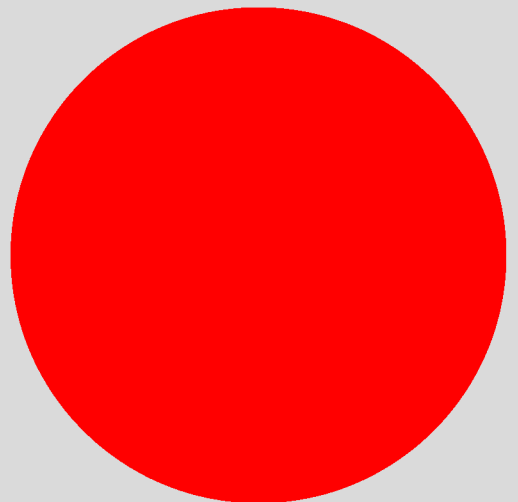


RE-IMAGINING CULTURE

How to (and how not to) build a cultural economy



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Lessons learnt after the crash and 'what now?' for artists, theorists and professionals working in art, culture and policy.

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Introduction

'Re-imagining Culture' is a discussion event that took place in May 2010, shortly after the UK general elections and amidst a recession, in highly uncertain times for culture and the arts. Through the event, DOXA seeks to question and explore the shifts in the vision of culture and cultural production, and its relationship with the global economy. Recent shifts are marked firstly by the emphasis of the 'Creative and Cultural Industries' in the UK in the past decade, which has come to be considered an archetypal economic model for culture internationally. Now as the global economy slumps into recession with the election of a new coalition government, anxiety over mass restructuring and cuts to public funding for the arts looms over the entire sector. 'Re-imagining Culture' provides a platform to reflect and reassess the state of the arts in the UK and to review the role of arts and culture in society as a whole, and to explore new visions and possibilities for culture for the future.

DOXA is a new international research collective that is exploring new shapes and models for culture today. Through a series of events as part of an on-going research on 'Creative Space', DOXA seeks to facilitate transdisciplinary discourse by bringing together professionals and practitioners from diverse backgrounds. For 'Re-imagining Culture', DOXA invites three speakers: John Kieffer, William Wong and Sonya Dyer to speak from their experience as artists, cultural consultants, policy advisers and arts professionals. In an open forum, audiences consisting of 30 odd professionals, students, artists and academics contribute from their personal experiences that opens up to further conversation. The discussion begins to form a unique case study and evaluation of the cultural sector from multiple perspectives from government, organisations and grassroots levels.

What emerges from the discussion is a desire to think in broader, more holistic terms beyond sectors and beyond dichotomies between art and business. There is a desire to rethink the relationship and self-knowledge of artists, audiences and organisations in the larger cultural economy. There is a need to gain a better understanding of how culture and cultural production is changing with the shifting relationship between producer and audiences. Concerns about public funding and what will happen next with the new coalition government are foregrounded, along with ideas on funding and a need to explore mixed models between non-profit and commercial models. There is a growing interest in community-led production and fan-funded projects, and issues with organisational complacency and a funding system that encourages 'box-ticking'. There are questions about access, quality and social interest in the arts, that lead to issues of class. There is a recognition of the increase of creative education resulting in a lack of jobs for graduates that lead to issues

of precariousness and free labour, and expectations for internships in the cultural sector. There is a desire to reconsider the value of the arts and the work of practitioners in the broader economy. Conversations extend outwards to Africa and China, while unveiling some of the realities of the cultural model in the UK that begins to question its influence abroad.

The following is a transcription and summary from the discussion beginning with brief introductions by each speakers that is followed by an open discussion with the audience. 'Re-imagining Culture' maps out a wider scope from the micro practices of artists and artist-led groups, to organisational practice and policy in the UK, while reaching out to other sectors and engaging with developments in other countries and cultures in a global economy.

Speakers

JK: John Kieffer (Editor of 'After the Crunch', Creative Director of Sound and Music)

WW: William Wong (Clare Leadership Fellow, Cultural Consultant)

SD: Sonya Dyer (Artist, Writer and Co-ordinator of the Chelsea Programme, Chelsea College of Art&Design)

AB: Abbas Nokhasteh (Director, Openvizor) – chair

YH: Yuk Hui (Co-founder, DOXA)

+ AUDIENCES

John Kieffer

Change and the Immutable

JK: We're obviously in a period where we're talking about change at the moment. It's the word of the leadership election in Americas, but also I'd like to have a look at what doesn't change, and at the UK and the way that cultural policy has not been configured for a very long time now. Although the money has gone up and down, the personnel has changed to some extent in terms of either cultural ministers or arts councils, but really, we have been looking pretty much at a static situation for a while. We're looking at a world, which is made up in terms of the funded arts - being not-for-profit organisations. Most of the organisations are charities, they have a board and they have very very similar constitutions. They do business in a certain kind of way.

How have we ended up in the not-for-profit sector and in the arts with everything looking pretty much the same? There is not a lot of new models being developed.

If you start looking at the top two hundred organisations in the UK in terms of what they've been supported, they're pretty much unchanged for the last 20 years. While we think about being in a state of flux, there's a lot of things that are pretty much immovable as well. Obviously the big difference is the new addition to the discussion in '97 when Labour took office and there was the introduction of the 'Creative Industries'. All of a sudden, there was an acknowledgement that culture was not just produced by charitable arts organisations, but also produced in the commercial sector. You suddenly had a whole new area that was under consideration, but that addition didn't really create the kind of fluidity that I personally would have liked to see.

The Quebec Model

JK: One of the models I've always been really interested in is Quebec, and how Quebec does the arts. They have a continuum. On one end, they will have the funded arts sector and the not-for-profit arts sector, and then on the other end they will have commercial investment strategies. They will work across the whole of that spectrum and all points in between. I think for a lot of us, around the time when the creative industries were introduced into the mix in the UK, felt there is a real opportunity to look at the whole world culture and to see where government and where organisations like the Arts Council could intervene in a more meaningful way. It never happened and it has always been bi-polar. There has always been

the funded world and there has always been the commercial world in terms of how government policy has worked.

There was one point when I was at the British Council, I was Head of Music and I had to introduce the people from the DCMS (as it was then) to their colleagues who worked in the commercial bit of DCMS involved with music, who have never met each other. We should really start thinking and acting on a governmental level across all that spectrum.

Mixed Models in Small Organisations

JK: Increasingly, new organisations coming into the cultural world are mostly new small organisations involved in the creative industries that are adopting a model, which is much more flexible. There's an organisation I've been working with on and off nearly a year now, which is a commercial visual arts organisation [United Visual Artists]. At one end of their spectrum, they work on designing the lighting and the stage effects for U2 and JayZ tours, which is obviously big money. At the other end of the spectrum, they also put on their own gallery shows. They will fund themselves out of their own money, and in between they will also get involved in public art commissions, and work for clients and so forth. They haven't sat down and developed this new model. It's just what they do and they don't have any issue with it. Not suggesting that everybody should be doing that, but it's an interesting way of working. They also develop software as well; writing software and developing new products for the market place. I think we need to have that perspective both at the level of policy, and at the level of practice.

Role of the Arts

JK: Just briefly on the not-for-profit sector, it has grown into a huge belief system, and there are lots of things that we say about ourselves in the not-for-profit arts world, which are weird, and some of them are just not true. In that sense the whole advocacy model, which has been running like mad for the last 15 years have been really claiming that arts and artists could do virtually anything from regenerating cities, to getting rid of your bunions. We just need to calm down. We need to look carefully at what creativity and what the arts sector can do and what it can't do, and really look at it more sensibly in relation to the rest of society.

Cross-Sector Activity

JK: One of the things that's raised often with me is why there's not enough cross-sector activity. The arts advocates very well for itself, but you don't hear people in other social enterprises or the voluntary sectors advocate for the arts. It's because we don't actually talk to people outside of our own world. It's a very insular kind of world. It has its own belief system, its own language, its own way of talking to itself. I think as much as making sense of the whole cultural world, we also need to start thinking of new ways of having meaningful conversations outside of it about what we really do.

Dialogue Between the Big and Small

JK: Lastly, in terms of how the government relates to the creative economy is that they largely only talk to big organisations. Governments are used to understanding, in the creative economy, what multi-national entertainment companies, what big rights holders and so forth have to say. So it's a discussion of big and big. What's not clear is the information about what's happening on a micro-economic level in terms of SME's not getting to the government. There's really a lack of understanding about how small companies work, how small organisations work, and how artists work. We don't do a good job in getting that message across, and also government does a very bad job in trying to find out what's happening at that level.

Thinking Holistically

JK: My argument is to be much more holistic and more forensic at the same time (if that's not a contradiction). It's actually taking a very big view. But to really start researching some of the areas about how things work, and to actually be able to talk about them sensibly outside of it.

William Wong

Funding

WW: I think what I would take away from John's insights is to think more holistically. Everyone is saying the arts is doing extremely well. I can tell you, all is not well. Actually, since 1997, when Blair took over under New Labour, there is this understanding through DCMS and arts councils is the so-called "Tripartite" funding model, a three-legged model. You have one being public subsidy, the other is your own box office takings, trading revenue, and the last leg would be fundraising, development, sponsorship, and grants income. The three together make up the pot.

I used to be in the private sector. I trained as an accountant and became a consultant. When I decided to retrain as a theatre director, the first two things that really hit me was everyone was telling me, it's all about funding. Oh really, is that how it works? There's only so much money in the pot; basically, if you get more, I get less. Oh really? It's a zero sum game. I thought this mentality is quite strange.

In an Arts & Business document about the so called 'Gold Standard Test', it says if the government gives you one pound of public money, you are expected to generate an additional two pounds using your own methods. You might think, that's not too bad, but the reality is, through their research, only less than half of Arts Council England's so-called 'RFO's' [Regularly Funded Organisations] are able to meet this so called 'Gold Standard Test'.

Internal Collaboration within Organisations

WW: What is happening within arts organisations? Now as you know, there's usually two parts. There's the art making; if you're a dance company or a theatre company, you have people who do the art in rehearsals; and then there is the administrative side, people who do the office, the strategy, the planning, the marketing and so on. You would expect the two sides would want to work together for the better good. In reality I thought, do the office people actually turn up and watch some rehearsals, take your shoes off, roll on the floor, do some physical exercises, some yoga training, breathing exercise and all of that? Hardly. What about the dancers, the actors? Do you get them to the office to shadow a little bit? Half a day, watching people in meetings, observe a board meeting, get an understanding of how the organisation runs from the other side. Afraid not.

Politics and Economics in the UK

WW: In terms of politics, post-election, now having the first coalition government in 65 years, a lot remains uncertain. Traditionally, I think the arts has always been quite adversarial with the Conservative Party. Now unfortunately or fortunately, the new DCOMS (Department of Culture, Olympics, Media and Sports), the Olympics portfolio is now merged with DCMS. You have a complete Tory team. There are no Lib Dem representatives. How that will play out remains to be seen. From what I understand, the conventional Conservative sentiment is anti-subsidy, and they don't like Quangos very much. All the agencies, from arts councils to regional development agencies and so on, what will their future in the next fixed term parliament over the next five years be? I think that's a big question.

In terms of economics, we know there's no money. Next Monday, we will get a much better sense of where the six billion pound cuts are going to fall. A lot of people are really nervous. I have to say, the 66 million pounds Jeremy Hunt (the new culture secretary) already confirmed saying "we have to find efficiency savings". Now 66 million is a lot of money of course, but if you multiply it by a hundred, which is roughly about 6 billion pound cuts that the coalition government has already committed to in the next financial year, if you multiply that by 28 again, that is our current fiscal deficit. 168 billion pounds, which is the largest in Europe. We know we will have an emergency budget on the 22nd of June. I know a lot of people in the subsidised sector are now really worried about the next round of comprehensive spending review, because that's what matters.

The term "post-crisis", when I saw it, I thought, OK, which crisis? We've had a wave of crises. From the subprime to the banking, to the economic crisis, the Greek tragedy, Euro debt zone, contagion and now the real funding crisis is going to hit the subsidised art sector in the next three years. More bad news. Inflation is on the up, everyone is expecting VAT to be 20% next year. All that will hit consumer spending, which will hit trading revenue of arts organisations.

Quality of Culture

WW: I want to share with you just an extract. An artist called Grayson Perry, who just a week ago gave a lecture at the Royal Philharmonic Society of Music Awards. He said, "Who cares about culture cuts, when Top Gear is doing well in Poland?". He said, "We all care about the quality of our culture, but are the tears shed in opera, better those that shed at a football match?" Are they better quality tears? People sometimes talk as if there is a vintage type of tear that is shed only at Glyndbourne.

Technology and Audience Relationship

WW: Everyone is talking about, "Oh technology is the saviour, web 2.0, social media networking...", it's true. What I noticed about web 2.0 is currently, there is a lot of "me too".

We must get on the bandwagon. Oh, they're on Facebook, we do that. They're on Twitter, we do that. There's a lot of push. I really wish there's more user-led innovation. Asking your followers, asking your audience, well, "What can we do differently? What can we do better?". Mobile apps are not only about technology, but now, because of these apps, it re-defines a relationship with your audience.

Innovation, Collaboration, Resilience

WW: Overall, I would advocate, for urgent structural reform. I think all organisations, small, medium, large need to be far more open, far more innovative, and resilient. You need to be open to change, open to criticism, open to more intercultural and more interdisciplinary inquiries; open to cross border and cross sectorial collaboration, which still remain the exception rather than the norm. You have to be open to form unlikely alliances, almost like our government at the moment.

According to a recent report, which came out from MMM, Mission Models Money. They categorically stated two things: "This sector lacks self-confidence". Also strangely, you think this is the cultural sector, this is the creative sector, actually we can do better at story-telling about your core purpose. What are the arts for? Organisations are not as good as they should be at in actually articulating what they are doing.

Sonya Dyer

Artists in Crisis

SD: When I was first invited to be a part of this forum, the invitation mentioned arts 'after the crisis' and I thought, which crisis? Because particularly coming from a visual arts perspective, we've been in crisis for a long time, in terms of practitioners, artists, writers, curators and so on. The state of crisis seems to be the norm for us.

Over-Saturated Job Market

SD: If we think about what's happened over the course of the last government, more and more people were encouraged to go into creative education. So we have this proliferation of art students and design students, curatorial students and courses throughout the country, which on one hand is great, but on the other hand, what happens to all these people once they leave college? There aren't enough jobs for them. There aren't enough opportunities for them, there aren't enough galleries to show all the artists. I think what this does in a way is it has increased the sense of insecurity amongst practitioners. It increases the desperation and hunger for opportunity that can lead to some quite self-destructive behaviour. One of which is the expectation that practitioners work for free.

Free Labour

SD: I graduated in 1998, so it was a while ago now, 12 years ago. One of the things that astonishes me now, speaking to people who are maybe a decade younger than me is that they automatically presume they have to become an intern in order to get into the system. Now, I've never interned because I could never afford to work for free. It's just not an option for me. I'm really fascinated by why this whole generation of people seemed to have been brainwashed into thinking that this is what they are going to need to do in order to get opportunity, and who that benefits. It certainly doesn't necessarily benefit them. Particularly if they are not necessarily savvy to work out how to make that situation work for them, by being practical and rather cavalier about it. I think this is a direct result of this increase in numbers coming out.

Class

SD: It's also one of the things that maintains a particular class dynamic within the sector, which is something that I've written about quite a lot. In a sense, if you think about who can afford to go study a subject, which is not really a high paid labour market in relation to the amount of education you actually go through (BA, MA and so on). Then you are expected to work for free, and then if you do get a job, it's going to start at a really low wage. I mean who can afford to support themselves through that? It's usually people who come from a degree of economic advantage or privilege that most people in this country probably don't experience. So it maintains a middle class bias within the sector.

Artists Self-Worth

SD: What I'm interested in looking at is the way in which the expectations that institutions have of artists, affects how artists behave towards themselves and each other. The expectations of what kind of conditions they can work under, and how that affects their ability to practice. In a way, I also think that artists are often their own worst enemies, because they accept the situation. We don't insist on our labour being seen to be of value, despite the fact that the creative industry earns all this money for the country. There is no creative industry without artists.

Arts Bureaucracy

SD: Another thing that has happened as a result of the last 13 years is the proliferation in the arts bureaucracy. A lot of money that has gone into the sector, goes into the bureaucracy that supports the sector as opposed to trickling down directly to practitioners. I'm someone who is both a practitioner and an arts bureaucrat. I guess I get to see it from both points of view. Also I work in the arts to support my practice, like a lot of other people. I'm not anti-organisation or anti-arts administration. I understand that those kind of things are necessary in order to support the sector, but it's about the balance of power and influence, and also the financial rewards that needs to be readdressed.

Cuts to the Arts

SD: We are always going to have, whoever is going into government, a huge cut in the arts budget. What I hope is that we are not going to get cut more than any other sector of government, but that remains to be seen. In relation to what you were saying about there being no Lib Dems involved in the cultural departments, the Lib Dems didn't really have a cultural policy anyway. We aren't missing out on anything there.

Artist-led Culture

SD: I think a lot of the answers to how we are going to go through this economic crisis can already be found in artist-led culture. That is artists who are already working on the condition of crisis and who are kind of self-generating their own solutions, their own project, their own spaces, their own organisations, their own agencies, their own curatorial teams, their own artists groups and so on. A lot of the critique that you make about this supposed insularity in the arts, I certainly think to a degree, is unfair in terms of the visual arts because artist-led culture is totally about internationalism and collaborating with other areas of society. In a way, it's a kind of financial necessity because of the funding that could be found in working with younger people or older people, or science, as opposed to just purely going for an arts project. It has become something that's quite pragmatic. It's also a desire to engage with the wider world. I think it would be a shame if we talk about the arts in terms of thinking of those high end organisations like the National History Museum and all those kinds of places. That's one angle, but there's also a whole range of more grassroots and more artist-led organisations working in these fields, who are doing all these things already. Let's not forget that.

Art Beyond Economics

SD: For turning one pound into two pounds, again, that's fine if you're a major organisation, but there are many art forms that don't make a profit and will never make a profit. They are still valuable as art forms in and of themselves. Some of the most interesting work being produced in those areas will never make any money.

The value of art and culture has to be seen beyond its economic value.

Why Subsidise Tourist Entertainment?

SD: Simon Jenkins who works for the Guardian, and who is also the chair of the National Trust were speaking at an event. It was him, Bonnie Greer, a guy from the Tax Payers Alliance, Matthew Taylor who runs the RSA. It was looking at whether we can still afford to subsidise the arts. What Simon Jenkins was saying was, why do the people of this country subsidise tourists entertainment? And by that he meant that free museum entry for everyone is potentially problematic, because in other countries, museum entry is free for people who live in that city, or in that country or in that town, but people from overseas have to pay a small amount to get into the museum. You can pose the question, which really made me think, why can we not discuss this? Because if we did charge tourists to use these gallery spaces, we could use some of that money to support artists.

Value of Labour

SD: There are huge organisations that run projects with artists without paying them. This weekend we had the 'No Soul For Sale' exhibition at the Tate Modern and there's been a bit of writing about that in the Guardian and other places because none of the participants, and they're international participants, who come from all over the world, were actually paid, and it was seen as being part of Tate's 10th year anniversary. So it's a real question to be asked about how in the future we think about new ways of considering the value of culture. Everybody who works there gets paid, so why shouldn't artists? They are the only people in the country who are expected to work for free.

I'm part of an artist-led group that's looking into how we might set up a union for English artists. There's a union in Scotland already. So we're looking at ways in which we can support the development of an artist union for England. If anyone wants to talk to me about that you can talk to me as part of this forum.

Open Discussion

AN: We are going to open it up to the audience. There are lots of different points of view, different visions of what the value of art is and the role of large organisations, and the space for smaller organisations, and the irregular, and probably where the real lag is, which is in the informal spaces. We've got a group of people here from both different organisations, but also from different parts of the world as well. I'll ask, William Chamberlain from Hackney WickED. It's the 3rd festival this year in what is an incredibly contentious space about 20 metres from the Olympic site, and the way that you looked at bringing together what is an informal into a collective, and the way that they value their work and whether their relationship with the wider environment is moving anywhere forward or backwards.

Hackney WickED: Case Study

[William Chamberlain, Sponsorship and Company Secretary, Hackney WickED]

WC: It has been extremely interesting over the last 3 years or 2 years. The first Hackney WickED festival I think started with 150 artists potentially, 4000 visitors, 4 galleries and some open studio buildings. Last year, we organised ourselves into a community interest company, and the reason we did that was to provide a coherent voice so that we could start having conversations with potential funders. Also, as a community interest company, it gave us the opportunity to speak to the commercial sector. I think we always recognised that there had to be a mixture of public sector funding and commercial sector money, as well as, money that we were earning ourselves. Last year, we had 12 to 15 thousand visitors, 500 artists participating, 19 galleries, and we're trying to use art as a way of demonstrating how we can regenerate a city. So that turns to the point where we think that this is an area that's been neglected over the years, and to do something like this in the name of the Cultural Olympiad, next to the Olympic park would be wonderful.

We recognise how difficult it is with pressures with other developers and people who see a great opportunity to make a great deal of profit. We haven't actually managed to get any public sector funding, no matter how hard we have tried, and we are in the process of signing our first commercial partner at the moment, so this climate has been incredibly difficult to operate in. There's no guarantee that you're going to get funding just because you are putting on a fantastic event. I think the signs are good now. The ODA [Olympic Delivery Authority] announced supporting us. I think by putting on a good festival this year would demonstrate a track record over 3 years and then things become very different I

think. At the heart of it, it's the art. At the heart of it is an opportunity for grassroots artists to use some of the spotlight that has been shone on this part of East London to further their own practice, develop their careers as artists, and to help them become working commercial people in the normal economy.

AN: I think that in the heart of this conversation, it seems that it's not either one or the other, but it's about the way a large organisation and a collective group, and collective action between artists can come together in a more pragmatic way, rather than being in contention, which is what politically happened in the 70s or even 80s, when artists and creativity were against a behemoth of very large governmental organisations, and to understand that there's a kind of flexibility and need to change with the times from both ends of the sphere.

Artist Unionisation

AN: I think that there's this idea of where would an artist-led union come from and what was your experience, Sonya, when you looked at Scotland, in terms of that kind of relationship of somebody wanting to be understood and valued in their rights and the rights of their work, when you're looking at a real mix of organisations that then have to deal with those artists?

SD: Essentially, it's about empowering artists to understand their value and their rights. To help them to be able to set rates of pay, to support them in any kind of dispute/negotiations, but also other benefits that will come out of the research period that we're in now. Of course it's always open to new ideas. Being an artist is a form of work, we're not any different from any kind of workers. I know there's a romantic idea that we're in the attic starving somewhere, but in reality, we are cultural producers, and most other workers have at least the option of having union membership.

If you work as a train driver, you have the RMT, and you have Bob Crow. If you walk on the Underground, he's there making a noise on your behalf. It's about allowing, not just artists but, curators, writers, anyone involved in the arts sector to have a voice, but also to have a kind of extended family of backup.

There are various organisations that perform some of those roles like A-N, who do AIR [Artists' Interaction and Representation], which is an A-N project. For example, if you subscribe to A-N magazine, you automatically get up to a million pounds of public liability insurance, and there are things like that which are just useful to have, but they can only do that because of the critical mass of people who join. As an individual, if you try to get that kind of insurance they're expensive, but you can get it for about 25 or 30 quid that you pay to subscribe for a year to A-N. So we're looking at those kinds of models.

Audience Relationships

JK: I think the new kind of area is not about artists or arts organisations at all. I think it's about audiences, and about people who are interested in what we do or are not interested in what we do here. I think the relationships in the future will not be reshuffling what's already there, it's about finding new ways of bringing those two together. I think that there's already some interesting models emerging in terms of fan-funded activity in the States. The whole idea of crowd-sourcing ideas, crowd-sourcing finance and so forth.

I think if we're going to get beyond the very institutional models and the very debilitating models we've got, then it's got to be about a new between the public and the people who are cultural producers.

I think you see more and more of that emerging in the pure commercial sector. What worries me a bit is coming from arts organisations, the audience is almost a kind of a weird after-thought. They talk about marketing, and I'm not talking about marketing, I'm talking about a different kind of relationship.

SD: I think that's a little bit unfair. I think it depends again on what sector. I'm on the board of a live art organisation and in live art, the audience is everything. Without the audience, there's no..

JK: Oh I know, it's the everything, but it's not factored in.

SD: I would kind of disagree. I think it is. I think also we need to think about what happens when the audience is also skint, which again, if things go as bad as the economy suggests, is going to be a factor. You know the people who can afford to go to the opera, can afford to put their hands in their pockets. More or less the people who go support artist-led activity are themselves, not anymore well-off financially.

JK: I think even skint fans will if they are really interested in what somebody's doing, may want to pay something towards it. There are plenty of examples in the states of people who pre-sold their tours by actually going straight to their fans, not working through intermediaries, galleries, promoters or whatever else. I think it's the removal of those middle people, which is going to happen more and more in terms of arts in the future.

Fan-Made Theatre

WW: Just on a note of audiences, certainly this changing relationship between the producer and the audience, rather than just being passive consumers, the word 'fan' is really interesting.

About six months ago I saw this 'fan-made' theatre. It referred to a South East London-based theatre company called London Bubble. They got the wave 2 years ago when Arts

Council England reshuffled their RFO portfolio. They got axed. Suddenly overnight, also the London Council grants were expiring. They laid people off, cancelled all their major projects. I spoke with the Creative Director, Jonathan Petherbridge. What happened was they had to go to the audience.

Rather than just saying "give us some money", they thought well, why don't we engage with our key supporters more, because when supporters realised the major budgets were axed and suddenly they say, "hey, what's happening to the summer show?" They keep phoning the theatre saying, "what's going on?" And this massive stakeholder campaign just rolled itself out. It's very grassroots. They are now in their second season of fan-made theatre. In a nut-shell, you can choose to pay a subscription; last year was £20, I think this year is £22. By doing that you become a stakeholder. If you are a budding writer, or producer, you can submit an idea and they all form a long list. There are workshops you can participate in. Basically, you have a say of what kind of outdoor theatre you might like to see in your local park in the forthcoming year. So you become an audience member, but also a stakeholder. Hence fan-made theatre.

Suddenly, this becomes a co-creation journey. The whole relationship between producer and consumer is shifting. What's interesting, Jonathan told me, out of the blue this man just came up to him and said "I'm now retired from my venture capital hedge fund business, and I noticed that you guys have been on the rocks for a while and I really really like your work. I'm going to make a deal with you. I'm going to give you a hundred grand a year over the next three years as long as you can find match funding." Arts Council wants match funding, that's not too difficult. That's an incentive.

I think sometimes even external shocks could actually provide that much needed stimulus and bring you onto a different journey, which you have never thought possible. Arguably now, London Bubble is a very different company. Actually the quality of the work and the ownership by the local community in Lambeth and Southwark and so on and Lewisham, is actually much stronger than before, because people have a stake in it and they want to see it develop as an example.

Philanthropy

SD: Philanthropy. That's what we're all supposed to need to go look for now according to the government.

AN: Well in America, philanthropy disappeared or disappeared significantly. This kind of informal element from National Endowment for the Arts and so for them 2011 is looking very harsh indeed, but they hope that 2012 or 2013 might start to change again.

JK: I spoke with an organisation I worked with in the States, and basically all of their private givings disappeared overnight. The money they were getting from Trusts and Founda-

tions almost disappeared at the same time. So they're suddenly in a position where their budgets just collapsed around them. I think when Jeremy Hunt and co, talk about trying to encourage philanthropy, it's going to be a generational shift. People in the States had to learn to do that rather than give them money to other social issues and so forth. We just haven't got the culture in the UK. It's going to be a very long time before that happens, even without the recession.

Dirty Money

AUDIENCE1 (female): I'm in the arts and running a community theatre company and basically putting on large scale community plays where we bring a professional theatre team to a community and they actually run the play themselves. We help facilitate the steering groups and help them set up and run their own projects. The projects were actually funded by Arts Council or corporate funding from Gatwick Community Fund. We had our first lump of funding for the actual company itself, but I'm now being approached as the manager of this company, by property developers and regeneration companies.

We're coming from the angle of community doing their own thing, but then these property developers are saying "we want to build community", and I wonder if people talking about interdisciplinary and commercial investment when that's actually not going to rub up very well against the history of what we've done the past 30 years. You need to be resilient as you said.

JK: I think it's very difficult. You have to trust the artist to actually be able to interpret this - to trust people to understand the context they are working in. Unless everything is very transparent and everyone knows where they're coming from in these kinds of situations. It's really hard.

SD: If you do decide to take the money, what I would recommend is you get some extra money from them to use to do the stuff that you really want to do. That's one way that a lot of organisations work.

It's a real moral issue for a lot of organisations because we all need money to support the projects, but who do you take the money from? There's Art Not Oil and all those kinds of organisations that say you know you shouldn't get money from BP. What I would recommend is that you really think about if you do want to engage with them, and what you want to get out of it for your company.

AUDIENCE 1: I just feel their interest isn't in the interests of the community and isn't in the interests of the artist and practitioners, theatre practitioners who work with us to make these things happen. It's not ever going to be in their interest. It's always going to be in their commercial interests and trying to get people to like them as property developers.

SD: You care about the artists and that's the key thing, because then it does give you more

power than you think you have. I think it's really important that we value what we do. We understand why those companies want to connect with you specifically, because they understand your relationship to the community and how important it is, so that gives you much more power than perhaps you realise.

JK: There's a lot of dirty money around. I think sometimes it's very hard and will be harder if public subsidy does start to go down that there's going to be all kinds of money lurking about, which is not going to be that easy to do.

Supply and Demand

AUDIENCE 2 (female): I think it's really refreshing to think about the arts within a more business framework. In a lot of the jobs that I've done, I've felt that there's a real complacency about always having money given to them and not trying to find ways to generate money or at least generate interest and thus extra sponsorship and so on.

In a lot of your points, I've been thinking a lot about issues around supply and demand, and the fact that the arts feels like an area where that's not a consideration. In any other more kind of capitalist areas, it's all about supply and demand. If there's not demand you can't supply, whereas here, there's real inconsistencies.

The two things that come to my mind from recent examples that I've had. One of which is I recently held an event, a workshop and it was free. Lots of people said they wanted to come along and nobody showed up. It struck me afterwards, actually, if you charge a fiver and it's a really good workshop, more people would have shown up. The other side is, I've done projects, in organisations that have set remit to work with this group. This is the kind of work that we want to do, and this is the funding we've got; tons of funding. I've had to beg people to take part. For a long time, I've been really struggling with the idea. I strongly believe in arts education. That's the area where I work in, but also every organisation now has to have an arts education section. Some organisations don't do that very well, and people don't want to take part and it's not easily transferable like that, and it's soaking money up. I think there are areas around supply and demand that need more consideration than they are getting.

AUDIENCE 3 (female): I think what you were saying is like 'box-ticking'. It's like you're being shaped by something not from within and you're responding to the box that needs to be ticked on the Arts Council form or the grant form, and say "oh we don't do that yet, so let's do it now". It's not really actually true to the art. I think there are pressures there.

Subsidising the Audience

JK: I've been in this business a very long time. I do not think the audience for the subsidised arts has changed at all during that time. I think there's a real need to stop substituting funding for the audience. Assume because you've got public funding, therefore you've

got legitimacy in relation to an audience, and actually start getting out there and doing some work on it. Economists say you don't create demand just by pumping more and more supply into the market place. It doesn't make sense.

WW: I don't think art business means selling out. I think there is an overlap. It's how you manage the overlap. It is about being clear, being honest, being consistent. It is about managing expectations. I would say, if your work is of genuine interest and value beyond yourself, you will be able to use your passion to attract a very diverse group of informal advisors. Get on board accountants, lawyers, you know the whole lot. Politicians, policy makers who really care about your work and they might even be able to spend sometime with you pro bono and give you strategic advice, and that's what it's about. I think it's about meeting each other and knowing what you want out of it, because it sounds like you really know your baseline.

SD: I'd like to support your statement about the workshops. In my experience, I used to work for a professional development organisation and various organisations that involved running workshops, and people never value the free stuff. Even if it's just a small amount of money, £5 or whatever, they are much more inclined to turn up, which again, relates to what we were saying about getting the audience to come help to support things financially.

The reason why there's been a proliferation of education departments is because that's where the money has been directed to. The structures that support the delivery of public fund, perhaps hasn't been given a good enough case by the arts to support the arts for the sake of the arts.

Value of Art and Culture

SD: Arts and culture isn't just for the people who experience it, but it also affects other areas of society, whether it's affecting things like architecture or the design of trainers, or anything. The way in which we interact in a space, can be affected by different art forms. It's something, again, that Simon Jenkins said at the National Campaign for the Arts (NCA) event. He thought that it was a mistake for the arts to continue to make an economic case for its existence, just because we were planning on talking to the Tories quite soon. Actually what we needed to do was talk about what we do for its own sake. Perhaps it's something for us to think about in terms of our own confidence in the value of our labour.

AN: I work in every single continent in the world and I think how did it happen? I'm a very small organisation, but it's because the world is changing, and it's changing very quickly, and governments and institutions understand this. They just don't know necessarily what the solution is, but they'd like to be part of it, rather than have it imposed on them by somebody else.

If you're a government in the Caribbean or South America, you have the same fears, in a different way than you do with your theatre company, when they have large organisations and conglomerates turning up on their doorstep with their own ideas about things. The

thing is the concept of valuing art only comes about because we've commoditised it so much. When you go to different continents in the world, different parts of the world, where the only thing they have is art. They don't have money, they don't have resources. They just have what the neighbour does every evening with the music or with the poetry with all these things that they sit around, and they talk about and do or talk about politics and all these different things over a coffee or a meal. This is the thing that they have. It's the only thing that they have, and it's beyond value. It's truly priceless. It's really what humanity is about.

Hong Kong: Interest in the Arts

WW: We talked about perhaps some of the developing countries, what they are doing is inherently artistic and part of their culture, and in extreme what we've seen in the United States, while Britain is probably somewhere in between.

I just want to share a little bit of my observations from the Far East in Hong Kong and China. Let's just start with Hong Kong, which is slightly quirky. Is it China? Is it not China? It's going through an identity crisis, post-colonial, very weird. It does cause lots of problems. I can speak categorically to you that most of my friends who actually live there, they might be Western educated; they might be quite cosmopolitan, well travelled, but in terms of what we call 'arts and culture' here, does not form a core part of their daily lives. They work very hard and mostly in finance. They work very long hours, so it's impossible to go to any event that starts at 7:30 or 8 o'clock. On weekends they want to chill. Sometimes it's seen as the "hip" thing to do. ART HK 10 is currently coming up soon, just like your Frieze contemporary art fair. You want to be seen mingling with the champagne. Whether you appreciate art is not the question.

I went to The Man Hong Kong International Literary Festival. In Britain, I'm very used to being the minority in terms of ethnicity. When I arrive in Hong Kong, it's exactly the same thing. Out of an audience of 80 people listening to a Western writer talk about China, I look at the audience and there were about two or three Chinese-looking people, who might not even be Chinese. They're probably expats or overseas-born Chinese.

I had a really quite interesting Skype conversation with a friend in China yesterday. I consider her very intelligent, maybe a bit uninitiated. I asked her, "When was the last time you went to a museum or gallery?" She said "you keep talking about art in your life, it's just so boring." Well now coming back to her, I thought well how can you have a life without art? Actually she just came back with two words: "Not interested". We don't need to convince ourselves about the intrinsic value of the arts, whether it's about GDP or the fact that art for art's sake is just art. 95% of people, most people out there, you need to convince.

SD: You raised an interesting point there. Personally, I think it's OK for people not to be interested in art.

Some people would much rather go to a football match or would much rather play chess or something, and that's fine. I think it's important for us to remember that it's OK for people not to be interested in what we do.

JK: We shouldn't pretend they are. I think that's where it gets dangerous, because people aren't stupid. Lots of museums and galleries triple click on their audiences when they go in. Everybody knows it happens, but nobody ever talks about it.

I have to say that the Tate don't. I'm an advisor to Tate. What we know is that 40% of the people going to Tate don't look at any art. That's interesting because that means they've established a public space that people want to be involved in, which is actually not about consuming art. I think the new building is going to have lots of areas of the building, which aren't programmed for exhibitions. It's going to be about acknowledging the fact that they are a public building, public space and people just like to go there, whether or not they are going to the galleries or not.

Audience Research and Audience Development

AUDIENCE 4 (female): ACE [Arts Council England] recently did a research on audiences in London. They divided it into certain types of audience and 20% are devoted fans, so you don't need to reach out, they already know all the information. But the other 70% you need to reach out to, are those people who keep on saying they don't get the right information. What ACE was telling us was that we have to give the audience the right communication tools to reach them.

I think the difficult part is not about understanding the audience, but about changing our perception about how we see the audience and how communicate with them.

At the same time, if we're open to changing our perceptions, how do we understand the audience? How do we reach out? They said that they're going to launch a new website introducing all these different types of audience and how we can communicate with them. There are 13 types, but I don't think it's enough to generalise people. If you really want to find out about these people and how they react, and whether they have any suggestions, they have these audience research surveys. I looked at it and they are very generalised questions, and that's the only way that Arts Council is suggesting. The thing with organisations, is they are trying to find the cheapest way to get to the audience. They don't want to put too much time into audience development or audience research. After all, if you don't generalise people, it's going to take so long and it's going to get really tiring and at the end you're just going to get the same audience back.

AUDIENCE 1 (female): I don't know whether it would work in every instance, but the audience can actually decide what they want because they have become the creators themselves. They become the creators that you collaborate with directly, rather than this them and us situation. We're going to bring them into the creative process. That's free

audience research because they're telling you right there and then what they want to see.

SD: I think that's a great example for a community-based theatre group. My concern about a proliferation of that model beyond that sphere is that it negates specialism and skills of artists who have worked over many years to develop their skills. I still want there to be spaces for playwrights to sit down in a room or cafe and write what they want to write about. I think we need to encourage kind of a mixed economy on that level. I think it's a great example of a way of working with community, but I would hope that it wouldn't be the only example that we would be encouraged to use as practitioners. Particularly as it gets to more difficult financial times.

A good example that I've heard of is through Shoreditch Trust, which did a project working with a couple of council estates in Shoreditch. What they wanted to do was to encourage the people in the estates to think that they could go to the theatre. What they did is they got some ambassadors who lived on the estates, and the ambassadors' role was to talk to their neighbours, and to basically say, "You've been to the theatre before? Are you interested?" Then they would end up doing things like explain to them what happens when you go to a theatre. When you go to a theatre, you go to a box office and you collect your tickets. If you've never been, it can be a bit daunting. To me, it was a really brilliant project because it not only empowered the ambassadors who were usually local mums or young people. It also encouraged neighbours to talk to each other, which is always a good thing in London. But it did then help people to feel more confident about entering into cultural spaces, which they don't necessarily feel that they belong to. Particularly in this country and this culture, class does play a huge part, and social expectations do play a huge part in terms of what type of leisure activity one enjoys.

Access and Exposure

AUDIENCE 5 (male): Some time ago I spoke to the audience development department at The Arts Council and they showed me a map of London and the densities of people who are very interested in culture and other places where they weren't, and she basically pointed to the outside of London and said "You don't really need to worry about them because I don't think they would be interested at all" and landed on exactly the place where I grew up. It is very difficult to gain access to the arts when you're living in these kind of places. I grew up in post-war new town. They pumped loads of money into culture when it first opened. There's Rodin statues in the water gardens. It's just interesting to demonstrate that you can have a cultural desert because there is no cultural conversation happening – and despite massive public art investment.

Cultural Hubs: Suburbs and Urban Centres

JK: The first time I worked for the Arts Council and worked for the London office. We commissioned a report, which actually tracked individual practitioners, artists, writers (not arts organisations), who were working at that time in London and found out where they came

from. And artists don't come from Hoxton, they come from Harlow actually. They come from the suburbs. This notion that you create these hotbeds in the cities and everyone gets marvellous and gets interesting haircuts and becomes artists; it's not true. It's primarily a suburban kind of business.

SD: Well I'm from Hackney and I know for a fact that one of the reasons why I always felt it was perfectly possible and likely that I could develop an interest in art and become an artist was because I grew up seeing Gilbert and George walking around all the time as a child. This is me being in this kind of metropolitan hub, so I do, perhaps a lot of people do come from the suburbs and what have you. Certainly there is a phenomenon of people moving to London where the cool kids are and all the rest of it, but there are also kids growing up in London who, like me going to a normal comprehensive and being the weird kid because I'm into art.

Creative Space

YH: If you went to our website, you will probably find one of our projects called 'Creative Space'. If you look at the history of the culture industry, it has always followed economic models. For example, before, we had consumerism, and now, we still have consumerism. Then we have speculative capitalism, like investment and things like that and you find that art actually, the culture industry as a whole is becoming something speculative. Then we have the financial crisis and everything collapsed. Can we think less about the economy, and more about creativity itself? It's more about space and less about the economy. If we think of something less about the economy, can we open up something more interesting and something more creative?

As a philosopher, I still believe in utopia and I think I'm trying to go back to the logic, which William raised before. He says that there is definitely an overlap between business and art, but maybe the logic of business has overlapped with everything in the world in contemporary capitalism. A question we want to address today is how to build a new economy, or not an economy. We have not addressed the question of not a economy yet. Because we have to follow a certain kind of economic rhythm, for example, demand and supply, we have to find an economic model, and we have to think how it will work on the level of institutions and then when the institutions failed, we have problems. Now what we have to do is to think how to repair the system. For example, to open up the institutions and how to do things to justify or legitimise this economic rhythm of demand and supply. Maybe we can talk about the economy, but maybe we can talk about something not a economy. Something more like what we want to call in general, a 'creative space'.

Amateur Production

YH: On the other hand, I think we have been talking a lot about artists as professionals, but this is probably not all about the creative economy, especially with the question of technology. There's more and more amateur production, which is becoming a very important part

of the cultural economy/creative economy. How can this mode of production sustain itself? How can it develop? How can we even develop it further of release this kind of creativity when we think of production itself?

SD: I think the amateur / professional thing is interesting, but I was also thinking about, people have heard of the phrase 'sunday painter', amateur painters. The tension between the professional and the amateur has been a kind of a concern in Western culture, anyway. Technology does raise new questions about that because it was more immediate. You could make something and share it with people almost automatically. It's going to change the way we think about culture for sure. I think strategically, it's important for practitioners in this country to think about, so they can stand up for their rights, as I was saying at the beginning.

International Cultural Development: Finding Your Own Model

AN: I think it has been an interesting workshop for DOXA because all of these issues are issues that we are experiencing here. But if you're a country developing, and having this push and pull of being immensely relevant locally, but having this incredible need or pressure put upon you to have a 'world class' development happen within your own arts and cultural field, this is the curve that you have to go through, or perhaps this is not the curve you have to go through, or perhaps there are options that have been learnt here or are being learnt and questions here in Britain.

JK: I've been very lucky when I was with the British Council to actually visit other countries and see what they were doing in terms of putting together their cultural infrastructure. I'm not saying this not just to be nice, but I think it's really important people do their own model. In South Africa, where I spent a long time, they've adopted the British model of how to do the arts, and it just doesn't work because they haven't got any money. They've got infrastructures with arts councils and regional arts councils, and it just doesn't work at all. Find a South African shape solution for this. Do it differently, because this model is OK, but it's really not that good and nor are most of the other ones around. Just find something that works for yourself, something that comes out of the culture as well.

I know South Africa put together a legal system, which is very good, which relates very much to the way business is done, where people talk and act with each other in Africa. But they put together an art system that looks like the UK one, which is crazy.

AN: I mean in South Africa, you have an amazing performance-led society and community. People perform at a very high level just for their friends and family. So when you get to that professional element of theatre, you're really dealing with amazing, amazing practitioners. But I think what the beauty of that process is that it gives that access to the creativity or the process of creativity, at the very early stage in life. So there is no fear of access to it. Much of you were speaking of getting the community to lead on creativity, actually it's

not for them to lead at all. It's to let them understand the kind of hard work and rigour and intensity that an artist goes through, so that the next time they see a play, they understand how hard it was to put it together.

'World Class Culture'

WW: We were just speaking from personal experience. I dabbled in business and the arts, so I'm a pragmatist with artistic sensibility. All I can say is I think I consider the catch phrase 'world class culture' very dangerous. I don't know what that means. Often 'world class' means Anglo Saxon, Western and supplanted into other parts of the world like the Middle East, Hong Kong, Shanghai and Beijing. I find it really worrying.

JK: The Hong Kong Arts Festival is exactly the same as the Edinburgh Festival actually.

WW: Exactly, and the whole West Kowloon saga, does that mean you take the Hong Kong Arts Festival and just stretch it out to 12 months? It remains to be seen when it comes on stream in 5 years' time. I think there is a place. I don't know what that is. You like the word 'creative space'.

Some Conclusions

WW: I think there is a role for top-down decisive leadership. Sometimes you do need intervention.

I think even the arts scene in England, I don't know about Scotland, Wales; it is some sort of state intervention after World War II. The Festival of Britain, the setting up of Arts Council England and so on. It is intervention, it is instrumentalism, it takes decisive leadership. But of course there's a role for grassroots development. I think it's the space between those spaces, which makes it interesting.

I think you make art because you cannot not do it. If you're really excited, you're passionate about it, it's infectious. I think the same for business. Advertising is a cut-throat business and it is immensely creative. You need to tell a story in 20 seconds and people will get it. That's a real art. So I don't see the distinction between you are business, and I'm arts.

I think maybe sometimes the arts people need to get out more. To think outside of the box, you need to get outside of the box. Not only that, you need to get out of the building. Well, how do you audience develop? I would say spend time with strange people. People who just don't see things the way you do. Go and get some sociologists, anthropologists, scientists, neuroscientists. I think, well, it's really simple, look, this is how it is, and would challenge the way in which you perceive everything, what we call reality, and more so challenge how you see yourself. I think that's what art and culture is. How we see ourselves. The greater cultural stratosphere is really just, I think a collective manifestation of individual selves, co-creating into something much bigger than us individuals together.

JK: I agree with that totally. I just think seeing a different kind of role for artists and the arts, the world needs to work out ways of dealing with complexity. Things are not as they were, (thank God). And you know, we're not very important as a country and all those kinds of things have to be cut apart. One thing artists can do is actually finding ways of dealing with that complexity and illuminating it and shining a light on it, asking questions about it, and I think that's something that you can't get from advertising, or anywhere else, actually. It seems to be very important for the future.

End

Biographies

Sonya Dyer is a London based artist, writer, cultural commentator and co-ordinator of Chelsea Programme at Chelsea College of Art & Design. Sonya's practice incorporates writing, performative actions, public speaking, film and paper-based work, as well as curatorial projects and interventions into public discourses. She has written for publications including a-n, Art Review and Time Out London. Past projects include Current Thinking (Tate Modern) and Temporary Agency (Chelsea Space). She is the author of 'Boxed IN: How Cultural Diversity Policies Constrict Black Artists' (Manifesto Club/a-n) and numerous other texts on art, politics and arts policy. She is a member of a-n's NAN advisory panel and on the board of New Work Network and recently contributed to 'In Time,' published by Live Art UK www.liveartuk.org/projects.htm.

William Wong is the Chief Executive of 3become1, a cultural strategy brokerage connecting UK arts with non-UK domiciled businesses, to raise mutual brand profiles and develop new markets. He was recently commissioned by NESTA to research on how leaders are driving new innovative business models in cultural organisations. His provocation piece, '@udi£nce-Inv€\$tor: WE LOVE YOU' was launched in July 2010.. He is a Clore Fellow and 2009 Visiting Fellow at the LSE. where he explored the linkage between the US\$3 billion cultural hub in-the-making, the West Kowloon Cultural District in Hong Kong, and the city's ambition to become an international cultural metropolis. William began his career as an accountant, then moved to international management consulting. He attended business school, which changed his perspectives. To learn the art of storytelling and mass communication, he retrained as a theatre director, which later led to his Clore Fellowship. William sits on the Imperial College Business School Alumni Advisory Board. He also mentors "Global Village", the international affairs journal of Imperial College London.

John Kieffer has over 25 years' experience in UK and international cultural policy, arts management, arts programming, creative industries development, and the music industry. Throughout the late 70s and 80s John worked in arts and live music programming and production before joining the London Docklands Development Corporation as Arts Development Manager. In 1992 he was appointed as Director of Arts for London Arts. From 1997-99 he worked simultaneously as Programme Associate for Artangel and as the Director of the Arts Foundation. John then took up the role of Director of Performing Arts and Head of Music for the British Council, and worked as a consultant in the US and the UK from 2006 to 2009. In 2009 he edited 'After The Crunch' with John Holden, John Newbiggin and Shelagh Wright, and continues to work with John and Shelagh on other projects, as well as undertaking his role as Creative Director of Sound and Music. John was formerly chair of Artangel and is a trustee of A New Direction, and the BBC Performing Arts Fund, and an adviser to City University, Cove Park and Tate Modern.

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