

Submission to the Cultural Commission Phase 2

The Centre for Community Arts Research & Practice has already submitted to the first stage and much of that initial submission alludes to the questions identified in the Phase 2.

Unfortunately current demands and deadlines for the Centre's work have prevented us from responding to each of the 62 questions. However, there are a number of other networks' responses to which we have contributed, and it is hoped that this short and limited submission supports the debate.

If required, we have a number of pieces of research and publications which can develop and support the points we make under each section.

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Rights, Entitlements and Responsibilities

Cultural rights are inherent to human rights and cannot be separated. If separation should happen then it is inevitable that cultural rights will become part of the bargaining process in arts funding and from there no more than a commodity defined by administrators as to their expression. Such a structure only feeds commentators who already see aspects of human rights as defined through a western conceptualisation.

The acknowledgement within the current debate that cultural expression is integral to the healthy formation of the personality has been a long time in this being more widely understood. Personality, identity and citizenship are not aspects of Humanity which can be reduced to mere materialist analysis.

Cultural Leadership

The integrity, philosophy, principles and often pedagogy of management practice required for cultural leadership remain a key concern for those engaged with arts and cultural industries. There remains evidence that often layers of managerialism have detracted funds and focus away from arts and cultural development. The assumptions of formulaic models, instead of management cited in practice, remain an expensive and lazy, wasteful contradiction. Cultural leadership is concerned with identifying contradictions and

addressing these through the example of resolving through creative intelligence.

Cultural leadership is a responsive and fluent process which uses the same reflective processes as artists and makers. Leadership serves the development of creative intelligence in human beings at every level of interaction. It is responsible and is informed by Human Rights and the Ecology of Humanity, it is beyond short-term politics but is a political being; it generates learning and is informed by rigorous and systematic research which is not just science based but humanities based.

Pan-Sectoral Planning

In considering this section of the Phase 2 consultation, the most dominant concern is to ensure that no monster is created that takes years to undo.

Scotland has an authentic tradition and practice of building through community and cultural development which is distinct from other parts of Britain, so beware imported models which are often rejected and seen as contradictory to existing practices such as community planning and development. It is these education-based practices which have contributed to the welcoming and integration of new communities, cultures and ideas. It is through these practices that people have a nourishing understanding of their own identity and are therefore open to welcoming the 'new'.

Within pan-sectoral planning, perhaps the need for continuous reflection to ensure that there are no cultural assumptions being made which is one of the most defining characters of bad practice. Is there ever a model which is transferable? No, not if it is good practice, because good practice demands acknowledgement of the context. It is the principles of practice that are transferable. Anything else questions the very heart of the debate of cultural rights, again just reducing these rights to a commodified framework.

Funding Arrangements

Inevitably since the beginning of arts councils there have been criteria for funding which have been influenced by contemporary political policy. This means that arts organisations very often define themselves and their activities by these directives, rather than being concerned with creating and developing their original purpose. How well an organisation can evolve and morph to achieve this depends on their principles and pedagogy. It seems a waste of resources however for an organisation which is really good at something and continues to develop the artform, to become just mediocre at some other activity as it is a response to the latest policy. This reduces and dilutes specialism and dedicated expertise. In the same way as the Health Service has distinct Health Education and Development and Research, so the Arts need such specialisms to ensure that a network of commodified mediocrity is not generated. Dedicated specialists inform development and practice.

Within current funding arrangements, there is considerable evidence to show the consequences of an organisation being dependant on one source of income which also drives an organisation to meet just the criteria of that source. A coherent funding structure which serves artists, arts workers, participants, arts and cultural organisations and can be a structure which can live beyond the 4 year political life requires careful building. It requires an insight into the human creative psyche and its expression which is beyond just being seen as a response to current whim. We are more than that as human beings. Funding arrangements can ensure that creative output builds on authentic and strong work and so creating frameworks that ensure the dynamic interchange between community and international, that ensures specialisms entwine into development, that innovation has a support structure.

In all the considerations, it is a sobering reminder to acknowledge that the people who deliver much of the funded arts projects that are community based, are low-waged, self-employed artists with little job security and career development opportunities. It is these artists who are contracted for short term work to deliver complex and demanding arts projects. What other industry expects delivery of its purpose and principles by the very people who are least secure?

Standards & Evaluation

In considering this section, perhaps the very first question is always going to be – what is it that is to be measured and by what means? Whatever is measured will generate the cultural output, for example in the Health service extra funding is awarded to bring down waiting lists, so waiting lists are generated to attract the funding.

So rather than using utilitarian measurements for standards and evaluation, a more realistic evaluation can be based on what the organisation, the artists, the participants learned and what would they do differently next time based on this learning. Therefore evaluation is no longer a static measurement but an artistic process that is inherent to practice. Currently there are evaluation forms for arts and cultural work which could also be used for measuring the level of comfort in an airport lounge.

It remains the responsibility of those who create the governance of an organisation and those who create partnerships to ensure the principles of standards and evaluation. It is they who generate whether or not there is a learning environment or a static environment.

Operations and administration

Our response and consideration of the points outlined in this section have been covered in our first submission and elsewhere in this second submission.

However, it can be emphasised, as it was in the first submission, that international cultural development can be lead by developing centres of specialism which can nourish, educate and develop humanity.

Edinburgh is associated internationally with having the seeds of such work and it is this opportunity which can lead major international work.

[The need for attitudinal change to ensure that resources and monies go to performance and participation rather than management and administration begins with this statement in the 62 questions!] Until management, research and evaluation are cited in practice then the tension between managerialism and arts will remain. Whilst the current fad of 'MBA - ing' the arts and cultural industries remains, there is little hope of more rigorous practices. [There are very few of these MBA courses which include the development of critical thinking.]

Local Authorities

The 'adequate provision' term has been problematic, particularly since Local Government reorganisation. The notion of adopting national standards would need to be rigorously interrogated as once again, there is the danger of creating some formulaic model which undermines creativity and cultural context.

Local Authority Arts Officers and arts teams provide an informed resource and network but can lack integration into their authorities at strategic level. The 'fire-brigade or dance artist in residence' culture can prevail. However, there are also requirements for officers to have more critical debate about what they are generating and promoting, and why.

Regional Bodies

In considering the questions in this section, there remains a need for clarification of intention in the formation of regional bodies. How is cultural planning different from cultural development? Do we want culture that is developed through communities engaging with the democratic process and contributing to developments, do we want a regional body planning and defining what our participation should be? Do we follow models and re-models from our neighbours in England, do we put stronger resources into community development and community planning which actively feed and inform cultural development?

If the formation of another layer of 'planning' and 'administration' takes any resources from art and cultural activity then such bodies are extremely hard to justify.

National

[This is taken from the Centre's first submission to the cultural commission].

The National organisations are diplomats for our values as a nation and their work reflects the humanity of our cultural life. Their work should explore and express our contemporary human condition for us to learn and delight – whilst Minding our Past. But the work should not be stuck in 19th Century aesthetics and the management requires

engagement with the processes which are discussed earlier in this submission, and do not reflect those 19th Century principles. Internationally, national Scottish work should lead in the expression of our humanity and at the Edinburgh International Festival we should be seen as the home to which all other artists and arts organisations in the world come to refresh themselves in such thinking and learning. The role of our universities and colleges in developing this work is implicit to this vision. There is an imperative to interweave with the arts in the nourishing of such thinking and application and our research work in this area is what the visiting artists from the world over come to participate in and learn from. The formation of the National Theatre and the values and governance that are generated, resound a warm welcome.

Cross-cutting

Our response to this section is interwoven within the other sections of our submission. However, we would highlight once more, the need for the highest standards of understanding and expression to be employed in any partnership work. This can only be achieved through rigorous development work when forming the partnerships. The very nature of sport and art for example can become no more than mediocre activity if reduced to 'collaborative sport forms'. Cross-cutting work can be productive, effective and challenging. It can also be boring, trivial and reductive.