

THE CIVIC ROLE OF ARTS ORGANISATIONS

from Inquiry to Movement

LEARNING REPORT



CALOUSTE GULBENKIAN
FOUNDATION

THINKING/
PRACTICE/

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FOREWORD

Arts organisations working with communities conjure hope and the possibilities of change. They ignite in the heart of civil society the power of the arts to reimagine the world and shape a better future – one rooted in equity, sustainability, creativity and opportunity for all.

At the Foundation, we have called this superpower – and responsibility – the ‘civic role’ of arts organisations. Through our Inquiry into the Civic Role of Arts Organisations and the Programme that followed, we have championed the need for arts organisations in receipt of public funding to demonstrate the value they bring to their communities, across the UK and internationally.

In the seven years since we launched the Inquiry, so much has changed in the external context, much of it turmoil and disruption. Yet we have seen repeatedly how arts organisations have responded with energy and agility, reimagining ways of operating, rallying for those most vulnerable in their communities, creating solutions and connecting people, inspiring joy and hope through arts and culture despite the challenges.

The Foundation’s support for this Programme has totalled £3.4 million over the period, seeking to influence change at policy, practice, leadership and network levels. Initiatives such as the Co-creating Change Network, the Creative Civic Change programme and the Award for Civic Arts Organisations have spotlighted and supported the growing movement of organisations embracing a civic role, with often transformational impact in the communities they serve.

The following pages show the civic arts movement is building, but there is much still to do. As the Foundation begins a new phase under the twin priorities of Equity and Sustainability, we remain committed to developing and growing the work that this Programme set in motion. With an international team based in Lisbon and London, and connections across Europe, our new Access to Culture programme will continue to support arts organisations in the UK, Portugal and beyond to work in and with communities. We will partner with key cultural institutions at national level to grow and embed this work; strengthen knowledge exchange and networks; and, in partnership with others, advocate for a European agenda on the civic role of the arts.

Mark Robinson's learning report gives an overview of the work supported by the Foundation in recent years. It also highlights areas for consideration in the next phase, which must respond to the shifts and demands of the sector and society now. We thank all those whose vision and pioneering initiatives have made the achievements of the Programme possible, with particular thanks to Mark for the care and insight reflected in this report, and his support to the team as the work has unfolded. And we look forward to collaboration with partners old and new in the next phase.

Louisa Hooper

Director, UK Branch and Sustainability Programme

Luís Jerónimo

Director, Equity Programme

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report tells the story of the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation's Civic Role of Arts Organisations Programme in the UK. It explores the impact made since 2016 and makes observations on the current state and needs of this field of practice.

From Inquiry to Programme

In 2016, **The Inquiry into the Civic Role of Arts Organisations** set out to explore how arts organisations could better fulfil their civic role, serving and working with their local communities in the UK and beyond. It supported arts organisations to renew and rethink their relationships with the public and to raise awareness of the potential and benefits of civic arts work locally, nationally and internationally. After the publication of its resulting report, **Rethinking Relationships**, the Inquiry became The Civic Role of Arts Organisation Programme, a key strand of the Foundation's UK Branch work.

The Inquiry phase concentrated on understanding and articulating the civic role of arts organisations. The Programme built on this through grant-making, a series of publications and gatherings, and by creating the **Award for Civic Arts Organisations**.

Impact of the Programme

The Programme aimed to influence systemic change towards a long-term vision for “a growing international movement of civic arts organisations that can operate sustainably in a supportive environment to enrich the lives of people, enable active citizens and communities and increase collective understanding of our place in the world.”

The focus was on five ‘levers for change’ to galvanise networks and groups to embed the ‘civic’ into arts practice, funding and policy:

- Connecting and collaborating
- Communicating the civic value
- Connecting beyond the UK
- Creating the conditions for change
- Connecting communities

Influence on arts practice, capacity, funding and policy

The Programme has been part of a rising tide of interest in the civic and social roles of arts activities. The roles and principles the Inquiry sought to define have spread in subsequent years. In surveys of members of the UK-wide What Next? network in 2021 and 2023, almost all organisations responding felt their work had civic dimensions. 65% of 89 respondents

in 2023 said it was central to their mission and a further 33% that it was part of their mission.

The language and vocabulary of the civic role are now well-established amongst a large proportion of the arts sector. Even where the term is not preferred, or where funders use a related but different vocabulary, people know what is meant and are able to relate their terminology to it. For some people, the work of the Programme and others in influencing language has been almost too successful, creating risks of co-option or over-extension.

Interventions

Knowledge exchange

Knowledge exchange has supported peer learning and brought people together to develop and discuss rich ideas, although reaching beyond the cultural sector has proved challenging. Supporting leaders to develop their work, organisations, networks or practice has created several cohorts of people who have learnt new skills and connected with peers and collaborators.

Networks

Networks for civic arts organisations and for co-production or co-creation have been supported during the lifetime of the Programme. Each has successfully brought people together to develop shared practices and norms around the civic role of arts organisations as well as improve individuals’ specific skills.

Tools

The Programme has supported or commissioned specific tools to respond to opportunities or needs, including brap's **Anti-Racism and The Arts: A PACT Pioneer Exercise Book** and **Inc Arts' Unlock programme**. These investments were made to support organisations to create anti-racist change. **Of/By/For All's online skills development programme ReVision** helped leadership teams reassess their strategies in times of crisis.

The Award for Civic Arts Organisations

The **Award for Civic Arts Organisations** launched in 2021 to raise the profile of and advocate for arts organisations working in the civic space. The first two editions focused on how arts organisations were supporting the needs of their communities during the pandemic. The third edition focused on co-creation and received the highest number of applications.

There has been a total of 798 applications from 649 organisations over the three years. The applications evidence a core group of organisations across the UK, of all types and scales but often smaller, who see themselves as fulfilling a civic role. The recipients of the main Award have been Heart n Soul, The Art House and Re-Live.

A growing movement in the UK and beyond

There is strong evidence of a growing movement with common practices and principles. More people and networks are making the case for civic arts practice and for the investment and policy framework that makes it possible. The response to the pandemic showed that people will come together to ensure creativity plays a role in situations of crisis.

The applicants to the three editions of the Award demonstrate a consistency of impacts, audiences, partners and methods across all art forms and regions of the UK. A growing number of networks have sustained or increased their activity over the period of the Programme, supported by the Foundation, and now are also often connected internationally.

The main challenge for the movement is the operational and funding environment. Business models, which have sometimes lagged behind the demand for activities that make a civic contribution, are increasingly stretched.

Impacts for local communities

Impacts for local people mirror those identified by the **Creative Civic Change programme** supported by the Foundation: connections between individuals and groups, confidence to act creatively, wellbeing, skills and creativity. Other common benefits to local people included breaking down isolation, opportunities to progress as creative practitioners and leadership development.

Analysis of the 2021 and 2022 editions of the Award shows that organisations consider themselves as delivering civic outcomes which cluster around wellbeing, skills and capabilities and local needs. The impacts are most commonly framed as cultural rather than social.

Indications of sustained change

In terms of sustained change, there are positive indications in how arts organisations talk about their work, how this is reflected in their plans and activity and the way funding policy is conducive to the civic role. 98% of respondents to the 2023 survey of What Next? members say fulfilling a civic role is part of their organisation's mission, 21% explicitly. 80% of respondents feel the civic is at the core of their vision and mission. 84% feel that people and local communities are at the heart of their practice.

Considerations for the civic role of arts organisations over the next decade

The report identifies five areas for consideration for the Foundation, arts organisations and policymakers emerging from the work of the Programme.

Equity

The pandemic and Black Lives Matter *inter alia* have raised awareness of the discrimination faced by BIPOC and people with disabilities, amongst others, and have led to a much greater – though still unevenly distributed – focus on making tangible change in the workforce, governance and design of activities. A shift of emphasis from focusing on inclusion and diversity to one of equity means considering not just *who* or *which places* are involved, but *how* and *on what basis*.

Issues for the long term include addressing inequality relating to age, class, disability and minoritised communities, further tackling digital exclusion, as well as exploring how the cultural sector recognises leaders from backgrounds other than traditional progression routes and how freelancers can work equitably and securely. For many engaged in the civic space, these are necessary conditions for the civic role of arts organisations to be equitable and inclusive.

Co-creation

Co-creation is a core principle for organisations truly committed to their civic role. However, the language and frameworks to appraise co-creation are lacking. If equity is to be a key concern in the next decade, the sector must address this issue and work through the implications of various co-creation approaches. What is specific about co-creation in the civic arts? What is co-creation trying to achieve? And how best, in practice, do you do it? Intention – the purpose behind co-creative methods, rather than the values informing them – should be given more attention and be articulated more consistently.

The funding of co-creation approaches will also need to evolve. If outputs and outcomes are to be decided by or with local communities, how do funders redesign their application processes to be more focused on process or constituency, rather than targets?

Generational shift

Generation Z has entered the cultural and social workforce since the Inquiry began in 2016. They are often described as bringing new socially engaged dynamics to workforces as well as fresh ideas. Along with Millennials, they are less likely to see ‘digital’ as a separate domain of activity.

The civic arts movement in ten years’ time will need new leaders and different business and organisational models. These may not be the traditional leaders of organisations and may include people setting up their own organisations outside of the ‘traditional’ arts charity model, either as activist organisations, community interest companies or social enterprises. The aversion to risk of the stereotypical arts charity board could usefully be confronted as part of this generational shift.

Climate justice

Climate has become a key element of the broader civic arts agenda. The Foundation’s recent work reflects this, with support for arts-climate projects and organisations and with its new strategy focused on the twin pillars of Equity and Sustainability. This is in line with the growing movement of funders investing in the arts-climate nexus – from requiring grantees to demonstrate their environmental responsibility to funding projects that raise awareness of climate change through arts and creativity. Arts organisations and policymakers will need to work together to deepen approaches to climate justice and continue influencing politics and policies.

Partnerships in place

The ‘civic’ has been conceptualised as predominantly place-based. It is clear that not all arts organisations are as skilled or experienced at developing non-arts partnerships. Often the most outstanding civic arts organisations excel at this. The winning and shortlisted organisations in the Award for Civic Arts Organisations all work well with non-arts partners in a sustained manner.

Partnership working brings potential benefits, as cultural business models are under pressure. The extension of networks and partnerships locally, regionally, nationally and internationally, to those ‘outside the circle’, will be especially important. There are, however, ongoing dilemmas: health, wellbeing, ageing and care have become important to many civic arts organisations. But some feel that arts activity in these settings can be a sticking plaster to prop up unjust systems, rather than tackling root causes, and sometimes at the expense of lowly-paid artists.

What next for the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation

The Foundation itself has been going through a process of review and reshaping of structures and priorities. This will see a more joined up approach across the UK and Portugal, with a view to developing a common civic arts agenda across Europe more generally. Two main programmes will focus on Sustainability and Equity. The Equity programme aims to help to tackle inequalities in access to culture and access to care, two key elements of a fairer society. This will include continuing to invest in organisations and people embedding the civic role of the arts in their work, developing the capacity of networks to deliver peer learning and knowledge exchange and partnering with organisations to explore how they enhance their civic role and how citizens can be directly involved in decision-making.

In 2023 the Foundation will be focused on scoping, benchmarking, mapping and stakeholder engagement activities to better define the future activities of the Access to Culture programme. The work will test, pilot and share new approaches to the opportunities and challenges described here, so that the movement of civic arts practitioners continues to expand and be more recognised and supported, to deepen and refresh its practices as the context evolves, and to become simultaneously more local and more international.

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ABOUT THIS REPORT

Since 2018 Thinking Practice has been the evaluation partner for the Foundation's Civic Role of Arts Organisations Programme. The evaluation has three main aims: to help the Foundation understand the impact the Programme was having, to make recommendations for changes to its approach and to suggest priority areas to address.

A Theory of Change was developed and regularly updated with the Foundation's team (see Appendix One). This set out indicators of change on the levels of practice, network and policy towards a long-term vision for "a growing international movement of civic arts organisations that can operate sustainably in a supportive environment to enrich the lives of people, enable active citizens and communities and increase collective understanding of our place in the world."

The main evaluation questions were:

- How has the Programme influenced arts practice, capacity, funding and policy to support the civic role of arts organisations across the UK?
- What kinds of interventions have worked well in sharing or spreading practice around the civic role of arts organisations and what have proved more challenging?
- To what extent has the Programme supported the development of an international movement of civic arts organisations?
- What civic impacts for local people and communities do supported projects and networks evidence?
- What indications are there of sustained change in how arts organisations consider, support and deliver their civic role?

This learning report reflects the substance of a series of internal reports produced since 2019, and internal evaluation of events and the Foundation's Award for Civic Arts Organisations. We have analysed interim and final reports from grantees and externally commissioned reports on the 38 main projects funded through the Programme since 2018, as well as other research commissioned by the Foundation and data on the applications to the three editions of the Award. We have also conducted semi-structured stakeholder interviews with 68 people. These included policymakers, funders from public agencies, local government and trusts and foundations, senior staff in funded organisations and networks, researchers and organisations working in the civic space. In addition, we have worked with the What Next? network of cultural organisations, artists and freelancers to conduct member surveys in late 2021 and early 2023 to assess sector behaviour, while acknowledging this group as only a slice of the sector. These surveys covered attitudes to the civic role, board behaviours and asked people to describe their work in their words. In 2021 139 responses were received; in 2023 89 respondents took part. Finally, we have reviewed data sources such as investment portfolios of the arts councils and strategic documents of bodies such as the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport.

This report tells the story of the Civic Role of Arts Organisations Programme, explores the impact made and makes observations on the current state and needs of the movement. We begin by providing an overview of the activity from the Inquiry into Phase Two (section two) and then outline the building blocks of the civic role as set out by the Programme (section three). Section four describes how the civic role of arts organisations has developed since 2016 and the impact the Programme has had. Section five moves on to posit five areas that our analysis suggests will be vital in the coming years. We conclude with a brief reflection on the next phase for the Foundation (section six).

*“What culture in its civic sense
can do is create a city that has
a sense of ambition and a
real sense of itself.”*

CLARE McCOLGAN
in
What Would Joan Littlewood Say?

2

OVERVIEW
2016–2023

Launched in 2016, **The Inquiry into the Civic Role of Arts Organisations** set out “to build a movement of change-makers, with impact in their local communities, across the UK and internationally.”

The Inquiry grew out of previous programmes **exploring participation in the performing arts**, as well as examples throughout the history of the Foundation’s work in the UK that had influenced arts policy and practice, such as the pioneering Arts in Schools work led by Sir Ken Robinson and work on community arts.

The Inquiry aimed to explore how publicly funded arts organisations in the UK could better fulfil their civic role by renewing relationships with the public and contributing to solutions locally, as well as nationally and internationally. This stemmed from the belief that arts organisations are uniquely placed within society to foster positive civic discussions and community-building as well as to promote empathy and build hope across communities. The focus was not on specific art forms, or on artists, but rather on how organisations work with communities.

The Inquiry involved hundreds of people through workshops, events, research and the work of an independent panel and international reference group (see Appendix Two). These considered examples of good practice and explored the meanings and applications of the civic role of arts organisations. From this came 80 case studies of inspiring practice from around the world and a major publication, **Rethinking Relationships**, which highlighted how arts organisations around the world were re-invigorating their civic role.

From 2018 the Inquiry became **The Civic Role of Arts Organisation Programme**, a core strand of the Foundation’s work in the UK. By identifying five ‘levers for change’, the focus was on galvanising networks and groups to embed the ‘civic’ into arts practice, funding and policy:

- Connecting and collaborating
- Communicating the civic value
- Connecting beyond the UK
- Creating the conditions for change
- Connecting communities

Appendix Three has a complete list of funded projects. A total of £3.4m has been invested since 2016.

Timeline

The Civic Role of Arts Organisations

The Inquiry and Programme build on the Foundation’s previous work, including the Participatory Performing Arts programme (2014–18).

2016	2017	2018	2019
<p>The Inquiry into the Civic Role of Arts Organisations launches with a series of workshops, literature reviews and gatherings, overseen by an independent panel and an international advisory board.</p>	<p><i>Rethinking Relationships</i> and 80 international case studies published.</p>	<p>The Inquiry becomes the Programme, focused on five ‘levers for change’.</p> <p>Creative Civic Change and Co-Creating Change Network begin.</p>	<p>Five ‘Relevance, Risk, Rewards’ conferences explore different aspects of the civic role.</p> <p><i>What Would Joan Littlewood Say?</i> published, featuring interviews with ten arts leaders on why the civic role matters.</p>

2020

Culture Reset by people make it work responds to the impact of the pandemic across the cultural sector.



Organisations and networks engage in pandemic-related work in communities.

2021

Launch of the Award for Civic Arts Organisations in partnership with King's College London, themed around responses to the pandemic, offering £150,000. Heart n Soul is the main recipient, followed by Eden Court, Museum of Homelessness and The Whitworth.

2022

Second edition of Award themed around adaptation to the pandemic. The Art House is the main recipient, followed by In Place of War and Project Art Works.

2023

Third edition of Award themed around co-creation. Re-Live is the main recipient, followed by Golden Thread Gallery and People United.



The Foundation launches new 5-year strategy with 'Access to Culture' as a key grant-making programme.

3

HOW THE PROGRAMME HAS DEFINED THE CIVIC ROLE OF ARTS ORGANISATIONS

This section summarises some of the central approaches to the civic role of arts organisations which emerged from the Inquiry and the Programme.

Definition(s)

The Inquiry concentrated on understanding and articulating what a civic role for arts organisations can entail.

The Programme has taken a ‘looser’ approach to defining the term, allowing funded initiatives to develop frameworks specific to their context or identity, rather than having to address a set of principles specifically. It was clear, and has been confirmed in subsequent activity, that definitions of the ‘civic’ vary, but arguably coalesce around the idea of service to community and place.

Rethinking Relationships, for instance, provides a typically disparate list of common versions or dimensions of the civic:

- Service to community; charitable; benefits the wider public
- Socially engaged practice
- Social responsibility, inclusivity, engagement, empowerment
- Active citizenship, dialogue; listening
- Citizens helping people be citizens
- How we make sense of the world
- Opting into personal responsibility
- Co-production; mutual; equality and accessibility
- Integrated approach: state intervention and grassroots up
- Public and private
- Inspiration and aspirational
- Accountability

(From *Rethinking Relationships*)

Respondents to the 2023 What Next? survey similarly had a wide range of ways of talking about their civic role, but which had community at their core:

- “Community development; collaboration; nurturing agency.”
- “Co-Designed. Collaborative. Public Benefit. Audience focused. empowering. Active. Open.”
- “We position ourselves as a ‘Town Hall’, hosting political hustings on the subject of culture and programming challenging work reflecting cultures not represented in our region.”
- “Leisure, participation, arts and health and wellbeing, local projects and partnerships, social prescribing, festivals, family days, playground tours.”
- “Inclusionary practice. Anti-discriminatory practice. Supportive.”
- “Dialogic, grassroots, community-embedded, participatory, cross-sector, social justice, amplifying voice.”
- “Safeguarding democracy, increasing trust in government, protecting national memory and identity.”
- “Accessible, socially engaged practice, co-created, community focused.”

(Quotations from responses to the 2023 What Next? survey)

Although there is no single definition to which all arts and community practitioners might agree, there is a commonality of practice apparent beneath the differences in vocabulary. This has also meant that most organisations are able to recognise themselves within the broad definitions, even where it was implicit rather than explicit in their vocabulary.

The range of responses to the term ‘civic role’ described in *Rethinking Relationships*, from approval to perceptions of elitism and state control, has continued throughout the Programme. One strand of opposition to the term is typified by one response to how an organisation delivers its civic role in the 2023 survey: “by not using words like civic role!” However, many people have found the term helpful as a way of summarising the community and public value of their work to funders, local government and other stakeholders.

Since 2016, some funders, policymakers and universities have used the word ‘civic’ in a way congruent with the Foundation’s ideas of the civic role of arts organisations. English Civic Museums Network is explicit in its focus. Universities including Derby and Southampton have created senior roles combining civic and arts expertise. The Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, Creative Scotland and Arts Council Wales have referenced the contribution arts organisations play in the civic realm. The *Civil Society Futures Inquiry* made the benefits of cultural activity clear and collaborated with the Foundation to ensure the role of the arts in civic society was considered in its work. Others have used slightly different vocabulary. For example, Arts Council England’s *Let’s Create* policy is widely seen as encouraging the civic role for arts organisations, including museums and libraries, and activity that shares core principles, even though it does not use the word itself.

Little Amal, 12-foot puppet of Syrian refugee child, walking across Europe to connect people on human rights on *The Walk*.



Chrysalis, a mobile space for learning commissioned by the Co-Creating Change Network in the bio-region of South Devon.



Core principles

Rethinking Relationships put forward nine operating principles shared by arts organisations with a civic role.

DEMONSTRATE STRONG AND EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE

The civic is part of the DNA of the directors of civic arts organisations. 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 the art produced must be of the highest possible quality to have a positive social impact.

CHAMPION DIVERSITY

They aspire to represent their communities fully, 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 are based in part on material produced for the Paul Hamlyn Foundation’s Our Museum programme.)

Metaphors

Responding to debates about the word ‘civic’, the Inquiry put forward five metaphors for the civic role of arts organisations. These were designed to be more ‘open’ than a traditional definition and came from discussions about the potential for arts organisations to help communities work through fast and unpredictable change, whilst also providing lasting access to a range of functions.



Town Halls

arts organisations as places of debate, where differences of opinion and values can be safely discussed, and urgent issues of the day addressed.

Colleges

arts organisations as places of learning, recognising the connection between creativity, skills and learning, and emphasising lifelong learning outside formal education.





Parks

arts organisations as shared space open to all, outside – at least to some extent – the commercialisation of public space, where people can find their own space or find others with whom they can connect.

Temples

arts organisations as places of enlightenment and solace, where people can be inspired to reflect on moral questions, where empathy can grow and where solace, or simply contemplation, can be found.



Home

arts organisations as places of belonging, connecting back to the Victorian era of city museums and galleries as ‘domesticated public space’.



These metaphors were intended to apply not only in the physical civic spaces, but also to the conceptual and digital realms. This assertion was tested during the pandemic, as lockdowns meant a pivot to digital and virtual activities for many organisations. The quality of

engagement during lockdown, for example, through the organisations shortlisted for the Award for Civic Arts Organisations in 2021 and 2022, suggests that these metaphors do indeed apply in different ways to the digital realm.

Gatherings

These metaphors and principles informed a series of five one-day gatherings convened by the Foundation in 2019, around the theme of ‘Relevance, Risk, Rewards’. These aimed to raise the profile of the Programme, in the wake of the Inquiry, and to showcase some of the different ways organisations were working with communities and local civic networks. It also sought to bring together people working across the sector who may have been less familiar with the Inquiry and the Programme, and subsequently to identify potential areas for future focus.

With almost 400 attendees and more than 40 speakers, each event focused on a different aspect of the civic role of arts organisations:

‘Partnerships, People and Power Dynamics’
at The Whitworth, in Manchester.

‘The Art of Cultural Democracy’
at Sage Gateshead, in Gateshead.

‘Cultural Spaces: Temples or Town Halls?’
at the Wellcome Trust, in London.

‘Art: A Catalyst for Radical Change’
at the Arnolfini, in Bristol.

‘Flagship Cultural Events: a Debt or Opportunity for the Community?’
at Birmingham Rep, in Birmingham.

Evaluation of the events highlighted areas of debate between participants:

- The usefulness (or, for some, redundancy) of the vocabulary of the civic role of arts organisations, and how adopting this vocabulary might reflect ‘lip service’ or co-option rather than commitment.
- Whether or not being venue-based is significant when discussing civic arts practice and how scale influences the way arts organisations can – or, indeed, are seen to need to – play a civic role.
- How radical the civic role can be if framed within an essentially hierarchical version of cultural provision.

It also highlighted that most attendees felt that the gatherings helped them to connect with people with similar practice and take ideas and approaches to share with teams and boards. A minority felt there was an insularity to the gatherings.

**Participants in the
'Partnerships, People
and Power Dynamics'
gathering at The
Whitworth, Manchester.**



4

IMPACT OF THE PROGRAMME

This section uses the five evaluation questions we defined with the Foundation and presents case studies of funded initiatives to describe the impact of the Programme.

The questions which guided our evaluation were:

- How has the Programme influenced arts practice, capacity, funding and policy to support the civic role of arts organisations across the UK?
- What kinds of interventions have worked well in sharing and spreading practice around the civic role and what have proved more challenging?

- To what extent has the Programme supported the development of a growing international movement of civic arts organisations?
- What civic impacts for local people and communities do supported projects and networks evidence?
- What indications are there of sustained change in how arts organisations and others consider, support and deliver the civic role of the arts?

In each of the areas, there is evidence of some success, with achievements and positive influence sitting alongside ongoing debates within the field.

Influence on arts practice, capacity, funding and policy

The Programme has been part of a rising tide of interest in the civic and social roles of arts activities. The roles and principles the Inquiry sought to define have spread in subsequent years. In the 2021 and 2023 surveys of members of the UK-wide What Next? network, almost all organisations responding felt their work had civic dimensions.

Almost all survey respondents described their work as in some way having a civic dimension. 65% of respondents in 2023 said it was central to their mission (17.5% explicitly, 47.4% implicitly) and a further 33% that it was part of the mission. Only 2% in 2023 said it was not part of their organisation's mission.

Centre for Cultural Value's research into the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic identified

“an apparent shift in values and missions of cultural organisations towards aspects of civic engagement.” Ideas central to the civic role can be seen in policies of the different arts councils and the Cultural Compacts developed by Core Cities.

The Programme has been a valuable part of a wave. It has reinforced elements of practice such as co-creation through investing in a range of projects that form an effective response to the themes of **Rethinking Relationships**. This has been a result of the Foundation’s flexible approach and use of existing networks of leaders and active partners to experiment, embed and spread evolving forms of practice. This has involved organisations at very different scales and with different roles – some local, some national. The Programme has also supported internal change work at larger organisations, such as the Barbican Centre.

Stakeholder conversations suggest that the language of the civic role is now well-established amongst a large proportion of the arts sector. Even where the term is not the preferred one, people know what is meant and are able to relate their terminology to it. As a report on workshops with What Next? members in 2021 puts it, “it felt like the participants had a shared understanding that didn’t need to be debated.” What was sometimes seen as niche or marginal activity has influenced or even become a new mainstream. This is apparent in shortlists for major awards such as Museum of the Year or the Turner Prize, which in recent years have featured organisations

and collectives working in the civic arts as broadly defined.

For some people, the work of the Programme and others in influencing language has been almost too successful. They worry this vocabulary is too easy to reach for and that organisations can proclaim their civic role without really reflecting and changing behaviours, either co-opting ideas or running the risks of disappointment and over-extension.

For others, the term is still off-putting or distant. In 2023, 26% of What Next? members agreed that the Programme had influenced how they talk about their work. One survey respondent said: “most people do not understand the word civic and using it would be alienating.” Other comments were in keeping with the respondent who wrote: “our focus is the democratisation of culture, and we see the civic role of the arts as being key to this.”

A consequence of these differing perspectives is that the language is often described as being used tactically or instrumentally within industry and fundraising contexts, rather than consistently.

The What Next? surveys and follow-up research with some of the original 80 case study organisations show a growing focus on community engagement, co-production and the handing over of power in collaboration. Many people feel this was the most exciting edge of the ‘civic’: challenging hierarchies

“There was a time when it felt really pompous to talk about civic responsibility and you had to fight through that veneer of pomposity and get to that place where you say no, I truly do believe that ... we are part of civic society. When you produce great art, you bind the community together.”

KWAME KWEI-ARMAH

in

What Would Joan Littlewood Say?

***Can I Live?*, Complicité's climate awareness digital performance with Fehinti Balogun. Photo: David Hewitt.**



and the status quo. This was heard even more strongly after the community-led and mutual aid responses during the pandemic and to the issues given fresh prominence by the Black Lives Matters movement. The decolonisation of museums and their collections, for instance, can be seen as part of how the civic role of arts organisations is evolving. This comes with opportunities and tensions, especially as such issues are weaponised in broader ‘culture wars’, which now form part of the political environment in which civic arts organisations operate. How many civic arts organisations feel able (or permitted by funding structures) to campaign and be activist in a range of contexts – and how the Foundation should react to explicitly partisan work that challenges other funders, local authorities and government policy – remain live questions.

Policy is increasingly attuned to the civic role of arts organisations: not simply the arts councils, but also local authorities who, despite reduced budgets, are buying in where the work presents new potential solutions to their urgent priorities and needs. The Local Government Association’s Commission on Culture and Local Government explicitly references the ‘civic’. They connect place (where they primarily cite the ‘civic’), health inequalities, local economic recovery and social mobility.

Let’s Create, Arts Council England’s strategy for 2020-2030, represents a shift towards the social and civic. This is evident in the ‘Inclusivity and Relevance’ investment principle, which is summarised in terms related to definitions of the civic role of arts

organisations, albeit in different language: “We want to ensure the sector is actively listening to, and taking account of, the views of the local community. We want organisations to actively form relationships with under-served communities. As a result, publicly funded culture will matter more to more people.”

Arts Council England has also brought its Creative People and Places programme into the National Portfolio and reaffirmed its commitment to the programme’s innovative focus on community decision-making and co-creation as integral to increasing engagement levels. The resulting National Portfolio has shifted funding towards more organisations working with communities, particularly outside of London.

Projects supported more recently in the Programme have also sought to respond to these complexities. Trinity Community Arts, working with Citizens in Power and St Paul’s Carnival in Bristol, is trialling a citizen-led approach to developing a cultural strategy for South West England. This will involve citizens’ assemblies working alongside stakeholders to enable cross-pollination between cultural organisations, community-led organisations and civil society at large. This has potential to build models for co-creation at a strategic level and to enhance increasingly well-established approaches at a project or participation level.

Sharing practice

Knowledge exchange

Knowledge exchange has been a key lever of the work since the Inquiry. The Foundation has supported developmental networks such as HEY 100, Culture Reset and UK Creative Community Fellows, which have created several cohorts of people who have learnt new skills and connected with peers and collaborators across the civic arts movement. Practical and peer support matters even more now as people are increasingly under pressure and fatigued given continued challenges following the pandemic, such as the cost-of-living crisis. As we will explore later, several sources suggested that peer support should be a focus of future activity by the Foundation.

Some, however, feel that bringing people together can be limiting at times. For instance, the ‘Risk, Rewards, Relevance’ conferences in 2019 were warmly welcomed by some and felt to be insular by others. Indeed, reaching beyond the cultural sector continues to prove challenging for many, although partnerships with bodies like the Local Government Association have had some success in connecting arts organisations to non-arts civic bodies. Cases of success include Streetwise Opera and Arts and Homelessness International, who forge non-arts partnerships to develop strategies and solutions for homelessness.

A question continues to be raised about who is included when a funder such as the Foundation convenes. The context of the last few years, with more intense attention on poverty, equity, racism, accessibility, ‘culture wars’ and so on, put this into sharp focus for some. This is reflected in the Foundation’s renewed commitment to questions of equity, diversity and inclusion, as reflected in its new strategy focused on Equity and Sustainability.

Networks

Co-production and co-creation have become central approaches in this field of practice during the lifetime of the Programme. This is partly because of two influential networks in which the Foundation was a key partner: the Co-Creating Change Network (delivered by Battersea Arts Centre) and Creative Civic Change (delivered by Local Trust). In turn, the two networks have influenced and deepened the practice of the delivery partners themselves, particularly around developing co-creative approaches (the Co-Creating Change Network) and working with volunteer-led groups in hyper-local neighbourhoods engaged in other change initiatives (Creative Civic Change).

Other networks supported by the Foundation have included Culture Declares Emergency, UK Creative Community Fellows (Derby Museums' transforming leadership programme), Culture Reset and the UK Governance Alliance for the Cultural and Arts Sector (part of the Clore Social Leadership programme). Each has successfully brought people together to develop shared practices and norms around the civic role of arts organisations as well as to improve individuals' specific skills.

The Programme has also supported place-based networks to address local issues. Birmingham Royal Ballet has worked with other organisations in Birmingham to develop the idea of a 'College of Creativity', which would bring together a partnership of leading organisations to develop pathways for young people into a cultural workforce that is more representative of the city's population. This identified that collaboration was central to addressing poor communication and negative perceptions of the cultural sector among young people.

More funding for networks, especially those developing new approaches to co-creation, community voice and leadership, is felt to be needed. There may be opportunities to work with, for example, the new Investment Principles Support Organisations within Arts Council England's National Portfolio. These reflect a shift towards the 'civic', with several new IPSOs with national or sector-wide responsibilities relating to aspects of the civic role – these include Arts and Homelessness International, Culture, Health and Wellbeing Alliance, Libraries Connected, Family Arts Campaign and Future Arts Centres.

Whitley Bay Carnival, by SALTo Arts Productions. Part of Creative Civic Change, empowering communities through art. Photo: Paul Norris.



CREATIVE CIVIC CHANGE

CASE STUDY

Creative Civic Change (CCC) was an experimental programme supporting 15 communities across England to shape, lead and commission arts and creative interventions, making positive social change where they live. It ran from 2018-2022 and was co-funded by the Foundation alongside Esmée Fairbairn Foundation, Local Trust and National Lottery Community Fund.

Each area has benefited from £200,000 of funding, given with full trust to local residents to control. It was connected to Local Trust's Big Local programme, which supports resident-led change. In addition to this funding, each area was given the time, support and resources to realise their vision, whether it was transforming public spaces, celebrating shared histories, or bringing people together.

The 15 areas taking part face similar challenges of high levels of unemployment, in-work poverty, and poor health outcomes for residents. But they are also very different, each with their own distinctive history, context, and community make-up. The variety of work communities chose to create showed the huge diversity that the civic role of arts organisations can embrace.

All CCC projects were funded for a six-month development phase of conversations across their communities, involving an artist. Their project plans and activities were based on these conversations, and ongoing community decision-making shaped activities across the projects. The network of people involved formed a peer-learning group and showed that the civic role can embrace bottom-up rather than top-down or institution-led approaches.

Nine key principles were identified that enabled successful projects:

- **Trust** – funders trusted that communities knew best, and communities passed that on.
- **Care** – a connected web of care was created across project workers, communities and artists.
- **Responsiveness** – listening to communities and responding to their changing needs.
- **Flexibility** – an ‘experimental mindset’, trying things out, learning and adapting.
- **Inclusivity** – actively including marginalised voices in decisions.
- **Positivity** – saying ‘yes’ and imagining what could be achieved.
- **Celebration** – achievements, large and especially small, were recognised and celebrated.
- **Action** – communities ‘got on and did stuff’, things happened, and were visible. Listening was balanced with doing.
- **Sustainability** – plans and ideas were long term and considered environmental impact.

CCC mirrored to a great extent the ethos of Big Local, putting resources into the direct control of local volunteer-led groups. This required long-term funding – a minimum of three years is suggested in the evaluation – as well as trust, respect and careful support at a programme level.

Relationships emerged as central to CCC: “every aspect of this work is about relationships.” The programme also put forward an argument that community organisations need to be seen more as partners or leaders rather than as bridges or entry points to local communities.

CO-CREATING CHANGE NETWORK

CASE STUDY

Battersea Arts Centre took the lead in facilitating the Co-Creating Change Network (the Network) launched in 2018. Its development with The Agency, in partnership with Contact, influenced by the work of Marcus Faustini in Brazil, had led to a fresh focus on co-creation.

Co-creation is a co-operative process in which people with diverse experiences, skills and knowledge come together and work in non-hierarchical ways to address a common issue. It is a collaborative way of working that enables people and communities to be actively involved in shaping the things which impact their lives. It shifts power, resource and ownership towards the people the work is intended to benefit, as opposed to the traditional 'top-down' approach. It encourages every individual to activate their creative potential and realise their own ability to make change.

The Network's original aim was to work together to advocate for a better understanding and appreciation of co-created practice in the arts sector and beyond. It sought to do this by bringing the sector together to explore and share proven practice, commissioning new methodologies for co-creation and developing the market for co-created practice. Although some of its gatherings were affected by the pandemic, the Network successfully convened those working in co-creation to explore what it meant, the dilemmas involved and what was to be gained from this approach. 11 Project Commissions and Growth and Replication Commissions were allocated a total of £147,570 to run live action research projects, with the Network growing to over 1200 members.

The extent to which 'co-creation' means participatory arts work with shared decision-making or social justice activity remains an open question for the Network. But its working definition of co-creation relates very clearly to the civic principles set out in *Rethinking Relationships*.

It also reflects the increased emphasis on the shifting of power within co-created work, from hierarchical or established authority to people and communities shaping what is done.

The key outcomes for the Network included a nuanced understanding of what co-creation is (and is not) and what the outcomes might be, as well as greater confidence about how to do it in practice. It is clear from the Network's evaluation reports that although there are compelling reasons to work in a co-creative way, it is not the only way to work in the civic arts field and may not be appropriate in some circumstances. The findings of the Network, setting out what is required for co-creation to work, echo those from other initiatives, such as Arts Council England's Creative People and Places programme. They include time and resources, trust, generosity, flexibility from all involved including funders, listening skills, and a willingness to take risks and fail.

The Network's Growth and Replication Commissions showed that although there is potential for the work to scale, tour or be replicated in different places, many organisations are still at an early stage in terms of readiness for growth.

The funded phase of the Network identified a need for national and regional networks to continue to share practice and to build the demand and funding for co-created work. There is a clear appetite from those involved to share skills and experiences of their own growth and for training and development to take this to the next level. A need for wider collaboration across agencies was also identified.

PACT PIONEER CASE STUDY

Tools

Networks and other activity have developed a wide range of tools and guidance for others wanting to learn from or adopt their approaches. The Programme has also supported or commissioned the creation of specific tools to respond to opportunities or needs, including brap's ***Anti-Racism and The Arts: A PACT Pioneer Exercise Book*** and ***Inc Arts' Unlock programme***. These investments were made to support organisations to create anti-racist change and commissioned from organisations led by people from ethnic minorities.

Of/By/For All's online skills development programme ReVision helped leadership teams reassess their strategies in times of crisis, such as the COVID-19 pandemic.

PACT Pioneer programme was created by brap in response to **The Civil Society Futures Inquiry**, which in 2018 found that many in England felt that there were major imbalances in the use of power, accountability, connections and trust (PACT) within civil society. Looking at the arts sector, where these societal issues are very much present, brap developed with UK arts and culture leaders a **practical framework** for developing leaders' equitable and effective use of power.

This framework was piloted with the PACT Pioneer learning cohort (a mix of arts organisations leaders and artists) over a period of 12 months at the height of the pandemic. As the programme developed and the learning cohort's focus changed following the global spread of the Black Lives Matter movement, the programme turned its focus to the power dynamics associated with anti-racism in the arts sector. A practical **'exercise book'**, co-designed by brap with the participants of the programme, captures the main themes of the programme and can be used by others working in the arts seeking a more equitable and effective use of power.

UNLOCK CASE STUDY

Unlock is an example of how the Programme has been able to invest, in a timely manner, in work which benefits many different arts organisations with similar needs. It is an interactive online system that allows organisations and individuals to chart and track their own actions on creating anti-racist change. This system was created by Inc Arts as an inclusive accountability framework for the UK's creative and cultural sector. It is the result of the anti-racism conference Speak-Listen-Reset-Heal that took place in autumn of 2020 and is based on suggestions for change made by those with lived experience of racism in the arts.

Unlock gathers the recommendations, demands and suggestions of those most affected by racism in the arts sector, and creates a series of actions that arts and cultural organisations can take to make their places of creative practice more inclusive. Individuals can choose which actions to take, and how long they can enact them in their organisation, after which they receive an analysis of their choices framed in comparison with the actions chosen by other organisations in the arts and cultural sector.

The Award for Civic Arts Organisations

The Award for Civic Arts Organisations was launched in 2021 to raise the profile of and advocate for arts organisations working in the civic space. In the first two years, the Award recognised how arts organisations were working with and supporting the needs of their communities during the pandemic, and applicants were asked to describe how they had responded (2021) and adapted (2022) to the circumstances. In 2023, the Award focused on co-creation, reflecting patterns in the sector and applications in previous years.

There has been a total of 798 applications from 649 organisations over the three editions. The third year received 336 applications, the highest number. Interest suggests there is a core group of organisations across the UK that see themselves as fulfilling a civic role. (Although some may have seen it primarily as a funding opportunity.) The recipients of the main Award have been Heart n Soul, The Art House and Re-Live. Figure 1 shows the three shortlists.

The Award has been successful in raising the profile of civic arts organisations, while making substantial financial impact in the field (offering a prize funding totalling £150,000, one of the largest in the arts). The scale of money available to the main recipients was noted as making a real difference, beyond a more widely spread but smaller set of awards. The Award has also benefited from a partnership with King's College London, with MA

Fig. 1: Award recipients and shortlisted organisations 2021–2023

	2021	2022	2023
Main recipient	Heart n Soul	The Art House	Re-Live
Other recipients	Eden Court Highlands Museum of Homelessness The Whitworth	In Place of War CIO Project Art Works	Golden Thread Gallery People United
Shortlisted	Deveron Projects EGO Performance Company Friction Arts Key Changes Quiet Down There The Big House Theatre Company	ACAVA Art Pop-Up Koestler Arts Nottingham Contemporary Streetwise Opera Union Chapel Project Wales Millennium Centre	The Albany The Barn Entelechy Arts Knowle West Media Centre Migration Museum Open Clasp Theatre Company Pop Up Projects
Number of applications	260	202	336

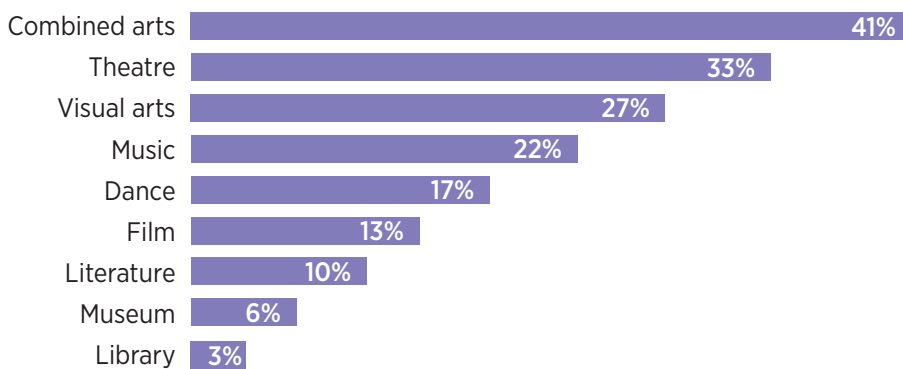
students creating **30 case studies** of the shortlists, showcasing the variety and richness of civic arts organisations.

Taking part in the panels judging the Awards has provided exhilarating and important development opportunities for those involved, with panel members describing the experience as enabling energising learning and networking opportunities.

The Award has offered a total prize funding of £150,000 per year, with the main recipient receiving £75,000 in the first edition and £100,000 in the second and third editions. Other recipients each received £25,000. Previous main recipients are hugely positive

about the impact of the Award. They highlight the boost to confidence and profile the Award has meant for them. This has subsequently been important for increased operational flexibility and attracting new funding.

Fig. 2: Art form focus (applicants in 2021–23) *

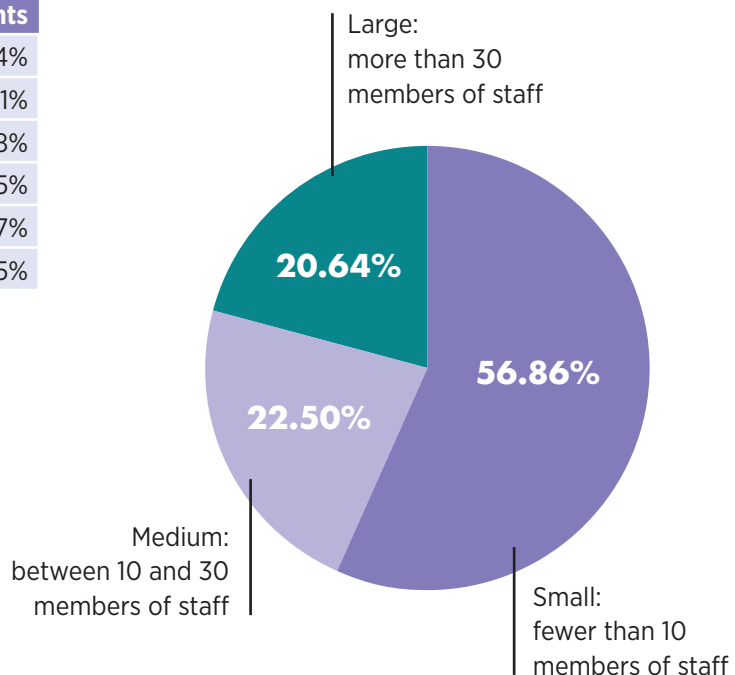


* Applicants could select multiple options.

Fig. 3: Annual turnover (applicants in 2021–23)

Annual turnover	% applicants
< £100 000	16.64%
£100 000 - £250 000	19.41%
£250 000 - £500 000	19.88%
£500 000 - £1M	16.95%
£1M - £5M	19.57%
> £5M	7.55%

Fig. 4: Organisation size (applicants in 2021–23)



“Exploring Life Stories through arts has a powerful role in supporting health and wellbeing, and to have that acknowledged in this way is so important. Now we have the potential to expand our work, ... shape policy and improve lives in Wales and beyond.”

KARIN DIAMOND
Artistic Director of Re-Live

Fig. 5: Geographical base (applicants in 2021–23)



The Award is a useful frame to consider the kinds of organisations that might be part of the civic arts community of practice and their preoccupations. Organisations of all sizes, art forms and public funding situations have applied across the years. They are spread

across the UK, with London and the North having most applicants. There are some signs that awareness of the Award is lower in the devolved nations and some regions, although this improved in the final year, following more targeted promotion.

Fig. 6: Most self-selected communities of focus* (applicants in 2023)

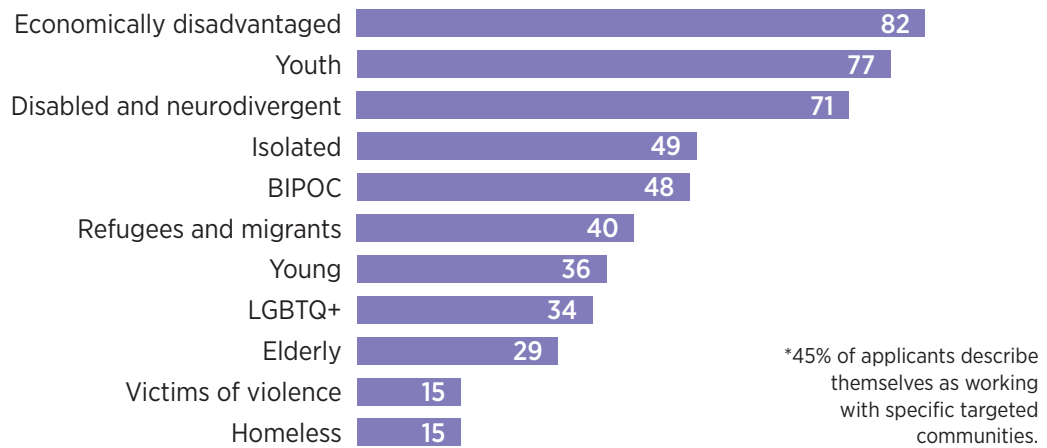
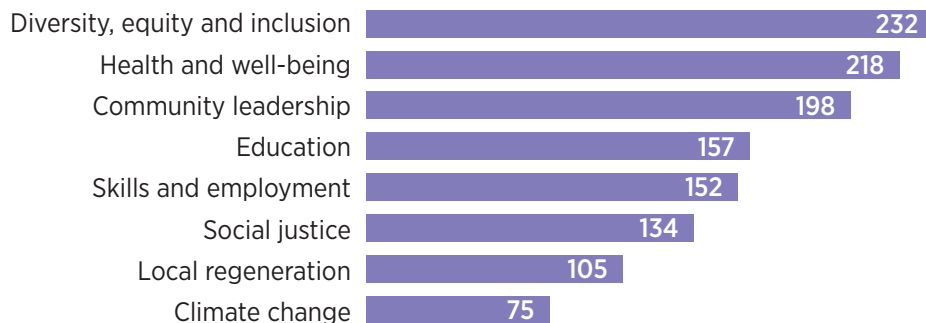


Fig. 7: Most self-selected areas of focus (applicants in 2023)



“The Award has made a huge impact on the work we do and most significantly has meant we have been able to flex, widen our reach and work with our community in more meaningful ways.”

MARK WILLIAMS

CEO/Artistic Director of Heart n Soul

HEART N SOUL: MAIN RECIPIENT 2021

CASE STUDY

Heart n Soul is a creative community and arts charity based in South London. Its vision is of a more open, creative and equal world where everyone can live full lives with independence, freedom and pride. Heart n Soul works with artists who are neurodivergent or have learning disabilities to create spaces for collaboration and sharing their music and art with the world.

During the pandemic, staff made weekly calls to 160 participants to consult members on their needs, forming a steering group to co-create an online programme of activities, including club nights, quizzes, baking sessions and an online gallery of artwork resulting from creative packs which were posted out every fortnight, providing regular work for freelance artists.

Heart n Soul ran digital events every day as well as choir sessions to provide a sense of social contact. During 2020, Heart n Soul moved its research residency, Heart n Soul at The Hub, into the digital space. Researchers from the community co-analysed data with academic researchers and shared their process and findings through a series of online events and building a new website. Navigating digital participation itself was a community-building activity for the community, which forged an opportunity to create a diverse digital environment to celebrate their talents.

*A longer **case study** by Priya Radhakrishnan can be found on the Foundation's website.*

Performance at Heart n Soul. Photo: Christopher Andreou.



THE ART HOUSE: MAIN RECIPIENT 2022

CASE STUDY

The Art House received the main Award in 2022 for its agility in responding to the needs of its local community and putting co-creation at the centre of its work in Wakefield. Its Makey Wakey programme provided free interim spaces to artists and creative businesses. This contributed to bringing down the barriers between their creative programme and community work. The Art House continues to look after artists and community groups through grants, activity packs and wider social programmes. This included projects with local schools, designing progressive arts curricula for students of all ages.

The Art House was founded in 1994 by a group of disabled and non-disabled artists. The aim was to create art studios that are physically accessible and adaptable for as many artists as possible. The Art House now has 51 studios filled with practising

artists, creative businesses and arts organisations and has become an important part of Wakefield's creative infrastructure.

During the pandemic, The Art House became a food distribution hub and collaborated with local charities to provide an emergency NHS mental health drop-in service. It worked with the NHS perinatal mental health team and created 1,000 handmade activity boxes for vulnerable families. The Art House passed small business grants and commissions totalling over £300,000 to local artists and creative businesses. The Art House founded the country's first Studio of Sanctuary for asylum seekers who were artists in their country of origin.

*A longer **case study** by Xinyi Ou can be found on the Foundation's website*

Staff outside The Real Junk Food Project's Makey Wakey Unit at The Art House. Photo: David Lindsay.



RE-LIVE: MAIN RECIPIENT 2023

CASE STUDY

Re-Live in Cardiff is a theatre company that puts wellbeing and health at the centre of storytelling. Re-Live's programmes help the elderly, those with dementia and military veterans to write and perform their stories as plays.

Through Re-Live's 'Life Story' approach, a tool that encourages individuals to reclaim and celebrate their personal experiences, memories, and pivotal events that have shaped their lives, storytelling becomes an engine for compassion, debate and discovery. The shared process creates new stories not just about individuals but about places, communities and the world.

After performance-based training, members of the community embark on a journey of self-discovery. This process allows them to delve into the rich and unique qualities and textures that make up their pasts.

Re-Live has also developed projects such as the comic book *Coming Home*, which explored veterans' lives after leaving the military. The organisation is also in the process of writing *Co-creating Life Story Theatre*, a handbook to guide practitioners of the field, set to be published in 2025. They also offer training for health and social care workers. Their approach to dementia care has been recognised by NHS Wales as a model of best practice.

Re-Live aspires to be a lighthouse for artistic practice, training, and research across Wales, so that it can continue to inspire the 'art of growing old'.

A longer [case study](#) by Maria Pertejo can be found on the Foundation's website.

The Return, Life Story Theatre with veterans, families and the local community at Re-Live.



A growing movement in the UK and beyond

The Programme has aspired to help the growth of a movement of people advocating for and delivering the civic role of arts organisations in the UK and beyond. As set out earlier, there is strong evidence of a growing movement or field of practice in the UK with common practices and principles. More people and networks are making the case for civic arts practice, and for the investment and policy framework that makes it possible, even in challenging circumstances. The response to the pandemic showed that people will come together to ensure creativity plays a role in situations of crisis.

The 649 applicants to the three editions of the Award demonstrate a consistency of impacts, audiences, partners and methods, suggesting a loose civic arts movement that is across all artforms and regions of the UK. This is, of course, only a slice of the sector working in pro-social ways.

There is, perhaps, not a clear ‘ask’ from a movement, beyond public investment to complement the private investment from donors, audiences and participants. Not everyone feels part of a movement, and those that do may define themselves as focused

on the shifting of power through co-production and co-creation rather than the ‘civic’, as defined by the original Inquiry. The ‘civic’ language is more often used by (or perceived by others to belong to) those closer to formal power structures, such as local government and funders, than by the charitable and socially engaged arts sector. Those active in any movement are under increasing pressure due to the cost-of-living and energy crisis, on top of pandemic-related issues still unwinding, a drawn-out funding process in England and instability in other nations. This pressure risks forcing some to be more internally focused, exactly when they could instead benefit from non-arts partnerships and networks.

It is harder to draw conclusions regarding an international movement based on the evaluation work. Some supported projects work internationally, such as the UK Creative Fellows Programme, which connects civic arts activists in the UK to leaders in the USA. Other projects draw inspiration from international practice. Trinity Community Arts and St Paul’s Carnival’s work with Citizens in Power to develop a cultural strategy for South West England, for instance, draws on examples of citizens’ assemblies in Ireland and Denmark.

Networks are vital to spreading civic practices across borders, with many supported networks increasingly connected internationally. Arts and Homelessness International's work on hubs in the Global South is a significant example. Culture Declares Emergency operates climate engagement hubs with local organisations in India and Germany. Several applicants to the Award have international networks, including 2022 recipient In Place of War, which works across the Global South.

A nascent movement relies on long-term sustainability and the existence of long-standing players, as well as continual change and absorption of influences. The ideas of sustainability, resilience and persistence came through several conversations. Museums are seen as good examples of the kind of longevity necessary for the civic, as their spaces and collections belong to people for the long term (or at least to some people). The Award recipients also demonstrate how the 'civic' thrives in the long term, with examples such as Heart n Soul, providing local infrastructure for people with learning disabilities in South London, or Re-Live, which seeks to build an international base for its work in Cardiff.

The main challenge for the movement in the UK is the operational and funding environment in the ongoing cost-of-living crisis, after more than a decade of austerity and changes to funder and audience behaviour post-lockdown. Business models, which have sometimes lagged behind the demand for activities that make a civic contribution, especially in organisations focused more on commercial income than revenue grants, are increasingly stretched. This results in stress and potential for burnout, and for lip service to the civic role, just when it is needed the most in communities. (If the metaphors were being developed in 2023, might a foodbank be included?)

Impacts for local communities

The **evaluation of Creative Civic Change** found that the biggest impacts of the activity in communities were around five areas: connections between individuals and groups, confidence to act creatively, wellbeing, skills and creativity. The passion, knowledge and skills of local residents were developed and were integral to the projects, working alongside but not led by the ideas of arts professionals. Other common benefits to local people included breaking down isolation, opportunities to progress as creative practitioners and leadership development.

Impact for local people is commonly seen as flowing from shifts in power enabled by mutual trust at every level, in appropriately resourced projects. These projects are often long-term, as building trust is ongoing and takes time and patience, especially in deprived communities.

Common Vision's analysis of the 2021 and 2022 editions of the Award shows the kinds of civic outcomes that organisations describe in their applications. These cluster around wellbeing (89% of applicants mention improved wellbeing as a driver/outcome of their work), skills and capabilities (74%) and local needs (72%). 94% of applicants talked about using digital techniques and 41% described developing creative packs or arts kits for remote use during the pandemic.

The impacts are most commonly framed as cultural rather than social. Although networks within the cultural sector are widespread, partnerships seem heavily weighted towards other arts organisations, reflecting a pattern commented on throughout both Inquiry and Programme. Although there are some passionate non-arts partners, the movement lacks leaders and voices from those sectors. Examples such as the Museum of Homelessness and The Agency do, however, show that people can move into arts activity from working in areas more directly orientated to social justice.

Collaboration needs to be encouraged to move beyond culture into the social and civic infrastructure of local authorities, health providers and Voluntary Community and Social Enterprises. In 2023, only 20% of Award applicants were in partnership with local authorities, and only 16% mentioned local charities, community orgs and VCSE groups.

ARTS AND HOMELESSNESS INTERNATIONAL

CASE STUDY

Arts and Homelessness International (AHI) stemmed from an inspirational live event organised by Streetwise Opera with support from the Foundation at the Royal Opera House, which ensured that the creativity of homeless people became part of the 2012 Cultural Olympiad. The immediate success and impact of this early project, which was designed to promote positive attitudes to homeless people as well as increase the self-esteem of those taking part, has ensured that its replication and legacy are being explored both in the UK and internationally. It has established itself as an independent organisation as a result.

Since 2012, AHI has reached 13,200 homeless people globally through international exchanges, events, research and training. It has organised over 150 events across the world from Montreal to Tokyo including at the London and Rio Cultural

Olympiad and convened the first International Homelessness Summit. It commissioned the first **International Arts & Homelessness Literature Review** and has published advocacy toolkits and practice guides.

AHI's work has had a positive impact on policy: its Jigsaw of Homelessness Support model has been adopted by three local authorities in the UK and at least 20 charities and NGOs in the UN's Best Practice Guide on homelessness. During lockdown, AHI set up arts programmes in hotels for homeless people (including in collaboration with Coventry City of Culture) and produced 11 resources for the sector. This work was recognised by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government as best practice. Currently, AHI is creating a 'hive' of NGO hubs in Latin America, Africa, Asia and Oceania, pushing for positive change in homelessness in the Global South.

Arts and Homelessness International mural in Manchester, raising awareness of homelessness. Photo: Simon Buckley.



PANDEMIC RESPONSES

CASE STUDY

The 2021 and 2022 editions of the Award focused on responses to the COVID-19 pandemic. The shortlisted organisations show the diversity of ways people responded to help in their communities. From repurposing theatres into foodbanks or humanitarian aid distribution hubs to developing new digital spaces, telling stories and singing songs online or on doorsteps, civic arts organisations found new ways to fulfil their purpose.

In doing so, they fomented the evolution of definitions of the civic for many people active in the field: 95% of applicants said wellbeing was a driver or an impact of their work, although this had been a smaller component of most versions of the civic role of arts organisations in the Inquiry phase. Building social capital and being rooted in local needs were also strong drivers. Quotes from applicants sum up best how the crisis impacted organisations.

“We work with people with complex support needs (learning disabilities, autism, behaviours that challenge, physical disabilities, other health conditions) and their families. The pandemic has had a catastrophic impact on their lives: many have experienced acute isolation, erosion of rights, lack of access to essential equipment and loss of care provision. The pandemic has brought into sharp focus how important care and compassion is for us and each other. We have changed how we describe ourselves, becoming a ‘collective’ of equals which reflects the non-hierarchical collaborative nature of how we work.”

“With education departments closed, and prisons locked down 23 hours a day, we have seen holistic value of [the support we provide] - prisoners reported how important creativity had been to them, their mental health and wellbeing. ‘Being creative, especially in lockdown, has really helped me with my mental health. Being in prison is hard, but being inside and in full lockdown, well that’s a lot harder. My artwork has kept me going.’”

“Our experience during the COVID-19 pandemic has defined our civic role as hyperlocal, utilising creativity to inspire, build confidence and resilience, and help people to connect, galvanise and convene. [...] We have learned that building partnerships with local community groups and organisations to co-create with the local community provides the most effective foundation for our engagement, and to encourage community agency.”

“Our experiences since March 2020 have demonstrated to us that our musicians bring deep levels of intrinsic and instrumental artistic value to communities and individuals that were already some of the UK’s most isolated and vulnerable. The practice that our musicians model brings a value that encompasses creativity, wellbeing, and a sense of self, identity and creative voice – of being heard – that is usually absent in many of our participants’ lives.”

The metaphors of colleges, town halls, parks, temples and home all took on new dimensions during the pandemic, as activity became both more concentrated – in the home – and more open – online and global. Pre-existing conditions such as the exclusion of some people with disabilities from physical cultural spaces and inequalities in the workforce became much more visible, and some organisations chose to focus on addressing them. In Place of War, for instance, worked with 12 grassroots community organisations to find ‘100 Agents of Change’. The project involved refugees, asylum seekers, people living in poverty and LGBTQI+ communities and resulted in a hundred young people connecting with artists and activists. Project Art Works, a collective of neurodivergent artists and activists, created a digital platform for their communities to participate in creative work from their homes, using tools such as letters, video conferencing and the exchanging of objects. They were able not just to maintain but to deepen connections and creativity.

Eden Court transforms Empire Theatre into the Highlands' humanitarian aid centre. Photo: Jane Barlow.



Museum of Homelessness consulted with health specialists and worked with partners, including Streets Kitchen, The Outside Project, The Simon Community and the Union Chapel, to co-create a community-led COVID-19 Homeless Taskforce and to publish a plan to help the homeless community – to block book empty hotel rooms for the community to self-isolate. This was adopted as a national strategy to bring 29,000 people into safe accommodation. The taskforce formed a group of 50 volunteers partnering with the council and local organisations to produce and distribute meals and connect with those in isolation.

Although the pivot to digital was an important part of some responses to the pandemic, this was only part of the creative response to the crisis. Culture Reset, a people make it work project funded by the Foundation, brought

together 192 people at an existential moment to explore the potential for fundamental, sectoral change, and how to operationalise more relevant approaches. The Award shone a spotlight on many examples of creative solidarity and empathy, new, highly strategic, partnerships being formed to improve lives, and civic arts organisations taking responsibility in response to the pandemic.

As a **report on responses to the COVID-19 crisis** by Common Vision put it, “these stories highlight both how arts organisations need active and engaged communities to thrive; and how individuals need creativity and cultural experiences to lead connected and fulfilling lives. They demonstrate that what matters in the arts are not objects, events, or activities in isolation, but the web of relationships between people that make culture happen.”

Indications of sustained change

The previous sections argued that the cultural sector is increasingly attuned to the ‘civic’ and that a loose movement of arts organisations focused on community and social activity has grown in recent years. But how sustained and sustainable is this change?

There are positive indications that the ‘civic’ is increasingly embedded in how arts organisations talk about their work and develop their plans and activity, as well as in the way funding is changing. More individuals in the sector are also now committed to moving beyond old arguments of quality versus community: the two are increasingly inseparable in their ambitions. (This is not to say this is a universally held belief: some feel excellence has been diminished by some practice and funders, and debate continues.)

Arts Council England’s *Let’s Create* places much greater emphasis on outcomes in tune with the ‘civic’ than previous strategies, championing individual and community creativity and the need for relevance and reach alongside artistic ambition and quality in new ways. This was warmly welcomed by the Foundation. Although the demand for Arts Council England funding is not driven purely by support for the investment principals, the record number of applications to join the National Portfolio in 2023 (over 1700) shows many organisations are prepared to describe their work in this way.

276 new organisations joined the National Portfolio of 990, with over 30% in Levelling Up for Culture places, a set of locations identified based on historic underfunding and potential for investment, agreed in partnership with the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport. It is hard to identify more than a handful that could not be described as having some form of civic role in their ambitions for impact. Arts Council England describes the portfolio as more representative than previous ones, spotlighting increases in the number of Black, Asian and Ethnically Diverse led organisations (up to 148 from 95) and disabled-led organisations, and that 21.8% more investment will be made outside of London compared to 2018/19.

This pattern is also reflected in the final What Next? member survey carried out in 2023. 98% of 89 respondents say fulfilling a civic role is part of their organisation’s mission, 21% explicitly. Only 2% do not. 80% of respondents feel the civic is at the core of their vision and mission. 84% feel that people and local communities are at the heart of their practice. These figures are slightly higher than the findings in the 2021 survey. Fewer respondents felt they fully integrated artistic programme with work with communities (68%), suggesting the development of practice should be more of a focus in the future than developing the intent. It is worth noting, however, that the intent behind the civic role of individual organisations can vary enormously and is often not explicitly articulated.

No respondents said that they saw the civic role becoming smaller for their organisation in the future, whilst 37.5% thought it would be larger and 33.3% described it as central to business planning. The direct influence of the Programme appears to vary and may have been strongest up to 2021, through the events, publications and support for networks during the pandemic. Almost half of respondents (49%) in 2021 felt the Programme had raised their awareness of the civic role of arts organisations, this had reduced to 35% in 2023. Only around one in four respondents felt the Programme had not raised their awareness or influenced how they spoke about their civic role. One in three in 2023 felt it had influenced their future strategy.

There is a strong pattern around the words people use to describe their civic focus in the surveys. Figure 8 shows the ten most frequently chosen words in 2021 and 2023, which suggest impacts are consistently seen as relating to inclusion, wellbeing and relationship to place and community.

Other positive signs of future sustained focus are the extent to which other government funds are supporting civic arts organisations. Cultural Investment Fund grants, made via Arts Council England with the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport as part of the Government’s Levelling Up policy, have focused heavily on projects which include civic elements. These have involved capital development in town centres that intend to create new civic spaces and support civic arts activity. The Foundation has funded civic arts organisations such as Jasmin Vardimon Company, supported

	2021	2023
1	Community	Community
2	Inclusion	Inclusive
3	Engagement	Wellbeing
4	Inclusive	Fostering
5	Wellbeing	Art
6	Responsibility	Learning
7	Place	Communities
8	Social	Empowering
9	Open	Inspiring
10	Responsive	Place

Fig. 8: Most common words used in relation to civic practice (What Next? member surveys in 2021 and 2023)

to become a vibrant hub of cultural activity in Ashford, to embed civic activity into major local developments.

There is, however, huge pressure on funding. Analysis by NESTA (Easton and Di Nova, 2023) suggests a real-term reduction of 30% in funding from Local Authorities between 2009 and 2020 in response to an overall decline in local government budgets over this period. Much of this would fall in the purview of the civic role, including libraries, which represent around half of the reduction despite being a statutory service. There is a need to identify better and more consistent ways of evaluating civic impact to justify support. This is lacking in cultural data collection currently. There is, as NESTA/the Creative Industries Policy and Evidence Centre have argued, a need for a deeper conversation about a new deal for funding, which should encompass the range of activity summed up as the ‘civic role of the arts’.

5

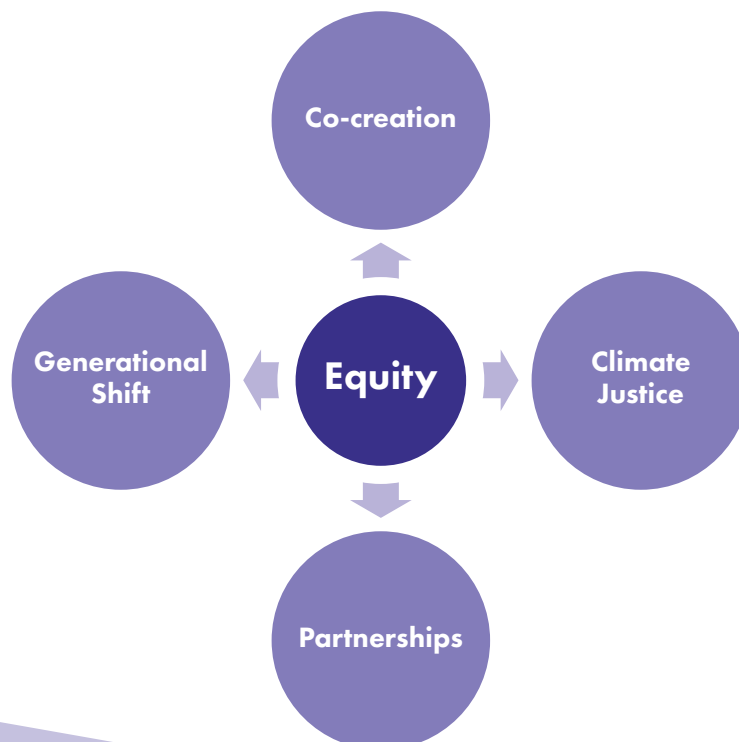
CONSIDERATIONS FOR THE CIVIC ROLE OF ARTS ORGANISATIONS OVER THE NEXT DECADE

This section sets out the issues we feel will be vital for consideration by those supporting and fulfilling the civic role of arts organisations over the next decade.

There is evidence in the impact of the Programme that most of the assumptions underlying the theory of change for the interventions have held up (see Appendix One). Experiments and networks supported by the Foundation have helped create and spread new practice, which has responded to the latent demand for arts organisations to play a civic role. This was most dramatically demonstrated during the pandemic and in response to the murder of George Floyd and the Black Lives Matter movement. The resources and vocabulary developed by the Programme have been useful. Organisations have been able to adapt, but their ability to do so has been heavily shaped by funding and, more recently, changes

in audience/participant behaviour. Similarly, funders and policymakers have become more civic or community-focused to varying degrees, but the extent and nature of this is shaped largely by their contexts and constraints. Although local government and local services can be supportive of the civic in policy terms, changes in roles and reductions in funding have made this a difficult context for many organisations in practice. The funding ecology faces new challenges to support genuinely community-focused organisations sustainably.

If there is demand from communities and policymakers, and willing adoption and adaptation from arts organisations, then, what are the potential areas of focus for the next decade? These are five interrelated areas which, if addressed, could help the growing movement for the civic role of arts organisations.



Equity

The pandemic and the Black Lives Matter movement have raised awareness of the discrimination faced by BIPOC and disabled people, amongst others, and have led to a much greater – though still unevenly distributed – focus in arts organisations on making tangible change in the workforce, governance and design of activities. A shift of emphasis from inclusion and diversity to equity means considering not just *who* or *which places* are involved, but *how* and on *what basis*. How are the lived experiences of people recognised and valued within a creative process? How are people involved in creative decision-making? How are target groups such as young or older people, refugees or people in a neighbourhood, involved in the organisation at different levels? Is this work ‘of, by, for all’, to borrow a phrase from the international network supported by the Foundation?

The word ‘equity’ does not appear in **Rethinking Relationships**. (Equality is used once, equal is used five times.) In 2016 issues of involvement and representation were much more likely to be framed in terms of diversity and inclusion or exclusion, building on the stark differences in participation in culture between people from different backgrounds. These had been highlighted by previous

programmes supported by the Foundation and the Warwick Commission on Cultural Value. Since then, however, the relationship between representation, inclusion and power has become a much greater part of cultural discourse. More people argue that it is impossible, or even inappropriate, to tackle unequal participation without also addressing structural inequalities around class, poverty, housing and health, which are part of the barriers to certain kinds of cultural activity. Others emphasise the creative activity present in all communities, which may not typically fit the norms of funded public arts activity.

In the immediate future, cultural organisations must respond to the impact of the cost-of-living crisis on their workforce, audience and stakeholders in a way that reflects these concerns, whilst also managing their own rising costs. Issues for the long term include addressing inequality relating to age, class, disability and minoritised communities, further tackling digital exclusion, as well as exploring how the cultural sector recognises leaders from backgrounds different from traditional and often normative progression routes and how freelancers can work equitably and securely. For many engaged in the civic space, these are necessary conditions for the civic role of arts organisations to be equitable and inclusive.

Co-creation

Co-creation is a core principle for organisations truly committed to their civic role. And yet, the language and frameworks to critically appraise co-creation are not yet fully developed. What does good co-creation look like compared to poorly executed or tokenistic co-creation? If equity is to be a key concern in the next decade, the sector must address this issue and work through the implications of various co-creation approaches. What is specific about co-creation in the civic arts, as opposed to, say, the health and care sectors? What is co-creation trying to achieve? And how best, in practice, do you do it?

There are now multiple definitions and lists of characteristics of co-creation. Building on practice innovation of recent years, and the development of networks of communities and practitioners, the focus should now include critical reflection on and refinement of the different ways of working. Networks should ensure spread across the UK and greater sharing between the different nations. Learning from, and exchanging with, international models of co-creation should be

increased, not least to provide other models than the typical frames of British culture. The potential for the use of citizen-led processes at a strategic level should also be explored further, considering the experience of the collaborative work on a citizen-led cultural strategy for South West England.

Intention – the purpose behind co-creative methods, rather than the values informing them – should be given more attention and be articulated more consistently, not least so all involved can make informed choices about their participation.

The funding of co-creation approaches will also need to evolve. The use of co-creation as a tactical word, a signal to funders and partners, is not always cynical, but funders will need to appraise the authenticity of claims to co-creation. If outputs and outcomes are to be decided by or with local communities, how do funders redesign their application processes to be more focused on process or constituency, rather than pre-designed SMART targets? What arguments and evidence are needed to persuade funders and policymakers that the approach is robust and useful?

Generational shift

A new generation has entered the cultural and social workforce since the Inquiry began in 2016. Generation Z – commonly described as those born between 1997 and 2012 – is now a growing part of the workforce. Along with the younger Millennials (born 1981-1996), this group is often described as bringing new dynamics to organisations as well as fresh ideas. These include a different focus on climate change, social justice and addressing colonial histories alongside a more identity-based politics. (Although these are also a concern to many older cultural workers engaging with the civic role of the arts.)

Within organisations, younger cohorts often expect cultures to be less hierarchical, and workplaces to be more open and flexible. They are also likely to bring different experiences of education and more student debt than their older colleagues, influencing their perspectives. Their approach to topics such as the ‘civic’, in whatever vocabulary, may be different from older generations, who may typically be more senior within organisations and have formal leadership positions. Many of the younger cohorts are more activist and work with different vocabulary and political frameworks that will influence how the civic role is conceptualised and delivered.

Generation Z and Millennials, who are now starting to get into leadership positions, are also less likely to see ‘digital’ as a separate domain of activity, and to integrate digital and face-to-face activity.

These patterns make it important to identify, track and support new leaders within civic arts organisations. These include those who were part of the civic arts wave of activity in the last decade. These will have different skills and backgrounds to their predecessors and may include people setting up their own organisations outside of the traditional arts charity model, either as activist organisations, community interest companies or social enterprises.

The civic arts movement in ten years’ time will need new leaders and different organisational models, reflecting how many non-arts social sector organisations operate. The aversion to risk of the stereotypical arts charity trustee could usefully be confronted as part of this generational shift, supporting organisational leaders in the ongoing pivot to the ‘civic’. As the UK becomes more ethnically diverse and finds new ways of connecting to Europe and beyond, this will also have an increasingly international dimension.

The representativeness of the workforce overall is a long-standing issue which needs to be addressed in the context of any generational shift. Supporting projects such as the Birmingham Royal Ballet-led College of Creativity reflect the importance of this to the Foundation. The argument made in [A New Direction’s report on Arts in Schools](#) for a fundamental rethink of education to build in creativity is also relevant.

Climate justice

Action on climate change has become a key element of the broader civic arts agenda. The Foundation's recent work reflects this, with support for arts-climate projects and organisations and with its new strategy focused on the twin pillars of Equity and Sustainability. This is in line with the growing movement of funders investing in the arts-climate nexus – from requiring grantees to demonstrate their environmental responsibility to funding projects that raise awareness of climate change through arts and creativity. This work is often cross-sectoral and local, with stakeholders responding to the direct effects of climate change in their areas.

At the core of this is climate justice, which advocates that addressing the causes and effects of climate change should be done in a way that shares the burden and responsibility equitably. This is essentially civic because climate change impacts people and communities, with those who have least likely to be impacted most. Climate change affects each community differently, so interventions (in housing, transport, energy and creative responses) need to be community- and place-based, in addition to considering environmental responsibility.

The Barn from the 2023 Award shortlist is an example of a pioneering civic arts organisation with projects arguing that the climate emergency runs through everything – especially in a place such as Aberdeenshire, which is so closely associated with oil.

The Foundation has supported Culture Declares Emergency, a movement of over 1,500 individual and organisational declarers in the UK cultural sector, who inspire and work with others internationally. Members believe the cultural sector is a leading contributor in creating a regenerative future that protects the planet and sustains everyone, everywhere. With a growing network of regional hubs, Culture Declares Emergency has the potential to support those working to ensure their work embraces climate justice.

Arts organisations and policymakers will need to work together to deepen approaches to climate justice and continue influencing politics, policies, attitudes and action.

Partnerships in place

From the Inquiry onwards, ‘civic’ has been conceptualised as predominantly place-based. The metaphors relate to places found in a typical locality. The principles include ideas of relevance to place, as do many of the policies which are supportive of the civic role. The civic is something that happens *somewhere*.

This means that there are opportunities and a need for partnerships and networks that reflect those places – in their diversity, needs, ambitions and different social infrastructures. It is clear that not all arts organisations are skilled or experienced at developing non-arts partnerships. Often the most outstanding civic arts organisations excel at this. For example, a hallmark of the winning and shortlisted organisations of the Award is how well they work with non-arts partners in a sustained manner. This is not to suggest that this is easy, especially given the pressures non-arts partners are under financially and in terms of demonstrating their own impact. But the issues that are rising up the civic arts agenda cannot be tackled by the arts sector alone.

There are, however, ongoing dilemmas: health, wellbeing, ageing and care have become important to many civic arts organisations. But some feel that arts activity in these settings can be a sticking plaster to prop up unjust systems, rather than tackling root causes, and sometimes at the expense of lowly-paid artists.

Creativity for children and young people in education is full of potential, but also feels in crisis as provision shrinks. Sally Bacon and Pauline Tambling’s *The Arts in Schools: Foundations for the Future* report for A New Direction, funded by the Foundation, argues for a new vision for education and creativity. Ensuring civic arts organisations are well-placed to contribute to those discussions will be vital in the next decade.

Dealing with migration and social isolation are other issues where organisations have provided support but face the challenges of moving towards sustainability. Increasingly consortia-based bids are invited for highly competitive funding calls, and funders will need to consider how these meet ambitions for inclusion and impact. Peer-to-peer and devolved funding mechanisms rooted in place, including loans as well as grants where appropriate, are likely to play greater parts in the funding ecology to support innovative practice.

The need for partnership brings potential benefits, as cultural business models are under pressure from reductions in public funding, the cost-of-living crisis and changes to audience behaviour post-lockdown. As the Centre for Cultural Value internal report on the pivot to civic describes, and as borne out by the three editions of the Award, organisations that proved most resilient during the

pandemic were not those with the biggest earned income streams, but those with the strongest networks and partnerships. The extension of these networks and partnerships to those ‘outside the circle’ will be especially important in the next decade. It is time to move beyond the usual suspects, at every level, and to find new supporters, peers, partners, and co-creators.

Marsha P. Johnson on hoarding outside the Young Vic celebrating unsung Black trailblazers during lockdown in 2020.



6

**WHAT NEXT FOR
THE CALOUSTE
GULBENKIAN
FOUNDATION?**

The Foundation is a long-standing and committed funder of the arts in the UK and internationally. It is, however, a relatively modest part of the arts funding landscape – the Programme considered here has spent around £3.4 million until now. It has sought to leverage this funding using its convening power, history of agenda-shifting publications and ability to generate discussion and reflection. It has also made significant investments into emerging and innovative practice and networks that themselves bring the best civic arts practitioners together.

There is a strong consensus that the Foundation has played an important part in shifting the dial on the civic role of arts organisations – a shift to socially engaged, civic practice which has created new, far from uncontested, ‘norms’ for artists, organisations and funders. Relevance of the arts to local communities, shared decision-making, co-creation and engagement in pressing individual and social issues are all now very much part of the orthodoxy. The civic role is not marginal for many publicly funded organisations but is mainstream as an idea. Indeed, there is now some discomfort and debate about whether the mainstream may co-opt more radical versions of the ‘civic’.

Many ideas in the civic realm and the creative sector have moved from being seen as radical or even unthinkable to becoming generally accepted policy. Whilst it could not be said that the civic role was ‘unthinkable’ for many arts organisations in 2016, some practices highlighted by the Inquiry and the Programme felt radical back then. Turning a theatre into a foodbank? Letting local people decide on the programme with budgets? Orchards as artworks? Such ideas have gone beyond the socially engaged practice common in the last decade.

The question now is to what extent the Foundation could continue to expand the horizons of the civic, from feel-good participation to civic activism, and how to do so in an extremely challenging funding and political climate for organisations. Business models are under pressure, and people may feel forced to balance the ethics of inclusion with, for instance, income generation. Culture wars press in on programming choices, organisational structures and how events, public spaces and buildings are designed to be more inclusive. (Even the design and provision of gender-neutral toilets have become controversial in some places.) Brexit continues to make the European aspirations of many creatives more difficult, but no less vital.

The Foundation itself has gone through a process of review and reshaping of structures and priorities. This will see a more joined up approach across the UK and Portugal, with a view to developing a common civic arts agenda across Europe. Programmes will focus on Sustainability and Equity. The Equity programme aims to help to tackle inequalities in access to culture and in access to care, two key elements of a fairer society. This will include continuing to invest in organisations and people embedding the civic role of the arts in their work, developing the capacity of the networks to deliver peer learning and knowledge exchange, and partnering with organisations to explore how they enhance their civic roles, and how citizens can be directly involved in decisions. The Foundation will also work to embed the civic role into its own cultural venues in Portugal, the Modern Art Centre, the Calouste Gulbenkian Museum and Gulbenkian Music.

In 2023, the Foundation is focused on scoping, benchmarking, mapping and stakeholder engagement activities to better define the future activities of its **Access to Culture programme**. The work should test, pilot and share new approaches to the opportunities and challenges described here, so that the movement of civic arts practitioners continues to expand and be more recognised and supported, to deepen and refresh its practices as the context evolves, and to become simultaneously more local and more international. The Foundation can focus on useful convening and interventions to develop networks and practice so that ultimately more citizens are engaged and connected and work with arts organisations to use their creativity to tackle what is most urgent in their civic space.

“Part of civic responsibility is looking at how we are accountable internally and that means who we employ and how we really respond to the community.”

MADANI YOUNIS
in
What Would Joan Littlewood Say?

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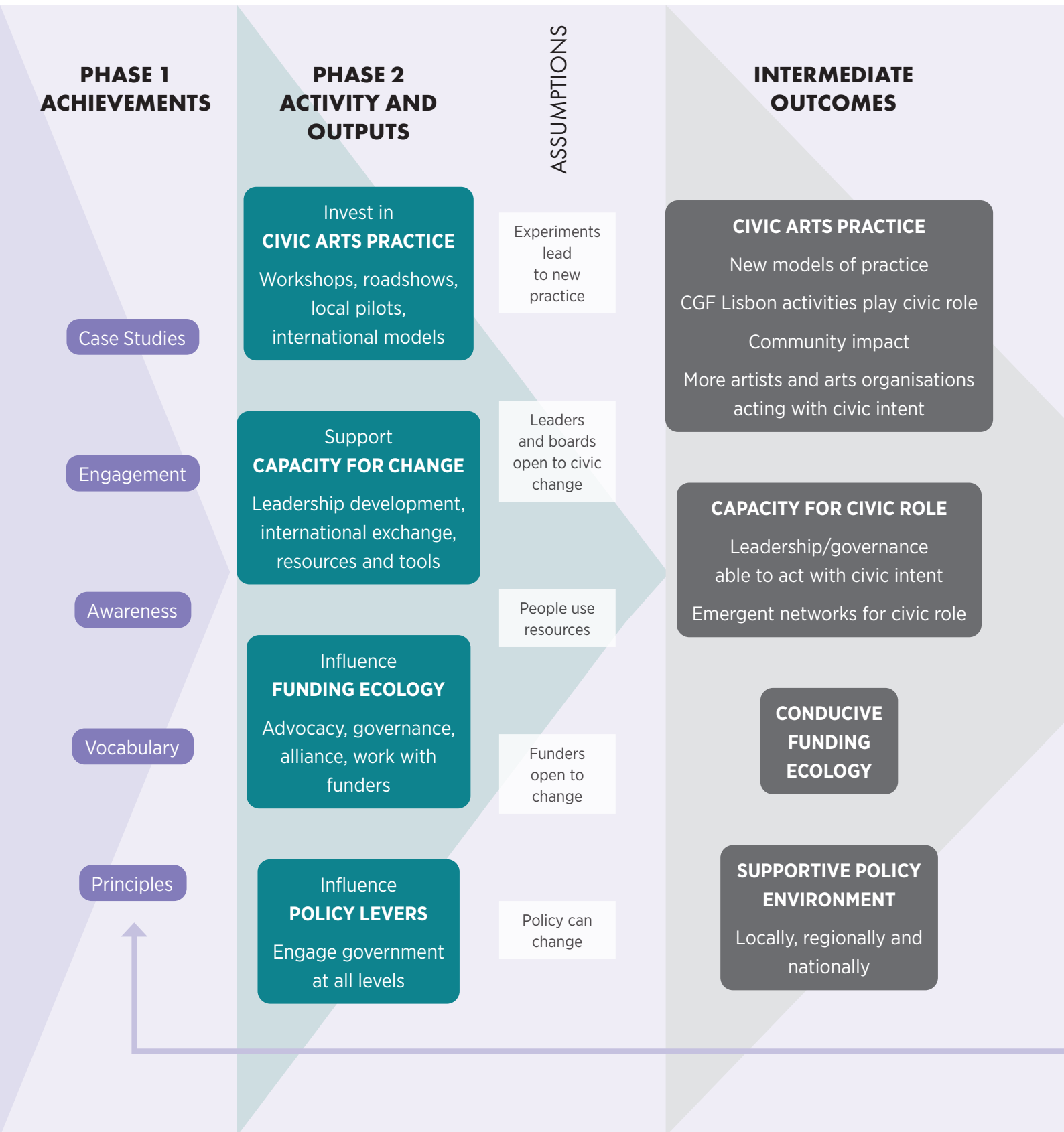
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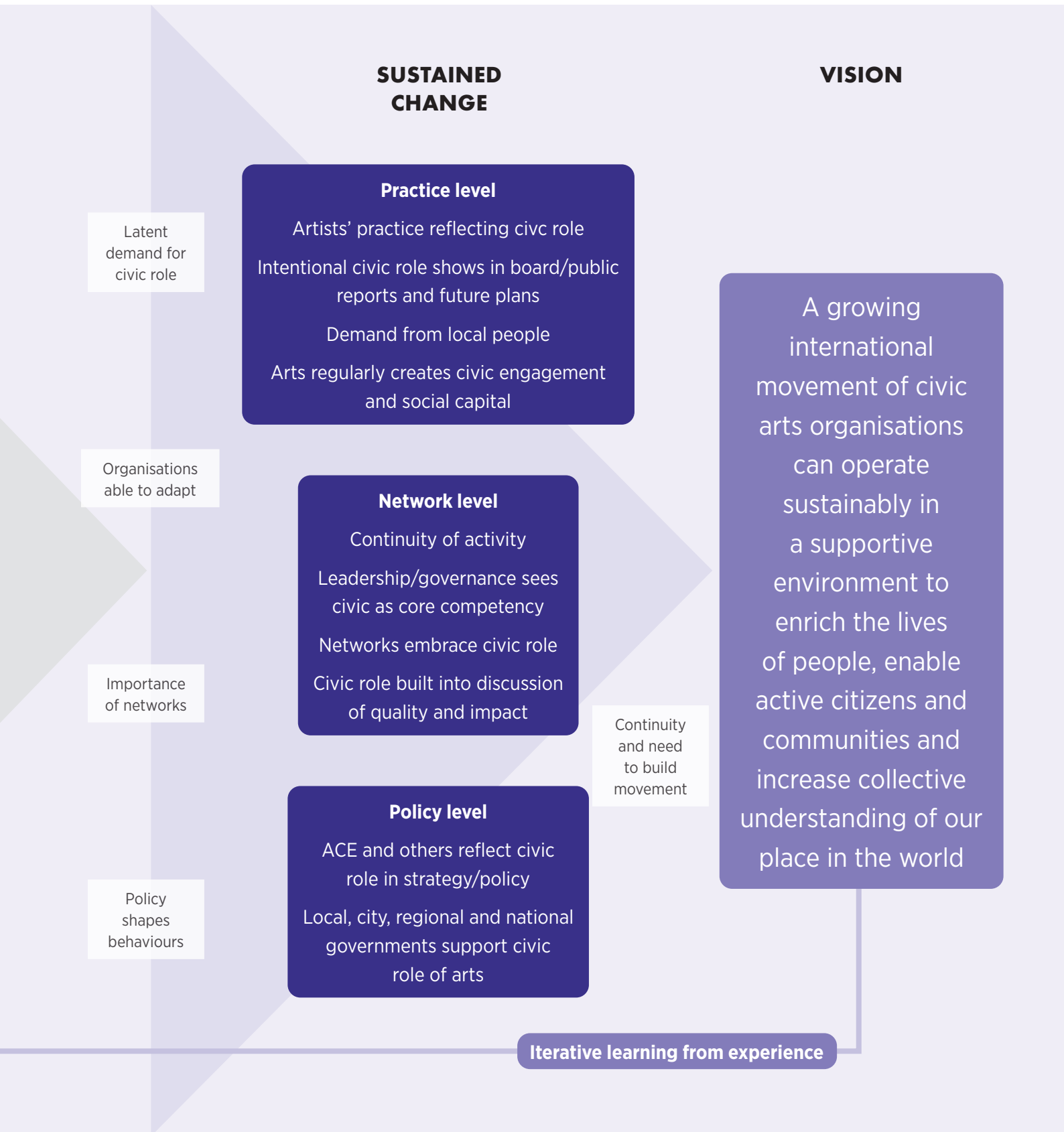
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APPENDIX ONE

THEORY OF CHANGE





APPENDIX TWO

ADVISORY PANEL AND REFERENCE GROUP

Advisory Panel

Tony Armstrong	Locality
Maggie Atkinson	A New Direction
Maria Balshaw	Whitworth Art Gallery
Andrew Barnett	Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation
Jerrell Barnwell	Duhaney Contact Theatre
Michael Buffong	Talawa Theatre
Deborah Bull	King's Cultural Institute
Mary Cloake	Bluecoat
Lorraine Cox	Arts Council England (Panel Observer)
Stella Duffy	Fun Palaces
Stuart Etherington	NCVO
Doreen Foster	Black Cultural Archives
Diana Gerald	Book Trust
Shaks Ghosh	Clore Social Leadership
Dominic Gray	Opera North
Sean Gregory	Barbican Centre
Polly Hamilton	Blackpool Council
Steve Hodgkins	Jobs Friends and Houses
Hilary Jennings	Happy Museums
Lucy Neal	Happy Museums
David Jubb	Battersea Arts Centre
Teasha Louis	The Agency
Caroline Mason	Esmée Fairbairn Foundation
John McGrath	Manchester International Festival
Lucy Ribeiro	NHS
David Robinson	Community Links
Jenny Sealey	Graeae
Tracy-Ann Smith	Diversity in Heritage group
Andrea Stark	Foundation for Future London
Andrea Sullivan	Bank of America Merrill Lynch + Arts Impact Fund
Adam Sutherland	Grizedale Arts
Sydney Sylvah	The Agency
Mark Williams	Heart n Soul

International Reference Group

Jamie Bennet	ArtPlace USA
Jacob Boehme	Melbourne Indigenous Arts Festival Australia
Pascal Gielen	European Cultural Foundation Netherlands
Paul Heritage	People's Palace Projects Brazil
Tommi Laitio	City of Helsinki Finland
Francois Matarasso	Writer Europe
Risto Nieminen	Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation (Portugal)
Diane Ragsdale	Independent consultant Netherlands/USA
Graham Sheffield	British Council UK
Daniel Silver	University of Toronto Canada
Russell Willis	Taylor Independent consultant UK

These lists show job roles at the time of involvement.

APPENDIX THREE

FUNDED ACTIVITY PHASE TWO

Initiatives at the Foundation

- ‘Relevance, Risk, Rewards’ roadshow conferences across the UK to consult with the arts sector on Phase 2.
- **Award for Civic Arts Organisations** to celebrate those rethinking relationships with the communities they serve and using the transformational power of art for individual and societal change.

Publications including

- **Rethinking Relationships, Phase 1 Report:** report summarising the findings from the Inquiry, mapping how arts organisations in the UK are playing a civic role.
- **What Happens Next, Phase 2 Report:** summary outlining feedback on Inquiry findings and setting out priorities and next steps.
- **What Would Joan Littlewood Say?:** collection of essays and interviews with 10 arts and culture leaders on why they feel it is crucial to play a civic role.
- **A Restless Art?:** François Matarasso provides a modern-day snapshot of innovative practice from around the world and sets out an argument for the value of participatory and community art.

- **Creativity, Culture and Connection:** research report by Common Vision on the responses from arts and culture organisations in the COVID-19 crisis and the future of the sector.
- **The Pulse of the Movement:** report by Common Vision looking at what the applications for the first two editions of the Award for Civic Arts Organisations say about this growing movement.

Supported activity

- **A New Direction – The Arts in Schools: Foundations for the Future:** analysis reimagining England’s education system and providing practical and policy recommendations for improved arts education.
- **Arts and Homeless International – Hives and Hubs:** deepening knowledge exchange and power-sharing within the arts and homelessness sector in the Global South.
- **Barbican Centre - Barbican Futures:** audit of the Barbican’s civic activity, establishment of a strategy for embedding a civic role into its core business and support for evaluation.
- **Birmingham Royal Ballet – College of Creativity:** community audit to establish a strategy for embedding a Creative Academy network into the West Midlands cultural consortium.

- **brap – PACT Pioneer programme:** toolkit for those in a leadership role to help measure themselves in terms of Power, Accountability, Connection and Trust.
- **Cardboard Citizens:** project to train creative arts professionals to empower communities and create change through theatre.
- **Centre for Cultural Value – The Pivot to Civic:** evaluation of the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on the UK’s cultural sector, resulting in an internal report.
- **Co-Creating Change:** international network of practice-based change, uniting artists, arts organisations and their communities.
- **Complicité – Can I Live?** – digital arts production with Fehinti Balogun to test the potential of the arts for engaging new audiences in climate action.
- **Creative Civic Change:** 15 hyper-local community-led projects across England, using culture to enrich lives and the community.
- **Creative United Prosper:** workshops, resources and business support through a network of business advisers to 70 arts and cultural organisations.
- **Culture Declares Emergency:** core funding for a movement of climate emergency declarers in the UK cultural sector, working with others internationally.
- **Good Chance Theatre – The Walk:** development of ‘The Walk’ international initiative, using theatre and art to connect people on migration and social cohesion.
- **Governance Now, 2021 conference:** national event for arts and culture sector professionals exploring how governance is essential in promoting a civic role.
- **Hey 100:** project strengthening cultural and social leaders’ networks and providing leadership training.
- **Inc Arts – Unlock:** inclusive accountability framework and toolkit for the UK’s creative and cultural sector to foster greater diversity within organisations.
- **Jasmin Vardimon Company – Creative Laboratory:** development of the JVC Creative Laboratory to become a vibrant hub of cultural activity in Ashford.
- **Letters to the Earth:** development of a road map for a participatory performance, working with practitioners to create bold new stories to engage with the climate crisis.

- **Local Government Association – Culture-led Regeneration:** report on how culture-led regeneration delivers quantifiable economic and social benefits through a range of models.
- **LIFT Tottenham:** programme providing transformative opportunities for artists, local organisations and communities through participatory performance practice.
- **Of/By/For All – ReVision:** online skills development programme for leadership teams at civic and cultural organisations on ‘revisoning’ in times of crisis.
- **people make it work – Culture Reset:** expert support and stimulus for 192 arts and cultural producers, makers and directors across the UK during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- **people make it work – International Exchange:** pilot international leadership and development exchange for arts leaders from the UK, Portugal, India and Brazil.
- **Slung Low – Federation of People’s Theatre:** establishment of a Federation of People’s Theatre, providing peer support for leading practitioners in participatory people’s theatre.
- **The Clore Duffield Foundation:** pilot place-based programme to support cultural and social leaders.
- **The Young Vic:** outdoor public art installation providing a civic response to the pandemic and Black Lives Matters movement during lockdown.
- **The Seachange Trust:** project exploring co-creation and international distribution models for socially engaged arts practice.
- **Trinity Community Arts and St Paul’s Carnival:** development of a process for citizens to design a cultural strategy for the South West and submit a bid for City of Culture 2029.
- **Derby Museums – UK Creative Community Fellows:** leadership programme exploring social transformation through arts with artists, community organisers and social entrepreneurs.
- **UK Governance Alliance for the Cultural and Arts Sector:** convening leaders to promote inclusive governance and integrated civic practice. Part of Clore Social Leadership.

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About the Foundation

The Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, established in 1956, is a philanthropic institution that is dedicated to the promotion of arts, charity, science, and education. It is committed to full independence and the preservation of its legacy. Its main priority is the development of a sustainable society that provides equal opportunities to all. The Foundation directs its activities from its headquarters in Lisbon and its delegations in Paris and London.

About Mark Robinson (Thinking Practice)

Mark Robinson is the founder of Thinking Practice, through which he coaches, advises, researches, facilitates and writes. Based in Stockton-on-Tees, he has worked with over 200 organisations since founding Thinking Practice in 2010. Future Arts Centres published his book *Tactics for the Tightrope: Creative Resilience for Creative Communities* in 2021. Mark's career has included work as a funder, adult education teacher, director of a community arts organisation, literature worker, editor, festival organiser, and head chef. He is a widely anthologised poet, whose *New & Selected Poems: How I Learned to Sing* was published by Smokestack Books. His poem *The Infinite Town*, is carved on a large plinth on Stockton-on-Tees High Street.

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