

Power Up

by Chrissie Tiller

www.creativepeopleplaces.org.uk

CREATIVE
AND PEOPLE
PLACES



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Power Up is a pop artwork, a verb, an outcome and a call to action. As such it frames the concept of shared decision-making that informs this think piece.

— Sarah Davies. A New Direction.

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01

**Culture is
Ordinary:
A Story**

Culture is ordinary: that is where we must start.¹

— Raymond Williams

Five months ago my cousin Pauline died. She had smoked as long as I could remember. Smoking was something you did growing up in that part of Leeds in the '50s. And, unlike many of her middle class contemporaries, she had never stopped.

The last time I saw her was November 19th 2016. On the train up from London I was nervous. We'd been told she didn't have long to live. She 'didn't want to know the ins and outs.' When we got there her sister, Audrey, already had the kettle on the boil. Sliced bread, ham and cheese set out on the table. Fruit cake and biscuits. We were invited to help ourselves.

Standing in the kitchen, making our sandwiches, while Pauline and Audrey fought about who was best at mopping floors, the conversation somehow turned to the subject of death.

It began with Audrey describing the day great Aunt Lily died. How grandma had the body brought back to the tenement flat where they all lived, and then needing to 'fetch some bits for the funeral tea', had left Audrey, aged 5, in charge. Telling her firmly not to go into the bedroom because Aunt Lily 'was resting there'. Naturally, as soon as the

front door had closed, the bedroom was exactly where Audrey headed. On the bed was a large wooden box, with what looked like an oversized doll in it. Running over and lifting the veil that covered it, she was met by Aunt Lily's white, staring face. Only in place of her eyes there were two copper pennies. Running screaming from the flat, she'd sat in tears on the front step until grandma had come home.

It reminded her daughter, Lynne, of the time 'her Stan' had gone to sort out paying for his father's funeral. Arriving at the caretakers too early, he'd been shown into a back room by one of the lads. As he went to sit down he noticed two coffins propped against the wall. One was empty. The other contained Stan's dad: with a big broomstick propped up his back. Just in case he tipped over and fell out.

The stories kept coming. We remembered the morbid lure of 'Ethel's Tomb' at Lawnswood cemetery. Argued the price of coffins. Wondered why everyone always had family rows at funerals. And laughed until the tears rolled.

I tell this story because, as Raymond Williams reassures us, 'culture is ordinary'. The irreverent, black humour that got Pauline, Audrey, and the rest of us, through that afternoon is part of the post-war, Yorkshire working class culture we all grew up in. It's a use of language that goes with the dialect; a comic dourness that befits life in Northern industrial towns. It's the same humour you can find in Alan

1. Williams, R. (2014) Raymond Williams on Culture and Society: Essential Writings. Ed. McGuigan, Sage Publications

Bennett's 'Talking Heads' acerbic comment on the cars that, 'go mad round the War Memorial' in Leeds. And the petty snobberies of afternoon tea at Schofields. It's Tony Harrison's Mum telling him to comb back his hair because, 'You're every bit as good as that lot are!' Or Sally Wainwright's portrait of Bronte sisters who could 'cuss' with the best of them.

I also tell the story because, like Lynsey Hanley, giving one of the keynotes at the CPP conference on **People, Place, Power**,² I made a journey away from those roots. Away from the Leeds council estate where I grew up and away from people like Pauline and Audrey. I did it by being encouraged to stay on at school and having access to free higher education and public libraries and galleries and museums. I did it through having access to the arts and 'culture': as a maker and producer as well as being part of an audience. I also did it by having access to the writing of people like Raymond Williams, Stuart Hall and Richard Hoggart who helped contextualise that journey for me: politically, socially and culturally.

On the way I gave up some things. My Yorkshire accent, a sense of where I belonged and proper custard slices. Saturday afternoons at Auntie Mary's where my Mum and her sisters shared 'who was up to what', cups of tea, home made apple pie and what Mary had gleaned from the latest Labour Party Conference. While, all the time, my Uncle Albert would sit watching the wrestling on TV and calling my mum and her sisters, 'the three witches'. I also gained some things. A love of Brecht and Brel and John Clare and Ken Loach and Maya Angelou and Angela Arnold. As well as a passion for all kinds of theatre and novels and art and music that don't reflect anything

of my own background or experience. I set off on that 'great post-war wave of social mobility'³ and 'great art' was mine for the taking.

Working closely with four of the Creative People and Places in the last six months, I've found myself rediscovering some of the things I left behind. Blackpool Tower Ballroom, Northern Soul dress codes and walks you can map by the views of Emley Moor transmitting station. And re-evaluating what we mean by offering people access to culture.

The possibility to frame our own journey within a wider context is one of the gifts arts and culture can offer us. The piece that follows is an attempt to contextualise the journeys being made by participants, artists, partners and teams on the CPP programme.

2. www.youtube.com/watch?v=0ctWFtgrXB8

3. www.telegraph.co.uk/comment/telegraph-view/5880980/Milburn-for-social-mobility-its-education-education-education.html

02

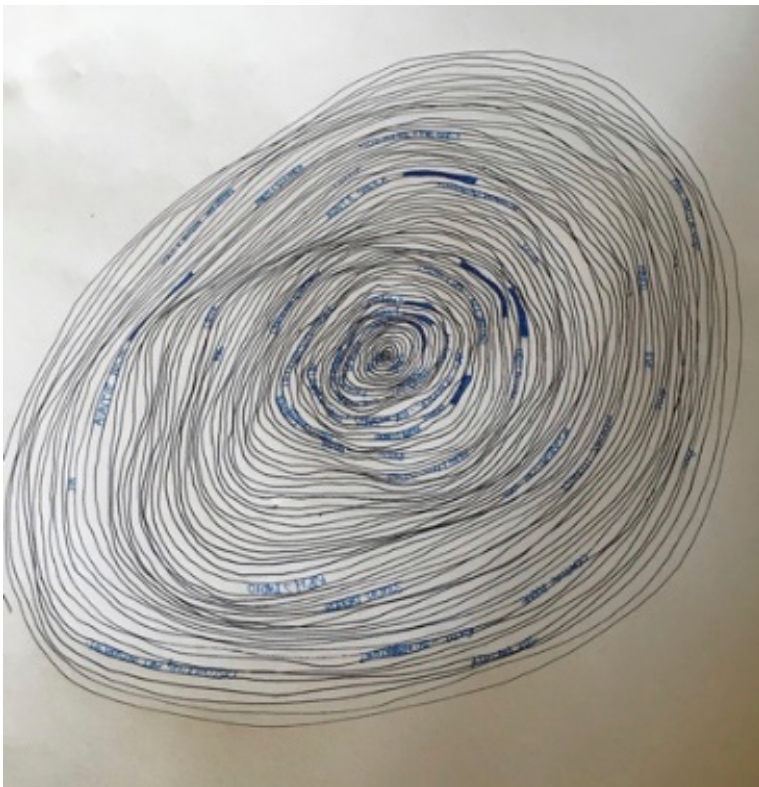
Introduction: We Make the Road by Walking

‘Don’t do too much without thinking and don’t think too much without doing’

—CPP Director

The imagery of maps and travel, individual and collective, tentative and purposeful, threads its way through everything that has been written about Creative People and Places. From the imaginative maps that are part of *More than 100 Stories*,⁴ to the road trip imagery of Robinson’s evaluation.⁵ Even project names such as, *Super Slow Way*, *Transported* or *LeftCoast* evoke notions of movement and passage.

Chrissie Tiller, 2016. ‘Mapping: The Faculty’.
Photo of drawing by Harriet Lawson.



Echoing the metaphor of discovery and exploration, CPP Directors have voiced a concern that when they first set off on this journey there were no charts to guide them. As, Nick Jones of *Transported*, explains, ‘There is no GPS for Creative People and Places’.⁶ Despite sharing a sense of common direction and final destination, every programme must be a unique response to a particular place and a distinct topography. The purpose of the journey, however, has been made clear. To develop a sense of agency and empowerment within communities too long neglected by enabling them to shape and determine their, ‘own cultural landscape’⁷ and environment.

In their inspirational reflection on lives devoted to travelling the road towards social justice and empowerment,⁸ Myles Horton and Paulo Freire suggest the first step is always to recognise the journey is ‘necessary’. Having a clarity about our reasons for travelling and the values and principles driving us means we can then focus on, ‘the process of making the road’.⁹ ‘The way’, they suggest, will become clearer once we have committed to the ‘walking’.

As part of this conversation, the pair discuss the notion of ‘praxis’: the understanding that comes from the interface between our actions and reflections. Whilst agreeing with Horton we only learn from ‘doing’,

4. www.creativepeopleplaces.org.uk/more-than-100-stories

5. www.creativepeopleplaces.org.uk/our-learning/faster-slower-slower-faster

6. This quote is from an article available from: mailout.co/magazine

7. www.creativepeopleplaces.org.uk/our-learning/faster-slower-slower-faster

8. Horton, M. and Freire, P. (1990) *We make the Road by Walking* Temple University Press Philadelphia

9. *ibid*

Freire insists on a parallel need for reflection. 'Without practice there is no knowledge', he proposes, but in order to use that knowledge we need to underpin it: with 'a theoretical type of practice'.¹⁰

Sometimes this act of reflection involves tearing up existing maps: especially if the routes offered no longer seem useful. As Suzanne Lacy suggests in, *Mapping the Terrain*,¹¹ of 'new public art practice' it could even take us into the territory of creating a new cartography. A cartography more fitting and able to respond to the shift in values Lacy sees embodied working with people and developing more collaborative arts practices. A cartography she suggests that refuses the over simplified label of 'instrumentalism' but is not afraid to work with community partners to address burning social and political issues: drawing on the power of art to affect and transform its audience.

Three years into the 21 CPP programmes making their own roads, new maps have inevitably begun to be drawn. They can be found in places such as [More than 100 Stories](#) as well as many of the evaluations and toolkits created. But the wider terrain of power sharing, decision-making, community engagement, and collaborative arts practice in which CPP has 'chosen to travel' did not yet feel as though it has been fully captured. Or the reflections that have informed people's journeys – often along roads 'less travelled by...'.¹²

In the continuing spirit of exploration and discovery that has informed the programme, this think piece is not intended as a fixed map of this complex landscape. Instead it offers what I have come to see as a series of 'trig points': markers that walkers have trusted to locate them on their journeys for hundreds of years. Trig points, like icebergs, I recently discovered, contain much more below the ground than is ever visible above. It was that deep underpinning of process and practice that it felt important to capture within Creative People and Places. By uncovering the values, principles, ethical compasses that have guided those leading the programme along their different roads.

I hope they might not only provide useful markers for those already engaged in the CPP programme but also for policy makers, funders, artists and arts institutions wanting to set off on a similar voyage. While each 'trig point' follows on from another as the piece is written, readers are also invited to choose their own route through them. Or to select one 'point' at a time to reflect on or undertake more reading and research around. I have included a bibliography at the end for those who might want to explore further.

Those who want more practical suggestions might wish to explore the parallel [toolkit](#), developed by Louise White for MB Associates. Whilst its focus is support for project-level ventures, it shares with this think piece a desire to unpack and explicate the varied forms of shared decision-making and collaborative practices, using examples and tools developed across CPP.



10. *ibid*

11. Lacy, S., (1995) *Mapping the Terrain* Bay Press, US

12. Robert Frost www.poetryfoundation.org/resources/learning/core-poems/detail/44272

03

Context

We do not learn from experience... we learn from reflecting on experience.¹³

— John Dewey

‘Culture is ordinary: that is the first fact.’¹⁴

In the sense culture is, ‘all the practices and objects through which we express ourselves and understand ourselves,’¹⁵ this is true. But for too long now, it seems, the word ‘culture’ has been synonymous not with the ‘ordinary’ culture that is part of all our everyday lives but with what have been accepted as ‘legitimate’ forms of art: opera, music, ballet, painting, sculpture, poetry and drama.¹⁶

This distinction became common currency some time in the 19th century. The impact of industrialisation and urbanisation causing social reformers like the Bernetts (founders of Whitechapel Art Gallery) to consider how this ‘high’ culture might contribute to improving the lives of the working class: by offering them ‘art exhibitions’ as a way, ‘to realise the beauty of nature and...the substance of hope.’ By 1938 art historian, A. R Hinks¹⁷ was able to suggest it was not only, ‘necessary to convince the public that art is an integral part of life and not an ornamental excrescence on its surface’ but also, ‘to remind artists of their duty to the public.’

13. Dewey J. *How We Think* 1933 p.78

14. Williams, R. (2014) *Raymond Williams on Culture and Society: Essential Writings*. Ed. McGuigan, Sage Publications

15. Holden J. (2008) *Democratic Culture Opening up the Arts to Everyone* Demos

16. www.tate.org.uk/learn/online-resources/glossary/c/cultural-democracy

17. Hinks, *Art in Britain* Penguin 1938

It took the advent of the Second World War, however, and a need to encourage ‘a shared sense of nationhood’ to bring culture firmly into government thinking: ‘The Best for the Most.’

Successive governments have largely pursued policies to democratise ‘high’ culture by engaging the ‘masses’. Jennie Lee’s 1965 White Paper being one of the few attempts to reach people and places who had been neglected for years. But the government she was part of continued to direct most of its funding towards the large, London based, national institutions. In that sense little has changed. After years of ‘targeting’ wider participation, the ‘distribution of cultural resources in Britain’ remains, ‘substantially unequal.’¹⁸ While the ‘barriers and inequalities’ that have prevented access have only multiplied.

‘Art,’ has the capacity, ‘to help shift our sense of what is possible, to unleash our radical imaginations, to model and experiment with new ways of being in the world, to enact social change’.¹⁹ The increasing inequity of our times would seem to demand a new and ‘fierce urgency’ for the arts to do just that. While the recent Warwick Commission notes increased participation in the arts cannot bring about social justice or solve the endemic problems of our ‘socially and economically stratified society’²⁰ by itself, perhaps it can make a crucial contribution?

18. Cultural Policy Collective, *Beyond Social Inclusion Scotland* 2004

19. openengagement.info/chicago-2017/curatorial-statement/

20. www2.warwick.ac.uk/research/warwickcommission/futureculture/finalreport/

Taking the decision to grapple with these issues in a meaningful way requires bravery and a willingness to look at causes as well as effects. As a recent report for the National Council for Voluntary Organisations²¹ argues, it is impossible to separate lack of engagement from the 'deep-seated social injustice' that is its cause. 'Disparities in participation' the report states, are a result of, 'the uneven distribution of power, social capital and other resources.' 'Such persistent and structural socio-economic inequalities,' the authors conclude, will never be removed without, 'profound political and societal changes.'

If the Arts Council's role, is, 'to ensure that everyone, everywhere,' has the possibility to, 'enjoy the best of art and culture' and 'all the benefits that flow from that,'²² it seems increasingly pressing to answer its own question: 'what might make a difference?' Is low engagement driven by, 'lack of opportunities to attend and participate' 'socio-economic factors', 'issues with physical accessibility' or 'a limited offer of activities'?²³ Are we 'measuring' the wrong kinds of cultural engagement? Ignoring the ongoing influence of issues such as class?²⁴ Or is there a continued reluctance to challenge 'the system' that, 'has created (these) low levels of engagement?'²⁵

By funding Creative People and Places, to conduct an action research programme in those areas where '*industrial decline, poor transport, high unemployment and economic and social deprivation*'²⁶ are increasingly

a fact of life, the Arts Council has opened itself to the possibility of addressing just those questions. It will not be an easy process. There are those who question if any 'top-down' initiative can bring about real change. And, as Nazli Tabatabaibai Khatambakshi notes in her response to Robinson's *Faster but Slower* report, issues of, 'power, privilege and equity',²⁷ inevitably 'shine through'. Making a real difference means a radical re-thinking of funding structures, a shifting of the balance of power between arts organisations and communities and an invitation to people not only to participate as nominal sharers in a 'decision-making' process but as commissioners, curators, collaborators and co-creators. It will mean not only questioning who gets to make art but where and how it is made.

This systemic change can only happen, 'by ensuring that everyone has the opportunity to have their voice heard.'²⁸ And by the Arts Council being prepared to listen to, and engage with, what might be difficult answers.

21. Brodie, E, Cowling, E, Nissen, N, Understanding Participation: a literature review. NCVO

22. www.artscouncil.org.uk/sites/default/files/download-file/Darren_henley_speech_diversity_event_2016.pdf

23. [Creative_people_places_guidance_2017_v3.pdf](http://www.creativepeopleplaces.org.uk/sites/default/files/download-file/Creative_people_places_guidance_2017_v3.pdf)

24. Bennett, T., Savage, M., de Silva, E., Warde, A., Gayo-Cal, M., & Wright, D. (2009). *Culture, class, distinction*. London, Routledge.

25. www.creativepeopleplaces.org.uk/our-learning/faster-slower-slower-faster

26. CPP director

27. www.creativepeopleplaces.org.uk/blog/nazli-tabatabaibai-khatambakhsh-faster-slower-slower-faster

28. www.artscouncil.org.uk/sites/default/files/download-file/The_arts_debate_overview_design_consultation%20responses.pdf

04

100 Questions: A Methodology

‘In order to start it should be necessary to start.’

—Freire and Horton

It did feel necessary to start. To find my own road through the depth and breadth of material that has already been written or made about the CPP programme. And in doing so, uncover ways in which it was beginning to challenge questions around power and decision-making. After a couple of false starts along paths already being trodden by others, I stumbled across the *100 Questions*²⁹ initiative. A collaborative response to pop artist, activist and teacher, Corita Kent’s, ‘quantity assignments’ it is inspired by the incredible body of work Kent made as part of the social justice and civil rights movements of the 1960s. Insisting on the central role research

should play in any collaborative making, she felt it was important to ask enough questions to be sure you had not only understood why you were making the work but also how it might address the social, political and economic issues impacting on your ‘audience.’

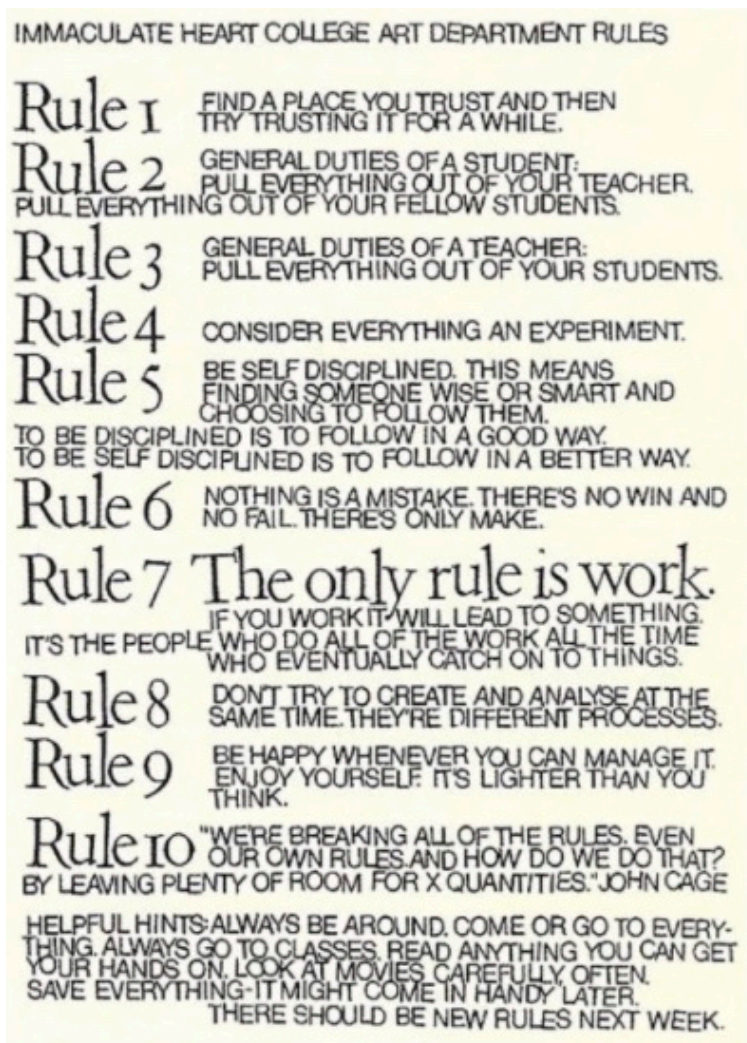
In the same spirit of enquiry, Kent created *10 Rules* for the Art Department. Many of them echo Horton and Freire’s commitment to learning as a dialogue between theory and practice: encouraging experimentation and risk-taking as part of the arts process. ‘If you work it will lead to something’, ‘Nothing is a mistake. There’s no win and no fail. There’s only make’. And ‘Read anything you can get your hands on’.

It was this commitment to research, alongside action and a need to engage with what has been written about power sharing that made Kent’s work feel like a good place to start. The original 100 questions were soon reduced to a more manageable nine, with the option for people to suggest their own 10th. The first person invited to add to Kent’s list was composer, John Cage. His addition feels incredibly pertinent to the times we are living in and the journeys being made by Creative People and Places:

‘We’re breaking all of the rules. Even our own rules. And how do we do that? By leaving plenty of room for X quantities.’

The ‘Power Up’³⁰ questions, or provocations I eventually asked are included below. While some are based on the original *100 Questions*, most were suggested by issues raised at CPP’s **People, Place, Power** conference. ‘Who decides?’ and ‘How can power be shared?’ may have been the starting points, but questions of reciprocity, cultural capital, privilege and politics quickly followed. Thinking about how

Corita Kent, 1968.
‘Immaculate Heart College Art Department Rules’. Calligraphy by David Mekelburg



29. <http://openengagement.info/category/100-questions/>

30. <http://corita.org/>

one might best create a context for sharing power and decision-making made it impossible not to explore the debate around ethics/aesthetics and the different approaches people might be taking to participation and collaboration. The relationship between personal values and a commitment to greater cultural equity was ultimately impossible to exclude.

CPP directors, community teams, participants and critical friends were each invited to respond to three or four questions that especially drew their interest. As were a group of artists working in CPP areas and engaged with the CPP-supported **Northern Faculty of Social Art**. Their artworks, like the response to Kent's Rule 4 below, thread their way through the piece.

Creative People and Places is, fittingly, a terrain inhabited by people with different approaches and different opinions. This also meant finding

different ways to collect responses. While some were made in writing, others emerged through conversations or in workshops that brought together directors, teams and critical friends. After the preliminary responses were collected, a smaller group of CPP directors, community engagement teams and critical friends came together to react to emerging themes in greater depth. Their practical exploration of different models of shared decision-making and their generous conversations around their own values and stories made an important contribution to the way the piece developed. As did later responses to an initial draft made by the peer learning group's meeting in Gateshead. All of these discussions have informed the final draft.

What I have come to sense runs through the programme is a shared mindfulness of the importance of the journey, the 'necessity' to take it and the challenges and opportunities involved. By placing the learning emerging from Creative People and Places within a more theoretical context, I hope to position this learning within a wider social, political and cultural discourse of collaborative working, social justice and the sharing of power.

* Note. When I am quoting CPP teams and participants' responses I have not used footnotes or ascribed them to individuals or always explained the specific context in which they were shared. Instead I have chosen to highlight the role of the person speaking and their place in the narrative and used italics to mark them. I have also shortened Creative People and Places to CPP when using the title with another noun.

Garth Gratrix, 2017. 'Rule 4. Consider Everything an Experiment'. Site specific performance and photographic series in collaboration with Denise Swanson FBIPP.

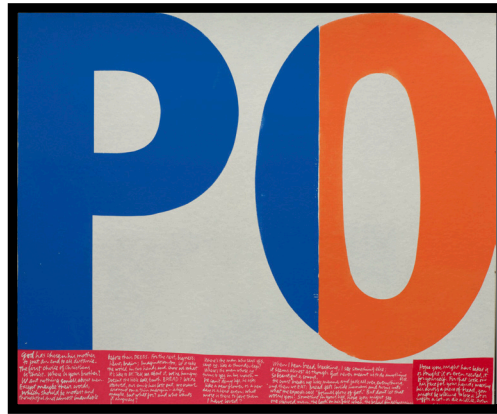


05

Power Up: The 10 Questions

Who Decides? 10 Questions About Power and Shared Decision-Making

Corita Kent, 1965. 'Power Up (4 parts)'. Serigraph on Pellon. Reproduced with permission of the Corita Art Center, Immaculate Heart Community, Los Angeles



01. Power

Can decision-making be shared if one group of people have most of the power?

02. Reciprocity

Do we have reciprocal partnerships with our communities?

03. Cultural Capital

Cultural capital can reinforce inequalities.

How do we value the cultural capital of our participants?

04. Privilege

Are we in the arts always coming from a place of privilege? And what do we want to do about that?

05. Participation

Is increased participation about climbing a ladder or encouraging people to find their way along a continuum?

06. Values

What part do your personal values and story play in your decision-making?

07. Ethics

Ethics or aesthetics? Where do our responsibilities lie in making art with others?

08. Collaboration

Is the process of collaboration a separate art practice?

09. Politics

Is shared decision-making part of creating political as well as social change? And is it with a small or a capital 'p'?

10.



POWER: the capacity or ability to direct or influence the behaviour of others or the course of events.

01. **Power**
02. **Reciprocity**
03. **Cultural Capital**
04. **Privilege**
05. **Participation**
06. **Values**
07. **Ethics**
08. **Collaboration**
09. **Politics**

'Sharing is not based on equality of assets, but on what you have, so yes, in theory. You 'just' need people willing to give power away.' Critical Friend

The question posed was about sharing decision-making: implicit within that, the role played by power. In trying to unpick the two I found myself wanting to ask (myself) further questions. I didn't manage to answer them in any totally satisfactory way. But I include them now as what felt like a useful starting point.

Engagement in the arts is about enabling people to:

- Speak truth to power?³¹
- Reflect the social realities of power?³²
- Ameliorate the effects of power?³³

Or all of the above?

Power is not something we speak about often in the arts. Although Gramsci's concept of 'hegemony',³⁴ or the notion that power is driven by our general acceptance of the ideologies, beliefs, world views and values of the dominant group, impacts as fiercely on culture as it does on any other of our social institutions. Especially when addressing questions of 'quality' or 'excellence' or who is invited to make judgements around 'value'. Or, those conversations John Seabrook dismisses in *NoBrow* as, 'taste as power

pretending to be common sense'.³⁵

It is also, as Jancovich notes, at play in almost every level of decision-making³⁶: in how the arts are funded, what kind of arts are funded and who gets supported by the public purse.



**Claire Weetman, 2017. 'Held down'.
Monoprint on tracing paper.**

31. <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2017/01/from-dada-to-davos-how-art-speaks-truth-to-power/>

32. Fischer, E. (2010) *The Necessity of Art*. Verso

33. Devlin, P. (2010) *Restoring the Balance: the effect of Art Participation on Well-being and Health*, Voluntary Arts Network

34. Gramsci, A. (2005) *Selection of Prison Notebooks*. Lawrence and Wishart

35. Seabrook, J. (2001) *The Culture of Marketing, the Marketing of Culture*. Vintage

36. Jancovich, L. (2017) *The participation myth*, *International Journal of Cultural Policy*, 23:1, 107-121. DOI: 10.1080/10286632.2015.1027698

- 01. **Power**
- 02. Reciprocity
- 03. Cultural Capital
- 04. Privilege
- 05. Participation
- 06. Values
- 07. Ethics
- 08. Collaboration
- 09. Politics

Until recently, the place this hidden power plays in upholding the values and interests of the dominant culture have largely been ignored. At least at a policy level. The debate centring mostly around how we might bring about, 'the chimera of social inclusion' through the further 'democratisation' of (legitimate) culture.³⁷ There have been few, if any, initiatives, suggesting we might undertake a 'broad, rather than a simply token, redistribution of cultural resources.'³⁹ Or the kind of power sharing that might challenge the dominance of the cultural elite and bring about real diversity and meaningful inclusion. As Arts Council itself notes, 'Significant disparities in...arts and cultural opportunities and engagement'⁴⁰ are still part of our cultural landscape. Any true form of 'Cultural Democracy,' remaining a pipe dream – until now, perhaps?⁴¹

This has been partly because the capacity to really bring about any shift of power, Gramsci would say, is still held by that select group of cultural mandarins who believe, 'WE know best'. A belief Nina Simon, in her piece on participatory museums, calls out as the presumptuous, 'Our job is not to give the people what they want but what they need,' mentality.⁴² It is a mentality encompassed in the belief that decisions about the arts and cultural funding are best made by those who understand the 'art' debate: particularly from the viewpoint of having been part of a major arts institution. 'Aesthetic judgments', are, 'expressions of power' in themselves, as Deborah Fischer notes, and culture still seems

37. Cultural Policy Collective, *Beyond Social Inclusion, Towards Cultural Democracy Scotland 2004*

38. Matarasso, F. and Landry, C. 1999. *Balancing Act: Twenty-One Strategic Dilemmas in Cultural Policy*. Belgium: Council of Europe.

39. Cultural Policy Collective, *Beyond Social Inclusion, Towards Cultural Democracy Scotland 2004*

40. Consilium Research and Consultancy, (2014) *Equality within the Arts and Cultural Sector*, England Arts Council

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

42. <http://museumtwo.blogspot.co.uk/2008/10/future-of-authority-platform-power.html>

divided into, 'people who get to *make* judgments of sentiment and taste', and, 'way more people who feel like they are (always) *receiving* judgments of sentiment and taste'.⁴³

Paradoxically, the arts and culture are increasingly tasked with ameliorating the social impacts of these misbalances of power: while little is done to challenge, 'the divisive power of capital'⁴⁴ that remains one of their main causes. Perhaps in the eventual hope that 'incorporating the 'excluded''⁴⁵ into the mainstream might be enough to bring about the social change that is needed.

One suggested solution to shifting this balance has been to 'widen the range of voices' involved in decision-making: reducing the power of the 'cultural elite' at the same time by instigating a 'redistribution of funding'.⁴⁶ It is not a totally new approach. As early as the 1980s, Greater London Council's (GLC) Community Arts Committee were diverting funding to projects that 'demonstrated the participation of communities in both decision-making processes and production'⁴⁷, in a bid to give a voice to the working class. In the context of the GLC at that time, it was also part of a wider political commitment to greater equity and a valuing of working class culture in itself.

The need to include more voices in its decision-making has been a major focus of the CPP programme. But, as many of the teams and directors responded, inviting people into the process is not always sufficient in itself. Real sharing of power involves a giving

43. <http://blog.americansforthearts.org/2014/11/19/seeing-power-and-possibility-in-socially-engaged-art>

44. Holden, J. *Democratic Culture: Opening up the arts to everyone*. Demos 2008

45. *ibid*

46. Leila Jancovich (2017) The participation myth, *International Journal of Cultural Policy*, 23:1, 107-121, DOI: 10.1080/10286632.2015.1027698

47. http://welcomebb.sophiehope.org.uk/Sophie_ActionResearch/contextual%20analysis.pdf

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away of power by those who already possess it. And, as noted at the **People, Place, Power** conference, this power can be held in a myriad of different ways. It is in the language we use, the knowledge we own, the social and cultural capital we possess. Sharing power is about who gets to speak and who doesn't in terms of decision-making but it is also, importantly, about: 'whose voices count', and 'whose voices go unheard.' The dominance of certain voices continues to be a feature of the arts and cultural sector: particularly in the public realm.

A recent piece of research on sharing power and decision-making for the Carnegie Trust⁴⁸ looks at how we might challenge that by grasping the different ways in which power can be understood. The first framework speaks of power possessing 'different forms':

- the visible (e.g. arts policies, political agendas, local authorities),
- the hidden (e.g. membership of elites)
- the invisible (e.g. cultural hegemony)

Invisible power, it is suggested, often implies an acceptance by everyone, including the powerless, that the agendas driving inequality are unchallengeable. The largely unquestioned pursuit of the neo-liberal agenda in arts and cultural terms.

Other frameworks offer the possibility of seeing power more contextually. And, in that sense, something which can be 'held' or 'shared'. Within a framework they name 'Spaces,' the researchers suggest it is possible to create places, 'where opportunities for formal and informal interaction help people to shape the decisions and rules that affect their lives'.⁴⁹ In a

context where access to public space is rapidly disappearing, this model seems particularly relevant. And a useful 'trig point' for programmes such as Creative People and Places?

The extent to which power is really shared in any of these spaces, the authors go on to note, is dependent on whether they have been set up to be, 'closed', 'invited' or 'created & claimed'.

Closed	Invited	Created/Claimed
Spaces are closed when decisions are made behind closed doors – often without providing opportunities for inclusion.	Spaces are invited when people are asked to participate in decision-making processes as citizens, beneficiaries or users. Although these spaces could become opportunities for genuine collaboration, agendas are often pre-determined.	Spaces are created/claimed when less powerful people come together to create their own space, and set their own agendas.

The Closed Space

In the closed space there may be some amount of public accountability but decision-making largely happens, 'behind closed doors.' Despite clear moves being made towards greater public accountability and diversity, there are many who still perceive this as the current Arts Council, and wider government, funding model. In a context where large institutions still receive most of the funding and certain voices continue to be privileged by the media, it is difficult for people not to sense decision-making processes remain in the 'closed space', 'influenced by vested interests of those (already) in receipt of funding and a

48. Hunjan and Keophilapong, (2010) Power and Making Change Happen. Carnegie Trust

49. Ibid

narrow range of voices.⁵⁰ Although there are those who would argue ‘the closed space’ is much more frequently to be found at a curatorial/programme level, wider questions of, ‘Who makes the decisions’, ‘On what basis?’ and, ‘Whose interests do they represent?’⁵¹ continue to be posed.

The Invited Space

In creating and investing in a programme that is very much place-based and led by consortia made up of, ‘local grassroots community groups and art/culture organisations, museums, libraries and other partners,’ Arts Council has taken up the challenge to create an alternative space: one where those who are not part of the small elite feel equally ‘invited.’ Not only to be given access to existing programmes but to be part of shaping the arts and culture they want to see in their own area. By focusing on ‘shared decision-making’ it has also committed itself to learning how this shift of power might shape its ‘approach to future projects.’⁵² Whether what is being learned eventually finds itself reflected in the funding criteria for major institutions or national funding policies is still open to question. Unlike CPP programmes, a national funding body is a, ‘large ship to turn around.’

CPP programmes have largely started with the concept of the ‘invited space’, taking similar but different approaches to tackling sharing of power and decision-making. In the ‘invited’ space created by initiatives such as **Community Bridgebuilders** or **SceneMakers** local people are clearly welcomed to the table and encouraged to be part of the conversation. Mostly this has been through, ‘taking part in

*decision-making panels to decide what community projects received funding*⁵³ or playing advisory roles in ensuring the art work commissioned is, ‘*relevant to local communities*’. Some CPPs have created groups such as **Appetite Builders**, or **Cultural Connectors** whose role is to actively encourage community participation. In many the invitation has quickly extended to include opportunities for these groups to get, ‘*involved in all aspects of the programme, from arranging trips and visits, sitting on funding panels, assisting artists, curating and producing festivals, leading workshops, taking photographs, doing office work and stewarding... to helping interview staff and freelancers.*’⁵⁴

Despite many successes, a number of directors were concerned whether the balance of power has really shifted. Especially when, ‘*delegation*’ still operates within carefully, ‘*constructed parameters*’. While many described actively encouraging groups, ‘*to take control ...deciding what to do and when to do it,*’ they also recognised, ‘*the initial guidelines are set by us*’. Even when community members have been invited to, ‘*create the criteria,*’ for certain commissions, the original selection of artists had often been ‘*curated*’ by CPP teams.

The role played by communities’ understanding of, ‘*who controls the purse strings*’ was frequently highlighted. ‘*There is power in who holds the money*’ one director commented, whilst another explained she was, ‘*very aware...that the real power often comes in a monetary form. ‘We’ still sign off the invoices and ‘we’ are still the ones legally accountable, and our panels realise that. In one panel, our partner organisation contributed financially to the final*

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Anthony Briscoe, 2017. ‘Power: I am Powerless/ We have the power’. Digital



50. Jancovich, L. (2017) The participation myth, International Journal of Cultural Policy, 23:1, 107-121, DOI: 10.1080/10286632.2015.1027698

51. ibid

52. www.artscouncil.org.uk/blog/value-everyday-creativity

53. www.makingascene.net/

54. www.creativepeopleplaces.org.uk/our-learning/engaging-communities-arts-five-case-studies

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event. *The balance of power was suddenly different.*

Who holds the power is not only a question of money. In a world where, as Susan Sontag notes, 'Rules of taste enforce structures of power' and are 'inextricably woven into our system of social class',⁵⁵ CPP directors spoke of having to reassure community members their opinions were equally valued. One described, *'a participant (who was also the chair of a local community association) asking, 'are we doing okay?'* after they had contributed their thoughts on a selection of artists. Another director was honest enough to suggest it can be, *'an uphill struggle' to get to a place where participants begin to see themselves on, 'an equal footing'.*

Having the confidence to voice your opinion, when there are those in the room who already possess the know-how and the language to speak about work in a professional context is not easy. While noting, *'there is also 'power' in the experiences, knowledge and connections people bring to the table,'* another director felt it was, *'still difficult. Our approach to community commissioning is about putting the decision-making power in the hands of the community...But... this doesn't truly hand over power. Panel members know their mentors are more experienced and knowledgeable than themselves and that influences things.'*

One response was to suggest it might not necessarily be about creating an *'absolute balance'* but more about being open about the invitation. Another that it was about recognising it might still be about, *'a gentle negotiating of power...where the most important thing' was to, 'ask the right question at the right moment.'* Others felt it must start with a conversation

where people were able to be, *'honest about who has what type of power'.* And in *'being consciously aware of where we place our power.'*

Some sensed even the 'invited space' might still seem patronising to community members. Especially if participants' ability to contribute to the debate seemed to be found surprising:

'What struck me was how thorough and detailed their observations ... were. They had read everything in minute detail...checked the budgets, and websites of the artists. This is not a passive group of decision-making novices, but a very passionate and earnest group of people who take their responsibility seriously...'

Created and Claimed Spaces

In the 'created or claimed space' there is a recognition power is not something unchanging or fixed. It is 'dynamic' and 'can be found in the hands of the many.'⁵⁶ What matters is creating the spaces for this to flourish. Speaking about power's different 'expressions', a recent Oxfam report⁵⁷ identifies four possible paradigms:

- 'power over,' which involves excluding others
- 'power to' which is about our capacity to take action
- 'power with' which comes through collaboration
- 'power within' or personal
- 'empowerment' - which often emerges from opportunities to develop 'power with'.

One of the important (though not uncontested)⁵⁸ claims made for the arts is their potential to create a sense of 'power within' through creating opportunities for people to work

55. www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/art/art-features/10117264/Grayson-Perry-Taste-is-woven-into-our-class-system.html

56. Sontag, S. (2007) *At the Same Time: Essays and Speeches*. Picador USA

57. <http://policy-practice.oxfam.org.uk/publications/quick-guide-to-power-analysis-313950>

58. c.f. Merli, Belfiore & Bennett Bibliography

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collaboratively. As one CPP director, quoting Aboriginal artist/activist Lilla Watson, explained, creating ‘power with’ is about finding solidarity with your community through collaboration and co-creation: *‘If you have come to help me, you are wasting your time. If you have come because your liberation is bound up with mine, then let us work together.’*⁵⁹ It is also dependent on whether, having given people a voice in creating, commissioning or curating work, *‘they feel that voice will continue to be listened to’* and that they will be able *‘to influence future outcomes’*. In order to do that, communities need to see themselves not only as participants but ‘co-creators’ and ‘initiators’ of programmes.

Sensing the tension that can still exist around the ‘invited space’, a number of CPPs have chosen to develop the, ‘created and claimed’ space through commissioning work that engages more directly with the social and economic context of the areas in which they are working. In particular, it has involved radical new partnerships with artists who reflect these communities and come from a background of socially engaged practice. And, importantly, working with artists who understand the ‘theoretical framework and ethics’⁶⁰ that inform such a practice.

This has included:

- challenging assumptions that people need to be offered ‘easy or celebratory subjects’ in order to engage e.g. **Holocaust Memorial Day event** in Kirklees, **Cultural Spring’s RUSH**, exploring mass movements and popular protest, and **From Out A Darker Sea** So Percussion’s response to the impact of the coal industry on the North east coast.
- working with communities to create the kinds of spaces where they can confront the devastating social impact inequality is having on their communities through ‘harnessing’ the ‘power of creativity and imagination’. e.g. **Heart of Glass’s** 12-year **Baa Baa Baric** residency looking at the negative statistics facing men in St Helens.
- commissioning internationally renowned artists already working in this way, such as Suzanne Lacy, Procu:arte Portugal or So Percussion, to lead projects like **Shapes of Water: Sounds of Hope** or **Flaneur** that bring diverse communities together or engage communities with complex memories and spaces.
- supporting local artists to experiment and develop their community based practice. e.g. Heart of Glass’ **prototype projects** or Peterborough Presents **Young Producers** programme.
- offering spaces for artists embedded in their communities to engage in shared dialogue around social art practice e.g. **The Northern Faculty of Social Art Practice**
- initiating public conversations around the responsibility of the arts in responding to issues of social justice and influence social change⁶¹ e.g. the **People, Place, Power** conference, **Shifting Loyalties** and the **With, For, About** seminars.

Anthony Briscoe, 2017. ‘Two Powerful Words’. Digital



Two powerful words

59. Aboriginal Activists Group, Queensland, 1970s

60. <http://superslowway.org.uk/news/open-call-for-a-socially-engaged-commission/>

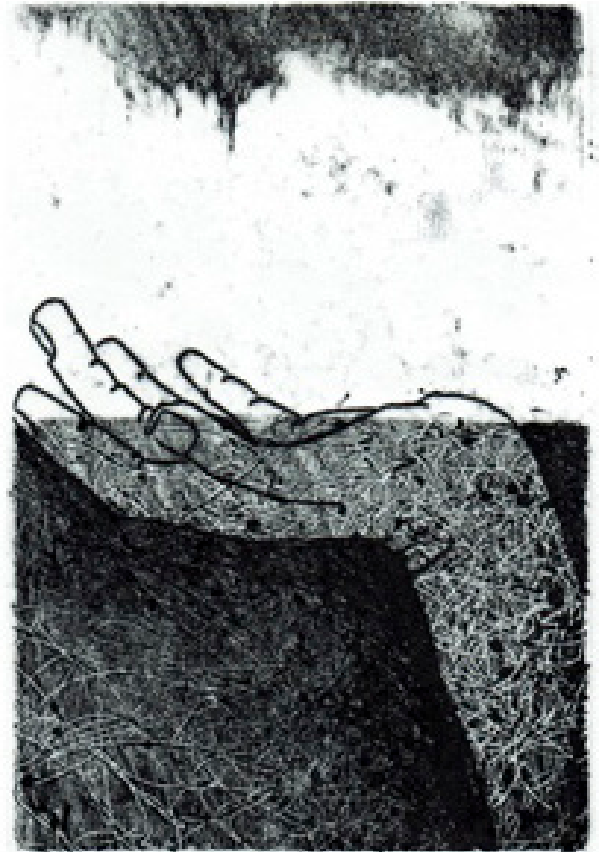
61. <http://www.heartofglass.org.uk>

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The importance of offering communities the possibility to participate in art that not only celebrates their history and heritage but also allows them to engage critically with the real issues facing them cannot be underestimated. This is work that not only asks rigorous questions, like the **bait prompt**, ‘does this project have something to say about the world we live in?’ but also, ‘directly reflects, challenges and questions the politics of our times’.⁶²

Most CPPs would see the establishment of ‘created and claimed’ spaces as their final goal: especially if the programme is to prove sustainable once this particular strand of funding has disappeared. Finding ways to challenge current power structures is a crucial part of this. If the ethos of the programme is to be reflected at a national level, this would mean creating a system that seeks to go beyond the arts’ capacity to ‘ameliorate’ the effects of long term dis-investment. It must be able to offer space to encompass what Chantal Mouffe describes as the ‘antagonistic’.⁶³ And to go beyond policies that accept, ‘the existing terms and conditions of the public sphere and seeks to modify, extend or otherwise reform them’ to being prepared to change ‘the public sphere itself’.⁶⁴

‘Culture’ as Holden suggests, can no longer be ‘something that is ‘given’, offered’ or ‘delivered’ by one section of ‘us’ to another.’⁶⁵ It needs to be something, ‘that we all own and make:’ by encompassing ‘power with’ as well as ‘within’.



Claire Weetman, 2017. ‘Helped Up’.
Monoprint on tracing paper.

62. <http://disabilityarts.online/jobs/heart-glass-seeks-eu-based-socially-engaged-artist-paid-residency-st-helens/>

63. Mouffe, C. (2013) *Agonistics: Thinking the World Politically*. Verso Books

64. Hutchinson, M. (2015), ‘Everybody lies: The ethics of social practice’, *Art & the Public Sphere*, 4: 1+2, pp. 53–62, doi: 10.1386/aps.4.1-2.53_1

65. Holden J. (2008) *Democratic Culture Demos*, London



RECIPROCITY: The practice of exchanging things with others for mutual benefit

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'Reciprocity? Of course not. It is a naive delusion to think this is possible. The issue is the transparency of what is possible. Not chasing the chimera of balance.' Critical Friend

The notion of reciprocity, in terms of the equal exchange of food, labour or skills, has been at the heart of creating sustainable and resilient communities since the earliest formation of human societies. It depends on both 'partners' believing they have something equally important or useful to give and to gain.

As the piece above suggests, it is always 'complicated'. Especially in a cultural context where communities' existing culture might be seen as being side-lined by the introduction of what others consider to be 'great art': or what Hoggart calls, 'cultural colonisation'.

There are those, like the philosopher Levinas, who would argue any exchange between 'us' and the 'other' will always be asymmetrical and unequal. This is especially true in a context where the sense of the 'other' is continually reinforced by issues of gender, ethnicity, sexuality and class or even the geography. And, especially in terms of those people and places the system has come to identify, and speak of, as being, 'on the margins'. The 'othering' of those who are not part of the cultural hegemony being one of the central ways, Foucault insists, where power dynamics are perpetuated.

Arguing the case for the artist needing to be more of a cultural anthropologist, Hutchinson⁶⁶ suggests reciprocity is possible if the artist and the community create a shared space where they can engage in real dialogue. To him this means undertaking a process of negotiation and collaboration in which each uncovers the skills, knowledge or expertise of the other. A 'reciprocal engagement,' through which Hope suggests, 'artists and participants' are able, 'to recognise (and exploit) the needs and expectations of each other'.⁶⁷



GREAT ART IN OUR COMMUNITIES STRONGER COMMUNITIES GREATER PARTICIPANT NUMBERS REACHING NEW AUDIENCES GROWING CONFIDENCE SHAPING PLACE EXCELLENCE ASPIRATION CHANGE IN NATIONAL POLICY CHANGE IN LOCAL AUTHORITY LOCAL AUTHORITY CUTS LOCAL TENSIONS LOCAL ARTISTS LOCAL TRADITIONS TRADITION HERITAGE CULTURE INCREASING AMBITION VOLUNTEER FATIGUE DESPAIR LIFE JOY ENVY BOUNDARIES EQUAL DISTRIBUTION COMMUNITY DECISION MAKING OWNERSHIP POWER MONEY CAPITAL INVESTMENT OTHER FUNDING CUTS SUSTAINABILITY BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS COMMUNICATION MAINTAINING RELATIONSHIPS PERSONALITIES GENERATING INCOME PARTNERSHIP WORKING ETHICS GENTRIFICATION LOCAL IDENTITY PRIDE HOPE ASPIRATION DEVELOPING TALENT HEALTH EDUCATION EXPECTATION OTHER OTHER OTHER

66. Hutchinson, M., (2002). Four Stages of Public Art. *Third Text*, Vol. 16, Issue 4. p.329-438

67. http://welcomebb.sophiehope.org.uk/Sophie_ActionResearch/4stages.html

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Until recently projects involving any exchange between artists and communities have largely been premised on the 'deficit' model.⁶⁸ Based on their own, often 'middle class norms' of what is important,⁶⁹ funders or arts organisations have identified a 'problem or need' within a particular community and the artist has then been charged with firstly responding and then providing a solution. An approach Claire Bishop provocatively suggests, has created, 'a world of hand-wringing practitioners easily satisfied with the feeling of 'doing good'.⁷⁰ Or, as Grant Kester proposes, the realisation of a no less ambivalent or unbalanced relationship which is created through the language used to describe participants. In particular, the use of what he calls 'regulatory' definitions, such as, 'at risk youth', 'drug addicts', 'single mothers', 'the homeless' or 'marginalised communities': definitions that have already consigned the individuals involved to being in 'need' of something.

While the artist's offer in sharing their process and the participants in sharing their stories or life experience has often been spoken of as an act of mutual 'generosity', the unequal nature of the relationship continues to persist. Partly because the artist is usually the one being paid for this act of collaboration, but also because certain types of knowledge and expertise are still valued over others. The artist is still too often perceived as the one, 'bestowing' a gift of, 'enlightenment, education, experience' or 'entertainment' on a community that has been labelled as, 'disadvantaged'.⁷¹

68. Miles, A and Sullivan, A. (2010) *Understanding the relationship between taste and value in culture and sport*, DCMS

69. www.everydayparticipation.org/category/uep-report/

70. Bishop, C. in, Helguera, P. (2011) *Education for Socially Engaged Art, A Materials and Techniques Handbook*. New York: Jorge Pinto Books

71. Jacob, M.J. (2005) *Reciprocal Generosity*, pp. 3-10 in: Ted Purves (ed.), *What We Want is Free: Generosity and Exchange in Recent Art*. State University of New York Press, Albany

Questioning whether the idea of mutual 'generosity' might become the basis of a more reciprocal act, curator Mary Jane Jacob suggests it can only come about through truly collaborative practice. A practice where the time and space is created for, 'listening, speaking and reflecting'.⁷² What Kester later defines as 'dialogical aesthetics' or, 'the creation of a... common ground that...allows for shared discourse'.⁷³

Building this mutual generosity or respect must come from the 'clear commitment to discovering a community's capacities and assets'⁷⁴ embodied in Kretzman and McKnight's model of community development. It comes about from a pro-active acceptance to explore and value, 'different forms of knowledge': especially in terms of the tacit or embodied knowledge that comes from living in a particular place, understanding its geography, its culture and its heritage. It is also supported by a belief that, 'everyone is in the possession of something valuable...and it is therefore 'critical to respect (that) knowledge... to ensure it will not be exploited, co-opted or devalued'.⁷⁵

The tacit, or embodied knowledge, that exists in communities, is not always visible on the surface: like the 'trig point' or iceberg. It lives within the people who live in and share the history and ecology of that place. As opposed to the explicit knowledge we value so much as a society: learning that comes from reflection on knowledge rather than the knowledge itself.

72. *ibid*

73. www.variant.org.uk/9texts/KesterSupplement.html

74. Kretzman, J.P. McKnight, J.L. (1993) *Building communities from the inside out*

75. Jacob, M.J. (2005) *Reciprocal Generosity*, pp. 3-10 in: Ted Purves (ed.), *What We Want is Free: Generosity and Exchange in Recent Art*. State University of New York Press, Albany.

John Seeley Brown.
'Knowledge as Iceberg.'⁷⁶

Yet scientist and economist Michael Polanyi suggests creative acts, like scientific discoveries, 'are shot through' with 'the informed guesses, hunches and imaginings' that come from our tacit knowledge or what he describes as 'passions'.⁷⁷ Tacit knowledge, he explains, is what enables people to understand what is happening *now* in order to consider what might be needed in the *future* to bring about change.

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Uncovering the 'tacit' knowledge of different communities through arts practice has often been about finding ways in which both kinds of knowledge can come together to create new knowledges. E.g. initiatives such as Suzanne Lacy's *University of Local Knowledge*, *The Silent University* at the Tate or Marina Naprushinska's *Refugees Library* in Berlin. The ways in which this, 'new knowledge' is then shared being integral to creating a truly reciprocal process.⁷⁸

Building up the kind of trust that will allow communities to feel confident this sharing is truly reciprocal takes time. As Rick Lowe notes, speaking of his own long-term place-based programme, *Project Row Houses* states, 'You have to spend years developing relationships... It'd be an arrogant disregard of a community to come in and think you can grasp all the complexities of a place in a short time.'⁷⁹

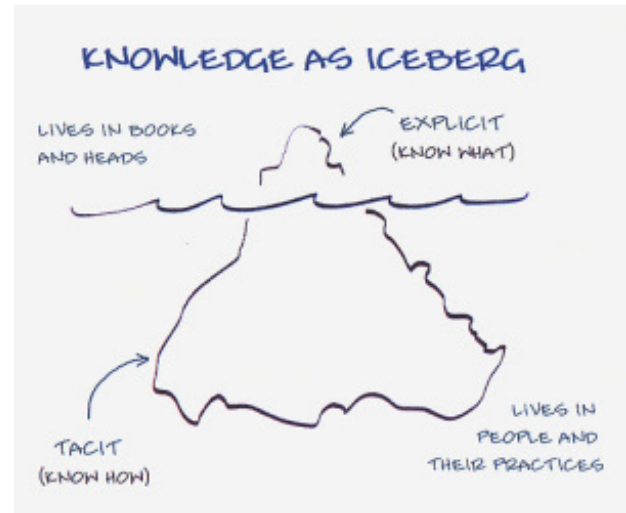
CPP programmes have both had that time and not had that time.

76. http://serendip.brynmawr.edu/sci_edu/seelybrown/seelybrown4.html

77. Smith, M. K. (2003) 'Michael Polanyi and tacit knowledge', *the encyclopedia of informal education* <http://infed.org/mobi/michael-polanyi-and-tacit-knowledge/>.

78. The University of Local Knowledge. <http://aprb.co.uk/projects/all-projects/2012/university-of-local-knowledge>

79. www.latimes.com/entertainment/arts/miranda/la-et-cam-what-rick-lowes-macarthur-grant-win-means-for-social-practice-art-20140918-column.html



As Robinson notes in *Faster but Slower*, 'Time has been a source of urgency and creative tension from the start of CPP.' A number of CPP directors and teams spoke about the 'need for visibility' which has often meant delivering high profile, large audience celebrations and festivals, alongside trying to develop projects that were more reciprocal and dialogic. Finding ways to work that draw on and honour the embodied, place-based knowledge of their communities has inevitably taken longer to develop.

Common Ground, a partnership between **bait** and the **BALTIC**, is one potent example of the power of artists and communities working together to draw on that tacit knowledge, through the artists immersing themselves within a community. The local working class culture of pigeon racing eventually becoming a powerful metaphor, shared in **More than 100 Stories**, of 'people in the North East... (as) extraordinary birds. So we're saying: we are worth more than you see in us. We are not a wasteland, we're beautiful.'

Teams suggested developing the kinds of relationships that create the 'trust' needed to work in this way can only be based on, 'mutual respect for different people's expertise.' And while, 'there may be moments when one partner is clearly giving more

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than the other – and often this is the community,' it is about creating, 'a mutual understanding that this is part of a shared process.' It means being 'transparent' about possibilities, including the role of the artist/s within any project: even if that means acknowledging, 'it can't always be an absolutely equal exchange.'

One director explains this journey towards mutual respect in terms of having had to move very deliberately beyond, 'assumptions we had made about their needs' to, 'a clarity of understanding' between the CPP and the community. This has also enabled them as an organisation, to, 'edge beyond people's (and local authority) expectations and misconceptions'.

At the beginning, he acknowledges the relationship, 'was often on the basis of offering a gift, making it easy for us to provide artistic experience,' but, 'through real partnership' he senses they have reached a place of greater equity, 'The next stage' he explains, 'is about developing sustainability.' 'Reciprocity' he suggests, 'is not necessarily the final goal,' but, 'a stage in the middle' from which, 'we hope they carry on, beyond reciprocity to independence.'

In world where product continues to be valued more highly than process, some felt there was a certain amount of bravery involved in, 'giving up your autonomy' and delegating decisions to others. 'There's not much room to fail' one director commented, especially when the pressure is on to continually 'deliver excellence'. The importance of taking time for shared 'reflection' as part of the learning process was underlined. 'That way you can analyse whether everyone felt what they had to contribute was equally valued.' As was the need to be kind to each other and not get overwhelmed by the, 'constant fear of not getting it right for everyone.'

One critical friend spoke of the need to, 'encourage generosity' and 'create space for kindness,' between partners, teams and other CPPs as well as with community members. There was a sense some teams might welcome, 'greater reciprocity' across the programme where there was sometimes a sense of 'competition.' 'Developing reciprocal trust' one person noted, often comes, 'through being open with people. Knowing when to open up and when to step back.' 'Yes', someone else agreed, 'It's about finding the connections, finding the shared issue, and listening.'

As John Berger wonderfully insists, 'Listening is what is important. The listening to a story is always primary, the listening is always primary.'⁸⁰ In a sector where hierarchies impact at every turn, it is a way of being with others that any institution that genuinely wants to work with its community might want to start from.

80. Black, L. (2016) *Academic Diary: Or Why Higher Education Still Matters*. Goldsmiths Press



CULTURAL CAPITAL: The knowledge that serves as a currency that alters the opportunities available to us.

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'I wouldn't entirely agree cultural capital reinforces inequalities. It really depends on what we perceive as the cultural capital. If we are talking about material / monetary inequalities - the fact one or more groups aren't as affluent doesn't automatically suggest they don't, or can't have, good cultural capital.'
CPP Director

Giving her keynote at CPP's **People, Place, Power** conference, Lynsey Hanley emphasised the ways she felt, 'education, social mobility and cultural capital are linked,' arguing participation in the arts, in particular, is based on the confidence that comes from owning cultural capital. The ability to have, 'the middle class conversation' is integral to any notion of social mobility. It is also, 'constrained by the psychological damage inflicted by class.'⁸¹

'Culture is ordinary'.⁸² It is also as Hanley recognizes, a tricky terrain: where class dynamics are frequently played out. Access to culture marks off the 'cultural elite' from the 'masses' by helping create the 'social capital' or networks that enable us to operate successfully in our present society. As Nobuko Kawashima notes in her piece on audience development,⁸³ it also legitimises and enhances 'social inequality,' creating the sense of not belonging that perpetuates the

social hierarchies and difference that Bourdieu describes in 'Distinction'.⁸⁴

'Cultural competence', Kawashima goes on to say, 'is something acquired through family socialisation and formal schooling' of a particular kind, one that Navarro points out, ensures access to, 'resources, including verbal capacity, aesthetic preferences, educational credentials, social class attributes... and so on and so forth' that are denied to others.⁸⁵ And, as a report for the DCMS highlights, cultural capital continues to play, 'a pivotal role in the intergenerational transmission of wider inequalities and social power'.⁸⁶

One of the questions posed at the **People, Place, Power** conference was whether cultural capital was one of the reasons the arts sector was often accused of, 'replicating society's inequalities and hierarchies?'⁸⁷ In the sense that the signifiers of cultural capital have always been associated with middle class taste through, 'cultural products', that include, 'systems of education, language, judgements, values',⁸⁸ this is probably true. In the sense that the framework for judging 'cultural value' is still predicated on what are considered 'legitimate' or 'high' arts it might also

84. Bourdieu, P. (1984). *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*. London, Routledge.

85. Navarro, Z. (2006), In Search of a Cultural Interpretation of Power: The Contribution of Pierre Bourdieu. *IDS Bulletin*, 37: 11-22. doi:10.1111/j.1759-5436.2006.tb00319.x

86. Miles, A and Sullivan, A. (2010) *Understanding the relationship between taste and value in culture and sport*, DCMS

87. www.creativepeopleplaces.org.uk/people-place-power-conference-2016-presentations

88. Bourdieu, P. (1986). 'The Forms of Capital'. *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Capital*. J. G. Richardson. New York, Greenwood Press: 241-58.

81. www.youtube.com/watch?v=OctWFtgrXB8

82. Williams, R. (2014) *Raymond Williams on Culture and Society: Essential Writings*. Ed. McGuigan, (2014) Sage Publications

83. Kawashima, Nobuko (2000) *Beyond the division of attenders vs. non-attenders : a study into audience development in policy and practice*. Working Paper. Coventry: University of Warwick. Centre for Cultural Policy Studies. Research papers, Vol.6 .

be said to be true. In the sense that those working in the arts and culture, whether as creators or managers, are increasingly coming from a narrow section of the middle classes,⁸⁹ it is disturbingly true.

Examining how cultural capital works currently in the UK⁹⁰ Mike Savage, and others, have pointed out some things have clearly changed since Bourdieu's original analysis. One is the rise of the cultural 'omnivore', the person who has widened their taste 'downwards' to include not only, 'high-brow culture' but also what was once considered working class culture e.g. football, soap opera, popular music. This is partly caused by generational differences: younger people are more likely to have tastes that cut across cultural boundaries, especially in terms of social media. What hasn't changed, he goes on remind us, is that class is still the most powerful indicator of cultural 'consumption' in contemporary Britain. Or the enduring correlation between economic capital, cultural capital and social capital that Bourdieu demonstrated. A connection that continues to uphold the values of the dominant culture as well as its political, social and cultural hierarchies.

Which brings me back to Robinson's pondering about Creative People and Places. And whether it has the possibility, not only to make change at a local level, but to 'change the system' that has brought about the 'low engagement' it is wanting to challenge.

A recent re-examination of 'cultural capital' offers one way of moving forward.

In her powerful piece on *Cultural Capital and Critical Race Theory*,⁹¹

89. www.thestage.co.uk/opinion/2016/dave-obrien-and-mark-taylor-do-the-arts-promote-diversity-or-are-they-a-bastion-of-privilege/

90. Savage, M. (2015) *Social Class in the 21st Century*. Pelican

91. Yosso, T. J. (2005) Whose culture has capital? A critical race theory discussion of community cultural wealth, *Race Ethnicity and Education*, 8:1, 69-91, DOI: 10.1080/1361332052000341006

Tara Yosso makes the case for turning Bourdieu's analysis on its head. Agreeing with his explanation of the way cultural capital has been used to privilege certain groups she nevertheless wonders if it might be useful to view it from the opposite direction.

Producing an alternative model, she calls, 'community cultural wealth,' Yosso proceeds to set out six forms of capital she believes are possessed by those communities often labelled as disadvantaged:

- Aspirational capital – the resilience to maintain hope in the face of real and perceived barriers
- Linguistic capital – multiple language and communication skills including oral history, storytelling and music
- Familial capital – having a sense of community history, memory and possessing cultural intuition
- Social capital – networks of people and community resources exemplified by the National Association of Colored Women's Club's motto, 'lifting while we climb'
- Navigational capital – the ability to negotiate social institutions not set up with anyone other than the middle classes in mind
- Resistant capital – knowledge and skills developed through the constant need to challenge the impact of inequality. Or what we might want to call resilience.

All these being ways, she suggests, of identifying the, 'cultural knowledge, skills, abilities and contacts possessed by marginalised groups that often go unrecognised and unacknowledged.' Reading about the successful applicants to the Arts Council's Building Resilience fund, it did seem to me CPP communities might have offered equally valuable and alternative approaches to what resilience might mean.

- 01. Power
- 02. Reciprocity
- 03. Cultural Capital
- 04. Privilege
- 05. Participation
- 06. Values
- 07. Ethics
- 08. Collaboration
- 09. Politics

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Although cultural capital is certainly, as one director suggested, not predicated on, 'material/monetary inequalities,' alone, there is a real sense in which it consciously impacts on teams and communities. As one of the CPP case studies notes, 'community members commented that there is still a long way to go until deeply rooted ideas of art and who is allowed to engage in the arts are overcome.'⁹²

While Yosso's model was not mentioned, the principles around which Yosso has created it were echoed in a number of the conversations with CPP teams. Many of them very much wanted to find ways to challenge accepted notions of 'cultural capital'. Not because they lacked an understanding of Bourdieu's analysis, but because they wanted to, 'resist any sense that our community

has less cultural capital - in a much wider sense - to draw on.' The knowledge individuals and communities bring to the table is clearly valued across the programme. Multiple partnerships with non-arts organisations from health authorities, rugby clubs, bus companies, community and voluntary groups, housing associations to arts organisations and local authorities

bring different kinds of 'capital' to the table. As one participant noted, 'Several of our projects have drawn on our history... These have valued place, memory and homes as well as creating inclusion - one of the local artists who helped on the mural had arrived as a refugee just a few months earlier.'

One CPP director suggests one way of consciously giving value to the cultural capital owned by their communities is working with them to create, 'work that is locally shaped, locally distinctive, determined by those involved and shaped to capture the attention of specific audiences/participants.' Another re-emphasised the need for mutual respect. 'Trust and confidence can only be built through partnerships that have mutual respect.... Authenticity is key. I think as a programme we give as much as we take from the groups we work with and treat each community member as part of the team, as equals. The groups we work with are like a family but this takes time and a lot of effort and resources to build and maintain.'

Accepting the tensions and hierarchies created between those who possess cultural capital and those who don't, one critical friend argued the case for actively seeking to undermine it. 'The funders may be 'expert', for instance on art (or health, or social cohesion), but our communities are the 'experts' on their local context, their appetite for different kinds of art, the demographic of the community'. She was just not sure this was a position held equally by all stakeholders. 'In an ideal world' she went on to say, 'there would be movement on both sides, towards each other, or a celebration of difference.' Instead she felt, 'A lot of the time...we are twisting and turning. As are our communities.'

While Yosso's 'community cultural wealth' model is clearly intended to speak to a particular US context it does offer a way of valuing very different experiences. CPP teams have suggested they feel it might be time to question and disrupt the dominant model. It would seem well placed as a programme to begin that conversation.



John Chamberlain, 2017. 'Cultural Capital'. Ink, acrylic, pencil and digital.

92. Ecorys (2016) Made in Corby, Community Engagement, Arts Council England



PRIVILEGE: a special right or advantage granted to a particular person or group.

01. Power
02. Reciprocity
03. Cultural Capital
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'There's really no such thing as the 'voiceless'. There are only the deliberately silenced, or the preferably unheard.' Andhurati Roy

It is impossible to speak about 'cultural capital' without also talking about 'privilege': the privilege that is afforded us through class, education, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation or being abled-bodied. Privilege is the inevitable result of living in a system where social injustice and inequality still prevail: a system that still honours one kind of cultural experience over others.

When I ran the MA in Participatory and Community Arts we used to have a 'quiz' at the end of the module on cultural learning that included the question: 'which of these are the odd ones out?'

- 'black' music
- 'chick' lit
- 'working class' drama
- 'rap' poet
- 'women' composers
- 'street' dance
- 'white men's' history
- 'white male artist'
- 'disability' arts

It took students a little time to get to the 'answer'. But once they had done so the debate that followed was filled with indignation and outrage: even from the white men. As the brief for a residency for the Live Art Development Agency focusing on Class and Privilege recently asked the question of, 'Whose knowledge is valid and valued?' is still a pivotal one.

The need to 'label' certain art forms or groups of artists underlines the

continuing existence of an 'all-encompassing' and 'accepted norm'.⁹³ A norm that has become accepted because, as Ferguson explains in his introduction to *Out There: Marginalization and Contemporary Cultures*, the dominant culture has created a sense of the 'unquestionable, invisible and universal' based on the absence and lack of power of 'the other'.

While some things may have changed in the past few years, most cultural institutions, as Nina Simon notes, remain bastions of 'white male privilege'.⁹⁴ The need to constantly differentiate or mark more diverse cultural practice indicating how far there is still to go. Simon goes on, in her own piece on privilege, to describe a recent exhibition she had seen in Boston, where, 'one photograph of three young ballerinas was labelled with their names' while, 'A second image, of three ballerinas with Downs Syndrome, was labelled with their difference.'

Despite programmes to encourage greater diversity in the arts and cultural sector in the UK, current economic and social policies seem to have ensured privilege has become even more entrenched. Not only are consumers of arts and culture 'disproportionately made up of the more privileged sectors in society'⁹⁵ but 'employment in the

93. Ferguson, R (1990) *Out There: Marginalization and Contemporary Cultures* MIT Press

94. <http://museumtwo.blogspot.co.uk/2013/03/on-white-privilege-and-museums.html>

95. <https://www.thestage.co.uk/opinion/2016/dave-obrien-and-mark-taylor-do-the-arts-promote-diversity-or-are-they-a-bastion-of-privilege/>

creative industries' is increasingly becoming 'the prerogative of the privileged.'⁹⁶

As O'Brien and Taylor note in their evaluation of the Panic! Project⁹⁷ on social mobility, many people employed in the cultural sector still have little sense of the way privilege works. Many of their respondents believing, 'despite all statistical evidence to the contrary', that 'hard work and ambition' is what matters in finding employment in the creative sector, 'the least important things being religion, gender, ethnicity and class'.⁹⁸

The report goes on to note most people working in the cultural sector only, 'knew people from backgrounds similar to their own', suggesting it may well be becoming as 'socially closed' as other elite professions. A situation Vicki Heywood argued at the launch of the Warwick Commission report, could no longer be tolerated. Not only is the existence of these barriers and inequalities bad for the sector itself she noted. It is also 'bad for business and bad for society.'

Accepting our own privilege, however, as the Panic! Report demonstrated, is not always easy. One critical friend dismissed it as an, '*inhibiting guilt-centred construct*'. Everyone would like to believe their success in life has come from hard work and diligence. But if we find it hard to accept the privilege we possess due to our class, education, gender, ethnicity or being able-bodied, what might we be saying about those who haven't succeeded in the same way? Working recently with a group of young, black, working class artists privilege was something they didn't have to question. If we

96. www.thecreativesociety.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2011/02/Creative_Survival_NDotM_for_ACE_march_2010_FINAL.pdf

97. www.thestage.co.uk/opinion/2016/dave-obrien-and-mark-taylor-do-the-arts-promote-diversity-or-are-they-a-bastion-of-privilege/

98. *ibid*



Cerise Ward, 2017. 'Miss High and Mighty'. Monoprint

acknowledge we may possess it, by the very fact of working in the cultural sector, is 'guilt' the only option? Or, is it more, as one CPP director suggested, about the need to have, '*honest conversations*.' Not, '*only with our communities and participants but internally as teams?*'

Perhaps, as Simon suggests, acknowledging our privilege might free us to work, 'with humility and openness to relentlessly challenge and expand it'⁹⁹ to include others. Or, as Arts Front, the programme looking at 'Australia 2030' suggests, it might encourage us to start actively critiquing the systems that have created it. As Arts Front state in the conclusions from their working group on Power and Privilege, 'It is the responsibility of the privileged to question, disrupt and reframe power and privilege'.¹⁰⁰ They don't expect it to be an easy journey but suggest, 'Ignorance is a choice': not an 'excuse' to do nothing.

99. <http://museumtwo.blogspot.co.uk/2013/03/on-white-privilege-and-museums.html>

100. <http://artsfront.com/working-group/?id=63>

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The question of whether those of us working in the arts come from a place of privilege was certainly one directors, critical friends and teams felt it was important to engage with. *'I think about it a lot when I go back to Burnley. People there feel like the majority of people. When I'm working in CPP it's rare that I see someone from a different background.'*

Many were aware it had to be something they constantly kept in mind: *'Of course we come from a place of privilege. Most CPP staff and partners, to be in the positions we are, have had access to education, experiences and ultimately, seen much more art, that the majority of our participants have had (otherwise we wouldn't be a CPP place!). I think we just need to be honest about that privilege with those we are sharing decision-making with.'*

The need to be honest with oneself resonated, *'...does this mean advantage? I am privileged, I have had an arts education and I earn my living from my practice...it is true that the arts reflect an idea of elite and complex experiences than can only be understood and enjoyed by a privileged class who are equipped and educated to de-code it, have the time to invest in it.'*

There were those, basing their response directly on their own personal experience, who wanted to differ. One critical friend was nervous speaking of 'privilege' gave support to the belief of the 'Rees-Mogg types' she knew that those who work in the arts are all 'luvvies': and, in accepting that sense of privilege she felt we might deny, 'creativity, passion and voice' to those who make up the CPP communities.

Another felt his own history mitigated against accepting it as a criticism: *'I think it is unfair to say the people working in or interested in the arts*

come from a place of privilege. Many people do but many people don't. I feel privileged only in the fact that I managed to see the benefits of 'the arts' (although they weren't defined as the arts to me) on my own terms by being in a band as a teenager, that was my route in and luckily surrounding myself with creative people inspired me to get interested in the arts.'

But a number felt, with Simon, that what mattered was having an awareness of what you might do with that privilege. *'I am an agent of arts development and the type of projects that aim to empower people rather than enforce a privileged culture.'*

This could begin with developing a climate of 'openness' with the community. *'Each of our community commissioning panels have an artistic mentor assigned to them and early on we discuss why we're all there. We're clear with panel members that they're there precisely because they haven't had the same experiences as 'us', and therefore their tastes are closer to the wider population of our place. The taste of the art world is created by the same things that make us privileged, and I think that is often at the heart of the disconnect between arts organisations and the wider community.'*

For others, it was very much about the relationships you build up with your community. *'I think empathy is really important... I can bring my own personal experiences into this because I was not into the arts growing up.... We need to open up the possibilities of the arts and maybe not even use the 'a' word, just let people experience the depth and breadth of the arts so it is relevant to them; to help challenge their own perceptions and give people the confidence to talk about it...It is important not to reinforce negative perceptions of the arts when trying to change people's attitude and behaviours but look at new alternatives*

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which might help to shape and change their thinking.'

One director said the best way to challenge existing notions of privilege was to think carefully about the artists one chose to work with: *'This can depend on so many factors that it can't be a straight Y or N answer... we work with artists from all backgrounds, with varied experiences, from different places in terms of location and perceived social class. Our projects are planned to be representative of our regional reach and what we know about 'some' of our communities.'*

For another director and team, it was also about using the art itself to challenge and unpick that privilege. *'If we accept we live in a sexist, hetero-normic, patriarchal society then the artists we choose, the art work they make and the groups they make it with give us the possibility to challenge that status quo.'* This included constantly challenging the notion participants were, *'underprivileged people in need'* who somehow had to be, *'saved by their participation in the arts.'*

In promoting shared decision-making in the National Health Service and countering systems that privilege those with a particular kind of knowledge, some health workers are moving to more collaborative models. One way of doing this has been, ironically, to experiment with storytelling. Quoting The Empathy Museum's director Clare Patey, the Health Foundation explains, *'Stories have a transformative power to allow us to see the world in a different way than we do if we just encounter it on our own...an entry point to understanding a different experience of the world.'* Patey's recommendation to work with artists to develop these skills has led to a number of innovative projects. One of these, *A Mile in My Shoes*, is an audio storytelling project that enables patients, carers and health workers, from hospital porters to consultants, to not only experience what

it might like to be someone else but to understand the different knowledges each brings to any healthcare situation.¹⁰¹

In a world where the narrative has largely been driven by those with privilege, the possibility to disrupt the status quo and challenge 'who tells the stories' and 'about whom they are told' something Creative People and Places has the possibility to lead on. There are many 'More Than 100 Stories' and voices needing to be heard.

101. www.health.org.uk/newsletter/power-storytelling



PARTICIPATION: the act of taking part.

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‘Our approach is based on the idea of a ladder of participation, and we deliberately try to understand how projects deepen people’s experience and dividend and increase motivation to carry on/do more.’ CPP Director

It is difficult to have a conversation about participation without referencing Arnstein’s 1969 *Ladder of Participation*.¹⁰² Particularly in the context of a programme such as Creative People and Places. Although Arnstein is approaching participation in the context of social and political outcomes, there are many parallels in intended outcomes. Christian Kravanga argues what defines it as a way of working within an arts context, is the need the artist/producer has to work collaboratively with their audience/participants. And their willingness to turn over, ‘a substantial portion of the work to them’. Either at ‘the point of conception’ or as part of its further development.¹⁰³

In presenting the different models of participation Arnstein differentiates eight rungs on the ladder: culminating in what she identifies as ‘citizen control.’

Arnstein is clear enabling greater participation is a social or political choice: ‘It is the redistribution of power that enables the have-not citizens, presently excluded from the political and economic processes, to be deliberately included in the future.’ She is also insistent, ‘There is a critical difference between going through the

empty ritual of participation and having the real power needed to affect the outcome of the process’.

Connecting Arnstein’s model with the wider cultural context, Claire Bishop suggests there may be some dangers in making a ‘direct equation’ between Arnstein’s analysis and the ‘art process.’ ‘While the Ladder provides us with helpful and nuanced differences between forms of civic participation,’ Bishop says, ‘it falls short of corresponding to the complexity of artistic gestures.’ What concerns Bishop, and others, is the progressive stages of participation the rungs of the ladder suggest. And within that idea of progression, the possibility of it being used to deliver a tick-box model that responds only to the neo-liberal agenda of what Williams calls, ‘administered consensus through co-option’.¹⁰⁴ What concerns Bishop is the continued possibility for artists and participants to grapple with all the, ‘unease, discomfort or frustration - fear, contradiction, exhilaration and absurdity’ reflected in our current situation.

Participation in the context of the CPP programme would seem to need to be about both: Arnstein’s move towards citizen power and Bishop’s desire for the complexity of the artistic response. There are spaces and places within the programme where audiences are invited to be collaborators and even co-creators in individual art projects, but there are



Sherry Arnstein, 1969.
A Ladder of Citizen Participation

102. Arnstein, S. R. (1969) A Ladder of Citizen Participation *JAIP* Vol. 35, No. 4, July, pp. 216-224
103. www.republicart.net/disc/aap/kravagna01_en.htm

104. Williams, R. (2014) *Raymond Williams on Culture and Society: Essential Writings*. Ed. McGuigan, Sage Publications

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also those where they are asked to contribute to making decisions about the content of the programme. In the context of communities impacted by the fall-out of austerity politics, from increasing unemployment, declining welfare provision and savage cuts to public services, and the resulting lack of agency it would seem impossible not to think about participation in its civic form. The ladder then provides a critical starting point.

At the bottom are the rungs Arnstein dismisses as Therapy and Manipulation: the 'closed' spaces of non-participation: Where those with power continue to see their role as being to 'educate' or 'cure' the masses. Often preserving the 'closed' space by holding on to the dominant narrative e.g. the arguments around excellence, quality and 'art for art's sake' conducted by Tusa,¹⁰⁵ McMaster,¹⁰⁶ Jowell,¹⁰⁷ Fenton¹⁰⁸ and others that resurfaced at the beginning of the 2000s. A debate that deliberately excludes most people, preferencing a model of participation premised on Keynes' 1945 suggestion the role of the arts was to enable the working man to discover, 'he is one with...a community finer, more gifted, more splendid...than he can be by himself'.¹⁰⁹ Or Socrates' suggestion that high culture, like reason, might be a useful tool to keep the mob at bay.

Most cultural organisations, like most public institutions, would want to suggest they are moving away from non-participation to a space where a greater diversity of voices is heard. But the ladder demonstrates Arnstein's

105. Tusa, J. (2007) *Engaged with the Arts* IB Tauris & Co, Univ. of Minnesota

106. McMaster, B. (2008) *Supporting Excellence in the Arts from Measurement to Judgement*. Arts Council England

107. Jowell, T. (2004) *Government and the Value of Culture*. London: Department for Culture, Media and Sport.

108. www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2004/may/29/artspolicy

109. JM Keynes (1946) *Art and the State*. The Listener August 1946

reservations about the middle rungs where she groups, 'Informing', 'Consultation' and 'Placation' under the sub-heading 'Degrees of Tokenism'. These are the spaces, she claims, where communities are invited in – but only to respond to agreed agendas. Anyone who has been part of a local authority public consultation will almost certainly recognise this stage. As may regional arts sectors who have seen 'devolution of funding'¹¹⁰ often realised through large capital initiatives such as The Factory rather than the re-placement of some of the basic resources being lost through cuts to local authorities and social services. It is easy, as Meissen notes, for what happens in the name of participation to become, 'a method of placation rather than a real process of transformation.'¹¹¹ Which is why the quality of the relationships Creative People and Places develops with local communities is so important.

These third rungs might also be said to cover the work largely undertaken by marketing or audience development programmes. Despite the creativity of approaches, the public are basically 'Informed' about future events and left to decide whether they would like to purchase tickets and be part of the audience. Arnstein might also suggest marketing initiatives such as membership schemes, targeted mailings and even the design of promotional material have already privileged those with the necessary cultural capital to access them. 'Informing' as she notes, rarely moves beyond a one-way conversation. Most CPPs I consulted recognised direct contact and dialogue with communities is what makes the difference. Marketing as an exercise in itself had rarely impacted.

110. <http://blog.policy.manchester.ac.uk/urban/2016/04/why-arts-and-cultural-policy-matter-in-the-devolution-debate/>

111. <https://vimeo.com/31127013>

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For many major cultural institutions, outreach programmes and/or learning and education departments are the places charged with activities that might be said to move participants up the ladder - toward consultation and even partnership. These are spaces where genuine enquiry can happen: where audiences can be invited in to become part of both the creative and the decision-making processes. Although when the work that takes place often does so at the margins of mainstream programming it can just as easily find itself serving the purpose of tokenism and placation. As David Jubbe notes in his response to *Faster but Slower*, the values this work represents are too often 'siloeed' and left to these smaller departments. Never reaching the rungs of curation and programming where they might impact on the working practices of the rest of the organisation.

There are those who would claim any 'top-down', or centrally initiated, arts programme will always struggle to reach the top rungs of the ladder. What Arnstein clusters under Degrees of Citizen Power. It would certainly involve major challenges to the ways in which large institutions currently operate.

But, in defining its starting point - the need for applications to come from locally based consortia of 'grass roots' community organisations, voluntary organisations, cultural institutions, local authorities and private sector

companies' - the Arts Council has, in many ways, set out its stall. A stall that involves the possibility of engaging with ways in which the wider public might play a more meaningful role in the decision-making process and through that the governance of our cultural institutions. True partnership, Arnstein suggests, is characterised by, 'the responsibilities of power holders and citizens' being shared through, 'joint policy boards, planning committees and mechanisms for resolving impasse.'

Many of the CPPs have moved beyond that partnership model to working closely with their communities to make shared decisions about the content and the structure of the programme. There is plenty of evidence to suggest those who have decided to get engaged have been enthusiastic and plentiful examples in blog posts from [Ideas Test](#), [Made in Corby](#) and [Market Place](#). The [More than 100 Stories](#) quote from one of Barking and Dagenham CPP [Cultural Connectors](#) that, '*The idea of commissioning artworks without local input needs to die*'¹¹² suggests the partnership 'rung' is already seen by many as only a starting point. The 'degree of citizen power' offered by different forms of participation is now what matters. The DCMS Taking Part survey,¹¹³ on which Creative People

112. <http://creativepeopleplaces.org.uk/100-stories-blog/conversation-about-decision-making>

113. <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/taking-part-survey>

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and Places is partly based, includes attendance at a cultural event, using a public library or visiting a museum as indicators of participation. In terms of audience development hitting increased targets in these terms¹¹⁴ may be encouraging. But making up the audience for an event created or curated by someone else is not the kind of participation that is likely to create real change.

This is not to say a moment of engagement or encounter with a particular piece of art cannot capture our imaginations in profound ways. And CPP programmes are offering opportunities for exactly those kinds of moments. Peterborough Presents *Wash Your Dirty Linen in Public*, Transported's *A Journey to the Centre of Your Heart* and Frantic Assembly's *No Way Back for Made in Corby* all clearly provided such experiences for their audiences. But each of these pieces also included the possibility of participation in a deeper way than might be provided by being little more than an audience. Whether this was a group of young artists' determination to curate an exhibition of live art, library visitors' choice to select and engage with a one-to-one performance or Corby citizens' resolve to co-create a piece of theatre about *'the events in our lives that shape who we are'* each of them created space for a different form participatory decision-making.

The role of the participatory artist, Grant Kester suggests, is to have an, 'openness to site and situation,' and a, 'willingness to engage with specific cultures and communities in a creative and improvisational manner.'¹¹⁵ He was also clear, in his critique of New Labour's cultural policy, that this did not mean the art, or the artist, is there

to deliver a 'state planned' version of 'self determination' and 'social cohesion' where 'political solidarity'¹¹⁶ is excluded from the conversation. As Helguera argues in 'Education for Socially Engaged Art', participation is not about achieving consensus, compliance with the status quo or providing solutions to social ills. It must offer the space for communities to problematise the causes as well as the effects of their disenfranchisement. And through that provoke the kinds of reflection that can 'bring about meaningful transformation and change.'¹¹⁷



Claire Weetman, 2017.
'It depends on your position 1'. Monoprint on tracing paper

When initiatives encouraging participation are funded by government bodies it is difficult for them not to be viewed as having already been co-opted by other agendas. If 'Degrees of Citizen Power' or the final rungs of the ladder are genuinely what is being sought by the CPP programme, any shared decision-making process must be prepared to embrace what Ranci re, names as the artist's 'ability to think contradiction'.¹¹⁸ And to leave space for discord and disruption.

114. <http://www.creativepeopleplaces.org.uk/ourlearning/audience-profiling-and-mapping-2014-2016>

115. Kester, G., (2011) *The One and the Many*, Duke University Press.

116. Kester, G. H., (1995) *Aesthetic Evangelists: Conversion and Empowerment in Contemporary Community*. *Afterimage*, 22(6), pp. 1-15.

117. Helguera, P. (2011) *Education for Socially Engaged Art*, A Materials and Techniques Handbook. New York: Jorge Pinto Books

118. Ranci re, J. (2009) *Aesthetics and its Discontents*. Cambridge. Polity

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Laclau and Mouffe¹¹⁹ maintain the moment of decision has to be a distinct space: a space where possibilities are opened up. But it is also the place where dominant power dynamics are often played out. Participation cannot be a process that does little more than what Dave Beech identifies as ‘papering over the cracks’ or neutralising the, ‘social and cultural distinctions that prompt participation in the first place.’¹²⁰ Neither can it be about providing the ‘diversionary activities’ mentioned in the Arad report on a recent participatory arts programme funded by Arts Council Wales.¹²¹ ‘The changes we need’ as Beech goes on to emphasise, ‘are more structural.’

In choosing to work with places and spaces that have been considered ‘marginalised’ or, ‘left behind’ in the modern race for progress¹²² Arts Council England is, hopefully, open to accepting something other than inclusion and cohesion might take place. Especially if participants in CPP programmes are genuinely being invited to take their place on the top rungs of the ladder. Communities facing profound social injustice cannot be expected to take up the invitation to participate with complete equanimity.

Which is why it feels important CPP programmes offer participants a voice within radical and challenging artistic processes. As well as inviting them to participate in processes that focus on commissioning or funding. It is in the terrain of, ‘artistic strategies that demand and enact fairness,’ that Kester

suggests change takes place. Going on to note, some of the most exciting, ‘collaborative art projects’ locate themselves increasingly in spaces of ‘solidarity’ and ‘on the continuum with ...cultural activism.’ A project such as Mark Storer’s *Baa Baa Baric*, which asks children to be the ‘voice from the grave’ for men who will (statistically) have already died by the time they are adults is just one example of such an initiative.

I have written and spoken at length elsewhere of the possibility of seeing participation as part of a continuum or spectrum, not least in the model created for the Gulbenkian Foundation’s Participatory Arts Alphabet.¹²³ For me it is always about the clarity of intention behind the participatory process. There are inherent ethical difficulties in participation that makes promises it is impossible for it to bring about. Conscious of the dangers of plagiarising myself, I quote some observations I made in a piece for Create Ireland:

In the end I think it has to do with being transparent about our intentions: being clear with ourselves and those we are working with why we, as artists, are engaged with a particular group of participants, a particular issue or in creating a particular piece of collaborative work. This means taking on the responsibility and the time to understand the social, political and economic contexts in which our work is situated: acknowledging the power structures, of which we, as artists, are part. And using this learning as a starting point for an open dialogue with our participants.¹²⁴

CPP responses to the question of participation were equally divided between those who found the ladder



Claire Weetman, 2017. ‘It depends on your position 2’. Monoprint on tracing paper

119. Mouffe, Chantal. (2000). *The Democratic Paradox*. London: Verso.

120. Beech, D., 2010 [2008]. *Include me Out!*. <http://visualintosocial.wordpress.com/category/talks/dave-beech-on-participation>

121. Arad Research (2013) Evaluation of the Reaching the Heights programme.

122. Shields, R., (1991). *Places on the Margin: Alternative geographies of modernity*. London and New York: Routledge.

123. <https://participatoryalphabet.wordpress.com/>

124. www.create-ireland.ie/images/pdfs/create-news/Create-News-17-October-2014-Chrissie-Tiller.pdf

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more useful and those who favoured the spectrum. One critical friend argued strongly for the latter because she felt: *'the usual paradigm of a ladder...creates a hierarchy and builds in failure. A continuum or a spectrum is a better image. People change and people want different things as they change. Participation, for me, is like the colour wheel, and where you are a given time is neither where you stay nor is it judged as in any way better.'*

One director argued it must be both/ and:

'I think over time it is about finding your way along a continuum. It is naïve to think you can expect people to participate without any support or professionalism... I would say at times you start off with a piece of rope to pull people towards the ladder. Then they start to climb and eventually have the confidence and self-efficacy to do it for themselves. It's not easy to walk away and leave people in the continuum if they are not ready.'

While another felt the 'continuum' was: *'effectively stationary. Arts development (and CPP) is about harnessing the value from arts activity so there is a dividend, to individuals in terms of happiness, health and wellbeing and to communities in terms of social cohesion, community spirit and creating stimulating and pleasurable places to live.'*

Even as I constructed the spectrum of participation I was conscious of the 'inevitable dangers in trying to capture something dynamic within a diagram or table.' One CPP director agreed and was clear participation would take different forms for different participants. And that one was not necessarily 'better' than another: *'I'm beginning to think that it's wrong to think of increased participation as any single metaphor. The 'journey' could be from A to B, could be a ladder, a cycle,*

a pyramid, a flowchart.... the point is that every person is different...For some it might mean getting more deeply involved in one art form or practice, leading, volunteering or decision-making, for others it might mean trying lots of different types of art experiences at a superficial level. And..., if the family that go to the theatre as an annual treat truly don't want to engage with any other arts activities then that has to be fine too.'

As one critical friend also noted, even, 'staying where you are' may not necessarily be, 'undesirable'. Especially when it is an active choice or the offer on the table does not seem genuine or significant. *'In order to participate,'* one director suggested, *'an individual or a group needs to find what is relevant to them - the more it finds relevance on their terms the more involved people will be.'*

It is this need to include participants, 'on their terms,' which seems central to any programme aimed at enabling communities to take 'control' into their own hands. In seeking to engage with more complex models of participation, Creative People and Places has the possibility to challenge those cultural places and spaces who still see it as something to be tinkered with on the margins. And to create a space where people are no longer divided into, 'those considered able to make their own decisions' about the culture they participate in and those who are still seen as, 'needing to be guided' by their betters.



VALUES: the principles or standards we live our lives by.

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'Dominator culture has tried to keep us all afraid, to make us choose safety instead of risk, sameness instead of diversity. Moving through that fear, finding out what connects us, revelling in our differences; this is the process that brings us closer, that gives us a world of shared values, of meaningful community.' bell hooks¹²⁵

bell hooks' statement about the need to discover what connects us rather than sticking with what divides us

seems a perfect place to begin thinking about the role personal values might play in participatory practice and in sharing our power and our decisions with others. Not only does she throw the notion of needing to cling to the dominant culture out of the window, she explains how its very narrowness constrains us to, 'choose safety instead of risk' and, 'sameness instead of diversity.'

Research projects into ways of measuring of 'cultural value' abound.

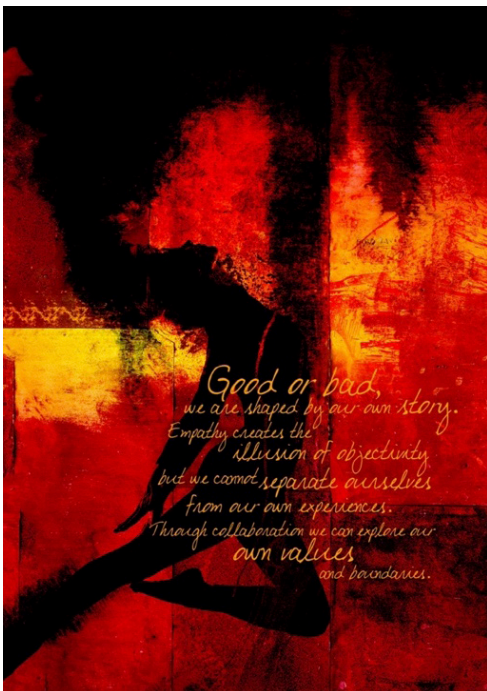
From 'the intrinsic v the instrumental, the elite v the popular', to the 'amateur v the professional, private v public spaces of consumption, qualitative v quantitative evidence, and the publicly-funded v the commercially-oriented.'¹²⁶ What there is less literature about, is

how our own 'cultural values' might inform our behaviours and thinking when we are working through the arts. As Chicago artist and curator Mary Jane Jacob's observes, 'No one asks you about values in school, in a grant application, in a project' even though one would think they should be, 'at the centre of those endeavours'. It is impossible, she goes on to say, to work in partnership with others without considering 'what your values are' and how you intend to 'apply them and not someone else's theory to what you do.'¹²⁷

Our values inform everything we do. They affect the choices we make, the way we construe the world, the standards we set ourselves. Everything we do, and everything we learn from what we do, impacts on the way we produce representations, create versions, take a position, or argue a point of view.¹²⁸ Nothing we engage in with others is, 'values free.' We all carry our own baggage.

Being prepared to own that baggage and accept it will always inform our exchanges with partners or collaborators is, as Jacob suggests elsewhere, central to creating a healthy society. When the public space to have those exchanges has largely disappeared, the arts can offer a crucial place for dialogue.

In trying to capture some of the principles and values informing



Kevin Threlfall, 2017. 'Sketch with Fire'. Mixed media painting

125. hooks, b, (2013) *Teaching Community: A Pedagogy of Hope*, Routledge

126. www.ahrc.ac.uk/documents/publications/cultural-value-project-final-report/

127. <http://magazine.art21.org/2014/09/17/planning-social-practice-an-interview-with-mary-jane-jacob/#.WRwf1ZgrJE4>

128. Hooper-Greenhill, E (2000) *Museums and the Interpretation of Visual Culture*, London, Routledge

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Jonny Glover, 2017. Visual Minutes: 'Sharing Power', an illustration from Power Up research activity. Illustration

Creative People and Places, a group of directors, teams and critical friends came together to explore notions of power sharing in the context of their own personal and cultural 'values'. The starting point for me had been a piece of writing by the Buddhist educator, Tulku: 'Our way of knowing and acting in our world, continually reinforced by our cultural conditioning, has established a complex interlocking system. Everything— language, educational systems, economies, commerce, politics, and social institutions—is dependent upon everything else. Underlying this great superstructure are our concepts, beliefs, assumptions, values, and attitudes, which are linked together like an underground network of pipelines connecting across a vast continent.'¹²⁹

The image of the network of pipelines drew me back to maps and cartography and the idea that 'trig points' were like icebergs: in that there is a great deal more going on below surface than above. This inevitably led us to Goodman's *Iceberg of Culture*, which makes some attempt to explain the way our different beliefs and values play themselves out in the way we

manage the world. Above the surface, in Goodman's model, are those things people can grasp from being with us: our dress codes, food, art, celebration and language. Just below the surface is what often remains unspoken: our concepts of time, personal space, courtesy. And, in the deeps below, the beliefs, prejudices, experiences, fears and dreams that inform the way we live our lives. And, more importantly, the way we relate to others. Many of the assumptions we make are based on the 90% hidden part of our own iceberg: which means we are often making judgments of others from this perspective.

Some of the open and honest thoughts of those who took part are captured in the image above.

Others have been mentioned elsewhere in the report. The values and principles people felt should be underpinning and driving all their work with communities were mostly those that dealt with equality, respect and cultural and social capital. One director, not able to be there, offered the list below:

- Value: Empowering
- Principle: Equality
- Ethical Approach: Inclusive

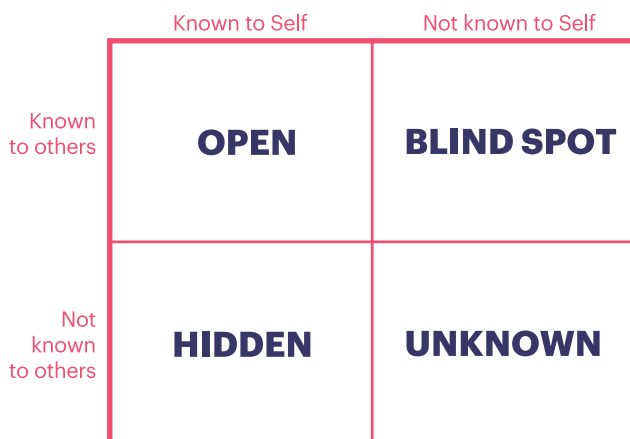
129. <http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.1000.6565&rep=rep1&type=pdf>

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Thoughts shared on the day included:

- *‘Understanding what it means to be an outsider – we are the other not the people we are working with – that can mean coming from 20 miles down the road but we are from a different cultural and social background and we need to own that’*
- *‘Thinking about what it means to be about powerful and to be powerless – where are our own insecurities, our feelings of not belonging and how might we use them to understand our communities?’*
- *‘We have to understand structural privilege, the privilege of the system, and how to deal with the conflict - internal and interpersonal – that comes from it*
- *‘We need to challenge views of privilege - in terms of understanding the privilege that is given to us by being able to work with as well as for our communities’*
- *‘We have to think about ownership and how we can really pass it on’*
- *‘We have to consider the wider ecology – in every sense- and understand our position within it’*
- *‘Where are our anchors? It can sometimes feel like a knot of different view points.’*
- *Class. We can’t ignore it.’*

As part of the conversation we touched on the notion of ‘disclosure’ and what might be gained by sharing our own values and stories with our participants as part of the power sharing process.



The Johari Window (Luft, 1969)

Especially when we were constantly asking them to engage with projects where they might be expected to share theirs. This took us to the possibilities offered by the Johari Window,

as a tool for reflecting on whether some of the values of reciprocity, transparency, openness and honesty that had been spoken about so often in the context of Creative People and Places were becoming a reality.

And thoughts about what it might mean to start to move those lines and allow there to be more that was ‘known to others’ and, through that, more that was ‘known to ourselves’ in the way we worked with teams and partners.

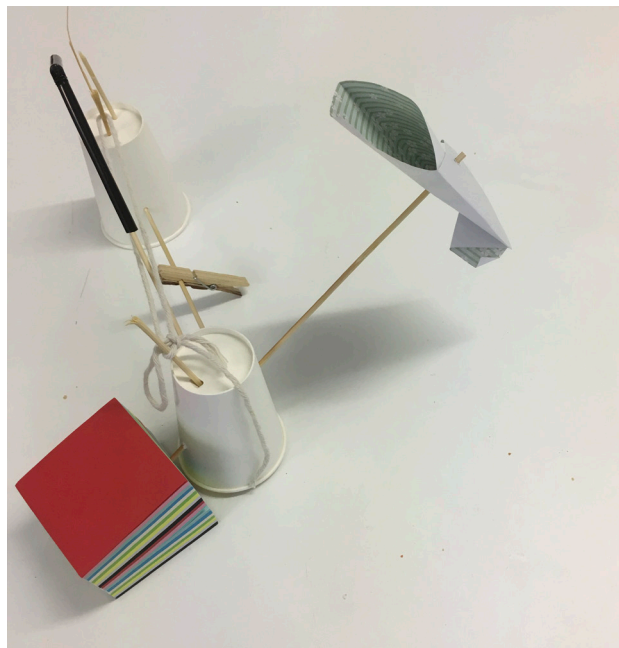
We also looked at the how we measure ‘value’ in the arts. *‘Sometimes it’s just about those small conversations we have with people who have been touched or affected by an experience. I was watching a woman at a ‘karaoke’ event and wondering why she was the only one not singing. I went over to encourage her to join in, then saw she was crying. She explained the song was one she used to sing with her mother who’d recently died. She hadn’t been able to listen to it since. But hearing it again was bringing back so many memories. How do we ask for funding for something that?’*

In *Common Cause: The case for working with our cultural values* Oxfam, Friends of the Earth and others come together to think about the ways in which our personal and cultural values might effect the way we deal with the ‘bigger-than-self’ problems that face our world.

Constructing, and speaking about, 3D models of the way their own values might inform their approach to power sharing, workshop participants created structures that captured both the complexity, and the precariousness, of what they were working towards. Developing a shared sense of trust was clearly important, as was the search for some kind of balance between what they felt they could realistically offer and those ‘bigger-than-self’ problems facing their communities.

While evaluations and case studies can give a sense of what is 'going on' in Creative People and Places as in many other projects, there is a deeper level at which teams are engaging. Drawing on their own values to work with the challenges of the programme as well as its potential. And in trying to keep a sense of these values finding something that 'anchors' them when it can feel that, 'everything else is shifting.'

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Chrissie Tiller.2017.
CPP Teams. Response
to Sharing Power 1.
Photo.

Or, as one director noted:
'Values? Fundamental. My values (e.g. to sustainability, inclusive economic improvement, safe and beautiful environments) inform my practice every day. Evidence-based consideration, recognition of imperfection, creating space for all voices....'



Chrissie Tiller.2017.
CPP Teams. Response
to Sharing Power 2.
Photo.



ETHICS: the moral principles that govern our behaviour. **AESTHETICS:** the philosophy of the idea of beauty.

- 01. Power
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'Ethics and aesthetics are one and the same.' Wittgenstein¹³⁰

The tension between ethics and aesthetics has been informing the arts and culture debate since Plato. Although Kant's work on the connection between 'taste', 'beauty' and 'genius'¹³¹ moved it firmly into the territory of 'art for art's sake' in the 18th century. A place it has struggled to escape from in terms of cultural policy. Since setting off on a post-war journey headed up by the Committee for Encouragement of Music and the Arts slogan, 'The Best for the Most'¹³²

publicly funded art in the UK has trodden the tightrope between those who speak out loudly for the intrinsic value of 'high' culture for 'everyone' on one hand, to those who have avowed the rhetoric of arts and social inclusion on the other.

This does not feel like a useful

place to re-rehearse that particular debate, although there is a great deal of literature devoted to it. But it does seem important for anyone working

within Creative People and Places, or similar programmes, to engage with continuing questions around the 'instrumentalisation' of the arts by being drawn into the service of political and social agendas.

The notion that the arts can act as an arm of politics is not a new one. As Eleanor Belfiore notes in her critique of New Labour's cultural policies *Defensive Instrumentalism*:¹³³ 'If we look historically at the idea that the arts can have an impact in a range of areas - such as, for instance, psychological well being, health, moral education and behaviour, educational development, political and social empowerment and emancipation, the forging of individual and group identity - we can only come to the conclusion that 'instrumentalism' is in fact 2,500 years old.' Perhaps this desire for politics to enlist arts and culture in solving so many different issues could be taken as testimony to the power of the arts to affect people and their lives. Although the 'evidence' to prove this always seems to elude us.

Belfiore goes on to divide instrumentalism into what she calls two versions: the 'positive' and the 'defensive.' The former, she suggests, starting with Aristotle's rebuttal of Plato's stance on the dangerous irrationality of poets; the latter a result of the late 20th century shift to aligning the arts with the market economy and the 'creative industries'. As cuts to public spending, post-Thatcher, marked the state's further withdrawal



xplusequals, 2017. 'Headliner'. Digital

130. Wittgenstein, L. 2006a [1921]. Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus, in Kenny 2006: 2-30.

131. Kant I, (2009) Critique of Judgement Oxford University Press, USA; Revised edition

132. JM Keynes, (1946) Art and the State, The Listener August

133. Belfiore, E. (2012) "Defensive instrumentalism" and the legacy of New Labour's cultural policies. Cultural Trends, Vol. 21 (No. 2). pp. 103-111. ISSN 0954-8963

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from the social sphere, the arguments for funding arts and culture have been increasingly premised on their ability to not only deliver the UK's economic recovery but to also solve its social problems.

Alongside this move towards justifying the arts in terms of the socio-economic agenda has come an increasing pressure to demonstrate 'public value' - through consultation and engaging a wider demographic of the public around funding and other policies.¹³⁴ Within that there has been increasing pressure to widen access and participation, create greater diversity in the work force and include different voices. An agenda Gray suggests has been partly upheld by a series of 'targets' set from the top-down and partly by the cultural sector's bottom-up move to increasingly prove their 'usefulness'.¹³⁵

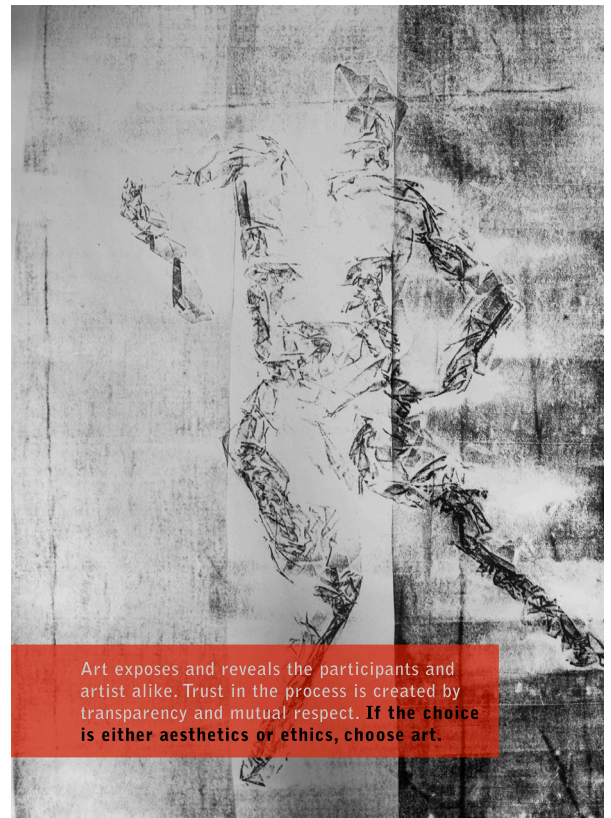
This has led to the criticism that too many access programmes have been, 'governed by a missionary ethos', projecting a set of hierarchically-defined cultural interests from the centre to the margins - their content often bearing scant relation to the lives of those they aim to 'improve'. Particularly in places, it is suggested, where there may well be more, 'urgent priorities like housing, safe play-areas, or proper policing'.¹³⁶ It is impossible to measure the way different pressures to deliver, 'brilliant art experiences' on one side and, 'participation' and, 'power sharing on the other' impact on the delivery of a programme such as Creative People and Places. Especially in terms of negotiating the need to take the time to develop the relationship on one side and the impetus to produce work that astonishes, delights and intrigues on the other.

134. Hatzihrysidis, M. and Bunting, C., 2009. *Public value programme: a wider range of voices*. London: Arts Council England.

135. Gray, C. (2008). Instrumental policies: causes, consequences, museums and galleries. *Cultural Trends*, 17(4), 209-222.

136. Cultural Policy Collective, *Beyond Social Inclusion: Towards Cultural Democracy Scotland* 2004

Levinas counsels us that we have an ethical 'responsibility'¹³⁷ in working with the 'other' which needs to be informed by direct experience of their 'lived time and place'. A responsibility Helguera suggests we can only meet by engaging with 'critically self-reflexive dialogue'.¹³⁸ Or by creating, what Suzanne Lacy, describes as, 'ethical sites of enquiry'¹³⁹ by continually asking ourselves why we are working with a particular group in a particular place and why it is important to be doing so. Kester responds to this by suggesting we might want to consider asking a simple question: 'are we there to speak 'for', 'through', 'about' or 'with' the communities we are working with.



Art exposes and reveals the participants and artist alike. Trust in the process is created by transparency and mutual respect. **If the choice is either aesthetics or ethics, choose art.**

**Kevin Threlfall, 2017. 'Body & Soul'.
Indian ink on paper**

The debate between Kester and Claire Bishop on the role ethics and aesthetics play in the relationship

137. Levinas, E. (1969) *Totality and Infinity*. Duqueune University Press,

138. Helguera, P. (2011). *Education for Socially Engaged Art: A Materials and Techniques Handbook*. New York: Jorge Pinto Books.

139. <https://ontheedgegeresearch.org/seminar-2-the-oakland-dialogue/>

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between individual artist/s and participants in more participatory practice has been well documented. Bishop's concern is that aesthetics are often sacrificed for a, 'generalised set of ethical precepts.' Thus leaving the work in the grey territory of, 'useful, ameliorative and ultimately modest gestures,' rather than, 'the creation of singular acts that leave behind them a troubling wake.'¹⁴⁰

While Kester agrees there is, 'no arts practice that avoids all forms of co-option, compromise or complicity',¹⁴¹ he is more concerned by the dangers involved in artists imagining, 'the very real differences that exist between themselves and a given community can be transcended by a well meaning rhetoric of aesthetic 'empowerment'.¹⁴² The ethics, for Kester, emerge from the artist's commitment to open, honest and critical dialogue.

In attempting to differentiate between the two viewpoints (see the table below) Lowe offers a model that focuses on explaining what he sees as the role of participants, the authorship of the work and the ethics of participation.¹⁴³

Toby Lowe, 2012.
Quality Framework for Participatory Arts

Kester		Bishop	
Role of participants	Participants in a process of creative enquiry, which they help to shape	Material for an artist's work	Role of participants
Authorship of the work	Co-authored, between artist and participants	Single-authored	Authorship of the work
Ethics of participation	Informed consent, plus on-going negotiation about the content and direction of the process	Informed consent	Ethics of participation

His summary of Kester's position being one that includes participants in 'shaping the enquiry', seeing them as, 'co-authors of the work', and inviting them to contribute through, 'informed consent' and, 'on-going negotiation about the content and direction of the process'. Bishop's model, he believes, places the focus on the individual artist while the participants are mostly there to provide material. The ethics being involved in the fact they have given their consent.

In the session looking at values and principles, it was clear CPP teams were conscious they are often 'outsiders' in the communities with whom they are working. Even when they may 'only come from 20 miles down the road'. This means having to ensure on-going dialogue across what Kester calls, 'a complex set negotiations across a myriad of social and cultural boundaries',¹⁴⁴ including class, status and geography. Some of the advice they wanted to share between themselves and others was:

- *Never assume. We can have presumptions about the communities we work with that often miss important realities.*
- *There is a tension between wanting to connect with communities and not always having the time for the conversations that will enable us to understand who they are.*
- *It is easy to forget everyone is an individual as well as part of a community: their own life experiences informing how they can participate or engage.*
- *For many of our communities 'the tipping point' has happened: in terms of housing, unemployment, cuts to benefits. For many of us it is still the threat. How do we connect ethically in those situations?*
- *It can never a case of either/or with ethics and aesthetics. It has to be both/and.*

140. Bishop, C. (2012) *Artificial Hells: Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship*. London, New York: Verso Books

141. Kester, G. H. (2011) *The One and the Many: Contemporary Collaborative Art in a Global Context*. Duke University Press

142. Kester, G. H., (1995) *Aesthetic Evangelists: Conversion and Empowerment in Contemporary Community*. *Afterimage*, 22(6), pp. 1-15.

143. Lowe, T. A. (2012) *Quality Framework for Helix Arts' Participatory Arts Practice*

144. Kester, G. H., (1995) *Aesthetic Evangelists: Conversion and Empowerment in Contemporary Community*. *Afterimage*, 22(6), pp. 1-15.



COLLABORATION: the action of working with someone to produce something.

01. Power
02. Reciprocity
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06. Values
07. Ethics
08. **Collaboration**
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'All artists are alike. They dream of doing something that's more social, more collaborative, and more real than art.' Dan Graham¹⁴⁵

What I appreciate about the definition of collaboration above is that it contains the idea of both process and product. Because, for me, the practice of collaboration is just that. Creating a space where we can work together. And the notion of producing something. Whether that something is the conversation we share or a full length play that puts the world to rights is up to us and our collaborators.

The debate around arts and collaboration often centres around the tension between the two. It impinges on the ethics/aesthetics debate: with Bishop¹⁴⁶ fearing artists working in social contexts are increasingly judged, 'by their working process—the degree to which they supply good or bad models of collaboration' rather than the power of the art produced. What is needed, she suggests, is, 'a productive rapprochement' where we can begin to create compelling alternatives to a, 'market-driven notion of art as product on one side and the instrumentalisation of art on the other'. Kester, on the other hand remains concerned by collaborations that come from a perception of communities as being 'in need' of the 'ameliorative' effect of working with the arts might bring to them. Many collaborative projects, he claims, 'tend

to be characterised by a degree of paternalism.'

In their, *Conversation on Social Collaboration*¹⁴⁷ for the *Art Journal*, activists and artists Doug Ashford and Wendy Ewald and curator Nina Felshin talk about coming to collaboration as an inevitable reaction to, 'situations' where what is happening, 'demanded' a response. Aware of the dangers of what they call 'the dark side of community-based practices,' in that many end up serving 'social effect and urban development' agendas, they emphasise the 'responsibility' of the artist/producer to be 'frank' and 'direct' with their collaborators.

For them collaboration means focusing on 'the process' of working together and building a relationship with the community that refuses to engage with 'an easily faked form of participatory democracy'. And, in that sense the ways in which that process is facilitated is a practice in itself. There is an aesthetic and form involved in the creation of a space where people can contribute equally. Arguing for the distinction between 'the participant' and 'the collaborator', Beech suggests it is about the 'degree of choice, control and agency'¹⁴⁸ offered. The collaborator, he intimates, not only has shared authorial rights but the possibility to make fundamental decisions about the structural features of the work.

145. quoted Bishop, C. (2006) "The Social Turn: Collaboration and Its Discontents," *Artforum* 44, No. 6 (Feb. 2006)

146. *ibid*

147. Ashford, D. Ewald, W. Felshin, N and Phillips, P.C. A *Conversation on Social Collaboration Art Journal* Vol. 65, Iss. 2, 2006

148. Beech, D., 2010 [2008]. *Include me Out!*. <http://visualintosocial.wordpress.com/category/talks/dave-beech-on-participation>

- 01. Power
- 02. Reciprocity
- 03. Cultural Capital
- 04. Privilege
- 05. Participation
- 06. Values
- 07. Ethics
- 08. **Collaboration**
- 09. Politics

Ironically, in many ways, the business sector is seemingly ahead of the cultural sector in promoting the advantages of collaboration. Even the Harvard Business Review recently proposing the strength of collaborative working lies in the fact that it ‘insists on the removal of existing hierarchies:’ in order to work in ways where people can begin to, ‘create new value together.’ According to the Collaborative Leadership Centre, it also ‘opens up space for ‘creative problem solving’, celebrates ‘difference’ and ‘diversity’ as a ‘strategic advantage’ and helps bring about ‘resilience and ‘sustainability’. Why then would the cultural sector want to work with any other leadership model?

Collaboration does not mean individuals have to negate their own area of experience or expertise. It does mean finding ways to work that celebrate the history, knowledge and skills everyone brings to the table. This means truly collaborative work cannot be tied to a particular product or a rehearsed outcome. It is always a form of improvisation. As Kester notes in *The One and the Many*, ‘The mode of perception (in collaborative work)... is not instrumental’ or driven by ‘a goal ‘already-in-mind’ but is, in its very nature, ‘anticipatory and open.’¹⁴⁹ Its capacity to bring about concrete and sustainable change coming from the possibility of art to work, ‘in the space between’.

In his exploration of what he sees as the lost art of co-operation, *Together*,¹⁵⁰ Richard Sennett speaks about our need to re-imagine solidarity and community. ‘Modern capitalism’ he argues, ‘has unbalanced competition and cooperation, and so made cooperation

itself less open, less dialogic...’. What we need, he purports, is ‘a Reformation’ through which we can begin to rediscover the values of community. And the power of working from the grassroots up to bring about change.

Collaboration and co-operation encompass the wonderfully creative act of ‘working with other people to do things you couldn’t do for yourself.’ In the conclusion to their conversation, Felshin, Ashford and Ewald voice their concern that the current pressure to move towards ‘consensus’ and a resulting ‘self-censorship’ on the part of artists and arts organisations, has negated some of the potential of collaborative practice. Perhaps, as Sennet explains, it is because, ‘The results of bonding have to lead somewhere; action needs a structure, it has to become sustainable.’ There has to be a possibility, beyond the process, to realise some of our hopes and dreams.

Describing the tenets of a healthy cultural democracy, John Holden suggests it, ‘implies a mature relationship where the public recognises, respects and benefits from expertise, while simultaneously being alive to its dangers and able to question its credentials. It implies professionals realising that they are part of, not separate from, that community.’ The sense of connection between Creative People and Places and their communities emerges strongly from many of the individual case studies and reports. And from the sense of people wanting to create work that reflects and responds directly to the history, landscapes and stories of the communities to which they belong.

Part of developing those relationships has been through working towards more collaborative leadership models: within the consortia, through partnerships with other arts organisations, through creative

149. Kester, G. (2011) *The One and the Many: Contemporary Collaborative Art in a Global Context*. Duke University Press,

150. Sennet, R. (2013) *Together: The Rituals, Pleasures and Politics of Cooperation* Penguin

- 01. Power
- 02. Reciprocity
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- 07. Ethics
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- 09. Politics

relationships with individual artists, collaborative arts projects and a wide range of community commissioning initiatives. The strength of these partnerships, CPP teams suggest, has enabled them to, *'be bold and push the boundaries'* in ways they wouldn't have been able to by themselves.

Working in this way has clearly not been without its difficulties: *'Power dynamics inevitably impinge on all these relationships'* and *'territories are definitely at play.'* Working with a group of partners who are all used to, *'taking the lead'* or, *'initiating'* programmes was sometimes felt to have, *'complicated things.'*

One director noted, *'It's sometimes a case of wearing a lot of different hats and being lots of different things to different partners.'* While another explained, *'it's about giving up that sense that we are the ones with all the ideas.'* Not something the arts always find easy to do.

While some directors spoke about collaboration as a way of directly *'sharing power'* and *'maximising possibilities'*, the invitation to collaborate was clearly valued at a more personal level. **Cultural Connectors** speaking at the *No Boundaries*¹⁵¹ conference described their experiences as being *'transformative'*. One had moved from a place where she was actively

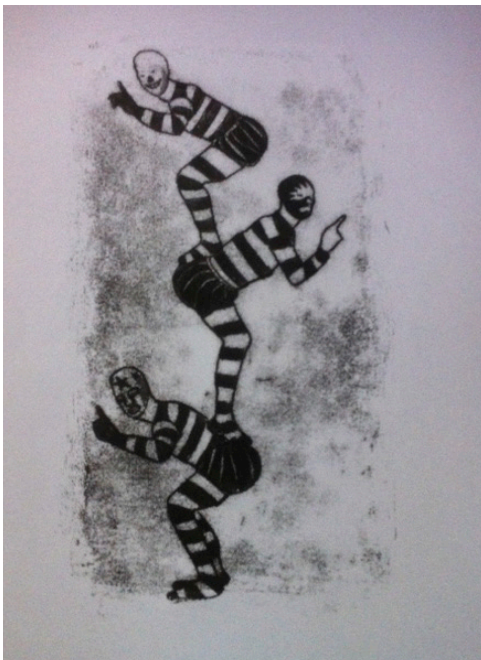
unengaged, *'Don't bother getting involved'*, to a space where she felt she could now describe herself as *'an artist.'* Another, having come *'from an Indian village where women's opinion didn't matter'*, had done and experienced things she could, *'never have imagined.'* By getting involved in the Connectors programme she had begun to, *'feel valued as a person as well as a woman.'*

Some CPPs felt there was a need to create more, *'opportunities to connect and collaborate across programmes'*.

The Faculty, a partnership between four CPPs – **Heart of Glass**, **Super Slow Way**, **Creative Scene** and **LeftCoast**, was offered as an example of the potential of *'collaborative learning'*: something that could become a model for wider cross programme co-operation. The artists who took part were enthusiastic about the possibility to learn from each other and have gone on to create collaborations and co-commissions across the CPP network including the recent **Peoples Bank** in St. Helens. As one producer working within a CPP explained: *'Change and impact is about people and collaborations and... the best way to do that is to build strong and positive connections. And then use those to support the communities we hope to engage with.'*

Introducing his *'cultural dimensions'*¹⁵² theory, Geert Hofstede looks at the impact of inequality and the uneven distribution of power on people's capacity to work effectively together. Creative People and Places programmes exist because of their communities and the local context: collaboration is the only way to ensure sustainability. Transferring this model of shared power and shared decision-making to more established mainstream institutions will be more of a challenge. There is so much more at stake in terms of influence, authority and power. But, as Matt Fenton notes in his response to the **People, Place, Power** conference, the exploration of *'artistic co-design and community-based decision-making'* that drives Creative People and Places, along with the emergence of more collaborative leadership models, have suddenly made it *'tantalisingly possible.'*

Cerise Ward, 2017.
'Piggy Back'. Monoprint



150. <https://nb2017.org/homepage/>

152. <https://geert-hofstede.com/cultural-dimensions.html>



POLITICS: The Art or Science of Government.

01. Power
02. Reciprocity
03. Cultural Capital
04. Privilege
05. Participation
06. Values
07. Ethics
08. Collaboration
09. **Politics**

Because things are the way they are they will not stay the way they are.
Bertolt Brecht

There are times when it seems there is only Brecht to turn to. Because the way things are cannot be the way any of us would want them to stay. The growing inequity of our society and the ‘bigger-than-self’ challenges the world faces demand action.

The social and political context in which the CPP programme has chosen to work, and its desire to engage communities with and through the arts, are *‘inseparable and intertwined,’* as one critical friend says, with much wider questions. Questions about the role of the arts. Questions about equality and fairness. Questions about who has a voice and who is heard.

The Arts Council has committed itself to ‘making a difference’ and bringing about ‘lasting change’ in the communities Creative People and Places works with. It has spoken about restoring, ‘a sense of belonging’ and helping, ‘communities come together to find a sense of place, and togetherness through a shared approach to arts and culture.’¹⁵³ In a programme that includes partners whose, ‘stated aim is to alleviate the poverty and problems’ caused by the loss of employment and the marginalisation of its community that has followed, is it possible to separate these aims from the need for social justice?

Like the young Community Projects assistant whose story I conclude with, most of us who work in the arts are doing so because we believe in its power to contribute to social change change, because, *‘It is inextricably linked to our position as human beings linked to the earth and all its natural entities and to each other.’* Can Creative People and Places create a model of arts and engagement that works in solidarity and partnership with its communities to confront the ‘fierce urgency of now’ and make that difference?

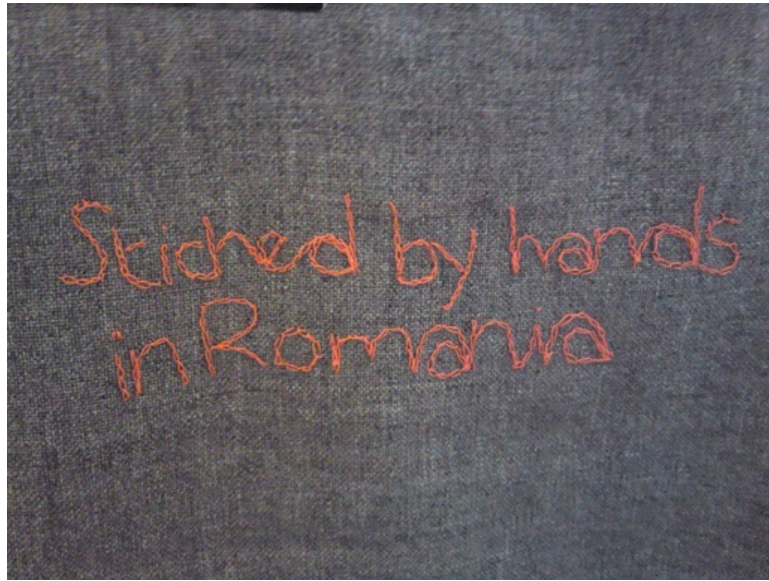
Answering the question posed, one critical friend states, *‘Now more than any time in the last 24 years at least, and arguably longer, there is nowhere free of politics. As our CPP communities change (harden, fracture, diminish, grow, laugh, fight) we are in the business, the stuff of politics. You only have to look at parliament, the law, Brexit to answer this one.’*

Which brings me back to Raymond Williams and *Culture is Ordinary*. And his reminder that, ‘There are in fact no masses, only ways of seeing people as masses.’¹⁵⁴ In investing in a programme that challenges a system that separates people into a cultural elite and the masses the Arts Council has made a step towards creating a space for cultural democracy. A ‘created and claimed’ space where everyone has the possibility to make art, think about art and make decisions about the art they want in their place. If this change is to

153. www.artscouncil.org.uk/read-all-blog-posts/pride-community

154. Williams, R. (2014) *Raymond Williams on Culture and Society: Essential Writings*. Ed. McGuigan, Sage Publications

- 01. Power
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Penny Skerrett, 2017. 'Ethical Dilemmas 1'. (Part of 'Who made my clothes' series (2010 - ongoing)). Photo of embroidered garment.

be permanent, then what has started in Creative People and Places will need to be replicated at a national level. As David Jubb says: 'I hope that CPP, as an Arts Council funded project, is part of a tipping point that pushes this approach from the periphery to the centre. And that the Arts Council begins to bring together and champion the whole movement.'

In *One Place after Another* Miwon Kwon speaks about the seeming inevitability of all, 'vanguardist, socially conscious, and politically committed art practices' becoming, 'domesticated by their assimilation into the dominant culture' and leaving their potential to create genuine political empowerment behind. Unable to provide a solution, she makes a claim for our continuing engagement with that contradiction: 'addressing the uneven conditions of adjacencies and distances *between* one thing, one person, one place, one thought, one fragment next to another, rather than invoking equivalences via one thing *after* another.' In that way she argues 'local encounters' can be turned into 'long-term commitments' and 'passing intimacies' turned into indelible, irrevocable 'social marks.'¹⁵⁵

Whether 'the local encounters' of Creative People and Places can be turned into a genuinely 'long-term commitment' rather than just being 'one thing after another' is in the Arts Council's hands. '*It's a long journey,*' as one CPP director explains, '*and you need to take people with you.*'

155. Kwon, M. (2002) *One Place after Another*. Site Specific Art and Local Identity. The MIT Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts

APPENDIX: **QUESTION 10**

In the spirit of Corita Kent I asked people to contribute their own Question 10. In the spirit of the process many emerged through the conversations and are included as part of the text. include some of them below.

In the same spirit, I would like to invite the reader to ask their own question. If power and decision-making are really to be shared, what might be the question we still need to ask?

Q. 10 Inseparable and intertwined. How does the Arts Council continue to fund art programmes that deliver complex values to our country? Arts for all our sake!

Q. 10 Belonging. When does an artist become part of a community?

Q. 10 How do we avoid the 'othering' of the communities we work with? Especially when we might come from such different starting points and sometimes hold such very different values?

Q. 10 What does the divide between the 95% (www.dezeen.com/2016/05/31/creative-industries-federation-members-96-per-cent-against-brexiteu-referendum/) of creative industry workers who voted to remain, compared to the 20/21 (CPP areas who voted to leave) mean for our partnerships and commissioning? How do we create provocative and meaningful work in the context of *UK* discourse?

Q. 10. Is it a total contradiction to imagine there might ever be a 'quick way' of bringing about shared power and decision-making?

Q. 10.....

ANOTHER STORY

In my role as community coordinator for a CPP project I was charged with connecting with local communities to encourage participation in the arts in areas which I myself have grown up, lived and worked, but this does not mean I can speak for everyone deemed as working class, I don't have some unique insider knowledge, all I have is my own life experiences and the knowledge gained from working with people in these areas.

As a child I did not go to the theatre, museums or exhibitions and nor was I encouraged to beyond the occasional school trip. We did not have a car so we did not go anywhere that we couldn't reach by walking. Both my parents did not really socialise other than with family and I did not take part in any after school clubs or activities. Consequently, my life was centred on family, school, the TV, playing out with friends and taking long walks in the countryside, picking blackberries, conkers and fishing for tadpoles. Anything beyond that really was not on our radar. However, for some reason for as long as I can remember, as most children are, I was intensely creative. I don't remember ever being encouraged to do this but as long as I didn't make a mess I wasn't discouraged either. This led to me pursuing an education in the arts.

But from the moment I left the comfort of Bolton Poly I have constantly felt uncomfortable working in the arts. Whilst working at an art gallery I noticed it was the same culturally educated few accessing the exhibitions, I also remember having an exhibition at a gallery in Stroud and my mum just could not muster the courage to walk through the door. That

door represented the entrance to a privileged world that she felt was not hers, a place she had no right to be in. I ended up actively rejecting a creative career.

When I stepped back in to the arts, working on a CPP programme on my own turf it felt like the perfect opportunity to really explore this awkward clash of cultures head on. What has this experience taught me about privilege? The most powerful thing about privilege is the sense of entitlement and the opportunities that come with it. When we as the culturally elite work in under privileged areas we come with the comfortable knowledge of the arts which allows us to try things new that others just don't have. Can art be a conversation? Of course it can. Can it be all about process? Absolutely. We, the culturally elite, have made those decisions because we are comfortable with boundaries being blurred as we entertain ourselves playing with created histories and paradigms. However, to those outside of the cultural elite these concepts are meaningless and disavow the cultural heritage of an area.

A post industrial landscape is born out of hard work and labour, of a long held history of craftsmanship and manufacturing where people came together with a common purpose of actually making something together. The relationships, the conversations, arguments and personal histories are equally as important as the product itself but in my view one would be always less without the other. It is no surprise to me that so much existing creative practice which goes on inside people's living rooms or in community halls is centred on making and

socialising as a reminder of forgotten skills and workmanship. For me, this is where art, industry and privilege align. What we are in now is a weird space where a manufacturing industry is being replaced by a creative one which suffers from the same perils of a top down patriarchal capitalist system which keeps the “have nots” occupied whilst giving them just enough freedom to feel empowered.

As I consider all of the projects I have worked on I think the most successful ones have been those where artists are firstly able to acknowledge the perceived notion of privilege they come from whilst not being apologetic for it. Our notion of being privileged is dependent on others accepting that they want a bit of the privilege that you have and this is so often not the case. “Hard to reach” “under privileged” “deprived” communities are such familiar buzz words in places I have lived and worked but I question how many people in these areas actually consider themselves to be any of these terms. Life is rich with cultural activity it just may not be the one prescribed as healthy or correct.

What is it that is so special about the arts that we need to pedal it to the masses? For me, it goes back to my childhood self, the individual who is led by innate curiosity, to discover the world and create new ones to connect with the world and for one moment believe that anything is possible. It is inextricably linked to our position as human beings linked to the earth and all its natural entities and to each other. It is not a privilege to be creative nor is it a right it is an absolute necessity within us all that transcends politics, power and privilege. For me the most interesting projects are those which hold this dear: allowing for people to

discover, create and learn and to take risks. It fosters openness, confidence and opportunity which allows people to thoroughly access the privilege of being able to experience a whole diverse range of thoughts, lifestyles, political viewpoints and ways of being and accept difference. The choice is then with them to open or close any particular door rather than it being done for them.

Ruth Shorrocks

*Community Coordinator
Super Slow Way*

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