

BUILDING SUSTAINABILITY IN CREATIVE WAYS

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THREE ASPECTS OF SUSTAINABILITY FOR CULTURAL ORGANISATIONS

1. Sustainability & audiences
2. Sustainability & partnerships
3. Sustainability & mission

I. SUSTAINABILITY & AUDIENCES





The
University
Of
Sheffield.

Birmingham
Contemporary
Music Group



Understanding Audiences for the Contemporary Arts

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UNDERSTANDING AUDIENCES FOR THE CONTEMPORARY ARTS

- Tim Rushby's question: is there crossover between audiences for the contemporary arts?
- Research context:
 - contestation of the nature of 'contemporary' art (e.g. within art history & musicology)
 - almost no empirical work has investigated the experiences audiences actually have of this art
 - absent from the emerging cross-disciplinary field of audience studies... & the 'cultural value' debate
- Practical agenda: audience development strategies

UNDERSTANDING AUDIENCES FOR THE CONTEMPORARY ARTS

‘Pilot’ Phase & National Phase

- Birmingham (funded by the University of Sheffield)
 - October 2014 – May 2015
- National phase (funded by the AHRC)
 - Five cities
 - May 2017 – November 2019

Key Birmingham Partners

- BCMG (Birmingham Contemporary Music Group)
- BE Festival (Birmingham European Theatre Festival)
- Craft Space
- DanceXchange
- Grand Union

WHAT DO OUR RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS MEAN BY 'CONTEMPORARY' ARTS?

1. Any work made now.
2. Work that strikingly 'belongs to today': is *con-temporary*, 'with its time' in some important respect
 - expresses a widespread thought or feeling of that historical moment
 - responds to a particular event or issue of its day
3. Work that is 'experimental'... unfamiliar / difficult / strange

WHY ARE THE CONTEMPORARY ARTS IMPORTANT TO PEOPLE?

- Experiencing something that's “different”, “new”, “challenging”, or “difficult”
- Community and “camaraderie”
- To be “in on the ground” of new work & creativity... proximity to process
 - Own creativity - amateur or professional interest

WHAT HELPS BUILD SUSTAINED RELATIONSHIPS?

Facilitative organisational conditions

- Opening up the creative process (access to rehearsals; workshops, etc.)
 - Opportunities to volunteer: to be actively involved in helping put on the event
- Venues “keeping the non-performance spaces alive”
- Festival & communal conditions: where people will see ‘anything’ / try new things

IMPLICATIONS FOR SUSTAINABILITY

- **Creatively building & sustaining relationships**

- Access to the creative process
- Varieties of sociality (ways of being together!)
- Varieties of participation
- Cultural / creative citizens (new partnerships?...)

- **Varieties of participation**

- Customers
- Audiences
- Visitors
- Participants
- Co-creators
- Cultural / Creative citizens...

2. SUSTAINABILITY & PARTNERSHIPS





ARTS GET CREATIVE

[Home](#)[Get involved](#)[Everyday Artist](#)[Champions](#)[Friends](#)[Debates](#)[About](#)[FAQ](#)[BBC Arts](#)

About Get Creative

Get Creative is a celebration of the world-class arts, culture and creativity that happens every day across the UK - and we want you to get involved.

Over the course of a year we'll shine a spotlight on the creativity that surrounds us everywhere in venues of all shapes and sizes: from village hall to the concert hall, and of course at home.

From digital art to fine art, from design to ballet, from poetry to hip-hop, Get Creative celebrates all forms of art.

THE GET CREATIVE CAMPAIGN

- The campaign responds to the call made by the Warwick Commission on the Future of Cultural Value for:
 - “a popular campaign ... to celebrate Britain’s arts in order to make our cultural landscape more visible to the public and to reconnect the public with culture at national and local levels.”
- Wide range of project partners, including:
 - Voluntary Arts, Fun Palaces, 64 Million Arts, Family Arts Campaign, BBC Arts, What Next?
 - Several hundred Get Creative ‘Champions’... & Get Creative Day (2016, 2017... 2018)

THE GET CREATIVE RESEARCH PROJECT

- King's College London, department of Culture, Media & Creative Industries
 - Dr. Nick Wilson, Dr. Jonathan Gross, Dr. Anna Bull

Wider Context

- Criticism of strategic ambition of cultural policy in the UK:
 - central focus on promoting 'access' to the publicly funded arts (only 8% of the population make regular use of this)
 - critiqued as a 'deficit' model
- Our research... explored *cultural opportunities* more broadly

TOWARDS CULTURAL DEMOCRACY: PROMOTING CULTURAL CAPABILITIES FOR EVERYONE

1. Broadening cultural opportunity: from primary focus on 'access' to **cultural capability**.
 - Building on the 'capabilities approach' of Amartya Sen & Martha Nussbaum
2. **Ecological** nature of cultural capability (cultural opportunity)
 - The publicly funded arts
 - The profitable creative industries
 - Everyday creativity

THE CULTURAL LEARNING ECOLOGY IN HARROW

- Building on John Holden
 - *The Ecology of Culture* (AHRC, 2015)
 - *Organism not Mechanism* (AND, 2016)
- Ecologies involve:
 - Interdependence
 - Complexity

A.N.D

A new direction for arts,
culture and young london



CARING FOR CULTURAL FREEDOM: AN ECOLOGICAL APPROACH TO SUPPORTING YOUNG PEOPLE'S CULTURAL LEARNING (WILSON & GROSS, FORTHCOMING)

1. Where do young people spend their time?
2. Psycho-geography
3. Experiences of freedom & creativity
 - 'supported autonomy'... including safe spaces
4. Aspects of *care*: attentiveness, responsiveness, competence & responsibility (Tronto, 2013)
5. A 'managed' cultural eco-system
 - *What new partnerships do we need / want?*
 - *What are we trying to (collectively) achieve?...*

3. SUSTAINABILITY AND MISSION



AUDIENCES, PARTNERSHIPS... & MISSION

- Creative possibilities for building sustainable relationships with audiences
- Creative possibilities for expanding the nature & ambition of partnerships

Three Questions... placing sustainability (creatively) at the heart of organisational mission

- 1. What particular kinds of cultural *opportunity* are we seeking to enable?**
- 2. What is our role within the cultural ecology / within our local cultural ecosystem?...**



BUILDING SUSTAINABILITY IN CREATIVE WAYS...

3. Sustainability of what?

- Particular organisations (and particular art forms, collections, etc)
 - Particular kinds of cultural opportunity
 - Particular cultural eco-systems
 - ...a sustainable & vibrant democracy?
- Many different roles (not everyone has to do everything)... let a thousand flowers bloom!

LINKS & RESOURCES

- *Towards Cultural Democracy: Promoting Cultural Capabilities for All* (Wilson, Gross & Bull, 2017):

<https://www.kcl.ac.uk/Cultural/-/Projects/Towards-cultural-democracy.aspx>

- *Caring for Cultural Freedom: An Ecological Approach to Supporting Young People's Cultural Learning* (Wilson & Gross, Forthcoming)

[Please contact Jonathan Gross jonathan.gross@kcl.ac.uk to be added to the distribution list for this report]

- *Understanding Audiences for the Contemporary Arts* (Pitts & Gross 2015 & 2017, Gross & Pitts, 2016):

<http://www.sparc.dept.shef.ac.uk/free-downloads/>

- *The Ecology of Culture* (Holden, 2015):

<http://www.ahrc.ac.uk/documents/project-reports-and-reviews/the-ecology-of-culture/>

...LINKS & RESOURCES CONTINUED

- *Organism not Mechanism: An Ecological Approach to Cultural Learning* (Holden, 2016):

<https://www.anewdirection.org.uk/asset/2570/download>

- Understanding the value of arts & culture: The AHRC Cultural Value Project (Crossick & Kaszynska, 2016):

<http://www.ahrc.ac.uk/research/fundedthemesandprogrammes/culturalvalueproject/>

- *Rethinking Relationships: The Gulbenkian Inquiry into the Civic Role of Arts Organisations, Phase I report*, (Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, 2017):

<http://civicroleartsinquiry.gulbenkian.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/Civic-Role-of-Arts-Phase-I-REPORT-SINGLE-PAGES-5-7-17.pdf>

- *Enriching Britain: Culture, Creativity and Growth* [The Warwick Commission into the Future of Cultural Value] (Neelands et al, 2015): <http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/research/warwickcommission/futureculture/>

THANKS!

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