



Knowledge Exchange Seminar Series (KESS)

...is a forum that encourages debate on a wide range of research findings, with the overall aim of promoting evidence-based policy and law-making within Northern Ireland



KESS Seminar 25 Jan 2017

'Quality of Life'

**Inclusion and resilience in
community cultural
development in Northern
Ireland**

Dr Matt Jennings (Ulster University),
with Prof Martin Beirne (University of
Glasgow) and Stephanie Knight
(University of Glasgow)

- March 2015: Arts Council of Northern Ireland (ACNI) cuts of 40-100% to arts companies after 11% reduction to ACNI Budget 2015-16 (ACNI, 2015)
- Before 2015, NI arts spending only '13p per capita per week', already 'far less than the 32 pence per week spent in Wales' (Litvack 2014, online)
- How can community artists survive?
- Derry/Londonderry UK City of Culture 2013
- Community artists support wellbeing, peacebuilding and social development
- Cross-community; education; health; youth; ageing; disability



METHODOLOGY

- 18 community drama, dance, music and visual arts practitioners in Northern Ireland
- Research since 2012: semi-structured interviews; questionnaires; participant and nonparticipant observation; seminars on arts management and cultural policy
- Advocacy/Consultation: Arts Council of Northern Ireland (ACNI), the City of Derry and Strabane District Council (CDSDC); the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister (OFMDFM); Department of Social Development (DSD) & Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure (DCAL) - now Department of Communities (DoC)



Community Arts, the Peace Process and UK City of Culture 2013 – ‘Legenderry’

- €2.2 billion of EU Peace funding 2000-2006 (Commission of the European Communities 2008)
- 2013: Derry/Londonderry UK City of Culture (UK CoC) - ‘Legenderry’ – shift to re-branding for Tourism and Public Relations, from peacebuilding and social development (McDermott et al, 2016)
- No UK funding for UK CoC - European CoC provides EU investment (Boland et al, 2016)
- 2012: 41.5 % of City of Derry and Strabane District Council (CDSDC) population ‘economically inactive’ - 30% of citizens aged between 16 and 64 (DETNI 2016)
- 2015: ‘economic inactivity’ in CDSDC population still 41.6%, - 32.9% of people aged between 16 and 64 (DETNI 2016)



UK CoC - Impact

- “In truth, CoC was never realistically going to be a panacea for deep seated and entrenched socio-economic problems in a deprived and peripheral economy” (Boland et al, 2016, 14).
- “If a major event of this nature is expected to have a major impact on the local economy, it needs to be part of a broader strategy with supporting investment” (Derry City and Strabane District Council 2016, 61).
- Cultural impact: “clear evidence of genuine transformative change regarding image improvement and civic pride; enhanced community relations and sense of unity; intercultural dialogue and cultural exchange; cross-community attendance at events; increased tourism and spend; shared and depoliticised spaces” (Boland et al, 2016, p.14).



IMPACT ON LOCAL ARTISTS

It was during the year of the City of Culture – where I had no work for four months. At all! And that has never happened in all the years that I've been at it. I've always had something.

Freelance actor/arts facilitator, interviewed 12 May 2015

In some cases, it was more than a year that people hadn't received their payments; in many cases, despite repeatedly supplying the relevant information...we seemed to be passed through all the various levels of administration, but verbal and written promises were broken about payment coming through.

Freelance writer/community facilitator, interviewed 13 May 2015

The big noticeable funding cut was after the City of Culture...Definitely for that year after the City of Culture year, work was just so hard to get. There was nothing...January, February and March [of 2014] it was just absolutely dire. There was just no work at all.

Freelance dancer/teacher/facilitator, interviewed 13 May 2015



TABLE: ARTISTS' PERSONAL RESPONSES TO PRECARIETY SINCE 2013

ACTIVITY	NUMBER (/18)
Working outside of community sector	18
Working on multiple projects simultaneously	18
Working for low pay/no pay	14
Relying on Partners or Parents	12
Working in other parts of Ireland & UK	12
Working in other disciplines	9
Regular yoga/martial arts practice	5
Working outside the arts	4
Receipt of welfare/tax credits	3



Value of the Arts

Alternative art practice lies outside the framing that we are given by bureaucratic and political practices...The question is, how do we value and what kind of values do we bring to the input and the creative process?

Dancer/Choreographer/Artistic Director, interviewed 18 May 2012

I think that what is special about Northern Ireland – it's the arts. And without that, and without how accessible the arts are here, what is there left really?

Freelance dancer/teacher/facilitator, interviewed 13 May 2015

There is the sheer enjoyment, the commitment, the energy, the passion. The skills base and the wealth of talent that there is in this area is unparalleled, to me, in any other community area. And every time you take your 'cynical self' down to do some work or be involved in a project, the sheer joy in it and the energy and enthusiasm is renewed – which is why we are all still doing it.

Freelance writer/community facilitator, interviewed 13 May 2015



Artistic Precariat

Working with the adults with learning disabilities, I only had 10 weeks to work with both groups from scratch, to come up with all the aims and objectives throughout and to follow through with I was going to do, right up to a performance with a live audience - theatre, lights, sounds - the whole shebang.

Freelance Drama Facilitator, interviewed 22 May 2015

I think one of the biggest changes has been a huge mood swing. A loss of confidence amongst community artists...A feeling of powerlessness. A feeling that significant achievements that have been made by the community arts have not been recognised.

Freelance writer/community facilitator, interviewed 13 May 2015

Has work become precarious? Well, yeah (laughs)...because you panic. Everybody I speak to that works in this field feels exactly the same...You can't make long-term plans because of the nature of the work. There is so much instability and I understand why so many people can't handle that.

Freelance Actor/Writer/Drama Facilitator, interviewed 12 May 2015



Personal, Economic and Community Resilience

- 'Personal resilience' is 'the capacity to do well despite adverse experiences' - arts participation increases the capacity 'to feel safe, commit to a group and belong, develop their learning, cope with difficult feelings, help others, develop self-understanding and foster a sense of identity' (Macpherson, Hart and Heaver 2015, pp 2-4)
- Green and Newsinger (2014): artists and arts organisations in the East Midlands of England, working with disabled children, have demonstrated admirable economic 'resilience' since 2010. However, client groups and participants have suffered from a reduction in services
- 'Precarization' of work globally (Butler 2010; Lorey 2015):

A number of recent studies and sociology of work discovered in the figure of the artist a pertinent metaphor, and even more than a metaphor, a common model, for those employees reputed to have personal qualities of strategic importance to the company, notably 'creativity'...this limit-point of employment, has been turned into a general model for the overall project of neoliberal normalisation.

London 2014, 123-125



Alternative Income & Collective Action

- Fundraising: charging fees; bake sales; charity raffles; crowdfunding campaigns
- Corporate sponsorship – state funding for infrastructure and training
- In 2016, the arts sector demonstrated the highest levels of economic growth, of all the ‘creative industries’ in the UK (e.g. advertising and architecture). Arts Council England introduced new funding streams, such as a “new fund...specifically for individual artists to “develop their creative practice” (Hutchison 2016, online).
- Resource Sharing: GSCA and Echo Echo room hire; artists subsidise each other and participants (transport; child care) out of own pockets; #Derry Creatives & Fun Palace (“there is no austerity of creative people”) - Voluntary Arts Ireland & #Brand NI

Further cuts to public services could have a disproportionate impact in Northern Ireland, where 28% of those employed are in the public sector, 35% of the population have no tertiary qualifications and 27% of the population is economically inactive

DETNI 2015



Policy Options

- **Australia: 'Community Cultural Development'** workers directly employed by local authorities. 2001 - most precarious and lowest paid arts workers; 2011 - after professionalization, the most secure. Median personal income doubled; overall government expenditure on community arts reduced (Throsby and Zednik 2011)
- **France: 'Intermittents du Spectacle'** system. State matches earnings of regularly employed freelance artists - reduces overall costs of arts subsidy (Chrisafis 2012)
- **Universal Basic Income (UBI)** - £10-15k a year stipend Expansion of current ACNI Individual Artists' grants – or pilot, with established freelance artists, for a broader UBI programme. **Scotland, Canada, Netherlands, Finland** and **India** conducting trials on UBI in specific sectors. India – UBI potential to decrease overall welfare expenditure (Schjoedt 2016)

REFERENCES

- Arts Council of Northern Ireland (2015) 'Arts sector feels the impact of £1.38 million funding cuts'. <http://artscouncil-ni.org/news/arts-sector-feels-the-impact-of-1.38-million-funding-cuts> (accessed 15 October 2015)
- Butler, J. (2010) *Frames of war: when is life grievable?* London: Verso.
- Chrisafis, A. (2012) 'European arts cuts: France threatens to pull plug on creatives' special benefits' *The Guardian*, 20 July 2012, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2012/jul/30/review-threatens-french-creatives-benefits>
- Commission of the European Communities (2008) *Communication from the Commission to the Council and to the European Parliament: on the Report of the Northern Ireland Task Force.* ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/sources/activity/ireland/report2008.pdf (accessed 10 October 2016)
- Derry City and Strabane District Council (2016) *Post Project Evaluation of City of Culture 2013.* Derry: Derry City and Strabane Council.
- DETI NI (2015) *Northern Ireland labour market statistics.* http://www.detini.gov.uk/index/what-we-do/deti-stats-index/labour_market_statistics/labour_force_survey.htm (accessed 3 Sept 2015)
- DETNI (2016) *Labour Force Survey Tables for Local Government Districts* <https://www.economy-ni.gov.uk/publications/labour-force-survey-tables-local-government-districts> (accessed 15 October 2016)
- Grant, David. (1993) *Playing the Wild Card: a Survey of Community Drama and Smaller-Scale Theatre from a Community Relations Perspective.* Belfast: Community Relations Council.
- Green, W. and Newsinger, J. (2015) *Disabled Children and Young People: Engagement In Arts and Culture in the East Midlands in an Environment of Restrained Resources: A Report for The Mighty Creatives.* East Midlands: The Mighty Creatives. [https://www.themightycreatives.com/assets/documents/publications/TMC_Disabled_Children_in_the_East_Midlands_Report_2015%20\(1\)%20\(1\).pdf](https://www.themightycreatives.com/assets/documents/publications/TMC_Disabled_Children_in_the_East_Midlands_Report_2015%20(1)%20(1).pdf) (accessed 15 July 2016)



- Jennings, M. (2009) 'Playing Your Role: Identity and Community-Based Performance in Contemporary Northern Ireland', *About Performance 9: Playing Politics: Performance, Community and Social Change*, 103-125. Sydney: University of Sydney
- Jennings, M. (2012) 'Building the Dream in a Theatre of Peace: Community Arts Management and the Position of the Practitioner in Northern Ireland', *Journal of Arts and Communities*, 4:3, 161-180
- Jennings, M. and Baldwin, A. (2010) "Filling out the Forms was a Nightmare": Project Evaluation and the Reflective Practitioner in Community Theatre in Contemporary Northern Ireland', *Music and Arts in Action*, 2:2, 72-89.
- Litvack, L. (2014) 'The Arts are for Everyone'. Arts Council of Northern Ireland <http://www.artscouncil-ni.org/mobile/news/the-arts-are-for-everyone-leon-litvack> (accessed 15 October 2015)
- London, F. (2014) *Willing slaves of capital: Spinoza and Marx on desire*. (trans. Gabriel Ash). London: Verso
- Lorey, I. (2015) (trans. A. Dereig). *State of insecurity: Government of the precarious*. London: Verso
- Macpherson, H., Hart, A., & Heaver, B. (2015) 'Building resilience through group visual arts activities': findings from a scoping study with young people who experience mental health complexities and/or learning difficulties'. *Journal of Social Work*, 0 (0) 1-20
- Maguire, T. (2006) *Making Theatre in Northern Ireland: Through and Beyond the Troubles*. Exeter: University of Exeter Press.
- Schjoedt, R. (2016) 'Why India is right to consider a universal basic income', *Development Pathways*, <http://www.developmentpathways.co.uk/resources/india-right-consider-universal-basic-income/>





Northern Ireland
Assembly



Queen's University
Belfast



The Open
University



Ulster
University

Knowledge Exchange Seminar Series (KESS)

...is a forum that encourages debate on a wide range of research findings, with the overall aim of promoting evidence-based policy and law-making within Northern Ireland