



Response to the Inquiry into the Inclusion of Working Class Communities in the Arts

prepared for The Northern Ireland Assembly
Committee for Culture, Arts and Leisure

School of Creative Arts, Queen's University Belfast, May 2014

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1 Introduction

- 1.1 This document has been prepared and submitted by The School of Creative Arts at Queen's University Belfast.
- 1.2 The School of Creative Arts at Queen's University Belfast welcomes the Northern Irish Assembly Committee's Inquiry into the inclusion of working class communities in the arts.
- 1.3 In response, this document introduces educational, cultural and research provision offered by the School of Creative Arts at Queen's University Belfast that is relevant to Inquiry.
- 1.4 The document additionally highlights a number of arts and cultural venues and facilities with which the School has strong connections and partnerships.
- 1.5 The information presented here serves to complement many of the Inquiry responses already submitted by colleagues in the arts, cultural and education sectors.
- 1.6 This paper aims to respond to all of the Terms of Reference in the following ways:
 - 1.6.1 *Acknowledging that Queen's University Belfast hosts a number of arts and cultural venues and programmes relevant to the Inquiry. The School of Creative Arts does not seek to respond on behalf of those venues and programmes, only to make note of their relevance to the Inquiry. (Section 2)*
 - 1.6.2 *Providing a snapshot of outreach, relevant to the Inquiry, that is currently being carried out by the School's staff and students (Section 3)*
 - 1.6.3 *Highlighting the relevance of the School's growing offer and experience in the fields of cultural policy and arts management teaching and research (Section 4)*
 - 1.6.4 *Demonstrating Queen's desire to—and capacity for—collaborating with policy makers, researchers, individuals, communities and arts and cultural sector professionals on research projects of varying methodologies and approaches aimed at addressing improvements in policies, delivery mechanisms and collaborations sought by the Inquiry (Section 5)*
- 1.7 The paper's key recommendations focus on developing areas of research that have the potential to contribute to improvements in policies, delivery mechanisms and collaborations sought by the Inquiry (Section 5)
- 1.8 Queen's University Belfast is a member of the Russell Group of 24 leading UK research-intensive universities, providing world-class education underpinned by world-class research.

- 1.9 The University's contribution to society has been recognised by four prestigious Times Higher Education (THE) Awards. Queen's received the award for Excellence and Innovation in the Arts in 2008, was awarded the title of the UK's Entrepreneurial University of the Year in 2009, won the Outstanding Engineering Research Team of the Year category in 2010 and received the Most Innovative Teacher of the Year Award in 2011.
- 1.10 With more than 17,000 students and 3,500 staff, it is a dynamic and diverse institution, a magnet for inward investment, a patron of the arts and a global player in areas ranging from cancer studies to sustainability, and from pharmaceuticals to creative writing.

2 Arts and Cultural Venues, Facilities, and Programmes at Queen's University Belfast

- 2.1 Along with the School of Creative Arts, Queen's University Belfast boasts a number of arts and cultural venues, facilities, events and organisations with which the School often works. This section presents information about these areas.
- 2.2 **The School of Creative Arts** (comprising of Music, Sonic arts, Film and Drama) is very well equipped in all its subject areas. From a large selection of musical instruments and audio recording equipment, to still and moving cameras. Students have the opportunity to use this equipment technically and creatively in their relevant course.
- 2.3 The facilities used by the School of Creative Arts are among the best in the British Isles; certain facilities within the School (such as the Sonic Laboratory) are unique in the world. The School has two dedicated concert spaces: the Harty Room in the Music building, characterized by natural acoustic, and the Sonic Laboratory at SARC which has variable acoustics and facilities for 3D sound projection.
- 2.4 The University has also given the go-ahead to build a purpose built 'black box' for film studies. This facility (due for completion in September 2014) will give students the opportunity to film in a multi-purpose, professionally equipped studio.
- 2.5 All areas of the School of Creative Arts (Drama, Film, Music and Music Technology) contribute to an extensive events programme including performances and screenings as well as research seminars and lectures, which are open to the general public. These include work developed both as part of the undergraduate and post-graduate curriculum and extra-murally through an extensive range of student societies.
- 2.6 **Queen's Film Theatre (QFT)**, with a 2-screen cinema, is Northern Ireland's only dedicated full time cultural cinema. From 1st April 2013 - 31st March 2014 QFT had 91,000 overall paid admissions.

- 2.7 QFT's annual public programme is underpinned by a range of both formal and informal education and outreach activities including master classes, talks, Q&As and introductions.
- 2.8 QFT Learning annually delivers an acclaimed year-round Outreach programme and welcomes over 6000 schoolchildren and young people to QFT for special screenings, talks and workshops.
- 2.9 Audiences for the QFT Learning programme are drawn from all sections of the community including TSN areas.
- 2.10 The QFT Learning programme aims to inspire young audiences to have a life-long interest in cinema, particularly cultural cinema, and uses film as a tool to encourage debate, discussion and understanding. QFT co-ordinates a year-round schools programme of educational screenings, designed to support the national curriculum from KS1- AS & A2 level. The Schools Out programme, which offers free screenings to schools, is supported by Northern Ireland Screen Education and Film Education.
- 2.11 QFT works with community groups on outreach projects, which attract nearly 6,000 young people per year. QFT recently received a grant from the Belfast City Council to work with four local youth groups on a new project called Take Over Film Festival through which young people from all cultural backgrounds who are passionate about film work together alongside creative industry professionals to programme film events aimed at teen audiences.
- 2.12 From 1st April 2013 – 31st March 2014, QFT held 47 lifelong learning events (eg talks, intros/ Q&As etc) with 2500 attendances (all in public programme) and 64 Education & Outreach events (specifically for schools, colleges, community groups etc...) with 4100 attendances
- 2.13 QFT has just been confirmed as the British Film Institute's Regional Hub Lead Organisation (HLO) for Northern Ireland, part of the UK Audience Network for Film. This ambitious four-year investment programme will see the QFT tasked with leading on developing audiences for cultural cinema across Belfast and Northern Ireland. The vision for the NI Film Hub is: 'To create a Hub for film culture in Northern Ireland that focuses on connecting with and growing audiences; that encourages participation and collaboration; that is open, diverse and accessible to all; that reflects and champions the creativity and cultural specificity of Northern Ireland; and that delivers on objectives locally, nationally and internationally.' A key aim of the NI Hub is to engage with and develop audiences in areas or communities that are classed as hard to reach and who have been previously underserved as regards access to a wide range of film.
- 2.14 More information on QFT in relation to the Inquiry is available in the NI Screen submission.

- 2.15 **The Brian Friel Theatre** is a 120-seat courtyard-style theatre that provides an intimate venue for a wide range of performances by students and visiting professionals. It is equipped to the highest professional standards, with state-of-the art lighting and sound technology and a professional stage management desk. Students engage with a balance of performance and production skills throughout their degree programme culminating in them producing their own work in their final year.
- 2.16 **The Ulster Bank Belfast Festival at Queen's** is Ireland's leading Contemporary International Arts Festival, firmly embedded in the cultural heart of Northern Ireland and commencing its 52nd edition in 2014. Promoting artistic collaboration and audience engagement, the Festival presents each October in Belfast the best of emerging and established international and local professional arts and cultural events.
- 2.17 The 2013 Festival saw 84 different performances from 24 countries, including 7 Irish premieres and 3 UK & Ireland Premieres. Offering Belfast residents and visitors to the city a 'Passport To The Arts' and an opportunity to be part of fantastic entertainment, cutting edge premieres and never seen before performances of international calibre in GB and Ireland, the festival annually attracts audiences of around 50,000 people from home and abroad and generates significant media and international profile (567 pieces of editorial coverage in 22 countries through 326 media platforms in 2013).
- 2.18 During the Festival period it also contributes to the local economy, generating business for local hotels, restaurants and retail outlets throughout the city and adding to the vitality of Belfast (£2m total benefit to NI Businesses and £577,180 Tourism Revenue in 2012 from Economic Impact report commissioned by NITB).
- 2.19 The Festival connects audiences, artists and communities right across the city with events taking place in East, West, North and South Belfast, offering audiences opportunities to experience arts and cultural events in their own neighbourhoods whilst opening up new pathways across the city for residents and visitors alike to discover locations in the city that may be less familiar to them. Accessibility for community engagement is a key priority eg. In 2013, 30,000 attended a free event, accessed a community ticket scheme (supported by Ulster Bank or through initiatives such as the Hitchhikers programme with Workers Education Association) or took part in a free master class or workshop to enable a participatory element for audiences, creating experiences by offering the chance to work alongside professional artists or inform the creation/direction of a particular work. In 2013, 884 tickets were specifically allocated to free community tickets.

- 2.20 **The Naughton Gallery**, named after its generous benefactors, Martin and Carmel Naughton, is a registered museum that features a rolling programme of works from the University's own collection, touring exhibitions and shows by local and international artists. The Gallery welcomes 20,000 visitors a year with about 3,000 of those visitors being young people under the age of 16. Through work at the Naughton Gallery, the art@queen's education and outreach initiative began in 2001 with the vision of delivering a workshop programme to art students from non-selecting Belfast schools. Since then the initiative has grown considerably and now encompasses many interested groups, opening up a wide range of exciting outreach opportunities. Pupils from primary, secondary and special needs schools, as well as other groups of adults and children, work with professional artists on an extensive range of projects.
- 2.21 Working in partnership with the Equality Commission, the Naughton Gallery has developed *Community Alphabets*, a project that brings community groups together with professional artists to create their own unique alphabet. These amazing artworks illustrate insight into the landmarks, activities and icons that mean the most to the participating groups. Works have included: *The Belfast Holyland Alphabet* (Belfast Holylands Regeneration Group and QUB Students with Corrina Askin); *The Equality Commission Alphabet* (The Equality Commission for Northern Ireland with Terry Gravett); *A Chinese Alphabet* (The Chinese Welfare Association with Chen Jing Lin); *A Muslim Alphabet* (The Belfast Islamic Centre with Alison Fitzgerald); and *An East Belfast Alphabet* (Ballymac Friendship Centre, the Doyle Youth Club and the East Belfast Area Project with Anita Cochrane) among many others.

3 Snapshot of Outreach Work by The School of Creative Arts

- 3.1 The School of Creative Arts supports the vision of Vice Chancellor, Professor Patrick Johnston, in developing research that impacts across all of our society. In doing so, the School develops a number of community-connected teaching and research initiatives.
- 3.2 This section will present a snapshot of these initiatives in order to demonstrate some of the ways in which Queen's can work collaboratively to understand and foster engagement in the arts for and with our communities.
- 3.3 These initiatives are led by School faculty and often involve connecting University students with children, young people and communities of disadvantaged areas.
- 3.4 Many PhD students include public engagement in their research projects, through performance or ethnographic interviews. A high proportion of lecturers undertake research that leads to public events such as Professor Pedro Rebelo's recent sound installation at the MAC.

- 3.5 Some research explicitly address issues of inclusion and public dialogue such as Professor Cahal McLaughlin's work on the Prison Memory Archive, David Grant's knowledge transfer project with the Lighthouse Centre in North Belfast and Duncairn Community Centre, and Dr. Brenda Winter-Palmer's drama work with people affected by strokes.
- 3.6 Work placement modules allow some students to gain experience working through the arts in a variety of community contexts.
- 3.7 The School runs its own Saturday music programme for children (JAM, the Junior Academy of Music).
- 3.8 Dr. Franziska Schroeder and David Grant are currently participating in an outreach programme funded by the Research Councils UK to share current research with secondary level school pupils who have attended special events in the Sonic Arts Research Centre. Drama workshops linked to a production of Owen McCafferty's 'Mojo Mickybo' addressing the impact of sectarianism on children have been held at four schools in North Belfast. The School has also been closely associated with the work of the Theatre of Witness, hosting performances, providing rehearsal space and facilitating through the work of film lecturer Declan Feeney the documentation and dissemination of the plays.
- 3.9 Queen's is currently developing a study entitled 'The Theatre as Therapy' with the Educational Shakespeare Company (ESC). This study will proceed, through a close liaison with Michael Pierse (Institute of Collaborative Humanities, QUB), Paul Murphy (School of Creative Arts, QUB), Tom Magill (Artistic Director, ESC) and Dr Kirsten Kearney (Chief Executive, ESC), to provide a scoping exercise in regard to producing a peer-reviewed paper on the work of ESC from a cultural perspective, developing a preliminary catalogue of its dramatherapy archive, and utilising those findings to develop a substantial, holistic and interdisciplinary research grant bid on the subject of dramatherapy and mental health in Belfast. The project aims to provide preliminary findings on if – and to what extent – artistic interventions can impact on participants' mental health, their relationship with the wider community and, beyond that, whether the process reverberates further in terms of changing perceptions of self and other and reducing the stigmatisation of mental health, both for these alienated groups and for the wider community.

4 Arts Management and Cultural Policy Research and Teaching

- 4.1 In 2012, The School of Creative Arts launched a Masters programme in Arts Management and Cultural Policy. This section will describe the MA and then discuss ways in which the programme may contribute to building the knowledge base of the sector relevant to this and other Inquiries led by the Northern Ireland Assembly Committee for Culture, Arts and Leisure.

- 4.2 The degree programme aims to provide students with an advanced knowledge and understanding of the most up-to-date theories and discourses in Arts Management and Cultural Policy and how these are influencing practice.
- 4.3 All modules are connected by a common strategic thread: training future arts leaders against the backdrop of evolving cultural, economic and political contexts. Modules focus on international perspectives in cultural policy, the everyday business of arts managers, work placements in local cultural organisations, and engaging with audiences and communities.
- 4.4 The programme includes a series of guest lectures and/or practical seminars by experienced professionals who are based in arts institutions in Northern Ireland (eg The Arts Council of Northern Ireland, Audiences NI, Arts and Business, Creative and Cultural Skills).
- 4.5 Through work placements, the MA provides a unique way in which the University may become more aware of, and contribute positively to, the needs of the arts sector in Northern Ireland. Work placements provide an opportunity for students to not only learn from the sector, but contribute knowledge and skills to it as well. It is important that work placements match the needs of an organisation with the learning needs of students in ways that enhance that organisation's work.
- 4.6 The dissertations that students undertake provide new research and knowledge for the sector, a need acknowledged by many organisations that have submitted responses to the Inquiry. Students carry out both quantitative and qualitative research for their dissertations. For example, studies have involved gathering and analysing audience attendance figures as well as carrying out case study research that examine projects happening in real-time in arts organisations local to Belfast. In addition, students often research wider cultural policy concerns (both national and international) critiquing existing policy and considering its impact on the development of the arts, the practice of arts managers, and the arts experience of the public. This work can contribute greatly to the sector's knowledge, being made available through online publications and presentations or reports provided to organisations involved in research.
- 4.7 Take up of the programme has been high in the 2 years the MA has been running with 18 students in year one and 28 students in year 2. The students have been a mixture of full and part time students.
- 4.8 Initial take up of the course has warranted a new post for a Lecturer in Arts Management and Cultural Policy.
- 4.9 This new post, having begun in March 2014, has provided an opportunity for the School of Creative Arts to review the Masters and develop new ways in which the degree programme may give more direct benefit to, as well as benefit from, the rich arts and cultural sector and communities of Northern Ireland.

- 4.10 The new post also allows the School of Creative Arts to build the university's culture for research in the areas of arts management and cultural policy. The MA is one aspect of this plan with the aim of increasing the uptake of PhD studies in the area as another.
- 4.11 Dr. Victoria Durrer, the new Lecturer in Arts Management and Cultural Policy at the School of Creative Arts offers expertise in the areas of access, audience development and participation in the arts and cultural policy. Her PhD, from the School of Sociology, Social Policy and Social Work at the University of Liverpool focused on the interpretation and delivery of social inclusion programmes in the arts. She has a particular interest in cultural policy design and delivery and will be developing research in this area.
- 4.12 The School of Creative Arts is interested in further developing the ties that the MA fosters between the University and the arts sector in Northern Ireland. We would like to contribute positively to the learning and professional development needs of individuals working in the sector as well as developing a stronger, critical research culture for the sector. We feel that the MA and PhD degree programmes in Arts Management and Cultural Policy could be a great contribution to issues raised by the Inquiry.

5 Research Capacity and Potential for Collaboration

- 5.1 It is an active part of Queen's strategy to build strong partnerships that enhance our economic, social and cultural growth as a society. As explained by Professor Patrick Johnston in March 2014 upon taking up post as Vice Chancellor, "We wish to provide impact, particularly in the most disadvantaged areas of our community here in Northern Ireland." The potential for collaboration on research initiatives is a key way in which The School of Creative Arts can provide this impact.
- 5.2 The School of Creative Arts at Queen's provides one of most diverse and active research environments in the UK or Ireland. 35 high-profile academics and a community of over 100 research students are engaged in projects in each area of Music, Film, Drama, and Sonic Arts. Further areas in Arts Management and Cultural Policy are under development. The School has been highly rated in the last two Research Assessment Exercises (now Research Excellence Framework) in the UK and has been at the forefront of a number of key creative research activities in the last twenty years.
- 5.3 The School of Creative Arts is interested in collaborating with individuals, communities and organisations in the academic and arts and cultural sectors in Northern Ireland and abroad to support the rigor of research in some of the areas outlined within the NIA Committee's Inquiry.

- 5.4 This section highlights potential contributions, capacities and areas of research interest that match the Inquiry's Terms of Reference with the expertise and offer available in the School of Creative Arts.
- 5.5 With funding support, colleagues within the School of Creative Arts have gained extensive experience developing research and teaching programmes around the **challenges and barriers to accessing the arts**.
- 5.6 Our research shows that working class communities are not homogeneous nor are the situations in which they live, study, work and take part in cultural or leisure activity (Vincent, et al. 2007; Ingram 2009). Further being working class does not mean that one is socially excluded (Levitas 2005).
- 5.7 The cultural interests and activities of any public are not straightforward (Roberts 2004); nor limited to those activities provided solely by publicly funded arts organisations (Miles and Sullivan 2012).
- 5.8 Access to arts and cultural activity for individuals is further complicated when considering the opinions of the general public as to which items and activities are believed necessary in Northern Ireland today to enjoy a decent standard of living. The Poverty and Social Exclusion Northern Ireland study (part of the Poverty and Social Exclusion in the UK study funded by the Economic and Social Research Council and based at Queen's University) raises questions as to what types of arts and cultural activities may be considered "one which 'all adults should be able to afford and which they should not have to do without'" (Kelly, et al 2012: 13).
- 5.9 In order to understand the ways in which individuals may or may not have opportunities to access the arts, methodologies should be mixed (Miles and Sullivan 2012) and involve speaking directly with those that may be disengaged (Vincent, et al. 2007; Durrer 2009; Ingram 2009).
- 5.10 Participatory arts-based research as well as the study of arts practice has much to teach us about the ways in which we may begin to understand class (Murphy 2012).
- 5.11 There is much to be learned regarding the **landscape of outreach activity** of arts venues and bodies (including festivals) in Northern Ireland. Arts planning guidance would benefit from understanding how outreach activity in multi-use or community spaces, including community centres and parks, might contribute to arts participation and inclusion. Further, greater awareness regarding the geographic spread and type of this activity will augment data gathered through the *Examining Social Inclusion in the arts in Northern Ireland* study (Hull 2013).
- 5.12 A baseline of information regarding outreach activity is needed through mapping in the following ways: Having a clear understanding of the terms / activity being mapped, such as what is meant by outreach activity, and what is meant by arts and /or cultural outreach activity.

- 5.13 Focusing on activity at local and regional level will illuminate the types of venues and activities that are of local significance, but may be hidden in wider, national studies (Lee and Gilmore 2012). This information has the potential to inform policy development across planning, economic, social, health and educational sectors.
- 5.14 Further, mapping activities must move beyond those of quantitative data gathering such as: 'this venue, on this street, in this neighbourhood, with this socio-demographic profile and population'. Mapping research needs to engage interactively with communities in order to understand the variety and types of outreach activities with which they are engaging, where, why and how (Lee and Gilmore 2012). Developing this knowledge of, and relationship with, individuals and communities will lead to a greater understanding of current use of, as well as gaps in, provision.
- 5.15 The Inquiry seeks to gather information regarding the **degree to which outreach activities can help tackle particular social issues and what examples of best practice might look like**. The difficulty of measuring the social, personal and, potentially, economic impact of these activities has been much discussed in academic circles with impact frameworks continually revised to address the challenge. In order to develop rigorous studies of how outreach activities might tackle particular social issues, it is critical to understand the nature and nuance of what is meant by social issues as well as understanding for and with whom these issues are trying to be tackled.
- 5.16 Further, as each individual's experience of exclusion (or inclusion) is argued to be different and any experience is also process-based, there is a need for thorough examination of the processes underpinning project delivery, particularly within a field like the arts that has its own issues of exclusion (Bourdieu & Darbel 1991; Butterfoss 2006; Durrer 2008a).
- 5.17 Many outreach projects work in very localised contexts with individualised and personalised approaches that require a particular degree of flexibility as well as dialogue and partnership with multiple stakeholders (Durrer and O'Brien 2014). It is necessary to take these approaches into consideration when developing methodologies for study.
- 5.18 Outreach projects also take place by and with a number of organisations that have different structures, histories, staff capacities, financial resources and relationships to the locality in which they are working, for example. Examining the delivery of programmes in real-time, with participants, facilitators and managers and within their individual contexts takes into account what is happening on the ground and sees practice as a process of learning that can provide the basis for a more reflective practice and thus more effective policy making (Durrer 2008a; 2008b; 2010).

5.19 Academic staff in Queen's School of Creative Arts have the capacity to develop these research areas.

6 Recommendations and Conclusion

- 6.1 The research capacity and educational provision offered at The School of Creative Arts at Queen's University Belfast has much to contribute to the arts sector and the matters put forward through the Northern Irish Assembly Committee's Inquiry into the inclusion of working class communities in the arts.
- 6.2 Events and facilitates at the School of Creative Arts and organisations like Queens Film Theatre, Brian Friel Theatre, the Naughton Gallery and the Belfast Festival at Queens, show that the University and The School of Creative Arts is already a very active member of the sector.
- 6.3 Practice based research in film, music and theatre, which is currently being carried out by a number of academics based in the school, demonstrates the richness of our research culture.
- 6.4 The recent development of a degree programme in Arts Management and Cultural Policy with a new Lecturer in the field provides fresh avenues through which the University might additionally collaborate with the sector on developing skills and research capacity.
- 6.5 The School's research capacity in the fields of the arts, arts management and cultural policy provide potential for developing a number of research studies raised by the Inquiry. These ideas are presented in Section 5.
- 6.6 While it is beyond the scope of this document to detail the research capacity present in other University Departments, it should be mentioned that additional expertise relevant to the Inquiry is available through the School of Sociology and Social Policy, which is currently running The Northern Ireland strand of the Poverty and Social Exclusion UK research project.¹
- 6.7 The School of Creative Arts welcomes the opportunity to collaborate with policy makers, researchers, individuals, communities and arts and cultural sector professionals on developing research projects aimed at addressing improvements in policies, delivery mechanisms and collaborations sought by the Inquiry.

¹ Launched in May 2010 with funding from the Economic and Social Research Council, the project uses the consensual method. It is the the fourth in a series of nationally representative surveys in Britain and the second in Northern Ireland that use a consensual measure of minimum necessary living standards and direct measures of material and social deprivation rather than solely relying on proxy income data.

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