

Culture Commission
Call for Submissions

A Submission from
FABLEVISION

INTRODUCTION

Fablevision was constituted in 1983 and has been developing socially engaged arts and cultural practice methodology, instigating projects, training and developing artists, community groups and other stakeholders ever since.

Fablevision led the field in the latter part of the 20th century and the projects initiated by Fablevision today are leading in education, planning, social inclusion, regeneration and other fields. Fablevision is committed continuing leadership in the 21st century, developing and delivering cultural projects that assist with making communities convivial and safe, getting people back into work, encouraging cultural diversity, improving health, raising educational attainment and engaging the most disenfranchised young people. In recent years, Fablevision has been the key organisation in developing infrastructure and support networks at neighbourhood, city, national and international levels as well as delivering socially engaged action research projects in key areas of identified need.

Background

During the 1980s and 1990s, Fablevision adopted an action research approach to perceived cultural needs through empowering local and stakeholder partnership responses. Fablevision developed a way of working with key community groups and individuals as well as stakeholders and funding bodies in the public and private sectors.

For example, in 1983, Fablevision recognised the lack of youth theatre provision in Scotland's largest town of Paisley. Over a five year period, the company worked with young people and stakeholders in Paisley to develop the Paisley Youth Theatre (now the largest in Scotland). Another example of the Fablevision methodology began in 1987 when the company perceived the need for a transformation in social attitudes towards people with disabilities. The company instigated partnership working between artists and people with disabilities – developing, empowering and skills training disabled people with an interest in theatre over a five year period until there was a critical mass of disabled theatre practitioners (and the first two in Scotland had gained their equity cards). Fablevision then supported the development of Scotland's first (and now foremost) professional theatre company managed by theatre practitioners with a disability – Birds of Paradise. Whilst integrated cultural work is now accepted practice, it is important to remember that in the early 1980's, the work of Fablevision in theatre, Projectability in the area of visual arts and Sounds of Progress in the music field was cutting edge, controversial and challenging to the accepted mores of the day.

Another example of the Fablevision approach to perceived need was between 1992 and 1999 when the company worked with members of the Scottish Asian community in Glasgow to develop new approaches to cultural diversity within theatre. An emerging inter cultural theatre company in the early years of the 21st century is the result of this work.

The above examples are thematic developments in disability, with disenfranchised young people and in developing cultural diversity. The company has also instigated key neighbourhood partnership developments – from the Easterhouse Festival Society inspired Ruchazie! Ruchazie! Project during 1990 to the internationally acclaimed Royston Road Project in 2000 and many, many more in between.

With a constant nation wide programme of mainstream theatre and innovative theatre in education, Fablevision has worked at a local neighbourhood and city level as well as internationally - networking and mounting collaborative work with European artists and arts organisations. The company has a place at the table in Council of Europe deliberations on European socially engaged cultural practices and their role in city regeneration and civil society (Culture and Neighbourhoods, Council of Europe publications, 1998). Fablevision has developed networks of socially engaged artists and arts organisations at neighbourhood level (Greater Govan and Glasgow North for example) at national level (the Arts and Communities Association for Scotland) and at international level (as founder members and Council officers of the European network Banlieues d'Europe).

In the 21st Century, the empowering and transformatory potential of socially engaged arts and culture is recognised by all sectors. Governments, local authorities, cities, planners, enterprise agencies, housing associations, the police, health boards, youth services, child care, social work, are a few of the key players who are trying to harness them for positive benefit to society.

Lack of clarity in terms of methodological distinctions, however, is still hampering strategic development. Most socially engaged cultural organisations and networks (including Fablevision) remain project funded in spite of their now recognised vital contribution to civil society. As can be evidenced from examples of successful Fablevision projects, the key to successful strategic cultural development is long term sustainable work from the grass roots which builds and grows over a period of many years.

Fablevision Response to Questions from the Culture Commission:

1. On the question of education: How do we develop artistic, cultural and social skills and provide cultural knowledge?

* "Banking" education (education which is based on the transfer of information) is insufficient in terms of developing citizenship. The socially engaged cultural sector must lead education in discovering new ways to unleash the full creative potential of every citizen.

2. In terms of institutional infrastructure: how best to organise and support the cultural sector to provide accessible culture and cultural facilities, encourage creativity at all levels of society and deliver the maximum value in the most effective manner?

*There is a need for new cultural institutions and new forms of leadership from the grass roots. Neither the public nor the private sector can be asked to deliver on this agenda. Rather, these sectors are best placed to support institutions within civil society on the delivery of sustainable cultural development towards a civil society. There are existing grass roots local, national and international organisations and networks within the third sector who are delivering powerfully on this agenda without core funding or strategic support from the public or private sectors. These organisations are best placed to deliver the agenda as long as resources are made available on a long term, strategic basis.

3. In terms of cultural rights, what legislation is required by at national government level?

* We don't really need new legislation. What we need is nation states and their governments like the Scottish Executive and the UK national government to:

- a. understand what cultural rights for every citizen means (access to and participation in appropriate cultural forms which are freely chosen and allow the creativity of each human being to be acknowledged, respected and contribute to the building of civil society)
- b. use the existing legislation powerfully and ensure it is put into practice within Scotland starting at grass roots neighbourhood level.

4. Responsibility for ensuring the cultural rights of every citizen are respected:

* The key question is about responsibility. Where in Scotland does responsibility lie for implementing cultural rights? This cannot be left to governments, arms length government agencies or local authorities, as they are always going to be required to prioritise the political agenda of the day.

* The key agents for delivery of cultural rights exist within civil society: the third sector and in particular third sector cultural organisations, artists and cultural workers who engage with people at neighbourhood level.

5. Planning for Delivery of cultural rights to every citizen

* Ensuring cultural rights for the Scottish citizen and those of its creative community requires careful planning. Socially engaged artists and arts organisations can assist the cultural commission of the Scottish executive in the development of a sustainable cultural development plan for Scotland. Fablevision, with its decades of experience in this area, coupled with its action research methodological approach is positioned to take a key role in this process.

* The key sector for delivery of cultural rights and ensuring sustainable cultural development creating civil society within nation states is neither the private nor the public sector. Rather, it is the independent third sector: the voluntary sector; those cultural social enterprises which are employing socially engaged artists, the socially engaged artists themselves and the networks (locally nationally and internationally) which represent them. Fablevision is key in the areas of employment, training, networking and delivering action research projects.

6. Fablevision, Action Research in Cultural Planning for Scotland

In 2004, Fablevision is positioned as Scotland's cultural planning action research organisation and can be viewed by the Scottish Executive as a key resource in the delivery of the cultural rights agenda. Working in partnership with socially engaged neighbourhood arts organisations and networks as well as national and international cross sectoral agencies and networks, Fablevision is developing a five year action research plan to support the Scottish Executive in the development and delivery of the new cultural vision for Scotland in the 21st Century

Recommendations:

- Strengthen existing, and set up of new, networks to allow socially engaged arts and cultural organisations to engage fully with their regeneration and community planning partners. Existing neighbourhood networks like Roots in Greater Govan and NGARN in Glasgow North, city wide networks like Edinburgh Arts and Social Inclusion network, national networks like Connector, run by the Arts & Communities association complemented by sector specific national networks like Commedia for community radio etc are examples of how this could be done.
- Promote skills development and sharing between social justice and cultural organisations, as well as between artists and community development workers as is already being developed by the likes of Senscot (the network for social enterprise in Scotland) and Connector.
- Appoint a high level 'champion' within the Scottish Executive to raise an awareness of models of good practice and to lobby on behalf of the sector.
- Provide core support for existing arts organisations that have demonstrated the ability to contribute to the Scottish Executives five national Social Inclusion Partnership priorities like Fablevision, Giant, Projectability, Sounds of Progress and many more.
- Provide core support for existing national networks which are supporting the organisations and artists like the Arts and Communities Association, Voluntary Arts Scotland, Commedia.
- Provide core support for locally based networks supporting socially engaged grass roots organisations and artists like EASIF, Roots, NGARN and many others at a city and local level.
- Support, both financially and structurally, cross departmental programmes to enable effective and integrated partnership working to take place, linking appropriate arts and cultural organisations into existing and citywide planning structures.
- Commission Fablevision to carry out a five year cultural planning programme of action research in education, health, physical planning and strategic cultural development towards delivering cultural rights to every citizen in Scotland.

Liz Gardiner
September 2004

LARIS/VOL ✓

Karen

From: Caroline
Sent: 14 September 2004 11:59
To: info
Subject: FW: submission from fablevision[Scanned]

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-----Original Message-----

From: Liz Gardiner [mailto:liz@fablevision.org]
Sent: 10 September 2004 17:27
To: Caroline
Subject: submission from fablevision[Scanned]

hi caroline
please find attached a submission from fablevision to the culture commission review
perhaps you could indicate to me its safe arrival?
thanks
liz

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