



Learning Lab: Collaborative Arts, Diversity and Social Justice

July 30th 2020



create national development
agency for collaborative arts

COUNTERPOINTS.



Create and Counterpoints Arts

Learning Lab on Collaborative Arts, Diversity and Social Justice

The creative case for diversity is an attempt to re-unite two conversations that have been in danger of becoming separated. Instead of having a conversation about diversity on one side of the room and a conversation about how we make profound, or great, or excellent art, on the other side of the room, let's have one conversation about art and how we make it with the true value of diversity and equality at the heart of it.

Hassan Mahamdallie, The Creative Case for Diversity

If we have now arrived at acknowledging the genealogy of violence and injustice in our institutions, public spaces, and personal lives, then the hard work of the days and months to come is to unlearn the practices and behaviors that have emerged from this condition, and seek to build anew along antiracist and decolonized lines.

**Yesomi Umolu, Artistic Director of
2019 Chicago Biennial**

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In June 2020, **Create**, the national development agency for collaborative arts, and **Counterpoints Arts**, a UK-based arts agency dedicated to Art, Migration and Social Change, held a Learning Lab on **Collaborative Arts, Diversity and Social Justice**, which brought together artists, activists, policymakers and racial justice/ human rights advocates and activists, to think about how we might put the principles around 'equality, diversity and human rights' into practice in Ireland. The Learning Lab coincided with the European Union marking the 20th anniversary of the Race and Equality Directive (June 29th) and was framed in the context of the Irish Arts Council's Equality Human Rights and Diversity Policy and Strategy (2019).

The thematic of the Learning Lab was considered in the context of the stark inequalities which COVID-19 lays bare in contemporary society – across health, housing, work and racial justice. Living through what is increasingly a dramatic conjuncture, marked by both the global pandemic and the witnessing of the forces of racialised violence in the US and elsewhere, it is clear that many of these inequalities and structural injustices are not 'new' but have deeper histories shaped by comparative systems of oppression. They are historically, geographically and structurally connected.

This Learning Lab opened an opportunity for collective/ concrete 'futures-thinking', to help us to imagine how policies of equality, diversity and human rights (values inscribed into many Arts Council's policies) might be practically implemented through new models of cooperative and participatory arts commissioning/ programming; newly formed cross-sector infrastructures; and new ways of sharing and redistributing resources and more equitable ways of working.



Land Walks: A meeting on Inchydoney Beach, 2019. Photo: William Bock

Land Walks is a collaborative sound and visual art project by artist William Bock and residents of West Cork, that maps experiences of belonging and uprooting in the West Cork landscape through walking, storytelling and collaborative field recording. Land Walks was funded by an Arts Council Ireland Artist in the Community Scheme Project Realisation Award, managed by Create.

For Create, the opportunity to engage in a broader discourse around collaborative art and diversity was a natural and necessary extension of our ongoing work in this area, primarily through the Artist in the Community Scheme. It was also an opportunity to build on the practice-based pedagogy and analysis of the annual Artist in the Community Scheme Summer School on Collaborative Arts and Cultural Diversity, which we devise and deliver with Counterpoints Arts.

The Counterpoints Arts' Learning Labs, designed to facilitate cross-sector, cross-community activities and critical reflection where no one participant can claim hierarchy of thought or skill, resonate strongly for Create. We have experienced the Learning Lab as a democratic space where transdisciplinary expertise and cross- sectoral experience is shared and tested. This is particularly valuable in the context of Create's strategic aim to be a resource and forum for generating cross-sectoral knowledge about collaborative arts practice and to broaden definitions and understandings of cultural diversity.

For Counterpoints Arts, conversations about art, migration, equality and the right to have rights are best navigated with people who straddle comparative locations and identities – where both learning and unlearning is performed through a crossing of personal, organisational, practice-based and geographical borders. The delivery of this event with Create involved deep listening and reciprocal exchange, echoing the ethos and intersectional pedagogy of the Learning Lab, enabling both organisations and hopefully participants to cast a collective inquiry about cultural rights and what we might mean by democratic 'participation' in the arts.

Bronwyn Lace welcoming Season 1 participants to The Centre for the Less Good Idea, 2017. Photo: Stella Olivier

Founded by William Kentridge, The Centre for the Less Good Idea aims to find the less good idea by creating and supporting experimental, collaborative and cross-disciplinary arts projects. It is a physical and immaterial space to pursue incidental discoveries made in the process of producing work.

Cross-border conversations play an integral part of the Counterpoints Arts' ongoing mission as a learning organisation, facilitating horizontal spaces in which to share both the many challenges and successes of respective work and projects. The richness of this Learning Lab dialogue can therefore be read in the sheer breadth of the case studies presented. These captured a range of grassroots interventions alongside perspectives honed from flagship art institutions; illustrations of experimental initiatives stretching collaborative process and practice; and the challenging of art and social justice policy via unique provocations made by individuals on the day.



The Learning Lab on Collaborative Arts, Diversity and Social Justice thus took the form of a 'think and do' incubator, allowing individuals and groups to work together to imagine more joined-up 'thinking and doing' across the arts, culture, policy and social justice sectors. It opened via a series of short provocations, responding to some of the following questions:

How can we begin the process of decolonisation in order to make civic spaces and ways of working more equitable and just? How can the arts and culture sector decolonise from within? Who will be part of this cross-sector conversation and what might decolonisation look like in practice?

The provocations were followed by a conversation with Hassan Mahamdallie, creative writer and dramaturge and one of the primary thinkers and authors behind the 'Creative Case for Diversity' (ACE, 2011), and Nike Jonah, Creative Producer, Pop Culture and Social Change at Counterpoints Arts.

The comparative nature of this discussion was intentional, with the aim of initiating a conversation between actors located in different geographies, institutions and practices, many of whom are shaped by and are responding to different 'genealo[gies] of violence and injustice' (Yesomi Umolu).

We are pleased to present this document as a record of this discussion and hope it prompts further reflection and debate.

**Dr. Ailbhe Murphy, Create, and
Dr. Áine O'Brien, Counterpoints Arts**

Schedule

Learning Lab: Collaborative Arts, Diversity and Social Justice

12:00–12:30pm

2:00–2:15pm

Welcome and Context Setting

Ailbhe Murphy, Director, Create

Áine O'Brien, Curator of Research and Learning, Counterpoints Arts

2:15–2:35pm

First Provocations

Magdalena Moreno Mujica, Executive Director, International Federation of Arts Councils and Cultural Agencies (IFACCA), Sydney

Evgeny Shtorn, Artist in the Community Scheme Cultural Diversity Researcher, Create
Osei Bonsu, Curator of International Art, Tate Modern London

Oein DeBhairdúin, Writer and Traveller Activist

2:35–3:05pm

Presentations

Hassan Mahamdallie, Playwright, Writer and Specialist in Diversity and the Arts

Nike Jonah, Creative Producer, Pop Culture and Social Change, Counterpoints Arts and Director, Pan-African Creative Exchange (PACE)

3:05–3:20pm

Second Provocations

Khaled Barakeh, Berlin-Based Artist, Cultural Activist and Founder of Coculture

Bronwyn Lace, Visual Artist and Director of the Centre for the Less Good Idea, Johannesburg

Jijo Sebastian, Filmmaker

3:20–3:25pm

Break

3:25–4:00pm

Breakout Sessions

Moderators

Dominik Czechowski, Curator and Researcher

Miguel Amado, Director, Sirius Arts Centre, Cork

Teresa Buczkowska, Integration Manager, Immigrant Council of Ireland

Evgeny Shtorn, Artist in the Community Scheme Cultural Diversity Researcher, Create

4:00–4:20pm

Post-Breakout Sessions

4:20–4:30pm

Wrap-Up

Welcome and Context Setting

Ailbhe

A very warm welcome from Create and Counterpoints Arts to this afternoon's Learning Lab on Collaborative Arts, Diversity and Social Justice. My name is Ailbhe Murphy and I'm Director at Create, the national development agency for collaborative arts. This question of the intersection of collaborative arts, diversity and social justice has always been at the forefront of our work but has come particularly into focus through the cultural diversity strand of the Artist in the Community Scheme, a devolved scheme of the Arts Council which Create manages. It's through this strand of our programme that we've come to work with Counterpoints Arts on a number of initiatives over the last two to three years. Clearly the current pandemic is making visible already existing inequalities and fault-lines and bringing into stark relief pressing questions of racial justice, so we are delighted to co-host today's Learning Lab with Counterpoints Arts, an organisation working at the intersection of arts migration and socio-cultural change. Áine O'Brien, Curator of Research and Learning at Counterpoints Arts, will tell you a little bit about the principles of the Learning Lab and start us off.

Áine

This is a very important moment for many of us for a range of reasons. It's a critical moment and it's a critical juncture, and we've brought together a range of people – from policy, from practice, from

Provocations: Challenges, Strategies, Fragile Ecosystems and Intersections

activism, and artists who are running their own organisations – because the Learning Lab is about, ironically, unlearning. It's about stepping out of the spaces that we're in every day and carving out some space to reflect on what we do with others. The first half of the Learning Lab is about listening, and we've gathered a series of provocateurs. The aim of the provocations is to throw out some ideas to challenge our thinking. They're short. They're informal. They're not meant to be definitive. And the Learning Lab as a whole is not meant to solve major problems because how could we do that in one session? This is, therefore, the beginning of a conversation.

Áine

Our first provocateur is Magdalena Moreno Mujica, Director of the International Federation for Arts Councils and Cultural Agencies. We've asked all of the provocateurs a series of questions and they can land on any of them that they choose. Some of the questions we asked Magdalena were 'What are you seeing across the global network?' 'Who's doing what?' 'Where are the innovators?' 'Who's challenging some of the conventions?' And just one proviso: we're really looking at that space between policy and practice because it's one thing to carve out a policy but it's a whole other thing to implement the practice on the ground.

Magdalena

Thank you very much. I'd like to acknowledge that I'm on Gadigal land, the land of the Eora Nation, one of the many hundreds of First Nations in Australia, and I'd like to pay my respects to their elders, past, present and emerging. I am from Chile originally and I have been living on and off in Chile and Australia for many years. I find myself in Sydney now but generally working globally. I have the honour of leading a federation of arts councils and cultural agencies, which is about 50% ministries and 50% arts councils, from sixty-three countries, and in Ireland it includes the Arts Council of Ireland.

So, first, the challenges and opportunities. Well, COVID-19 has certainly created a major disruption in the arts and cultural sector. If we use UNESCO's cultural value chain, the importance of going from creation to presentation to distribution to participation, and imagine that every part of this chain needs to be supported, the disruption that COVID-19 has created has cut through all of these areas, and what one could call participation in cultural life has been deeply affected. One of the things that has really been brought to the surface is the uneven distribution of power, and this isn't only in the arts and cultural sector. We can look at how social contracts are really broken – we can look at Black Lives Matter, the constitutional referendum in my country, Chile, in October, the massive social inequities of the social movement, the Me Too campaign. There are major societal reactions and frustrations where communities and groups are saying enough is enough.

These issues that were already present have surfaced even more during the pandemic. And it is very much about who the decision-makers are and how that distribution or lack of power is actually manifesting itself. Going to the creative and cultural sectors in this disruption (being one of the first sectors to close), as we started to witness countries around the world presenting stimulus packages and looking at emergency measures, what started to emerge quite strongly back in March and into April was that the informality of the sector made it really vulnerable and precarious in terms of how it could respond. There were countries where, even if there were stimulus packages or support methods or response mechanisms, when you looked at the taxation list in terms of how you were defined as a cultural worker, those categories didn't even exist. So, there's a level of invisibility in terms of the general workforce that is becoming evident.



Summer School on Cultural Diversity and Collaborative Practice, July 2018. Photo: Aoife Herrity.

The Artist in the Community Scheme Summer School on Cultural Diversity and Collaborative Practice is an annual peer to peer learning platform for artists devised and hosted by Create in partnership with Counterpoints Arts.

In terms of great examples, anything that is cross-sectional – I know in Ireland a special advisory group is being set up – anything that is transgressing or going beyond the typical structures is something worth looking at. I can think of some activities in Singapore in terms of working across digital platforms. I can think of Namibia supporting artists going into different creative employments, pushing boundaries. I can think of Uruguay working with the parliament to set up cultural content on Spotify for Uruguayan artists. I can think of Spain in film, creating online platforms that are also respecting the analogue space. There are surveys being developed. The list is quite long in terms of new ways of looking at this current situation.

In terms of equality and human rights and learning and unlearning, I'd give the example of Canada, which has realised that some existing structures are actually generating barriers in terms of reaching arts and cultural communities, arts and cultural audiences. They are using the pandemic situation and its impact as an opportunity to unlearn and rethink the way they move forward. One of the really big, important steps that they announced was that the chair of the Canada Council for the Arts is Jesse Wente, the first First Nations chair the country has had, in spite of the reconciliation strategy.

Some of the policies that are really interesting are still in early stages, but looking at participatory governance over culture means civil society engagement, different stakeholders, going to different ministries. I work in the policy area, so I'm thinking that this area needs to be in dialogue with those decision-makers. The decision-makers need to open the doors. We need to look at a space where we're not talking from the deficit model, but the diversity is actually going to strengthen and ensure that we have a much more cohesive and equity-based approach so the inequities of the past are not repeated. As awful as the situation we are living through is, I see it as a really important time to do things differently.

Ailbhe

Thank you very much, Magdalena. Evgeny Shtorn is our next provocateur. He is a writer and an activist and currently works with Create as the Artist in the Community Scheme Cultural Diversity Researcher.

Evgeny

Thank you. Today I basically invite you to reflect on the twin brothers or sisters which are human rights and equality – and in a sense, they are essentially the same, but there are some differences. I probably won't be able to identify all the differences between them but the first is that human rights is a codifiable thing. Human rights are a code, they are procedural, they have an institutional basis behind them, a huge infrastructure around them, while equality is something that is much less tangible. It is so subtle, it is so non-prescriptive, it's an inherently ethical category. And in a sense we cannot express it, so we cannot really create a list of demands because it is impossible to demand something which is based on the emotional, on non-tangible things. And in this sense we would say that equality is looking at the more subtle forms of discrimination, as it operates on an emotional level – say, misrecognition rather than discrimination, or disrespect rather than humiliation, or inclusion rather than tolerance.

In the research Create conducted last year we found that people were giving some practical advice and they were very generous in describing the model of respecting their right to enjoy their art, which is the convention, but at the same time they had this demand to be heard, to be listened to, to be respected, which is very hard to achieve with the tools we have. I don't think building a space for co-working or appointing someone to a certain role will resolve the problem of inequality, and they don't think so either, so we are all the time negotiating in this process of being equal to each other. There is an understanding that it's an ongoing process – it will never end. We will never achieve equality but it doesn't mean that we don't have to go there or fight for it or cling to it. We see it now, for example, through engaging in the re-evaluation of our historical past, our collective memory, our monuments in our streets and squares, classical novels and our curricula in colleges.

It's all about this process of being equal to each other, of not being someone who is appointed there because he is unequal so let's make him or her equal and then we will resolve the problem. This is why a 'tick-the-box' strategy is, by default, erroneous.

My own research has been informed by three major theoretical concepts: anti-essentialism, fluidity and voice. Anti-essentialism is the idea that a person or a group is not supposed to have a specific set of traits, beliefs or expressions necessary for their identity or identification. Fluidity suggests that identity is not set in stone but changes according to historical, social, political and cultural circumstances. Voice is a methodological foundation of a study when people's accounts are given priority over researchers' own thoughts. These three theoretical frames are so important for anyone who is writing policy, and it's a huge task

to implement them into the policy documents, but without them we will never achieve anything.

Áine

Thanks, Evgeny. Our next provocateur is Osei Bonsu, Curator of International Art at the Tate Modern in London.

Osei

Thank you. So, over the past few months, museums around the world have experienced somewhat of an identity crisis as many organisations faced a monumental challenge of reopening their doors to new and uncertain realities. The museums among them form part of a fragile ecosystem, one that is heavily dependent on tourism, blockbuster exhibitions and decreasing supplies of public funds. However, the most challenging hurdle many museums will have faced during this global pandemic has less to do with social distancing and more to do with how they connect to a society calling for an end to racial inequality.

Following the killing of George Floyd in police custody, the rising tide of international protest has inspired a long overdue discussion about racism and how it structures the world we live in. What becomes clear is the cultural institutions, often held as the exemplars of liberal politics, had a choice to make: to align with the Black Lives Matter movement or to perpetuate a system of cultural inaction that has brought society to its breaking point. The question of race has plagued museums since their birth in the nineteenth century when they were founded on a colonial desire to collect and preserve objects from around the world. During this time, the exploitation and mistreatment of people of colour under colonialism allowed for the unproblematic flow of cultural artefacts into western museums in the name of scientific knowledge. Today, museums of art are an integral part of civil society, spaces where creative expression is celebrated by diverse communities. For many, these museums form the basis of our

understanding of art history and, by extension, whose images, bodies and stories matter. It is for this reason that museums must consider how their actions or inactions contribute towards systemic racism.

The fact that museums are more inclusive than they ever have been does not excuse their history of violence. The fact that art is understood by many as a form of escape from politics does not mean that museums cannot be real champions for social change. In times of crisis, what roles might museums play as spaces for knowledge production, community building? Can art be simply understood as more than a reflection of the society we live in? The answers to these questions are not straightforward. They cannot be resolved by inclusion policy strategies, public engagement strategies or even by increasing the number of black and ethnic minority artists on museum programmes. Instead of superficially aligning with social justice causes, museums should start interrogating their histories and their relationships to the recent and historical past. Instead of celebrating black and ethnic minority achievement for its own sake, they should become catalysts for public dialogue around issues of racism and representation in society. We must remember that museums are spaces where the dead, even if only momentarily, can be brought back to life. In times of crisis, museums must think of themselves as part of a dialogue in which the voices of our collective ancestors are rendered audible. Thank you.

Ailbhe

Thank you Osei. Oein DeBhairdúin, a writer and Traveller activist, will be the fourth provocateur in this first section.

Oein

The context in which I'm engaging is on a more personal level around my own expectations and experiences and understandings of navigating art spaces and infrastructures. And a lot of it goes



A Stitch in Time – East London Textile Arts, Who Are We? Tate Exchange – Counterpoints Arts Production 2018. Photo: Marcia Chandra.

down to one thing: relationships. Because when we talk about relationships we also talk about power and openness and those kind of resources, and in the context in which I have engaged, there is a sense of discrimination in place that can often be denied.

There's assumptions made that I only want to talk about Traveller-specific topics. Now, that is where I have my passion, which is fine, but there are assumptions in place there. Resources are sometimes assumed to be there when they aren't and there can be personal and communal barriers to having contacts within those structures. Tone management is very much alive – the idea that people want to hear from you as long as you're not challenging them – and then there's also that sense of directness around honesty. I'll give two quick examples to show that even when positive attempts are made, they can actually be quite damaging. One would have been two years ago. I happened to chair a discussion around the arts and creativity – I believe that Rosaleen McDonagh was there – and the idea of creating relationships with our museums and our sense of visibility within them. One of the main points, which was so unusual to me, was they brought in a sculpture from a settled artist into a Traveller space – it was Jerome Connor's *The Siren* – that wasn't actually directly identified as a Traveller subject. That was an attempt, and it was made in an honest way, to set up those relationships. But I thought the resources could have gone directly to artists within the community rather than saying, 'Here is a settled person's view of your community', rather than, do you know what, we actually have our own artists – why don't we cultivate that?

The second example is quite controversial and I think it's really interesting. About two years ago, the Irish Film Board awarded a €620,000 cultural grant towards promotion of Traveller culture to a film director and writer who was settled, who

was the self-context, and the overall framing was settled people telling a Traveller story and this was done within the idea of promoting Traveller culture. Today I checked the IMDB listing of people involved – not just the actors but the lights, everything. I only identified one Traveller among that list. So I think we need to have the honest conversation about where resources are going and are they actually benefiting the community and our intersectionality, or are they just portraying the sense that we're woke and we're aware and inclusive but sometimes it does not hit the ground.

But this is not a new conversation to me. It's a conversation I've had many times before, and I think we're always having this conversation, but what strikes me more is that I know there have been actions but I can't identify what those actions are and what the outcomes are and how we measure them. Rather than saying these are all the ideas that we have, we should look at what we've done in the past, how meaningful that has been and incorporate that into any way going forward, because if we don't do that we'll continue coming around this table and just filling it with words and space rather than actually ensuring that our arts and our connections are living, breathing, realistic ones that connect people rather than feign a sense of connection. Thanks very much.



**Afghan Camera Box (kamra-e-faoree'),
Farhad Berahman, Who Are We? Tate
Exchange – Counterpoints Arts Production,
2018. Photo: Marcia Chandra**

Berahman's site-specific project was installed across communities of place and interest. The 'kamra-e-faoree' is still used as a traditional method of capturing memories by veteran street photographers in Afghanistan and Iran, where the hand-made wooden camera acts as both the camera and darkroom. For Berahman, the slow process of taking a photograph enables the capture and printing of photographs – creating a space for conversations with participants about belonging and un-belonging.

PRESENTATIONS

History of the Creative Case – Where are We Now?

Áine

I want to introduce Hassan Mahamdallie and Nike Jonah. Hassan is a dramaturge, a writer and a researcher but he was also one of the key authors of a piece of policy in 2011 called the Creative Case. Nike is the creative producer of a project called Pop Culture and Social Change at Counterpoints Arts. She's also the director of the Pan-African Creative Exchange PACE. Hassan will talk first about the Creative Case and then Nike will follow on with concrete case studies and anecdotes about how the ecosystem might shift and change and be radically challenged and disrupted.

Hassan, you had this phrase: 'we're going to park our equality tanks on your art lawn' in relation to the intervention made by the Creative Case for Diversity, which has always been very resonant for me. Can you walk people through the Creative Case, how it came about, what the political implications were, how you drove it through strategically and has it changed anything?

Hassan

For those not familiar, Arts Council England launched a conversation in 2011 which was really a polemic and an argument about the nature of art, how it is made, how it is innovated, retelling the history of art away from notions of a western canon and, therefore, trying to put the people who structurally are marginalised by the arts

establishment into the centre of the debate. It arose for a lot of reasons, mainly political. And I think the whole question of arts policy at the end of the day is about politics and power. In a sense, that change within the arts should be strictly linked to change within society as a whole.

One of the impetuses for the Creative Case in England was the murder of a young black man called Stephen Lawrence back in 1993, whose murder by racists was then covered up by local police who were corrupt and structurally racist in and of themselves, and it became a kind of a reckoning in British society. The Stephen Lawrence case symbolised everything that was wrong about British society – the Black Lives Matter movement has thrown up the same questions but in a different context now – and forced change on government policy and then on the policy of those who were given government money to do the things that governments ask organisations to do, including the Arts Council, which distributes money on behalf of the taxpayer via the Treasury or National Lottery. It said we need some real change, and the Arts Council, at the time a bureaucracy, like many other bureaucracies, inherently resistant to change, brought in a little group of us, who were basically political radicals – cultural guerrillas, whatever you want to call it, angry people – to devise policies which the Arts Council itself could not devise because it didn't have the imagination or the political reach... So it brought that in from the outside, and they kind of let us loose inside the Arts Council for a number of years. The culmination of that was the Creative Case, which in one sense said everything about the arts is upside down. People at the margins should be at the centre and power should shift away from the centre towards the margins – whatever way you want to spatially argue it.

Shortly after we launched it, the current diversity unit of the Arts Council was shut down so it was

kind of unfulfilled. It became a policy but the policy, as far as I'm concerned, between 2011 and now, has really driven to a full stop in the sand. I think the argument was right, and we said we were going to win the argument and we did, but we didn't win the shift of power. Power has remained in the hands of a very small elite in the creative class, which is ever more not just middle class but upper middle class and very, very well paid. I've done some analysis on behalf of the Arts Council recently and the conclusion I came to is a lot of the powerful funded organisations had, faced with the Creative Case and diversity, acknowledged that it was right – and I think there has been a shift in language around the arts in this country and maybe other places as well. They said, 'Yes, you are absolutely right,' but when it came down to measuring their policies a big number of very, very powerful arts institutions funded by the Arts Council basically went on strike – they basically said, 'Yes, you are right but we're going to do the minimum.' They said, 'We are not going to implement this policy' because, rightly, they saw it as a fundamental threat to their position of power and authority within the arts. I think this is an essentially undemocratic stance to take, and now, emerging out of COVID, what has become clear is those same organisations have kind of won the argument as to where the funds should go now.

At the beginning of COVID, apart from the shock of everything closing down, there was the beginning of a debate that, when we come out of it, maybe there's a chance to do a reset, and different policies and possibilities and more interesting art or un-artistic infrastructure can come out of it. What's clear is there has been a retrenchment. The government was applauded by many people in the arts for the rescue package it set out in early July 2020. Now that the fine detail has come out, it's clear that the big organisations will get all the money: they have been released from any obligations to do anything structurally around

diversity, equality or human rights – all those issues that I've been talking about – and they have accrued more power and resources to themselves. Seventy per cent of the arts workforce in the UK is freelance. It's being turned into basically a reserve army of labour – in other words, we'll sit around waiting for big arts organisations to pick us up, and, fundamentally, that is the end of the Creative Case, I think, in Britain as policy. I think a new fight will have to take place to try and realise those possibilities we talked about at the beginning of COVID.

Áine

Nike, you're very clear about what concrete actions are needed to not only challenge the arts infrastructure but radically change it – and not in any piecemeal way. You had some specific examples in relation to the notion of public discourse specifically around direct criticism, the issue of promoting diverse curators and practitioners into leadership positions, and also backing people when they're in those positions so they are not left vulnerable in terms of public debate, and also the power and history of archives, the importance of multiple and plural histories.

Nike

I worked alongside Hassan for a number of years at the Arts Council. I was on the delivery side of the policy team, so a lot of what I did was taking ideas that were being shaped both by me and my team and the diversity team and putting them into practice, and I was quite lucky to realise and experiment and shift things while I was within the organisation. Of the key observations made – and of course this is not an exhaustive list – things like art-form data are incredibly dominant in terms of performing arts in the Arts Council, which subsidises this. So if you're a dancer or a musician, often you're a little bit further down – you're not just talking about intersectional events and religion and sexual orientation or gender: you're also looking at form and the way they shape form and what

falls into categories and things, what falls into visual arts, and a lot of marginalised groups don't fit in those boxes. They tend to be more in that interdisciplinary space.

When I was at the Arts Council the interdisciplinary space was underfunded, under-resourced in terms of staffing, didn't really have a heavy role – it is shifting now but I'm not really keeping up with what they're doing (I'm talking about Arts Council England). I think when it comes to the visual arts they're incredibly strong with discourse and conversations about the artists, their histories, which we are not as good at in the performing arts. In the visual arts they are way ahead of what's happening in performing arts. You can go to organisations way back and see they were saying what's being said right now – maybe in a denser fashion – but there's a number of key players in the spaces that have really been pushing this space of deconstruction and decolonisation. What is clear to me is that if we're going to have people like Hassan and a number of critics of colour in these positions of power they need an ecosystem around them that supports them. I sat on the board of the Bush Theatre and I had the pleasure of working with Madani Younis. He was incredibly sharp. The board is half men and half women. I've never been on a board where I wasn't the only person of colour, the minority woman on the board, and a really interesting kind of conversation happens when you've got a board that is diverse, and it is at the heart of everything they did and said. But what was quite powerful with Madani was he had a number of critical friends that he would go to in a very private way – I'm not one of them but I know Hassan was – and he would pick their brains around anything critical that was happening, any problems he was faced with or when he was feeling vulnerable. I think people underestimate that when people are in these positions of power it can be lonely, it can be isolating and you need critics that can support and challenge and create some kind of dialogue in debate.



**Rubble Theatre, Manaf Halbouni, St Enoch Square Glasgow, Refugee Week Scotland, Counterpoints Arts Production, 2019.
Photo: Basharat Khan**

Halbouni's work was commissioned to sit on the square in Glasgow in public view, with the artist and installation engaging in conversations with passersby. Halbouni's cars (which have travelled across several cities in Europe) appear overloaded with personal possessions, resembling mobile living rooms, like 'impossible houses' offering moving tributes and testaments to loss, resilience and hope for displaced communities around the world.

So you need critics of colour, you need archives that support those critics of colour, you need the institutions to open up their canon beyond the western canon and start to unpack beyond this western gaze. You also need to think about things like, if artists are being funded, how you can support them to be able to get to, in terms of production and artistic quality, the levels of a national theatre or some of the big institutions. When I ran the performing arts showcase for nearly nine years for the Arts Council, it kicked off by promoting African, Asian and Caribbean artists, and over and over again you'd see that the work wasn't quite hitting it, and you'd speak to the artist – they were getting one week's rehearsal. I think marginalised artists should have more time in the rehearsal room, they should have more time to develop the work – three months research and development should be extended to six months, eight months, a year – because when you are structurally shut out it takes you a bit longer to cement relationships and find the right people to navigate with, and I think you can address this by supporting them at the back end with things like profile management in the absence of having this amazing network. There was a figure in the Arts Council, something like 80% of your opportunities in the arts come from your networks – 80%.

So what does that mean in terms of people who don't know how to navigate or don't have the contacts or the profile? I think profile management really works – and when I say profile management I mean really good, strategic PR: I had a bit of that at the Arts Council and I saw how it raised my profile, the work I was doing and who I was – but you need to have the right people supporting you. You need an agency behind you the way people in the cultural space do – Kim Kardashian has a whole team behind her doing her PR. I think people in the marginalised space need to have that level of support with public speaking, positioning your



Attendees photographed at the Creative Time Summit Screening, NCAD, 2018.
Photo: Brian Cregan

As an official off-site host, Create, Fire Station Artists' Studios and the National College of Art and Design's MA in Socially Engaged Art and Further Education hosted a live streaming of the Creative Time Summit, an annual presentation of the world's leading socially engaged artists and activists

argument within your sector or even outside of your sector. That starts to grow the confidence of an audience that possibly wouldn't find you because you're not networked in. I feel quite passionately about this because, through the work I'm doing with Counterpoints Arts on Pop Change, I'm starting to test out the ideas and I'm starting to see really interesting and quite powerful results coming out, and since I've understood the Creative Case, I've really tried to think always about who I'm excluding and how I can include them – so it's things like language, where I position things, who I have talked to, trying to create spaces where people who are privileged and those who are trying to get in can find a connecting point.

Hassan

What I like about Nike's work is that she models different ways of working. What she is trying to model is different, more democratic, more transparent, more open, more horizontal rather than vertical ways of working. And that's what I always thought about in performing arts showcases. People were booked – weren't they, Nike? – at the end of it, booked out for tours, and the way that you put it all together really modelled how we should be working rather than how we are working, given that we know that most jobs in the arts are distributed through closed networks of privileged tastemakers and when you go for a job in the arts you're lucky if you get one based on merit, quite frankly.

One thing I want to add is I think we have invested too much, in the west certainly, in buildings, so now we are faced with basically bailing out buildings and we haven't invested enough in companies and individual artists. For me, that's important because as an artist I don't want to have my artistic agenda dictated to me by a building or tastemakers sitting in their citadels, which most working-class people are averse to stepping into anyway. The commercial sector is slightly different. For me it's about freedom and autonomy and this is the one thing that we don't have. I think the creative class is a colonial class in that it wants to colonise even diversity now. Decolonisation as a term has been co-opted by the people who it's supposed to get rid of, in one sense, and been kind of neutralised. But what we need is more autonomy, less buildings and more companies with more people permanently employed.

When I joined the arts in 1994 in theatre, I went into a permanent acting company of seven people. There were two administrators; most of the people in the company were creators or performers or directors or designers or whatever. Now the Arts Council in England has created this massive bureaucracy and the artists, as we have seen, are marginalised in that process.



William Kentridge working with the cast of Jero from The Centre for the Less Good Idea's Season 1, 2017. Photo: Stella Olivier

One of the approaches to exploring an idea is to share openly with other participants through readings or presentations of the research or progress of the idea. Through these sharings the idea is able to develop collectively rather from an individual's perspective.



Seamus Nolan
Traveller Collection at the Hugh Lane

Collection of stainless steel objects made by tinsmith
James Collins.

**Collection of stainless steel objects made by
Tinsmith James Collins, Dublin City Gallery
The Hugh Lane, 2018. Photo: Ros Kavanagh.**

This exhibition was part of TravellerCollection.ie, a joint commission between Create and The Hugh Lane as part of the EU funded Collaborative Arts Partnership Programme 2014-2018. Led by artist Seamus Nolan, and with collaborators including Pavee Point Traveller and Roma Centre, The Galway Traveller Movement and the Cork Traveller Women's network, TravellerCollection.ie investigates the idea of archive, deconstructs ideas on 'heritage' and engages with communities of place and of interest, involving Traveller activists and archivists.

Q&A

Áine

Shall we open it up for questions? Marcia, how are we doing in the chat room?

Marcia

One key question is about profile management and building networks: is there a role for a structured mentorship approach, perhaps via the Arts Council or other funder bodies? Another question is about the interdisciplinary art sector, where it is, what its role is in this conversation.

Nike

With profile management, all of the above: shadowing, giving opportunities, encouraging people to come to events. I went to the Equity summit – my first invitation on an international stage. It was from Magdalena, and she didn't know me. I made so many amazing connections out of that one trip to Australia in 2011. And getting people into the spaces, advocating on their behalf, we can all do that – we can all share information to our wider networks of opportunities and encourage people to apply for things. All that sort of thing is part of it because it's confidence that's missing when you've been shut out over and over again. You have to be encouraged and, you know, hugged a little bit into the right direction.

Rosaleen

I'm from the Travelling community and we have been used and abused for many centuries, but what I'm really worried about today is the lack of intersectionality. I'm not just a Traveller, I'm a

woman with a disability. Nike mentioned theatre – believe me, when you’re involved in theatre and you’re an ethnic minority you’re way down the pecking order for all jobs. In visual arts we’re not there. I would love Hassan to comment on collaboration by the colonialists. They come to us, they use us, and we sometimes, not always, get money, but that’s not enough. And when they use our collaboration as a funding proposal, that seems to be okay, but I know and Oein knows the standard means something very different to a minority artist than to one who is a minority lead artist.

Áine

Thanks Rosaleen. Hassan, can I also pick up on a connection here with what Osei was saying? The buildings now have become part of the legacy and the bailout is also about supporting the institutions, so is this an impasse or is it something that can be worked through by people working differently together? The ecosystem is very complicated, but is it simply that, post-COVID and going forward, these very large flagship organisations are going to suck up all of the funding? I think Osei’s point was how these buildings need to be sites for public conversation. How do you get your head around that?

Hassan

I think that Osei is absolutely right. Museums were founded in the UK in the Victorian age as expressions of imperial and colonial power and they filled themselves with loot and that’s in their DNA. It’s very difficult for an organisation whose whole purpose is rooted in that kind of background to then turn itself into something completely different. The question we should be posing is if we were to found museums again today, what would they look like? I bet they wouldn’t look like the British Museum.

To Rosaleen’s point, I agree 100%. The great thing about Black Lives Matter to me is that it was an expression of solidarity – we have more in common



The launch of We Claim, held at Curved Street, Temple Bar, 2017. Photo: Vance Lau

We Claim, by young migrant women and Kathryn Maguire, was funded by an Arts Council Ireland Artist in the Community Scheme Project Realisation Award (2016), managed by Create.

Osei

than that divides us. That's the great hope of this historical moment. In the UK we had 260 towns and villages where there were Black Lives Matter demonstrations, and in America the notion of young white activists coming on the street around Black Lives Matter is a real, significant break in terms of how divisive race politics and history have been in the USA. So we have this movement going in that direction and then we have a counter kind of trust. For example, when the government was consulting on what the arts and cultural sector should look like post-COVID, lots of disabled groups and black groups went individually to the inquiry saying 'don't forget about us' and thinking that the government would go, 'Oh yeah, don't worry about that.' In fact none of those people have got what they asked for. What I do think, though, is to acknowledge that the disabled arts movement who are lobbying also talked about intersectionality, talked about the fate of black cultural workers, that we were in the same position. It seemed to me more of an expression of solidarity, but you're right: it's the old divide and rule, isn't it? We should call it out for what it is. Sometimes with solidarity, without losing the particular nature of our oppression or our marginalisation, we do have to find what brings us together and work together as an art sector more and more.

I agree with so many of those points, and to your point, Rosaleen, about intersectionality, for a lot of us there has been a specific awakening. I happen to be biracial and I have cousins who never really thought about their own proximity to the structures of racism and are now able to have frank and honest conversations with me about things that they might have done or thought about in the past that weren't consistent with the way in which they see the world today. And I do feel there has been a sense of reckoning on all fronts for me, both professionally and personally, and it's my sense listening to everyone today that that is echoed

throughout our experiences, irrespective of where we stand politically or socio-economically.

In relation to my work at Tate, there are lots of really pertinent questions concerning the proximity between colonialism and structures of knowledge, of which the museum is just one. In relation to the point that Nike was making about how we educate ourselves about issues of inclusion in the arts, my first experience was working for the National Museum of Wales, which was a hugely traditional white organisation that just really didn't see race. I mean, it thought of itself as the same race but there were no black people inside and, for any of you who have been to Wales, Cardiff is quite a diverse city, but if you speak to Wales more broadly you definitely don't get the sense that you're in a multicultural society. I think because of that I was able to think about these issues from the perspective of people who have just never had to confront their own racism, and a lot of that learning from provincial Wales is being applied now because I am dealing largely with colleagues who want to help, who want to be productive, who want to be allies but may not know how.

At one level there is a certain amount of handholding and labour that falls on people of colour which is wrong, in that we really should be questioning contacting a person of colour saying can you help me with such and such a thing if we're not paying them to do that work or take that labour. And then there's another level of my consciousness that thinks if we don't stand up now, those of us who have experiences of racial injustice and who have witnessed it face to face, to educate others and to share that knowledge, what kind of citizens are we? So I'm kind of stuck between those poles at the moment in terms of my own institutional experience.

But I think each sector has its own specific and nuanced histories. But the Tate Modern,

particularly, is a millennial institution, and I often say that if the institution does think of itself as millennial, was founded officially in the year 2000, what does that mean in terms of how it can live up to some broader expectations of what a future museum could look like? And I think we're lucky in a way not to have a collection that was founded on exactly the same colonial principles but it doesn't mean that we haven't inherited similar structures.

Magdalena I just wanted to mention, especially to Hassan, around the Creative Case, don't underestimate the value and the impact it has had internationally because at that time I was the director of what is today Diversity Arts Australia, and what it is doing today is very much thanks to that groundwork. I can't say how Arts Council England are responding, or why or why not, but I can say that it has permeated and, within the Australian context, it has brought the conversation much more into the middle. Because it was very much on the fringes and the fringes used to be the groups of people advocating for their own issues.

But, in the current context, what happened in the US with Black Lives Matter has brought the issues to the centre, so you're looking at the Aboriginal deaths in custody issue in Australia, and you're finally looking at the fact that only 3% of leadership is made up, for culturally and linguistically diverse reasons, of 39% of the population. These things are now at the centre of the discourse and everybody is speaking about them, so that's where I see this shift as so significant. And those of us that have been through the journey – talking about what Nike was saying about networking – take on a responsibility so that the privilege that has been given to us, we shouldn't have to carry forward, in terms of ensuring we're not further reinforcing the very structures that we wanted to break in the beginning. I think these sort of exercises and conversations also go to that very strongly.



Facilitator Mary Ann De Vlieg leads a workshop at the Summer School on Cultural Diversity and Collaborative Practice, July 2019. Photo: Joseph Carr

The Artist in the Community Scheme Summer School on Cultural Diversity and Collaborative Practice is an annual peer to peer learning platform for artists devised and hosted by Create in partnership with Counterpoints Arts.

PROVOCATIONS

New Infrastructures, Valuing Process and Labour

Ailbhe

Khaled Barakeh is a Berlin-based artist, cultural activist and founder of Coculture and we've asked him to reflect on how he's challenging mainstream arts platforms through Coculture, reimagining and rebuilding new spaces.

Khaled

I'm an artist born in Syria and I moved to Europe twelve years ago. About 2015, a big community from Syria – artists and cultural producers – arrived all over the world, and that was when I decided to shift my practice from being politically engaged and criticising institutions to try to take the initiatives to the ground and create a difference and build infrastructures. So I founded a cultural organization called Coculture and a project called Syria Cultural Index, an online platform aimed to map the Syrian cultural scene around the world, connect the participants and provide them with an opportunity.

That, for me, was a form of reorganising ourselves where we are connected outside of the institutional form of restraint, an institution that is very much based on colonisation. And after mapping the Syrian cultural scene, we are organising the first Syrian biennale, a mobile exhibition that will follow the refugee routes taking place, redefining our needs and our presentation from our own perspective.

So the first thing that came to our mind at Coculture was how can we reorganise ourselves and how can we reconnect the community? How can we find and reclaim the opportunities that usually were given to us? So we thought of Coculture as a form of reorganising ourselves where, instead of us waiting for initiatives to be created, we create the institution that takes the initiative. And that's the spirit of Coculture. So we're creating our spaces, we're creating our projects, we're creating our funding structure. We're using the structure that existed in the western world but we try to see it from our own perspective to reflect the needs of our target group. We also created our own ecosystem through our own space in Berlin, which we rent out commercially for our own cultural producers. We tried to shift that concept of mentorship, so if anyone from the community has an idea and they don't know how to do it, they come to us and we provide them with the knowledge and know-how and they can have a bigger influence.

Áine

It's an interesting transition to you, Bronwyn. The pathway of the conversation is moving towards autonomy and freedom, the way that Hassan posed it, but also the setting up of a different type of ecosystem with new platforms and new ways of working. Bronwyn is co-director of the Centre for the Less Good Idea, which is all about collaboration and experimentation, giving support to people who might be on the periphery to comment, and to work together through collaboration.

Bronwyn

I'll tell you the story of a modest space in downtown Johannesburg, South Africa, which is only four years old now. It has started to have an impact on the landscape that is extremely interesting. In early 2016, South Africa's arguably best-known artist, William Kentridge, who spans and crosses many of the disciplines within the arts, came to a realisation that he was in the position not only to begin a

foundation of sorts but also to create a space that could respond to the needs of artists practising in Johannesburg. He had, eight years before, set up his studio in a part of downtown Johannesburg that, at that point, was dangerous and derelict. And that action in 2008 had catalysed, unwittingly to William, a kind of cultural precinct which was very much a privatised project but that brought galleries and artists and bookshops and restaurants into an area that was, up until that point, not really functioning.

William approached me because I was an artist living on the edge of this area, until it became that area, and I was deeply embedded in communities and groups of artists working across the disciplines, so he asked me to work alongside him in building the centre. And just to go to Hassan and Nike's point, we began to envision the space in our conversations – it was a couple of months of talking about the space and visiting different buildings and old factories across downtown Johannesburg trying to find the space. And it was in this time, when we were walking through buildings that could possibly become the centre of this foundation, that William shared with me a proverb that he had recently read, a Setswana proverb that when you translate it into English has this kind of lovely cumbersome awkwardness: 'if the good doctor can't cure you, find the less good doctor'.

And it was such a gorgeous description of what we understand as artists in our processes. That great, grand idea that wakes you up at three o'clock in the morning, that gets you into a space of making and, once you attempt to manifest it into the world, cracks and fissures emerge and with that collapse comes an emergence, a peripheral emergence that is both the description of what happens in the artistic process and a description of the art world. And it was from that point that we took our cue. We were going to be the centre for the less good idea,



A moment during the performance of Her City, a performance installation from The Centre for the Less Good Idea's Season 6, 2019. Photo: Zivanai Matangi

we were going to focus on the impulse of the artist and we were going to build an institute in the same way you build an artwork: through trial and error and through slow, incremental processes, assuming that we didn't have the grand idea, that we would only know the less good idea once we were in dialogue with people on the periphery.

Áine Thank you, Bronwyn.

Ailbhe Jijo Sebastian is a filmmaker, and we've asked him to reflect a little bit on the balance of time and labour in sustaining and developing practice both in terms of film work and other work.

Jijo This is a personal reflection on my lived experience. I'm an immigrant filmmaker from India. I have lived in Ireland for the past 14 years. I belong to a diasporic community, an Indian community from the state of Kerala. I would describe myself in the context of this discussion as an artist with three parallel social lives in an almost cleanly divided space. The first one is my community life as part of the Kerala community and my family life with my wife and kids. This space gives me the insider's perspective of diasporic life. It is very nice socially to be an artist and filmmaker especially interested in the themes and the longing to have that insider's perspective. My comfort zone is largely where my body lives; my mind lives elsewhere but my body is very comfortable in this space.

The second space is my full-time work. I work as a healthcare worker in a hospital here. It is full-time work and this space helps me build cultural capital, develop an outsider's perspective on the community and myself. Every interaction in this space is like a learning experience – it's almost like being a cultural anthropologist. There is enough trust in this space to keep me very vigilant and this space defines my lived experience as an immigrant.

There's a third space and this is my academic, artistic, liberal circles. I am in that space now. This space is largely an intellectual playground for the brain, a space for theories, discussions or learning. The other two spaces act as testing grounds for concepts I learn here. I share what I learn from the other two spaces here. My problem is I spend only about 5% of my life in this space. I want to increase my percentage. I want to take time off my work in the healthcare industry, and how can I do that? I also want to stress that all these spheres have been very complementary in building my personal reality.

So to my questions. Would exposure to the world outside artistic, academic, liberal circles be helpful for an immigrant, especially an immigrant artist from the global south, to acquire necessary cultural capital? My next question is how can I free up some time from my day job? Is a concept like universal basic income for artists a plausible idea?

Ailbhe

Thank you, Jijo. When we come back we're going into the breakout sessions, an opportunity to get further into the conversation. Each one of the four groups will be moderated by a facilitator who will take you through the next phase of the discussion.



**Film maker Jijo Sebastian photographed at the Summer School on Cultural Diversity and Collaborative Practice, July 2019.
Photo: Joseph Carr**

The Summer School on Cultural Diversity and Collaborative Practice is offered as a partnership between Create and Counterpoints Arts, and is part of the Arts Council's Artist in the Community Scheme, managed by Create.

Breakout Sessions

Following the provocations and presentations, attendees were broken into four breakout groups, each with a facilitator, and asked to consider areas for structural change, such as:

- new models of cooperative and participatory arts commissioning/programming;
- newly formed cross-sector infrastructures;
- new ways of sharing and redistributing resources and more equitable ways of working.

Breakout Group 1

Moderator: Teresa Buczkowska, Integration Manager, Immigrant Council of Ireland (ICI)

Lisa Crowne, Artist, Managing Director and Curator, A4 Sounds

Hina Khan, Visual Artist

Felicia Olusonya, Nigerian-Irish Poet, Performer, Playwright

Khaled Barakeh, Berlin-Based Syrian Artist and Cultural Activist and Founder of Coculture

Rosaleen McDonagh, Playwright and Board Member, Pavee Point

Bee Sparks, Artistic Project Manager, Dublin Fringe Festival

Nike Jonah, Creative Producer, Pop Culture and Social Change at Counterpoints Arts

Carolann Courtney, Creative Places Tuam Coordinator, Create

Introductions

Khaled

I'm a conceptual artist – mainly my work is focused on social injustice, and I get engaged a lot on the track of communities and society where I try to reflect and bring different aspects to the room. After many shifts in my life, geographical shifts and identity shifts, I ended up at Coculture, a non-profit organisation working at the intersection between art activism and building community. I teach at the Art Academy in Berlin as well.

Rosaleen

I'm from an indigenous community in Ireland – the Irish Traveller community and Roma – but for my day job, I'm a playwright. I've also recently been appointed commissioner with the Human Rights and Equality Commission.

Bee

I'm artistic project manager at Dublin Fringe Festival, so I work on producing and programming for our festival as well as running our studios. We do a lot of artist support work through Dublin Fringe as well, through workshops and residencies and that kind of thing. So managing the programming and the year-round work.

Nike

I'm a creative producer with a number of different hats on, but I work at Counterpoints and I also run a showcase platform in South Africa called the Pan-African Creative Exchange. I'm also a visiting research fellow at Central School of Speech and Drama where I look at the creative case for diversity and how it can be presented and played out in an academic setting.

Lisa

I'm a social art practitioner at A4 Sounds in Dublin, Ireland. We run programmes and residencies and exhibitions, and we work within the arts and activism and social change.

Teresa

My role today is to facilitate this conversation. Our task is to discuss three guiding questions around new models of cooperative and participatory art



Nhlanhla Mahlangu during the making of Empty Note which was part of The Invisible Exhibition in The Centre for the Less Good Idea's Season 5, 2019. Photo: Stella Olivier

commissioning and programming, an eco-sector or structure that might be useful, and ways of sharing and redistributing resources that are more just and equitable. But any other ideas and questions would be most welcome because we can go in any direction.

So, the first one: models of cooperative and participatory art programming and conditions. Do you know about anybody with practices in this area, or is there anything you would like to share or any questions? For those who are working in this area as programmers and on commissioning, what would you like to see and what challenges you can see?

Carolann For us, it's having artist representation, so artists are in the room making decisions and the art forms and projects that they want to see funded are given support and in that room. But if you are an artist on the selection panel, you are also an artist who cannot apply for the funding and there's that circular issue – it's a very rigid structure. So how do we move out of that cycle?

Rosaleen I'd love to hear more about Nike's model.

Nike Thank you. When I was working at the Arts Council, I was asked to look at just race, and then, because the Creative Case was being developed at the same time, they said you've got to come away from the silo around identity and look at more intersections. Our focus and our priority became stability because one thing we recognise is if you're at the intersection – if you're a woman, there's an issue. If you're black and disabled and a woman there's an issue, if you're a black lesbian ... and also access to phones is not guaranteed. This is an example of the intersectionality of barriers to access. These barriers need to be understood.

So we made it a priority – we asked all the arts council regions to suggest artists that could

come along to the next showcase so that people would be prepared and feel included. As a black person who has often been included in check-box exercises, I recognise that if you don't put in the money and the resources to make people feel like this is important, they're going to just feel like an add-on. I invited about 15 artists with disabilities to come and be part of the showcase in the hopes that the following year they would be confident and have a network to be able to apply for funding and that's exactly what happened. And in 2011 it was very diverse.

Rosaleen Nike, earlier, in the other room, you said sometimes your art, your artists, weren't up to standard?

Carolann Is it that the artist needs more time and incubation and research and development?

Rosaleen Yes. What I wanted to ask Nike was, was there a tendency for minority artists to be polemical or to be perceived as over-political rather than artistic?

Teresa Can I add to that because what Rosaleen asked really is in terms of what we perceive as 'up to standard'? And this is something that I recently perceived myself. I'm a writer but I'm a very shy writer – I don't really show my stuff to many people and I don't go at that in public. However, recently I started slowly showing it to people, and I had this moment when I was showing a piece to an English native speaker who told me, like, maybe you could change this or that because when you read that piece you can see it was a migrant who wrote it.

But the thing is I am a migrant and this is how I used that language, and I asked the person, 'Is it grammatically correct – do you understand what I meant?' 'Yes.' So why am I supposed to pretend that I am somebody else when I am not a native speaker? This is how I use English and this is how I write in English, and it's that my writing wouldn't be

considered professional or up to standard because there is no understanding that this is a new model, a new way of expressing through English of people of migrant backgrounds. So that's why I would like to ask you that question Rosaleen asked about. On one hand, people are needing more support to familiarise themselves with the system and with the structure, but at the same time we might fall into the trap of saying this is not professional enough, this is not up to standard, because we have very narrow understandings of what is professional.

Nike

I think it's such a good and valid point. When I was at the Arts Council, we had a debate on what policy was. Policy is often shaped by a Northern European gaze. So there were people like you who had a migrant background and I thought that the writing was exquisite, and they told me that they were challenged about the way they used English, but I actually thought the way they used English was more correct, more than the native speakers. They were constantly being challenged and feeling like they weren't as good as.

I think there needs to be new assessment criteria. I don't think we have to go with the existing criteria. Who gets to decide what's good and what isn't? Who gets to decide who is an expert and who isn't? With my showcase in South Africa, I had a commission with the Royal Court in London, and I saw the first iteration of the artist's work in progress. Then I saw a second iteration in South Africa with a lot of African artists – not just from Africa but from around the world – who were coming to our showcase in 2018. The feedback he got he could never have gotten in England. People were questioning it and made observations that humbled him and it really was very powerful.

I think a big part of what we need to do more of is presenting our work outside of the traditional structures, so we should be going to other places. Why not go to India? Why not go to Korea? Why



Summer School on Cultural Diversity and Collaborative Practice, July 2018. Photo: Aoife Herrity

The Artist in the Community Scheme Summer School on Cultural Diversity and Collaborative Practice is an annual peer to peer learning platform for artists devised and hosted by Create in partnership with Counterpoints Arts.

not go to a disability festival and present in a different way? Why not go and present in different spaces that will disrupt your thinking but also disrupt the people who are on a journey to try and be an ally, you know? Because I think sometimes people don't know what they don't know. They don't know that making that comment to you could have set you back years. So what if you sounded like a migrant? Some people want that voice and some people find comfort in that voice and it's about people being brave enough to say, 'You know, I like that voice and I think others will so let's present that as it is. We like what she said and let's present it how it is.'

That means you need diversity in curators. You need people who have not necessarily gone to school for it but have routed in through different pathways. It's not that they went to Goldsmiths and did their MA here and then they became a curator and they follow a box. We have to find new ways of bringing other voices in to that curatorial space because they will interpret it very differently. It's really important that the people who are leading the space, the people who are writing about the space, the critics, the people who support that infrastructure – so even the magazines and the bloggers – are brought in from all different viewpoints. Because when you stop to do that, you get something quite beautiful happening. You get a richness, a voice that is very authentic and isn't pressurised or pushed into a particular space. It's important that you get all sorts of people involved and support them where they're at. You can bring in a diverse voice, a migrant voice, but you have to support them to be their authentic voice and that might mean you give them more time, more resources.

Khaled

I agree with you, Nike – why not go to India and why not go to South Africa and other places? I was really trying to advocate for this a lot. Let's try to make connections outside of the

western centralised connections. So, let's go to communities here in Berlin, for example, where I am based. I have written in these communities – let's try to bridge between the Syrian community and the Indian community. But also, we don't go to India because we need western funds. Most of the people coming as immigrants from not very strong economic country backgrounds have to apply to western-point-of-view funders. I went once to Brazil and there was a conference about slavery which was very interesting. They brought everyone together but it was organised by Goethe-Institut – so the whole narrative of colonisation existed, and was even rooted in that continent.

I just want to mention one thing you also mentioned: bringing diverse voices and accents and languages and ways of speaking. I'm an immigrant and refugee myself, and I'm shy sometimes with my English because what I want to say doesn't match my thinking so I have to kind of guide the conversation somewhere else to match the words I can speak instead. I think most people coming from a non-English background can relate to this. So with that platform I mentioned, we tried to elevate the language. Let's say we are targeting the exiled artist community here to match the western standard – not because of anything, I just think art is a language like any other language. So when you apply for this platform for your work we help you and guide you from one step to another in your professional life, your language or your representation to match the western standard, which I really believe is a very important point.

Nike

That's interesting. Part of what I've introduced in the Pan-African Creative Exchange is a dramaturgy lab to do exactly what you just talked about because sometimes the intention just doesn't come across. We worked with a First Nations Australian, we worked with a Dutch person, an Afrikaner and a Nigerian woman to help unpack the artist's intention, and at the end of it, at the end

of a week, you saw people being able to articulate outside of their local, being able to go global or go to someone who speaks French when they speak English, and that's so powerful in terms of what we're talking about – getting that intention right – because so many artists have to change their voice on the funding application to fit into the Goethe-Institut or the British Council or the Arts Council of England to be worthy of funding. And I think the funding structures, all of that, need to be looked at because it is forcing people to pretend to be something that they're not.

Carolann Is that something then that we have to push back on, in terms of when we are doing our budgets and the infrastructural support that we need, for artists to ensure that we have peers and co-creators in the room with us? Going back to your statement, Nike, around more time and resources in the pre-production development phase to get to the standard that we decide as fit for purpose?

Nike You know, we saw a piece that came out of the Centre for the Less Good Idea in South Africa at my showcase. All the Nigerians said, 'Was that made by a black man?' They never saw anything like it – it was absolutely beautiful as a piece of work. And they said, 'God they must have had months of rehearsal' – they just don't get any of that and they know what they're putting out could be better if they didn't have to be a producer and wear four or five hats. We know within diverse communities we always have to be a bit of a producer, a bit of a fundraiser, a bit of a networker. You can't just get on and do the art.

Carolann That's exactly it. If we look through intersectional funding, then, we need to ensure that their PA is in the room and someone with disability needs support and translators – all that kind of stuff. That's what I mean – it's not just time to rehearse: it's how do we live in this space as artists and be

mindful to be the best we can be? And the burden not to be on the artist to carry.

Nike

I did a lot of work at the Arts Council for the Cultural Olympiad and we gave a lot of funding to disabled artists, and so many of them were stuck because they had never had funding before. Someone said, 'You can have a PA, you can do a talk,' and these guys were, like, 'I don't know who to collaborate with because I've had this dream and it's now reality.' So I said to the funders, we've got to remember that what might come out might still need a bit more headspace because there's a conflict that comes with being ignored, ignored, ignored and then money is thrown at you and you're expected to perform and do something amazing. I was saying you've got to give people space, time and money.

They are the three things, wherever you go in the world, everybody needs: time, space and money. And the space is always about a physical and mental and emotional space – that's something we're all witnessing with Black Lives Matter, where black people go, 'Well, there's other people saying that Black Lives Matter and they are not black.' So that's where it becomes incredibly powerful, where people who are not the least affected are moving forward and seeing it as important. And that emotional space is something we often underestimate because that's years and years and years of pushing barriers and trying to knock down walls and then all of a sudden you're there and you can't believe it because you keep thinking it's going to be pulled away from you. That space also needs to be evolved and protected and developed and supported and nurtured.

Teresa

Can I ask a question about Black Lives Matter here because I feel that there is a danger to the stability of Black Lives Matter without change, without the sustainable change of the system and the structures. Because we have people declaring

support to Black Lives Matter and doing nothing after that. And I understand that having this discussion is very important in terms of providing emotional support to people who are affected by race, but at the same time, statements of support change nothing. Action changes. How do we insist on actual change beyond statements of support?

Nike

I think people have to have an action plan – I don't think you can make a statement without having a back-up. Black Lives Matter in London is starting to call out the organisations that have done nothing. *Vogue* magazine recently had a bunch of employees quit, six in one week, because they made solidarity statements and then these millennials – might I say, white millennials – dug deep and found pictures of them with black faces and said, 'You're showing solidarity and you were in blackface two years ago – what's that about?' And so this is what's happening now: people have time at home and they're digging stuff up – and millennials learn how to dig out things that none of us would have found.

I thank God for them because they are beginning to really call people out – 'What's your action plan?' – and they're holding them to it now. That's what you have to ask: 'You've got a statement – how do you plan to uphold that statement?'

Rosaleen

I want to hear from Felicia.

Felicia

I was just thinking about a lot of things from the conversation and one was in relation to Black Lives Matter and Ireland and the art space. I think we're still getting used to the fact that racism exists here, so even art in that space still looks a bit different. I think that we have to use space for growth, from both the institution and the artist.



This installation used touch, sound and interactivity to bring the audience into contact with asylum seekers faced with inhumane detention centres across the UK and a mental health system that disregards people's political and emotional needs. It builds upon a previous collaboration *As Far As My Fingertips Take Me*, in which El Khoury commissioned Zaraa to record a rap song inspired by the journey his sisters made from Damascus to Sweden.

Breakout Group 2

Moderator: Dominik Czechowski, Independent Curator and Writer, London

Olwen Dawe, Project Lead (Equality, Human Rights and Diversity Policy), Arts Council Ireland

Francesca La Morgia, Researcher, Lecturer in Linguistics, Founder and Director of Mother Tongues

Osei Bonsu, Curator of International Art, Tate Modern, London

Oein DeBhairdúin, Writer and Activist

Anthony Haughey, Artist, Researcher and Lecturer at TU Dublin

Sinéad Nolan, Public Engagement and Communications, Irish Council for Civil Liberties

Áine Crowley, Programme Manager, Arts and Engagement, Create

Introductions

- | | |
|----------------|--|
| Dominik | I'm an independent curator based in London. I'm going to flag up a few possible areas for this discussion: new models of comparative and participatory art commissioning and programming; newly formed cross-sectoral infrastructures; new ways of sharing and redistributing resources; and more equitable ways of working. But, of course, we are free to put in more ideas and suggestions. |
| Olwen | My name is Olwen Dawe and I'm the project lead for the Arts Council's Equality, Human Rights and Diversity Policy. |
| Anthony | I'm an artist. I'm also a lecturer in TU Dublin where I teach in the Centre for Socially Engaged Practice-Based Research. |
| Oein | I'm an Irish Traveller, which means I'm one of the indigenous ethnic minority members of the Irish community, and I'm a community archivist. |

- Shayane** I work in Counterpoints Arts as their social media officer, so being part of the conversation today was really interesting. It's good to hear more from artists and those in the arts specifically.
- Sinead** I'm the communications officer for the Irish Council of Civil Liberties so this is a little outside my normal area. It's really fascinating and good to hear from you all.
- Dominik** Thanks, everyone. So we'd like to come up with some concrete ideas for structural change, how we confront racism, inequality, lack of opportunities, and how we strive for a more just future for everyone.
- Anthony** For me, two key themes emerged in the presentations that appear to be universal. Jijo articulated it very clearly from his position: precarity and power relations are inextricably linked in many socially engaged art practices. Diverse artists and most other artists are forced to do other jobs to survive. Jijo referred to this issue when he spoke of his family life and the difficulties of finding time to produce collaborative projects. There isn't enough funding for artists to produce durational socially engaged artworks, and I think a lot of us end up having to do day jobs as well as the primary objective of trying to be a cultural producer.
- Olwen** I think it's actually picking up on a point that Oein made relating to some of the work that we're trying to do in the Arts Council. It's work that's ongoing and it's going to take a while to get it properly embedded, but I think there are two things. First, those who are under-represented need to be more present in the power structures themselves, ensuring that those who are excluded from the power structures are brought into them – you know, 'nothing about us without us' – I think that is absolutely critical. We've seen a little bit of change on the board of the Arts Council in the last year but it's slow. We've seen a change to some of the

norms in terms of people naturally making their way into those structures, but there's a lot more work to be done.

The second thing is I was really struck by Oein's comment earlier on, and I think Rosaleen alluded to this as well: 'Let's apply for funding to make a film about a Traveller narrative without actually including anybody from the Traveller community'. It's mind-boggling, and we're talking about power structures. Organisations like Screen Ireland, and indeed us in the Arts Council, need to be scrutinising those decisions – that people would decide to create a piece of work about a particular community without actually having them in any way represented in the structure that's created in the work. They are two things I think would help to unpack those structural inequalities.

Oein

In Ireland there's a lot of good policies and a lot of good structures in place. There's a lot of good people with a lot of amazing goodwill who work collaboratively and are incredibly transformative where there's a lot of blocks. I always struggle with being too severe because it can be very off-putting, but at the same time, having consequences for oversight and looking at how things are implemented and those mechanisms is very important.

At the moment the consequences fall to the artist and the community they come from, and should we just be relying on goodwill and good people because sometimes they move and the blockages they inherited might move with them? I think if we're serious about inclusion then we really need to be looking at not just the policies but how they are implemented and what we do when they fail. I mean having a very serious conversation about when they fail and what comes next because sometimes failure is just failure and we can review it. Until there's a consequence to the structures it will be a conversation.

Dominik But how do we go about demanding those consequences? The old-fashioned ‘naming and shaming’ doesn’t seem to work, as we observe on Twitter with all the debates around Tate right now.

Olwen I think it’s a bit carrot and stick, to use that hackneyed phrase. I know Arts Council England have set up a register for organisations that are doing really well on diversity across their organisation – their staff, their board, their programming. It’s like a grading or ranking system so it’s visible. And I think that makes its way into how decisions are made about the funding that’s granted over time. So here are brilliant organisations doing great things, but if you’re not doing great things there’s going to be an impact, so I think there’s a bit of both.

Oein Here in Ireland we have structures in place and we have histories of where agencies haven’t been able to provide what is needed and those powers have been taken away from them after a long process. And it was very much that carrot and stick: ‘We’re trying to open these spaces up for you but if you’re not engaging there has to be a consequence’ – do you know? But it’s not a finite, immediate process: it’s a lengthy process, allowing people to grow. I think we need to start that as soon as possible.

Dominik I would like to pick up on another point that Anthony made about precarity and not enough funding for artists being available, artists having to work multiple jobs to support their practice. Maybe there should be an equal pay structure – a pay system – in the industry? So if you’re invited to exhibit in a group show, or have a major solo exhibition, or a workshop or a talk – whatever the activity, there is a specific pay-grade system one can refer to. Because, particularly for showing in exhibitions, I hear complaints that a lot of artists are just ‘invited’, and they are of course grateful to be included, but they never get any fee. There’s a production budget and the covering of expenses,

but no remuneration per se. I just wonder what you think about that?

Anthony

In Ireland there have been numerous campaigns to support the professionalisation of artists – some of them have been successful. Less than ten years ago what you just described would be the norm – when you're invited to give a talk, and even to exhibit, there would be no fee. It would be assumed to be some kind of privilege that your intellectual labour would be completely ignored. That's changed. There is a policy in Ireland where artists do get paid for most kinds of cultural activity.

I just wanted to make one concrete suggestion that we could think about in relation to policy. I occasionally sit on Arts Council panels, I can see things from lots of different perspectives, but one thing that is really important is that when a policy document is researched and written – for example, on cultural diversity – it's not enough to simply circulate it. A policy document should be enabled to enact change within a given timeline, so instead of having well-meaning rhetoric and good ideas that are worthy, I think it needs to be followed by concrete action. There should be a commitment to support culturally diverse artists; it can't be words without action. There has to be funding and within a published time frame – not empty rhetoric and platitudes that don't go anywhere.

Dominik

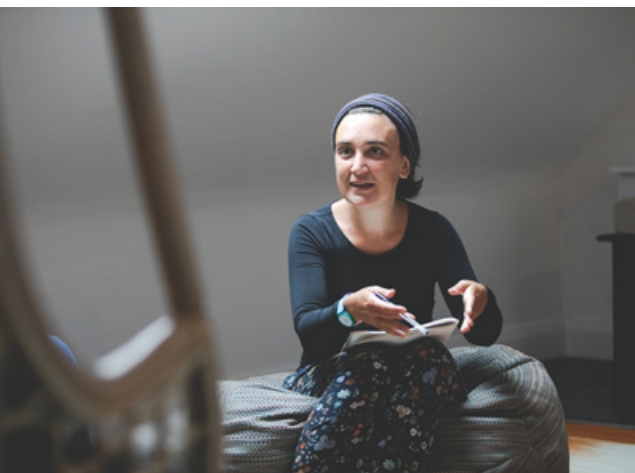
That's a great action point. So to borrow the suffragettes' motto: 'deeds, not words'.

Anthony

Absolutely.

Áine

Nike spoke quite a lot about the ecosystems of support for artists and, coming from a resource organisation and working in terms of supporting cultural diversity in arts practice and socially engaged collaborative practice, I was also fascinated when Khaled started to look at the



Francesca La Morgia photographed at the Summer School on Cultural Diversity and Collaborative Practice, July 2019. Photo: Joseph Carr

The Artist in the Community Scheme Summer School on Cultural Diversity and Collaborative Practice is an annual peer to peer learning platform for artists devised and hosted by Create in partnership with Counterpoints Arts.

alternative structures. It is quite interesting looking at how he has taken on a whole new ecosystem of working with the artist, almost like his own resource organisation.

And for me, it is that we need to look at how we are working or go deeper in terms of the supports needed at very many levels. There are many levels of support and structures that you need to put in place, and looking at alternative ways of working is very important right now as we start meeting back to create change and action.

Dominik

In other words, a more DIY attitude and focus on the communities that already exist outside of the institutions? It's again about the redistribution of funding. I think Hassan was making the point about the government package that's going to be given to the arts and that is likely to go in large part to really huge institutions. And then the freelance artists, curators, practitioners will be yet again reliant on those institutions to distribute the money, which is a lengthy process and is likely to be uneven. I think the ecosystem of support is really important in terms of this. Nike mentioned profile management, mentoring, shadowing, creating opportunities for practitioners not in the networked centre of the arts sector to have more sway.

Áine

I look at very small organisations here in Ireland – Francesca, your own festival and also A4 Sounds Artists' Studios – quite small but quite intimate spaces with quite radical approaches to supporting artists. And I think there's a lot we can learn from looking at the small organisations, how they work to support. Often they're quite under-resourced in that there's not many people in these organisations, but they are more intimately connected, and often the communities are the people running these places – that's possibly what makes them so strong, and we have to listen and look at that.

Anthony Following on from those comments and what Dominik said earlier around the idea of political and ideological change or a return to the idea of the common good for all, in Ireland we have never had an NHS to enable equal access to healthcare. But recently a group of migrant women set up a cooperative for health workers to take back control from minimum wage private agencies, which I was really excited by – a more democratic approach to funding, to cooperation, to work practices. In a similar way, I think it is important to have a conversation about art connected to political ideologies and social structures.

Francesca In response to your question about the practical, the practical is something that, to me, has to happen very quickly. A policy as big as the equality and diversity policy is not something that within a year you can see the benefits of. So it's quite important that it's not taken on by different organisations in their own individual ways and also that it's taken on in a genuine way. Because if you have to tick the box that you have responded to this policy and what you have is a black artist on your board, that is totally against inequality and diversity policy. Inclusion is about friendships and relationships and trust and it's really important that this is also considered because maybe if you have been excluded for a long time you don't trust institutions.

You are more likely to trust a small group of people – like an arts or a smaller collective – because it's about you and you benefiting, rather than ticking a box for the Arts Council or whatever other policy. I've had this issue with different communities because I work with such a diversity of people, and not everybody trusts what we want to do because we haven't made that relationship and it's not a lasting relationship. So there's two bigger questions. One is policy, which is a huge question and is also something that needs to be measured and reviewed, not just by the Arts Council but also



Recognize, Risk, Reimagine, Rebuild, Redistribute, Artist Collective, Who Are We? Tate Exchange – Counterpoints Arts Production, 2019. Photo: India Rose

Sixteen artists explored the political dynamic of 5 words in a unique collaborative commission. They invited the public to think about the following questions: What might real social change look like in practice? How do we begin to recognise the most urgent issues? What kinds of strategic/creative risk might be involved in owning them? And how might we begin to lay the foundations that will enable us to reimagine, rebuild and redistribute?

by people who take it on to implement the policy, and also the relationship with communities. I think it's something that can be done quickly and it can be done to make the most of the diversity that we have because we don't need to make up diversity in Ireland anyway – you have people everywhere.

Dominik

Thank you, Francesca. I was also wondering about how we can work in more collective and non-siloed ways. What about applying collectively for funding opportunities and doing something like collective curating or sharing resources, cross-fertilising ideas around programming, so when one programmes for an institution they are working as part of a consortium, bringing partners in early on and sharing costs. There seem to be more people doing it this way right now but maybe that should be something that we should always have in mind and strive for. And also, when working for big institutions, to remember how we can support those smaller ones who may not be otherwise eligible for certain grants etc.

Francesca

Maybe Olwen would know more about this from the Arts Council on funding. If you're scared of the system and once you do not succeed, you may not know that everybody doesn't succeed until the second or third time – you may think, 'Oh, this is not for me, I'm not Irish, forget about it. It's never going to work out.' People really do give up. Something like a group of people might work, but also information being shared properly – I don't know.

Olwen

Just, Francesca, because you mentioned it, the necessity for institutions like the Arts Council and national institutions like national theatres and so on to ensure that they are actually talking to communities, that they're listening, that they are engaging openly with artists. One example of resource sharing is the Abbey Theatre – which, for colleagues not in Ireland, is the national theatre in the republic – have run a series of short programmes called Five by Five, which essentially

opened the studio theatre to a whole range of different collectives, including one facilitated through Pavee Point, Oein. They give them support and development and 5,000 euro and essentially give them space, time and support to work on an idea. So, it opens the doors. For a lot of people, the Abbey would be a highly intimidating place if you've never worked or been involved in a production there.

It's a small example, I suppose, but it's a good example of how saying 'the doors are open, here's money, here's our resources, here's our support, and they are for you' sends a strong signal and also is meaningful because, I know Francesca mentioned this as well, policies are great but if the actions aren't meaningful then it's a pointless exercise, you know? The Arts Council is having a series of conversations with artists from different diverse backgrounds in the next few weeks to do this exact thing – 'Have you applied for funding? If you haven't, why haven't you?' – to really get into the nub of the issue. And for a lot of people it will be perception: they won't feel that they had an opportunity or they feel they won't be able to access the funding or it'll be a waste of their time. So, we have a lot of work to do to tackle those issues. Again, it's not going to happen overnight, but consistent action will see change over time.

Dominik

Thanks a lot everyone, so I'll try and summarise what we've discussed. The first point is that any policy made should be followed by a concrete action. Policy-making is important, but actions are really meaningful and we need to do, not talk. And we need to do more.

Then we focused on the ecosystem of support and not being reliant on big organisations but trying to have more radical DIY attitudes and approaches to working and supporting each other – critically and intellectually, also by offering mentoring

opportunities, financially by creating ways of approaching funders collectively so everyone can be included and can share and redistribute obtained grants. It's really important to listen to communities and work with them closely rather than treating them in a patronising, opportunistic and purely utilitarian way. There should be a genuine dialogue rather than a box-ticking exercise on application forms.

I really liked Anthony's suggestion, or recollection, of the workers' cooperatives – could you briefly summarise this, Anthony?

Anthony

I can think back to my childhood and there were a lot of workers' cooperatives – people who shared responsibility and shared the profits and all the working practices therein, childcare, everything. So what's exciting for me is a migrant health-workers' cooperative has just been formed in Ireland. I think there is an important conversation to have about how collectives work and the potential of cooperatives to offer smaller scale eco-friendly workplaces. Many socially engaged art practices are mirroring earlier communitarian approaches that cut across many sectors and disciplines. I think it's important to encourage that.

Sinead

I'm reluctant to come in because it's not my area, but talking about the responsibility of organisations, training on implicit and explicit bias and things like that, we work on those kind of things all the time – for example, with the guards and other institutions that interact with communities who are marginalised. It's really important.



**The Consul, Stephen Till, Opera Machine
and Kent Opera, Who Are We? Tate
Exchange – Counterpoints Arts Production,
2018. Photo: Briony Campbell**

This performance was a collaborative response by musicians, singers, performers and creative facilitators to the powerful themes of displacement and dispossession at the centre of Gian-Carlo Menotti's 1950 opera, *The Consul*. The team included opera singers: Becca Marriott and Marie-Claire op ten Noort, Iranian composer Shohreh Shakoory, choir-leader Naveen Arles, Musical Director, Andrew Charity and Director, Stephen Tiller from Opera Machine & Kent Opera – working alongside a chorus of migrants, asylum seekers and refugees from Sanctuary Voices.

Breakout Group 3

Moderator: Miguel Amado, Director, Sirius Arts Centre

Helen Trew, Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion Specialist, Creative Scotland

Bronwyn Lace, Visual Artist and Director, The Centre for the Less Good Idea

Owodunni Ola Mustapha, Writer and Activist for Social Inclusion and Supports to Asylum Seekers

Tomasz Madajczak, Artist

Caoimhe McCabe, Information Officer, Pavee Point

Jijo Sebastian, Filmmaker

Marcia Chandra, Creative Producer, Counterpoints Arts

Introductions

Miguel I work as an arts curator and I am currently director of the Sirius Arts Centre in Ireland.

Marcia I work at Counterpoints Arts. I am a creative producer on the Pop Culture and Social Change programme. And I work a lot with neighbourhood programming as well.

Tomasz I am originally from Poland. I live in Ireland. I'm a professional artist. I collaborate with different artists. I run and facilitate art projects with different communities, like those in Direct Provision. I work with adults, children – basically, with arts in Ireland.

Caoimhe I work in Pavee Point Traveller and Roma Centre. We've been involved in a number of different cultural collaborative projects and we are also trying to promote Traveller arts and culture through our own work.

Helen I am the equalities officer at Creative Scotland, that is the Arts Council in Scotland. I also run a social justice and human rights festival called Just Festival. My background is in theatre and film in collaborative practice.

Ola

I am an asylum seeker and the founder of Ballyhaunis Inclusion Project. It's basically a support group for asylum seekers in Ireland. I am also an aspiring poet and I am a writer. I have had a few of my writings published in some journals in Ireland. I look forward to collaborating with other artists across the country.

Bronwyn

I'm a South African artist and I am currently based in Vienna because I can't get home.

Miguel

So to come up with three action points that follow from the conversations that we have been having, I suggest we move from ideas around policy to, say, strategies or tools that we could try to begin implementing. So from the discursive or theoretical kind of background, our conversation might be what could be useful to set up in our context, whether that is our local area of work or more globally.

We could think about new ways of sharing resources and to set up more equitable ways of working. For instance, Jijo was talking about ideas such as basic universal income, which, of course, could be a suggestion but it's really at the level of policy-making which probably none of us will be in the position to make happen in an immediate moment.

Yet, basic universal income has been put forward by economists in the last 25 years, coming from left agendas – particularly the west and northern part of the globe. Here in Ireland since the pandemic emerged there has been a large movement of artists and art workers getting together to try to put forward an agenda of larger and more powerful support from the state to the arts sector – not only because of the pandemic: before it was fairly fragile because of a lack of funding. And they came up with a set of points, one of which is the creation of a basic universal income, which



As far as Isolation Goes, Basel Zaara and Tania El Khouri, Who Are We? Tate Exchange – Counterpoints Arts Production, 2018. Photo: Briony Campbell

of course the government is not interested in addressing because this would be a powerful challenge to the way capital and capitalist societies operate. So I would like to hear from you whether we see other ways of working in line with that. For instance, we also heard from Magdalena, from Australia, that COVID-19 demonstrated that there is a large workforce in the arts sector and beyond in the community and they recognise the fragility in which this workforce lives. Or when Hassan mentioned that in the UK 76% of the workforce in the arts sector is now becoming even more disconnected from typical labour relationships with employers and contemplating what is, using Marxist terminology, reserved labour or reserved workforce.

So there is something to talk about here in terms of tools that we might consider in our workspaces or community groups to help mitigate this inequality created within the arts and community sector around the non-managerial workforce. And I would also like for us to discuss questions of under-representation brought forward by colleagues speaking on behalf of the Traveller movement in Ireland or people working in the global south like Jijo or Bronwyn or that relates to Osei's presentation around the recognition of our arts organisations being not only managed by an elite of the creative sector, which is mostly whites and male, but also remnants or instruments of colonial legacies and capitalist infrastructures.

Helen

Being a funder, from an Arts Council and from an equalities perspective, it is difficult to separate policy and practice from that perspective. The idea of what a cultural infrastructure is isn't agreed by anybody within even the same organisation or within funding organisations or within any such government. The notion of infrastructure is bandied around when you want to fund somebody so it becomes the kind of reason for funding, even if you can't lock it into place in any other way. So

when Hassan is talking about regular funded organisations and buildings, what has happened during this situation is that that was beginning to expand, and people who wanted to get into the club were getting into the club a bit more.

But the retrenchment is happening and is basically going back to what people think is really the infrastructure, and how do we challenge that? And I do want to come to universal income, because I believe it's not talking about infrastructures or arts or cultural sectors at all: it's talking about how people manage the means of production from their own lives. Where is autonomy? Where does autonomy sit? If I choose to be an artist, can I sign a form at the tax office saying that I am an artist and that I have an income, a right to an income, which allows me to operate and create my own networks, my own world. And it's not parallel to anything and somehow it separates me, gives me some control of where I'm going in my life. And some big organisations have decided, instead of retrenching and keeping their money, to say, 'This is what money we've got left in the pot – let's share it out equally, at the same level, across our managers or administrators and our group of associated artists.' One organisation, I believe in Australia, has done that and they've managed to support 300 artists for a year because they've just divvied up their money that they get from the Arts Council. So I think, on infrastructure, there is no one thing.

Ola

I'm going to speak in terms of my own community and how hard it is for people who, like Rosaleen was saying about Travellers, are pushed farther down the ladder. Over the years we've been told, in Direct Provision, you are in Direct Provision, you are a black person and there is a stereotypical way you are assumed to come from this background – you might not have the kind of quality, kind of content that the Arts Council is looking for.

Everything I've done so far in Ireland has been when I met somebody at one seminar or one gathering. They would say, 'I know this event and I would like you to attend.' We don't have that access, we don't have that platform where we could come in and say, 'This is what I'm bringing to the table and this is my content and I need a platform to display what I'm bringing.' I've seen people over the years in my community who have applied for grants and explained what their project is all about and it doesn't see the light of day. At the end of the day, they just push it back and say, 'Maybe this is not for me.' Sometimes it happens to me as well – I put in a submission and I get some feedback that is not so encouraging, and I put the same submission into an application someplace else, which might be from an organisation that is not as reputable as the one that rejected my application, and they would get on board.

I think that idea of, you know, assuming that the colour of your skin is the quality of your brain or the quality of what you're bringing to the table needs to be discarded, and people need to be given an equal opportunity to express their art and have equal access to resources as anybody else.

I agree with you. Even when I am an active participant in, say, the panels who see applications like the one you might have submitted, it's always awkward when we have to provide feedback, and we just have general words to say rather than providing more qualitative feedback. It might help someone truly understand the pitfalls of their application or the good parts. There should be more respect for those who submit applications and might benefit from potential funds. Could we come up with a suggestion around what can be done to tackle the recognition that there are still differences in accessing support, so the support is unequal rather than equal? Are there any tools or ideas or actions that we could suggest to challenge the inequality?



Land Walks: Clonakilty Old Railway, 2019.
Photo: William Bock

Land Walks is a collaborative sound and visual art project by artist William Bock and residents of West Cork, that maps experiences of belonging and uprooting in the West Cork landscape through walking, storytelling and collaborative field recording. Land Walks was funded by an Arts Council Ireland Artist in the Community Scheme Project Realisation Award, managed by Create

Miguel

Ola

Instead of saying 'we are sorry we wouldn't be able to take on your application', why can't we have some kind of mentoring programme and, say, identify your potential – if you would like to liaise with so-and-so communities you might be able to come up with a better work – something like that?

Bronwyn

In South Africa, it is a problem that we identified at the Centre for the Less Good Idea. Our funding is from a different source and we don't have to report to the government so we are bureaucratically and administratively very light. It's interesting to be in that position because you recognise how much of the heavy bureaucracy that belongs to larger flagship organisations and projects is potentially unnecessary and a kind of inherited assumption rather than what really gives mobility to a space. We say we are not interested in proposals and we are even less interested in reports.

So, the way in which we have tested finding and working with artists is by identifying what we call lead artists at the beginning of a season and we run two seasons a year. These are people who we've noticed to have an interesting trajectory, are doing interesting work but seminally are people who are also working outside of their disciplines and in collective ways. We bring these people around the table and we ask them to identify artists from any discipline that they would be interested in working with and collaborating with. This is before a season begins. So, what starts as a team of maybe 5 people slowly grows to 15 which grows to 30 and we typically get to somewhere between 60 and 90 in the making of a season. Once an artist is invited into a season they are given the autonomy to make what they want to make. They can collaborate in the way that they need to collaborate. All artists are paid equal artist fees and there is no judgement as to how involved or not involved you are – we leave that open. And in four years and seven seasons we've been disappointed 3% of the time and we've worked with 500 artists. That's a lot.

There's a lot of nonsense that goes into report writing and proposal writing. There are people who spend their lives becoming adept at describing their practice and visualising it on PDF and there's nothing that happens in the real world and space, and it's also not a space that facilitates collaboration – there's no surprise in the PDF. There is surprise in the physical spaces that hold the work. So the evidence of the work, the archive of the work, is our responsibility as the organisation, and throughout these processes of meeting and making and showing, we commit to having dedicated writers, cinematographers, photographers and editors on the ground who are facilitating, describing the process outside of the process. Because that's a heavy weight for artists to take on in the throes of making. At the same time, our own Arts Council in South Africa, the national arts council, has a very strange – and I suspect it happens in other arts councils – way of making calls available to artists. And then in the application form, before you talk about your concept you have to make evident the demographics of people you will be positively affecting in the first three months of your project. That is the cart before the horse. That is saying to artists, 'We don't trust that actively engaged, practising artists is something that we need. In order to validate yourself as an artist you have to represent your whole community and you need to bring your community into the project from the get-go.' It collapses any kind of artistic process, that weight, and again, in the four years without that being a requirement to work with the centre, we've seen awesome artist community engagement and groupings of people we would otherwise never have met coming into the centre through artists and becoming both audience and collaborative practitioners.

Miguel

Sounds fantastic, sounds like a very unique organisation.

- Bronwyn** It is and in the heart of downtown Johannesburg in post-Apartheid this is happening. It can happen in Ireland and it can happen in the UK.
- Caoimhe** Where do you get the funding from?
- Bronwyn** The funding comes from William Kentridge himself. As an artist, he has recognised his immense privilege as a white male with the education that he was afforded and the family ties that he has, and he funds the entire organisation and draws on the networks of people who follow his practice to co-fund and drive it.
- Caoimhe** So he's like a benefactor?
- Bronwyn** Yes, but he's also a collaborator.
- Helen** Can I ask about one of the things you are trying to do, to remove as many gatekeepers as possible? It's really problematic when you have public funding which comes with the level of accountability that you must audit. I think it causes more problems. I never asked for reports because they are pointless, they're boring. I said, 'Tell me what the problems are and tell me what you have found and what you want to do next as a result.' That's much better – there is no consistent way of doing that. We're all fixated on funding and not the artists and how to enable the artists.
- We are driven by outcomes and outputs and I think – and I am not representing Creative Scotland right now – if I had a magic wand and could step out into the other space as an artist, I would dissolve the lot and I would give the money to artists almost in a lottery system to allow people to have a goal, to have a chance, to take control of what they want to do. And then artists gather and they collaborate quite naturally. Things start to happen together.

During the 1980s, one of the unintended consequences of the Thatcher era was she actually supported more creativity in the UK because of an employment scheme which allowed anyone to sign on for a year and get benefits as an artist. You could name lots of established organisations in the UK now who started there, and they all went, 'I've got £50 a week – we can all get together and do something.' Nobody had to ask permission and there were no gatekeepers. People had some kind of control. Nobody wants to live on that kind of money, nobody wants to live in poverty, but there needs to be some form of being able to open it up. Sometimes you're in a situation of having to make decisions, so removing gatekeepers, removing people who filter quality – get rid of as many as possible and get it as close to the artist doing what they want as possible. That's my pitch.

Miguel

I represent one of those gatekeepers, right? I represent a typical ethno-normative identity. I am a white middle-class man, educated, heterosexual, married, all of that. I am conscious of my privilege. I am conscious of my body and mind because I am from Portugal, the first people who brought slaves from Africa to Europe 500 years ago. So what do you recommend to people like me who want to be allies, which means challenging my own power, right? But also recognising that my power position needs to be challenged but won't necessarily cease to exist, even if I give up my post, because most likely I will be replaced by someone exactly like me. So what are the tools that enable allies to be more conscious of their need to work around recognising their privilege and, by recognising their privilege, recognising the equality they can also generate, so I can challenge that?

Tomasz

Is it possible to open more of a dialogue with the gatekeepers? This is always a problem because I think that's how the application process can seem. And the applications are slightly artificial, they are PDF based, they are constructed for a certain



Summer School on Cultural Diversity and Collaborative Practice, July 2019. Photo: Joseph Carr

The Artist in the Community Scheme Summer School on Cultural Diversity and Collaborative Practice is an annual peer to peer learning platform for artists devised and hosted by Create in partnership with Counterpoints Arts.

reason. There should be a way of creating a live dialogue with the gatekeepers. That's where I see the role of Create because I met different people from Create and suddenly realised there are people who it is possible to talk to and who listen, who want to know more and who can find time to actually create a relationship. And that's what astonished me, that's where I felt that actually there is a space that is opening up and it's welcoming. I am constantly looking for spaces like that because I need to feel comfortable to be able to open up and speak my mind, to access some inner parts of myself to engage in a conversation that doesn't always happen when I am trying to present a project or an idea in PDF form.

Ola

Also, spread your tentacles. Don't always reach out to that one person that you know. Don't get comfortable with just this person – feed the rest of the people as well. It gets so monotonous when you walk into the room and you see the same people you see in this place are the same people you see in that place. Spread your tentacles, network, give everybody a chance.

Caoimhe

I think that's where you're talking about the outreach aspect.

Marcia

Part of it also is about making space for experimentation. I really liked what Nike was saying

as well – understanding the gatekeepers are operating from a certain aesthetic and a certain idea of how things are to be done and what kind of people qualify as artists, and if you are a refugee artist you are only categorised in a kind of refugee art. Those people in the elite need to make physical room for new ways of thinking about what art is and what artists are. I work a lot in community and participatory arts and community commissioning and how to open up spaces for the community to commission work, but a lot of that is undervalued in terms of it's never paid. Community members are people that make up diverse kinds of advisory boards. They are never paid or never valued for that expertise that they bring. How do we distribute the funds not only to the artists but also to the people who decide what art is?

Miguel

That was really interesting – thank you very much.



As Far as Isolation Goes, Basel Zaara and
Tania El Khouri, Refugee Week 2019 at
the V&A – Counterpoints Arts Production.
Photo: Marcia Chandra

Breakout Group 4

Moderator: Evgeny Shtorn, Artist in the Community Scheme
Cultural Diversity Researcher, Create

Hassan Mahamdallie, The Creative Case for Diversity

Sharon O'Grady, Arts Officer, Galway County

Jane Wells, Programme Manager of Tate Exchange, London

Emma Grady, Artist

Zoe O'Reilly, Researcher, Writer and Visual Ethnographer

Dijana Rakovic, Project Manager, Counterpoints Arts

Introductions

Jane

I'm from Belfast in Northern Ireland and I work at Tate Modern on the programme there for Tate exchange.

Zoe

I'm usually Dublin-based but I'm currently in France. I have several roles – none of them quite clear, like many of us. I'm kind of straddling academia and socially engaged art a lot of the time and crossing between or bringing them together. My current role is in University College Dublin, forming a new project around refugee integration. I use all those terms with, sort of, questions around them. It's at its very early stages but there's a lot of work collaborating with artists to look at method in the social sciences and how we can decolonise method and work in truly collaborative ways with the subjects of our research. But I've worked more closely in the art sector, as well, with diversity and the arts and doing things together.

Dijana

I'm one of the producers at Counterpoints Arts. Occasionally I help Áine out with the Learning Lab project, but I work with some of our creative arts projects including collaborating with Jane at the Tate Exchange – we are in the fourth year of that. Hassan is involved this year running things.

Evgeny I'm working at Create as a cultural diversity researcher and I am from a refugee background myself. I lived in Saint Petersburg, Russia, for most of my life and over two years ago I found myself in Ireland. So since then I am here.

Emma I am an actor and writer, I work in theatre, based in Galway and I'm writing a show with Oein, who spoke earlier. For the past four years we have been working on a theatre show together that will be produced at some time in the future. It started off as a piece about his life and we are constantly having conversations about how to make it really inclusive and to ask all the hard questions about what it means to put on a theatre production about and for the Travelling community in Ireland.

Evgeny So we have three questions: new models of participatory arts programming, newly informed cross-sector infrastructures and new ways of sharing and redistributing resources in more equitable ways for working. We have to come out with three key actions. One is for change, which is an impossible task for this few minutes that we have, but maybe we can try to formulate three key actions that can be innovative in pushing the boundaries of what we are familiar with and trying to redefine the ways we see the institutions and our own roles within them.

Jane When Magdalena spoke she acknowledged the land that she lives on and the history that it belongs to. Something I've been thinking about is remembering as being such an important act in decolonising and, like, not looking away. I lived in the US for a long time and I'm not English and I think here, and certainly in the UK, it's difficult sometimes to talk about history or to have uncomfortable conversations. It's something that people shy away from.

What would happen if we started every meeting at Tate Modern acknowledging the history of the

institution and the impact of that? I have Australian friends and friends in Canada who acknowledge the land which they're on every time we start a meeting, and that has an impact on the culture in which you work and the place you're from. We can talk about moving forward but there has to be an emphasis on the past and what that's built on, the land on which we stand, the make-up of buildings. You can talk about the buildings which we're in, but we've invested in the labour, the very fabric of the building, somewhere we came from. I think that would be an amazing thing. I think it's a proposition for us all and how can we acknowledge our histories in the present moment.

Zoe

I find that fascinating as well, as I work a lot with the idea of place in its many guises. One of my last roles was working in a big suburb of Dublin called Tallaght – one of the most diverse areas of the country, I believe. Tallaght was from the beginning a place of migration, a sort of invented place where people were shifted from Dublin and houses were built and the place was made out of nowhere. When I was working with very diverse people there, I found it so useful to go back to the history of the place and that everybody living there had actually a very recent history of migration, whether they were of Irish origin or elsewhere, so I think there is huge importance in going back to acknowledge a place and empowering it.

I also have a fascination for working across fields, and I think that can bring huge insight into this area of constantly pushing boundaries. It's so easy to be in the same circles all the time, the same discipline, whether it's art or social sciences or wherever we are coming from. That constant cross-fertilization and asking questions, how other people are seeing it from different perspectives and disciplines, in a very wide sense, just opens that up. And in the work I do, especially when I'm in academic-based work, of trying to pull in people from other disciplines, even if it doesn't quite fit in the academic

boundaries where I am, just pushes perspectives and boundaries and that can be really important.

Evgeny Is it multidisciplinary or transdisciplinary? Because I think we can mix different disciplines and remain in the discipline, but we also can try to abandon our disciplines and say, 'No, I don't want to know anything about what I know – I want to know what you know and I want to hear you.' And what you hear may become more innovative, in a sense, because you don't have an answer. Of course, we have an education, we are very privileged people. We have our disciplines behind us but we also can see how limited they are.

Zoe I think maybe there is space for both of those moments, where it's very interesting to hold your discipline because there is a history of the discipline that can be very interesting, and I always respect people with clear disciplinary backgrounds because I don't have that and they can bring a lot to the table, but maybe they also need to be open to the unlearning of their discipline.

Evgeny So we have identified so far acknowledgement, remembering and working across disciplines. What can we add that might help us to change the actual order of things?

Emma I'm involved in a couple of different organisations for independent artists and trying to support the independent sector, so I have been around nationally. Some conversations have a parallel to this. I was trying to approach venues and to get organisations to understand what it is like to be freelance, and what we keep getting from organisations and venues is a very defensive 'our door is always open'. We started to think, 'If they have that attitude to us, what attitude do we have to people trying to get into *our* organisation?'

One group I'm involved with, Theatre 57, has a hundred members of freelance theatre artists in

Galway. We did a big survey last year and we're 85% white Irish – we're trying to see how we can serve the needs of all our members and how we can be open to more members. So next year we're going to do a session called No Irish Need Apply and give the space to the people in our group who are not Irish or whose being Irish has been questioned. Our board of directors won't be there – we're going to have it facilitated by a member of our organisation who is not from Ireland so the people who attend can present the problems and the challenges back to us, which might be us as well – you know, people running the organisation. It's like a brainstorming session where the people who have the power are not in the room.

Sharon

Is it not shifting the power dynamic back to the group that feels powerless? There is a huge amount of organisational issues around large-scale organisations that have now been given an equality and diversity brief and nobody knows what to do with that. With well-established organisations and venues and funders, like Rosaleen was saying, we are brought into the room for the applications, but where are we left after that? How integral are we to the rest of the journey? It's a huge challenge. We've had to make huge shifts in a very short space of time and many of us are, honestly, left behind.

I mean, there were conversations there that didn't really resonate with me because I'm more of a practical person. The biggest thing is having all those voices in the room. So how do we put a mechanism in place to ensure that all the voices are in the room when it comes to decision-making around policy – obviously, that's important. But the practical delivery of policy on the ground, that's where some of us who are in institutions need to step back and go, 'That's not what we do.'

I think that's what Theatre 57 are aiming to do with No Irish Need Apply, but it's really none of us who are embedded in the land need apply – everyone

else need apply, just trying to find a space. It's hard to do that in the right way and a lot of mistakes will be made and it's okay to make mistakes. But definitely that resonated with me about the land – we are afraid to recognise the land. The land in Ireland resonates so many different things, both positive and very negative, and there's a lot of fear there and a lot of oppression that has to be recognised as well.

Evgeny

Yes, it is of course connected to the history of the country and, in the sense of Direct Provision, for example, continuous institutionalisation and things like that. Obviously, we have a long way to go there. So to be open to mistakes and practical delivery of this policy, no?

Dijana

What we've been hearing at Counterpoints Arts for a long time now, and artists often spell out, is 'This infrastructure doesn't work for me. It doesn't work for people I collaborate with, and it doesn't work for my networks.' A lot of people also come to us and say, 'Where I find real honest support is with other artists like me out there' – on the periphery, collaborating, making things happen, working with each other, sharing skills, supporting production of videos. All sorts of practical stuff. So how do we get together and have a conversation about these things that might be working?

We haven't really created the right opportunity or right space to have that conversation with artists and to consult them on models of infrastructure that they see as working to at least start changing things. I do want to acknowledge the Tate Exchange as a model in that infrastructure – it has been a space where we were able to test things. But, and Jane will be the first one to acknowledge it, there are obvious limitations of that as a model itself.

But if we look at it as a model, what is the next one that is better? There are lessons out there that we need to look at and learn from. But we need to

make it a space where the labour around telling us is also recognised. Plus, what happens at the next stage, once they do tell us, because there are some basic things that I'm grappling with at the minute:

Evgeny

So what can we do as an action? Like what Hassan was saying, we can propose to the institutions certain things, but they won't accept it; they will do everything to sabotage it. And I understand, in a sense, why: because they haven't arrived to that conclusion themselves. And it's a big problem because we need to do it now but those who have to implement it will likely be very uncomfortable doing that. This is my vision, at least, as a researcher, someone who is very much in between spaces. And I have this huge feeling that they say one thing but, actually, they are not comfortable even saying that. And when we arrive at the actions, there might be a serious problem on the ground.

Sharon

I think the idea of finding an artist that an institution is comfortable with and trusts to work with other artists from other backgrounds – that's where it comes from, rather than the institution. So the institution empowers the artist themselves to collaborate. When large institutions move outside of their physical space things happen. And maybe when those trusted artists are empowered to start moving outside of where they might normally, that's how the engagement happens. But it might necessarily have to be with the organisation itself.

Evgeny

I agree and disagree – sorry – because what I observe also is that these artists who have been empowered are becoming also sort of gatekeepers, and this is a big problem because they are well connected now and they don't want anybody else to be a refugee artist or a black artist or an Asian artist. You think, okay, you empower one and he empowers others but it sometimes can be a different thing and I don't know what to do with that. That happens with white Irish artists as well.



The Consul, Stephen Tiller, Opera Machine and Kent Opera, Who Are We? Tate Exchange – Counterpoints Arts Production, 2018. Photo: Briony Cambell

Hassan

During this period, when all the theatres shut down, me and my circle of artists, we'd been making stuff without any support from the institutions whatsoever. And in one sense that has been quite empowering: we've not had to ask anyone's permission to make work – we just kind of got on with it. I think individual artists, we're the ones that should go on strike – withhold our labour until institutions understand that if they're going to give over space then they have to give it over without restrictions or trying to limit what we do and allow us as artists just to get on with it. You might not like the results; you might like the results.

The problem is, at the moment, all investment is in the institutions. We have to try and negotiate a position in relation to them when what we should be doing is making the work, thinking about the work, going to institutions and saying this is what we have to offer, as opposed to institutions trying to tell us what we should be doing that fits in with their agenda. We have to try and shift that power dynamic. And then it's not about gatekeepers: it's about artistic autonomy, and that's what we all crave, isn't it? To do what we want to do and not what everyone thinks is acceptable or what they think we should be doing, and working with whoever we want to as well.

Zoe

I'm wondering is it a very British-Irish model, the institution as gatekeeper? I'm having a lot of discussions in France at the moment and everything centres around the 'intermittents', which is the system of funding for artists. It's a very complex model, but you fulfil a certain amount of hours and you have a certain salary from that. And, although it's got its complexities and huge bureaucracy, there is more autonomy in it. You are not fixed to an institution and what an institution thinks of you, whether it'll be able to sell your show – there's a wider net to reach out to and more potential for freedom and autonomy in that.



Gresham Wooden Horse, Isabel Lima, a participatory, place-based project commissioned by Middlesbrough Institute of Modern Art and supported by Arts Council England, Platforma Festival/Counterpoints Arts and Thirteen Community Fund, 2017. Photo: Ian Robinson

Inspired by the ancient Greek story of the Trojan Horse, the collaborative building of the horse initially served as a catalyst for the cultivation of coalitions between citizens and non-citizens. It has since led to a 'neighbourhood plan', which has been produced by local communities setting out a vision for the Gresham area and containing policies for the use and development of local land.

Hassan

It's a very interesting model, the French model. I think it's been invented for a very particular reason. It's used by artists for a kind of safety net, which we don't really have here. We used to in the 80s – you could sign on the dole and, basically, they'd tell you to go off and come back two weeks later and collect your next cheque. And that's how the arts movement grew in the 1980s, in the UK at least: people went up, took the money and went off and did their own thing, knowing that at least they could pay the rent and buy themselves some food. Now we're just kind of in-harness and trying to break out of that somehow.

Evgeny

What resonates with me is combining what Sharon said with what Hassan said: finding an artist that an institution is comfortable with. I think it's an interesting way of thinking. Are you comfortable with that action as a group?

Hassan

I like Emma's notion of independent artists combining together and understanding that they have some strength and can make their own agenda, rather than try to fit into somebody else's agenda. They can explore what they want; they can choose who they want to work with or not work with.

Zoe

It kind of connected with what Khaled did, not waiting for institutions to recognise them and

creating their own. I think that's similar and very powerful.

Hassan Absolutely and this is an organisation that goes across boundaries, that isn't rooted in a building, that networks virtually most of the time – it might land somewhere at some point, but it's a virtual organisation that goes across borders. It's very interesting.

Zoe And, Evgeny, what you're involved in with the arts and cultural diversity and your work with Francesca, there's a similarity in that looking across networks in Ireland and trying to draw in people who might want to be part of that. It's different but there's a similarity in it, crossing the structures and creating networks and social capital in that way.

Emma The challenge is to not turn into an organisation.

Evgeny So for the second point, I have put 'to create our own autonomous space and not expect any approval from the institution'. For the third, I would take Jane's point about acknowledging the land we are on and remembering?

Hassan I think Emma's disorganisation instead of organisation, or un-organisation!



Thought Space by Tomasz Madajczak,
pictured at the launch of Mother Tongues
Festival 2020, Tallaght, Dublin. Photo: Elena
Cristofanon

The Mother Tongues Festival is the largest festival celebrating linguistic diversity through the arts in Ireland. Their mission is to showcase Ireland's rich artistic and cultural tapestry through the use of the multiple languages spoken in the country and to enable people to connect while engaging in diverse creative experiences.

Post-Breakout Sessions



Ailbhe

Welcome back. I'm going to call on each of the four moderators to give us their group's feedback. Unfortunately Theresa's connection dropped, so I will ask Carolann to speak for group one.

Feedback: Breakout Group 1

Carolann

It was a very good discussion. We didn't drill down the three points, but the need for space, time, money and that space to be physical, mental and emotional came from Nike and was felt very strongly by the room – that the labour can't be solely on the artist, and the artist needs supports and time to develop their work.

That when we present work we need to look outside of the northern European gaze and maybe situate practice and work in other countries to allow that understanding to be felt differently. The idea that there's only one voice that should be showcased was felt to be wrong and needs to be challenged. Space and time for growth for the artist and the institution, especially in Ireland when we're facing racism and how to deal with it in the first wave or iteration of it.

Feedback: Breakout Group 2

Dominik

Our group came up with a few suggestions. Firstly, any kind of policy being made and proposed should be followed by concrete actions, with money ring-fenced and objectives set up to follow. We should act more quickly and try to implement changes as soon as ideas are born, because policies take a long time to be implemented, so we should focus on actions and on what needs to – and can – happen quickly on the ground. Policies are important, but actions are meaningful, even if they are small and not fully rehearsed.

Secondly, we talked a lot about the expansion of arts ecology and the system of support. We wanted to suggest a more radical, more DIY attitude, so we are not dependent on big organisations so much but are able to create an ecosystem of support working directly with communities, and not using them as useful examples for funding opportunities. We should focus on active listening and working with them directly. That also applies to support for younger or more vulnerable artists and practitioners through mentoring or shadowing, and also financially if possible. A suggestion was that smaller organisations could apply for funding collectively as a consortium of sorts that could mutually benefit from financial opportunities and ideas and really enable any underrepresented practitioners to be part of a public-funding landscape.

Finally, there's a historical example of workers' cooperatives, but also more recently of migrant health-workers' cooperatives in Ireland, whose examples may lead the way forward for the arts industry. Coming together in the spirit of civic engagement, collectivism and self-organising, foregrounding collaboration and open dialogue, could be not only a friendlier, but perhaps also more politically effective, way of working.



Summer School on Cultural Diversity and Collaborative Practice, July 2019. Photo: Joseph Carr

The Artist in the Community Scheme Summer School on Cultural Diversity and Collaborative Practice is an annual peer to peer learning platform for artists devised and hosted by Create in partnership with Counterpoints Arts.

Feedback: Breakout Group 3

Miguel

The first thing we talked about was that we should continue to push forward agendas towards systemic change at government level for a larger redistribution of resources. We could be talking about universal basic income, which here in Ireland has recently been reintroduced as an idea by people within the arts as a way for extra funds and support. More specifically, we talked about the idea that arts organisations in general should be more focused on redistributing their own resources, rather than working with a small group of performers or practitioners within a specific framework of a programme. They should try to see themselves as enablers of support to a larger pool of artists and art workers and communities in general, rather than retaining the funding they have access to within the art field itself, which is already a site of privilege. They would actually be operating as a hub or a platform for those monies to be brought back to civil society by enabling artists and art workers to develop their work engaged with communities.

We also talked about the level of inequality in access to funding which is expected to be experienced in Ireland or beyond by people who might not be part of the mainstream identities or class. Something that could be developed is, rather than funding bodies giving stock feedback after an application, which is basically a neutral way of saying 'thank you for your application, we're sorry that we could not fund you', they could use some of that money to develop mentorship programmes for those that apply who might not be totally equipped to secure a grant but, through a mentorship scheme, could potentially access the tools to enable them to develop their professional career and, ultimately, to secure other sources of funding.

And finally, we talked about how we can develop a stronger dialogue between arts practitioners

in general or communities in general with gatekeepers in the system. These gatekeepers are more and more part of a sort of elite of the creative sector, an upper class of white highly educated people who don't really represent society at large and, for sure, don't represent the communities they say they serve. So how can we remove these gatekeepers, or at least make them more engaged and in dialogue with the system itself? One way would be to try to understand – at policy level or governmental level or almost ideological level – that grants support, public support to the arts or cultural community, cannot continue to be seen as part of a competitive way of working in which some benefit at the expense of others. Can we get rid of that competitive nature of the grant-giver system to enable more arts organisations, more artists, more practitioners to have access to funds and enable more reflection, more experimentation, rather than attach grant-giving to outcome-driven projects and practices?

Ailbhe

Thanks so much, lots of action points there.

Miguel

If we implement this it will start making a revolution.

Feedback: Breakout Group 4

Evgeny

Our conversation was all around shifting power and how to do that in a practical way. We identified three very solid phrases, and the first one is finding an artist that an institution is comfortable with and that will shake it from within. Another one is that we need to create our own autonomous spaces and not expect any approval from the institutions – like we don't care about them anymore. Become stronger and this will also shake the power dynamics and the hierarchy-



CAPP Cartographies, Susanne Bosch. Part of Practice and Power, June 2018, Dublin. Photo: Joseph Carr

CAPP Cartographies is a visual footprint of the research journey that artist Susanne Bosch undertook during the EU funded Collaborative Arts Partnership Programme 2014–2018. As the embedded researcher within the network, she applied a dialogical methodology to capture, gain and gather knowledge and insights with the key stakeholder groups and individuals involved.

established institutional artist. The third would be the acknowledgement of the land we are on—remembering is an important thing for decolonising. Remember the past, acknowledge that certain things from the past are still our present and be able to recognise it.

Also, we were speaking about the need to be open to mistakes – we don't have to be afraid of mistakes, of critiques received as a result of our mistakes, because we are learning. And to look at the margins and the periphery, using multi- and transdisciplinary ways in reaching each other, but also acknowledging that we are coming from certain educational backgrounds, from certain disciplines. It's hard to escape from them but we need to try.

Ailbhe

Thanks to all four of you for very succinct summaries. I'll hand over to Áine now to close.

Áine

That was really rich and incredibly fast moving and thinking from you, given that you had such a short time. I read the other day that a budget is both a moral and an ethical document and it really reminded me of some of the things that you have been saying, all of you, about the need to redistribute funds and to think how we are positioned in terms of dynamics in relation to those funds.



Afghan Camera Box (kamra-e-faoree'), Farhad Berahman, Who Are We? Tate Exchange – Counterpoints Arts Production, 2018. Photo: Marcia Chandra

Berahman's site-specific project was installed across communities of place and interest. The 'kamra-e-faoree' is still used as a traditional method of capturing memories by veteran street photographers in Afghanistan and Iran, where the hand-made wooden camera acts as both the camera and darkroom. For Berahman, the slow process of taking a photograph enables the capture and printing of photographs – creating a space for conversations with participants about belonging and un-belonging.

Ailbhe

Evgeny mentioned the land that we are situated within or standing on, and that is something to be thought through at the minute. One of the reasons that this Learning Lab came about is because of the cross-solidarity work between Create and Counterpoints Arts. Even though Counterpoints Arts is based in Hoxton and works nationally and internationally and Create is based in Dublin and works nationally and internationally, we have chosen to come together to begin that process of sharing resources and mindsets, and also what I think is a discourse of care, which is really important to cultivate. But today we just want to thank all the provocateurs who did a brilliant job in such a short period of time: Magdalena, Evgeny, Osei, Oein, Khaled, Bronwyn and Jijo; and Hassan and Nike for taking us a bit further in terms of the conversation; and all of the facilitators – Dominik, Evgeny, Teresa and Miguel; and everybody who stayed in the room.

We're planning to make a transcription of this conversation and send it out to all of you and then let's see what happens. This is the beginning, hopefully, of a series of conversations. We don't want to promise too much until we see the transcript, take stock and reflect on what has been an incredibly layered, rich and provocative conversation. I think the thing we need to put our minds to is, in this particular moment, can we work more cooperatively and comparatively? And I think it's really important. It's the cooperative and the comparative that will make the conversation even richer.

Thanks to everybody for your wonderful participation and particular thanks to the Create and Counterpoints Arts teams for all their work in organising today's event.

End

About Create and Counterpoint Arts

Create is the national development agency for collaborative arts. Our work initiates cross-sectoral national and international partnerships which support artists and communities to co-create work of depth, ambition and excellence. Create believes that by working together, artists and communities can purposefully explore how collaborative arts engage in distinct, relevant and powerful ways with the urgent social, cultural and political issues of our times. Through our management of the Arts Council's Artist in the Community (AIC) Scheme, and the AIC Cultural Diversity Strand in particular, Create is working to advance opportunities for artists from ethnic minority and migrant backgrounds to fully participate in shaping the arts and cultural landscape of Ireland. Create is also leading Creative Places Tuam, an Arts Council pilot programme 2020–2022. www.create-ireland.ie

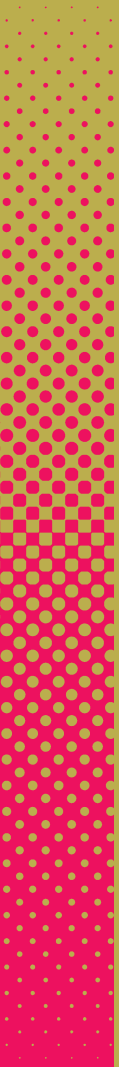
Counterpoints Arts works in the intersection of art, migration and cultural change. Counterpoints Arts navigates cross-sector partnerships, supporting artists and communities who have first-hand experience of displacement, alongside artists who are committed to exploring migration as a defining narrative, shaping contemporary culture and society. We work across all art forms; and everything we do is delivered in collaboration with partners from the field of arts and culture, advocacy, policy, human rights, community based work, activism and education. **The Counterpoints Arts' Learning Lab** programme makes research an accessible activity and is designed to mobilize horizontal, democratic spaces for peer-to-peer learning and the creation of new knowledge. Counterpoints Arts is based in Hoxton, London, working nationally and internationally.

List of Attendees

<https://counterpointsarts.org.uk>

Organisation	Name
Arts Council Ireland	Olwen Dawe, Project Lead (Equality, Human Rights and Diversity Policy)
Mother Tongues Festival	Francesca La Morgia, Researcher, Lecturer in Linguistics, Founder and Director
Dublin Fringe Festival	Bee Sparks, Artistic Projects Manager
Galway County Council	Sharon O'Grady, Arts Officer
Sirius Arts Centre, Cork	Miguel Amado, Director
A4 Sounds, Dublin	Lisa Crowne, Artist, Managing Director and Curator
Tate Modern, London	Jane Wells, Programme Manager of Tate Exchange
Tate Modern, London	Osei Bonsu, Curator of International Art at Tate Modern
Centre for the Less Good Idea, Johannesburg	Bronwyn Lace, Visual Artist and Director
Artist	Oein DeBhairdúin, Writer and Activist
Artist	Emma Grady, Theatremaker
Artist	Jijo Sebastian, Filmmaker
Artist	Zoe O'Reilly, Researcher, Writer and Visual Ethnographer
Artist	Anthony Haughey, Artist, Researcher and lecturer, TU Dublin
Artist	Hina Khan, Visual Artist
Artist	Tomasz Madajczak, Visual Artist
Artist	Felicia Olusonya, Poet, Performer, Playwright
Artist	Owodunni Ola Mustapha, Writer and Activist for Social Inclusion and Supports to Asylum Seekers

Coculture, Berlin	Khaled Barakeh, Berlin-Based Syrian Artist, Cultural Activist and Founder of Coculture
Curator	Dominik Czechowski, Independent Curator and Writer
Immigrant Council of Ireland	Teresa Buczkowska, Integration Manager
Pavee Point Traveller and Roma Center, Dublin	Caoimhe McCabe, Information Officer
Pavee Point Traveller and Roma Center, Dublin	Rosaleen McDonagh, Board Member and Playwright
Movement of Asylum Seekers in Ireland	Lucky Khambule, Founder
Irish Council for Civil Liberties	Sinéad Nolan, Public Engagement and Communications
Arts Council Scotland/ Creative Scotland	Helen Trew, Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion Specialist
International Federation of Arts Councils and Culture Agencies	Magdalena Moreno Mujica, Executive Director
The Creative Case for Diversity	Hassan Mahamdallie
Counterpoint Arts	Nike Jonah, Creative Producer, Pop Culture and Social Change
Counterpoint Arts	Marcia Chandra, Creative Producer
Counterpoint Arts	Dijana Rakovic, Project Manager
Counterpoint Arts	Dr Áine O'Brien, Curator of Learning and Research and Co-Founder
Counterpoint Arts	Shayane Lacey
Create	Dr. Ailbhe Murphy, Director
Create	Áine Crowley, Programme Manager, Arts and Engagement
Create	Carolann Courtney, Creative Places Tuam Coordinator
Create	Evgeny Shtorn, Artist in the Community Scheme Cultural Diversity Researcher
Create	Vance Wing-Sze Lau, Arts and Cultural Programme Coordinator



This report was produced by Create, in collaboration with Counterpoints Arts.
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