CULTURAL DEMOCRACY IN PRACTICE

by 64 Million Artists with Arts Council England

September 2018

Foreword from Darren Henley,
Chief Executive, Arts Council England

Fun Palaces. Photo by: Helen Murray

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Cover image: Fun Palaces. Photo by: Tom Parker

FOREWORD

Arts Council England has commissioned this guide to support those who are interested in finding out more about Cultural Democracy and exploring how they might put it into practice. It's aimed at those who are starting out on this journey, although we hope there will be something of interest here for those who already work in this way.

There is no single 'right' way to engage people in arts and culture and at Arts Council England we recognise that organisations and individual artists do this in lots of ways. We do see that where Cultural Democracy is taken seriously it can have a powerful impact on who engages, and the type of art and culture produced.

The idea of Cultural Democracy is not a new one. Many organisations across the country, both publicly funded and otherwise, have been operating according to this ethos since they were first established. Many of our funded organisations have been working in this way, whether via community decision making panels or through their volunteer and youth programmes and let's not forget the amazing amount of amateur activity; community choirs, amateur theatre groups and art clubs, that happen as a result of a local community's desire to engage with arts and culture, on their terms.

Our programme Creative People and Places works very much like this; it's about more people choosing, creating and taking part in brilliant art experiences in the places where they live. The programme is proving that engaging communities, participants and audiences in decision making processes is enabling deeper participation with arts and culture, particularly in places with traditionally low levels of cultural engagement. The process of being involved in commissioning is enabling individuals to feel a sense of ownership over the arts and cultural provision in their local area. It is also ensuring that this provision remains relevant and representative of the community it serves and contributes to the vital need for an expansion of cultural and creative diversity. Taking this approach can mean everyone has the opportunity to experience and be inspired by Arts and Culture.

We appreciate that much of the leading activity around Cultural Democracy takes place outside of the funded, indeed outside of the professional, arts and cultural sector. In 2016 we commissioned 64 Million Artists to gather a wide range of views about Everyday Creativity, which highlighted the significant role played by the voluntary and amateur sectors in enabling access to arts and culture for their local communities.

With this publication we hope to share examples of the excellent work taking place across the funded sector, highlighting best practice, and contributing to the case for Cultural Democracy and the potential benefits of open decision making, co-creation, co-curation and co-production for arts organisations and their communities so that many more people across England and beyond can enjoy, be empowered by and create fantastic cultural experiences.

**Darren Henley, Chief Executive,
Arts Council England**

Fun Palaces. Photo by: Tom Parker

INTRODUCTION

The term Cultural Democracy describes an approach to arts and culture that actively engages everyone in deciding what counts as culture, where it happens, who makes it, and who experiences it. It is not a new concept, but it's one that seems to be gaining focus across arts and culture. It's also often misunderstood or misused within the cultural sector.

In this guide we argue that there is a sliding scale of Cultural Democracy, that it's not a fixed thing but a range of approaches to widening involvement in arts and culture. In many cases formal arts and culture practices what we might term the 'democratisation of culture.' This assumes that there is a formally recognised definition of what constitutes culture (determined by a relatively small number of people) and that it is the duty of publicly funded arts organisations (who are the gatekeepers) to make it widely available. This democratisation has fuelled some brilliant work to diversify audiences and open up many of our institutions to people who often don't think formal culture is for them. But we are suggesting that true Cultural Democracy is different to this. It describes a simple proposition – that art and culture is unbounded, and encapsulates all kinds of activities—from the personal to the collective, informal and formal, from grime to opera, knitting to line dancing, the West End to fringe to gardening, cooking and everything in between. Cultural Democracy underpins a culture that is debated, designed, made...by, with and for, everyone. This much broader definition extends beyond work funded by Arts Council England. But it's an important

and significant part of a much wider ecology of arts and culture in this country. To recognise and celebrate this diversity is to acknowledge the rich ecology of our cultural life.

This approach has been at the heart of 64 Million Artists since our inception in 2014. We believe that everyone is creative and that when we are we can make positive change in our lives and in the world around us. For us, the power of creativity and culture is about so much more than just seeing a show, or listening to music—it is about actively participating in the world around us, making it, shaping it, uncovering it. We think this presents an opportunity for the existing sector that is potentially untapped.

Cultural Democracy isn't anti professional arts practice or the artist. Great artists, curators, directors, producers help us look at the world differently, and make sense of our place within. But it challenges the idea that art is only what artists do. It is rooted in the idea that we are culture—that everyone of the 64 million of us can be actively engaged in its production and presentation, and all the thinking and feeling that surrounds that.

This guide is aimed principally at Chief Executives, boards and staff of arts organisations in the UK and seeks to tackle particular issues within the sector. We want to offer something practical for those that want to move towards a democratic approach to culture. We hope it offers a bunch of carrots, not sticks to

beat ourselves with. A set of practical steps that arts organisations might take on a journey towards nothing less than a cultural revolution in this country. We will argue there is an economic, social and political case for this revolution; and that the risk of ignoring it may be that formally defined arts and culture becomes increasingly irrelevant in a society that wants to be actively involved in everything.

As with all of our work, we aim not to be the sole authority on this subject, merely facilitators enabling others to join the debate, to have a voice. With this in mind we travelled across England, and beyond, meeting people who are already doing great work in this area. The findings in this guide are based on feedback from them. We have tried to reach beyond our own networks and experiences to offer some exemplars of excellent practice. There are things we will have missed and so we have created a living document online and invite contributors to add case studies and conversations over the coming months.

There are many organisations, including a number of Creative People and Places projects, community artists and socially-engaged groups, for whom these guidelines will feel obvious. Instead we are talking to those who might be curious about exploring a new way of engaging with people at every level of a community or organisation. It's called Cultural Democracy because it's about the inclusion of everyone. It's about fundamentally shifting the way we talk about, think about, and value culture. We believe this is central to the future of a culture that is relevant, innovative and valued by all. We really hope you enjoy reading this as much as we enjoyed putting it together. It might raise as many questions as it answers and we think that's ok. We hope you do too.

Jo Hunter, David Micklem and Ed Ikin
64 Million Artists

'Cultural Democracy is welcoming everyone, not worrying about the result, not imposing standards or ideas, being given permission.'

Carine Osmont, Maker,
Fun Palaces

Contact, Manchester Dynamic Beginnings.
Photo by: Joel Chester Fildes

Many people have debated and defined Cultural Democracy.

In their 2017 report Towards Cultural Democracy, Nick Wilson and Jonathan Gross of King's College London describe it as 'when people have the substantive freedom to make versions of culture.' John Holden, who has also written extensively in this area, cites 'universalism, pluralism, equality, transparency and freedom' as central elements of Cultural Democracy. Don Adams and Arlene Goldbard suggest there are three central components to it:

- that many cultural traditions co-exist in human society, and that none of these should be allowed to dominate and become an 'official culture'
- that there is a cultural life in which everyone is free to participate
- cultural life itself should be subject to democratic control. We need to participate in determining the directions that cultural development takes.

From Democratisation of Culture to Cultural Democracy

'If Cultural Democracy has an ideal, it is not some distant heaven towards which we are guided by a priesthood, but the quality of what we are doing, sharing, living now. It is about making sense of where we are, through creative and artistic interaction with others. It's about working out for ourselves what we think is good and why, always remembering that others think differently for equally valid reasons.'
Francois Matarasso

If democratisation sees culture as pre-defined, governed by the few, and open to the many, Cultural Democracy is a state in which everyone feels empowered to actively participate in the broadest range of cultural activity.

Arts and cultural organisations looking to work towards Cultural Democracy might shift:

...from (the democratisation of culture)	...to (Cultural Democracy)
asking your audience or stakeholders for feedback on your ideas	facilitating the ideas of your stakeholders, or co-creating together
launching a programme or product and marketing it far and wide	working with stakeholders from the outset to co-create a programme
employing professional artists to come up with ideas for community programmes	employing professional artists to work with communities to co-create ideas
convening a youth board who give feedback but don't hold decision making power	supporting young people to play an active role in governance and decision-making
a leader with all the ideas who disseminates them to others	a leader who facilitates others to have ideas
defined limits for culture such as visual art, theatre, dance, music etc	a recognition that all of that, and much much more (including gardening, cooking, knitting, fashion etc) is part of culture, even if it isn't funded.
community outreach, engagement and participation 'departments'	communities and engagement at the heart of arts and cultural organisations
selling cheaper tickets to encourage broader audiences	connecting with broader audiences to better understand what they might want
a learning and community team leading on engaging people	making engagement a core organisational value
people as audiences	people as participants

Broadening definitions of culture

For many reasons, the formal arts and cultural sector has, up until now, adopted a fairly narrow definition of culture, prescribed by the artform definitions that are often required by funders and other statutory bodies. Because of this 'arts and culture' is often seen as exclusive, not-diverse, not for everyone. If you're not interested in what's included in that, then de facto you're not interested in, or even excluded from, 'culture.'

By changing the way we think of culture, it becomes inherently diverse, because everyone is already a part of it. Most people participate in activities like listening to music, watching television, going to the cinema, using their local park, gardening, cooking, dancing, singing, expressing a passion or interest in something cultural. Far fewer people regularly take part in formal funded cultural activities. The Warwick Commission on the Future of Cultural Value stated that the average weekly reach of the BBC is 96.5% of the population whereas in publicly funded formal culture the 'two most highly culturally engaged groups account for only 15% of the general population and tend to be of higher socio-economic status.' By relaxing and broadening our definition of what it comprises, culture immediately becomes more diverse and engaging. This isn't to say that everything under the banner of culture suddenly

needs to be funded by ACE or other funders, but by recognising the broader picture, we can better address how funded culture is positioned.

However, it's not just about definitions of what constitutes culture. Contributors to this report repeatedly made the case for supporting people to take a more active role in cultural life. This is a shift from being consumers to being active participants who have a stake in both the creative process and product they are involved with. The Warwick Commission report cites the need to guarantee equal access for everyone to have the 'opportunity to live a creative life'. It makes the case for individual and collective creativity as a fundamental human right – a part of what makes us human and societies thrive. We believe in order to live a creative life you need to have an active role in it, and it's this belief that sits at the heart of the idea of Cultural Democracy.

Super Slow Way. Beyond Labels, In Young Mens Shoes. Photo Saqib Choudrey

'What I see described as culture isn't democratic, isn't diverse, but there's all sorts of other stuff out there that is owned by everyone.'

Asad Ullah, performer, Fat Blokes, Scottee and Friends

The Quality Question

One of the principle objections to the notion of Cultural Democracy comes from those who question the quality of arts and culture made by, and with, people who aren't 'professional' artists. It is said that 'Great Art' is what artists do—and if everyone has permission to think of themselves as creative, the quality of art is questionable. Objectors reinforce a perceived binary between great art and everyone, between excellence and access.

The professionalisation of arts and cultural institutions has reinforced this sense that quality is something to be defined by arts professionals and that it is principally applied to creative output. One video installation is declared to be of higher quality than another. One show is four stars, another two. One artist is a 'cultural institution', another 'emerging'.

This implied hierarchy, between great art and access, runs counter to the notion of Cultural Democracy. Cultural Democracy isn't concerned with attempts to define what is excellent art and what's not. What it thrives on is excellent practice, brilliant facilitation,

great processes, awesome approaches to decision-making, developing, making, sharing, and engaging. Excellent processes, open and accessible, are at the heart of this notion of Cultural Democracy. Our focus here is on process, less on output, though often in the case studies we found output was greatly improved through a democratics approach. Throughout this guide we suggest some excellent approaches we might build consensus around. Excellent output is far more subjective and has traditionally been defined by a relatively small group of artists, arts professionals and critics.

Cultural Democracy isn't about low quality art or dumbed down culture. It's rooted in the principle of excellence—that everyone should feel able to express themselves creatively and that by doing so, excellent outcomes can be achieved. Cultural Democracy is not constrained by the received wisdom of what comprises excellence and what doesn't. It's liberated beyond artform definitions, outside of an obsession with output, away from a sense of one group of people judging another's work.

'Democracy means that the lines between beginner and expert / professional and amateur across demographic - those lines are blurred. People become the makers as much as the artists'.

Chris O'Connell, Shop Front Theatre

CULTURAL DEMOCRACY
- some whys

Why now?

- Because despite some great work, the approach of 'democratising art and culture' has still resulted in the 'wealthiest, better educated and least ethnically diverse 8% of the population forming the most culturally active segment of all' (Warwick Commission Report on the Future of Cultural Value). Similarly, 43% of ticket sales of National Portfolio Organisations go to a group of frequent attenders and although Creative People and Places have made great strides in this area, the division between the two approaches is significant (see p20 for Audience Agency data)
- Because there are rich and untapped seams of art and cultural activity right across the country — in bedrooms, front rooms, village halls, mosques, rooms above pubs, public parks, back gardens, everywhere and these are being capitalised on by other areas of the creative industries and commercial companies but aren't valued by the cultural sector, who also don't benefit from them
- Because the very notion of active participation is becoming the norm in the digital age, and a culturally democratic approach supports this
- Because there is a risk that unless the cultural sector listens and becomes more relevant to society, it will fail to pull in government funding or earned income

Why at all? What are the benefits to you, your organisation, the sector, or the wider world?

- Because there is a compelling business case: our case studies have shown increases in footfall, long-term engagement, revenue, volunteer hours, funding and diversification of products and services as a result of opening up their decision making
- Because there is a compelling social case: participants in our case studies have seen improvements in educational attainment, feelings of community belonging, engagement in local politics, professional qualifications and employment as professional artists
- Because there is a compelling political case: much of the formal arts and culture in this country is publicly funded —through taxes and the National Lottery—and yet the current cultural sector is not reflective of the public, and does not formally serve it. We need to radically rethink who gets a say in what kinds of support different kinds of practice might require.

Shop front Theatre
Photo by: Andrew Moore

Why not? What are the challenges facing people trying to shift towards this way of working?

- Because supporting everyone to feel valued is hard to adjust to— it takes time and patience to change embedded working practices
- Because it can cause friction for existing 'experts' within organisations, destabilising structures and established relationships
- Because some funders find it difficult to fund this kind of work as the outcomes are not always predictable — it's as much about process as product and so projects can be harder to describe in funding applications
- Because this way of working feels counterintuitive to a lot of organisations who are used to setting the agenda, deciding what happens and leading on all artistic output

Why you? Why would you be invested in this way of working, and what can you change?

- Because you care about art and culture and in the widest enjoyment of cultural lives across the country
- Because you believe in democracy and equality
- Because you have influence in the sector — as a board member, a Chief Executive, a staff member, a participant, a volunteer
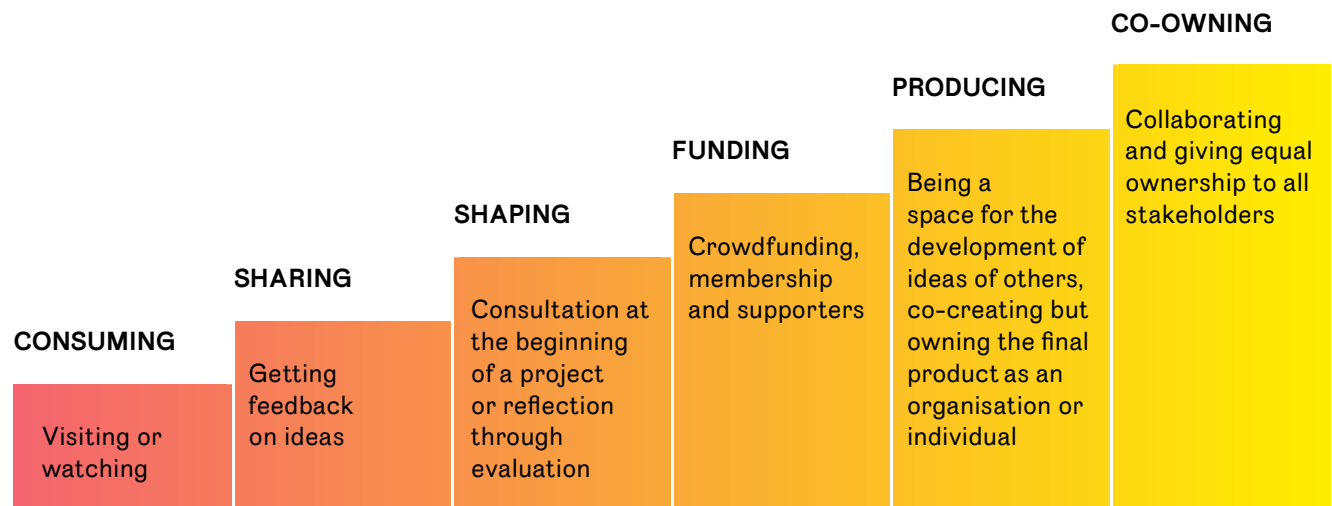
Moving towards Cultural Democracy: Taking small steps

Cultural Democracy is not always an easy path to pursue. Concerns about loss of rigour, quality or control may challenge an organisation's cultural norms or strategic direction: many worry that hard-fought-for brand currency could be diminished by a loss of artistic integrity. Whilst true Cultural Democracy has a number of absolutes, the path towards it can be incremental and iterative. Not everything needs to be done at once.

We've adapted Jeremy Heimans and Henry Timms participation scale from their work on new power to explore a set of incremental stages towards Cultural Democracy. Perhaps try identifying where you are on the scale currently, and what the small steps are that you can take forward.

'Shared democratic ownership is difficult. There are no shortcuts. But it is incredibly rewarding. It's more time consuming but much, much richer. And once you've done it it's hard to imagine doing it any other way.'

Hilary Jennings, Happy Museum

CONSUMING
Visiting or watching

SHARING
Getting feedback on ideas

SHAPING
Consultation at the beginning of a project or reflection through evaluation

FUNDING
Crowdfunding, membership and supporters

PRODUCING
Being a space for the development of ideas of others, co-creating but owning the final product as an organisation or individual

CO-OWNING
Collaborating and giving equal ownership to all stakeholders

MOVING TOWARDS CULTURAL DEMOCRACY:
Embedding values

The interviews that informed this report have helped identify five key values. These are reflected in the case studies that pepper this report, and are described here as principles to underpin greater Cultural Democracy within arts and cultural organisations. Throughout the next two sections you'll see references to the case studies we've shown later in this report, you can either click on the hyperlinks, flick through the booklet or visit our blog to find more detailed information on these.

- **Leader as facilitator**

- **Agency and permission**

- **Valuing everyone – equality of expertise**

- **Active participation**

- **Valuing process and product equally**

Leader as facilitator

Achieving Cultural Democracy requires traditional models of leadership to be reconsidered or challenged, and some power over decision-making to be relinquished. The sector has been defined by a relatively small number of leaders who decide what constitutes art and culture. This 'top-down' approach closes off access to many potential participants who may feel little agency or opportunity to feel part of formalised culture. Recasting the leader as key facilitator opens up culture to far wider numbers of artists, audiences and participants. Here, as Hilary Jennings of Happy Museums pointed out, 'the skills of a leader become much more about asking the right questions than having the answers.'

Agency and permission

At the heart of a good democratic process lies the empowerment, self-expression and collaboration of everyone. If people feel they have permission to be involved, that they have something to contribute, that their opinions matter, then they are more likely to want to be included. The giving of this permission is key, as many people have felt excluded or 'done-to' for a long time, and therefore this process can be slow. In the Northern Heartlands case study for example, several of the communities they work with aren't used to being asked for their opinion or getting involved in local decision making, so they are often written off as people who don't want to participate. But by spending months developing relationships, listening, understanding people and giving them permission to participate, communities are starting to get involved.

Valuing everyone - equality of expertise

Democracy isn't anti-expert. We need experts in the arts as much as we do in the health service or education. But our interviewees recognised that everyone had some expertise to contribute. A curator might have knowledge of the relevance and significance of objects, but community participants might bring different stories, life experience, expertise from their day-to-day lives or a perspective from a different aspect of society. Artists like Scottee spend time getting to know all of the participants as people, to bring out the richness of their personalities into the work, making the relationship mutually beneficial rather than just thinking about what they can offer the organisation, or the artist.

Active participation

Cultural Democracy thrives on people being actively involved, not just consulted with. Good practice suggests that when people are engaged throughout a process - in the beginning, middle and end - in the programming, the delivery and the reflection, they are far more likely to experience a sense of ownership of a process and its output. Fun Palaces have active participation as a key element of what they do. A Fun Palace won't have activities in which people are passively watching because it creates a delineation between the 'makers' and the 'participants' — the spirit of Fun Palaces is that everyone is always creating together.

Valuing process and product, equally

A focus on quality in arts and culture often places the emphasis on the product or output. Is the thing that's been created any good? Cultural Democracy requires an equal emphasis on process and the qualities that surround the ways in which people are facilitated to create. At Scene & Heard, the process of working with young people to write their own plays gives them ultimate autonomy. This well-supported process has seen 86% of participants go onto formal education (in contrast to the average of 25% in the local area). Additionally, the focus on process also means that the work is often excellent, with audiences selling out and hugely engaged with the work. The pursuit of an excellent product can be an interesting and important driver, but when it becomes the exclusive focus, this can negate the valuing of people as individuals or their experience.

Derby Museums,
World Cultures project lab

CULTURAL DEMOCRACY IN PRACTICE

- a brief how to...

Trying to create a one-stop shop of how to 'do' Cultural Democracy is an impossible task. The nature of most democratic work is that it's different in every circumstance and dependent on the people involved. But we did find some key pointers and key questions across our case studies that might be useful in thinking practically about how to begin a journey towards greater Cultural Democracy, and we've outlined them as a series of 'How Tos.'

How to make work and develop new ideas...

Making and creating experiences is central to the life of any cultural organisation. Across our case studies we found 3 distinct ways of doing this differently:

1. Facilitation of Ideas

In short, this means an organisation working with a group of people to support their ideas to happen. It is the closest process to the traditional way of working with artists. A group might propose an issue they want to explore, an idea they have, a place they want to be, and the organiser or cultural provider helps them make that happen. This might be done through offering space, facilitation through workshops, a framework or an opportunity like a festival, event or online programme. Examples in this report include Scene & Heard, who support young people to write their own plays and have them performed by professional artists

and Fun Palaces, who provide a national framework encouraging local people to develop their own ideas and bring these to life.

Case Studies:
The Agency, Scene & Heard, Fun Palaces

Things to try:
Enabling others to run a Fun Palace — hand over your building to a group for a weekend and help them bring their ideas to life. Or if you're not building based, think about a conversation you can have with others in your area about how your resources might be more widely used?

Questions to ask:
- What resources do you have that could be useful to others around you?
- If you receive public funding, who is it in your community that you feel could be really benefiting from it? How could you facilitate their ideas?

Fun Palaces
Photo: Helen Murray

2. Co-Creation of work

Co-creation, as expressed by the interviewees in our case studies, is a term that reflects a mutually beneficial relationship, maximising the expertise of everyone in the room, to create a process or product that everyone has played an active role in. It is a simple concept that generates outcomes that all contributors can feel proud of. Many of the case studies in this report used co-creation to develop ideas — in museums, libraries, performing arts venues, and in community settings.

Case Studies:
Derby Museums, Scottee and Friends, Citizen Curators

Things to try:
A pilot project that you could collaborate with others on. This could be a way of testing out a relationship between an existing local group and an arts and cultural organisation to develop an initial idea as an experiment. A co-creation process should be mutually beneficial with all parties set to gain from the collaboration. Remember we're all human; think about your own interests outside of work, and then think about others — instead of categorising people by race, gender or age, try thinking about local interest groups, or trending topics on social media, and how you might use these as a point of connection and the beginning of a relationship or collaboration.

Questions to ask:
- How could collaborating more help you better achieve your purpose?
- If you opened yourself up to partnership with new people, how might this transform your ability to produce relevant work?

3. Community commissioning

This is the process of engaging a community in commissioning or developing work right from its inception. It supports creativity and creative thinking on the ground, within communities, and with direct relevance to place. Ideally community commissioning — where community members choose a programme, connect with artists, partner with other communities, to develop and deliver work — happens hand in hand with co-creation, i.e. the community who are commissioning also go on to deliver.

Case Studies:
Creative People and Places

Things to try:
Start small — try sourcing ideas for programming on social media. Twitter polls and Facebook groups provide an excellent democratic platform through which organisations can generate new ideas. Or survey staff from all teams within your organisation — what does the finance officer suggest, a bar person, a volunteer on front of house?

Questions to ask:
- Who makes the decisions about commissioning or programming in your group or organisation? Why is that? What might happen if you opened up decision-making to a wider group?
- How much is your current programming rooted in the needs or wants of your community? How do you know?

Useful Resources:
If you're starting this kind of work read this fantastic resource from Creative People and Places

HOW TO OPEN UP SPACES
(physical and digital)…

Arts and cultural buildings can seem unwelcoming and many struggle to attract people who think they are 'not for them.' In our case studies we looked for examples of how space can provide a platform that brings people together — whether that's a local community, a community of interest, or a community of artists. Many libraries do this brilliantly with free and open access, relevant content and in the heart of communities.

Drawing from our case studies:
- Think about the needs of your broadest community. Free wifi, affordable food with no pressure to buy, space to get together and time for reflection contribute to a greater sense of community ownership. How can you open to create a more welcoming offer for your building, throughout the day?
- Think about hosting — who is visible in your building and how might they improve the building's welcome? Do the first people who are visible in your building reflect the diversity of the community you exist to serve?
- When is your space not used? How can you make it available to others when there's less demand on space?
- Work with others to understand how your space is viewed and how you might collaborate to make it more accessible. And don't just ask for feedback — listen and then respond, get people involved in the co-creation of a space that works for everyone
- Go online to reach a wider community, beyond the echo chambers of the arts and cultural sectors. Join groups you wouldn't normally, contribute to discussions outside of your comfort zone. Contribute to more diverse online communities, and listen and learn.

- When creating new digital products, think what your intention is behind it. If you're looking to reach new and different people then use spaces where people already are, rather than trying to draw them to you, can often be more effective than building something new like an app, or trying to get people to your website.

Case Studies:
Shopfront Theatre

Things to try:
If you run a building think about co-hosting an open day with a local community group. Empower them to run the building for a few hours and see what you learn. Or your organisation may have other community assets that you could share more broadly with local communities. Start a conversation with your local library and explore how you might collaborate.

Questions to ask:
- How inviting is your space to local people? Visit a non-arts space that you rarely visit and experience that sense of trepidation that many feel when they first cross your threshold.
- Who uses your building or digital space currently? Who else could?
- What spaces do you feel comfortable and at home in? Why is that? What could you learn from that?

Useful Resources:
Our Cultural Commons from Voluntary Arts is a great resource - how does this apply to you?

Heart of Glass,
Heather Peak of Studio Morison recently took more than 50 local St Helens skaters on research trips to skate parks around the country.
Photo by: Stephen King

HOW TO OPEN UP DECISION MAKING
(governance and leadership)...

One of the biggest barriers to Cultural Democracy is that often a small number of people exercise power and influence in decision making. The professionalisation of arts and culture has been necessary and useful, but has often resulted in only a few people defining what culture we experience, who's made it, where it's presented, how it's described, who it's for. Broadening who gets to make key decisions — about programmes, money, recruitment, pricing — is central to the idea of Cultural Democracy, and yet this is often the hardest step for most cultural institutions.

Throughout the case studies in this report there are innovative approaches to opening up decision-making to a broader range of voices. Decisions may impact the whole organisation, or a specific project, but the National Theatre Wales TEAM and Contact Manchester are both fantastic examples of how putting engagement at the heart of an organisation and embedding community decision making throughout can transform the way it works, and embed long-term engagement that benefits both the individuals involved, and the cultural organisation.

Key themes that came from these case studies were:
- The importance of genuine giving up of power by the traditional leaders of an organisation (Artistic Director/CEO/Board)
- Having trust in others
- Providing training and development opportunities so everyone feels equipped to manage roles they are given
- Paying people if and when the time they have invested outweighs the personal benefit they are gaining

Case Studies:
Contact,
The TEAM National Theatre Wales

Things to try:
Open up programming meetings to include people from across and outside of your organisation. As a leader, are there ways you can use your skills as a facilitator to enable other ideas to come to the fore? These might be ideas for seasons of work, or specific themes, or certain artists that others are interested in.

Questions to ask:
Could local stakeholders be involved in key recruitment decisions? Are there ways in which young people could play a more active role on your board, influencing decisions about programme and resource allocation?

Useful Resources:
As part of this series of reports from Arts Council England, The Roundhouse produced an excellent report on Youth Governance, much of the learning from which could be transferred to other community members.
You can download it here

- Replicating and innovating traditional structures such as boards, advisory groups, recruitment panels
- Abandoning the idea of a 'learning and participation' team and making engagement central to everyone's role in the organisation
- Replicating and innovating traditional structures such as boards, advisory groups, recruitment panels
- Abandoning the idea of a 'learning and participation' team and making engagement central to everyone's role in the organisation

HOW TO USE CREATIVITY TO INFLUENCE OTHER AREAS OF CIVIC LIFE...

Unlocking creative potential can be incredibly powerful. It can influence arts and culture and contribute positively to democratic decision-making in civic life. Creativity has a proven benefit to problem solving, ideas generation, conflict resolution and contributes to richer thinking. With great facilitation creativity can be channelled to other areas of public life — in public health, education, social services, housing and elsewhere.

3 ways we saw partners approach this were:
- Develop new programmes: As part of our work at 64 Million Artists we have used creativity to develop new online programmes for mental health, as well as running a leadership programme for King's College London for senior academics who develop ideas on our programme that go onto influence government policy, make innovations in healthcare and develop new products and services.
- Empower others to lead change: At Northern Heartland, they work with people to empower them to make change in their community, or at a political level by directly using cultural work to improve people's confidence in speaking up and speaking out, joining local committees or community organising.
- Partner up: Creative People and Places organisations are often partnerships between Arts and Cultural organisations and either voluntary groups, healthcare organisations, local government or education to ensure that the outcomes are embedded in the real lives of a community.

Case Studies:
Northern Heartlands,
Creative People and Places network

Things to try:
Read up on the priorities of local government for your area. Do you already have a local neighbourhood plan? Could you get involved in developing one of these? Connect with agencies or community groups already working on the ground in community development — how could you partner with or support them to use creativity and culture to further develop their work?

Questions to ask:
What assumptions are you making about the needs for development in your community?
If you are doing community development work, are you doing it with people? Or to them? Or on their behalf? How do you know this?

Useful Resources:
There are some further case studies and suggested practice as part of the Gulbenkian Inquiry into the Civic Role of Arts Organisations.

Slung Low.
Photo by: Thomas Arran

CASE STUDIES

The case studies overleaf are a small series from the many we have gathered. They are presented here in edited form and on our website as fuller reports. On the website we are inviting others to share good practice and we will be growing an archive of exemplary case studies, and great practice, over the coming months. We would love for you to contribute to this which you can do by following the links at the end of this report.

CREATIVE PEOPLE AND PLACES (CPP)

Who:

Creative People and Places is an Arts Council England scheme funding 21 projects across England that allow people to 'choose, create and take part in brilliant art experiences in the places where they live.' Many CPPs contributed to the research in this report and individual case studies are detailed online.

What:

Cultural Democracy and community decision making is at the heart of CPPs and, being an action research project, there are many rich resources that can be drawn on from their learning (see here). This report draws heavily from the CPP model and shares best practice from many individual CPP projects.

Key principles and practice:

- Community decision making at the heart of all programming (see this fantastic toolkit on shared decision-making)
- Seeing culture as something that already exists in these areas, and that CPPs are there to value it, amplify and develop it
- Establishing confidence and mutual respect with all people, spending time listening and developing
- Seeing quality as something that is achieved by listening to a diverse range of voices
- Reflecting and learning from the process as you go along – action research at the heart of working with communities

Outcomes:

CPPs across the board are making huge strides in engaging people who have previously not attended a lot of formal arts and culture events. A recent Audience Agency study showed that whilst 43% of NPO ticket buyers come from an audience demographic that are frequent attenders and participants in arts and culture, only 14% of CPP participants come from this group. Conversely, 52% of CPP participants come from a demographic that rarely attend arts and culture as opposed to only 15% of NPO ticket buyers.

- Giving up power and leading by facilitating discussion, conversation and creative action
- Employing cultural connectors from the local area to lead on developing programmes, projects and leading citizen panels for decision making
- Connecting with partners outside of the arts (health, education, business, voluntary organisations)
- Using the principles of Human Centred Design (see opposite page) to engage people in programmes — iterative development and engagement allows a more porous approach to decision making and helps others feel ownership
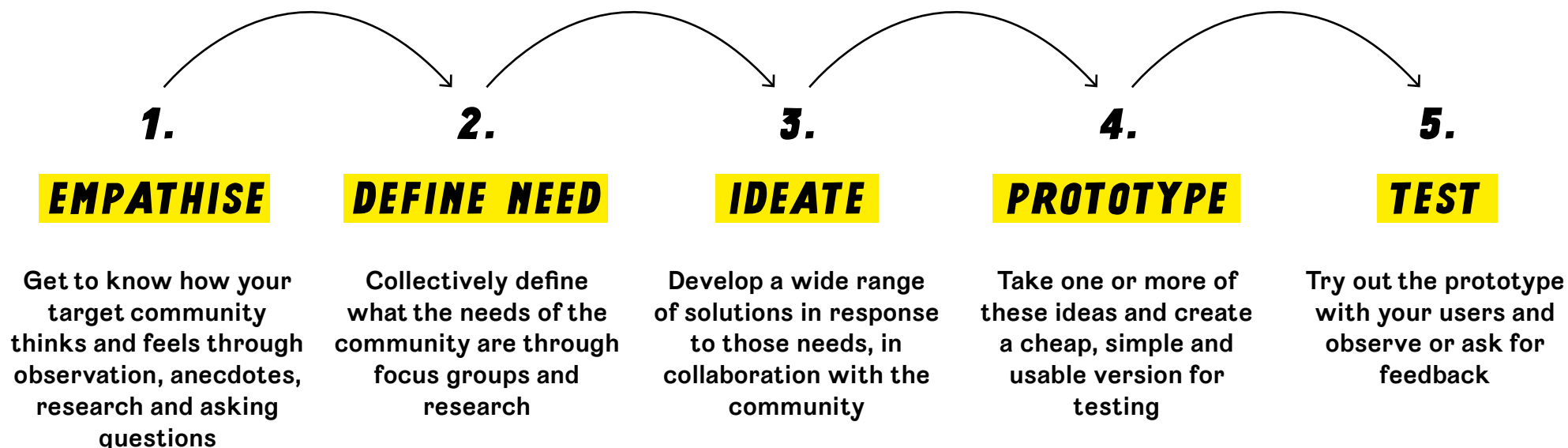
IMAGE CREDIT: Imrana Mahmood, photo by Stephen King

"I feel honoured that I am in a position to contribute to redefining the arts scene — we need to diversify and ensure appropriate representation to bring new audiences in. Working with Revoluton Arts has given me the platform to enable this to happen."

Imrana Mahmood, Participant, Revoluton Arts.

HUMAN-CENTERED DESIGN

1.

EMPATHISE

Get to know how your target community thinks and feels through observation, anecdotes, research and asking questions

2.

DEFINE NEED

Collectively define what the needs of the community are through focus groups and research

3.

IDEATE

Develop a wide range of solutions in response to those needs, in collaboration with the community

4.

PROTOTYPE

Take one or more of these ideas and create a cheap, simple and usable version for testing

5.

TEST

Try out the prototype with your users and observe or ask for feedback

Human Centred Design is a concept that has been embraced not just by the design industry but in sectors ranging from health, to education and business. Quite simply it has at its heart the notion of starting with the needs of people, and working outwards from there. It believes that design is more responsive when it is created from the needs of the users, rather than being based on assumptions about them. We might think we know the public we serve, but quite often we fail to ask the right questions. Huge innovations in health and social care have been made using human centred design, examples of which can be found at the Helen Hamlyn Centre for Design, IDEO and Helix Centre.

These principles sit at the heart of many great approaches to Cultural Democracy seen in Creative People and Places and other organisations within the arts and culture. This diagram - designed by IDEO and adapted for the cultural sector by the Audience Agency - outlines the 5 stages of Human Centred Design. These are designed to be iterative, so that the process can run as many times as needed.

ENGLISH POPULATION AUDIENCE SPECTRUM PROFILE

compared to: ● NPO ticket-buyers, ● all arts NPOs, ● museums, ● CPP audiences and participants 2017
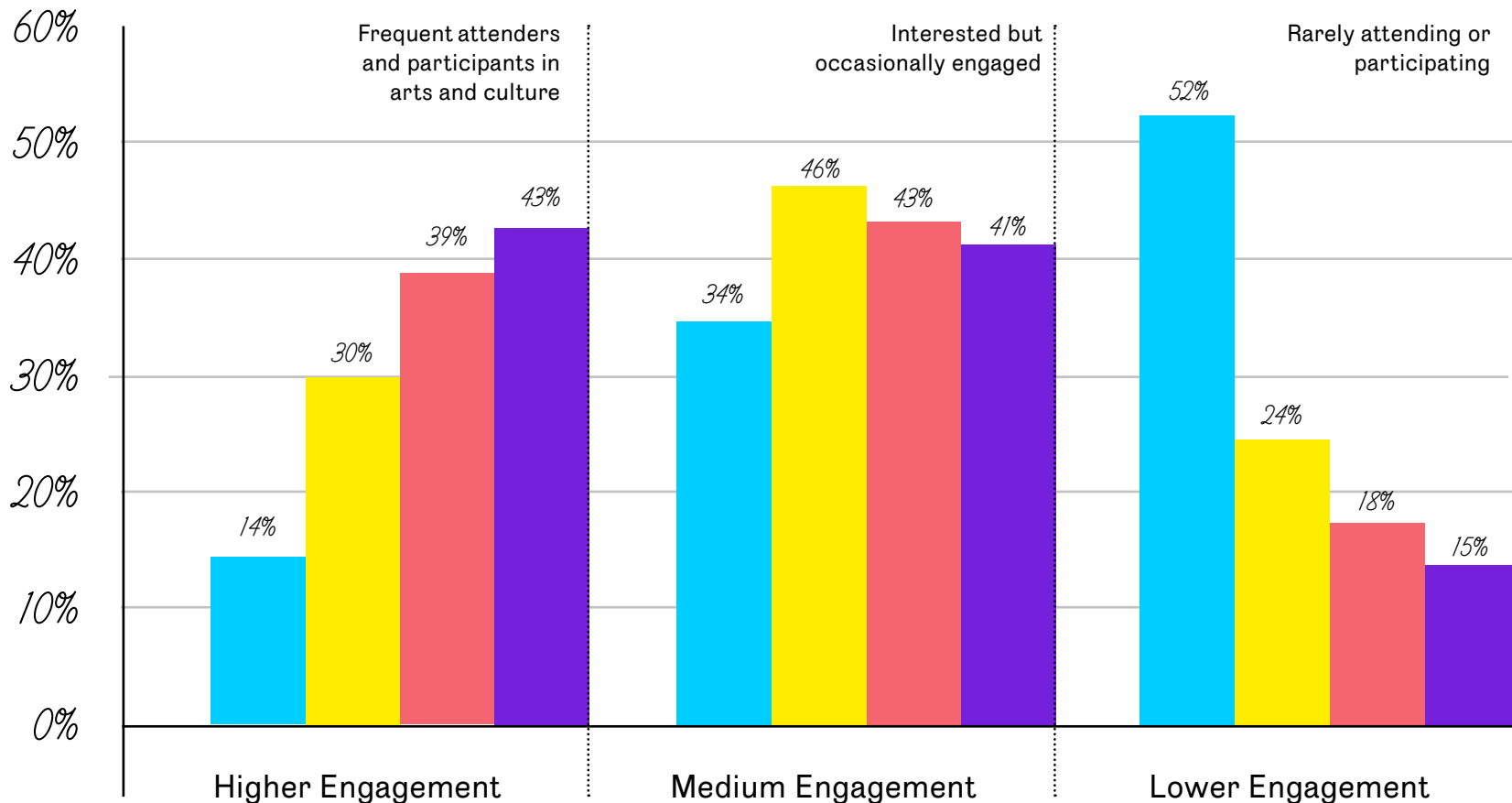
Sources:

1. Creative People & Places audience profile, 2017

2. Population analysis by Audience Spectrum, 2017.

3. Audience Finder Museums survey profile, 2015/16.

4. Audience Finder All Organisations survey, 2015/16

5. Audience Finder ticketed NPOs, 2017
© The Audience Agency 2018
www.theaudience agency.org/audiencespectrum

Case study 2
FUN PALACES

Who:

Founded in 2013 by Stella Duffy and Sarah-Jane Rawlings, Fun Palaces is an organisation committed to campaigning for Cultural Democracy year round.

What:

On top of their year-round work, they focus on a weekend of community run activities across the UK (and internationally) run under the principle of 'community at the heart of culture'. Based on Joan Littlewood and architect Cedric Price's vision, each Fun Palace challenges the way culture is owned and created by fostering stronger and more engaged communities. People feel empowered to create the activities and infrastructure that they want in parks, faith spaces, community centres, libraries, cultural buildings and beyond.

Key principles and practice:

- everyone is valued equally regardless of age or background
- everything is free
- any kind of arts or science activity is welcomed, the Fun Palaces approach is to say 'yes' to everything and everyone, excellence is something that can be developed, rather than something that is an immediate requirement — so people aren't put off
- Fun Palaces are ideally led by community members for their own local community

IMAGE CREDIT: Helen Murray

Outcomes:

In the last four years, 934 Fun Palaces were made by 24,000 people with 340,000 participants. Libraries taking part in Fun Palaces weekend saw on average between a 50% and 70% increase in footfall with 50% of those visitors signing up to be members. 78% of Fun Palace makers felt that the Fun Palace opened up new partnerships and opportunities locally, and personal benefits included feeling more at home locally, getting to know people, and taking up regular volunteering positions with their local cultural organisations.

- activity can be (and is) arts, sciences, heritage, craft, tech, digital, sports and any other field in which individuals and communities engage together, this is the Fun Palaces approach to what culture is
- volunteers are supported and empowered to make everything happen, the central Fun Palaces team are there as guidance
- evaluation, reflection and learning are central to the nature of Fun Palaces and their growth has reflected this

'I know the people around me; I know their names so we can have a chat…. It wasn't easy to integrate when I moved to England. But Fun Palaces helped me do it'

**Carine Osmont,
Fun Palaces Maker**

Case study 3

THE AGENCY

Battersea Arts Centre, Contact and People's Palace Projects

Who:

Battersea Arts Centre is a leading arts organisation with a mission to inspire people to take creative risks to shape the future. Since 2003 it has pioneered its Scratch process — developing ideas using an iterative approach to support creative risk-taking. Contact is a theatre in Manchester (see p28). Peoples' Palace Projects has spent the last twenty years creating and debating art that makes a difference to people's lives. PPP is a research centre based at Queen Mary University of London dedicated to investigating how the arts and creativity transform the lives of people living at situations of risk, violence and crisis

What:

Developed in partnership with Contact Manchester and People's Palaces Projects, The Agency is a programme that enables young people from underserved communities to develop skills, support and connections for ideas they have for their community.

Key principles and practice:

- young people are paid and supported to develop an idea that contributes to their community. The ideas aren't necessarily arts related, but a creative process is used to draw them out
- ideas are developed collaboratively and iteratively by the whole cohort
- partnerships and support from the local community are key (a minimum requirement being 100 signatures for any project)

IMAGE CREDIT: Rob Logan

Outcomes:

One of the outcomes of The Agency is the co-production of a board game called Life's What U Make It, developed by Osmond Gordon-Vernon. In the next phase of Life Is What U Make It, Osmond is developing the game as a teaching resource. BAC Productions are supporting the development of a programme of schools activity that can be rolled out across London, with the ambition of supporting young people to make positive life choices. Using BAC's scratch process, he has tested the programme in local schools and Pupil Referral Units. With feedback from this scratch, necessary changes will be made to the board, creating robust evidence demonstrating the impact of the programme. BAC will work in partnership with Osmond to seek match funding for this next phase of development.

- a panel of experts provide specialist support in commerce, marketing and product development to support the ideas
- Benefits to participants include access to a creative methodology that builds skills; access to professionals working in the sectors they are interested in; £200 seed funding and a producer for successful projects

Case study 4
DERBY MUSEUMS

Who:

Derby Museums is conceived as a new model for sharing heritage with a local community. It is conceived as a set of institutions for the thinker and maker in all of us.

What:

Its approach is to place co-production at the heart of all decision-making across programming and capital development. Its ethos is centred on social capital, with experiences, skills and learning flowing between Derby Museum and the city's population.
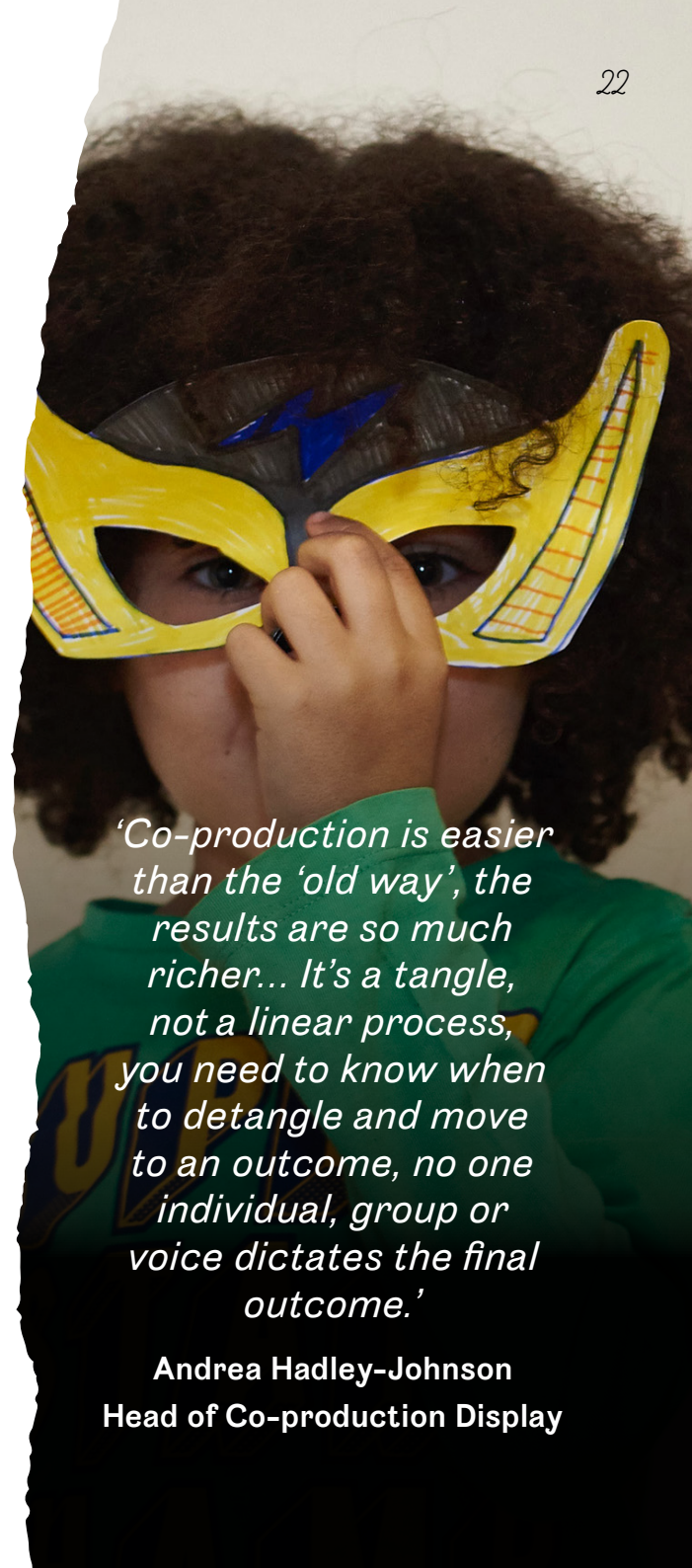
Outcomes:

A reappraisal of a 140 year old cultural institution as a bridger of social capital, fostering relationships with audience rather than transactions. This approach has led the museum to think differently about measuring public benefit, for example using models such as Social Return On Investment (SROI) to measure impact. It's also begun to turn social capital into financial capital both in terms of a large increase in support in kind for projects and actual onsite donations.

Key principles and practice:

- co-production — a close working relationship between participant and practitioner to identify and deliver a community's needs
- independence — the museum is owned by the community it exists to serve, not an anonymous management structure
- a spirit of constant experimentation sits at the heart of the museum ethos
- mutual relationships are fostered across the organisation

- a commitment to well-being (helping people connect with others, keep learning, take notice of the world and give back to the community)
- action rather than words — ideology is rooted in practical delivery — the exhibitions in the museum are co-created with the community

IMAGE CREDIT: Derby Museums, World Cultures project lab

'Co-production is easier than the 'old way', the results are so much richer... It's a tangle, not a linear process, you need to know when to detangle and move to an outcome, no one individual, group or voice dictates the final outcome.'

Andrea Hadley-Johnson
Head of Co-production Display

SCOTTEE AND FRIENDS

Who:

Scottee is an artist, activist and troublemaker with a background in LBGTQ performance. He has established himself as one of the UK's leading artists making work by, with and for communities outside mainstream arts and cultural practice.

What:

Fat Blokes is a new performance piece for 2018 made in a partnership with four non-professional dancers, drawn from 100 applications and a workshop for 30.

Outcomes:

Scottee's approach is hugely powerful for both him and the people he works with. It is helping to change the way theatre works. The performers in Scottee's Fat Blokes have increased in confidence — 'I identify more as queer now than I did 3 weeks ago', 'I feel part of a community,' 'I call myself a dancer', ' I have applied to be a plus size model.'

Key principles and practice:

- selection of collaborators isn't rooted in skills, it's rooted in stories that are there to tell and who will benefit from the process
- the rehearsal is a safe and democratic space
- honesty and openness are central values applied to the making process
- each rehearsal opens and closes with 'The Noticeboard'; an opportunity for everyone to share where they're at emotionally and physically

- all performers are valued as artists and paid above equity minimum
- the importance of establishing a shared vision for a project is embedded at the outset and content generated from this central idea

IMAGE CREDIT: Holly Revell

"It's never been about what I wanted to do. The idea comes first — it's way more interesting to work with real people."

Scottee

Case study 6

CITIZEN CURATORS
Cornwall Museums Partnership

Who:

Citizen Curators is a collaboration between Tehmina Goskar and Cornwall Museums Partnership (CMP). It was piloted as part of the Arts Council England Change Makers programme and hosted at the Royal Cornwall Museum (RCM).
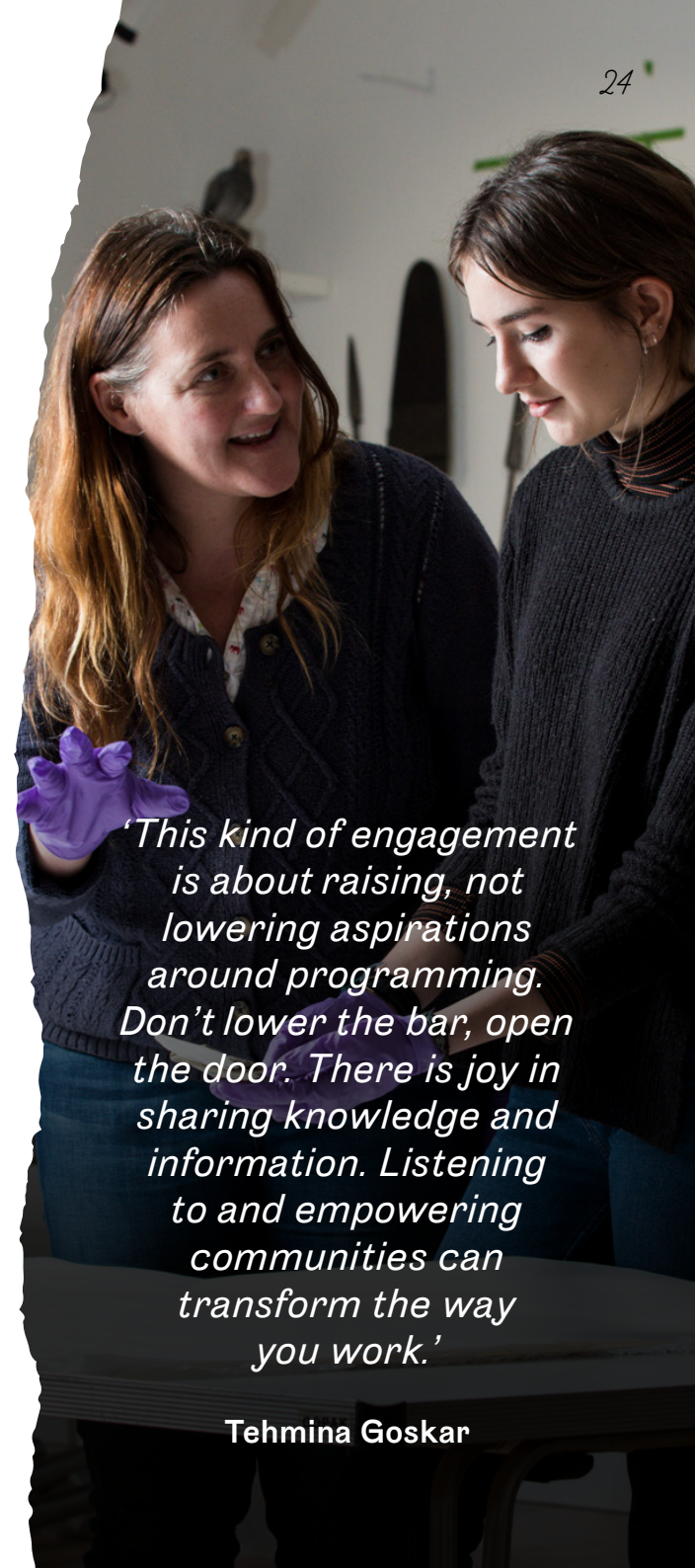
What:

Aiming to move away from a tradition of museums doing things to people, not with them, Citizen Curators is a work-based museum awareness and curatorial training programme that enables volunteers from communities to have a central stake in commissioning and decision-making, building trust between an organisation and its stakeholders, including the public for whose benefit and enrichment museums exist.

Key principles and practice:

- a small group of Citizen Curators (volunteers from within the community) are given permission to make curatorial decisions and create and contribute to events and exhibitions
- everyone is valued for their contribution and the skills and ideas they bring to the table — professional and non-professional — regardless of status, age, background

IMAGE CREDIT: Cornwall Museums Partnership/James Stuart

Outcomes:

Working with the Citizen Curators benefited the museum hugely. The pilot brought much needed diversity into the museum's curatorial voice(s) and revealed aspects of the collections that told completely new stories, such as the Cornish role in converting the Miao peoples of China to Christianity. Citizen Curators were successful in building brand new relationships on behalf of the museum with members of the community who had never engaged with museums and collections before. They created an exhibition and event that was featured on local BBC radio. Their Instagram art exhibition called #Hireth — the Cornish language word for longing and belonging — increased engagement with the museum 16-fold in 4 months and brought a new style of interpretation to the galleries. As a result of the pilot Citizen Curators is now funded for 3 years and is being rolled out across seven Cornish museums.

- high quality training, coaching and support for the participants underpins their empowerment
- the only rule is that outcomes are in line with the museum's strategy and vision but are not dictated by the museum establishment
- the Citizen Curators took over some platforms completely and were allowed freedom to do so e.g the museum's Instagram account to curate in their own voice

'This kind of engagement is about raising, not lowering aspirations around programming. Don't lower the bar, open the door. There is joy in sharing knowledge and information. Listening to and empowering communities can transform the way you work.'

Tehmina Goskar

SHOP FRONT THEATRE, COVENTRY

Who:

The Shop Front Theatre, managed by Theatre Absolute, is a performance, workshop and exhibition space based in an old shop in a dilapidated shopping centre in the centre of Coventry.

What:

The space is designed so that anyone can use and feel comfortable in it, and now their users range from The Belgrade Theatre to community groups, local breakers and artists from a range of disciplines.

Key principles and practice:

- the space is deliberately lo-fi and informal — a few lights, nothing precious, very flexible. It's a blank canvas so you can make it your own
- it feels 'like having a living room in the city centre,' people can pop in and feel welcomed throughout the week

- there are no rules about how the space should be used, there are no curatorial decisions made centrally, anyone who wants to can use it
- everyone participates on an equal footing

Outcomes:

Marius, a local breaker, came to the space in 2016 and uses it for rehearsal with his group. As a migrant to the UK, the community around Shop front made him feel part of something and has been a bridge into 'mainstream culture' — being booked at festivals and local arts centres. Grapevine, a local community organisation, have worked with a group of local fathers. Young people have taken over the space and they've brought together social workers, local authority staff, students and community to debate big issues. The fact that the building doesn't feel like a council space, or a typical cultural space means that everyone can take part on an equal footing.

IMAGE CREDIT: Andrew Moore

'Cultural spaces are normally seen as bastions of culture and lots of people don't feel like they belong there, those spaces alienate people. We're not interested in numbers, we're interested in real relationships.'

**Chris O'Connell
Theatre Absolute**

Case study 8

SLUNG LOW / CULTURAL COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Who:

Slung Low is a theatre company based in Leeds that that makes adventures for audiences outside of conventional theatre spaces. They are based out of the Holbeck Underground Ballroom (The HUB) — a convivial rehearsal and performance space. In 2018 the company developed the Cultural Community College — a place to learn the broadest range of life skills, for little or no cost.

What:

The Cultural Community College is an experiment in education. It offers a wide array of classes and courses for adults aged 18+ covering subjects from basic life skills such as CPR, all the way to creative hobbies and interests including stargazing and the HUB Choir. All courses are Pay-What-You-Decide and have been programmed by members of the community the college seeks to serve.

Key principles and practice:

- Slung Low is governed by a board of 7 professional theatre women and a community advisory board of 12 people who are made up of local residents, audience members, supported artists and participants.
- The company and the Cultural Community College are both collaborations between professional theatre artists, and a community
- Together, these people have developed a shared mission that makes the organisations braver — more willing to take risks

IMAGE CREDIT: Thomas Arran

Outcomes:

Slung Low is much loved within Leeds and across West Yorkshire. The company brings together professional artists with people from local communities to create unexpected and emotionally engaging theatre that can be accessed by all.

Flood, produced by Slung Low for Hull City of Culture 2017, was a major commission in four parts working across theatre, television and online. It brought together 100 volunteer performers and community choruses in a partnership with a professional theatre company, the City of Culture, The Space and the BBC. Each part of Flood had its own community chorus, which was valued at £196,400 if paid at the company wage of £100 a day.

- The content of the Cultural Community College is entirely driven by the users (and a public vote) — Slung Low want users to care as much about the courses as they do about other local issues
- The team leader is key to great decision-making. It is the role of the chair or the director to provide excellent facilitation to support people to make well-thought-through decisions

'The Park Run is a good analogy. When I run for fun with professional athletes, I run faster. There is something in this mix of professional and amateur that raises everyone's game'.

Alan Lane, Director of Slung Low

NORTHERN HEARTLANDS

Who:

Northern Heartlands is one of the Great Place schemes, jointly funded by ACE and HLF with an ambition to empower communities through culture, heritage, and the arts. The Great Place programme is designed to pilot new approaches that enable cultural and community groups to work more closely together and to place culture heritage at the heart of communities. There are 16 programmes in England, and it is being rolled out across the rest of the UK.

What:

As one of the only schemes not to be embedded within a local authority, the bid itself left space for the strategy and direction of the process to be owned and directed by the community. 2 community facilitators have done extensive work over 9 months, listening to communities and co-creating briefs for work in their area.

Key principles and practice:

- constant investment in a listening process, spending time in knitting circles, working men's clubs, community cafes and clubs
- a commitment to process as equal to artistic output
- a commitment to taking time
- artists can be great catalysts for other peoples' ideas

- one-off artistic interventions can catalyse communities, build pride, show what's possible but legacy has to be built in from the start
- The activities across the programme are designed to help use creativity to impact other areas of local life such as influencing local policy and politics, agriculture and transport

IMAGE CREDIT: Claire Collinson Photography for Northern Heartlands

Outcomes:

Through one of the activities designed to help the community develop a local neighbourhood plan (plus subsequent community events on planning) one participant has decided to stand for her local parish council, feeling empowered to make change in her area.

'People have had culture and arts done to them, there has been damage done where something has been given and then taken away. We have been breaking barriers down and starting from what they want.'

Tariq Imam
Community Facilitator

Case study 10
CONTACT

Who:

<u>Contact</u> in Manchester is run by, with and for young people aged 13-30. For twenty years, the organisation has given agency, responsibility and skills to young people, using performance and theatre as a force for social change and artistic empowerment.

What:

Contact is underpinned by a set of conventional approaches to the business, ensuring their mission is delivered with purpose and efficiency. Uniquely, young people are embedded at every level of decision-making across the organisation to ensure that it remains relevant and owned by local people.

Key principles and practice:

- direction and key management decisions (including all staff appointments) are shared 50/50 between staff and young people's panels
- for every major department within the organisation, there's a young people's sub-group, with the express purpose of developing the participant's expertise:
  - Icon (marketing)
  - ReCon (programming)
  - Construct (capital projects):
    » Technique (technical/design)
    » Contact Young Company (performers/ theatre makers)
    » Future Fires (young socially engaged arts leaders)

Outcomes:

The potency of their issue-driven theatre has impacts well beyond Manchester, eg with 3 recent Contact co-productions filmed and broadcast by BBC Performance Live/iPlayer: No Guts, No Heart, No Glory with CommonWealth about young female Muslim boxers, Eggs Collective's Get A Round about female friendship and booze, and the Contact/20 Stories High show about unplanned pregnancy and abortion I Told My Mum I Was Going On An RE Trip. A focus on young people's governance means 70% of audiences are under 35, and 40% come from a BAME background. Artistic output is deeply relevant to its audience and has a loyal following amongst Manchester's young and diverse communities.

- long-term relationships between individuals and Contact builds skills and experience which in turn develop significant outputs
- the environment created is as welcoming and open as possible
- openness and inclusivity is designed into new spaces, with capacity to nurture skills in a broader range of performing arts
- senior staff step back, offering facilitation and guidance where needed
- constant reflection and questioning are central to the processes at the heart of the theatre

'Our strength is in the facilitation, development and empowerment of our young people... The building is a touchpoint, a place to feel welcome, respected and supported. We ensure the environment we create is as welcoming and open as possible.'

**Matt Fenton,
Artistic Director**

NATIONAL THEATRE WALES TEAM

Who:

Although based in Cardiff, National Theatre Wales work all over the country bringing theatre to trains, military training grounds, beaches, mountains, warehouses, nightclubs, schools, village halls and libraries.

What:

Since the inception of National Theatre Wales in 2009, TEAM has been an integral part of what it does. Designed to be a different kind of national theatre that had a relationship with the communities it serves, TEAM is their approach to engagement. It is an international network of now over 2000 volunteers who help to influence the direction of NTW, a new organisational model and a range of approaches to leadership.

Outcomes:

The personal outcomes for individual participants are huge. For Ali Goolyad — it has transformed him into a successful professional artist: 'After a couple of years they actually put me on the TEAM Panel which makes programming decisions, decisions on artistic 8 year and 10 year celebrations, I've been on the interview panel for the Communication Manager and Finance Assistant, I've been a trustee — it's opened up miracles for me, putting on my CV that I am on the board of NTW.' Within the next few years, NTW has committed to putting two shows in its main programme that is 100% programmed and produced by TEAM members, with all of the creative team and production coming from the group.

Key principles and practice:

- TEAM feeds into all NTW's decisions including programming, recruitment, governance and policy
- it provides free training in everything from playwriting and acting to production and governance
- it is represented at board level by a rolling set of panel members who become trustees

- TEAM provides paid opportunities as well as volunteering roles for members both within NTW and with partner organisations
- The TEAM website serves as a jobs and opportunities board for people across Wales — opening up a huge range of activities and opportunities

IMAGE CREDIT: Dan Green

'It's slow and messy and hard to control — It doesn't cost more but it does take time and patience.'

**Devinda De Silva
Head of Collaboration,
National Theatre Wales**

Case study 12
SCENE & HEARD

Who:

Founded in 1999, Scene & Heard is a unique mentoring project that partners the disadvantaged children of Somers Town, Camden, London with volunteer theatre professionals. The fundamental purpose of their work is to use the skills of theatre professionals and the power of creativity and imagination to mentor children in poverty.

What:

Harnessing the imagination and creativity of children to create innovative, engaging theatre, Scene & Heard's work enhances self-esteem, raises aspiration and improves cognitive and non-cognitive skills. Productions of the children's work bring communities together to experience high-quality theatre for a diverse audience.

## Key principles and practice:

- long-term commitment to the participants, their families and communities — 'once a Member Playwright, always a Member Playwright'
- tailored experiences for the developing needs of each child
- one-to-one mentoring by arts professionals; adults from beyond the participants' experience
- professionally produced seasons of innovative new writing for a public audience with and for the communities they serve
- everything is free to everyone
- a meaningful, quality volunteering experience for the professional theatre community

Outcomes:

Over 19 years Scene & Heard has created long-term relationships with the hard-to-reach children and families in Somers Town, their community and the wider theatre going public. They create seasons of innovative theatre where people that do not access London's cultural scene come together on an equal footing with traditional consumers of theatre to share in the success of Somers Town's children.

86% of Scene & Heard Member Playwrights who are old enough to have done so have gone on to higher education compared to 25% of Somers Town residents with a higher degree in the 2011 census.

400 professional theatre artists volunteer their time and skills to the organisation, allowing them to "give back" in a creative, fulfilling way.

IMAGE CREDIT: Actors Philip Elvy and Clare Wilkie with Scene & Heard Member Playwright
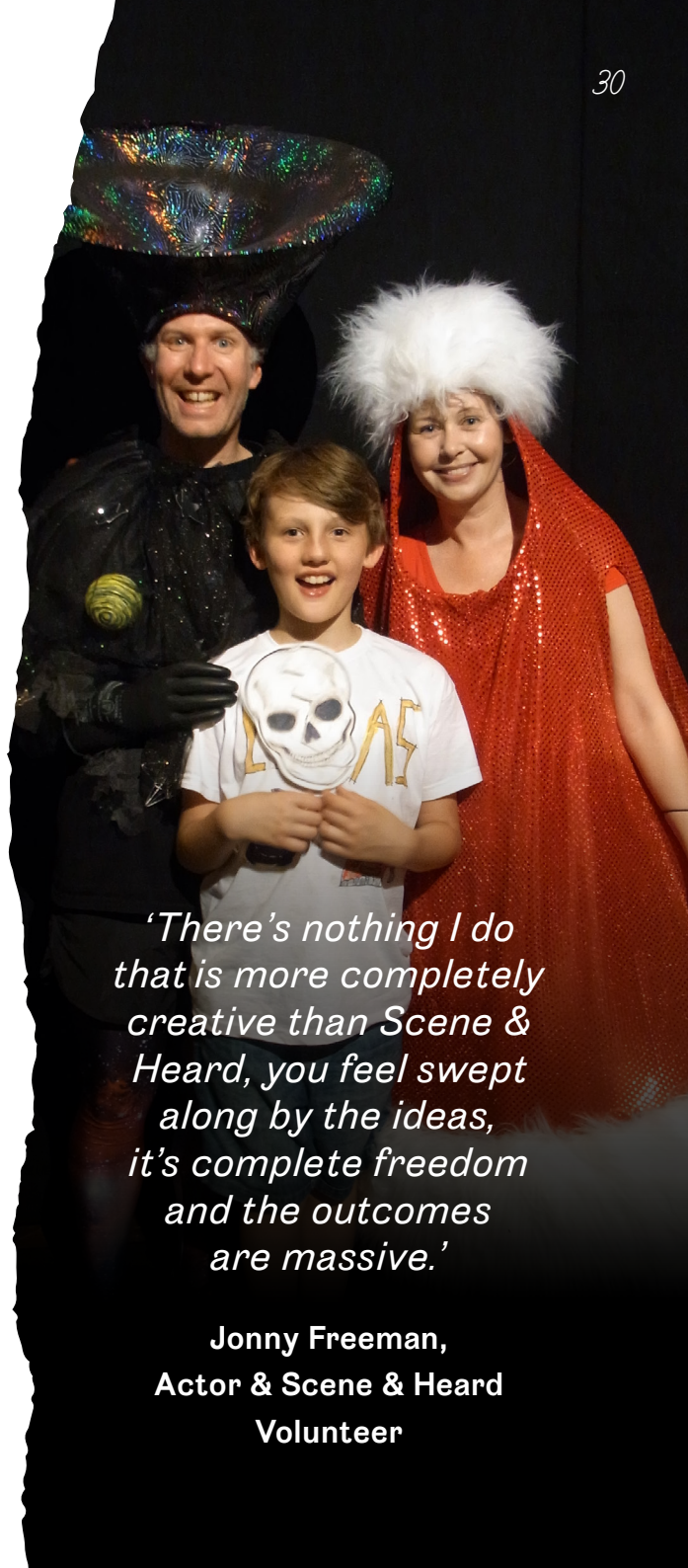
'There's nothing I do that is more completely creative than Scene & Heard, you feel swept along by the ideas, it's complete freedom and the outcomes are massive.'

**Jonny Freeman,
Actor & Scene & Heard
Volunteer**

Notes and acknowledgements

We've spent the last few months interviewing a range of different people, many of whom are included in this report. Further contributions sit on our website where we aim to grow resources to share best practice. In compiling this guide our aim has been to reflect a breadth of practice. We've used social media to find people and projects unknown to us, asked for recommendations, followed up leads. However, we are conscious of our own knowledge, backgrounds and biases. While we've tried to overcome these, there will always be areas we've missed. That's why we'll be continuing the development of this report as a blog series to capture more stories and examples of Cultural Democracy in practice.

Talk to us at hello@64millionartists.com with recommendations for further case studies.

Thanks

64 Million Artists would like to thank all of the people who have given up their time to contribute to this document, by giving a case study, taking part in a workshop, having a conversation with us, or by just getting on and doing the work which we have learned from and built on. We thank Arts Council England for commissioning it, the Clore Leadership Programme for sending the brilliant Ed Ikin on placement with us to help develop the report, and to all of our team members and associates who contributed in some way.

The full list of contributors to case studies is as follows:

Chris O'Connell — Shop Front Theatre
Marius Mates — Performance Artist
Mel Smith — Grapevine
Jill Cole, Tariq Amam, Anna Collins, Jayne Bradley —
Northern Heartlands
Jackie Winchester, Claire Simmons — Bristol Culture
Rediat Abayneh, Fatima Murtala Safana,
Colleen Martin — Rising Arts Agency
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Jack Brown — Units of Power
Rosalind Paul, Fiona Mallin-Robinson — Scene & Heard

Scottee, Asad Ullah — Fat Blokes, Scottee
and Friends
Simon Floyd — The Common Lot
Tehmina Goskar — Citizen Curators
Ali Goolyad — Independent Artist
Devinda De Silva — National Theatre Wales
Stella Duffy, Carine Osmont — Fun Palaces
Rachel Adam — bait
Joanne Gray — Cambridgeshire Libraries
Alan Lane — Slung Low
Hilary Jennings — Happy Museums
Jack Morrison and Rose Barnecut — Feast

Plus: Participants at the Creative People and Places conference, numerous ACE staff, the 64 Million Artists Advisory Board, Clore Leadership Programme Cohort 11, various academics mentioned in the bibliography

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Colophon

Design: Damiaan Melis

Slung low, Photo by: Thomas Arran