practice.

WORK UNDER WAY:
Governance Now conference

This national event for professionals from the arts and culture sectors explored best practice in governance and how to place the civic role at the heart of organisational mission and governance. We are continuing to work with the Clore Leadership Programme and a wider collation of partners on this issue.
NEXT STEPS

Working with other funders, we want to explore options for:

- Networking, international exchange and leadership training
- Training, support and networks for artists, producers and curators co-producing projects with communities
- Guidance and tools for the boards of arts organisations to help them consider what a civic role might mean for them (see also page 4, Defining the civic role).

We believe a civic role is as much about mission as it is about practice. We want to build capacity through leadership development, international exchange, and practical resources and tools. We’re looking to collaborate with others to take our current projects long term. Plans include:

- Co-funding a new Governance Alliance to help cultural and arts sector trustees become strong, adaptive leaders and improve governance practices across the sector. Elements already under way include online resources and training, a conference (see box) and an events programme.

- Evaluation of how London International Festival of Theatre (LIFT) immersed its team in its Tottenham community, to provide pointers on place-based practice for other organisations.

- Investigating ways that HEY100 (see box) could be expanded to cultural sector leaders and managers in other places.

WORK UNDER WAY: HEY100

This pilot provides free leadership and management training to the voluntary, cultural and community enterprise sectors in Hull and East Yorkshire. It is a Clore Social initiative, which we are supporting jointly with Arts Council England and the Rank Foundation. It will bring together leaders from social and cultural organisations, build leadership skills and capacity, and in turn enable community and voluntary projects to grow.

Read more: hey100.org.uk

Hey100 by Clore Social Leadership is pilot in Hull and East Yorkshire for place-based leadership development that brings together leaders from social and cultural organisations. We are co-funding this work with Arts Council England and the Rank Foundation. (Photo: HEY100)
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FUNDING

Unsurprisingly, Rethinking Relationships found that funding is an ongoing concern for many arts and cultural organisations. In particular, there is a conflict between strict funding guidelines that require certainty of process, outcome and timeframes and the flexibility that arts organisations require to co-produce work with communities.

What did you think?

Several responses confirmed that funding guidelines can limit organisations’ ability to co-produce work in the community. Arts funding is often separated into distinct categories and this can also be problematic. Work that seeks to perform a civic role often crosses many categories and so ‘falls between the gaps’ for funding.

Strict funding guidelines restrict the flexibility the civic role needs

NEXT STEPS

We want to examine the potential for greater collaboration between funders. There is a need for funding for ‘light touch’ infrastructure and capacity building.
We want to look at the feasibility of incentives for large and small arts organisations to work together and appropriate processes for application, evaluation and accountability.

We want to work with other funders and arts organisations to make funding more flexible and fit for purpose.

WORK UNDER WAY:
Prosper

During 2017-18, Prosper offered workshops, webinars, resources and business support through a network of expert business advisers to 70 arts and cultural organisations. Designed and managed by Creative United, it aimed to improve staff resilience and organisations’ commercial capacity and understanding of investment.

Read more:
creativeunited.org.uk/programme/prosper/
UK CASE STUDIES

Researched and written by arts journalist Maddy Costa, we have added to our ‘bank’ of case studies.

Our case studies illustrate best practice in the UK and overseas. Contact theatre empowers young people in Manchester through the arts. (Photo showing performers in Contact Young Company’s show There is a Light: BRIGHTLIGHT)
Rethinking Relationships found that funding cuts and reduced public spending are having a serious impact on arts organisations’ capacity. National interest in the responsibilities of organisations that receive public funds is also inspiring arts organisations to be more creative with their budgets, and encouraging them to help local authorities achieve better outcomes in sectors such as health and social care.

Arts Council England is working on its next ten year strategy. It commissioned Britain Thinks to survey the public about their views on the future of arts and culture, which were published in a report titled The Conversation. We also commissioned Britain Thinks to compare The Conversation with our Phase One report Rethinking Relationships and were pleased it found the main themes were very similar.

Many responses referenced the need for a policy environment more conducive to arts organisations engaging with their civic role. To achieve this, some suggested that arts organisations must have influence over public policy decisions through individual supporters at policy level – such as champions in local government and town parishes.

There is a desire to work more closely with social organisations and public services within a policy framework that helps arts organisations fulfil their civic role. However, there was concern that arts organisations must not be expected to be a cheap alternative to social services.

**Arts organisations must not be seen as a cheap alternative to social services**

**WORK UNDER WAY:**

**Local Government Association**

Research by Hatch Regeneris for the Local Government Association shows how culture-led regeneration delivers quantifiable economic and social benefits through a range of models. It provides guidance to councils on how to achieve the greatest impact in their area and evidence of the effectiveness of local arts funding for social change.

**WORK UNDER WAY:**

**Civil Society Futures**

The debate over organisational relevance has been made all the richer by Civil Society Futures. Its final report calling for a reimagining of how institutions and groups operate underlies our belief in the civic role. We look forward to collaborating with arts organisations on making these findings real.
NEXT STEPS

We agree the arts and culture sector should be recognised as adding value to other public services – and certainly not as replacing them. We want to work with government at different levels, to create supportive conditions for arts organisations to fulfil a civic role.

We are delighted that Arts Council England has already responded favourably to Rethinking Relationships. We hope to continue to work with Arts Council England, in particular around its next ten-year strategy.

WORK UNDER WAY: Creative Civic Change

This three-year funding programme provides £4 million for communities to make positive social change in their area. In partnership with the Big Lottery Fund, Local Trust and Esmée Fairbairn Foundation, we will support approximately 16 communities to use the arts to create change in ways they themselves have identified. We believe Creative Civic Change will show the value of supporting community-led projects for creative social change, provide evidence on the benefits of flexible community-led funding, and demonstrate innovative practice and how to build capacity.

Read more: bit.ly/creativecivicchange

CREATIVE ARTS PROJECTS LED BY COMMUNITIES GIVEN NEW SUPPORT FROM #CREATIVECHANGE PARTNERSHIP

bit.ly/creativecivicchange
@BIGLOTTERYFUND @CIVICROLEARTS @LOCALTRUST

We launched Creative Civic Change, a new arts funding programme for local communities. The programme is a partnership between the Big Lottery Fund, the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, Esmée Fairbairn Foundation and Local Trust.

DOES YOUR COMMUNITY WANT TO MAKE POSITIVE LOCAL CHANGE USING THE ARTS & CREATIVITY?
FIND OUT ABOUT A NEW PROGRAMME #CREATIVECHANGE
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We are delighted that Arts Council England has already responded favourably to Rethinking Relationships. We hope to continue to work with Arts Council England, in particular around its next ten-year strategy.
CONCLUSION

The relationship between arts organisations and the public is changing. Those organisations that receive public investment need to articulate more clearly the value they bring, including to local communities. Changing mindsets and practice takes time and courage. For Phase 2 of the Inquiry, we have deliberately avoided a neatly defined programme with a set beginning and end. Instead, we are focused on developing the right partnerships that, together, may have an impact that is lasting and systemic. We see ourselves as a catalyst. We know that we don’t have all the answers: we can only ask the questions and connect those with the commitment and expertise to help make a difference.

GET INVOLVED

We believe we make a big impact by working with others. We are looking to partner with other funders, organisations and individuals.

We need your help to focus on the key areas where we can make a difference, we want to hear from, and work with, organisations which show courage and want to embrace the future.

Interested?
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