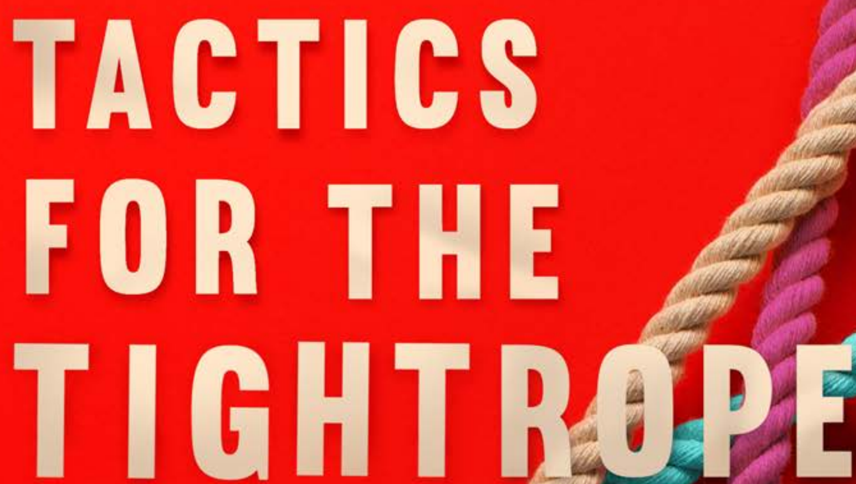
MARK ROBINSON



TACTICS FOR THE TIGHTROPE

CREATIVE RESILIENCE FOR CREATIVE COMMUNITIES

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Creative Resilience for Creative Communities

MARK ROBINSON

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FOREWORD

Over the past few years, Future Arts Centres has brought together more than 100 arts centres from across the UK, to talk, think and work together in many different ways. Our instinct was that some vitally important developments in arts practice were occurring around the country in these centres, that were genuinely starting to shift who gets to make and experience arts and culture.

Many leaders within arts centres were stepping up to challenge the status quo and find new and different ways of working that embraced our key principles: to provide outstanding cultural experiences, maximise social impact and community cohesion, contribute to local economic regeneration and develop business models to support artistic risk-taking.

We wanted to expose these practices, to interrogate and challenge them, and to share them.

Through the generosity of Esmée Fairbairn Foundation, we were able to bring in Mark Robinson to work alongside us. Mark's own practice, experience and influential research and writing was very much aligned with our values, and we are delighted to commission and publish *Tactics for the Tightrope*. It embraces many of the principles and considerations that are core to Future Arts Centres work, particularly the commitment to collaboration.

We hope it will inspire people to work together creatively, as well as interrogate their own practice. We want to encourage everyone to consider what leadership in the 21st century could and should look like and provide some practical tools to help in those moments when you feel yourself teetering on your own tightrope.

Gavin Barlow & Annabel Turpin
Co-leads, Future Arts Centres
futureartscentres.org.uk

"these are calamitous times we're living through
you can't speak without committing a contradiction"
Nicanor Parra

"Don't mistake a light bulb for the moon, and don't believe that the moon is useless unless we land on it… The moon is profound *except* when we land on it."
Rebecca Solnit

"Give me sand before gold, sea instead of champagne – what's it like anyway? – and all the common things like air, and wind, and clouds, and people."
Sid Chaplin

"Dream a little before you think."
Toni Morrison

"My contribution is to ask for a *paradox* to be accepted and tolerated and respected, and for it not to be resolved. By flight to split-off intellectual functioning it is possible to resolve the paradox, but the price of this is the loss of the value of the paradox itself."
D.W. Winnicott

CHAPTER ONE
A CORNUCOPIA

Makers of pastry and shapers of pies,
builders of houses and mortgage providers,
bankers, crafters, tanker-drivers, shops,
counters of beans and makers of scenes,
conjurers of light and houses from hats,
creators of mats, offices, homes,
scaffolders, miners, benders, combiners,
those who run trains and boats and planes
– and cars, vans, bikes, trucks and lorries,
frothers-up of headlines and local stories,
potash, iron, marshmallows, paninis, cakes,
country houses, open mines and mucky works,
people who pluck pictures from the air to make
photos, blueprints, fresh-baked pizzas, songs,
the people who give you ice creams,
toffees, tarmac, sleep-filled nights, insurance,
sharpeners of pencils, bakers of bread,
the ports, the malls, and the roads up to them,

the fillers of airways, airwaves and glasses,
pullers of pints and molten steel, lager and bitter
and mild mannered curries, mixers of spices,
pickers of pickles and peppers, proud paper-peddlers,
fryers of fish and chips, trainers of the fat,
blenders of soup and fine tailors of suits,
mixers of cement to fill high heels and boots,
lickers of stamps and blowers of glass,
builders of containers, cisterns and fountains,
breakers of brown-fields, diggers of the dirt,
kickers of footballs, halo-headed chefs,
binders and sellers and printers of books, plain cooks,
cutters of concrete and layers of turf, geniuses
who argue the elements into medicine and art,
lines of melody, memory and meaning,
words, pixels, frames, oils, water, light,
muscles, shape, music, movement, laughter, bite.

CHAPTER TWO
DREAMERS ON THE TIGHTROPE

The point:
- *The image of a multitude of dreamers on a plethora of tightropes, finding the balance between movement and stability*
- *The need for not just survival but creative resilience as resistance to hierarchy, inequality and irrelevance*
- *You cannot be resilient alone*
- *The opportunity for 'infinite variety' as a result of distributed leadership that connects, collaborates and multiplies*
- *The potential for a transition from hurt to hope using a handful of basic principles*
- *A paradox or conundrum: any one of us only gets to do the tightrope in our own unique way when we all get to do it in our own unique way*

Some questions:
- *If you cannot be resilient alone, who else is on the tightropes with you, and what do you owe them?*
- *How do you use your creative resilience to resist and to dream something unachieved into life?*

Welcome

Imagine a person on a tightrope, juggling cups and saucers. One foot keeps them up there, weight running up and through bent knee and tightened core. Or they're on a unicycle, or using a wheelchair or crutches. Or they're even walking on their hands and juggling with their feet, if they have feet. It's your imagination, you decide. Their eyes fix on a cup and saucer in mid-air, apart, but not too far – the crockery is still a set. On the tightrope walker's head (or feet or shoulders or lap) sits a whole pile of cups and saucers. Their arms and hips and thighs are ready for the next shift. Around them the crowd has chosen not to worry, or to worry only from the far edge of wonder.

The spotlights single out each walker, though a host of others hold them. The room is full of others who make this moment happen. And now more make their way onto the tightrope, moving in accumulating patterns and singular forms, juggling different objects, every step and shape revealing another

angle. Members of the crowd, or people we thought were members of the crowd, start to come forward, to climb, to dream. Some begin to erect their own tightropes and slack wires, many a foot from the floor, some in the rafters. Soon people are leaping between the wires, somersaulting, vaulting, bouncing off the trampolines and rubber tables that others manoeuvre at a run. They make sure no-one hits the ground before they choose to. The multiplying tightropes help them escape the linear.

Movement and stillness meet where balance dances with the drop, with flight. The wire walkers unite in concentration, flow and muscle memory. They explore and improvise, confident that practice has replaced their tentative beginnings. Close, fresh attention to the moment, and the coming moment, and the one after that. They look each other in the eyes. They reach out knowing touch will come. Sometimes there is shouting. Those around them play their part too, add their silence, encouragement and will. The watchers have their own tightropes at home, at work, in the heights of their dreams. For this *is* a process of dreaming something unachieved into life, of finding better arrangements, closer ways of being. Culture is wideawake dreaming.

This is the image I want to start with, and invite you to hold as you read this book. For me, this is one image of an artist, of the freelance cultural worker, of all those working in theatre and dance companies, publishers, galleries, museums, artist collectives, producing hubs, magazines, festivals, arts centres and a thousand more variants, hybrids and mutations, and of those organisations themselves, and of the communities they serve.

The dreamers on the tightropes want to do good work, to take risks but be healthy and to care for each other. Yet the sector around them is beset with chronic conditions and dangers. Narrowness of voice, unfair power dynamics, reductions in public funding, undercapitalised organisations and precarious individual workers conspire to bake-in inequality, which encourages further inequality. The climate emergency, racial violence and injustice, social inequality and deprivation, the disabling of so many people, also form part of the environment in which they work. Then along came a global pandemic to throw loss, grief and more uncertainty at them. The Covid crisis revealed, again, the withering effects of a decade of austerity on the business models of the cultural sector. The limits of conceptions of resilience that restrict themselves to developing diverse income streams are clear. Those on the

tightrope are often pig sick of hearing about resilience.

Those on the tightrope also want to find the balance between the necessary risk of their creative and cultural lives, and the in-built precarity of the systems within which they find themselves. Many – though not all, there are solitary beauties on the ropes too – want to do this while involving people in communities and organisations and freelancers in different, non-hierarchical ways. I've spent the past decade developing tools and frameworks that can help, after two decades mainly on one tightrope or another. (Or, a few times, brushing myself down after falling.)

There are no silver bullets. The tightrope only looks like a straight line. We will still, for now, be working within or alongside a culture and economy dominated by notions of enterprise, individualism and marketisation, even where our work or approaches oppose it. But we can, at least, understand that environment and how we relate to it. We can then shape our approach to the extent we are able: our own combination of rejecting, ignoring, challenging, fitting in, accommodating. Or indeed embracing it if you prefer - we should not forget, in what follows, that many in the creative and cultural sector are fine with 'survival of the fittest'. I won't talk much about them, and they don't talk about themselves like that much, but they walk amongst us, and they are – inconveniently perhaps - responsible for some of the art and culture which most moves and challenges us.

What we need: creative resilience as resistance to hierarchy, inequality and irrelevance

This may not seem a revolutionary cry for an opening argument. I believe it would be better for us all to move from carelessness to care, from hurt to hope. This is possible, I think, without 'burning it all down' in a revolution, if we build resourcefulness and creative capabilities so we can resist through our creative resilience. If we ditch hierarchical leadership models to connect, collaborate and multiply many, many voices. If we make ourselves useful and make spaces for others even as we take our own space. And if we keep some slack for ourselves.

I know that sometimes you have to step outside and work with others to create your own systems with your own values, with meanwhile and evolutionary

zeal. This means rejecting things others run towards. I also know how hard that can be practically for many, much of the time. In the decade I have worked with adaptive resilience, people have sometimes accused me of neoliberal managerialism, to my face or in academic papers, far more even than before I left a pinstriped job for the plains of independence. Those in organisations and community groups, though, have more often picked up on the other meaning of 'manage': to get by, to do what's needed in the circumstances, to shift tactics to make the most of what power and control you hold. It is reassuring to me to find resilience increasingly conceived as a potential precursor to resistance and transformation, instead of necessarily a defeatist adaptation to an unhealthy system. If I wanted to promote neoliberal managerialism, I wouldn't do it from here, and I'd have spent more time talking in repressive regimes than in the economically challenged towns where I've tended to work.

I have sometimes wondered if my lack of instinctive recoil at talk of resilience stems from growing up in a place full of imposing but empty cotton mills, which had been a rail hub but now was brown fields and rusting sheds. My grandad had driven one of the final steam trains out of one of those sheds when I was a toddler, and my ancestors specialised in the dying industries of cotton and steam trains. I grew up in Preston, Lancashire, in North West England and I have lived almost 30 years in the parish of Preston-on-Tees, in Teesside, a place once renowned for steel and chemicals, with towns that have been identified as the least economically resilient in England. Apart from a year as a student in hyper-diverse Saint-Denis in Paris, and a year in London's bustling West End cheffing, it has essentially been a life lived a long way from what many people in England would still consider, in the words of Matthew Arnold, the "natural centres of mental improvement and sources of lucidity" that practice if not policy holds to be in the South East of England.

It was not an especially deprived place, or didn't feel it to me as a child. It had a requisite variety of social clubs, pubs, bands, fetes and float festivals, youth clubs, churches, building sites and wind-blown recs, and a library. For a year or so in my teens, the village even had the most important cultural infrastructure I could then imagine beyond the library: a record shop with a box of independent label singles on the counter. I suspect now people had looked for how they could live and work with the positive ways community life expresses itself – what I might, in creative resilience terms, call the core

purpose and values – and repurposed, rebuilt and drawn on networks and assets so people could do what was possible. (They had done so in a very different policy environment, of course, with that previous community infrastructure still standing, like those mill buildings.) I don't want to paint myself as an outsider who struggled through, despite my flashbacks to being an 11+ fluke with a cardboard briefcase, that's not my point. My family were very supportive in many ways (even when, after graduating, I worked as a vegetarian chef for six years). My point is that if most people in the arts had parents with professional or management jobs when growing up – well over 60% on one programme I evaluated recently – maybe the idea of resilience sits differently. (My Dad worked in warehouses most of his working life; Mum was a secretary, shop worker and, in her last job before she died, a care worker on minimum wage. I was the first in my family to go to university. I did, though, make a fortuitously good and early marriage for what was to come, as my in-laws were a musician/composer and an animal welfare campaigner. I didn't know that when I fell in love with my wife aged 19, mind.)

Thanks especially to an inspirational talk by the artist Jess Thom, TourettesHero, and work by resilience researchers, I have come to think of building resilience as an act of resistance to the damage made in communities by economics and sometimes by nature – adaptive, creative resistance, bending rather than breaking. For many things in culture, longevity matters. It has a function, of accumulating memory and innovation into new, evolving traditions. It builds up habits and assets, bodies of work and their critical reception. It creates spaces for people to do their work over long periods, and for others to come in, learn and pass through. It also demonstrates a set of values at odds with the stick it up and tear it down values of much commercial activity. It allows for memory as well as discovery, for attachment to place and people to mature: all are component parts, for me, of the 'ordinary' thing we call 'culture'. This runs counter to a strain in the arts that loves to talk of transformation, of novelty, of opposition-as-identity, even from comfortable pension-building positions.

My argument is that if we want a culture that is creative *and* fair, that can better explore the stories, sounds and images of our times, and play a part in making those times better, and is also, as Raymond Williams put it, 'ordinary', we do need some organisations, events and institutions to last, and to be healthy, productive places to do work. This requires creative resilience at

all levels: the capacity of organisations and communities of people to be productive, valued, and true to self-determined core purpose and identity. This may involve absorbing disturbance, adapting with integrity in response to changing circumstances and positively influencing the environment. This capacity is most important at system levels, although it includes and respects individuals and should help them thrive. To sustain creative resilience according to anything like my definition, regardless of levels of public or other funding, we need new ways of working with communities, and we need new power structures that demolish hierarchical leadership and trickle down funding models and instead build collective, connected models that resist individualised marketisation of *everything*.

Let me be plain: you cannot be resilient alone.

The characteristics that make up creative resilience are collective and communal ones: resourcefulness, comprising a culture of shared purpose and values, predictable financial resources, strong networks and intellectual, human and physical assets; and creative capabilities, including power and agency, leadership, management and governance, creative capacity and situation awareness. These are all collective efforts, rooted in time and place. As Tyson Yunkaporta concludes when thinking about how cultures adapt and evolve over time: "like all things that last, it must be a group effort aligned with the patterns of creation discerned from living within a specific landscape."[1]

Consultant and writer Peter Block, whose work on community has been vital to my growing sense of doing more than managing but rather resisting and building, says "We serve best through partnership, rather than patriarchy. Dependency is the antithesis of stewardship and so empowerment becomes essential."[2] One of my own practical steps has been to make sure that those I work with are not dependent upon me, by sharing the tools I use, and by turning analysis into useable tools of my own and making those available to others. A positive side effect of this is that it also makes me feel less dependent on others. I simply refuse to monetise every idea I have, every conversation; I want to share it and see it used by others. *Even if* they don't do with it what I would. *Especially* if they do something with it that I could never have done. That's what culture is for me: the passing on of the tools to make your own world. This has also proved more valuable to my earning a living than trademarking every little exercise and framework. (I started off a poet and, like all minor poets, my greatest aspiration remains to one day be Anonymous.)

About this book

I wrote this book in early 2021, during the global Covid-19 pandemic, after the summer of Black Lives Matter, and as Brexit became a reality and its sad and messy effects were felt, leaving the UK weaker and more isolated than at any point in my lifetime. I wrote it in the parish of Preston-on-Tees, in Stockton-on-Tees, in the North East of England, in a house I've lived in half my life now. I was born 56 years ago in the back bedroom of my grandparents' council house, breech, bruised and stubborn. I'm a white, straight man, long-married, father of two grown-ups, and a grandpa. I have worked in and on the cultural and hospitality sectors since graduating, first as a chef in vegetarian restaurants trying to change the world through food, then as a poet, writer, publisher, organiser, arts manager, university (adult education) lecturer, arts funder and suit wearer, and, since 2010, as a writer/consultant whilst also publishing books of poems and making public poems. I suspect there are people who consider me a bit provincial; I don't think it's just my imposter syndrome twinging when I see those looks, but I'm alright with that. (They are wrong, by the way: I'm a Parochial Cosmopolitan, as I'll explain later. I love London too. It's not Paris, but it's OK.) As such, it carries those roots and limitations, minimum. I have tried to challenge myself, my privilege, my instincts and engrained reactions, and to bring in a range of perspectives. But now, more than ever, that feels an effort doomed to only go so far. So it goes.

The first idea for this book came in the anxious, Lost Nights of Corona, with a half-waking, half-sleeping thought to bring together and revisit some of the writing I had done over a decade of Thinking Practice which had most connected with a lot of people. (And to move on from those that didn't.) On proper reflection I still felt this might be a useful thing for people to have and refer to as we discover what balance of new normal and old normal faces us. I had done several talks over lockdown, especially ones for Arts & Business Northern Ireland and for Centro Gabriel Mistral (GAM) in Santiago, Chile, where I put together ideas and frameworks from various earlier papers, and subsequent developments of them, to explore this time of release, and the relationship between resilience and resistance. This is not an attempt to respond to Covid and what it has revealed. The patterns and possibilities emerging from Covid are not unknown, they were hiding in plain sight, ignored or dormant. The frameworks, tools and tactics described were not a

response to a moment and have proved useful over time. I hope they will in future.

Happily, the ever-positive Annabel Turpin and Gavin Barlow, co-leads of Future Arts Centres, also thought that this would be a timely thing for many people in the cultural sector in the UK and perhaps beyond, grappling as we are with what one of the Co-Directors of Culture Reset described to me as an "existential moment". I take it as existential because it demands choice, to be *for* something. Sartre said, in John Gerassi's book *Talking with Sartre*, "what we must do instead is commit ourselves over and over again. No act is pure. All acts are choices, which alienate some. No one can live without dirty hands. To be simply opposed is also to be responsible for not being in favour, for not advocating change."[3] My intention here is to share some ways of making those choices.

We also hope it will be useful to those who think of themselves as more in the voluntary or community sector, where many of the tools and frameworks also apply. There is not a world of difference between a volunteer-led community group and an arts centre. They are both ways of imagining better worlds whilst grappling with this one. On what basis to react, to choose and to build? On what grounds to adapt? Where to focus and why? How might the sector address the chronic conditions it had pre-pandemic in the way it came out the crisis? So I hope that it will be read by artists, writers, directors, curators, charity managers, by the boards of cultural organisations, by those developing leadership programmes, anyone tempted to run a resilience workshop focused on individuals not systems (my advice: don't), and by people working in community networks, art form or subject networks, and people thinking of how to make their creative community endure – whether that's a family, a group or company, a van full of people, an organisation, an institution or a local authority.

This book covers things people have found useful in deciding what to do, or what to stop doing. (I like a good theory more than the next person, I must admit, but I also like action.) I have updated, revised and combined various things I have written in the past, some being more altered than others. (The writing, projects and commissions of the last decade had given me some of the right notes, but not necessarily in the right order.) I have brought together some tools for using those frameworks and ideas. I have also drawn out some

of the implications of Covid-19's effects, as I understand them at the time of writing, but have not included every fresh statistic and fact. Even more than usual, it would be out of date by the time this book reaches you, whenever that is. (I hope it is some years and a world away from my writing it.) I hope the sector lives up to talk of transformation post-pandemic, but I have written this book on the basis that the underlying patterns and ways of being will persist in that reset environment, that the things which we adored, abhorred or ignored before will still be there, and that even if some new patterns have to be lived with in future, be it social distancing or jetpacks, we will face them with our human selves. I hope it provides a way to bring together some of the things I've written about in a way which is easier to share and access over time than the digital realm: a book. There may be the odd fold and crease where new meets old. Enjoy them. If you're one of those – I hope – mythical people who no longer read books but only listen to podcasts, what can I say? #SorryNotSorry.

I've written here about frameworks and models, what some might call theory, and about projects and people. Some of this writing has been public, and available under a Creative Commons license so others could use and adapt it. This book is similarly 'protected' and released into the wild. Take what's useful, change what doesn't work for you, and feel free to adapt. I take inspiration from a local hero in Stockton-on-Tees. John Walker, the inventor of the friction match, refused to patent it, for the good of mankind. He died in poverty, which I hope not to, but I still think it's a good example. These ideas are not mine alone, so I can't own them, I can only put them into the commons to see what use they can be. I am pleased this has happened, with organisations such as the Association of Independent Museums developing sector specific 'resilience' hallmarks from the characteristics I first outlined in *Making Adaptive Resilience Real.* Many other people have told me they have used the frameworks and ideas in their own planning, and I have developed ways of doing this with my own clients.

In this book, I draw out and revisit things I think are still relevant from some previous papers: *Making Adaptive Resilience Real, The Role Of Diversity In Building Adaptive Resilience, The Art of Living Dangerously, Inside Outside Beyond,* and *Multiplying Leadership in Creative Communities* especially. I have adapted and evolved the frameworks since those first publications, and want to share how they join together in my head, as a basis for making a shared, collective, fair

culture: **creative resilience as resistance to hierarchy, inequality and irrelevance.**

Many of the several hundred thousand words I have written in the past decade are not public, but are in evaluations and research reports for a wide range of organisations. These inform what follows in some way, as I've learnt something from each evaluation, each provocation paper, each conference keynote, each business plan. Some of them have provided material more directly, especially in Chapters Three and Four, which draw on commissions from Arts Council England and The Bluecoat, including some as an Associate of EW Group. I am grateful to the people who commissioned the originals, and those who collaborated on the original versions of some of them. Mission Models Money, the 'holocracy' founded by Clare Cooper and Roanne Dodds, of which I was an Associate from 2010 until its closure in 2014, linked transition in an over-extended cultural sector to that necessary for an over-extended planet, seeking to build collaborative and peer-led solutions, and I am especially grateful for that example.

My focus is arts and culture rather than the broader creative industries, or the broader social sector, both of which have deep parallels with what I discuss here, but which I have decided not to bring into my scope. I focus particularly on the non-profit part of the larger picture, rather than the commercial sector of say, music, theatre and visual arts. I suspect much of what I say holds true, but have not extended my work to look into that enough to say definitively. By culture, I mean that which we think of as the arts, heritage, museums, libraries, digital and publishing, both professional and amateur. That's deliberately baggy, I'm afraid, as last time I spent days debating this I wanted to bang my head against the wall and there's no time for that. I trust you. Trust yourself.

I am by nature, habit, budget and poetic leaning a bricoleur: someone who makes things from what is to hand. I prefer the hybrid, heterogenous, juxtaposed and borrowed, even the slightly awkward, to the pure. I have a high tolerance for ambiguity and expect people to work out applications themselves, so they fit the shape of their worlds rather than mine. This is not a book of academic research, for all its leanings towards frameworks and tools not case studies. It is full of things I have found useful in working out what the hell has been going on, and what to do next. I want more than

anything to say, "this may be useful to you", so you can pick it up and apply to your own situation, not find set role models to emulate or simple solutions to implement. (Bricoleur is also used in French for odd-job man, which is a fair cop.)

In some ways, on some days, in certain moods, I even describe this as my cultural practice, joining the dots between writing, research, organisational development and facilitation: connecting, collaborating, multiplying the culture made by us all. Dreaming on the tightrope.

I hope this book will put these ideas, tools and tactics into more hands. It moves through the spheres of the 'self' or individual, 'inside' creative practice and organisations, 'outside' in the sector and 'beyond' in the world or society. It connects individual practice to that of organisations and sectors as they interact with society and, especially, creative communities, and the assets, strategies and tactics needed, including those of multiplying leadership. Throughout, you'll find tools for individuals, staff teams, boards, sector groupings, local networks, networks of networks and any collective of people to help think through their position, possibilities and plans. (These will also be available online as standalone documents for practical use.) So if you choose to work on the tightrope you can do so knowing the risks and potential rewards. You can find your own way to stay up there to do what you need to – and, indeed, discover how you can invite others to dream with you, to make something healthier, more shared and more beautiful than the world we currently live in.

None of what you will find here applies only to people with fancy job titles, seats of power, big cheeses on their boards. These practices do not need authority. In fact sometimes working in the cracks of creaking systems helps. (And rest assured: the current economic system may feel inescapable but it is cracked and creaking.) Stepping away from so-called power to try and influence differently, as I did when I left the National Executive Board of Arts Council England in 2010, metaphorically leaving *Making Adaptive Resilience Real* on my desk, was a deliberate choice to work in those cracks, rather than adapt to the compromises I felt I was having to make. At times this feels exposed and frustrating, at other times, luxurious, even frivolous. It demands as much clarity as when I was an Executive Director. Maybe more. Promiscuous collaboration and sharing of your ideas, heedless of who takes credit, help. It takes a network of trusted critical friends, multi-function bullshit detectors and cheerleaders, too.

I concentrate on the models and patterns I see in the work of those I have contributed to, evaluated, thought about and supported over three decades in the cultural sector. (If you can call the little poetry magazine and press I founded in 1989 part of the cultural sector.) Although you will find reference to the work of specific organisations and programmes, what you won't find is a set of case studies describing specific arts, heritage or cultural organisations. This is partly because there are many sets of case studies out there and some of them – whenever you read this – will be more up-to-date than a book can be. It's also because case studies can be hostages to changes in fortune. (I am relieved looking at previous papers that no one 'case-studied' seems to have crashed and burned since. (You may know better, of course.) It is mainly, though, because the case study approach plays into the heroic leadership/ breakthrough artist model I find so unhelpful for building more equitable creative communities. It becomes another kind of sorting mechanism, and we have no need of more of those. There are some inspirational people mentioned here, but they are not put forward as models to copy: they are who they are, and have done what they've done because of so many factors; you or I cannot copy them and hope for the same results.

As D.W. Winnicott wrote "examples can start to pin down specimens and begin a process of classification of an unnatural and arbitrary kind, whereas the thing I am referring to is universal and has infinite variety."4 I am not sure what I describe here is universal except in the sense that the Irish poet Patrick Kavanagh used the word when he said, "Parochialism is universal, because it deals in fundamentals."5 (He contrasted being rooted at the parish level with the provincial attitude which always looks to the capital for approval.) The context I have worked in is primarily an English one, for all that internationalism has enriched it. The patterns here flow in part from British cultural policy since 1945, and a model of state, private and audience support different to the more private philanthropy-focused models of North America; the national and local government state-funding models of Western Europe and Scandinavia; or the NGO and community-centred models in Africa. I have, though, found from working in Canada, South Africa and Australia that these frameworks have resonance and application beyond the UK. I hope that at least there may be some fundamentals drawn from my tales of home, even if they must be adapted or held differently in different places and times. The heart of it is the other part of Winnicott's statement, which I'll repeat now with space around it and in bold:

Infinite variety

That's what I hope people will make from the arguments and tools in this book. An infinite variety of ways to do the tightrope with an infinite variety of people. That is the purpose of the tools included here, to help in understand and make the best use of whatever it is you bring – the beliefs and values, the natural or enforced tendencies, the learned and acquired skills and experience, the brilliance, the shortcomings, the traits you were born with, those you picked up along the way, the abilities you didn't know about until later, but now you do. I hope these tools can support you to make best use of all these things.

I start by thinking about the people who work in the cultural sector and the pressures on them. We can consider individual livelihoods inside organisations and creative practices, and how one might sustain them, and on what terms. Is a poor artist 'resilient'? Or in *what ways* is a poor artist resilient? What are the pros and cons of that artist being resilient? I describe four domains to think about: the self, inside (the organisation or practice), outside (the art form or cultural field) and beyond (in society). Across these are four enabling mindsets to be encouraged: co-creating creative resilience; accountability; framing and reframing purpose; and enabling power and agency. I sketch a framework for individuals to base their tactics and strategies on an assessment of five kinds of assets: creative, social, financial, physical, and environmental.

You will find a number of frameworks of four or five things throughout the book. This is literally to help keep them to hand: picture one element per finger/thumb. This is an idea I have unashamedly taken from Tyson Yunkaporta's brilliant *Sand Talk*. I like the human touch of it far more than the 'rule of three' I learnt from Sunday School, the Three Bears and Tony Blair. It also serves as a prompt to remember another thing Yunkaporta said, which I find a source of inspiration: "Your culture is not what your hands touch or make – it's what moves your hand."

I then go on to present a description of creative resilience which I think is necessary, not for adapting to the world but for changing it, which embraces resilience as change and is centred on purpose, values and agency. Creative resilience is the capacity of organisations and communities of people to be productive, valued and true to self-determined core purpose and identity. This may involve absorbing disturbance, adapting with integrity in response to changing circumstances, and positively influencing or disturbing the environment. It requires resourcefulness built on a culture of shared purpose and values, and creative capabilities flowing from power and agency. It is a collective, eco-system process more than one of individuals.

Creative resilience is enhanced by, and enhances, community resilience and distributed, co-creative leadership, which I explore in Chapters Five and Six. I argue for the positive effects of arts centres and cultural or creative activity as a 'potential space' in which people can come together to explore and play, and for a leadership which connects, collaborates and multiplies the voices of others through a process of discovery – knowing and asking.

In between these sections you will find 25 tools that may be useful in deciding your tactics for the tightrope. To repeat: these will not tell you the answers. There are no set answers, just as there should be no despair, only tactics. Use them in the spirit of Ivan Illich's "convivial tools": making them your own to suit you by using the structure but altering the terms if my description does not fit or convince, and by adapting them to your circumstances and context, and what you wish to achieve[6]. Add the ones that work to what you take from the many other useful toolkits available. Never forget, to echo Illich, that the aim is to use the tools to "invest the world with [your] meaning", rather than be mastered by the tools so they shape your self-image. Try them out and see which ones work for you, and feel free to adapt and pass on so long as you give us the due credit. These are all available free through the Future Arts Centres and Thinking Practice websites. You can add to the repertoire of tactics yourself and join the creative community on www.tacticsforthetightrope.com.

I end by setting out the potential for transition in the system, a transition that will see dreaming on the tightrope as risky but more protected, involving more people. It is possible for us to move from hurt to hope. To do so we will need to remember a handful of basic rules. How we work must build resourcefulness

and creative capabilities in ourselves, in others and the collective. We should ditch hierarchical leadership models to connect, collaborate and multiply many, many voices. Our creative resilience should be a process of resistance. We should make ourselves useful and make space for others, even as we take up our own. We should keep some slack for ourselves.

And finally we must hold on to this paradox or conundrum: any one of us only gets to do the tightrope in our own unique way when we all get to do it in our own unique way.

CHAPTER THREE
THE SEARCH FOR 'GOOD WORK' IN AN OVEREXTENDED SECTOR

The point:

- *Covid and lockdown have revealed what was there already: an over-extended, under-capitalised sector operating in highly contradictory times and environments*
- *The unequal opportunities and conditions of the workforce matter because they affect who gets to make culture*
- *Much of the cultural sector has been, in many ways, already operating in the precarious future of work*
- *A lack of focus on workforce diversity and development by employers, boards and recruitment panels is exacerbated by a lack of inclusive, supportive working cultures leading to socially narrow entry and progression*
- *Networks and collaborative efforts are potential tipping points or levers for change*

Some questions:

- *Where do you sit in this picture and for what or whom are you responsible, or connected to?*
- *How could you use your position, knowledge or networks to create opportunities for 'good work', for yourself and others?*
- *How would you reduce over-extension within the cultural sector as you experience it?*

Waking up to contradictory times

I can still picture the stack of letters. I was working as a poet and arts worker in community settings at the time, "trying to make two short ends meet". (As I said in a poem from the time, entitled, subtly, 'Struggling'.) I spent most of my time running between community and adult education centres, schools, prisons and libraries. I edited magazines and newsletters, in the days and nights of Desktop Publishing. I got home with my wife and two small children from visiting her sister (our holiday that year) to a pile of envelopes on the mat. In amongst the poetry rejections and bills were several letters from the bank, informing me of cheques and payments they had bounced while we had been away. By the time I'd opened them all we were further in the red than ever and I had a suspicion Something Must Be Done. We

couldn't even sell the car, as it was an ancient, leaking £250 tank of an Austin Princess bought from a neighbour who had grown too old to drive. What happened next is too long and personal a story, but it involves juggling low interest credit cards for years, reassessing priorities and what I was capable of, and the continuing search for balance.

For the cultural sector, the Covid-19 crisis has served the same function as that wake up call. It has revealed something there already: a dangerous set of pre-existing conditions, including over-extension of individuals, organisations and funders; too many people working over capacity, stretching people and resources too thin; massive inequality in who gets to make work, and who takes part or enjoys it. Unfair pay differentials between chief executives and zero hours staff in large organisations. Large parts of the country and population paid only lip service by those with resources and platforms. These things have not just arrived, they have been well-documented. Covid-19, as in the areas of health and poverty, has drawn big, bold lines around them so they are – for most, anyway – harder to ignore.

I want to start by considering the conditions in the sector that mean we must think about how to build creative resilience and sustainable livelihoods, and how the sector needs to change so people can do and enjoy good work in healthy conditions.

I first developed a picture of the operating environment long before Covid, in a provocation paper for The Bluecoat in Liverpool, which by happy coincidence was the first arts centre I ever loved, when I was a student. I proposed then, and would maintain now, after the changes wrought by the pandemic, that we work not in troubled or challenging times but in *contradictory* times, which makes everything more complex. When I hear people talk of troubled times (pandemic aside) I wonder where they have been, as the times have always been troubled for some groups of people. That didn't start with the Global Financial Crisis of 2008. Troubled times suggests privileged, narrow horizons.

If we lived in a simple, peaceful, harmonious world, without pandemics and financial crashes, would cultural work be straightforward? I very much doubt it. Cultural and creative work expresses itself in countless ways. It finds its necessary homes via countless routes. It takes shape in and from the individuals and teams that make and share its results. It is a voice or band of

voices, an atmosphere, an argument, a composition emerging over lifetimes, as well as programmes, plans and budgets. It isn't always smooth or graceful. But it echoes. Resonates.

The forces shaping cultural work and leadership in the UK are high-tension and often contradictory currents in politics, people, work, technology, business and education. Each brings both opportunity and damage, abundance and want. Creative work in this context is neither a simple set of tasks or skills, nor a complicated set of interrelated actions and projects. Instead, it is ever more concerned with complex problems, where solutions and results are unpredictable, and bringing together many imaginations and perspectives is a core skill.

Digital technology has also encouraged co-creation and collaboration, especially during the Covid pandemic. Artists, makers and audiences are increasingly joint participants in what happens or is made. Some libraries, arts centres, theatres and galleries are evolving into (or back into) shared spaces for everyday creativity, play and making. They are homes for ideas, creative people and tools, from 3D printers to stages. People integrate creative activity into their everyday lives, although they may not call it Art or Culture. We make films, books, music on objects in our pockets, the means of production and distribution in all our hands. Recorded music and film, new and historical, are available to people at the click of a button, often free or at very low cost, but in ways that have shattered business models and left artists struggling financially. Digital technology has transformed processes from buying a ticket to enjoying a performance at national theatres and opera houses, changing what people demand in terms of information and access. Covid has deepened this, with more people engaging online, though some long for touch, for a crowded venue. However, it may also worsen the divides between the engaged and otherwise-engaged. Research suggests lockdown has meant that those most likely to engage in the arts have both more time and more money, whilst those groups least likely to engage have less time *and* less money.[1]

This conflicted flourishing was happening, even pre-pandemic. It was the companion of unease, of gentrification, poverty and exclusion. It donned bright statistics of great wealth and high levels of growth in the creative industries, to argue for Treasury support. Despite policy consensus on the benefits of a more diverse sector, some groups of people continue to dominate

and others continue to be under-represented. Changes to school curricula and to higher education, tightening of the benefits system, and narrowing of routes into the workforce due to reductions in public funding, are affecting people without middle class family support. This mirrors growing equality gaps in many areas of society. These are especially important to the arts given how gender, education, disability and class affect engagement, participation and who progresses within the sector.

A more personalised or privatised society fuels inequality, reshaping public spaces and private expenditure. People now expect – albeit sometimes unwillingly – to personally pay for things previously paid for collectively through taxes. As seen in higher education, this is transforming relationships, turning communal activities into customer transactions. Expectations of the arts experience are changing. Although these may lead to new income streams to replace public funding, we must ask, at what cost? Part of that cost is to the workforce and damaging distortions within the workforce, all of which limits what it can do and reduces creative resilience. Young people in the sector find it hard to establish the kinds of livelihoods and homes seen as standard for the Boomer generation. Resentment blossoms on all sides. More people live alone. Politics is also polarising, consensus fraying in the face of global crises and varied fundamentalisms.

Climate change is causing physical and psychological damage, with many artists responding. The world is more interconnected and internationalised, and Britain more diverse, but some define their identity in narrower ways. Divides and tensions result, with many feeling ignored, sidelined, frustrated or simply puzzled. Culture can reflect, react to and reimagine these crises, though notions of instrumentalism personally ('well-being'), locally ('place-making', 'regeneration') and nationally ('economic return') are contested.

Why this matters

Why, a cynic may ask, does that matter? If there are enough talented people prepared to work for the reward available, in the conditions available, somehow making great work that moves or enlivens, what's the problem? If you want security or fairness, don't go into the arts, train as a plumber, a nurse, an accountant or a lawyer, they'd say. And like all clichés, there's an element of

truth in there. There is risk built into every step of the creative life, if you're doing it right. From ideas to showing the first attempts, to stepping into the light or opening the gallery doors or publishing the book, it is risky. The financial returns reflect this. As the artist and economist Hans Abbing showed in his book *Why Are Artists Poor?,* the arts is a space where some win very big and the majority do not, regardless of the creative merits of their work.[2] There is no shortage of young people with ambition, talent, and families with money and networks to help them get established in their creative careers, sorting placements, helping out with money during the unpaid internships that are still all too common. We won't want for high quality arts, and well-curated museums. There'll even be a good degree of performative commitment to diversity and equality, to many of the things I talk about later. You don't get an arts education these days without learning to talk the talk.

Yet, if we are to have a cultural sector that reflects the fine grain and nuance of our nations and our imaginations, we need people of all types and backgrounds working in it. Without that, we're unlikely to see and hear the stories we need to, to recognise the cultures within all our communities, and the pleasures and benefits will remain an integral part of being privileged, rather than the basis for cultural democracy.

Without that the sector will remain unable, except in patches and glimpses, to talk and listen in dialogue with the full range of the population, and to walk through the trials of today and tomorrow. We'll have something narrow, with few Black and brown faces (and many of those forced into stereotyped roles), few working class voices (again, often forced into prole-play), and a sector dominated by people who grew up with parents who were senior managers and professionals, who'd been to university and might have insight into how the business of culture worked. Of course there will be exceptions, as there have been in the past. One of the things *Culture is Bad for You* by Orian Brooke, Dave O'Brien and Mark Taylor demonstrates, by focusing on data alongside individual stories, is that this is actually not that different to the period many older cultural professionals think of as 'a golden age'.[3] Yes, there were things like a relatively pressure-free dole, which helped many musicians get started, and the fabled Enterprise Allowance that helped many people start what we would now call 'creative businesses' to escape signing on for a year. But the make-up of the workforce was as exclusive as it is today, when graduates face the extra challenges of student debt, and higher and higher expectations from

employers in terms of levels of qualification.

Covid and lockdown are already having a disastrous effect on many people. A study in late 2020, from the Creative Industries Policy & Evidence Centre, suggests that in the first six months of the lockdown, employment in music, performing and visual arts shrank by 30%, and that there were many more people leaving the industry that usual[4]. (It is chastening to note, though, that in a more typical year an average of 10% of people leave the sector anyway.) Although the demographics of this phenomenon remain unclear, it is plain that freelancers are especially affected, especially those without savings or family funds to tide them over during the crisis. This is likely to especially impact Black and other minoritised communities, and disabled people. There is a great risk that people from marginalised groups leave the sector in high numbers.

We cannot be confident that future talent from all parts of our communities will thrive, given these changes come on top of what we have seen in recent years. The school timetable and curriculum have squeezed arts and design subjects in many schools. This has led to drastic drops in pupils taking arts and creative GCSEs. Brexit will mean fewer people able to travel to work in the UK, and less work in Europe for UK artists, with additional complications and cost. (Each touring musician is likely to have to pay more than £360 per year per country according to the Musicians' Union, and may have extra costs and requirements around work permits, insurances and instrument documentation.) But even if that is pessimistic, there will still be missed opportunities, weaker businesses and diminished resilience in the sector if it does not nurture an important asset: its people – *all* its people, including freelancers as well as those on PAYE contracts.

At the most basic level, we must begin therefore by doubting whether the sector is currently, consistently, a place to do good work in a healthy way, and how overextended the sector is. The 2017 Taylor Review of Modern Working Practices stated as its vision that "All work in the UK economy should be fair and decent with realistic scope for development and fulfilment."[5] All evidence suggests that this is not the case in culture right now. Despite some excellent practice, the cultural workforce is not diverse enough to meet the challenges the sector faces due to forces such as technological and demographic change, globalisation and political uncertainty. Levels of investment in training and

development are insufficient, and levels of reward are, on average, far lower than comparably educated sectors. As a result, the working culture of culture is demanding, inflexible and stressful, and fuels inequality and lack of diversity by excluding many people.

Why start here, with this discussion of the problems of the workforce, when many in our sector have proved brilliant at ignoring issues of inequality, and when there are issues of basic survival at stake? (As there often are, of course: pick a year and someone was facing a crisis of some sort, while others did well, as – let's not forget – some continue to do.) Nor do I start here because the arts and cultural sector exists *for* its workforce. I placed artists at the centre of my sketch of an arts ecology in *Making Adaptive Resilience Real* because nothing happens without their practice. But the sector does not exist primarily for their benefit, in my conception of it at least, but for the benefit of all society, including artists and creative practitioners.

The conditions of the workforce matter because they affect who gets to make culture. And that matters because culture and creativity is one realm we explore, 'set' and, paradoxically, resist distinctions of class, power and privilege. They are also, paradoxically, where we can resist the excluding and narrowing consequences of those distinctions. We know the subsidised arts are enjoyed by people of all backgrounds, but disproportionately by the better off and the better educated, reflecting the workforce. We know many people still feel excluded from arts and culture, and that this mirrors other exclusions in everyday life.

Work not jobs: Self-employment and Precarious Portfolios

More than 35 years ago, work and management guru Charles Handy wrote a book called *The Future of Work*. He wrote: "The signs are that there are not going to be enough conventional jobs to go around – not full-time, lifetime jobs with an employer who pays you a pension for the ten years or so of your retirement… the supply of jobs, as defined today, is unlikely to be adequate to meet the demand… We have to look beyond economics to the definition of a job, to the meaning of work and the measure of success and meaning in human life.".[6] This illustrates two things. First, it shows that 'the future of work' displays some persistent or very-slow-to-change trends. Technology remains both threat and opportunity, for instance. Now that some of that

future is our past, we can see that things change only slowly – or perhaps not so much slowly as persistently.

It also suggests that much of the cultural sector has been, in many ways, *already* operating in the future of work in the neoliberal economy, a future that now spreads to the rest of the workforce. Demand to work in the arts has always outstripped available jobs or work, leading to positive and negative traits. Flexibility, creativity and passion co-exist with low pay, patchy collective representation, the challenge of saving for a pension. (Because the cultural workforce is better off and better educated, they are also more likely on average to live more than the 10 years after retirement that pensions used to predict, as average life expectancy has risen from 70.8 (for men) and 76.8 (for women) between 1980 and 1982 to 79.4 and 83.1 respectively in 2010-12. Socio-economic disadvantage brings life expectancy down drastically, with men from the 10% most deprived areas living almost a decade less than those from the 10% least deprived[7].) An abundance of potential activity co-exists with uncertainty and instability of return. This pattern *is* cultural work, and many people I have talked to about workforce development have felt it is so engrained in the system it is unlikely to change.

The shifts in social mobility are beyond social policy, one academic told me when I was researching this area. You see widening inequalities between the rich, the poor and the average throughout society, not only in the cultural sector. The Social Mobility Commission suggested pre-Covid that graduates from disadvantaged backgrounds still struggle to find appropriate work, that wages have stagnated especially amongst the young, and that the gaps in attainment between children from poor and rich backgrounds will take 40 years to close.[8] The predictions for the workforce post-Covid are that this will only be grimmer and tougher in future.

An overarching trend in the marketised, fragmented economy is a shift to *work* over *jobs*. This is enabled by technology, and relies on (and creates) the kind of individual, precariously situated workers often found in the creative industries. As one speaker at a Davos conference put it, "With tech enablement, employment will no longer be the dominant model or the singular model through which companies get work done."[9] The Aspen Institute's Future of Capitalism[10] identifies a "fragmentation of the firm", echoing that described by Charles Handy in 1984 as typical of Japanese business, with a

contractor network integral to large corporations. As well as project-based teams including portfolio workers becoming common, platform-based businesses such as Uber, Deliveroo and Amazon Mechanical Turk operating in the so-called gig economy are disrupting the idea of fixed 'jobs', down to single tasks. (I half expect to find some Grantium-related jobs on offer on Amazon Mechanical Turk, where you can pay for 'Human Intelligence Tasks', to help navigate the much-loathed grants portal of Arts Council England, but no, not yet. I can't help thinking this is a missed opportunity for boosting the resilience of many people in the subsidised part of the cultural sector. Arts Council England may eventually improve Grantium, which is a classic example of downshifting from something good to something less good to save money – it was introduced after government reductions in funding – but portals will be portals…)

'Tech enablement' offers release from mundane and routine work, and the restrictions of a single employer. The massive disadvantages, though, are vulnerability, lack of benefits and often low pay. They can also exacerbate dissatisfaction with work. In a UK survey pre-Covid, only one in five families said they have got the right balance between time to spend with family and money (earning or having enough income) to see their family thrive, with over a third saying they haven't got enough time or money. Almost half of parents are not comfortable raising the issue of workload and hours with their employer, with fathers less comfortable asking for formal flexible working arrangements.[11] This, of course, was before many people were working from home, or living at work, which turned those issues into mutant versions of the same competing demands.

The percentage of self-employed people in the entire UK workforce has doubled in recent years. In 1980, the self-employed accounted for less than 8% of the workforce, but this had risen to 15% by 2016 – 4.25m people. The increase has occurred within each age cohort, although it has been greatest among older people. The self-employed are now more likely to work alone. In 1990, 30% hired other workers, but in 2016 only around 16% employed others. The cultural sector has a high proportion of self-employed workers – more than 40%, with more than 75% in theatre and visual arts.

Until the Covid-19 lockdowns, self-employment was generally seen to have benefits such as flexibility and variety, but lockdown revealed the precarity

beneath that. A million people were unable to receive any support from the government, due to having started only recently, low earnings or to having worked through a combination of director-owned companies and dividends. In addition, both the government's Self-Employment Income Support Scheme (SEISS) and Arts Council England's Covid-19 Emergency Fund for Individuals included requirements of 50% of income from self-employment, affecting those with portfolio careers including PAYE employment, and those paid through limited companies and dividends. In the UK the tax incentive to be self-employed gets bigger as earnings rise (a self-employed worker is £200 better off than a PAYE worker if earning £10,000 pa, but £7000 if earning £100,000.) However, earnings for self-employed people tend to be lower than those in PAYE contracted roles, and their earnings remained more or less stagnant for two decades pre-Covid. The increase in self-employment since the turn of the century was more of a UK phenomenon than a European one, with self-employment decreasing in some countries. Only 13% of self-employed people had training in 2018 – half the percentage of employees trained. [12]

The Resolution Foundation suggests there are two tribes of self-employed – the precarious and the privileged. Cultural professions would on the whole fall into the former, despite the level of education typically seen, with artists and writers typically earning less than £10,000.[13] Creative Skills Europe emphasises that creative workers must increasingly be portfolio workers, linking this to the fact that "job demand is still higher than supply". [14] Susan Jones has argued that 'self-employed' as a category does not reflect the reality of visual artists, and for a 'Status of Artist' category. [15]

Lack of employer focus

A lack of focus on workforce diversity and development by employers, boards and recruitment panels is a central issue. Workforce development has not received the strategic attention or investment it deserves. If behaviours must change for investment to match ambition, as I argue, it will take more than employers alone, but employers will need to take a leadership role.

There is no data available to confirm the levels of financial investment in workforce development and training: funded organisations tend not to report

on it. The most recently published Arts Council England annual submission reports covering National Portfolio Organisations (those receiving four-year regular funding) do not cover training or development. Anecdotal evidence – including my own as the ‘squeaky wheel’ about CPD budgets on various boards – suggests training budgets have been squeezed in recent years. Many have come to rely on funder-led ‘schemes’ to provide training and development programmes at subsidised cost – from Clore to the various programmes within dedicated (and competitive) funding streams. Succession planning is patchy at best.

It would be harsh to say the sector has paid lip service to diversifying and training its workforce, but more than a few people would say it. This was clear especially in the light of increased attention and understanding of racial injustice and racism after the summer of 2020, with the killing of George Floyd and the resurgence of Black Lives Matter. Action, not more words, was a common feeling.

In UK Theatre’s Workforce Review Of The UK Offstage Theatre And Performing Arts Sector staff identified a perceived lack of professionalism from both employers and workers in terms of organisational culture, highlighting antiquated attitudes to flexible working. [16] Research I have been involved in around disabled people in the workforce is consistent with this.

Statistics suggest a values-action gap between what the sector says, or agrees to with funders, around diversity, and the cumulative results of its recruitment and workforce decisions. That women, working class people, Black and other minoritised people, and disabled people are under-represented is now well established. We see sociological differences in both consumption and production of culture.[17] O’Brien et al have identified that core cultural occupations, such as music, publishing, film and TV, and the museums sector, all include more people from affluent, middle class social backgrounds than the population. Those with working class social origins are under-represented. Gender, ethnicity and education can also lead to exclusion from the cultural workforce.[18]

Making A Shift, a report I co-wrote in 2016 with other associates of EW Group, found that D/deaf and disabled people were under-represented in the cultural workforce, and suffered systemic exclusion. Distressing stories of

bullying and refusal to adjust spaces and working practices to avoid disabling people were common. This affected not only disabled people but also women and those with caring responsibilities. A perceived lack of professionalism was described as 'dire' by one interviewee, and may put some people off entering or staying in the sector. Whilst some areas such as dance had greater numbers of disabled people than might be expected, others could be said to be unrepresentative in their workforces. Music and visual arts organisations have relatively low levels of employment of disabled people as a proportion of their staffing. Only one in 20 disabled people working in organisations receiving regular funding from Arts Council England was employed in visual arts, where we might have expected this figure to be almost one in ten if it were proportionate to the pattern of employment across the sector. In music, the employment of disabled people was similarly a little over half of what might be expected if the general pattern applied.

The root cause of this I would sum up as the culture of culture: a lack of flexibility and imagination about who could work in culture and how. Too often the models imposed create patterns of work which are, in actuality, unhealthy, disabling and stressful for everyone, including those without impairments or limiting conditions. High entry expectations in terms of education and experience gained through volunteering, placements and interning rule many out. Then, a potentially stressful and demanding pattern of precarity, long hours, low income, networking to progress and inflexibility of practice makes it difficult for some disabled and disadvantaged people, and those with family or caring responsibilities, especially women, to remain. This applies to all kinds of impairments and health conditions. Limitations on the support available, either to the individual through government support, or through organisations make this worse. Some businesses are less successful – or in a few instances unwilling – in making the adjustments necessary to *enable* people rather than *disable* them.

These factors also impede progress in making the arts and culture workforce more representative of the population as a whole, as they also create barriers to, for instance, some women, those with family or carer responsibilities, and those from lower income backgrounds. Progression was also difficult: "If you are disabled and going for senior management roles in the arts, you have to be twice as good as able-bodied candidates, as appointment panels (often made up of trustees) are largely conservative and risk averse when it comes to

appointing potential leaders, and disability is regarded as a major risk." Many D/deaf and disabled people found it more practical to become self-employed, despite the precarity of that situation.

Related in some ways to the working culture is the aesthetic culture in arts and museums. Some interviewees were clear that rigid thinking about standards of excellence disabled some people. From notions of how dancers and actors might move on stage, how mental health or neurodiverse conditions might appear in visual arts or literature, progress in both arts practice and inclusion of disabled people was slow due to a lack of awareness of the creative possibilities of different ways of working and being. The creative potential of work by disabled artists, and that within inclusive companies combining disabled and non-disabled artists, was often seen as an advantage. Programmes such as Unlimited have broken fresh ground in recent times.

Growth in the workforce

Despite this picture, until Covid, the DCMS economic estimates showed significant growth in creative industries and the cultural sector (defined as those industries with a cultural object at their centre), outstripping that of the economy in general since 2010. Research for Arts Council England suggested the sector was worth £13.5 billion to the UK economy in 2018, up from £12.8 billion the previous year, and contributed £3.4 billion in tax. It predicted growth to £15.2 billion by 2025, even with the effects of Covid. The research – part of advocacy for the Cultural Recovery Fund, and so best taken with a pinch of salt – predicted that the sector's Gross Value Added (GVA) would return to its pre-lockdown level of £13.5bn by 2022.[19] This would indicate a high degree of 'bounce back' type resilience, and runs counter to the feelings of many in the sector.

This sector is not fit for the future in a fair, decent and sustainable way. It will not become so if it continues to under-invest in and over-expect from its workforce. It is vital that employers – ultimately at board level – make a step change in their approach to and investment in workforce/sector development. They control the working conditions – pay, culture, pensions etc – and the investment made into training and continuing professional development. They need to work with providers such as further and higher

education to create pathways for workers in all roles, using apprenticeships and PhDs alike to ensure skilled workers. And they need to recognise their own lead role in shaping and developing the workforce whilst encouraging employee engagement. Although data is lacking, it appears that a combination of budgetary pressures and a related reliance on funders to stimulate or even provide development opportunities have given employers an easy albeit often guilty opt-out. If we accept for argument's sake that finances will remain tight, progress may be best achieved by addressing culture – as has begun in the specific fields of leadership and fundraising.

We need a big conversation about working culture in culture – to expose and tackle the lack of flexibility and long (often unpaid) hours, in the way the unpaid internship issue has been addressed to some extent. Although there have been some encouraging signs during Covid, it is by no means certain these will continue. Lasting change, I propose, is more likely to come if we put workforce development in the context of long-term collaborative approaches to creative resilience, and of models of leadership and community engagement. Individuals, organisations and sectors need to see the connection between their own futures and those of the workforce.

This is something Future Arts Centres have been active in, as well as the many consortia which have developed leadership and resilience programmes with support of funders. Sometimes, these have focused on particular groups, such as Sour Lemons with its emphasis on young Black creatives, or Creative Gloucester with its local ecology focus.

There is an ongoing need to cultivate skills that meet the needs of a flat and dispersed sector. The notion of career progression is changing from a hierarchical image to one of expansion and connection. An image of widening circles instead of a ladder. The sector needs specialist skills and crosscutting, general skills. These are especially needed in management, revenue generation and fundraising, digital, and co-creation with communities. Any skills agenda must cover project skills for a project world, rather than only train people for full-time employed jobs that are likely to shrink in number. Already more than 40% of people in museums, galleries and libraries, or music, performing and visual arts are in part-time jobs. (If anything, this should grow, as some 'freelance' gigs would be better designed as part-time, short-term contracts, imperfect as those can be.)

There are few very large-scale employers in the cultural sector able to run their own individual development programmes, although some such as National Theatre and RSC have developed schemes for their own staff. These organisations could open these out more to others, or connect through networks. Sector bodies or national organisations have led many useful collaborations or initiatives, the Plus TATE network being one example. This is something to build on, encouraging a coherent set of collaborative and co-operative networks or platforms that target specific issues or groupings, as well as open programmes. These could use learning from the models such as the Clore Leadership Programme, Resilient Museums, Museums Women Leaders Network and regional or city-wide initiatives such as ASTONish in Birmingham or Sync for disabled leaders.

The chronic issues of freelance cultural workers such as lack of sick pay, late payments, affordability of training, and pensions, insurance and tax regimes, could all be alleviated by co-operatives and membership schemes. The Royal Society of the Arts report *The Self-organising Self-employed* gives examples of innovations in this area.[20] US academics Melissa Valentine and Michael Bernstein argue that "platforms could eventually dampen insecurity by playing a role that companies have historically played: providing benefits, topping off earnings if workers' freelance income is too low or too spotty, even allowing workers to organize".[21] This might build on services currently provided by organisations such as unions, a-n The Artists Information Company or the National Association of Writers in Education, or the workspace movement.

Levers for change or tipping points

Immediately before the coronavirus crisis of 2020, I was whipping around England interviewing people and running round tables to assess the needs, priorities and potential for change in workforce development, to inform Arts Council England's thinking in the area. (At one, a group of HR directors joined, fresh from updating their Coronavirus Risk Plans – I have often wondered how many times they have done that since.) The issues were clearly felt to be perennial, and there was understandable frustration expressed by many I met with at the lack of progress. There was, though, even before Covid, lockdowns, Cultural Recovery Funds, the shift online and so on, a sense that the old normal could not stand. The issues of inequality within such

contradictory times had gained increasing attention, and more organisations and initiatives were specifically addressing them, such as The Creative Society, Beatfreakz, The Cultural Exchange and others. Creative and Cultural Skills was bringing sharp focus to matters of access and inclusion, and to core skills.

I ended up writing my report as the conversations about change in the sector and society rose in intensity. The themes felt prescient, showing how the 'new' situation people were describing had, in fact, been there all along. The sector had a set of ongoing needs, repeatedly identified by research and voices in the sector, that the sector had failed to address – employers, funders and policy makers particularly. These formed the core of what was now needed: a culture change. To connect the new normal and the old disappointing reality, though, would mean support in relation to core skills and change skills.

The heart of any culture change should be a shift to valuing the workforce, given their importance to creative resilience. This means investing strategically in attracting, retaining and developing people in inclusive, supportive working cultures that respect diversity, inclusion and equality to build a properly diverse and inclusive workforce representative of local populations. This would in turn mean employers – senior management teams and boards – altering their practice. They must invest in workforce skills long-term, and alter recruitment and employment practices. There would need to be a wider recognition of the range of roles within the sector, and the transferability of skills across the chain of roles. A new approach to investment and reward, including for freelancers, away from precarity for some and high pay for CEOs, would also help.

It is clear, too, that there are core skills which still need attention if we are to have a more resilient, equitable and productive sector. These include fundamental management skills including recruitment, performance management and people development; the legal responsibilities of employers; care and duty of care and emotional intelligence as well as financial management, business planning and budgeting; income generation including fundraising, philanthropy and loan finance; data-informed decision-making, commercial skills, use of assets and activities, technical skills, IP and partnership working. Working in digital workflows, in virtual or distanced teams, in flexible working patterns and non-hierarchical organisational models are also important. All these are needed if the sector is to be resilient and play its role in creative communities.

Alongside the core skills must sit a set of change skills: creative resilience, business modelling and restructuring; co-creation with communities, families and non-arts partners (e.g. local authorities, the NHS, Clinical Commissioning Groups, care homes et al), working beyond the culture system – in ecosystems of place especially, reflective learning practice, leading and working a multi-generational workforce. Staying in touch as a senior leader, self-care and personal resilience were also seen as important. Finally, out of that combination of ingredients, came a change skill of managing a balance of coming and goings in the workforce. This must be slow enough to do the work well, fast enough for change and fresh thinking.

The support needed includes clear leadership from funders. This should centre on a shared purpose with the sector – the heart of creative resilience as I will explain later. This can embrace a clear set of shared outcomes and expectations of employers (boards and management teams). Only from a culture of shared purpose can funders hold people to account for their behaviours as employers. Business models would have to shift to reflect adequate levels of pay and investment in training, including for regular freelancers. (Or all freelancers through a variant of the apprenticeship training levy paid by large employers.) Investment in networks and sharing of learning, toolkits, case studies and practical guides, alongside improved provision of advice, guidance, brokerage and insight from research would help. There is also a personal aspect to the support needed, through peer networks, confidential hotlines, coaching and mentoring to support self-care. A set of Workforce Outcomes and Norms to which everyone can sign up and commit to act would help creative resilience across the ecology. This connects to the kinds of anti-racism, anti-sexism, anti-ableism plans people are looking to in the wake of Black Lives Matters and the disproportionate impact of Covid on Black and other minoritised groups and disabled people.

It is interesting to look back at those conversations and see what has happened since. The talk of investment into the workforce has an ironic edge given the level of redundancies and furloughing still ongoing as I write. This has affected all kinds of staff, and has particularly hurt freelancers. There are good examples, though, of organisations supporting freelancers through involvement in discussions about the future, paid work, commissions and so on, and by paying contracts even where work has been impossible due to lockdown restrictions. This has not been universal, though, and many

freelancers and junior staff, especially front of house, have felt abandoned and been worst hit by redundancies. The kinds of networks discussed have proved valuable to the whole ecology. They have advised funders, shared information and approaches, provided support to peers and friends, and challenged bad practices. They also created spaces for dialogue and mutual support when necessary upheavals such as Black Lives Matters gave new impetus to anti-racist and anti-discrimination work.

I hope time will show that the sector was able to grasp the crisis as a teachable moment. (This is the closest this book will get to a cliff-hanger.) I move, right now, between hope and pessimism. It is a moment that reveals possible change. As we emerge from the pandemic's worst immediate consequences we must hold boards to account for their leadership on workforce issues, and their contribution to the sector workforce and creative resilience discussions. Business models must resist over-production and excessive extraction of value, so people have time and space to learn. We should collaborate to share the mindsets of creative resilience, co-creation and welcome.

Attention must be paid to the potential tipping points in the system already, so the change already aspired to becomes real, no longer held back by precedent, timidity, conservatism and restrictive business models. This can build on the many networks and collaborative efforts seen during Covid. Informal peer groups and existing network have stepped up. Lobbying and development groups such as Freelancers Task Force and We Shall Not Be Removed have emerged. If the sector ignores those tipping points, and does not use them as levers for change, the patterns of exclusion and damage will worsen. This is likely to lead to even less diversity, inclusion and equity, and even thinner stories.

I have begun with a picture of the workforce because this is at once a central component of creative resilience and a reason for more focus on the creative resilience of the ecosystem. The over-emphasising of individualised resilience – are you strong enough for change and shocks? – and financialised resilience – are your income streams reliable enough? – has intensified the patterns I have described. They lead to more pressure on people and more marketised, target-driven management systems. They lead to debates about viability. This is bad for the workforce, but also narrows the work done, which distorts the relationships with communities, artists, audiences and participants,

not least through widespread short-termism. To better connect to creative communities, we must turn our attention to how creative resilience of organisations and sectors could better serve the interests of both artists or workers and communities and society.

CHAPTER FOUR
LIVING INSIDE, OUTSIDE, BEYOND

The Point:

- *A need to work beyond restrictive structures and boundaries*
- *A lack of attention to the role of emergent and established individual artists in most models of cultural value and resilience*
- *A sustainable livelihood framework for creative individuals based on creative, financial, social, physical and environmental assets, applied across a set of strategies and tactics*
- *The connection between sustainability of a place and the livelihoods of artists who live and work there*
- *From the Connected Self to Inside a creative practice or organisation, Outside in the creative community and Beyond, in the world*
- *Enabling mindsets: accountability, co-creating creative resilience, framing and reframing purpose, and enabling agency*

Some questions:

- *How might you connect to organisational businesses and sectors without overdosing on either compromise or risk?*
- *How do you influence and interact with the systems you play a part in, which you influence and which shape you?*
- *What tactics give you the best chance of living within, inside, outside, and beyond?*

Introduction

"I've lost faith in reforming anything that calls itself an organisation. They inevitably dehumanise us... organisations value people less and less and yet... there's enormous hope in humanising spaces in organisations.…What dehumanises organisations is the system's design based on predictability, consistency and control. There can be experiments and exceptions locally for a while, but most often they are killed off by the system's requirement for consistency and predictability. My aim is to carve out spaces for human possibilities. I cannot change organisations – they have this inbuilt context, and the patriarchy is so deeply embedded in us – but I can decide every time how to occupy the room."
Peter Block, in interview.[1]

I open this chapter with this quotation to suggest a need to work beyond restrictive structures and boundaries. As is implicit elsewhere, I acknowledge that many things will continue to take organisational shape, but they do not need to take traditional shape. They need to take any shape necessary to support and reflect the needs of individuals within them more, to see the people within an organisation, or even within a network, as integral not interchangeable. They are, though, connected to each other, and to others outside and beyond their immediate settings, in the broader system. This makes creative resilience possible across the ecosystem, as well as ensuring attention is paid to all the parts of that system.

The work of Frederic Laloux argues for organisational systems built on peer relationships, which develop practices that invite people to bring all of themselves to their work (without demanding over-commitment) and "listen to what the organisation wants to become", and have an "evolutionary purpose"[2]. Organisations working in this way – which he calls 'evolutionary organisations' - eschew traditional hierarchical structures even at scale, and build space for thought and reflection. They devolve management and decision-making, so care workers can control budgets to support older people in the community, for instance. There are examples of cultural organisations that might share some of these characteristics: networked, and yet, for all their innovation, these are still organisations, so many people whose work lives centre on creativity and culture live outside them.

The question then becomes: how might you best stay free, and connect to organisational businesses and sectors without overdosing on either compromise or risk? And how do you influence and interact with the systems of which you form a part, which you influence and which shape you? What habits and behaviours give you the best chance of living dangerously within yourself, inside work, outside in your creative communities, and beyond in the world?

The arts of living dangerously

This chapter revisits work done when I worked as a regular associate of the influential 'holocracy', Mission Models Money. We worked with Exchange, a group of Newcastle-based performing arts companies and the New

Economics Foundation in 2013/14 to consider the needs for a sustainable artist ecology in Tyneside, and what that might do for the place. The resulting paper, *The Art of Living Dangerously,* was jointly written, and went on to inform a long-running project in Dundee. I want to connect thinking from that to another central idea, first developed in a provocation paper for The Bluecoat about artistic leadership in contradictory times. By bringing these together in one model I want to add to the arguments for the centrality of sustainable livelihoods of artists and individual practitioners to equitable organisational, sectoral and community creative resilience. These arts of living dangerously must inform a future beyond traditional organisations, with more networks, more co-operatives and collectives, and organisations working very differently with their freelancers and partners, as well as with their own teams.

As part of the Exchange project, *The Art of Living Dangerously*, we identified a general lack of attention to the specific role of emergent and established individual artists in most models of cultural value and of resilience, except as the inhabitants of centres, studios and organisations, or as suppliers of necessary services, or, often, as the select recipients of trickle-down benefits. This has had material impact on artists and practitioners, and on the diversity of those able to work in the sector. Much research has reinforced this, making the point that a culture so unequal, which excludes so many people, or expects them to live in poverty or have other sources of income, is not healthy. In fact, in the words of the title of Brook, O'Brien and Taylor's book this means "culture is bad for you". Artists in that Tyneside project often felt that a lack of flexibility and understanding from building-based infrastructure meant they were frustrated in what they could contribute artistically, socially and economically. Organisations not working well with artists and other creative practitioners means they earn less and are less useful, as well as increasing their precarity and stress. These are concerns that have been raised many times about the response to Covid lockdown, and the lack of dedicated funding for freelancers. There were also examples, however, of venues being clear about the potential value of their facilities, and how they provided physical capital, which artists could use to build their own human, social and financial capital. This has arguably been very visible in Tyneside more recently, through the work of New Bridge Project in the visual arts, Alphabetti Theatre in performing arts, and the Studio Six workspace complex to name but three. All of these have created schemes to help artists make the most of the infrastructure, albeit often in limited, 'meanwhile' settings. The shift of this thinking to permanent spaces is very much a live issue in 2021.

The idea that the supply of artists and creative practitioners can be taken as read led, in the wake of the Lottery and European funding-fuelled capital development in the early 21st century, to public funding from local authorities and arts councils concentrating into buildings and building-based organisations. It was inevitably followed by a large proportion of philanthropic funding, too. As cuts to arts council funding were introduced in the wake of the financial crash of 2008, there was a seemingly inevitable squeeze on regular funding, which favoured 'sustaining' building-based organisations and led to a reduction in funding for others.

The scope for artists and creative practitioners to form livelihoods around those venues and organisations has often been limited, sometimes even shrunken when potential commissioners or partners prefer to work with the higher profile 'brand'. The case for funding of such venue-based organisations often relied on economic impact assessments, which, although not untrue, tended to miss many of the less immediately tangible results of the activities. The counter-argument is that buildings don't do anything for you themselves (unless you are a landlord or a property developer in which case you may be getting rich while you sleep), people do. Culture managers and artists and backstage staff all contribute to cultural life in and around buildings – and, increasingly, many of the organisations some dismiss as 'buildings' work beyond their own spaces, in community settings as well as on tour. The building is often the tip of the iceberg, the base (to mix metaphors) from which work radiates.

Some have suggested that such infrastructure developments make the issues of class exclusion, elitism and gentrification worse, especially if shaped as a 'creative city' or economically driven. The Warwick Commission on Cultural Value gave us an oft-quoted statistic that 8% of the population engage with the arts three times a year, and showed how the educated and better off, from middle and upper class backgrounds are 'super-served' by subsidised arts activity, often paid for from Lottery funds which come disproportionately from disadvantaged communities, and centred on London and other metropolitan centres. This exclusion goes hand in hand with a lack of recognition of local and vernacular cultural practices and artists. This slow crisis for those shaping portfolio careers, or establishing their practice, became a rapid crisis during Covid, with 55,000 job losses in the first six months of the crisis, 38,000 fewer freelancers and a huge reduction in hours worked by freelancers. This

affected some groups more than others, with more than a quarter (27%) of creative workers under the age of 25 leaving creative occupations after lockdown, compared with just 14% of workers aged 25 and over.[3]

It also leads to well-documented low levels of pay and reward. Despite the tiny minority of artists and creative practitioners who win big, the vast majority earn significantly less than in other professions with a similar level of higher education, and have poor pension provision. A 2018 study by UK Copyright and Creative Economy Centre at the University of Glasgow looked at authors' earnings and found that the top 10% of writers accounted for around 70% of total earnings in the profession. Meanwhile, there had been a large drop in average and median earnings, with earnings described as reducing from £16,531 in 2006 to £16,096 in 2018, a massive reduction in real terms, allowing for inflation. Yet, writers' household livelihoods were healthier, with typical incomes of £50,000, suggesting that household income is, in practice, fundamental to sustainable creative practice, which has obvious implications for the diversity of those able to make writing their primary occupation.[4] In the visual arts, Susan Jones has painted a similar picture showing that 68% of visual artists have additional jobs and one in five have three or more different jobs[5]. Fewer than 2% gain funding through direct grants. (Jones describes how the proportion of artists teaching in some form of arts education has reduced from 74% in the mid-2000s to just 28% of visual artists now.)

This also leads to a distance for many members of the general public, who see the arts and culture *and* those who work in them as distant. (Just as those who work in arts and culture are more likely to know other artists than bank managers or postal workers, according to Brooks at al.) Public consultation for Arts Council England's strategy, *Let's Create*, for instance, found that "The majority of the public who attended workshops tended to respond well to the term 'culture'. In contrast, their initial association with the arts usually relates to forms which they do not perceive as 'for them', such as classical music, ballet and opera. 'Culture' is perceived to be more approachable and inclusive as a term, containing a broader range of activities that the public are interested in, consider to be accessible, and which speak better to a diverse range of audiences."[6]

These patterns – replicated across art forms – have meant that artists' and creative practitioners' incomes and work conditions, and their ability to build

sustainable livelihoods and careers within particular localities or communities, have become ever more disconnected from the bulk of the population, whilst also becoming more precarious and vulnerable. Covid-19 has both worsened this syndrome and shone a spotlight on it, making it unignorable to more people, although some persist in trying.

Sustainable Livelihood Framework(s)

In *The Art of Living Dangerously* we wanted to identify ways of thinking about what practitioners needed, to go beyond the subsidy and grant model, given that demand for grants will always outstrip available funding. (I know in theory that's not true and might be read as an admission of defeat by some, but I have yet to come across a funding programme that closed due to lack of demand.) We looked at work done by the UK government's Department for International Development (DFID – now replaced by the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office) in creating a framework for sustainable livelihoods which seemed to show ways forward.[7] The model, which has also been adapted by anti-poverty work in the UK, defines five kinds of capital that make up the foundational assets upon which people can sustain livelihoods:

- Human capital: skills, knowledge, health
- Natural capital: land, natural resources, environmental health
- Financial capital: savings, income, borrowing
- Social capital: networks and beneficial relationships
- Physical capital: infrastructure, buildings, equipment, energy.

Lasse Krantz's useful introduction to *The Sustainable Livelihood Approach to Poverty Reduction* compares the DFID model to others. [8] That used by UN considers tangible and intangible assets alongside people and their "livelihood capabilities", primarily to inform programme design. The framework used by CARE International uses the household as a central design principle, and its approach to using a livelihoods frameworks emphasises the empowerment of individuals within their contexts. In the framework I set out below, I have drawn on all these models to propose a way of understanding the elements that creative individuals must understand to shape the individual and – more importantly – the collective strategies and tactics through which they make their livings. I have also factored in the power dynamics and processes and

broader environmental 'vulnerability context' which will enable or make more difficult achieving the desired results. These processes and contextual factors can, then, also be worked on – and changed – as well as adapted to. Like so many things I think about here this is not, given our situation, an either/or but rather a "yes, and". Attempting to ameliorate the conditions of artists and creatives does not preclude addressing the exclusion that women, Black and other minoritised people and disabled people face in the cultural sector.

Canadian researcher Judi Piggot, who has argued for the application of the Sustainable Livelihood framework to understanding the economic role of artists and creative practitioners in the creative economy, defines it thus: "A livelihood system framework is asset-based, identifying and building on existing strengths. Its core concept is sustainability, in that greater capacity and resilience to reduce economic vulnerability is the goal."[9]

Some of these assets and capitals lie outside our direct control, others we can build, others we share with others. Living within the current and future limits of those capitals would not only improve the quality of creative livelihoods, but also help us grasp the challenges of climate change. It would serve a transition to a more sensible way of living that resists the temptation to 'overshoot', to use an image from Kate Raworth's *Doughnut Economics* framework. (This identifies a set of elements of the ecological ceiling we must live beneath – such as air pollution or water usage.) Why build an exclusive version of 'structural social capital' to increase gentrification and division rather than bring people together in inclusive networks of creative communities built on 'relational social capital' or the cognitive capital represented in a practice? These come at the cost of artists and practitioners, as shown by economic impact evidence some years ago which showed full-time, employee earnings increasing by 29%, whilst part-time earnings – often freelance and portfolio workers – went up by just 21%.[10] A creative resilience focus can be helpful in resisting this by emphasising the values of long-term productivity, diversity and inclusion.

The work of Susan Jones has since created a model for visual artists' 'motility' which sees creative, human and social capitals built from a combination of factors including creative space and confidence to act, sense of belonging and negotiated relationships.[11] She sums those up as vocation, location and relations, and – importantly – sees the application of those as not static but

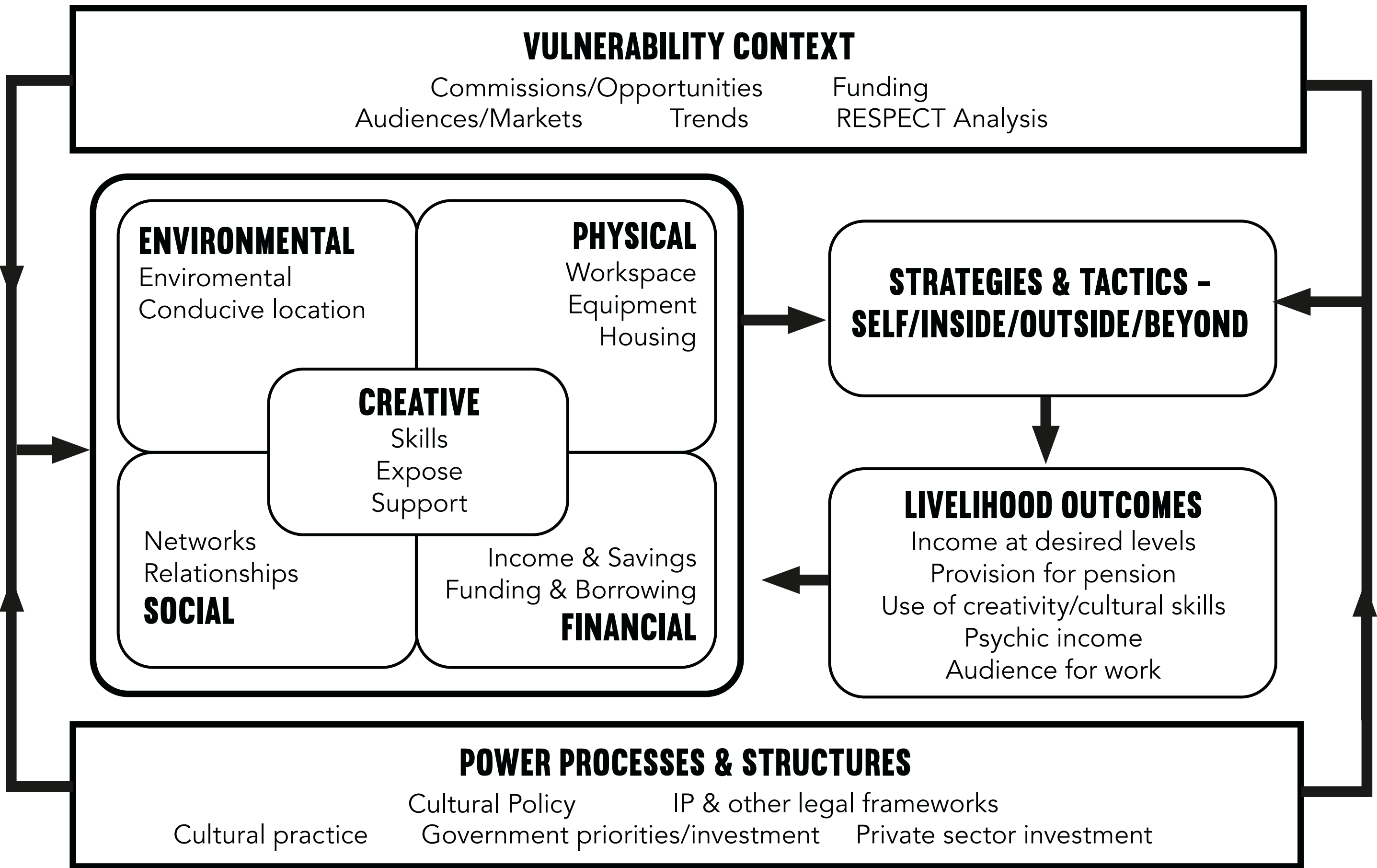
dynamic over a lifetime, and manifest in the artist's physical and social reality and values. She defines volition as the ability to move spontaneously and independently and, importantly, to do this in a way strongly reflective of and finely tuned to someone's specific artistic aspirations and personal needs. This relates strongly to the ideas of agency which I now give greater weight in my own frameworks. It also comprises more than financial or business aspects, and includes emotional backing, practical support and encouragement. The social capital or network aspects are, for Jones, as much about circles of trust as they are about industry networks. This is a helpful way to think of it – and leads to a consideration of the diversity of people within that circle of trust. Are they very similar or very different? Are you excluding anyone from the mutuality implied by a circle of trust?

Assets, strategies and tactics

In the framework below, I have built on and adapted the framework created in *The Art of Living Dangerously*, to better reflect how I see the Livelihood Assets for individual creative practitioners, and how they connect to the context in which an individual lives and works, and the strategies and tactics they might adopt for themselves and how they will work in the sector and broader society. It now has a greater emphasis on the specifically creative nature of some of the livelihood assets and the strategies and tactics used to achieve outcomes.

This not the simplest diagram in this book. It may be helpful to start at the set of five types of assets that form the livelihood assets of an individual – or of a group. These are the things you carry with you up onto the tightrope. However, what you do on the tightrope is constrained or enabled – or both – by what the framework terms 'vulnerability context' (the operating environment within which you work) and the power processes and structures around you. These might include cultural practices (e.g. if literally walking the tightrope was confined by tradition or law to one gender), or policy (e.g. if it was taught in all schools and protected by legal frameworks). From an understanding of the assets and their context, a set of strategies and tactics can be shaped, leading to a range of livelihood outcomes. It can be used for both diagnostic and planning purposes.

You can usefully map types of asset or capital against factors in an artists'


VULNERABILITY CONTEXT
Commissions/Opportunities
Funding
Audiences/Markets
Trends
RESPECT Analysis
ENVIRONMENTAL
Enviromental
Conducive location
PHYSICAL
Workspace
Equipment
Housing
CREATIVE
Skills
Expose
Support
Networks
Relationships
SOCIAL
Income & Savings
Funding & Borrowing
FINANCIAL
STRATEGIES & TACTICS –
SELF/INSIDE/OUTSIDE/BEYOND
LIVELIHOOD OUTCOMES
Income at desired levels
Provision for pension
Use of creativity/cultural skills
Psychic income
Audience for work
POWER PROCESSES & STRUCTURES
Cultural Policy
IP & other legal frameworks
Cultural practice
Government priorities/investment
Private sector investment

CORE ELEMENTS	CREATIVE CAPITAL	SOCIAL CAPITAL	FINANCIAL CAPITAL	PHYSICAL CAPITAL	ENVIRONMENTAL CAPITAL
	Skills, knowledge, confidence, agency	*Networks and beneficial relationships*	*Savings, income, borrowing*	*Infrastructure, buildings, equipment, energy*	*Landscape, natural resources, environment*
	Initial training followed by continuing professional development and opportunity to make work and have it peer-reviewed, building up a track record	Strong networks and beneficial relationships that lead to collaboration, commissions, income and skill-sharing	Having money available, whether from income, savings, family or borrowing	Being able to access (via affordable public transport or good roads) high quality but affordable studio, rehearsal, performance or office workspace, at convenient times	Good environments to live, relax and work in
	Working within systems that encourage healthy body and mind fit would tend to increase assets.	Contacts and networks in the field of practice	Costs of producing your work covered by related income from whatever source		Reduction in/relative lack of vulnerability to climate change or its impact (eg not somewhere likely to flood more often)
		A cohort of friends, allies, collaborators	Living costs in balance with income		
		Knowledge of funding, commissioning and other practical systems	Housing costs manageable		

POTENTIAL ISSUES	CREATIVE CAPITAL	SOCIAL CAPITAL	FINANCIAL CAPITAL	PHYSICAL CAPITAL	ENVIRONMENTAL CAPITAL
	Lack of regular CPD, lack of exposure to current and ‘next’ practice (or ability to partake) Lack of opportunity to share work with public and peers Issues of exclusion, marginalisation, racial, gender or age discrimination or disabling by society that face many groups	Networks and beneficial relationships, contacts and connections that can help people to share skills, resources and ideas with, supportive colleagues Isolation (geographical, personal or contextual such as lack of others working in the same field) Lack of contacts where needed/ wanted	Lack of available finance, either for investment (into say training or equipment, or time to rehearse) or for ongoing living costs, debts Costs of producing your work outstrip related income from whatever source Housing costs not manageable Living costs out of balance with income	Having no access to suitable spaces, or to ones that were too cold or costly	Lack of healthy environment: unsafe Vulnerability to early impacts of climate change (e.g. frequent flooding)

ability to sustain a livelihood, as summarised in the table below. A tool to help you do this is provided in Tools and Tactics 2.

A dancer, for instance, builds up what I term creative capital through their initial training followed by continuing professional development, alongside opportunities to make work and have it peer-reviewed, building up a track record, whilst keeping their body fit and healthy. Lack of regular workshops, lack of exposure to current and 'next' practice (or ability to partake) or to critical feedback would tend to diminish it. Good environments to live and rehearse in would increase environmental capital in this area: cramped, damp unhealthy spaces would tend to diminish it.

Having money available, whether from income, savings, family or borrowing forms financial capital, as illustrated by the way author's earnings are supplemented by household income in the report cited earlier. Having a 'backstop' from family or a partner would tend to increase opportunities to create work to a high standard, especially given that the low levels of fees available will often 'necessitate' working beyond the contract. Lack of available finance, either for investment (into say training or equipment, or time to rehearse) or for ongoing costs, leading to distracting 'day jobs', would tend to weaken an artist's ability to fulfil their livelihood ambitions alongside their cultural ambitions. Being able to access (via affordable public transport or good roads) high quality but affordable studio, rehearsal, performance and office workspace, at convenient times might be important physical assets for a dancer.

Social capital can be problematic when considered as a private 'asset', which one can use to progress or to get work in a way which turns privilege into opportunity, say, rather than its usage to describe the connections, bridging and bonding where it is more often seen as conducive to social cohesion, although these still carry risks of excluding some people. (The work of American sociologist Robert Putnam remains powerful on this, and the idea of connection is important to the kind of distributed, multiplying leadership I describe in Chapter Seven.) Social capital as seen in connections to people in positions of power and influence, strong networks and beneficial relationships that lead to collaboration, commissions, income and skill-sharing all strengthen an individual, but may divide and weaken a community if not fairly available, distributed or shared. A lack of networks and poor

connectivity will tend to lead to diminished social capital. The combination of human, social and financial capital assests make entry into the arts more or less possible – with its emphasis on talent but also its documented reliance on networks, and growing evidence that the ability to work for nothing for a while is a de facto entry requirement.

Livelihood strategies and tactics are how a person or family unit seeks to draw in the resources and other support which make their desired livelihood outcomes possible. These may include a portfolio of roles or of activities and services they offer to others. They may also include support from family members, or, for short periods, borrowing or debt.

For artists and creative practitioners, these strategies and tactics will be shaped by their assets – what they have to play with, and can offer – but also by where they find themselves (geographically, in terms of art form or other characteristic). To use a crude example, the viable strategies available to similarly skilled, networked and financially resourced dancers may differ if they choose to live in London or in Louth in Lincolnshire, are Black or white, disabled or non-disabled, neurotypical or neurodivergent.

These livelihood assets are key to negotiating the influence and access necessary to carrying out what I label, in the context of artists, livelihood strategies and tactics. This shift is influenced by the distinction made by Michael de Certeau in *The Practice of Everyday Life*, between strategy, which he describes as assuming control and requiring agency, and tactics, a more improvisatory, opportunistic and adaptive response including the surprising and unpredicted, and working around restrictions caused by others' behaviours.[12] The dual term has the kind of paradoxical nature that creative resilience is likely to embody for artists.

The livelihood assets operate within a system of several other factors that form the vulnerability context – the specific operating environment of an artist or creative community in terms of markets and the circumstances or strategic environment in which they find themselves. This might include the seasonality of work or income, shocks such as natural disasters, and pandemics or changes in populations, markets or demand for services or goods. The resilience of regional economies is part of the vulnerability context. As seen most clearly during Covid-19, this will vary from art form to art form and time to time – the context for outdoor festivals and theatres

has differed from that for publishing or media arts, for instance. Any analysis of the environment or potential scenarios such as PESTLE (using the lenses of Political Social Environmental Technological Legal Environmental) or a scenario planning exercise can help understand the vulnerability context and the power structures influencing a person or organisation. In the Tools and Tactics which follow this chapter I propose a variation on PESTLE which brings out some specifically cultural reflection, within a RESPECT Analysis covering Regulation, Economic, Social, Political, Environment, Cultural, Technological aspects. This has the advantage of encouraging specific reflection on what is happening in culture, creativity and creative communities, so that the factors influencing, say, audience behaviour, or art form or museum practice, can be considered specifically.

Livelihood outcomes are the expectations and results of a viable livelihood such as a mix of monetary income, personal or family well-being and security of food and housing, reduced vulnerability to changes in circumstances, and the sustainability of their use of resources. Artists and creative practitioners often trade present security for potential future success, which may never arrive, and for the satisfaction and control over their creativity summed up in the phrase 'psychic income'.

Power processes and structures are those policies, institutions, legal frameworks, power dynamics and general 'how we do things round here' ways of working within which people must operate. These can be more or less helpful to creating sustainable livelihoods. Examples of enabling structures in the creative and cultural industries might be the legal framework of intellectual property law, licensing laws, employment practices such as internships, touring networks in the performing arts, or indeed the arts funding system or the education system. Equally, all of those have aspects which can constrain the development or use of livelihood assets, or lead to exclusion. It is important to ask who the processes and structures enable and how, and who or what kinds of practice are hampered or even disabled. So changes to curricula such as seen since 2010, leading to fewer people studying arts subjects, will affect the whole environment and what can be done in terms of livelihood and creative practice.

This framework, like any others, is a kind of model and therefore, as statistician George Box first said, always already inaccurate. Hopefully it is so in a way

useful for understanding current situations and potential. Adapt or scratch out what does not fit, add what seems to be missing. I think this framework is a useful part of the argument of this book in that it connects the elements that enable or restrict the ability of individuals to sustain livelihoods – 'a living' – to the larger system and ecology, including the benefit to communities and the public. It is not intended to stipulate how it should be, although my explanatory examples risk giving that impression, but to help understand and potentially think about the shape of how it is. It can be used to understand why things feel the way they do, what constraints and opportunities face an individual or group, and to identify priorities of what must change. This can equally be in the vulnerability context or power processes and structures as in the livelihood assets, leading someone to, for example, argue for Universal Basic Income for artists or changes to tax regimes more than building their own financial capital.

This framework allows us to ask who is getting the best chance to be creatively resilient, and examine the roots of the resulting patterns of inclusion and exclusion. By working together, individuals and communities can shift their relationship to elements of the framework as described or experienced at any one time, as well as being subject to it. They might, for instance, campaign to change laws that restrict their work, as people did to abolish Clause 28, or as disabled people did to create the Disability Discrimination Act. The desire to not just adapt to things but to change being expressed during Covid and in the wake of the murder of George Floyd, for instance, is an example of a proactive, creative approach to the limiting factors: adaption can co-exist with resistance and change. Being actively anti-racist in actions and policies or actively altering your building to better serve transgender and non-binary people or disabled people, for instance, might create new 'assets' whilst influencing the environment, for an organisation.

This holistic analysis can then be used – as it is by the UN and CARE for instance – by funders, activists, leaders of all sorts, to identify focused interventions, resisting the temptation to create over-complicated programmes which aim to address every problem in the system. Sustainable livelihoods can then take their proper place in cultural policy, for instance, rather than being taken as read or as inevitably flowing from other policy imperatives.

The public investment made over previous decades into bricks and mortar

could generate more health in the ecology if all organisations that work with arts and culture were to adopt strategies and tactics that contribute to sustainable livelihoods for artists and creative practitioners. This has very much been the call made by freelancers during Covid, and by organisations looking to work differently with freelancers and artists. Ideas have built on some pioneering practice by some, with models such as use of space, and investment in much more flexible ways being discussed and taken up. New Diorama Theatre is a good example here, responding to nuanced artist needs with its Artist Development Programme, which has many strands, but includes, for instance, graduate and emerging company schemes, free use of rehearsal space, travel grants, cash flow assistance, and 'two nightstands' and two week offers bringing companies to London with 100% box office takes and cheap accommodation as well as the shows. The programme shifts power and responsibility for development to companies, but supports them to do this by, for instance, transferring more resources to them – rather than the old, precarious, disempowered touring model of splits and patronage.

From the Connected Self to Inside, Outside and Beyond

Schemes such as these show the value in making explicit the connection between sustainability of a place and the livelihoods of artists who live and work there. The interdependence of place and workers of all sorts, including creative workers, has been a major theme of discussion of post-Covid new normal or resets, with networks and collaborative efforts such as the Theatre Freelancers Task Force, the disabled artists network We Shall Not Be Removed and many initiatives in the wake of the murder of George Floyd and the resurgence of Black Lives Matter. This connects to the type of community co-creation enabling leadership approach described in Chapter Seven. There can be no genuine, widespread, sustainable 'multiplying leadership' without sustainable livelihoods for artists and creative practitioners of all sorts. To continue the dominant, exclusionary models too often leaves the network too full of holes to meaningfully connect, collaborate and multiply, and ends up super-serving one group or another, usually those already best served.

It is important to note how the individual or self connects to the patterns that are found in organisations, networks, sectors and in the broader society or social-economy or ecology, for two main reasons. Firstly, the connection of

self to the broader system leads to rejecting overly individualised notions of resilience or success. It stresses an individual's part in the broader society, be that economy or collaborative or commons-style working. As David Bollier and Silke Helfrich put it, writing about "the insurgent power of the commons", "There is no such thing as an isolated 'I'… We are not only embedded in relationships: our very identities are *created* through relationships."[12] This seems to me to be true of the cultural sector, which is always-already relational, even in its most cut-throat commercial guises.

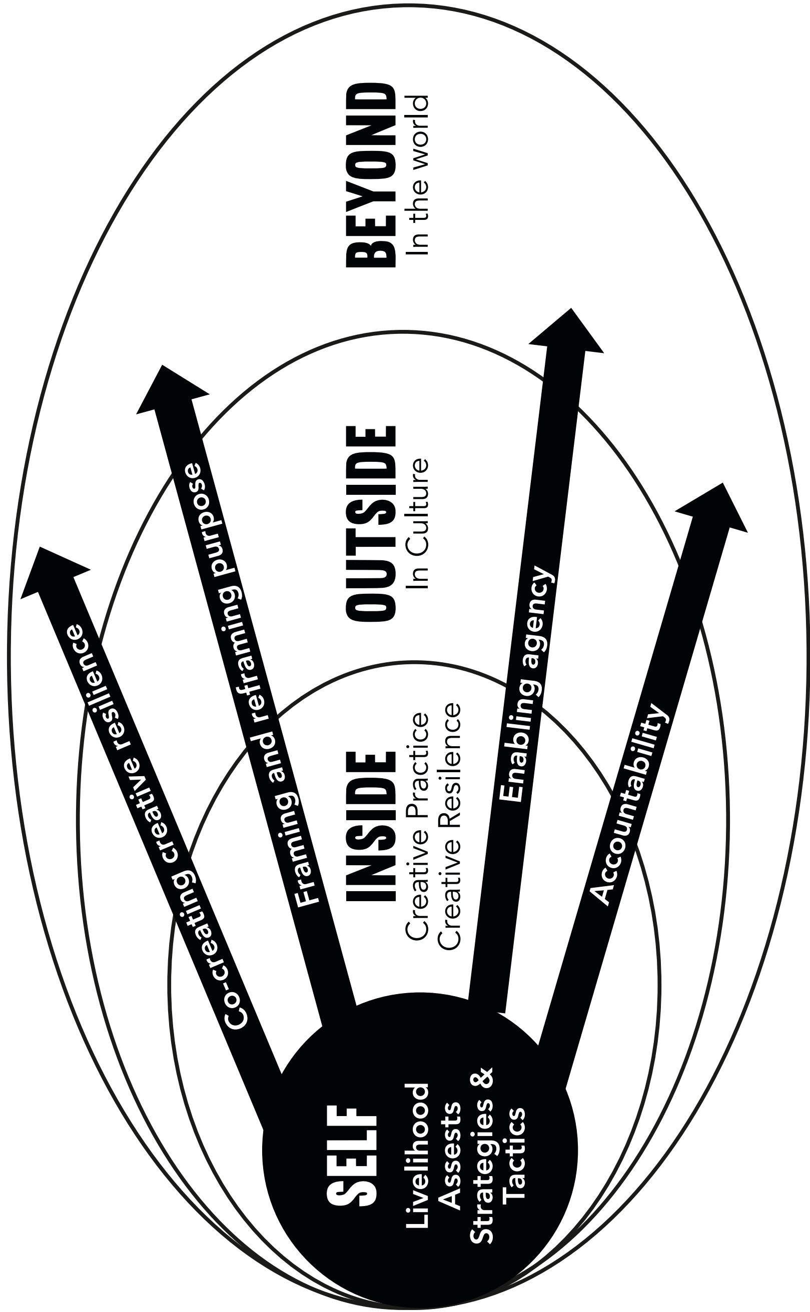
For me, the idea of Ubuntu, which I learnt about from several inspiring South African leaders when with the Swallows Foundation, connecting North East England and the Eastern Cape, underpins the second reason to map the connection from self to inside, outside and beyond. Ubuntu is a Southern African mindset or belief system summed up or translated by philosopher John Mbeti as "I am because we are and, since we, therefore I am." This formulation brings out that the larger 'we' must also respect the individual, just as it influences them. We need, tricky as it might be, to try and hold both parts at once. What Bollier and Helfrich called the "Nested-I" I prefer to think of as the Connected Self as opposed to the disconnected self so much of modern life demands.[13] This is reflected in the first of the key elements of the Multiplying Leadership framework described in Chapter Seven: Connect.

I want next to join the dots between the livelihood assets, strategies and tactics thinking to the organisations individuals will connect to, and collaborate with, and the sector and society they work in, by adding that focus on 'self' – which is universal and flexible enough to apply to everyone working in the sector, not just those who consider themselves artists, creatives or curators. Understanding yourself and your motivations, preferences, competencies, qualities and attributes, social reality or realities, is a key skill for leaders, and as I have described, my vision of leadership in creative communities is that everyone has the potential to be a leader in some context. Also, as I saw working with Future Arts Centres, and as I've learnt from all of my clients in some way, organisations are people too. By this I mean that a network of arts centres, say, is actually a network of individuals with a brilliant variety of styles and skills, but also their own pressures and situations. Most crucially, individuals also move from one job to another, which means the network has to evolve as new people come in, or even potentially member organisations leave or are replaced. Future Arts Centres was initially a group that stepped

forward. The organisation name remains the same, but the humans do not. This has meant reviewing and renewing purpose as the network progresses. This has been a challenging but healthy process, so far as I have observed it. The main ideas behind the next part of the framework were first set out in a provocation for The Bluecoat in Liverpool, commissioned by Mary Cloake, to whom I'm grateful for much support and encouragement over the years. Considering the unreasonable pressures on artistic directors in what I termed contradictory times led me to describe three spheres for leadership, which I now see can be connected to the self, and the livelihoods framework. My analysis of those pressures is very much what I described in Chapter Three (overextended), including the contradictory public pressures and demands on cultural organisations, from mass markets to the civic role. If anything, they have increased: from identity politics to resurgent nationalism and Brexit, generational clashes, so-called 'culture wars' being manufactured around progressive issues such as decolonisation and trans rights, plus a pandemic hitting the sector massively whilst also creating massive trauma and grief, especially amongst the most disadvantaged. Yet, the enabling mindsets I described have also been massively in evidence, as people have reframed their purpose from making theatre to running food banks or supporting mutual aid, from face-to-face to digital, to working with local government as part of recovery for the hospitality sector or town centres, changing what they saw as their story-telling or image-making process. I had previously seen these qualities abundant in the Future Arts Centres network, and in Creative People and Places. These are key skills for creative resilience, but it is clear they also connect to individuals' circumstances and resilience.

From the work centred on self (as opposed to self-centred), the focus and impact of leadership in creative communities moves through three further domains in order to have the most authentic and lasting impact on creative resilience and what is done in creative communities. (By impact I mean, very briefly and not restrictively, successfully adding art or artistic processes of worth to the world and developing a community of artists, audiences and others around places, practices or ideas in order to make a positive contribution.)

From self, the focus shifts to **inside** a creative practice and or creative organisation, contributing to its creative resilience. (To avoid a surplus of caveats, I'll describe things as if people sit within some kind of organisation


BEYOND
In the world
OUTSIDE
In Culture
INSIDE
Creative Practice
Creative Resilence
SELF
Livelihood
Assests
Strategies &
Tactics
Co-creating creative resilience
Framing and reframing purpose
Enabling agency
Accountability

– this need not be a business or company as typically constituted, but could be a network, a coalition, a gang, a band, a one-off gathering or even a global conglomerate. It could even be a sole trader such as myself. I make no assumption, here, about the type of organisation – I have a hunch that the arts charity model will diversify further over coming decades, and that holocracy and co-operatives will spread, some never taking fixed organisational form.)

Vital areas for artistic leadership inside are the necessary strategies, tactics and delivery for creative resilience across the eight characteristics of purpose, assets, networks, finance, agency, creative capacity, situation awareness, and leadership and governance; connecting, collaborating and multiplying within creative communities and growing creative practice through all of that. These cover the crucial leadership roles of defining team roles or structure, business strategy and alignment, decision-making and knowing the factors influencing the organisation. They include artistic disciplines, as well as the business acumen fit for a period where every penny earned counts, and new sources must, for many, supplement previous income streams without damaging mission. They would also apply to relationships with artists and audiences, who might be thought of as on the cusp of 'inside' and 'outside'.

The third domain is **outside** the organisation, in the cultural and creative community. Each act of leadership, each creation or activity enabled, has the potential to change an art form, or shift thinking in the arts and cultural sector, or to reinforce current practice, as seen in the idea of nested cycles of change within the idea of panarchy, the interactions between different scales and types within an ecology. Each innovation may have immediate and long-term effects, some of them unpredictable. (The over-told story that only 100 people bought the Velvet Underground's debut album on its release but all of them went on to form bands remains a good illustration of this.) Leaders operate in the arts as well as in their own organisation's work de facto: every behaviour models the sector for those in or considering it. This means that the way in which leaders build relationships with people including makers and audiences, the way they run their business and the way they practice their art has an effect at a sectoral, public and social level. (Even if for some the end result is irrelevance.) To give just one example, the extent to which leaders who have been supported to progress and achieve status within the sector mentor others – whether they pull up the ladder or help others up – is crucial to the well-being of the sector. In a collaborative age, the contribution people make to

broader agendas is also vital. As the leadership moves outside the organisation it becomes more about sharing or creating shared platforms or tools with which others can be creative and make culture than about individual performance.
The final domain is **beyond** the organisation, in the world. The best contemporary leaders lead beyond their formal authority, achieving things through influence more than control. Great social changes arise not from leaders deciding what should be made to happen, but by leadership that brings people into the process and reaches beyond traditional borders. This is where artistic leadership can become civic leadership, influencing a town, city or region, or social leadership changing minds and hearts. Think of the influence of an artist such as David Bowie on attitudes to creation, sexuality and identity, for instance, or of many arts leaders active in city developments, from Margate to Dundee and all points between. At its most prosaic-seeming this can manifest itself as an arts leader getting involved in the local chamber of commerce. At its deepest, places become identified with artistic leaders of all kinds, inspiring everything from emulation to tourism.

This kind of activity is what has been seen in what the Gulbenkian Foundation brought together in the idea of the civic role of the arts, with arts organisations contributing to the civic realm in a myriad of ways. A large-scale *Inquiry into the Civic Role of Arts Organisations* concluded by suggesting a number of principals seen in action in such activity. These included being rooted in local need, developing community agency, championing diversity and artistic quality, and being open and reflective. They also suggested five metaphors for the civic role: colleges (places of learning), town halls (places of debate), parks (public space open to everyone), temples (places which give meaning and provide solace), and home (a place of safety and belonging). The illustrations they used in publications to do with these metaphors found, for me, an unexpected resonance during lockdown as they illustrate the spaces without people (although there is a cat looking out of the house in the illustration of Home). The empty park bench, college and town hall took on new meaning. Putting this aside, and a personal desire to add bus-stops and pubs to the list of metaphors, and public loos to the list of non-metaphors, the images do convey much about the uses to which people can put culture in the world.

Enabling mindsets for inside, outside and beyond

For the authentic multiplying creative practitioner or leader to operate powerfully and influentially in all of these domains, and to support others in building the resourcefulness and creative capabilities described in the next chapter, there are four enabling mindsets to be nurtured.

Accountability
Leaders step forward and take responsibility for situations, work, organisations, other people. They are more likely to say, "if not me, who?" than "I'm sure someone will do it." There is a degree of self-confidence implied in this, although it is often illusory, a way of covering up Imposter Syndrome. It is one of the reasons for the persistence of the Great Leader model: individuals do step out from the crowd. This also provides a figurehead for establishing and driving forward a vision, and clear accountability: a head that will roll as well as a face for the poster. None of this means they do things alone or do not, in our current context, need to work with others to achieve things. But they take responsibility and make themselves accountable.

This has practical manifestations. The best leadership creates visible accountability for individuals and their organisations or networks, one-to-one or through the group. This means artistic leaders have a responsibility to artists for equitable pay and collaboration, to the communities they serve for what is produced and shared, and how, for what opportunities are created for making together. They have a responsibility to funders and the public, including those who never see their work. They should make themselves accountable for the diversity of their staff and their programmes, and to those people with whom they choose not to work. This is essentially about developing high quality relationships built on trust, and then making the accountability within those relationships as visible as possible.

The difficulty for artistic leadership in the middle of the 21st century will be that the most vital part of the job, developing ways of turning complex problems into positive change, is least likely to have direct consequences. Work within the organisation currently often trumps the work in the arts and in the world in terms of accountability. To put it crudely, a leader is currently far more likely to get sacked if they run up a deficit or have a series of artistic failures

than if they allow their organisation to be irrelevant to most of its community or damaging to the local or cultural ecology. (Although that makes the first two things more likely.) To meet the challenges of the changing environment in ways that boost creative resilience and cultural value for society as a whole, this needs to change. Leaders must consider a new 'triple bottom line' – not just their organisations', but those of their sectors and their communities. A mindset that actively embraces a responsibility to the whole cultural ecology and a responsibility to use public investment for broad public good as well as organisational benefit can use its capacity to nurture new and diverse groups, and serve diverse artists and audiences.

To be genuinely accountable, the artistic leader has to demonstrate through action a set of values that operate inside the organisation, outside in the arts and beyond in the world. Then they need to know and communicate how they mean to live up to them, and do that consistently. This means wrestling with ideas of privilege, including that which comes with leadership. Modelling behaviours and techniques such as international co-commissioning or new-style partnerships with social housing providers creates project and funding opportunities. Influence over the development agenda can also grow. Being seen as a sector leader may benefit the 'brand' of individual organisations. However, there is a burden of responsibility to use the opportunity well, and to share the learning and benefits across the broader network.

Co-creating creative resilience

Artistic leadership in contradictory times is not about managing provision, selecting or making hits. It is fundamentally about the paradoxical combination of change and stability scientists suggest make for resilient ecologies. (This is not a balance, but a paradox: you can't forgo a bit of one for a bit more of the other and hope to be successful.) Leadership is about inspiring change: in people, in their work, in the relationships they build, in what is achieved together.

The artistic leader seeks to be changed by the people they meet and work with. This applies as much inside the organisation, with staff, board and customers, as it does outside in the arts, and beyond in the world. This demands an openness to learn from experiences and what results from them. Practically, this means having all channels open to new ideas, new talent, new forms that might emerge from old ones – or indeed, spotting old forms that might

have new uses today. It means establishing relationships and accountability with multiple constituencies – the community groups and activists, the young artists and the older ones, audiences and non-audiences, amateurs and professionals, the policy makers, the businesses and the scientists: everyone.

An adaptive mindset will encourage and help manage change. Such a mindset typically makes many small changes in response to ideas and context. It adapts itself around clear core values and a shared purpose, but stays true to its core purpose and identity.

Framing and reframing purpose

One of the aspects of traditional leadership models in simple or complicated settings is defining the direction to be taken. In our contradictory and complex times, however, the most powerful leaders are as concerned with framing and reframing purpose as they are with timelines. Artistic leaders will find the best uses for crises, as the biggest problems can lead to the biggest breakthroughs. The artistic leader's role is to lead the reframing of the purpose – what is it we are doing here and why? – as much as decide exactly what to do next.

This has layers related to the domains set out earlier. What is the purpose of the organisation or the artworks or activities, how do they relate to other aspects of society – social, moral, financial, ecological, psychological and so on – and what impact might they have in the world? To operate well the artistic leader needs to be as skilled at asking questions as answering them. They need to take in information, patterns and hints from data or from observing how people act, and help others synthesise them. They need to be able to draw and redraw the frames and know how to stop when a useful-enough framework has been reached.

There is something here in common with the essential creative and cultural impulse: sensing and sense-making, inside the organisation, outside in the arts and beyond in the world. This process recurs in each formal or creative decision, in the shape of a programme, in the mix of artists and others involved, in debates and shared learning within the sector, and echoes out into the world. Art can help people make sense of local, national and global issues, or of current and eternal themes, but also make them question what they thought before. Leaders also have a role in introducing new modes of

sensing and sense-making into the culture: modes of art-making lead to fresh ways of imagining both art and world.

Organisations that do not reflect upon themselves and their activity become more vulnerable to change over time. Leaders can encourage a reflective mindset in their teams, taking on board – and sharing – data and views from very differing perspectives, built on relationships of trust with many communities. (Reflection within a monoculture can become a self-fulfilling prophecy.) Reflection alone is not enough: people must take necessary actions.

The constant framing and reframing of purpose is vital within Future Arts Centres. Behind many of their discussions lies the question: "What is it we are doing here and why?" People apply this to their impact on society, economy and their locality, and to the work of their organisation. The group's diversity of model, focus and situation allows for shared learning about the people, practice and business operations inside the individual arts centres as well as more broadly. This ranges from issues such as box office systems and ticketing strategy to influencing local authorities. How centres work with local or international communities and artists to affect their changing worlds is a central preoccupation, even where the demographics are as different as, say, Kendal and East London.

Enabling agency

Arts and culture are acts of collective interpretation: a key skill for working with complex problems. The complexity of the environment for culture is such that more than one perspective is generally required, although there may be times this needs to be simplified to the stillness of one person's final decision or contemplation, and times an individual vision cuts through the noise. The artistic leader now has, therefore, to inspire and enable co-creation.

This can be at different levels. Some works and activity will be entirely co-created, some not, although bringing them to public attention generally involves a range of people. Some programmes and projects will involve co-creation or co-curation, and others will be 'authored'. Not every organisation will make co-creation part of its artistic vision or business model.

To work inside the organisation, the leader must inspire a team, with appropriate delegation and accountability. To work outside in the arts, the leader must, by the very nature of the sector, see themselves as co-creators of their art form or sector, contributing as best-placed and suited, stepping ahead at times, sometimes following the lead of others. And certainly, to work beyond in the world the artistic leader must inspire others to action around shared goals.

And so?

New leadership challenges flow from this kind of thinking, alongside recast challenges for how work should be made and developed with artists and communities on an equitable footing. It is necessary but not enough to achieve an annual surplus and build reserves, to hit sales targets or audience targets, to work with local people and artists whose work and ideas surprise and enthral, to introduce people to things they may not have seen before, to help people find their talents and strengthen them, to explore and maybe even resolve the questions and requirements of their lives.

Rebecca Solnit, in her book, *Hope in the Dark,* uses the image of moths and the moon: "Moths and other nocturnal insects navigate by the moon and stars. Those heavenly bodies are useful for them to find their way, even though they never get far from the surface of the earth. But light bulbs and candles send them astray, they fly into the heat or the flame and die. For these creatures, to arrive is a calamity. When activists mistake heaven for some goal at which they must arrive, rather than an idea to navigate earth by, they burn themselves out, or they set up a totalitarian utopia in which others are burned out in the flames. Don't mistake a light bulb for the moon, and don't believe that the moon is useless unless we land on it. … The moon is profound *except* when we land on it." This seems a useful image for how to respond to calls for the 'new normal' or 'building back better' or 'resetting' to me. I want things to navigate by, not decrees which experience has taught us are either unachievable or distorting in their effects.

Lasting change demands ideas 'beyond crisis'. (Oh how I hope you are in that moment when you read this. How I hope you have to look up what Covid even was.) This, when it comes, will bring relief and a tendency for some to

try and go back to the old world. Others will be frustrated that not everything has changed, that their revelations have not been replicated in everyone. (This is a tendency the arts and cultural sector is prone to: just as we find it hard to understand not everyone responds as we do to a work of art or heritage, some will find it hard to accept that for many the pandemic has not been a revelation, but a chore, an intensified and poor version of dull days they'd have had anyway. We should avoid universalism in how we talk about the experience.) Sorting the useful things from the 'old world' from the things to leave behind is not the same as dealing with a crisis. It is a moment of release in terms of the adaptive cycle, which swiftly moves on to reorganisation. Fully exploring and using the growth phase to explore and define how best to live inside, outside and beyond, and in harmony with the self, will require cultural leaders (by which I mean for the sake of argument everyone working in the sector) to build their welcome to others and to multiply their leadership, as we will see.

A slow squeeze on funding is not the same as lack of opportunity, or even a sudden cut. The challenges to come may mean a shift from crisis management after years of managed leanness towards investing in growth. But how to move from scarcity mind-set to abundance or renewal mind-set, without falling into the traps of boosterism? This is an area in which arts 'centres' of all sorts are in a good position to share learning with the rest of the cultural sector. Indeed, one might argue, that prior to Covid theatres, galleries and museums were increasingly adopting (or purporting to) characteristics typical of arts centres such as a broad public welcome based on locality and access to cross-art form programming, community-use focus, and mixed models of curatorial approach. Not to mention letting the public use their non-metaphorical loos: a small change that serves as a highly tactical and strategic intervention in a failing of public policy – i.e. the loss of public toilets in the privatised formerly public spaces of our towns and villages, an example of the civic role at its most human.

A network such as Future Arts Centres can, it seems, operate as a kind of sensor for the cultural sector. It has identified patterns relating to audiences, new practice in many art forms, and workforce development issues. Each 'measurement' asks questions about accountability, about context and framing, about change, and how to respond individually and collectively. So, for instance, the Future Arts Centres' Annual Survey suggests 63% of turnover

is generated from earned income and fundraising activity even though the average ticket price in arts centres is just £9, compared to a national average of £23.53. What does that mean? Is it an argument for more public funding and more partnerships of all sorts? For more or less commercial or risk-taking programming? Or is it an argument for raising prices, to earn even more and become even less reliant on public funding?

Developing the answers requires leadership drawing on all four of the capacities I've described, in the context of building creative resilience as resistance in creative communities, which I will explore in the next chapters.

TOOLS AND TACTICS 1: SELF/INSIDE

Introduction

These tools are especially useful for thinking about the space where the self meets the sector or the organisation. You can think about them as an individual, a business (even of one) or from a sectoral perspective.

This section includes the following tools.

TOOL	WHAT YOU MIGHT USE IT FOR
Livelihood Assets Canvas	To assess and identify livelihood assets as described in Chapter Four, and to identify strategies and tactics that might make the most of them, or strengthen them in future
Ikigai	To identify your 'sweet spot' in terms of what you should best spend your time – life, even – doing on the tightrope, given the world and your own capabilities
GROW Coaching Model and template	To give structure to a coaching conversation about you, current situations and/or future activities
28 Coaching Questions	To self-coach or to provide a framework of questions for coaching others
RESPECT Context Analysis	To consider the external environment and boost your situation awareness
Certainty Spectrum	To explore your risk and change appetite and think through the implications for your work
Renewing purpose via a cheesy film trailer	To explore and articulate your purpose, why it's needed and what difference it makes

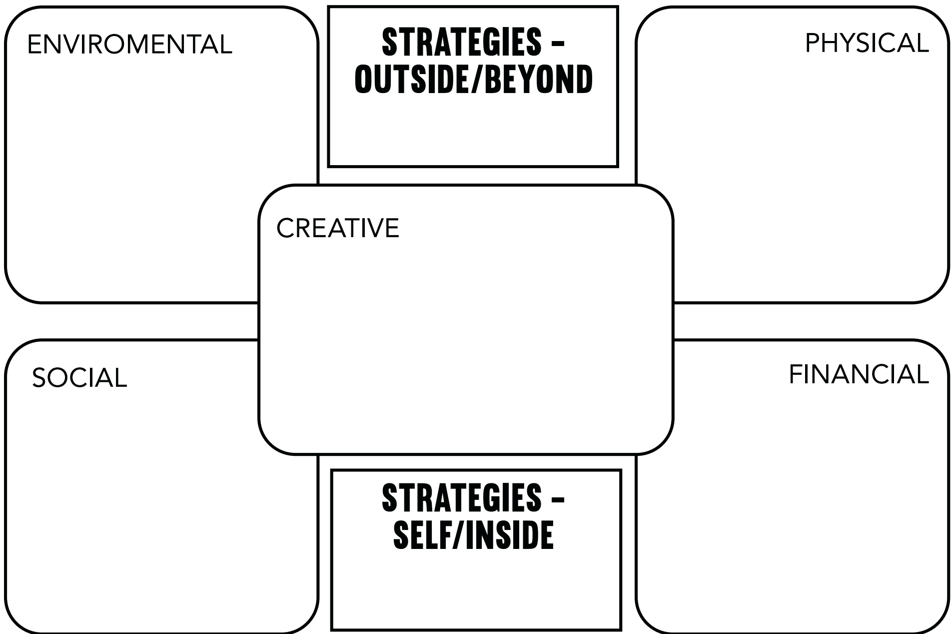
Livelihood Assets Canvas

This tool is based on the Livelihood Assets Framework, described in Chapter Four, a revised version of the original framework developed in *The Art of Living Dangerously,* co-written with Shelagh Wright and Sarah Colston. The tool is most helpful for individual practitioners, but can be used by small organisations or start-ups.

It can be used to assess the current state, or to set achievable goals for yourselves over a particular time period, identifying what you would like to achieve in each area. (E.g. you might want to live in a busy city but with access to the sea or countryside, have three novels written and published over the next decade, each reaching more people and earning better advances, averaging an income of £10K pa, to supplement with part-time teaching so you earn £30,000 pa, and to save towards a deposit for a mortgage). Your analysis of your own assets might lead you to work not on yourself but on the system. What could you join with others to change in how things currently work? Where might you get involved with others?

You can use the table below and/or the graphic version to map your livelihood assets using the following three steps as a guide.

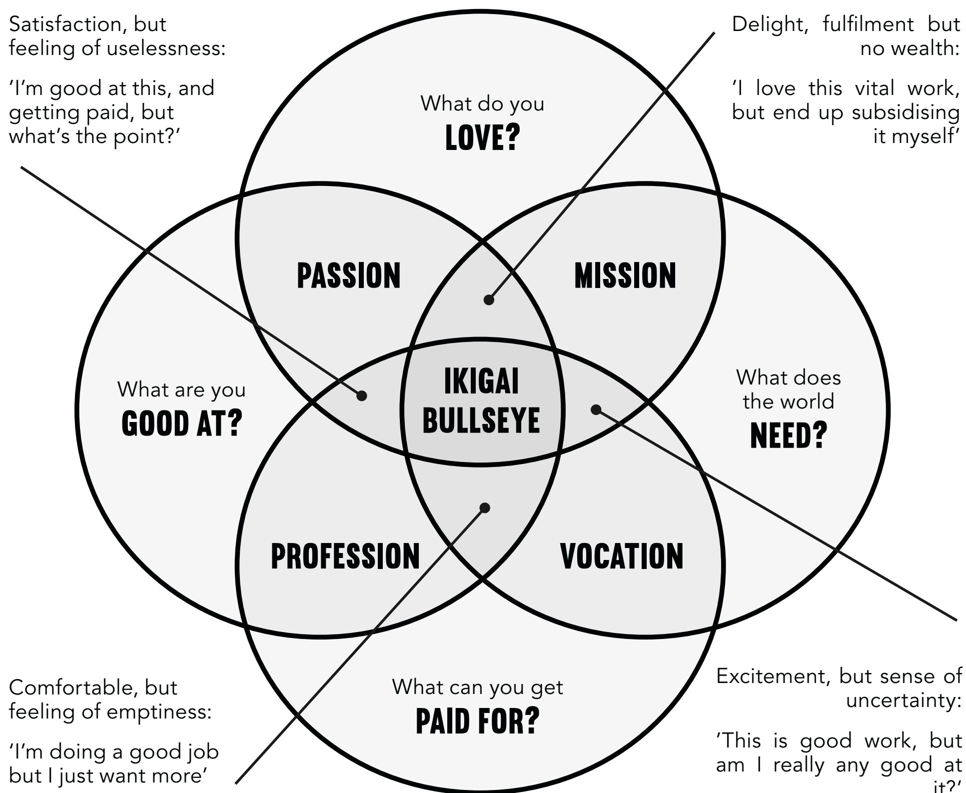
1. What do you have or have access to in each of these categories? – think broadly.
2. How confident and powerful does that make you feel in each category? If using the graphic version, you can give yourself a % rating out of 100 to make the relative levels apparent if it helps.
3. What could you do to strengthen your position, now or over time? Think about strategies and actions that relate to yourself or your group/organisation (self/inside) and also how you might work with others to tackle issues outside or beyond in the system or environment that make a sustainable livelihood harder to achieve.


ENVIROMENTAL
STRATEGIES – OUTSIDE/BEYOND
PHYSICAL
CREATIVE
SOCIAL
FINANCIAL
STRATEGIES – SELF/INSIDE

	CREATIVE CAPITAL	SOCIAL CAPITAL	FINANCIAL CAPITAL	PHYSICAL CAPITAL	ENVIRONMENTAL CAPITAL
Core Elements *What do you have or have access to in each of these categories?*	Skills, knowledge, confidence, agency	Networks and beneficial relationships	Savings, income, borrowing	Infrastructure, buildings, equipment, energy	Landscape, natural resources, environment
Boosters *What do you have or have access to that boosts your capital in these areas?* *Use the examples as prompts but think broadly.*	• Initial training followed by continuing professional development and opportunity to make work and have it peer-reviewed, building up a track record. • Working within systems that encourage healthy body and mind fit would tend to increase assets	• Strong networks and beneficial relationships that lead to collaboration, commissions, income and skill-sharing • Contacts and networks in the field of practice • A cohort of friends, allies, collaborators • Knowledge of funding, commissioning and other practical systems	• Having money available, whether from income, savings, family or borrowing • Costs of producing your work covered by related income from whatever source • Living costs in balance with income • Housing costs manageable	• Being able to access (via affordable public transport or good roads) high quality but affordable studio, rehearsal, performance or office workspace, at convenient times	• Good environments in which to live, relax and work • Reduction in/relative lack of vulnerability to climate change or its impact (e.g. not somewhere likely to flood more often)

	CREATIVE CAPITAL	SOCIAL CAPITAL	FINANCIAL CAPITAL	PHYSICAL CAPITAL	ENVIRONMENTAL CAPITAL
Reducers *What do you encounter that could reduce your capital in these areas?*	• Lack of regular CPD, lack of exposure to current and 'next' practice (or ability to partake). • Lack of opportunity to share work with public and peers. • Issues of exclusion, marginalisation, racial, gender or age discrimination or disabling by society that face many groups	• Networks and beneficial relationships, contacts and connections that can help, people to share skills, resources and ideas with, supportive colleagues • Isolation (geographical, personal or contextual such as lack of others working in same field) • Lack of contacts where needed/ wanted	• Lack of available finance, either for investment (into say training or equipment, or time to rehearse) or for ongoing living costs, debts • Costs of producing your work outstrip related income from whatever source • Housing costs not manageable • Living costs out of balance with income	• Having no access to suitable spaces, or to ones that were too cold or costly	• Lack of healthy environment: unsafe • Vulnerability to early impacts of climate change (e.g. frequent flooding) •

Ikigai



Ikigai is a Japanese concept, often translated as 'a reason for being' or 'the value in life'. Ikigai is partly credited with the longevity of health life of people in Japan's Blue Zones such as Okinawa. Putting aside the intricacies of translating a word from Japanese into English, and the scientific evidence behind the potential benefits to lifespan, I find these four overlapping circles a powerful way to consider what you really want and to spend your time doing, or for explaining why you might sometimes feel a particular way.

I use the framework to explore four questions:

- What do you love?
- What are you good at?
- What does the world need?
- What can you get paid for?

As shown in the diagram, the sweet spot of all four coinciding is a small part of the overall picture. That doesn't mean you shouldn't aim for it. But if you can't get all four all the time, it can help to understand the effects and make choices accordingly where you can – or resolve to only spend a certain proportion of time in particular areas. Use the template to firstly note the things that matter most to you in each area.

Next, think about where you spend most of your time at the moment. Do you recognise any of the descriptions of typical feelings when not accessing one part of ikigai? What proportion of your time are you at the heart of ikigai, and how often are you, for instance, well-used but not rewarded financially, or comfortable but empty as you are not serving your mission or passion?

Finally, what are you going to do about it? What could you change that would make you feel more powerful, closer to ikigai or that you are addressing weaknesses? Set yourself some ikigai gaols for the next year. The GROW model which follows may be useful to help decide you what you should do.

GROW Coaching Model

The GROW model is a seemingly simple but endlessly flexible and deep framework or tool for coaching conversations. It may look small but has many uses and nuances. I think of this as a Swiss Army Knife snuck into an available pocket of space. It was created by Sir John Whitmore, whose book *Coaching for Performance* I heartily recommend. It is based on the principle that unusual levels of attention to the results of actions and process tend to lead to unusually high levels of achievement.

The model can be summarised in four stages and questions:

- Goal – what do you want to achieve, what are your goals and aspirations in what context?
- Reality – what is the current reality, the enablers and obstacles?
- Options – what options do you have, what possibilities are there?
- Will – what will you do and how will you know when you've done it?

Although there are endless possible coaching questions, some of which have entered into cliché despite their usefulness – what else could you do?, what would you advise a friend in your situation to do?, what would success look like? – the acronym provides an adequate framework for many conversations. I have provided a set of 28 questions which can be used as a framework for coaching either yourself or someone else. Going through these on your own in a quiet 15 minutes regularly can be a really good practice for thinking through how a project is going, or to do when thinking about priorities for the coming year.

I find it useful to remember to be (or encourage others to be) as specific as possible in your reflections, and to be as creative as you can be in your questions. Sometimes our intellect holds on to issues so tightly they can't fly off or be dropped, and it takes an unexpected question to open us up again. I borrow some of my favourite questions from my days teaching poetry to people of all types and ages, as the knack is the same: to 'outwit' what Ted Hughes called the "inner police system". 'Reversal' questions can be good too. If you prefer to think visually or in 3-D, drawing and modelling can also be useful, though I have come across a small number of adults who appear to be allergic to playing with Lego. Always check the comfort levels of people you coach.

A Basic GROW Coaching template

GOAL
What do you want to achieve and why this goal right now?

REALITY
What is the current reality, the enablers and blockages or obstacles?

OPTIONS
What options do you have, what possibilities are there?

WILL
What do you commit to, and how will you know when you've succeeded?

28 Coaching Questions

GOAL

1. What is the topic or situation you would most like to explore?
2. What do you want to achieve?
3. How would you measure your achievements?
4. How would someone else know you had achieved what you wanted?
5. What else might you achieve?

REALITY

6. What is the current situation?
7. What is actually happening?
8. Who else is involved?
9. What is the impact on you – physically, mentally, emotionally?
10. What have you tried so far?
11. What has resulted?
12. What have you thought you could do but haven't?
13. What stopped you?
14. Using your intuition what's really going on?
15. Is what you set out to do still valid?

OPTIONS

16. What options do you have?
17. What else could you do?
18. If a friend was in the same position, what would you say?
19. What would you try if you couldn't fail?
20. How would you like things to be?
21. What else?

WILL

22. Out of the ideas you've had so far, which is the most appealing to you?
23. What are you willing to do?
24. When will you do it?
25. When will it be completed?
26. What support do you need and from whom?
27. How committed are you, on a scale of 1-10
28. Why not 10?

RESPECT Context Analysis

This is my own riff on a PESTLE analysis. PESTLE is a useful tool for analysis of your context or environment. In terms of creative resilience, regular context analysis should be part of your situation awareness and alert you to potential vulnerabilities. This can help shape strategies for adapting to emerging realities, and for changing the context itself. Holding to core purpose and values doesn't mean either ignoring or simply submitting to your context: it means paying it due respect. As much as that, no more than that. But a PESTLE doesn't go quite far enough for creative organisations.

I have tweaked the common framework in two ways that lead to RESPECT. This first tweak introduces a C, so demands a different acronym. I have included Culture as an explicit and specific area to consider. It seems important for cultural organisations to think about culture specifically when scanning the horizon and thinking about the implications for them. (As with all these terms, I advise not getting too hung up on definitions when conducting your analysis: go with what works and feels relevant for you). You could fold culture into the social, or fold the sociological into a bigger definition of culture, as the two are intertwined, but for some organisations I've worked with, it's been important they also reflect on what's changing in their art form or in the cultural sector. Example shifts from 2020 might be digital and online creativity, streaming, the increased focus on equality and racial justice, the emergence of networks of freelance and disabled practitioners, or the structural issues facing freelancers.

I have also introduced Regulation to cover the areas usually covered under legal, which has the advantage of also allowing consideration of the other regulations within which a cultural business or organisation might need to work, such as funder rules, reporting frameworks or even application processes. Finally, the RESPECT framework also gives you the opportunity to hear Aretha Franklin in your head, which I am convinced – though cannot substantiate with evidence beyond my own shallowness – is going to help.

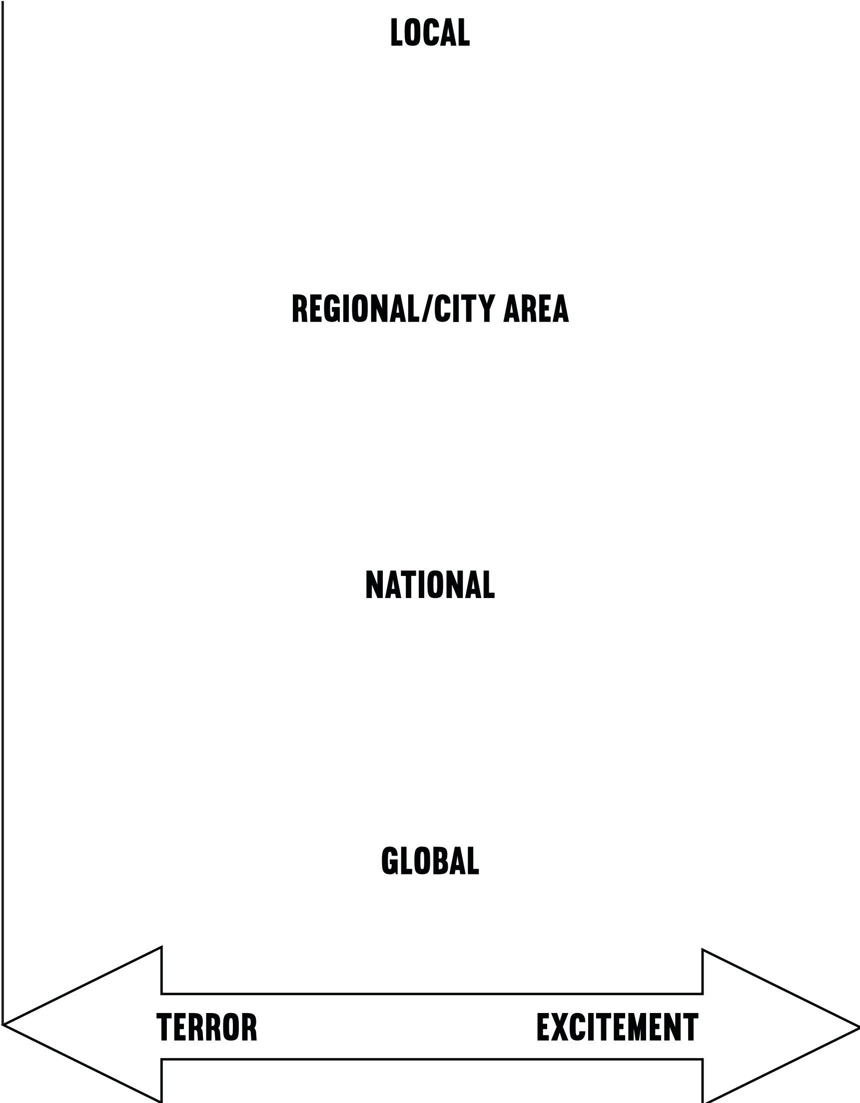
RESPECT Context Analysis

1. Consider each of the following areas. I have suggested some starting points, but you can expand this to suit your own context and organisation.
2. Identify the most influential factors for each area and map them using the format on the next page, locating each on a horizontal scale of 'terror' – negative impact – or 'excitement' – positive impact, and on the vertical scale to 'locate' the factor as local, regional, national or global. (Sometimes you may want to add 'city' to this, or consider that as regional – e.g. an organisation in Bolton in Greater Manchester, where there is an elected Mayor and a Combined Authority with devolved powers, might want to think about local politics, but also the Greater Manchester picture.)
3. Highlight a small number of contextual factors that are potentially particularly important to you/your organisation and how it operates.
4. Finally, consider what actions you might need to take in response to your analysis.

AREA	TYPICAL THINGS TO THINK ABOUT	NOTES
Regulation	What legal frameworks influence you, and how are they changing – e.g. HR, pensions, consumer law, health and safety, data protection? What other factors 'regulate' you in some way, even if not by law – e.g. funder requirements, union agreements?	
Economic	What economic factors are relevant to you? – Think local, area or region as well as national and even global.	
Social	What social or sociological patterns are changing? Think about social attitudes – e.g. to racial injustice, gender and sexual identities. How are people's lives changing – patterns of behaviour – that might be relevant to you? How cohesive or otherwise does the social realm feel?	

AREA	TYPICAL THINGS TO THINK ABOUT	NOTES
Political	What is happening politically locally, regionally, nationally? Are there structural changes happening, or changes in who holds power, or makes policies? Think about your relationship to the political tides, as well as their influence on you.	
Environment	What climate change or other environmental factors might influence you? Are there major changes locally? How is climate change likely to affect you directly? You might also consider pandemics here or under social.	
Cultural	What is happening culturally to influence you – either locally, nationally or globally? Are there ground-breaking forms, 'schools' or trends you need to respond to, or be part of?	
Technological	What technological changes are happening or likely that you need to consider? Are they direct or indirect in their impact? (E.g. given lockdown shifts, what are the relevant patterns in digital and mobile technology?)	

RESPECT Context Analysis Mapping



Certainty Spectrum

This is a simple tool to begin to explore your risk and change appetite. You might also find it useful if thinking about an organisation or person you are working with: where would they sit on this spectrum?

There are various forces in society and culture that might force many of us to think we either have to embrace change over tradition and things remaining the same, as it's a driver of markets and growth, or make us feel constrained in terms of innovation and pushed towards continuation of the old rather than the shock of the new. This exercise is not about what you think you *ought* to feel or think, but what you actually, even instinctively, do. I have no scientific basis for this tool, but I have seen organisational personalities in action many times, and this is a useful way to get into the discussion.

1. Place yourself on each continuum, by thinking about the questions below or discussing as a group.

Continuity – Change
Do you prefer things to basically stay the same, building on tradition and the ongoing flow of your work or programme, or do you prefer things always to be changing and work to introduce change by innovating constantly?
Specialism – Holism
Do you prefer working in identified specialism – either in roles or in what you do, or do you prefer integrating things and an holistic approach?
Predictability – Risk
Do you prefer to be able to predict what will happen, or are you happiest taking risks?
Adaption – Transformation
When you make changes do you prefer lots of small steps, or the great leap forward?

2. Think about the implications for your work. What might you need to pay particular attention to. What constraints or possibilities might your pattern create.

CONTINUITY	Do you prefer things to basically stay the same, building on tradition and the ongoing flow of your work or programme or do you prefer things always to be changing?	**CHANGE**
SPECIALISM	Do you prefer working in indentified specialisms, either in roles or in what you do, or do you prefer integrating things and breaking down silos, even when that brings more uncertainty?	**HOLISM**
PREDICTABILTY	Do you prefer to be able to predict what will happen, or are you happiest taking risks without knowing what might happen?	**RISK**
ADAPTION	When you make changes do you prefer lots of small steps, or the great leap forward, knock it down and start again mode?	**TRANSFORMATION**

Renewing purpose via a cheesy film trailer

Sometimes putting your purpose into a short simple statement can be tricky. Too often things like mission statements can seem really reductive, generic or inauthentic. I think that's because we tend to have such a rich sense of why we are doing things we rarely spell it out. Yet articulating your purpose can be really valuable to others, who can then engage with whatever you make or do with an understanding of your aims.

The movie trailer format is deeply rooted in the 'hero's journey' story form, as most clearly set out by Joseph Campbell, and there are many leadership development models implicitly or explicitly shaped by that form. A hero goes out on an adventure, finds old and new skills in order to win a decisive victory against challenges and temptations, and returns home transformed and ready to lead a different life because of that transformation. The form can be over-familiar, a bit tired, and its themes of explorers all too easily jump to outdated ideas of power, leadership and saviour syndrome. Stories give a shape to life it may or not have as we live it – which is something they have in common with plans, strategies and self-assessments, so I have decided to occasionally embrace that. Besides, playing with the format can be fun. Fun is allowed.

However – as I've argued earlier – the cultural sector is an odd, distorted, unequal shape, and this is partly because of an over-reliance on heroes. So try and be open to versions where you're not the hero, necessarily, but active in the story. Refuting heroic leadership doesn't mean becoming a passenger or observer: it can mean facilitating and working with others to fulfil your own and a collective purpose within a larger narrative or world. It can invite you to think about who you work alongside. There are other cycles and story forms from other cultures and genres, of course, but inconveniently I've yet to come up with a version that works as well as this in getting people to think about purpose. (Lots of collaborations have versions of the rom-com 'meet-cute'.)

The classic elevator pitch exercise is a common approach to this – summarising in 30-45 seconds what you do and why. This 'movie trailer purpose finder' is a variant on that, which always seems to lead to some insight, especially if people are comfortable enough in a group to have some fun with it.

The exercise is straightforward. It works best in groups, though can be done alone. If you're doing it alone, generate several different version, really stretching the form if you can.

1. Fill in the blanks in the following statement using just a few words, thinking about the particular situation or place you find yourself in, and what you need or want to do and why. It can help to have done some context or horizon scanning or scenario planning, but the important thing is to sum up what you are responding to and living with.

In a world/place/time/situation where [potential, needs or challenges]
We must be/become [new or developed state]
And [actions/missions – some specific verbs]
So that [change made and for/with/by whom]

2. Next, look for the core themes that emerge from the different versions and think about how you can express them in plain English. (People can look at you funny, if you talk in real life like a voiceover in a film trailer.) Does that help you get to a short, pithy statement of purpose you can bear to repeat for a few years? How does it fit with your current plans and statements? How would other people understand what you do and why, and who you hoped would gain? What are the themes different people have in common – and where are the divergences? What does that make you think? If there's a big gap between these trailers and what you currently do, you may need a change of tack.

3. It can also be helpful to dig into the middle section if you are doing this as part of planning and have some more time.

You might find these questions helpful:

- What do you need to keep hold of for the journey?
- Who can you invite to join you on this journey?
- What do you need to leave behind of your past self?
- What do you need to learn or build up?

CHAPTER FIVE
CREATIVE RESILIENCE AND RESISTANCE

The point:
- *Creative resilience explored and defined: the capacity of organisations and communities of people to be productive, valued and true to self-determined core purpose and identity. This may involve absorbing disturbance, adapting with integrity in response to changing circumstances and positively influencing the environment*
- *Eight characteristics of creative resilience: culture of shared purpose and values, predictable financial resources, strong networks, intellectual, human and physical assets, power and agency, leadership, management and governance, creative capacity, situation awareness*
- *Resilience of cultural institutions and creative communities (still) matters because things need to change whilst sustaining what works now*
- *Resilience as "a potentially radical practice of collective action and community-led resource building" (DeVerteuil and Golubchikov) that develops power and agency*

Some questions:
- *How do we cultivate a resilient ecology or ecosystem for arts and culture that can serve people well and equitably over lifetimes?*
- *Resilience is a contested term, how might you use it, and which applications would you resist?*
- *If creative resilience means exploiting imperfect options, what does that suggest for you?*

About creative resilience

In this chapter, I want to give an overview of some of the strands of resilience thinking I have found useful and set out my take on creative resilience. I see creative resilience as an adaptive basis of resistance that can help people stay healthy long enough to deliver on their mission and purpose, in a way which serves themselves and the broader ecology, and develops a more creative and resilient sector, too, by adapting to *and* resisting potentially damaging shocks and conditions, and positively influencing the environment.

Much of this chapter is an evolution of ideas and frameworks shared in *Making Adaptive Resilience Real,* the paper I researched and wrote for Arts Council England in 2010, during my final month as Executive Director for the North East and my first months of running Thinking Practice. So much has changed since then. The paper was written in early 2010 and published in July 2010, two months after the general election that brought a coalition of Tories and Lib Dems to power, kicking off a decade and counting of regressive austerity, the EU referendum, Brexit and much more including cuts to arts funding as well as local government funding, and the epic mishandling of a pandemic. The pandemic has also led to a massive reassessment of priorities in the cultural sector, accelerating patterns already ongoing over decades. More organisations see their roles within local communities and the civic realm as central to their cultural activity; more digital approaches are becoming central; and there is a far sharper focus on issues of equity, especially in relation to race, disability and class. And yet, because I was not so much responding to then-current data as looking to describe underlying models so that they could be understood, used and built on, much of what I said in *Making Adaptive Resilience Real* is still relevant and accurate. Evolving versions have been the basis of much of my work with organisations and sector bodies since. I still feel this is useful to those looking to create a culture that enables rather than disables, that shares its own tools as it makes them. I have, however, made changes to the models in the light of many, many conversations about adaptive resilience in different countries, and many responses to the work. The changes are primarily to better reflect the importance of agency, the way resilience can be part of positive change not just stubborn persistence, and the relationship to the political environment.

As I have often said since, it is misleading, or a sign of privilege, to talk of times as unprecedented, tough or complicated. Even the idea that the pandemic is unprecedented has a Eurocentric aspect to it. My interest in resilience was not primarily a response to austerity, certainly not an attempt to serve it. Poverty and structural injustice against women, people of colour, disabled people and working class people are not, sadly, new phenomena, although they may assume fresh shapes. Resilience is not, in my conception of it, a response to any individual government's policies so much as a way to (attempt to) deal with the existential conditions of living, especially – for me – of living within late capitalism which pokes you, sometimes subtly and sometimes less so, to monetise yourself before you respect yourself. This affects different

people differently. I have also drawn here on the paper I co-wrote with Tony Nwachukwu in 2011, looking at the role of diversity in building adaptive resilience, where we specifically focused on Black, Asian and disabled-led arts organisations. It became clear to us that marginalised and excluded groups draw on their own particular resourcefulness and creative capabilities to remain productive in the face of structural barriers and injustice. They draw on and serve particular community knowledge and assets. They understand and work with the nuances of lived experience. This has been underlined for me by projects looking at the barriers faced by disabled people in the cultural workforce, by young people from particular ethnic groups and by disabled young people. I now, therefore, put greater emphasis on the role of power and its process and structures within situations, to echo the terms from Chapter Four. A revised set of characteristics tries to reflect the importance of power and agency to act in a way that generates creative resilience, or even a sense of it, whilst acknowledging this is not equally distributed or enabled.

Neither should being resilient, personally, organisationally or as an ecosystem, or trying to be more so, necessarily indicate complicity with unhealthy systems. Increasingly I see resilience as the foundation of resistance and expression values, of creating more sensible collective futures, as well as resistance being an element of resilience. I explain this in more detail below, but it is perfectly summarised in a phrase Jess Thom used at a Creative People and Places conference: *Building Resilience Is An Act of Resistance*. This is a disabled artist's statement which chimes perfectly with the literature.

There are other areas where my thinking has developed and changed, based on my work with more than 200 cultural organisations of all sizes. Most visibly, I have substituted the word 'creative' for 'adaptive', as in creative resilience. I do this slightly reluctantly, having had to make an awkward point of emphasising 'adaptive' for 10 years when people just talked about resilience. Some suggested this term made for unease and an uncomfortable fit, but I did so to make the point that resilience is not about staying the same: it is about changing as you continue to serve your purpose. Several reviews of resilience which followed my own note this, approvingly, as it intimates more than stubborn survival, but still seem to conclude it's too much of a mouthful. I hope the word creative, for all its unhelpful ubiquity, is at least easier to say. It also, though, draws attention to the problem-solving, solution-conjuring aspect of resilience in the arts and culture ecosystem.

I change terms for three other reasons. First, one of the things I have seen in the work of so many cultural organisations, which I think I underplayed in that first paper, is that they change their environment as well as responding to it, and they do this through their creative and cultural practices. They make things happen. This goes beyond adaptive response to change or crisis, and is part of their role as cultural organisations: they are sometimes the disturbance, not the response to one. (Especially the positive sort of disturbance, although not always: there can be negative results too.)

Secondly, the creative impulse that drives cultural organisations needs to be seen as integral to their resilience instead of one being an add-on to the other. Creativity may be a driver of resilience, though that's not usually why people do it: they do it to bring something into the world, to bring people together, to play, to express something and so on. Your practice, business, organisation or network may not need to last for ever to these things, but it helps, if you can, to stay healthy while doing the work your purpose and mission dictates. So often I have seen the creativity of organisations – their programme, their ideas, their inventiveness, their connection to artists, partners and communities, their ways of looking at the world – increase their resilience in financial and support terms, but more importantly in terms of their networks and relationships: in terms of how much they are loved and valued by people. I have also seen that as resilience lessens, as organisations grow complacent or lose touch with their networks, so does the vibrancy of their creativity.

Thirdly, I want to frame adapting in healthy ways to changing circumstances as a creative process, not a managerial or administrative one, for cultural organisations and the sector as a whole, as for other businesses. It is one that happens most effectively in collaboration or as part of joint efforts rooted in our values. (A culture you might even say.) This has led to my current working definition of creative resilience, which I will share here before exploring some strands of resilience thinking I have found particularly useful:

Creative resilience is the capacity of organisations and communities of people to be productive, valued and true to self-determined core purpose and identity. This may involve absorbing disturbance, adapting with integrity in response to changing circumstances and positively influencing the environment.

The characteristics that tend to lead to creative resilience are as much ones

of a system, collective and communal, as they are properties of individual entities: resourcefulness, comprising a culture of shared purpose and values, predictable financial resources, strong networks and intellectual, human and physical assets, and creative capabilities, including power and agency, leadership, management and governance, creative capacity and situation awareness.

I will come back to this, but I share here so it can echo through, illuminate, or indeed rub up against your reading of what follows.

Why resilience (still) matters

I want to start by thinking about some of the reasons I still think resilience matters, beginning with this quote:

"We recognise that the seeming paradox of change and stability inherent in evolving systems is the essence of sustainable futures. We now know that to counteract the current pathology we need policies that are dynamic and evolutionary. We need policies that expect results that are inherently uncertain and explicitly address that uncertainty through active probing, monitoring and response. However, we cannot successfully implement these new policies because we have not learned the politics and we ignore the public."

This does not come from a cultural policy commentator hoping for a culture reset or a new normal or a bouncing back better post-Covid. It comes from the field of ecology, one of the founders of 'resilience thinking', C.S. 'Buzz' Holling.[1] This, and other comments from the same article such as "The fundamental paradox is that change is essential, and yet stability is necessary" led me into an interest in the ideas relating to resilience in ecological and social systems. That innovation might be driven *and* embedded by moving through cycles of growth, consolidation, release and reorganisation. Providing the opportunity to build resilience to events without becoming defensive or static seemed to open up conceptual and practical possibilities for arts policy and practice.

Resilience matters because things need to change whilst sustaining the best of how things are now. In 2020, the Covid-19 pandemic has shown the vulnerabilities, inequities and costs of the kind of cultural sector which has

evolved in the UK in the past, let's say, 60 years. The combination of funded, commercial and socially-focused uses of arts and culture has led to a sector which super-serves the educated and the middle-classes, makes it hard for people from beyond those groups to work in them, let alone enjoy them, and in which the precarity and un(der)paid labour of freelancers and junior staff is baked-in. Some artists win big, many will earn less than £10,000 per year from their artwork. Freelancers also face low pay and lack of support. The creativity and culture of people who don't often engage with either funded or commercial cultural activity is often overlooked or downplayed. Hierarchies of culture put certain sorts of music-making or writing in different boxes, say, with strict demarcations between professional and amateur, which bear little relation to actual earnings, or to the large amount of creativity shared informally, online or in local scenes or cultures. The pandemic lockdowns have been devastating on many people's livelihoods, but they have also inspired the kind of considerations of what's needed for a healthy ecology I was, in my own way, groping towards in my first writings about resilience. (One academic paper accused me of 'subterfuge' in that first try: this under-estimates my clumsiness and over-estimates my commitment to the status quo.[2])

The pandemic has been like someone turning the big light on at a teenage party: suddenly we can all see what's been going on. My question, though, remains what it was in 2010: how do we best cultivate and sustain a resilient ecology or ecosystem for arts and culture in this country that can serve people well and equitably over lifetimes, and so has to be about more than sustainable financial models, whilst including those? How do we respond to the shock of the wakeup call, the big light blinding us, without stuffing everything into bin bags in a panic and then having to rebuild or rebuy some things later? These are ethical and practical questions, not ones of definitional debate. My interest remains practical, for all I have – gratefully – drawn from theory and academic thinking.

For me creative resilience is important as a way of thinking that goes beyond immediate outputs to lasting benefit and assets. Many of us in the arts focus our attentions and energies on the immediate, and thinking long-term can sometimes actually be counter-productive for individual artworks. (Spare us the poet concerned with posterity.) But for local communities, or communities of interest or identity, often more rooted in place than artists, the long-lasting

resilience of cultural institutions and a creative community can be more powerful and transformational than any single show, exhibition or work – indeed they make places those individual transformations can take root.

Take the example of a festival or one-off event. A festival that happens once or twice can provide some unforgettable inspiration for those that were there. That's not nothing. But it's history that makes the significance. In fact history makes the short-lived nature of the event both romantic and somehow integral – designed you might say. In the language of ecological resilience such a cultural happening is not the environment that needs to manage its vulnerabilities, but the disturbance to which everyone else must respond. There are countless examples from arts history: from the Armoury Show in New York to the Royal Festival of 1951 to Sensation (founding exhibition of the Young British Artists) to the Sex Pistols at the Free Trade Hall Manchester.

We also need, however, other arts events that become part of the world, think longer term and become transformational in other ways. A festival that happens for 30 years starts to have a cumulative influence on local people, giving audiences the chance to try things, giving children the chance to grow up and take on roles they've aspired to, giving artists the chance to explore their practice, creating relationships across the world that are impossible on a one-off basis. Of course, it can't do that if it stays exactly the same: it will need to adapt, to incorporate its own successful experiments and those of others, respond to its funding environment and to the changing population of a place, and so on. But if it lasts, it creates its own future whilst making its own history.

Resilience is a word which is used in so many contexts, and those uses and contexts have multiplied massively. There are now hundreds of books, many of them focusing on individual resilience under pressure, some with more explicit references to 'grit' or synonyms, many about bouncing back, or bouncing back better. The term has become all too familiar. And yet, I would argue the ideas can still be useful for thinking about individuals, organisations, and sectors operating at risk and under pressure. Looking for how you can maximise return from your work, your intellectual property, your earned income, and so on, could to some extent go with that flow of marketisation and privatisation which is so damaging in so many ways. However, in the

words of Jim Beirne, when describing Live Theatre's approach to income generation to *The Guardian*'s Charlotte Higgins. "It's just a tool to deliver what we do. Of course we have to be robust about what we stand for and what our values are. If we didn't do this, what the fuck else would we do?"[3]

You may not want to think about resilience, but you may want to draw on it to resist, as Jim Beirne's words hint. Thinking about resilience might even look a bit boring to those who prefer their culture raggedly romantic, but it could be better than vulnerability or loss of purpose, closing your organisation, getting what your parents or friends think is a 'proper job', or stopping serving the people you work with and for. (Although those may all be perfectly reasonable things to do at some point. No need to be a martyr to creative resilience.) This aspect to creative resilience thinking and developing consciously within that framing involves adapting the dominant system not submitting to it. I find the French sociologist Michael de Certeau's distinction between strategy and tactics useful here, for what in his terms is a tactic of bricolage, or making do with what's to hand – improvising within the dominant structure, as a taxi driver might do to find a route through a road system he does not control. He refers to people making "innumerable and infinitesimal transformations of and within the dominant cultural economy in order to adapt it to their own interests and their own rules", which is certainly something I recognise from arts and cultural organisations with which I have worked.[4]

Critiques of resilience as a desirable state or process cluster around the idea that it supports austerity and marketisation, and turns what should be system issues of risk, safety or protection into matters of individual responsibility and even morality: that it is above all else about maintenance. All of these are not without elements of truth, it feels to me, or at least the risk of becoming truth if one approaches resilience in a certain way. However, I am also drawn to other more recent conceptions of resilience which see it as pre-existing neoliberalism and supporting autonomy and agency, the heart of action and creativity. That the forces of capital want resilient precarious workers does not, in itself, mean resilient workers are unhealthy for a more human and planet-friendly system, if they can use that resilience to build creative communities that can move beyond market forces – communities with whom those forces are much less concerned.

It is undoubtedly the case that resilience became both a buzzword and a policy

priority at a time when the government in the UK was intent on shrinking the state and public spending, and when globalisation and international capitalism was intent on what it's always been intent on: making the rich richer. Jack Newsinger and Paula Serafini argued that the idea, as taken up by arts funders and to a certain degree in my first paper, was "a solution to the problem of austerity that supports austerity itself".[5] Philosopher Mark Neocleous argued that "Resilience wants acquiescence, not resistance. Not a passive acquiescence, for sure, in fact quite the opposite. But it does demand that we use our actions to accommodate ourselves to capital and the state, and the secure future of both, rather than to resist them."[6]

But resilience was also, at the same time, being conceived as potentially connecting to political movements or moments in which groups could claim autonomy and build self-determination. Examples are found in post-disaster developments in New Orleans and Haiti[7] which have echoes in arts and culture, especially where networks have come together to establish new norms – e.g. in ways of working with freelancers or disabled creatives – that enhance "the capacity of organisations and communities of people to be productive, valued and true to self-determined core purpose and identity", to quote my definition again. This is increasingly articulated in ways which connect resilience and community explicitly, as well as other kinds of network connections. The interest can be seen in a special issue of *Research in Drama Education* on resilience. Sarah Bartley positions the work of two contrasting People's Theatres: Brighton People's Theatre and Slung Low in Leeds, in relation to resilience, delivered through, in the latter case, a praxis which "positions the residents of Holbeck as co-curators of this cultural space and reaffirms the site as a community resource to be utilised in whatever way the community wishes."[8] This is very much the thinking I will explore in Chapter Seven through the primary lens of 'leadership'. Simon Casson of queer arts producer Duckie, in an interview about the resilience of this almost 30 year-old organisation, concludes "I think we've made ourselves resilient because we care about who our communities are." One of the other staff members, Emmy Minton, adds "We're resilient because we're together and we work together, not because we're individuals."[9]

This has hallmarks of what Geoff DeVerteuil and Oleg Golubchikov, academics who have articulated a version of "resilience redeemed", call "a potentially radical practice of collective action and community-led resource

building". I find this valuable despite all the reasons to avoid 'resilience' as a term.[10] They see resilience as a metaphor for change, not against change, and call for what they describe as "critical resilience", which develops and sustains dynamic alternatives to marketisation, and ensures survival as a precursor and precondition for transformation, social justice and greater equality. This idea of resilience which supports the kind of positive agency which can move beyond the market, into a shared or common wealth and health, remains my primary concern in describing the factors relating to creative resilience. I advocate for a sector that creates alternatives, that can host others to do so, and that can be stronger and more agile if creative resilience is designed-in and worked on purposefully. As DeVerteuil has said, it "should impart a sense of adaptive capacity, a pro-activity and potential for learning – it is produced and earned rather than being an inherent property".

The tools and frameworks here are very much designed with that in mind. It is what I see in many of the organisations I have looked at. I have shifted from the word adaptive to creative partly to stress that resilience is not simply responsive, and partly to reflect the bringing into being of something new and stronger through resilience. I believe it applies to sectors beyond the creative or cultural industries.

Resilience thinking

My primary focus remains the use of the word derived from ecological and social system theory, beginning with that developed by C.S. Hollings and associates within the Resilience Alliance[11] and set out in *Resilience Thinking* by Brian Walker and David Salt. My thinking is also influenced particularly by Katrina Brown's work in *Resilience, Development and Global Change*[12] which I first came across when we both spoke at a Creative Kernow gathering of the creative sector at the Eden project in Cornwall, the perfect venue for a conference about the resilience of cultural ecologies.

Creative resilience is more important as a property of a system than of individual elements. Walker and Salt define resilience as "The capacity of a system to absorb disturbance and re-organise while undergoing change so as to still retain essentially the same function, structure, identity and feedback."[13] Another definition relates it to three factors: "the magnitude of shock that the

system can absorb and remain within a given state; the degree to which the system is capable of self-organisation, and the degree to which the system can build capacity for learning and adaptation." The ideas of resilience are based on the adaptive cycle, set out below, and on the theory that cycles at different scales connect and are in fact 'nested', like Russian dolls, but with each affecting change in the other. This is referred to by Hollings as "panarchy".

Change is therefore normal and necessary, and that to maintain any system in a fixed, seemingly efficient or optimal state contains risks, and can ultimately be counter-productive. As Walker and Salt put it, "There is no sustainable 'optimal' state of an ecosystem, a social system, or the world. It is an illusion, a product of the way we look at and model the world. It is unattainable, in fact… it is counter-productive, and yet it is a widely pursued goal." Brown's summary also makes clear that resilience is a dynamic not a fixed or achieved state: "Resilience concepts bring recognition first that uncertainty is part of how 'systems' work and that we should expect the unexpected; second that systems are inherently dynamic and there are multiple links and feedbacks between processes and changes; third, that there are important temporal, societal and spatial cross-scale interactions, and fourth that multiple stressors and drivers act on systems and interact, sometimes with synergistic results." As I've said to many clients, the best way to keep achieving what you are is to not try to stay the same. This is not defeatism, but the beginnings of resolve.

One often overlooked element of balance or proportion's importance to adaptive resilience is how much ability to respond to disturbance there is in your human, financial and physical capacity or reserves. Reserves, as we've seen during the pandemic, can be crucial to not just survival, but to adapting how you work, to introducing new ways of working and supporting those you work with and for. Building reserves is difficult and requires a clear focus. But being efficient in a narrow sense leads to elimination of anything seen as wasteful or redundant – keeping only those things that are directly and immediately beneficial. This however can diminish creative resilience and lead to vulnerability in the event of disturbance. (It is important to note that disturbance does not always come in the shape of trouble or bad news – it might come in the form of a hit show or a big contract that requires adaptation of the organisation, a skilled new team member, an opportunity to work somewhere new or to adopt new technology.)

Getting rid of all redundancy can diminish flexibility and responsiveness, and have a toll on individual resilience in organisations, by encouraging poor conditions and long hours, for instance. There is good evidence the cultural sector pre-Covid had insufficient slack. Touring theatre and dance companies, for instance, reported pre-Covid that as venue staffing has reduced, they now have fewer people to deal with, making things more inefficient, and sometimes reducing the ability to service or market their shows well. Stripping back may be crucial for survival in lean times. But cutting back can cost you when a disturbance or opportunity comes along. You need 'unrestricted' capacity for change and to be able to respond to opportunities for growth. So I do not mean redundancy as in making people redundant, but 'slack', some human, financial and physical resource that is not fully stretched 100% of the time.

We all know organisations - pre-Covid even - where people simply cannot meet you for a month as they are too busy. Lack of time was a constant theme of away days and performance review meetings. The best thing, people often said, about such days or conferences was the chance to reflect away from the pressures of the day-to-day. But the creative, adaptive and resilient organisation does not design a programme that has to be delivered at full tilt all the time by all its people. Even as I type this I see sceptical eyebrows raised and hear exasperated if not exhausted spluttering. But no matter how much pressure is applied, this is not resilient behaviour and we have to call it, pointing out the risks involved and the long-term damage done. Make time. Make space. Or store up problems. (At least this is what I have learnt to tell myself.)

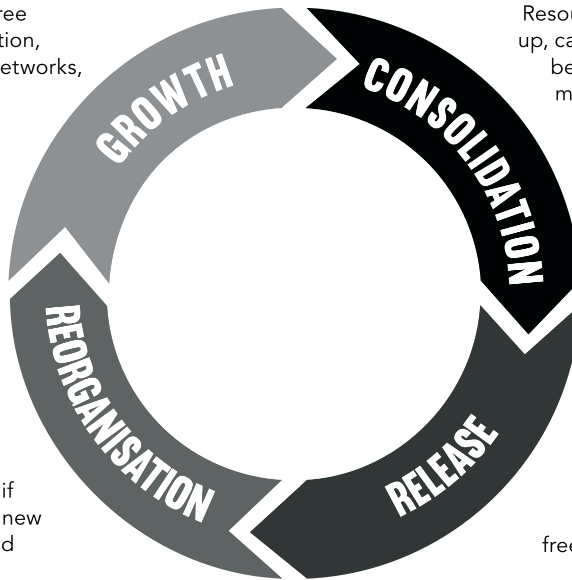
This was one of the lessons people said they learnt in the 2020 lockdowns. As I write in 2021 I see the same patterns re-emerge, albeit transformed into Zoom fatigue in place of travel and commute fatigue, and feel a little less hopeful for change. I remind myself, however, of the imagination and commitment shown by organisations as they served people during the first lockdown, and how it demonstrates the accuracy of social scientist David Stark when he commented that "resilience is not just having extra resources held as redundant slack (at the outset, quantitatively more but not qualitatively different) nor is it suddenly being granted more resources externally. Instead it is an internal ability to acknowledge and utilize what was there but had not been already recognized as a resource."[14] This has been important in later lockdowns, when stamina was also an important factor.

Individual resilience is about the strength and ability to carry on in the face of trauma or difficulty, facing "stress at a time and in a way that allows self-confidence and social competence to increase through mastery and appropriate responsibility."[15] Development psychologists have looked at how resilience is developed and maintained in children and adults. One study of children on Hawaii's island of Kauai resulted in the identification of four central characteristics of resilient children: an active approach toward solving life's problems, a tendency to frame what happens to them constructively, an ability to gain others' positive attention, and an ability to use faith to maintain a positive vision of a meaningful life.[16] This area has seen massive and problematic growth.

(Occasionally, search engines misguidedly throw my name the way of people looking for resilience training for teachers, lecturers, students and other pressurised workers, giving me a window into what is obviously a growth market. Self-care has become a key skill, but as I argued in the work around leaders with the Creative People and Places programme, the responsibility lies not primarily with individuals but with the stewards of the system they work in. It's not the teachers and lecturers who should be doing resilience training, but the managers and Vice Chancellors, and it should focus on organisations, systems and cultures, not individuals. If anyone wants to invite me to talk to senior leadership teams about shaping resilient organisations and workplaces that don't damage your workers, just let me know. Close brackets, end of ad.)

In this light, I have chosen not to concentrate on the personal resilience aspects of 'doing the tightrope', beyond the section on sustainable livelihoods. This may be a weakness, or at least a missed opportunity to really make a training offer, but I want to put the emphasis in this chapter on the broader structures and systems. The chapter on Multiplying Leadership also contains some helpful tips for looking after oneself while being creatively resilient and multiplying the voices of others. But just as the great poet Adrian Mitchell forbade his poems from being used in relation to exams, such was his hatred of rote learning, I should probably ban resilience trainers from using anything here. My interest here is not in making individual artists strong enough to fit in with injustice, more for them to be resilient enough to work outside it, turn it on itself or work to end it. (I am making this available under a Creative Commons license so I can't stop you, but please refrain from using this book in the way a bad Head of HR might.)

The adaptive cycle



Central to an understanding of resilience in a systems sense is the adaptive cycle. There are various depictions of this four phase cycle and the figure above is a simplified version. (It is often depicted as a loop, as below.) I have simplified for the sake of clarity and analysis, but inevitably some richness is lost, not least the image of the adaptive cycle as a rollercoaster, a metaphor that several interviewees used when I first researched this. I have also adapted the terms generally used in the literature, preferring 'consolidation' to 'conservation', for instance, to avoid unwanted resonances with conservation of heritage assets.

The cycle has four phases, although an organisation, especially a larger one, may demonstrate characteristics of all four phases simultaneously, and that movement between phases is sometimes not as linear as the figure suggests. Most organisations and sectors, though, will tend to move over time through recurring cycles containing the following four phases:

Growth: characterised by innovation and high demand for product/services and resources to meet demand, resources move around as a result. Duplication of activity, organisations or staffing may arise. Networks spread very rapidly, often informally, again with some duplication.

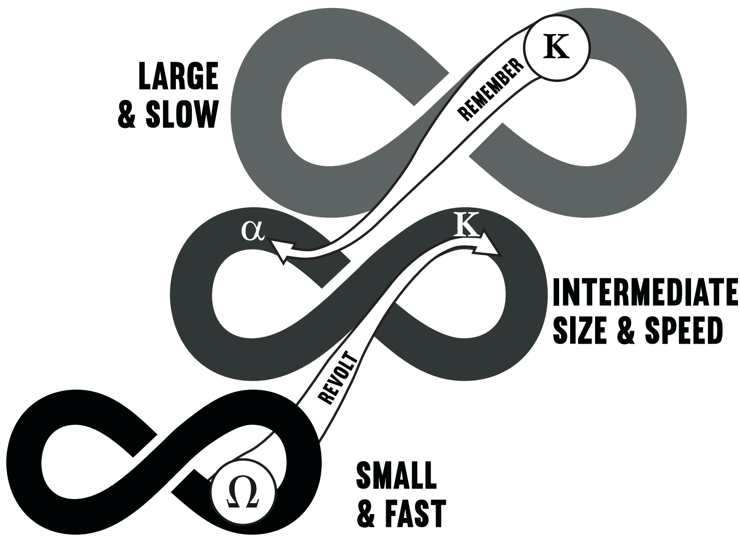
Consolidation: Over time, resources become more fixed, both internally in terms of staffing and physical asset use, but also externally in terms of demand becoming predictable. Capacity is built, in terms of structures of organisations and networks, and things become more 'efficient'. Budgets are more fixed. During the late consolidation phase systems can become vulnerable to unforeseen disturbance if either too fixed or not paying enough attention to their operating environment. Some may fall into 'the rigidity trap' of hanging on to structures and ways of working which need to adapt to changes in the environment, or internally.

Release: This phase usually begins when a disturbance, or set of disturbances, creates the need or opportunity for change. This may be internally or externally driven and either seemingly positive or negative (e.g. departure of long-standing CEO, funder having to cut grants and move to commissioning, a hit show leading to demands for more touring). Resources are necessarily freed up and can be reallocated. Often this phase has an urgency to it and even if not it is usually quite rapid, as it is a less productive phase for any system. New ideas and forms often emerge in this phase.

Reorganisation: Release leads into renewal and redesign which creates new potential and stimulates fresh innovation, which also carries with it some of the learning from the previous cycle. Although this and the release phase (sometimes called the 'back loop') can feel unsettling, even traumatic, they are also creative and full of possibility. This often then moves back into growth or consolidation, with the paradigms created during the release and renewal phases shaping the next cycle.

Within larger organisations, versions of the adaptive cycle take place simultaneously within their organisation – in different teams or areas of work, or artistically and commercially. It is common for cultural leaders to talk of consciously driving change through their organisations – in essence, introducing disruption to avoid becoming complacent in a prolonged consolidation phase.

No system is an island, however, and the resilience literature suggests one can extend this model, by exploring how different cycles are interconnected.



Adaptive Cycles within a panarchy, indicating cross scale influences. Holling, C. S. and L. H. Gunderson 2002. "Resilience and adaptive cycles."

As illustrated above, cycles of different scales are not separate, and not simply connected, but 'nested in a hierarchy across time and space'[17]. This potentially describes how things change in the arts over time and also from place to place[18]. Experimentation and innovation occur periodically, but are incorporated into the nested hierarchies which tend to remain relatively stable even when changing. As Gunderson puts it, "in essence, larger and slower components of the hierarchy provide the memory of the past and the distant to allow recovery of smaller faster adaptive cycles."

The idea of linked scales can seem hierarchical, but gives a conceptual framework for the way new creative and heritage practice moves from individual practitioners or groups of them, and small, marginal organisations to, in time, influence seemingly monolithic national institutions, and then influence the whole system afresh from there. (Including becoming something to resist.) What's more, this framework links that kind of adaptation not only to outputs – the art or engagements or learning programmes – but also to creative resilience, making it clear that without that process of embedding innovation, the system as a whole becomes more vulnerable to unexpected disturbance.

Arts or Cultural Ecology

This idea of different systems interrelating, with different systems changing at different speeds, and playing different roles in the larger system, leads us into a discussion of the arts ecology.

At the centre of my schematic version of an arts ecology when I wrote *Making Adaptive Resilience Real* was the individual, in particular the artist. I would now frame that not so much around the individuals as around creative practice, the work that artists do, along with each other and with others working in arts and culture, including non-professionals and communities. I would position local communities much closer to the centre of the ecology, too, and describe the interaction between the elements as the defining factor for those shaping the power structures and processes, such as funding, to pay attention to. A number of questions might be asked to assess the health of the ecology for cultural organisations:

- Where do they primarily sit in terms of geography, specialism and stakeholders?
- Is there a healthy spread across all parts so that the ecology can be productive as a whole?
- Are there gaps or duplications?
- Is there adequate diversity of function, approach and aims?
- Are there particular parts well served by others, or parts where investment is especially needed?
- How are the factors affecting institutions such as national theatres or galleries likely to impact on the way in which smaller organisations operate, and vice versa?
- How healthy are the connections and flows between different parts of the ecology?
- How are the different parts of the ecology impacting upon and being affected by economic systems?
- What changes are happening in society that might have impacts within the ecology?

The idea that certain parts of the sector may adapt at different speeds and contribute different things to the adaptive cycle offers new ways to conceive the role of, for instance, innovation and infrastructure.

Without either romanticising or patronising individual artists, it is important that policies to increase organisational resilience do not over-determine the creativity at the heart of the arts ecology. Also vital are the role and position of cultural players in their locality and its systems. What happens in a town or city – economics, population change, transport, etc – impacts on the cultural sector, and vice versa. This is explored more in Chapter Six. What happens in the arts or in an arts venue changes the city. What happens in the city changes what happens in the venue, and in the lives of those that use it. For cultural organisations to properly embed themselves into localities, they must understand the connections and how the place works. The greater connectivity generated drives change and protects against unforeseen disturbance by networking the organisation. This suggests that 'place' agendas need to be highly sophisticated and responsive. A nuanced and flexible strategy allowing for local and hyperlocal variations can support artists, organisations, local authorities and other local partners to form sustained partnerships and their own agency, preferable to the one-size-fits-all and controlling approach too often seen from that funder.

I want to draw attention to two very different conceptions of the ecology of culture of the arts, of which there are many. One, by John Holden, was part of the massive Cultural Value Inquiry project run by the Arts and Humanities Research Council, the other is a framework developed by a now disbanded group of US researchers led by David Moss and Createquity. Whilst Holden's focuses on the relationships between different modes and actors involved in cultural production, consumption and reception[19], Createquity usefully emphasises the results of the ecology. I want to draw attention to both, not for reasons of completeness (I'm missing lots of others out) but because the two approaches combined seem to sum up what is important to me in terms of why we should think ecologically. The idea of an ecology is useful for my argument insofar as it draws attention to the bigger picture through paying attention to the individuals, groups and organisations that through their connections make up the sector, thereby enabling the kind of agency, co-creation and social uses described in Chapters Five and Six. Thus the issues of creative resilience and productive life for an individual theatre company are intertwined with the health of the theatre sector, as are the livelihoods and life conditions of set designers and actors, which are intertwined with the health of local communities and national cultures. To quote a phrase from Richard Powers's eco-novel, *The Overstory,* "Everything in the forest is the forest". That

does not mean everything has to stay as it is or keep growing forever: cycles of birth, growth, die back, planting or management are necessary for the longevity of the forest if not every individual tree or animal within it. This is not an argument for survival of the fittest, but for creative adaptation and for attention to what is maintained and what is not, what thrives and what does not.

Holden describes three cultures interacting across communities and industrial sub-sectors: public or funded, homemade and commercial. He suggests that the three are increasingly converging and becoming interrelated, but notes the lack of evidence and research about exactly how. The ecological view, though, allows for considering the social, economic and meaning-making aspects simultaneously, or in relation to each other. The flows of money and people are known in the stories of the sector – something seen in arguments to the Treasury over funding in every Spending Review, and most recently very apparent in arguments for support during the Covid-19 crisis – but not tracked or identified in detail. This can lead to a narrow emphasis on the financial aspects of resilience. For some the idea of ecology remains a metaphor more than an actuality in which one can with any confidence intervene. Numbers are felt to be more concrete. (Even though money is very much a metaphor.) Holden finds the metaphorical branching out from ecology a beneficial side-effect, relating ideas such as emergence, interdependencies, networks, convergence (things growing up alike/connected) and system fragility to the creative and artistic process, how works are received over time, how 'schools' come together and so on.

Createquity developed a definition based more on what they described as the collective good, centred on outcomes in terms of benefit to people such as improving lives, and on people, not the institutions through which they work. The health of the ecosystem in their view is the extent to which it maximises the net benefit for all individuals in the system today and in the future, which they suggest is likely to flow from more equitable access to opportunity. They define a healthy arts ecosystem as one where "Each human being today and in the future has an opportunity to participate in the arts at a level suited to that person's interest and skill", a practical application of a rights-based approach.[20]

Creative Resilience and Resistance

There are three common versions of resilience: absorbing shocks, bouncing back from shocks and positive adaptability to shocks. These might be thought of as 'You can't knock me down', 'I get knocked down, but I get back up again' and 'I'll change my style so you can't land a meaningful punch, and if you do I'll use the force against you'. I want to draw attention to a fourth dimension I think fruitful for the cultural and community sectors, which I have tried to reflect in my definitions and descriptions: resilience as creative resistance.

This idea, as mentioned earlier, can be seen in such different perspectives as the artist Jess Thom, Tourette's Hero, who says from her perspective: "Building resilience is an act of resistance", and the academic Katrina Brown who says, from her research into disaster zones and resilience in global development: "Considering resistance as an element of resilience necessitates that power be explicitly examined. Above all it puts agency at the heart of resilience."

Brown describes "resistance" is one of three central aspects of resilience, alongside rootedness and resourcefulness.[21] Her definition highlights what she calls the contested nature of the struggle for agency: "the capacity of people to withstand external forces and actually shape their own strategies – strength, self-determination, agency and power." Rootedness is important in Brown's community-focused version of resilience as it highlights place and the socially, geographically and (implicitly) historically situated nature of resilience. (What boosts resilience in one place and time may not do the same elsewhere, or in a different cultural context.) Resourcefulness covers the capacities and agency to shape change. These are all aspects which can be applied to the cultural sector, and which are reflected in different ways in the eight characteristics I set out below.

There are other important aspects to highlight from Brown's work, and to acknowledge as influential on my own thinking. It stresses, as do the complementary models of the cultural ecology briefly described earlier, that creative resilience involves capacities or capabilities, processes or behaviours *and* the outcomes, which can be seen in my discussion in Chapters Six and Seven on multiplying leadership and co-creation. Brown stresses the importance not of self-reliance – often present in what you might call 'bootstrap resilience'

images – but of self-determination. The development of autonomy through mutual aid has been one of the welcome responses to the pandemic and of actions inspired by Black Lives Matter.

Any autonomy does, however, sit in the vulnerability context, which is not equally distributed, arising in part from social (political) processes. As Jones, O'Brien and others have shown, artists and creative practitioners may need to be resilient not to shocks as much as to the system itself. Creative resilience therefore has to make something new, or make something new happen, not simply cope with a bad situation. I want to emphasis this: there is uncreative resilience for individual bodies – e.g. the emptying of public spaces to those who cannot afford to pay, to be replaced with far fewer and far more privileged people who may make more of a contribution to the bottom line – and it is damaging to the outcomes of a properly creative resilience approach.

Part of how the walkers on the tightrope do this is through informal, unlegislated tactics. These fit into the everyday forms of resilience Brown observes in communities facing disaster. Another writer, Anne Masten, calls this sort of resilience "ordinary magic", a phrase which has echoes for me of Francois Matarasso's "regular marvels" of community arts. It is connected to communities, and questions of who holds or assumes power and agency themselves. Faced with disturbance and shock, community resilience often takes three forms: regrouping or redeveloping in response to change; resistance; and taking action together to shape the factors affecting them and interrogate power – who holds it and on what basis, what they do with it and in whose interests, and to whom they are or feel accountable, to adapt some questions first posed by Tony Benn.

It is this last I hope we see more of in the cultural sector, and which I think the framework of creative resilience can be helpful in promoting, with a greater emphasis on power and agency.

Eight Characteristics Of Creatively Resilient Cultural Organisations And Sectors

One of the parts of *Making Adaptive Resilience Real* and the subsequent *The Role Of Diversity In Building Adaptive Resilience*, co-written with Tony Nwackukwu, which people found most useful, and which I have used with many organisations, sectoral networks and funders since, was the set of "eight characteristics of resilient arts organisations and sectors". In a special edition of *Artswork*, the journal of the Community Arts Network South Australia, devoted to responses to the first of those papers, Nick Hughes from Restless Dance in Adelaide describes using the eight characteristics to look at his company, and ends by saying it's a "valuable resource" and that "one of the best aspects of the theory is that it changes the language and the mindset used to examine a performing arts company. It encourages you to see it as a moving and interacting entity; as an organism rather than a plan or a picture." This is exactly how I hoped people would use that framework. I want now to present a fresh version which places more weight on the role of power and agency within creative resilience – as Jo Caust suggested I needed to do in that same special edition, and as others have done since.

This section draws on both available literature in ecological and business thinking and on the characteristics repeatedly observed in organisations and interviews with people working in them.

My own definition of resilience has evolved into the following:

Creative resilience is the capacity of organisations and communities of people to be productive, valued and true to self-determined core purpose and identity. This may involve absorbing disturbance, adapting with integrity in response to changing circumstances and positively influencing the environment.

I have identified eight characteristics, in two sets of four, which can be described as relating to resourcefulness and creative capabilities, that will tend to help organisations and sectors build this capacity. Some are more within their gift than others, and this set of characteristics acknowledges, and encourages assessment of, the shaping influence of power and the operational environment – the vulnerability context and power processes and structures described earlier in relationship to livelihoods – which can enable or constrain.

Creative resilience sits within a complex web of limits and enablers. I have found the idea of conversational agency, as described by David R Gibson, a useful one when thinking about both organisations and sectors.[22] He suggests that agency in conversations comes from negotiating constraints and norms in order to pursue "idiosyncratic interests and objectives", and that looseness and flexibility of the constraints are important. Success, though, is always dependent on others and the environment. Gibson says, in a phrase which makes me think of many of the best cultural leaders I have known, that "the most agentic people are those who readily exploit imperfect options though this means abandoning the inflexible pursuit of pre-conceived objectives". Creative resilience means exploiting imperfect options, in part because groups of people – whether in organisations, sectors, ecologies or communities – operate within a broader social and political reality. This needs to be assessed and designed into consideration of creative resilience – not, I stress again, so you can go along with the constraints, but so you can resist them.

The eight characteristics that tend towards creative resilience for organisations and sectors, operating in the realms of 'outside' in culture and 'beyond' in the world are as follows.

Resourcefulness
Culture of shared purpose and values
Predictable financial resources
Strong networks
Intellectual, human and physical assets

Creative Capabilities
Power and agency
Leadership, management and governance
Creative capacity
Situation awareness

Organisations and sectors need *both* resourcefulness and creative capabilities to be resilient over time, although they may not necessarily all need all of them at all times. Strong leadership skills alone will not deliver resilience, for instance: they could be undermined by a lack of financial flexibility or

silo working and lack of networks. Equally, an awareness of vulnerabilities without a strong culture of shared purpose, made real by organisational memory, might lead to mission drift and loss of purpose.

A blend of change and continuity is essential for resilience. Without change, driven by innovation, networks and the evolving environment, organisations and sectors risk falling into the Rigidity Trap. There is, therefore, a threat with simplistically maximising the efficiency of any organisation or system: it tends to inflexibility and vulnerability in the face of change. Without continuity of purpose, there is simply persistent activity.

The following table sets out what those eight characteristics might look like in creative resilient organisations, and also expands on this to illustrate how this framework – diagnostic rather than prescriptive – might apply to sectors or sub-sectors in the arts.

CHARACTERISTICS	WHAT YOU MIGHT SEE IN ORGANISATIONS	WHAT YOU MIGHT SEE IN A SECTOR/ SUB-SECTOR
RESOURCEFULNESS		
Culture of shared purpose and values rooted in organisational memory and diverse perspectives	• Decision-making is actively influenced by clearly defined and articulated vision and purpose emerging from the history and culture of the organisation • Anything outside core purpose taken on very consciously and after due reflection: mission-drift is avoided, although the mission may evolve with new inputs • Purpose and values are shared and understood externally as well as internally – by partners and audiences • Diverse perspectives and shared reflection, sometimes decision-making, ensure freshness, new ideas and connection to others • An open, transparent culture includes a diversity of committed views and input from all levels of the organisation, stakeholders and partners	• A strong, consensual 'story' emerges of the nature and impact of the sector, reflecting a diversity of voices from people of many backgrounds • Professional standards emerge, either informally or formally managed and shared through shared reflection and mentoring • Unions or other industry groups speak authoritatively on behalf of the sector • Mentoring is common, and new voices are encouraged, supported and listened to • The culture includes people of all kinds, and attention is paid to those at risk of marginalisation due to societal factors • Sector can acknowledge both strengths and weaknesses and debate difference productively and transparently
Predictable financial resources derived from a robust business model	• A clear understanding of how the organisation generates income and creates value for others (i.e. a business model) connects activity, resources, customers and revenue streams • A range of reliable income streams, derived from a diversity of activities,	• A diversity of organisations and types of organisations providing services/activity to its different audiences, who are prepared to regularly provide revenue in exchange – be that public sector funding, private sector sponsorship or philanthropy,

	markets, audiences and funders • Activity either relates directly to the core purpose of the organisation or is strategically and consciously designed to enable that • Budget includes income derived from exploitable assets (e.g. merchandise, intellectual property, consultancy fees) and expenditure relating to creation of current and future assets • A portfolio of strategic options for increase/decrease minimises over-reliance on individual income streams • Some financial and resource flexibility or reserve is retained to respond to the unexpected and to invest in future development	or ticket/earned income • These organisations form a supply network, and also provide a networked environment in which talent and skills are developed and extended in equitable ways • Supply and demand are in healthy equilibrium, providing good revenue income and good returns • A range of specialist financial providers and financial mechanisms including grant-makers support sector revenue and capital investment needs
Strong networks (internal/external)	• Internal: • Cross-team working amongst a diverse workforce is common and effective, and no unnecessary silos • Flexibility in roles is encouraged • Networking by staff at all levels is encouraged and supported • Formal or informal platforms for ideas to be shared and nurtured in place • External: • Organisation works in collaboration with others in its locality (and sometimes regionally, nationally and	• Individual parts of the sector communicate well and collaborate regularly, in accessible and enabling forms that include those at risk of marginalisation elsewhere • Those involved in networks feel time invested yields appropriate returns • Networking leads to greater creativity, reach and efficiency, greater knowledge of situations and patterns, and to a stronger advocacy voice • The sector is a powerful advocate for its activities and

	internationally) and art form, and is part of wide information networks • Insight is built with broad networks including diverse groups and communities and used to challenge established thinking • Staff at all levels are involved in appropriate networks and collaborations • Networks are targeted strategically to make the organisation vital to other systems – e.g. local arts/political/social networks	creates new customers and supporters for its work • Networks also provide challenge, innovation and ultimately improvements in practice • Interdependencies are increasingly acknowledged and self-managed, competition and collaboration co-exist
Intellectual, human and physical assets	• Organisation makes best use, including commercial/social where applicable, of intangible assets e.g. staff skills, intellectual property (IP) such as repertoire or data, relationships and physical assets e.g. buildings and equipment • Budgets show planned investment into the creation and exploitation of new assets (e.g. new digital platforms, new repertoire, merchandise) • By-products of primary arts activity are exploited beyond event (e.g. from learning materials to T-shirts to DVDs of performances) • IP may be shared with others to be exploited in collaboration with better placed partners • Spaces and facilities are often shared with others, with either in-kind or financial income • There is a diverse range of approaches, markets and offers,	• Sector has the assets required to do its work – e.g. building and digital infrastructures, and there is good sectoral knowledge of what is held, shared openly • Assets are used for collective/sectoral benefit as well as individual or organisational gain • Networking of assets is enabled by appropriate collaborative or collective financial planning by industry bodies • Income from artistic assets, in the form of repertoire or collection-based IP is maximised, and made possible by appropriate legal and commercial skills and planning

	emerging naturally from a diverse and equitable workforce culture • Some slack or redundancy is kept in staffing and time allocations	

CREATIVE CAPABILITIES

Power and Agency	• Self-determination of planning and strategy, in line with core purpose and values • A sharp understanding of the constraints and systems within which that self-determination must be delivered (e.g. funder policies, political influence) • Clear processes for taking on new projects and work so that it suits core creative and cultural purpose and any other needs • Clear creative identity, understood internally and externally, by team, audiences, participants, funders, partners and others • Investment in skilled, diverse workforce (including freelancers), from inclusive recruitment processes to pay and conditions, and continuing professional development for all staff • Strong, equitable relationships with the freelance sector • The ability to do what's needed without checking with others	• Sector able to determine its own priorities, in partnership with stakeholders or communities where appropriate • Sector able to determine and design its own development needs and methodologies • Advocacy bodies able to challenge orthodoxies (including the sector's) and government policy where necessary • Business models and practices are shaped by sector values, needs and ambitions
Leadership, management and governance	• Clear, supportive and challenging management, staff development and reporting systems in place, alongside open culture that involves all	• Sectoral leaders emerge who are backed by a majority of elements of the system/network and taken seriously by

	staff in multiplying leadership – this may include collective management or decision-making • Leadership team works with staff and board to achieve clarity internally and externally, with appropriate decision-making and non-hierarchical processes, involving people at all levels where appropriate • All involved always seeking improvement and future-focused, while delivering current mission with flexibility • Board, leadership team, managers and all staff have appropriate skills and commitment and make relevant contributions • Succession issues are considered well in advance • Leadership and governance draws on and contributes to networks in sector, locality, and beyond	funders, politicians and public • Improving governance is seen as a shared responsibility, and processes are made explicit • Industry bodies act in a way which develops sectoral resilience rather than individual interests, and are future-focused as well as practical in the immediate term • Sector advocates for evolution rather than maintenance of the status quo • Ability to deal with crises in ways that support sector health rather than partisan interests • Sectoral governance brings together peers of diverse perspectives in clear and equal reflection and decision-making
Creative capacity: Innovation and experimentation embedded in reflective practice	• Experimentation leads to changes in how things are done and driven partly by justice, equity and diversity of activities, offers and communities involved in co-creation • Programme is designed to balance forward planning with flexibility – some time or spaces unprogrammed to allow for unexpected opportunities/slack • Lateral thinking and opportunity spotting is common	• Sector adapts to changing environment over time – and influences that environment • Dominant ways of working and forms of art and organisation change as innovation is adopted into the mainstream, thereby adapting it • Innovative models are supported to establish themselves • A culture of constructive peer review and critique brings diverse perspectives

	• Successful innovations integrated into how people work • Balance of activities changes over time due to regular reflection on learning from developmental or new activity • Change seen as a natural positive, not an • unavoidable trial, and all staff actively prepared for innovation and disturbance	into constant reflection on practice • Not all individual elements of the sector are maintained in perpetuity, which is seen as healthy • Risks are taken in an informed and responsible way
Situation awareness of environment, vulnerabilities, and performance	• Formal and informal ways of collecting and considering information about the operating environment • Awareness of innovative practice in its area of expertise • Well-designed and appropriate metrics, qualitative data and evaluation frameworks • Information is regularly and creatively used to inform short-, medium- and long-term planning and decision-making • Analysis of emerging and inherent vulnerabilities carried out on a regular basis and integrated into medium- and long-term planning • An ethos is in place which acknowledges vulnerabilities and who they affect, but accepts that some things will change	• The sector openly shares information on performance and environment, to enable benchmarking and self-assessment • Discussion of environment is everyday and not merely defensive • Debate refines understanding of both formal and informal information • Industry bodies take situation awareness into account in advocacy and spreading best practice • Shared discussion of vulnerabilities is common, open and constructive • Collaborative planning is routine, particularly in specific localities (e.g. cities or counties) or art forms, leading to decision-making informed by sectoral insight as well as by funders • There is spare capacity in the sector to cope with unexpected disruptions

The characteristics set out form the basis of the self-assessment tool shared after this chapter, versions of which I have used successfully with boards and staff of many organisations. However, thinking about what creative resilience looks like, whilst useful, only goes so far. There are fundamental mindset issues which must be addressed. So, for instance, the issue is not whether a written vision statement is in place, but whether that vision genuinely directs the choices the people within the organisation make, whatever their role, and whether they can relate it to the history of the organisation, and whether that vision statement is relevant and inclusive now.

These characteristics have been demonstrated in the sector's response to the pandemic, lockdowns and the abrupt cessation of many cultural activities. They are part of what has helped the cultural sector be relatively resilient during the Covid pandemic – indeed, if there is not enough change around power structures, inclusion, anti-discrimination and so on after the pandemic, we may consider it *too* resilient, in an uncreative way. The core purpose has shone through what people have been able to do – whether in the many projects that have taken theatre and dance online, or storytelling, poetry and other performing arts happening in people's front yards, or posters on lampposts or bus-stops, photography and video moving onto social media, Facebook and Zoom becoming the equivalent of the workshop room for people of all ages. People have gone back to the fundamentals of "What are we here for?"

Some have had uncomfortable realisations of how detached their business model had become from their purpose as they maximised and diversified income streams, and without a purchase or a transaction they had no way of reaching their audiences. Those whose models centred on networks and relationships were often more able to respond to local need. Earned and traded income disappeared overnight for many, whilst those with higher proportions of grant income ironically had, in some cases at least, less need for the emergency grant funds made available. Assets such as buildings lost some of their uses, although great ingenuity was shown in repurposing them to support resilience, with some venues being used for civic roles: food banks, food distribution hubs, vaccination centres, 'Nightingale' courts. (Perhaps inevitably ingenuity can lead into contested areas.) Those who felt more in control were able to act decisively. Those with supportive and

creative working cultures were also more able to negotiate the tricky waters of furloughing staff, continuing activity, sometimes massive learning curves in new ways of working, and supporting staff to have the flexibility to manage complex lives which might include caring responsibilities, illness and loss as well as working from home/living at work. Those with passionate supporters – people who love them enough to help save them, to put it slightly dramatically – have been able to draw on support through crowdfunding campaigns, as well as generating support in funding and political networks. The crisis has shown the power of crowdfunding to enable people who might have been excluded from more 'official' funding streams to continue and develop their work, to demonstrate how needed they actually are, and that the demand for their work that exists.

TOOLS & TACTICS 2: INSIDE/OUTSIDE

Introduction

The tools and frameworks in this section are especially useful for thinking about the space where the inside of an organisation or a practice meets the sector or the immediate world outside.

TOOL	WHAT YOU MIGHT USE IT FOR
Self-Assessment Characteristics of Creative Resilience	To identify strengths and vulnerabilities for an organisation, network or sector as the basis for action planning for the future
Creative Resilience Canvas	To describe your organisation or network's underlying business model and how it leads to value and creative resilience
Assessing your business model – six questions	To identify strengths and weaknesses in your business model so you can make the most of strengths and work with or on weaknesses
Resilient Choices Canvas	To help decide to do or not do projects that might affect your creative resilience
Four quadrants of creative resilience	To explore your creative resilience as an organisation, sector or network, or to understand the risks in your current situation
Three Governance Triangles	To your governance in terms of roles, insight, review and future thinking
A learning log	To keep a simple, shareable track of learning
Most Significant Change	To people-orientated activity where pre-determined 'indicators of change' are limiting and where participant voice is important

Self-Assessment Characteristics of Creative Resilience

This is a basic building block activity for people working in organisations. It can be done very quickly and intuitively, or in more depth, and involve one or more people. It is most powerful when you bring people together to discuss it, as you will undoubtedly get a deeper understanding of your organisation's strengths and weaknesses by comparing different perspectives. You can do it on your own, but it's richer if you can bring together a team of staff and board members or trustees, and compare answers. (This is a really useful activity for an away day, for instance, though I think you can do something useful in an hour.) Pay particular attention to discussing any areas where scores differ markedly. There may not be a right or wrong answer – but try and find out why you have different perspectives.

You will want to refer to the detailed descriptions of what you might see at organisational and sectoral levels in relation to the characteristics described in the previous chapter – see pages 117 - 122.

As a summary reminder the eight characteristics fall into clusters: Resourcefulness and Creative Capabilities.

Resourcefulness
Culture of shared purpose and values
Predictable financial resources
Strong networks
Intellectual, human and physical assets

Creative Capabilities
Power and agency
Leadership, management and governance
Creative capacity
Situation awareness

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1. Give yourself a score out of 10 for how you feel your organisation fits the description of each of the following eight characteristics. The stronger you feel you are, the closer to 10. The less like the description you think you are, the closer to zero. You can use the template below to note your ratings.

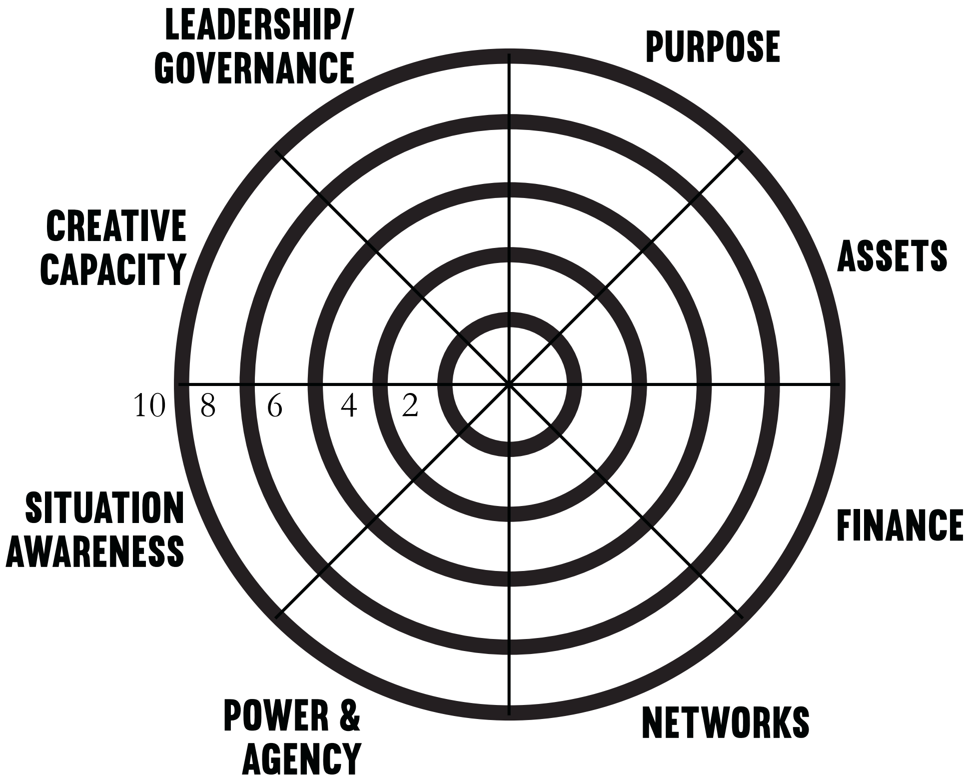
2. Discuss your conclusions, and agree an overall rating for each characteristic. (If you are doing this in a group of more than five or six, it can be useful to break into small groups, and then compare the answers of the different groups. The more you get a sense of areas of clear consensus or difference, the richer your understanding will be, and the easier it will be to start to think about which area to work on first.)

3. Identify two or three areas of strength – where you rate yourself seven or above. What use are you currently making of those strengths – and how could you use them more to make better work, have more impact with your work, or to make your organisation stronger for the future? Are any of your strengths likely to face challenges in the future, and how might you plan for that?

4. Identify any areas of weakness – where you rate yourself four or below. What might you do to improve in those areas? Which is the most important for the short-, medium- and long-term?

5. If there are differences in scoring from different parts of the organisation – if, say, the public-facing 'front-line' staff give consistently higher or lower scores than the management, or the board have very different thoughts to the staff – discuss what might be behind those differences. It might, for instance, imply something about how information is shared. A shared view of the opportunities and challenges, albeit from different perspectives, is likely to be helpful in building your creative resilience, and using it to make your organisation as productive as it can be.

6. Identify two or three areas that might be long-term targets for improvement, or for maximising the benefits. Think what you could practically do in each area – there may be some actions or projects that could benefit more than one characteristic.


LEADERSHIP/
GOVERNANCE
PURPOSE
CREATIVE
CAPACITY
ASSETS
10
8
6
4
2
SITUATION
AWARENESS
FINANCE
POWER &
AGENCY
NETWORKS

Creative Resilience Canvas

This Canvas draws inspiration from the highly influential Business Model Canvas, developed by Alexander Osterwalder and Yves Peignuer and popularised first in their book *Business Model Generation*. I have used their canvas with many, many organisations and individual artists and I recommend it. You should visit the Strategyzer website, or look at the business model canvas resources on Culture Hive, which I worked with the Arts Marketing Association to produce some years ago. It is an excellent tool for shaping a business model – and indeed for understanding the business model you may have not-quite-deliberately found yourself working within.

The Business Model Canvas describes a business model: what Alexander Osterwalder summed up as "the rationale of how an organisation creates, delivers, and captures value". It's important you understand yours, but it's also important you understand the rationale for how you nurture and sustain the capacity needed to deliver your mission, your creative resilience. This will vary from one organisation to the next: a touring theatre company formed by a band of like-minded friends just out of university will need a different model of creative resilience than the main art gallery and museum in a town or city. The vulnerabilities or performance indicators of one may include starting families or meeting new partners, for instance, instead of capital development. To repeat myself: creative resilience is not about everything lasting forever. It is about having productive lives for organisations that are balanced and healthy for people involved and for the wider culture. You may be 'the disturbance' and not need to be around for 30 years – although you might see benefits in that too.

I do, though, think there are some key things missing from the classic Business Model Canvas for creative and cultural work, in particular the nexus of values and purpose. The Creative Resilience Canvas gives a format for capturing the drivers of your creative resilience on one sheet, so you can see and understand them, reflect on them and make changes if needed. Like the Business Model Canvas, you can play with it at design or review points. Looking at the example I give – based on my own time as a small press publisher – I can see my implicit model was about change and disturbance, not about creating a publisher to last forever. I can also see, though, that changing the model of management and governance could have made the

press – and myself, I suspect – more resilient if I had introduced more people into the mix. I'm by no means putting Scratch forward as a good example, but using it to illustrate the kinds of things to cover.

The Canvas model has become popular partly because it allows you to sidestep linear descriptions where helpful. The Business Plan and its close relatives the SMART target and the KPI are arguably the largest example of the distorting force of the linear sequential approach, and yet, paradoxically, they are of little use on the high-wire except in extremis. I would encourage an attitude of dreaming and play when using any canvas – to be combined with rigorous but equally imaginative analysis.

A completed example is provided by way of illustration, as well as a blank one you could scribble in. To maintain confidentiality of Thinking Practice clients, and to hopefully show this is relevant to cultural businesses or organisations of any scale, I have shown how I might have designed or described the creative resilience of Scratch, the small (tiny!) poetry press and magazine I founded and ran from 1989 to 2001. For each area, I have included a line or two of reflection on the strengths and limitations of the design, in terms of creative resilience.

MISSION

What do want to achieve?

Intellectual, human and physical assets

What are your key assets?
Intellectual e.g. backlist, repertoire collection, data
Physical, e.g. buildings, spaces, equipment
Human, people and their skills

How do you invest in them e.g. grants, retained surpluses, sweat?

Values

What are the values or principles that guide your work and shape your purpose?

Identify no more than five

Situation awareness

What are your key environmental factors, vulnerabilities and performance indicators – and how will you build systems to make sure you have up to date information on them?

Culture of shared purpose

Who are you, why do you exist and what or who do you stand for? What shapes your decision-making?

Identify three or four central aspects of your purpose, and how it is shared with others – internally and externally

Think about where you've come from as well as where you want to go

Creative Capacity

What structures/ processes do you have for innovation, learning, and integrating successful innovations into core business?

How do you invest in the capacity to create new services, cultural work or partnerships?

How do you generate new work?

Leadership, management and governance

What are your structures and processes for leadership, management and governance?

Relationships, networks and partners

Who are the people, bodies or places you have important relationships with – and what kind?

Which networks are you part of that provide support, help or resources or help achieve your mission?

Who are your key partners – other cultural organisations, community partners, funders etc?

Costs: Money Out

What do you need to spend money on? How predictable and controllable is each budget line? What can you shrink or expand if needs change?

Income: Revenue Streams

Where does your income come from? Grants – project or core? Ticket income? Donations? How reliably can you predict the income over what period?

MISSION

To increase the profile and standing of new poets of my generation

Intellectual, human and physical assets

Copyright on publications

Publishing Licences

Editor

Laptop etc

Longarm stapler (for printing emergencies)

Few tangible assets – light but no big liabilities. Copyright can be hard to earn from – likely to build as backlist does if at all

Values

Diversity
Range
Freshness
Surprise
Clear – though may put some off

Situation awareness

Scanning of poetry magazines and small presses
Funding situation
Quarterly management accounts
Annual accounts/report

Culture of shared purpose

High quality platform through magazine/press publishing small number of books each year

Non-alignment with any particular schools of poets

Clear editorial identity

Support for writers to move to bigger presses

Clear but limited – or focused? Understood by partners, poets, readers

Creative Capacity

Commitment to experimentation
Committed to dropping ideas quickly
Control
Good levels of agency and flexibility

Leadership, management and governance

Private company
Light touch and focused on editorial voice: single editor, no board
Informal advisers
Vulnerable in terms of growth/longevity/diversity

Relationships, networks and partners

Other magazines and presses
Networks of North East presses
Website subscribers
Social media followers
Poets
Poetry promoters
Local bookshops
Subscribers
Achievable levels to allow for step-by-step growth. Gaps/risks for ambition.

Costs: Money Out

Printing costs Editorial costs Marketing
Predictable and controllable

Income: Revenue Streams

Project grants Subscriptions and Sales Personal guarantee
Relatively predictable on cautious basis, becomes harder as grow more ambitious

MISSION

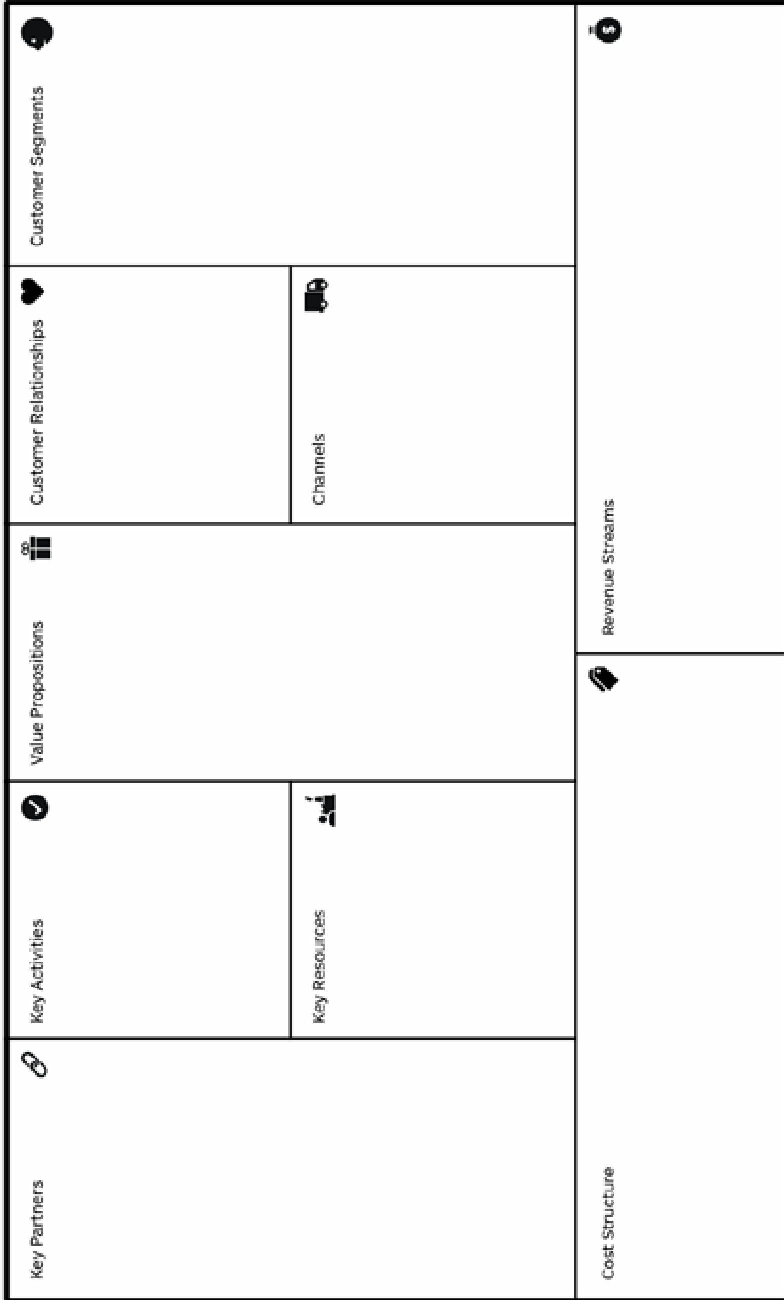
Intellectual, human and physical assets	Values	Culture of shared purpose	Creative Capacity	Relationships, networks and partners
	Situation awareness		Leadership, management and governance	

Costs: Money Out	Income: Revenue Streams

Assessing your business model – 6 questions

If you have a clear idea of your business model, for which I recommend Strategyzer's Business Model Canvas, there are six questions you should ask yourself about it. You can use the template below, using words, or feel free to take a different approach – pictures, models, Lego, plasticine, whatever form suits you.

Q1: **Can you talk clearly, simply and powerfully about your business model and your value? Try it.**	Q2: **How does your Value Proposition fit with your mission, purpose and your customers/ those you work with or for? Describe the fit.**
Q3: **Does your business model reflect your values? Describe what it encourages/discourages.**	Q4: **Are you making the best use of your particular 'crisis'? What is it and how you are moving on?**
Q5: **What roles do your Partners play in your business model – and in the model for the sector as a whole? Describe them.**	Q6: **What impact might your business model have on others in your ecology, locally, nationally or art form/specialism? Describe it.**



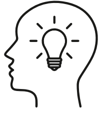
The Business Model Canvas
Designed for:
Designed by:
Date:
Version:
Key Partners
Key Activities
Key Resources
Value Propositions
Customer Relationships
Channels
Customer Segments
Cost Structure
Revenue Streams
DESIGNED BY: Strategyzer AG
Strategyzer
strategyzer.com

Resilient Choices Canvas

This tool is for people thinking about making choices that might affect their capacity to be productive, valued, and true to self-determined core purpose and identity. Often organisations and sectors decide to prioritise activity based solely on outputs, or financial results, or developing creatively. This framework is built around some of the characteristics that make up the resourcefulness and creative capabilities that lead to long-term creative resilience.

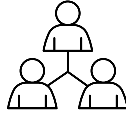
For each area, think through the questions, before then coming to a conclusion based on all the factors. If one thing is most important for you at the time you use this canvas, you might want to weight the factors. (You may be prepared for negative impact in one area for large benefits in another.) Some organisations have even developed ratings systems.

1. Note responses – factors to guide decision-making and taking things forward for each area.
2. List any actions you need to take to make this achievable.



CHANGE

Will it help us change how we do things by introducing a new way of working or new offer? What might we learn? Will it create better or innovative technology or ways of working? What might participants and partners learn?



NETWORKS

Will this increase or strengthen our networks? Who within our networks will be partners? What sort of networks will it increase – are they new? Can partners commit people/time/funding?

PURPOSE

Do we know why we're doing it and who it's for? Does that excite us as a way of achieving our core purpose, or helping us do that? Is this going to give more than it takes, thinking long-term as well as short-term returns? Will it leave us stronger, more confident or more able to adapt? Will we kick ourselves if we don't do it?

PRACTICE

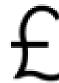
Does this let us try something new? Or build on something else? Does it stretch us? Will it introduce us to or let us experiment with new ideas or talented people or communities?

ASSETS

Will the project generate intellectual or physical assets? Will it use/use up current assets? Will any assets created be useful or exploitable? Can we share them or let others use them?

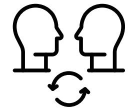
TIME

Do we have time, resources and capacity to deliver within the timeframe? Does it have the potential to unlock or create capacity?



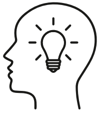
MONEY

Are there viable sources of income, from grants, fundraising, earned or traded income, from sources that fit our values? Is it the best way to spend resources?

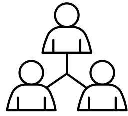


PEOPLE

Could it connect with new audiences or collaborators? How will we make it inclusive? Do we have the capacity and the skills? Will we develop useful skills?



CHANGE



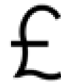
NETWORKS

PURPOSE

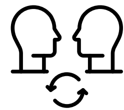
PRACTICE

ASSETS

TIME



MONEY



PEOPLE

Four quadrants of creative resilience

This tool is a diagnostic if you are wondering why you are feeling a certain way when you think about your creative resilience as an organisation, sector or network, or if you want to understand the risks in your current situation.

The effects of acquiring the resourcefulness and creative capabilities to adapt and resist can be seen in the following diagram which illustrates four types or organisation:

- Vulnerable dependence: those with few adaptive resources and little change orientation
- Coping persistence: those with good adaptive resources, but little orientation towards change
- Frustrated innovation: those with a strong orientation towards change, but few adaptive resources
- Creative resilience: those with both the creative capabilities and desire to change.

It is worth underlining that good, even great, art and culture is made by organisations in all of those quadrants – you can be culturally productive anywhere in this table. However, you would be carrying certain risks and stresses depending on your situation.

Some organisations are almost wholly dependent on public funding to maintain current levels of activity. Even where that funding is a minor proportion of the total it is usually seen as enabling all activity, and where it effectively acts as a backstop or guarantor. (This is not language many would have been comfortable admitting to until Spring 2020, perhaps not even now, but the Covid crisis has revealed this fact, the way a tide going out can reveal hidden paths or islands.) This has been seen very clearly during the Covid pandemic, when organisations with significant revenue streams from earned and traded income found these cut off, but grants from the Cultural Recovery Fund were vital in keeping them afloat. Organisations sometimes rely on local authority funding, and very occasionally on private or philanthropic giving. These organisations often define themselves by their regularly funded status more than their activity, and are essentially as sustainable as their next (or last) core grant. They can often feel themselves in the reverse of the Rigidity

Trap – the Poverty Trap, where a feeling that funding is never sufficient for aspiration comes to shape behaviours in a damaging way. Little financial flexibility is generated, as all funding is put into activity, and therefore they are always vulnerable to disturbance, even success.

Alongside such organisations are a second group which are persistent and cope with whatever changes come their way. They will be inventive in gaining support when needed, drawing on strong networks and very strong identity. Their coping skills also mean that when reorganising, they will cut their cloth according to available resources, but tend not to fundamentally alter their structures and ways of being. In a sector which prizes innovation, these organisations can be seen as either long-standing examples of good practice, often practice back in their history, or alternatively undervalued as organisations which have not moved with the times but somehow survived.

Innovative organisations without the resources to turn this innovation into sustainable organisational capacity – due to lack of investment or lack of certain skills – can be productive, but can also become frustrated in their ambitions. This is a typical situation for organisations trying to access regular funding. Frustrated innovators can also inhabit the Poverty Trap, though tend to do so in a more positive way than those who feel more dependent on funders. The major downside of operating in this quadrant is what might be called the Exhaustion Factor. Individuals burn out here, talent is lost to the sector, some people move through on their way to more stable jobs. In ecosystem terms this may be a natural thing, but there is undoubtedly a cost to individuals and indeed to localities.

A fourth category of organisation prove able to genuinely adapt without losing their identity and core purpose. They are resilient and innovative, always looking for ways to improve – which they acknowledge means change, albeit usually through a continuing series of adjustments rather than huge reorganisations. When required though, by some disturbance, they are psychologically able to fundamentally adapt to a new environment, and have appropriate resources to draw on to do so.

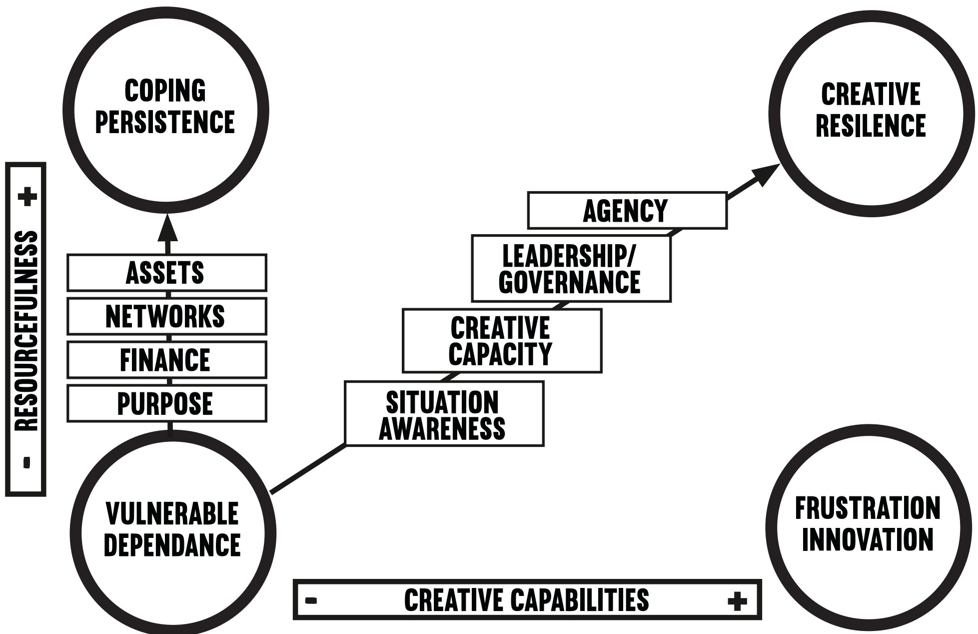
This model draws on a categorisation of community approaches to resilience which describes three types of communities. "Powerless spectator" communities have poor adaptive skills and few financial or technological

options, and lack natural resources, institutions, and networks. "Coping actor" communities have the capacity to adapt, but tend to be short term and survival focused, with weak leadership. "Adaptive manager" communities have both the capacity to adapt and the organisational or governance resources to sustain change.

Obviously not all cultural organisations will fall neatly into one of these groupings and some will demonstrate characteristics of more than one. This is a diagnostic, not a grading system. This model also seems applicable to art forms and sectors, although there will inevitably be an even greater degree of variegation. Broadly though, this model does have enough 'fit' to be useful.

This diagnostic has only three questions for you:

- Bearing in mind the descriptions given above, which of the four quadrants do you think are relevant to you?
- How would someone who knows your organisation well answer that question?
- Is there anything you should stop, start or carry on doing as a result of your answers?



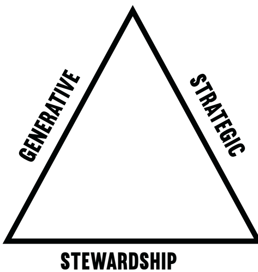
Three Governance Triangles

There is no shortage of guidance on governance – the Charities Commission, National Council for Voluntary Organisations and the Cultural Governance Alliance cover all the areas you need to think about your legal and fiduciary duties. This set of three mini-tools is to help boards and management committees do some quick health-checks about how well they are working together to make good use of those governance norms.

It is a set of three triangles, inspired by the triangle of governance roles set out in *Governance as Leadership* by Richard Chait, William Ryan and Barbara Taylor. Each includes questions you could spend some time reflecting on. I recommended using one in at least two board meetings a year and then seeing if the discussions have helped. After each reflection you should ask:

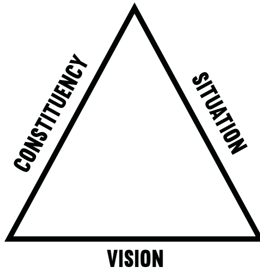
- What should we stop doing?
- What should we start doing?
- What should we carry on doing?

1. ROLES: this is a slightly adapted version of Chait et al's main triangle, and relates to three roles boards play. They argue – and I agree – that as well as the fiduciary or stewardship role and the strategic direction setting, boards also need to work with the staff and leadership team to be more generative – asking and exploring questions to find new insights and approaches.



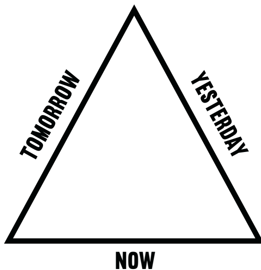
1. Stewardship – oversight and managing of legal and other responsibilities. Key question: Are we doing the right things right?
2. Strategic – strategic direction setting in partnership with executive leaders. Key question: Do we know where we're going and why?
3. Generative – the wider leadership role which is more questioning, enquiring and creative than simply managing processes or deciding on strategic goals. Key question: Are we asking the right questions?

2. APPLIED INSIGHT: this triangle can be used to think about how the board provides insight, oversight and challenge across the range of artistic and audience or social and financial imperatives to be achieved.



1. Vision – artistic or cultural, often driven by an individual or group vision or expression. Key question: How well are we contributing to the evolution and oversight of the vision?
2. Constituency – who is the organisation for, what is its role in that constituency (eg local or artistic) and how is it doing, what might it best achieve? Key question: How well are we each/ collectively bringing insight and intelligence from our communities/stakeholders?
3. **Situation** – artistic, social, financial, market. Key question: How well are we helping the organisation understand the possibilities and challenges of the external world?

3. DEPTH OF FIELD: this triangle is about where your attention as a board goes – current performance, future plans and learning from the past. All three are helpful but getting the balance right is important. Too much focus on the immediate and you can miss future opportunities or threats. Too much future gazing can mean missing lessons from experience, or issues in the business now. Too much examination of what's been done, or how things used to be, can mean fuzzy focus on the present or the future.



1. Now – Key question: How well are we thinking through the implications of what we know about our performance?
2. Tomorrow – strategy, world, what is likely to happen around you, to you, and with you – what can you influence and why? Key question: How well are we not only planning but exploring the future?
3. Yesterday – organisational memory and evaluation are important factors in creative resilience, though they should inform more than restrict. Key question: What have we learnt?

A learning log

This is a simple tool for making shared learning a habit. It can be used by individuals, teams, boards and board members, or anyone involved in a project.

An important aspect of creative resilience is facing up to what is really happening, or likely to, or even possible, so that you can plan accordingly – adapting, changing tack or making plans for avoiding if necessary. Time is pressured for this, so having some relatively easy formats for capturing learning can help. Capturing and sharing learning should be a straightforward and flexible process, not an onerous and time-consuming one, and can be done using a variety of time-frames – immediate or months-after retrospective after-action reviews combined with monthly or more periodic reflections. I advise a combination of learning logs centred on personal observations and learning reviews by groups or teams which can fold in other sorts of data – e.g. monitoring or evaluation quantitative material. I have shaped some of the log to the Self, Inside, Outside, Beyond framework – but you could replace these with your own categories that suited your context more specifically. (E.g. programme development, production, presentation, networks…)

Shared learning amongst a team or a group of people working together multiplies the individual learning, adds richness and perspective, and helps everyone understand the different things different people might take from what may appear to be the same experience. This is a commonly identified benefit of having a diverse group, who will be more likely to notice different things, or understand them differently. Although you can hope that all members of the team will share learning and support others in their learning, it's important to remember that not everyone will 'learn' at the same pace or time, and people shouldn't feel pressured to have learnt something every day. Equally there may, occasionally, be some things which are deeply personal and not safe for work sharing and the right to privacy should be respected in such cases.

Learning may have relevance to individuals and our professional development, to the team and its needs, to the programme and its progress, or to the network as a whole, so be open and alert to any or all of the implications.

LEARNING LOG

Name Date

Main Context:
Self
Inside the organisation
Outside in the sector
Beyond in the world
Other (specify)

What happened/what did I experience, hear or observe?

What did I learn from this?

What are the implications for me/the team/organisation/project?

What immediate actions, if any, are required?

Could this learning be shared, and if so how?

What is my next step in this area of learning?
(e.g. is there any research I should do to check comparisons?)

'Most Significant Change'

Most significant change (MSC) is a participatory, qualitative approach to evaluation. It is particularly useful for evaluating people-orientated projects and services where it is difficult to pre-determine outcomes or where complexity makes it hard to only measure indicators of change. MSC is a collaborative and non-hierarchical way of identifying what has the greatest significance for the people who are accessing and delivering services – what matters most to people involved and why. It can give real insight into what causes the impact of change.

Originally developed by Rick Davies in the 1990s, the MSC technique aimed to meet some of the challenges associated with monitoring and evaluating a complex participatory rural development programme in Bangladesh. Since then, it has predominantly been used by international development and aid agencies to evaluate their programmes around the world. However, MSC is now increasingly being recognised as a highly effective research, evaluation and change management tool by smaller scale, people-orientated projects and organisations in the UK. I am part of the Story-based Evaluation and Research Alliance, a group of practitioners who have come together to promote more use of narrative within research and evaluation.

The technique uses stories of change as data, collected from and analysed by project stakeholders through shared discussion. It can be used alongside other evaluation methods, to explore or triangulate quantitative data, for instance. It is easy to implement and scale to share findings and is adaptable to project needs and budgets.

There are three stages of the approach:
Story collection: in which stakeholders are asked what changes have come about as a result of their involvement in the project, and which of these matter most to them. They are asked what this aspect of their life or practice was like before their involvement, what it is like now, and what specifically has made the difference. This is written up as a short piece of prose, or can be recorded on video or audio.
Story reflection/selection: in which a different group of stakeholders read and discuss a number of stories in order to identify what stands out most for them; and what the learning for the project is.
Feedback and dissemination: the learning from the discussion session is shared.

Information noted from each story should include:

- Storyteller (plus demographic information if important)
- Who collected the story and when, and that consent to share was given
- Description of the story itself – beginning, middle, end
- Significance (to the storyteller) of events described in the story

Generally, I make notes and then write up into three-four paragraphs. You can record it, audio or video, if better for context. I have created two separate pages to help do your own simple version of the MSC process. This visual approach has the advantage that you could also use drawings or visuals if that suited you or the storyteller better.

It can be helpful before collecting to think about what kinds of change, impact or result you want to look for. These are sometimes called domains of change. Domains are broad and often fuzzy categories of stories. For example, funders of an arts programme for older people might look at:

- Changes in the quality of people's lives
- Changes in the nature of people's participation in arts activities
- Changes in the sustainability of providers and activities
- Changes in perception or habit
- Any other changes

Equally, this kind of analysis can be done after collecting stories.

The story reflection is also a valuable part of this process, as it gives you the opportunity to bring together stakeholders you want to involve in your learning, or whose behaviour you want to influence. It is best to keep this to four to six people. For complex projects, where you might have lots of stories, you might have different layers of reflection – e.g. front line staff choose stories which are then reflected on by senior management or board members. Although not part of the 'classical' MSC approach, I always include a question about what people think they might stop, start or carry on doing as a result of what they've heard or learnt from the discussion.

TITLE:

What are the most significant changes, positive or negative, that you have seen or experienced?

Which the most significant change? Pick one.

What was it like before?

What is it like now?

What made the difference?

Why does this matter to you?

MSC PANEL DISCUSSION

Who's in this discussion - stakeholders, influencers, participants?

Story 1

Story 2

Story 3

Story 4

Story 5

Story 6

Story 7

Story 8

What themes are there that matter to you - and why do they matter?

Which story feels the most signifcant and why?

What is the relevance for your work? What might you start/stop/carry on doing as a result of this discussion?

CHAPTER SIX
THE WELCOMING SPACE: CREATIVELY RESILIENT COMMUNITIES

The Point:

- *The importance of 'starting from ABCD' with an asset-based community development approach and embracing broad definitions of culture*
- *The importance of shared purpose, connection and place so that Creative heritage x People's voice x Place = Expressive Life*
- *What happens in the welcoming spaces: "Creativity… is the retention throughout life of something that belongs properly to infant experience: the ability to create the world." (D.W. Winnicott)*
- *Creative community resilience and involving artists in long-term co-creative processes and devolved decision-making*
- *Towards abundance: replacing coercive audience development with an invitation which confronts people with their 'gifts' instead of an analysis of their failings*

Questions:

- *What assets are there in your creative community and how could you use them?*
- *What gifts do you bring to creating a welcoming space for people to play in?*
- *How do you, in your own context, enable expressive lives of others?*
- *How do you facilitate conversations about the possibility of community, connection and confidence?*

Introduction

Can creative resilience help us with the big paradox about the arts and culture, especially that community-connected part which is my prime concern? We have a cultural sector which can do many things brilliantly – create stories, images, myths, encounters, have social and personal benefits, play a role in economics and society, entertain and move *inter alia* – but it does so mainly for a privileged few, ignoring the cultural lives of many others, and so creates negative social and psychological impacts as well as positive ones. The non-commercial 'public' and 'homemade' parts of the ecology are set, at least in their rhetoric, on learning how to involve those too often marginalised, and building organisations that can last long enough for a more representative and inclusive range of people to connect to them. But what happens to make that

connection and everything that can flow from it more likely to happen for an individual citizen, especially those who might not currently feel creatively involved?

We know it is always possible, and many people have been telling stories of the exceptions that prove the rule all my working life: I have been one myself at times, perhaps, and I have told my share of these stories. I thought that was helpful. I'm still not sure that's untrue, but I'm also aware that transformation narratives can reinforce an illusion of meritocracy. Those 'transformational power of the arts' stories, of how kids with no cultural capital somehow find books or music or performing or museums and heritage, and then somehow find or make ways into the professional arts, and then somehow manage to stay there and do their work are not untrue exactly, but are they true *enough, often enough*? In fact, they have probably been used more overall to maintain the status quo than to transform it as those of us who have told them wanted. I've been lucky, described myself as rattling door handles to see which ones were locked and which weren't, in lieu of a career plan, and none of that is untrue either. But neither is that kind of story enough to build a sector creatively resilient enough to help build creative communities.

I want in this chapter to argue for the importance of equitable and open approaches not just on the organisational or sectoral structures, nor the decision-making and leadership processes, but the welcoming third space of potential that is made when creative communities come together. I will draw especially on what I have seen working with the national networks Future Arts Centres, ARC and others, and by patterns seen in Creative People and Places written about in *Faster But Slower, Slower But Faster.* As elsewhere, that is not to say these are the only people doing this, but by way of illustration, and in order to draw out some central principles for people working in this area. I want then to argue for the potential of this kind of welcome and inclusion in creative activity to contribute to the common characteristics of resilient communities, by focusing on assets not deficits and on creative dialogue.

Starting from ABCD

Asset-based community development (ABCD) turns the deficit model on its head. Instead of focusing on what is missing or wrong, an asset-based approach starts with what is present in a community or situation. What physical or organisational resources are there? How might they be used? What formal and informal networks exist and to what uses might they be put? What skills, hopes or aspirations do people describe?[1]

As such, it could be said to differ from many audience development or outreach models which were often shaped by top-down, deficit thinking. The idea of 'cold spots', of places with less access to culture can be found in many funder and government strategies, or in responses to the Brexit vote, which set off a wave of national organisations showing a sudden interest in visiting Leave-voting areas. Sometimes this was to listen – as was the stated intent of the National Theatre's *My Country* project which involved 10 writers across the UK, for instance – sometimes to outreach. This approach comes from a deficit position: places lack something, it can be brought to them. This has been disempowering and distancing, especially over decades of such approaches in deprived communities.

I was involved, in 2019-2020, in collecting stories of change from a project in the Tees Valley which was part of the Arts Council England/National Lottery Heritage Fund collaboration, Great Places. A recurrent theme was the difficulty of building trust with communities who had become used to apparently well-meaning projects parachuting into their communities, looking at them only as deprived or hard to reach, and then not being seen again after the project had ended, with little thought to legacy. This had taught people that they were not the participants in projects, they were simultaneously the raw material being used by the cultural sector and the product being sold to funders. Conversely, where projects took the time to build trust, to understand and relate on an equal basis, this enabled long-term approaches and actual change.

This pattern has been replicated in national projects and networks from Creative People and Places to Co-creating Change and Creative Civic Change, two major national networks funded through the Gulbenkian Foundation's

Civic Role of Arts Organisations programme. The report on the first year of the latter, for instance, concludes: "It took a long time for areas to trust that this programme was committed to community leadership at every level, and that we weren't going to impose expectations or leave them without support."[2] The lessons are there: it is time to learn them, by starting to build in asset-based ways, trust, connectivity and shared approaches and purpose.

In practice, these networks and others such as Fun Palaces, arts centres and community arts organisations, are now taking an increasingly asset-based approach, and embracing broader definitions of culture. Or actually not worrying much about the definition, which has tended to be my approach, or not even thinking of activity as culture, but just everyday, creative, messy, life. This embraces professional and amateur activists, promoters, teachers, artists and crafts people. It also includes people whose creative passions may not fall into neat categories, from knitters to folk dancers of many cultures.

People adopting these approaches use spaces of all types: community centres, village halls, town squares, parks, pubs, empty shop units, shopping centres, buses, old factories and mills, working factories, warehouses, churches, sports clubs, trains and train stations, libraries, museums, galleries, theatres and arts centres. The variety is a lesson and an illustration in itself. There are things, people and connections to work with in even what may be (or be labelled) deprived places without what is often called infrastructure. (This is not to minimise the effort communities put into such spaces but to recognise it.) I have often wondered if the use of 'infrastructure' in cultural strategy and advocacy language is more euphemism, avoiding being clear about buildings or organisations, upselling by making something often quite intangible and people-centred sound like it fits in the same category as roads and bridges and broadband cables, or exactly the right term for the public nature of the tools that can help connect people, connect artists to audiences and peers, and feed a local culture, in the way a river or a road connects and nourishes.

Networks such as Creative People and Places and Co-Creating Change, and those organisations playing a civic role, have learnt to use existing community networks where possible, and then build what is necessary. Artist networks, promoter networks and groups of local supporters working together are common features. This does not reduce the value of professional arts venues and their teams: in some places, arts venues play major roles. Exhibiting in a big

gallery, performing at a theatre with professional artists and production standards, or broadcasting on the radio has given participants insight, inspiration and confidence for their own creative journeys. Some describe this as life-changing. Implicit in all this is the insight that for the arts and everyday creativity, people are vital – physical, creative and social parts of what makes an ecology thrive. They need nuanced attention and investment – upkeep if you will – as much as buildings. Without their input, connections can be sporadic, only partly successful. Without community activists who see the value of being involved in commissioning panels or promote work, the model frays.

Infrastructure for the arts thus becomes the sum of assets usable by artists and audiences within their community, and the networks that facilitate that use. This can then be nurtured, invested in and shared. Mapping the assets is an important part of this step, and of the Asset Based Community Development framework. (You can use the tool for mapping the assets in Tools and Tactics 3 as a start.)

This approach, and that these assets or infrastructure are essentially public and communal, is the heart of the argument for public funding of (some) arts and heritage, and indeed, the heart of my vision of a creatively resilient culture serving creative communities. Culture must be "common as air", to borrow a phrase from Lewis Hyde. Whilst respecting artists' rights in terms of intellectual property, and the value work can have financially, resilience and long-term outcomes emerge, it seems to me, when the tools and the work made with them are accessible for use by everyone. As the Cultural Value Project and others have demonstrated, this is not the case in the UK right now. Whilst access to culture and to making culture concentrates around a privileged few – with culture made by others not seen as quite 'legitimate' – the result is socially narrow, with a picture from a small proportion seeking to represent the whole. This distorts perceptions – and damages community creativity and resilience through mistrust, doubt, lack of confidence and restricted opportunity.

Expressive lives in "grim, beloved places": No I without we

This is the connection, for me, to some of the political and social crises which have slowly come to the boil in the UK. There is an alienation and lack of confidence beneath the culture wars and disjunctures around Remain and

Leave, vaccines, racial and gender-based violence, the restricted progress for trans and non-binary people: a lack of practice at imagining, experiencing and sensing together, of attending to evidence and empathy. (The bullishness of many opinions showing how often lack of confidence is hidden by the performance of its opposite.) The common good has frayed, and although there are many, many examples from the coronavirus response of people going to extraordinary lengths to help others and show solidarity with those at greatest risk, there are also, unfortunately, many times we have seen people choose to act selfishly, choose to mislead, choose misinformation over uncomfortable fact.

One of the critiques of resilience thinking is that it can be seen as innately preferring the kind of stability, status quo and consensus that emerges from competition over change, dissent and design. There is some negative, restricting truth in that, given the way systems will find equilibrium, even if that is restricting or damaging to some elements. And yet, there is something powerful to me in the idea of consensus emerging from the social processes of genuine dialogue and governance in the broadest sense: not necessarily agreeing on everything, but finding enough common ground to work, and allowing others their different views or activities. Consensus is, it seems to me, part of community. At times it might feel restrictive, but overall it helps us make things such as places, lives and livings, cultures together: David Bollier and Silke Helfrich suggest that the creation of shared purpose and values are "the lifeblood of any commons… [but] can only arise when people contribute from their own passion and commitment, connect with each other, and share certain experiences"[3]. Consensus, a shared position respecting difference, is an acknowledgement of the interconnection of self and group, of the I and the We.

Some years ago, Richard Eyre, former Artistic Director at the National Theatre, bemoaned cuts to the arts with an argument that, as he put it, "Art is about the "I" in life not the "we", about private life more than public. A public life that doesn't acknowledge the private is a life not worth having." I would say we need urgently to find moments when the reverse is true: "There is no I without the we." This relates to the idea of the connected self and Ubuntu described in Chapter Four.

At a Creative People and Places conference in 2018, writer Lynsey Hanley

described how many people suffer psychological damage inflicted by class. Arts participation, she argued, is based on confidence in your own opinion, which comes from the habits and skills of cultural capital. Non-engagement flows from a lack of this confidence, leading to a sense of *not* being part of a consensus, not having contributed to achieving it. Less stressful lives would equal more participation. This is echoed in research in South East Northumberland, which found negative perceptions of the arts amongst unemployed respondents. One can see deeply-rooted local identities with traditions of change and welcome across the work of many cultural organisations and different communities – including, for instance, Black, South Asian and other diaspora communities further displaced by gentrification. Loss is a common theme – of industries, heritage, roots, homes, confidence, self-esteem. Some people, some places, have felt ignored and denied and seen the programme, and other local culture, as a way to promote and inspire them. There are passionate demonstrations of pride, resilience, stubbornness, imagination, generosity and creativity.

This is not to pass judgement on a vote either way in the referendum, nor to argue that particular areas are unique. But the themes of personal and community confidence and capacity form the warp and weft of much locality or group-focussed activity, cultural democracy activism, and can be seen in the work of the network of hundreds of arts centres and libraries across the UK. A phrase from Sarah Butler and Nicolle Mollett's *More Than 100 Stories* also captures the damage described: "Having a passion for a town that's grim, that hurts".

I connect this to the Irish poet Patrick Kavanagh's thinking around parochialism, which he argued could be a positive force. Kavanagh contrasted it with provincialism, which he thought showed a less confident, more subservient attitude: "The provincial has no mind of his own; he does not trust what his eyes see until he has heard what the metropolis – towards which his eyes are turned – has to say on any subject. This runs through all activities. The parochial mentality on the other hand is never in any doubt about the social and artistic validity of his parish."[4] This pattern can be seen and heard every time the phrase local artist is heard, as people weigh the intent behind the phrase, and the context, the flows of cultural capital under the surface. John Tomaney points out in a defence of parochialism based on Kavanagh, that there is a social and political split between 'cosmopolites'

and ‘parochials’.[5] (I seek to bridge this in the term ‘parochial cosmopolitan’.) These are also seen, from a different starting point, in David Goodhart’s description, in the context of Brexit, of ‘Somewheres’ (Leave-voting people disturbed by change in the places they feel rooted) and ‘Anywheres’ (Remain-voters drawn to global cultures and abstract values).[4]

What interests me in these conflicts, and where I think arts centres of all sorts come in, is that for many people, their culture is highly localised, whilst for those working in the cultural sector, and the very highly engaged 8%, it is often partially about escaping the local or usual, even if that leads to new perspective on the local. (Is it coincidence we ask, “Shall we go *out* this weekend?”) This is something the cultural sector has grappled with and that arts centre practice shows ways to resolve. The arts centre on Tony Wilson Place in Manchester is called HOME for a reason: home represents something people want from their centres of creative community. Because, I think, British society is so stratified if not segregated by class, and its arts and culture dominated by people from the middle and upper classes whose professional parents would be more likely to move around or be ‘mobile’, we have come to associate local with narrow, and from there to downplay the importance of place in terms of rootedness. Arts centres and community cultural co-creation projects are starting to resist that.

Writer and academic of indigenous knowledge Tyson Yunkaporta, a member of the Apalech Clan in far north Queensland, describes how the home language of his family has no word for culture, but the closest thing translates literally as “being like our place”.[7] American folklorist and policymaker Bill Ivey has argued that “expressive life” combines heritage and voice. Heritage for Ivey describes the “continuity and community” of a place, set of people, or art form or genre. Voice is the ability to express something, through skilled autonomy and innovation in practice.[8] This moves us helpfully away from the notion that arts engagement equals great product plus persuasive marketing. It also swerves the hierarchical aspects of excellence. But it underplays two factors that the learning from Creative People and Places and other work in the civic realm, and the work of arts centres emphasises: the importance of place and how new conversations involving different people, away from pure art form-focused discussions, lead to challenging new ideas.

Innovation and change bring freshness and challenge to heritage – as do

voices and perspectives from new members of a community. Place combines intangible local elements of community with sites and spaces that seem so influential on engagement. The asset-base of a place can bring together and share people's voices, be they incoming professionals, resident professionals, amateurs or practitioners of everyday creativity. The change equation begins to be even clearer:

Creative heritage x People's voice x Place = Expressive Life

You can change the maths of engagement in more ways than simply increasing numbers by multiplying local skills and assets, spaces and heritage to increase confidence, so that passion for 'grim', beloved places can be expressed without hiding any of its tensions or hurt.

At the heart of this process is what I heard a speaker say at Slung Low Theatre's Wild Conference in 2019. (As an aside: what a tender memory that outdoor gathering in the sunshine is, as I write this in March 2021, during yet another lockdown, and with it becoming harder and harder to imagine standing over a barbecue with a bunch of theatre makers or catching up with those I see as fellow conspirators as well as friends. One day, one day.) A community activist from one of the Creative Civic Change projects supported by Local Trust and Gulbenkian Foundation summed up how arts organisations should work in communities: "Be human together." This may sound obvious, maybe even a soundbite, of course, but it resonates with much of my argument here. It also sits alongside Slung Low director Alan Lane's mantra: "Be useful. Be kind." And that is much more difficult to do than to write.

The welcoming space of a centre for creativity, an arts centre, a cultural centre, a community centre, whatever it's called, is a space to practice being human together when so much business and cultural practice pushes people to act differently: to see people as markets, customers, providers or material, not other humans trying to live full lives, making and passing on cultures together. The very format of the conference encouraged us to avoid this, and to take ownership of our own contributions. This is not straightforward, but it is essential. It draws on all the characteristics of creative resilience: your purpose, your relationships, the assets you use and share, your budget. (As Joe Biden is quoted as saying: "Show me your budget and I'll show you what you believe in.")

What happens in the welcoming spaces?

What happens in the welcoming spaces? What kinds of spaces are they? And what happens to people there? How does that happen? I want to share some different ways of answering those questions from work I have been involved in, although there is also a growing body of work researching this topic which I am not going to attempt to summarise here. Let's say I am arguing *as if* the following were more or less accurate, or a more or less useful image for what can happen in certain circumstances.

It's important to say that what follows is not necessarily a building or what would generally be called an arts or heritage venue. You do not need an arts centre, a gallery, a museum, a theatre, a workshop, a studio space, a soundproof box, white walls, a library, a maker space or a building of any sort to make a welcome with people. But you might and you can, and often buildings are really useful. I want to speak in defence of arts buildings that draw people in and open themselves up for being *used* – arts centres in all senses of the word, whether also theatres, libraries, galleries or museums – as useful tools to make the potential space between the individual and the environment, even though I often feel unwelcome when I go into some of those spaces, just as I do in some pubs and social clubs: the arts do not have an exclusive on exclusion. (I once told a conference of librarians how often I felt unwelcome in their spaces, despite having many of my formative hours in libraries, and being a bookish type with a literature degree. They didn't like that. I thought I was going to get shushed.)

Well-run buildings with confident staff that embody the values of welcome and their local communities make it possible to spend time alone or with others, and feel welcome. They remove the 'not for the likes of me' barriers by being human rather than demanding conformity of views. They usually configure the physical spaces to make corners to hide, to spend time not being a consumer, as well as opportunities to eat, drink and have fun. They are learning spaces, well-facilitated and careful of people's emotional and physical security. People say hello. (I know that sounds basic, but I am flabbergasted how often it is not the norm, a phenomenon that speaks of ownership by staff and 'permitted' use by others.) Over time you might get to know the staff. At an event or show there will be some unobtrusive nurturing of a positive

atmosphere, of you being part or something. The venue will pay attention to your needs. If you need food, food will become part of the offer, by hook or by crook. You can come as you are, for what you need. There'll be people who look and sound like you, and people who don't. You will have a good time, a positive experience and that will build trust and appetite for more. When the venue gets something wrong, they apologise and get on with fixing it. All these things can be made easier and more consistently done in a well-designed and equipped building. (We must acknowledge that many of our cultural buildings need improvement in this regard.)

These things can also happen in found, borrowed and 'stolen' spaces, whether that's a 'meanwhile' space repurposed from the decline of the high street or industry, or public squares, riversides, high streets. Super Slow Way, the Creative People and Places project for East Lancashire, whose name reflects the canals of Pennine Lancashire, has used old mills and other sites. They have made the connection to a neutral or third space explicit in their framing of projects and their evaluation, which notes how "neutral or 'third' spaces can be a route towards engaging with people who are not accessing managed facilities and resources. Artistic processes can offer novel encounters in such spaces, enabling communities to re-imagine them and reveal and celebrate the histories and identities of the area."

They argue that such spaces "belong to no one or everyone" and are thus ripe for creative use, where all can find fresh dialogues and encounters, including between people of different cultural background and ages. They conclude "Super Slow Way has endeavoured to re-imagine the canal and its industrial buildings, many of which remain for the moment empty, not merely as sites of post-industrial decline and dejection but in a moment of transition, as potential places of cultural regeneration and developing social capital."[9] Community stories in settings resonant with community history seem to have a different power than touring stories. They can engage people deeply and change perceptions about the arts, which may in turn enable benefits such as increased confidence. This relates closely to the need for facilitation to make dialogue possible between different people, or even, you might say, with oneself. The physicist David Bohm, in his writing on dialogue, suggests its purpose is "to reveal the incoherence in our thought" in order to discover or re-establish a "genuine and creative collective consciousness".[10] It requires three basic conditions: a suspension of usual assumptions, a genuine

acknowledgement of others as peers, and the facilitation of a space, especially at first. This seems to me what happens within many creative and cultural projects.

These spaces, when they come together, make people feel comfortable with strangeness: people pretending to be other people; people moving in beautiful, rare ways; ancient artefacts, strange sounds and beats; marks on paper or canvas expressing meaning; even (sometimes) with that weird voice so many writers use for reading poems out loud. This very process of learning to play in the strangeness of arts and culture builds the capacity to care for others that communities need to nourish. The Care Collective, a group of researchers who created The Care Manifesto argue that one of the things needed to move from carelessness to care is what they call "everyday cosmopolitan" which I might argue should be "parochial cosmopolitan", to coin an oxymoron, and to connect back to John Tomaney's defence of parochialism. They seek "promiscuous care on a global scale – that moves our caring imaginaries beyond kinship structures, communities and nation states to the furthest reaches of the 'strangest' parts of the planet… Being cosmopolitan means being at ease with strangeness."[11] The parochial cosmopolitan is also at ease at home.

This seems to me a fundamentally creative and cultural project. It can happen in the street or the park. Stockton International Riverside Festival has, for more than 30 years, brought outdoor arts to my local town, building confidence in generations of local audience that look and talk very differently to those found in local theatres. My favourite story to illustrate this is of the day I overheard two stereotypical-looking Teesside blokes talking about a contemporary dance show on the High Street. One was looking very sceptical, but just as we thought he was going to move away saying it was a load of rubbish, he turned to his friend and said: "It's not as good as the dance thing we saw last year." He then moved on to give a detailed reasoning why he felt that. This critical discussion of actual art cannot but help to affect the culture in the broadest sense of Stockton, even if through some kind of tiny ripple effect.

It can happen in a small back room. Writing about the Belfast poet and musician Ciaran Carson, poet Wayne Miller describes how Carson cherished "the intimacy of the small back room – the fact that it's sheltered from the public eye and the marketplace of ideas – that [is what] makes it so vital,

the very heart of everything. Provisional spaces are essential to developing artistic ideas – particularly if those ideas are to be nuanced and layered and multifaceted, as humanistic thought generally should be."[12] Here, the intimacy – the implicit contrast with the mass event – helps generate connection and collaboration to use terms from the next chapter. (Think of the way small crowds negotiate silence and noise to generate atmosphere, and how much more visible and sensitive the interdependency is: we can see who's talking during the quiet bits, clapping or not clapping, playing with their phone…)

It can happen on international stages and platforms – those that have some sort of sanctioned status to be more than local. This can be important to artists and audiences, and especially to those not used to such platforms. And, as we have especially seen since the arrival of Covid-19, it can happen in the simultaneous somewhere/anywhere/nowhere/everywhere of the digital realm. Digital allows us to be in two places at once – although the same can be imaginatively true of a book, play or painting. (This may be why is it so tiring working through the medium of video calls.) It allows for different dimensions of strangeness to co-exist. The challenges of a number of digital divides – access to technology, confidence with technology, learning styles and information-processing preferences – mean this is as yet unsettled territory.

This idea that the place where creative happens and culture is made and remade is, regardless of its physical location or nature, one of potential, brings me to one of the most powerful framings of cultural life: D.W. Winnicott's idea of the potential space, a third space between "the baby and mother, between child and family, between individual and society or the world." The potential space is where we play, where play is used to explore and establish our reality, as well as where healing through therapy can occur. (This is important given the need to recognise trauma whilst building creative resilience which I will say more about later.) The potential space can be a game, an environment or landscape, music, theatre, a poem or dance – anything that allows a person, even momentarily, to feel outside what Winnicott described as "the perpetual human task of keeping inner and outer reality separate yet interrelated". The paradox of the play and the potential space – and of the welcoming space of culture – is that only by stepping out of that tension can one hope to resolve it through creativity. This connects the experience of play "which expands into creative living and into the whole cultural life of man" to creative resilience and creative community resilience. As Winnicott wrote in his essay *The*

Location of Cultural Experience, "Creativity… is the retention throughout life of something that belongs properly to infant experience: the ability to create the world."[13]

Building this space can look like the work of a moment or a lifetime, both for the individual and, if one expands the focus to those involved in sharing and promoting creative engagement of any sort, let's say the cultural sector. Winnicott emphasises a term that comes up time and time again when considering socially engaged practice or community engagement: trust. Trust, he says, equates to "the building up of confidence based on experience". As described elsewhere, and proven in much research, since the landmark report into museum audiences *Not for the Likes of You*, the lack of confidence built up within marginalised and ignored groups and communities as a result of their exclusion undermines trust and deters people from some parts of the cultural sector.[14]

For play to lead to exploration of the potential space in culture, and an understanding of self and work, we must build trust, therefore, at individual, organisational and sectoral level. I need a welcoming space within a venue or site, made by the combination of people, space and equipment (amongst other aspects this means it is safe and fully accessible in all ways whatever my particular background, impairments or characteristics). This needs to sit within a communal or organisational setting that I trust, and in an equitable relationship with the broader sector also rooted in trust. I need to trust the usher, the programmer, the director, the funders and so on for me for a visit to an arts centre to be what Winnicott calls "an inviting and safe interpersonal field in which one can be spontaneously playful while at the same time connected to others". This in turn builds up my ability to play, and to process play, and to relate to what I've persisted in short-handing here as culture. I take inspiration, again, from Winnicott here, who similarly decided not to fret overly, and let the word define itself with his readers. Although I would go further than he did in relating it to "the inherited tradition", I tend to agree with him that "I am thinking of something that is in the common pool of humanity, into which individuals and groups of people may contribute, and from which we may all draw *if we have somewhere to put what we find*."

This process is encouraged by the non-art-form specialist or cross-art-form nature of the non-arts 'third' space, or by the multi-art-form arts centre. These

are often part public space, part community centre, part meeting place, part theatre, gallery, studio complex. They tend to have very tight feedback loops with local demand and therefore a better chance of shaping their offer to the needs of artists, users or audiences, and other local stakeholders such as community groups or businesses.

One arts centre I worked with recently collected stories of what difference they had made to people who used the building or took part in creative learning activities, using the Most Significant Change technique. This is a story-based evaluation and research approach, which included here staff, management and board reflecting on first person stories of change.

People reported confidence built through creative activity and a better or different sense of self – one person described changing from a depressed self-described couch potato after being widowed to beginning to paint again and getting so energised he was now going on painting holidays in France. New skills and even that kind of progression to professional or advanced practice were often described, but for others the simple social connection to others they found at the arts centre was the most important thing. It was important that the programme was broad in its range of activities, and working with artistic integrity to provide multiple entry points to creative activities – and pathways for those that want to take them. Supporting people as they choose to explore further possibilities and to progress in their engagement was important. The stories revealed – or made clear again – the importance of a building to people who do not have a pre-existing relationship with an art form or a particular third space site's story or background. Having somewhere to go that is clearly cultural or creative but can also be used for purely social, or even practical, purposes – to meet friends, to get a cup of tea, to get out of the house – was important. Having somewhere to go to connect to a friendly face is too often taken for granted by the educated, connected frequent engagers in the arts, especially those actively involved in them either professionally or on an amateur basis. But isolation is a growing issue in society and having somewhere to go where people feel welcomed, relaxed, safe and valued for themselves matters not just to the individual but to society – and is even said to have an economic impact. (Research by Eden Project initiative The Big Lunch argued the cost to the economy could be up to £32 billion a year and a range of activities promoting 'neighbourliness' could already save up to £28 billion a year, although I might argue the figures miss the deeper point and

demonstrate the pressure to show everything in economic terms.)[15]

A UK government study found that in 2016-2017, 5% of adults in England reported feeling lonely "often" or "always", while almost half of adults say they feel occasionally, sometimes or often lonely. That is a pre-existing condition on which arts centres, libraries, museums and other cultural spaces have been working for years, before Covid made it much worse. Like Covid, though, it affects different groups particularly: the young, the widowed or single women, those with limiting conditions, renters more than homeowners. Tackling loneliness also increases a sense of belonging to a place or neighbourhood, and trust in others. As one person put it in reflecting on the stories, creative engagement in an arts space of whatever type, be that a class, gig or meeting, can, for a small proportion of those that use it, be an anchor in people's lives, and "a home that's different to home".

One point to connect this to the discussion of workforce earlier is that staff felt the diversity and culture of the staff team, which was representative of the locality, and the culture of the whole organisation, which they described as welcoming and supportive, made the welcome to others more possible: "If you feel you belong somewhere, it's easy to make someone else feel welcome."

Pay What You Decide is an approach that has successfully been used by many arts centres in recent years, although the idea and basic model has been tried many times in the past. ARC in Stockton found that when they introduced Pay What You Decide for some categories of performance – theatre, dance and spoken word – in 2014, audiences increased by 34.5% and income by 52%. Audiences new to ARC were up by 31.25% and audiences new to theatre at ARC (i.e. those who had attended other art forms or activities) were up by 13%.[1] Although not applied to other areas such as music and comedy, the model has been continued with online activity during Covid. Pay What You Decide introduces an element to the welcome of a venue, which is different from either the commercial model – pay what you can afford or bear – or the 'free entry' model which is so totemic for many in UK cultural policy, which could be parodied as Don't Pay, You Own It Already, Don't Pay, Donate or even Don't Pay, the Lottery Players in Poorer Areas Paid for This.

Pay What You Decide is *not* free entry – although it can be if someone chooses or needs it to be – but does three things important to the kind of welcoming

potential space I would like to see more of. Firstly, it encourages risk-taking in what people try, or reduces one element of risk – will I waste my money? Secondly, it encourages a reflection on value on the part of the audience, no matter how brief that might be between leaving the theatre and walking past the person with the collection box. How much do I want to give, what was that worth, how much do I want to contribute to that – even do the performers deserve to get well-paid for that or not? Thirdly, it asks for, and seems to generate (and be based upon) mutual trust between venue/promoter and audience. Over time, this becomes a relationship where people commit to the space and the organisation, and decide themselves what's possible. There's a greater sense of mutual dependency and interrelation than previously.

Finding Value(s)

One might expect the AHRC's Cultural Value Project to shed some light on what happens in the potential space for individuals and communities. I co-wrote one paper within this mammoth project, working with academics Joshua Edelman and Maja Sorli, looking at *The value of theatre and dance for Tyneside's audiences*[17]. Our findings included that amateur performance, while not quite as highly rated as its commercial counterparts, is not massively different from professional performance in the experience it provides to audiences, and that audiences enjoy watching the skilled and arduous labour of performers. This is even more so when they are amateur performers who they feel are "just like them." I have taken this as encouragement to not fret overly over the boundary issues in this book, although I acknowledge a different lens might bring those out more and find more use to put them to than I would have here.

An important thing I take from the Cultural Value Project overall, especially from projects such as Eleonora Belfiore's examination of value with a project centred on the Gordon Boswell Romany Museum, is that value is always contested, always politicised. "Whose cultural value?" as Belfiore puts it.[18] This is a parallel and related question to mine earlier of who gets to be resilient, and who gets to fail. Inclusion or exclusion of certain groups from the discussion of these topics changes the outcomes of those discussions.
The Cultural Value Project concluded with an influential aim to reposition first-hand, individual experience of arts and culture at the heart of enquiry

into cultural value, alongside more robust evaluation and evidence. This latter especially led to the creation of the Centre for Cultural Value – a collaboration between universities and cultural intelligence agencies such as the Audience Agency which in some ways exemplifies the kind of sector-level coming together envisaged in the creative resilience framework set out in Chapter Five. This focus on individual experience is best seen as the foundations of a collective or communal experience which manifests as culture at any particular moment in a particular place. Without the individual gaining the habits of negotiating the 'potential space' between self and other, inner and outer realities, and without the full span of the population having the opportunity to do so, we will struggle to achieve that as a society, and continue to reach for simplistic binaries and economic metrics.

The Cultural Value Project described the most significant values as residing in the ability of arts and cultural engagement to help shape reflective individuals, facilitating greater understanding of themselves and their lives, increasing empathy with respect to others, and an appreciation of the diversity of human lives and cultures, and thus producing engaged citizens. It is more sceptical about the impact of major cultural buildings in urban regeneration, although more accepting of the evidence of damage through gentrification and displacement than of benefits. It describes "a complex ecology of talent, finance, content and ideas" and focuses attention on how people engage in a wide variety of settings. Interestingly, given many of us have spent much time in lockdown during the Covid crisis, the final report stresses the importance of engagement at home and online: "Indeed, the home is where most engagement with cultural activities takes place and yet it is virtually ignored in discussions about their impact."

During the Art of Living Dangerously project, we brought together a group of artists, local authority culture officers, funders, educationalists and culture managers to identify the contribution of arts and culture to an area like Tyneside, based on their knowledge and evidence. They consistently described elements or values with a high degree of 'fit' with the findings of the Cultural Value project and of the stories from arts centres. These began with individuals and expanded out into the social and economic realms. Arts and culture were felt to be important to individuals in terms of personal development and well-being, with the stories, images, movements that people take to their hearts and minds resulting in delight, bafflement, joy, anger and other emotions, learning,

expansion of perception, creation of awareness, empathy. They were important in connecting individuals to family, friends and community. This was seen as often developing symbiotically with individual well-being and development. Culture has this network or social capital effect both physically, in venues and at festivals, for instance, but also intellectually and across time and space. It creates new norms right across behaviours and attitudes. These can, it should not be forgotten, also be restrictive and repressive of different groups at different times, leaving people frozen out or attacked by the coming together of others: the process is not free of values and politics. It can also be used to create "distinction" in the Bordieuan sense, to assert superiority and exclude or make connections to serve oneself. This is not just about class and getting ahead though, but also about what positively attracts some people to artistic and creative activity or worlds. Every school has groups of people who find each other through their cultural preferences: becoming one of the theatre crowd, the skaters, the gamers or the fashionistas involves both belonging and exclusion. Youth culture seems less tribal than it once was, but more divided, even more fragmented and often forming very specific subcultures in a social media-mediated world , but it continues to be a way of saying "I am. I am *this:* I am not *that.*"

At its healthiest, the process creates interdependencies – the positive heart of social capital – between people, even if it sometimes is in opposition to other groups. This happens in an audience, that magical connection much missed during Covid lockdown of being in a room with many people focused on a performance, who come together to become part of that performance, in the role of audience or crowd. This 'being an audience' is a process of co-operation and co-creation as much as some art: think how easily it can be damaged, by noise or shushing, by the person whooping at the wrong moments, or tutting at the whooping, by the talkers during the comedian's set, or the feeling that you don't know the rules so can never relax. (Think how you learnt the unwritten rules you no longer even realise are there.) This leads to what you might call the habits of culture, in its broadest definitions. As Creative People and Places and others have found, what people do in areas where low percentages of people take part in what the Taking Part survey covers (asking people about their behaviours within a much broader 'household survey') includes all sorts of other creative activities, which need to be recognised more.[19]

Creative community resilience

The next two paragraphs may look like product placement on behalf of the publishers of this book, but I want briefly to use the Albany and ARC as an example of one way – not the only way, but one way – of connecting co-creation with local people and artists and their livelihoods and expertise: an initiative new at the time of writing called Artists of Change. This gives local people in South East London and Stockton the opportunity to work directly with inspirational artists and co-create new programmes for their local arts centres. Artist are 'embedded' in the localities of the centres – Deptford and Stockton respectively – with no set outcome required, aiming to change the top-down producer/programmer/commissioner-led models still dominant in venues and touring networks. As well as reshaping what is presented, it will also change how decisions are made in each venue, involving artists and local people more. It's a step-change towards further democratising the way each arts centre is run.

The first artist commissioned from the Albany will be of a Black, Asian or minoritised background and the first from ARC Stockton will be from a working-class background, responding to local demographics and need. This builds on projects such as: Pizza and Pitches, which invites local people to submit their own creative ideas for funding at both venues; and the Here and Now project, a Future Arts Centres initiative where communities co-create work to reflect their local areas in 40 arts centres across the country. This is an exploratory way of working that avoids tying everything to KPIs and outputs, and is intended to bring a wider range of voices into the design of the work of each organisation. There is also an element of peer learning and support in the project, building on previous collaborations between the two centres.

The takeaway here is that involving artists in the processes of cultural democracy, rather than simply commissioning 'a thing' from them, can be a way to ensure the welcome for individuals and communities is connected back through to creative practice at every level. This has also emerged in another project I have worked on in the Tees Valley, which I think may have some elements others could borrow and use as a way of building creative community resilience.

The Great Place Tees Valley (GPTV) programme increased collaboration and partnership working across the Tees Valley, created training and employment opportunities for more than 350 local artists and small businesses, and supported more than 12,000 local people, children and families to create and enjoy cultural activities. Practitioners collected 60 stories from people with whom they had worked. These included stories of activity during the Spring 2020 lockdown and were used to create a mosaic of stories of what local people gain from cultural engagement. Examples included a man who a creative writing group had helped become more sociable after a breakdown: "Attending the group has stopped me slipping back. If I didn't get out I would spend more time internalising and always look on the dark side of life." Another man whose children had made puppets in a workshop culminating in involvement in a Halloween Parade connected his experience to matters of agency and confidence: "The smiles on the kids' faces as they walked up Church Street, puppet in hand, are something I will cherish forever. Our skeleton suddenly became part of the performance and this was when it really hit home that these events do matter to people. They build confidence in those that are involved and entertain those lining the streets." A woman, prevented from writing as a girl by family and societal pressures, had gained confidence from a writing group. "I feel as if I have really achieved something that I couldn't do before. If I hadn't joined the group I would never have put pen to paper and I would never have felt I had achieved anything."

Alongside the practitioner training and Most Significant Change evaluation, the GPTV Steering Group, which includes organisations active in the programme, came together to agree a set of shared 'Tees Valley Principles' to guide their work with local communities in future. The principles, summarised below, were developed to reflect learning from the work and evaluation. They would be useful principles to adopt for anyone wanting to create 'the welcoming space', in a building or without one, in a permanent space or a meanwhile or one-off space, in person or online or by mail. They should be foundational principles for anyone walking the tightrope of cultural and creative activity.

Long-term processes
It takes time and commitment – ongoing processes and sets of relationships – to work as well as we aspire to, not one-offs or time-limited projects.
Trust and partnership
Trust is central to everything that works well, and takes time and effort to

build. Working with communities means acknowledging local ownership and involving community advocates.

Social and creative solutions

We bring people together by designing the invitation and connection to address social barriers as well as creative and cultural ones. What works for some can exclude others, so variety matters.

Properly resourced and planned

We invest properly in creative processes and practices, and the people and practicalities involved, to build trust and help co-production, and we give work the greatest possible visibility.

Open minds and agility

Flexibility and agility lead to better impact, as we can respond to what we learn from conversations and work on the ground, and shape our effort better, rather than having set ideas and rigid plans.

Cross-scale collaboration

Collaboration and shared learning between organisations of all scales, individual freelancers and communities creates new networks of participants and practitioners so that all can play their part.

Beyond authorised narratives

Seeing or hearing yourself in cultural works can build confidence, self-esteem and self-understanding so we must be representative beyond 'authorised' or traditional narratives about the area.

Repetition and longevity

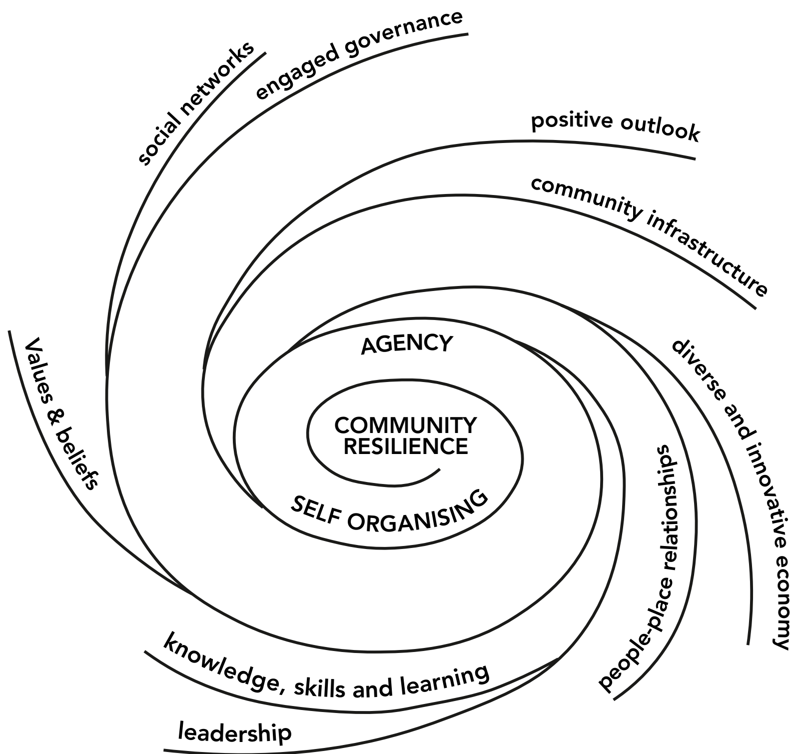
We do most things more than once so we can learn, get better and make what works well a habit, while empowering others so we become dispensable as communities gain momentum.

Quality of the whole – *everything*

The quality of experience, process, engagement, ambition, access and any creative output cannot be separated: they all matter.

We can connect this back to the idea of creative resilience through an integrated vision of community resilience proposed by researchers Berkes and Ross which builds on both the socio-ecological and psychological fields of resilience thinking.[20] They describe nine characteristics enabled or activated by agency and self-organising. These have a lot of similarities with the eight characteristics I argue make up creative resilience, which suggests the possibility of using one to model and boost the other:

- Knowledge, skills and learning
- Leadership
- People-place relationships
- Diverse and innovative economy
- Values and beliefs
- Social networks
- Engaged governance
- Positive outlook
- Community infrastructure



These things are found in creative communities as well as communities of place or interest. The devolution of decision-making power through long-term trusting and responsive relationships sought by ARC and The Albany, and reflected in the Tees Valley Principles, embody many of these factors. The networks bring in ideas – whose pitchers then draw in their own supporters,

family and friends – around loosely defined values and beliefs, to decide where money should go. This is enabled by leadership, informed by knowledge, and often connected to the community and voluntary groups. The debates bring strangers together to make decisions together, cultural democracy in practice. One could draw the same parallel with the increasingly common (pre-Covid) 'scratch' process, most codified by Battersea Arts Centre, which makes the development of new work a more collaborative and open process, involving anyone prepared to share constructive feedback. This builds resilience in artists as they learn about their work from different points of view.

Towards abundance

It is from this connection that I want to move to close this chapter by discussing briefly the work of Peter Block, an American writer, consultant and activist, as a bridge between the welcoming space and leadership. His work on communities has been influential on my ideas of creative resilience, multiplying leadership and creative communities, as well as his book on consulting being invaluable over the years. I first explored this in work for Creative People and Places, but it seems to connect to the thrust of this argument too: that shaping collaborative spaces for people to explore the world through dialogue and creativity, using the skills of multiplying leadership, is central to creative resilience not just of the cultural sector and organisations but of communities too.

In his book, *Stewardship,* Block sets out why a change from command and control, patriarchal and colonial modes of leadership is needed so communities can find their power. Leaders must choose service over self-interest – related to the idea of servant leadership but not simply that – and embrace the seeming paradox of "being deeply accountable without choosing to control the world around us". As he continues, this "requires a level of trust we are not used to holding." This has been many people's experience of working with the community and with artists in the community from their arts and cultural bases, building or otherwise.

The challenges he identifies to this, given our dominant culture, again resonate with what those creating the 'welcoming space' describe. For teams, artists and community members alike, the effort of co-creation is at times

difficult because people are so unused to not being in either an empowering or dependent position: “We often don’t know how to have a conversation where neither side is in control. Our training makes us very nervous when we all give up control.” Although Block uses “empowerment” positively, he is also suspicious of it being seen as bestowed on people: he talks about people assuming both their freedoms and responsibilities, and says that “entitlement is empowerment run aground”.

Block highlights the need for long-term change in ways that resonate for creative resilience, especially in light of a sharper focus on anti-discrimination action: “Service-based governance strategies mean the redistribution of power, privilege, purpose, and wealth. All the team building, improvement teams, and skills training in the world will not create service if the institutional questions of choice and equity never change. This is why organisations have such a difficult time taking advantage of their own successful experiments. It would force them to redistribute power and ultimately privilege.”

Block argues for the assumption of agency with self-definition of purpose and success: “Having others define for us our accountabilities, measure us against them and pay us in accordance with their measurements creates a culture of caution and compliance. Compliance is the antithesis of the emotional ownership that real accountability means…. Getting better at patriarchy is self-defeating.”

He is also alive to the dangers of what he calls “soft core colonialism” where community members are ‘enrolled’ without a fundamental shift in governance, “using participation as a means of getting people to adapt more cheerfully to their helplessness”.

At the heart of what I found so relevant to Creative People and Places’s leadership functions, and see in the work of many arts centres and socially or civically engaged groups, is the overall premise set out in Block’s *Community: The Structure of Belonging*. I can really do no better than quote it:

- “Build the social fabric and transform the isolation within our communities into connectedness and caring for the whole”
- “Shift our conversations from the problems of community to the possibility of community”
- “Connect to a future distinct from the past”.[21]

This, it seems to me, summarises what some of the most progressive practices in the cultural and social sector are doing, and what they enable when people enter their welcoming spaces. This includes the best of Creative People and Places and of the civic role and 'everyday creativity', the reinvention of some museums as useful community spaces, the expanding role of arts centres in communities and much more, including the strength in practice by Deaf and disabled people, people of colour, the LGBTQIA+ communities and other previously under-represented groups. One common element which Block writes about powerfully replaces coercion and persuasion – modes of audience development still prevalent in the arts – with an invitation which confronts people with their 'gifts' instead of an analysis of their failings, and is relational not colonising.

To do this, everyone must be willing and able to be authentic with each other. For Block, this is manifest in every meeting, especially every conversation which could lead to decisions. He brings this down not just to engagement process but to leadership, writing in one article that "The job is to hold a vision and bring it into every room you enter. Leadership at its best is the use of power to support the human spirit. It's the capacity to initiate something in the world." A creative act, I might say, which has the potential to positively increase the capacity of organisations and communities of people to be productive, valued and true to their self-determined core purpose and identity.

This involves changing our idea of leadership away from the charismatic, heroic model, and to emphasise the citizens who he says create leaders: "The essential task of leadership is not to be a role model or visionary, it is to engage citizens in creating this future for the commons." The commons is what I believe the welcoming space can become in arts centres, venues and 'third spaces' of all kinds, and what we need to explore if we are to work on the tightrope, and build creative resilience in creative communities.

CHAPTER SEVEN
MULTIPLYING LEADERSHIP IN CREATIVE COMMUNITIES

The point:

- *How Creative People and Places, and others, have developed an open, collaborative style of working that tends to decentralise and flatten authority, bringing many more voices into leadership and decision-making than typical hierarchical structures*
- *These approaches are part of broad movements working to decentralise power and break down patriarchal and hierarchical versions of culture and to work within complex systems*
- *Eco-system leadership through consortia and shared purpose*
- *Multiplying leadership: how to Connect people and ideas, Collaborate and co-create through exploration of shared purpose, Multiply the visibility and awareness of the effect, range and diversity of people involved, rooted in actions to Know the self, the community and the context, and Ask useful questions*
- *53 tactics for Multiplying Leadership practice are described*
- *The opportunity to move away from toxic, dividing leadership models is described*

Some questions:

- *How do/might you use a multiplying leadership approach in your work?*
- *Which elements of the framework are most useful to you and what could you do with them?*
- *Who or what could you connect, collaborate with or multiply?*

Introduction

"Our heroic impulses most often are born from the best of intentions. We want to help, we want to solve, we want to fix. Yet this is the illusion of specialness… If we don't do it, nobody will. This hero's path has only one guaranteed destination – we end up feeling lonely, exhausted and unappreciated. It is time for all us heroes to go home because, if we do, we'll notice that we're not alone. We're surrounded by people just like us. They too want to contribute, they too have ideas, they want to be useful to others and solve their own problems."
Margaret Wheatly, *Leadership in the Age of Complexity: From Hero to Host*[1]

This chapter draws on a report I did for the Creative People and Places National Peer Learning Network which was published in 2010. Creative People and Places is one of most significant interventions in English arts policy and practice of the decade before Covid came. Originally an Arts Council England response to statistically low levels of engagement in some local authority areas, it has developed into an action research programme happening in more than 30 areas across England, aimed at increasing arts engagement by bringing artists and local people together so more people choose, create and take part in brilliant art experiences where they live.

My research included interviews with all the directors at the time, as well as desk research, workshops and roundtables. Although this was mainly written pre-Covid, I have remained the Critical Friend to Museums Northumberland bait, the Creative People and Places project for South East Northumberland, and in touch with the network, and have observed how they have responded to lockdown and the impact of the pandemic on their local communities. I have seen huge commitment to continuing the co-creative and democratising work being done, including digitally or virtually. What I once thought of as a face-to-face practice has transferred well online – including the face-to-face of the Zoom room. What I have seen has confirmed my sense of how Creative People and Places demonstrates a more distributed, non-hierarchical type of leadership and creative practice.

I do, though, want to further underline that the local projects within Creative People and Places are not alone in this: many organisations and networks have responded to Covid similarly and have much in common with the framework I set out here. Networks and organisations alike have shown similar characteristics, and especially the core 'verbs' connect, collaborate and multiply have been very much in evidence across the new networks supporting freelancers, artists, Black workers, disabled creatives as well as localities.

What I will describe here is another way of looking at the kind of leadership that adds to the creative resilience of individuals, organisations, sectors and creative communities – be they communities of artists, localities or people bound together by common characteristics or interest. It combines identity and diversity through a process which *multiplies leadership* by building trust, being open and positive, and sharing control. Multiplying leadership means more people become confident in their agency, regardless of their place in

any hierarchy. It also means vastly more connections between people, which encourages more collaborative, less patriarchal structures for informed decisions, action, co-creation and learning.

This is an open, collaborative style of working with others that tends to decentralise and flatten authority, bringing many more voices into leadership and decision-making than typical hierarchical structures. It is also, crucially, the act and art of connecting potential leaders to each other in clear, productive structures so that everyone involved is active in the leadership of an organisation, project or community. These approaches are part of broad movements working to decentralise power and break down patriarchal and hierarchical versions of culture. Leadership is changing not for the sake of innovation alone, but to redefine what cultural engagement and capabilities might mean when everyone gets involved. Creative People and Places's influence, alongside that of others, may prove what Graham Leicester wrote in a prescient paper for Mission Models Money in 2008: "We are more likely to act our way into a new way of thinking than think our way into a new way of acting."[2]

It would be misleading to say Creative People and Places leadership approaches are all successful all the time, all the same, or unique within the social and cultural sectors. Looking at them in some detail gave me what you might call a clear view of a distributed model of leadership rooted in connection and learning. The network has built on de-centralising and anti-heroic strands of leadership practice. Here leadership is a team game, a collaborative effort of people in relationships, working for each other and the collective across groups, types and power dynamics. In this, it challenges engrained, dominant ideas about leadership, accountability and control. It also makes it hard work at times for the individuals involved.

It has multiplied the number and range of people involved in leadership within the community and within the systems active in the 'places'. Sharing power, including decision-making, has been paramount, alongside a willingness to learn from failure and an open, trust-building approach. Knowing the people and place, connecting people and ideas and building trust, have been crucial. They have seen leadership as a non-linear, sometimes messy practice, not a set of skills or actions you turn on and off. Creative People and Places has built teams which bring in a good range of voices and backgrounds. The leadership

across the network has a much higher proportion of women than is typical, with flexible work patterns common, and there are examples of progression from non-traditional backgrounds. The teams are generally small and there is support from host organisations, which may allow a greater external partnership focus, especially where the host is a non-arts organisation.

Creative People and Places is not unique in this, but part of a progressive movement you can see all over the UK, of people developing and modelling leadership in ways that reject archaic, heroic, individual-centred models. I contrast the example I was given of a Chief Executive who preferred to meet people of equivalent job title, with that of the Artistic Director (Alan Lane of Slung Low) I saw quite naturally handing out ice cream and shifting tables and clearing up as part of hosting a conference. One was living the in the 19th century, the other in the 21st. How far the collaborative, distributed model can take over from control, targets and ego may depend on our collective ability to multiply leadership in the next decade.

Leadership academic Keith Grint says "wicked problems" demand messy or clumsy solutions. Writing about leadership has felt, to me, like a wicked problem. Over-simplification beckons on one side. Over-complication on the other. One danger is it can easily sound as if leadership is one thing, rather than *multiple*. Even the collaborative leader sounds heroic. I try to avoid that through my key word: *multiplying*. This means diversifying not copying. The three elements of connecting, collaborating and multiplying leadership take many forms, using many and diverse combinations of skills, preferences and approaches. Here I set out a broad set of potential elements – some vocabulary I invite you to use, adapt, remix and build on, or indeed over.

If the number, range and diversity of people in leadership is to increase, leadership will have to be more *multiple and various,* transforming a cultural sector still dominated by white men in positions of formal authority. The skills and traits used will also multiply and applications differ. To that end, parts of this chapter, revised from my original report, are more a set of ingredients with thoughts on what works together than menus and recipes.

I hope it does not lead to one 'new' leadership, but to many. To paraphrase Louis MacNeice, let us embrace the world's incorrigible plurality and things being various: multiply now.

Cultural leadership

I considered Creative People and Places as both a cultural and a social programme. Its specific brief is to increase arts engagement in areas of statistically low engagement, and to work with local community members and groups, delivering excellence of both engagement process and cultural product. This has meant it has often worked in areas which also have significant indicators of multiple deprivation. Addressing these, or regeneration, is not part of its stated brief, but the correlation has often brought the cultural and the social together. What then is the current context in each of those areas? I shall describe them separately but the reality of many people and organisations is that they overlap or are one and the same thing.

Leadership is a recurrent and important concern in arts policy in England, seen as connecting to resilience, to workforce diversity, productivity and ultimately to quality and reach. Launching their Transforming Leadership fund in 2019, Arts Council England's Director of Skills and Workforce, Jane Tarr, wrote that leadership is seen as "the most influential factor in shaping ways of working and workplace culture". She also said that "We believe leadership exists inside and outside organisations, at all levels and career stages." The fund invested more than £7m into 18 projects.

An emphasis on leadership as central to the resilience of organisations has influenced strategic programmes. The Museums and Resilient Leadership programme, for instance, argues that decision-making is "the key dimension" and that "to define, energise and see through change, the leader must make decisions in the service of their organisation". Although there are collaborative elements, the emphasis is on charismatic leadership modes: personal, organisational and relational capacity, presence, knowledge, communication, entrepreneurialism. These include some elements which appear likely to exclude some groups, such as "good health and emotional balance", which might limit leadership for people with ongoing health conditions.

Robert Hewison and John Holden, who contributed much insight to the creation and development of Clore Leadership, also co-wrote the influential *Cultural Leadership Handbook*.[3] The model for leaders which emerges from this practical guide to how to run a creative organisation, combines the need to

shift from hierarchy to network, from fixed to fluid, with a practical focus on the necessary skills, competencies and behaviours for individuals. It is less concerned with collective action, and some aspects could create leader-dependency. A leader is, for instance, described as an inspirer, a direction setter, a problem solver, a controller.

A Cultural Leadership Reader, edited by Sue Kay and Katie Venner[4], published in 2010, contains a range of insights across themes of distributed and collaborative leadership within increasing complexity. It also includes a number of essays reflecting on diversity and voice in leadership teams. Although as Sue Kay comments in an overview essay, the majority of contributions frame leadership as involving "leaders, followers and common goals", the collection reflects a shift towards a more systemic approach, building on the work of Arts Council England's Cultural Leadership Programme (steered by Hilary Carty, now Director of Clore Leadership.)

Changing Cultures, a report for Arts Council England by Sue Hoyle and Kings Culture argues that the challenges faced by the cultural sector include a changing external landscape, financial pressures, changing tastes and demographics of both audience and workforce talent, meaning that organisations need to become more inclusive and innovative if they are to be resilient.[5]

The paper identifies a desire for leadership styles that are what it calls "facilitative, flat and more diverse". Its analysis chimes with many of the concerns raised when I published my original report, which suggested that there was still a long way to go until this was an accepted and expected style. Many felt old patterns persisted in many places. The report suggests change is "a special challenge to hierarchical models of leadership and create(s) new pressures that may exacerbate the already high risk of burnout in the sector, at all levels". Again, much of the debates around 'resets' during the pandemic (such as that around levels of pay at senior levels in national institutions being maintained whilst redundancies concentrated on front of house and trading staff, who are more likely to be young and from disadvantaged communities) have shown this to be the case, whilst also demonstrating the potential benefits of a less hierarchical approach in tackling the issues of burnout.

The set of leadership competencies and behaviours suggested in *Changing Cultures* builds on that developed by Hoyle during her time at Clore Leadership.

This is based on four areas:

- Know yourself
- Build relationships
- Embrace change and innovate
- Be responsible

Although the model might appear to focus on individual leaders and their skills, competencies and behaviours, including some that fit comfortably with older models (e.g. confident, decisive), the main thrust is towards flatter, less hierarchal, distributed leadership. It thus connects to two other strands: renewed interest in variant strains of cultural democracy, and an increased focus on the civic role of arts organisations and activity. Arguments for greater cultural democracy have included strands calling for a greater range of creative activity to be recognised and supported, clustering around the notion of 'everyday creativity' championed in different ways by organisations such as 64 Million Artists and Fun Palaces. (The latter bringing art, science and other forms of creativity together on an equal footing in a community-led, skill sharing way.) It has also included arguments for devolution and reallocation of resources and decision-making. *Cultural Democracy in Practice*, a report by 64 Million Artists for Arts Council England identifies a paradigm shift from the leader as "a leader with all the ideas who disseminates them to others… [to] a leader who facilitates others to have ideas".

The Gulbenkian Foundation's Inquiry Into the Civic Role of Arts Organisations has put particular emphasis on leadership and governance, albeit couched in terms of the vision and belief in co-production of leaders. The Inquiry more often situates the civic role as including empowerment and enabling, terms which others dispute. In the Inquiry's publication *What Would Joan Littlewood Say* several interviewees frame the civic role as involving a letting go of control so others can recognise and exercise their own power. Doreen Foster, Director of Warwick Arts Centre, says: "Our cultural institutions and cultural leaders need to get out of the way if they are really committed to change because it is only when they get out of the way that we can fully understand what others might want to do with the space."[6]

The Inquiry has partnered with other trusts and foundations and with lottery funders to support two large networks relevant to this discussion.

Creative Civic Change is a partnership between Local Trust, the National Lottery Community Fund, the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation and the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation. It explicitly focuses on "the dynamic between artists and arts organisations and communities when communities take the lead" and hopes to influence arts organisations to be less top-down. The Co-creating Change Network, convened by Battersea Arts Centre, brings together organisations working in a co-creative way. This involves looking at how much agency people have at different points in a project – from set up through activity including selection, use of resources and ownership of any output or outcomes. It emphasises "working in non-hierarchical ways to address a common issue, and which enables people and communities to be actively involved in shaping the things which impact their lives" – although interestingly it does not mention leadership per se.

To summarise, then, I am drawn to an idea in Graham Leicester's 2008 paper for Mission Models Money, *Rising to the Occasion*, in which he sets out why the arts sector must play a larger role in reacting to a variety of global 'crises' of change. Cultural leadership, Leicester argues, is not about "putting Humpty back together again", seeking stability, but must "help evolve the culture". He suggests that "creative adhocracies" – groups of people coming together to take on specific challenges outside organisations – should look to become not "crisis academies" but "academies of hope". This feels even more urgent when thinking of a post-Covid situation, or a future shared with the virus. It sits clearly with a creative resilience approach, rather than any attempt to be resilient by staying the same.

Social leadership

The same contested shift from centralised hierarchies of control towards collaborative, distributive ways of leading in complex systems or ecologies can be seen in the social sector.

Clore Leadership concentrates on cultural leaders, although many Fellows work in socially engaged contexts. In 2010, a sister organisation was created, Clore Social Leadership, which aims to "develop leaders with a social purpose so that they can transform their communities, organisations and the world around them". They have adopted a capabilities framework made up of six

elements. According to Clore Social, the leader needs to be an:

- Inspirational communicator
- Empowering enabler
- Focused strategist
- Passionate advocate
- Generous collaborator
- Courageous change-maker

The similarities between social sector concerns and those of the cultural sector can be found in the Civil Society Futures inquiry which ran from 2017-2018. This included cultural perspectives in exploring how civil society could flourish and tackle the big challenges faced by communities in the UK. It was a very wide-ranging inquiry which concluded a call for organisations and individuals to commit to what it called a PACT, focused on changing approaches to Power, Accountability, Connection and Trust. Follow-up activity has included a focus on leadership. This includes the need to broaden who leads by increasing access to power, resources and networks for excluded groups. The future styles of leadership required are summarised as generous, open, distributive, inclusive, authentic and compassionate.

Systems thinking and other relevant strands

Much of the challenge of actually dreaming on the tightrope is that the tightrope only looks like a straight line: in reality it is part of a complex system, and dreaming on it requires the skills of creative resilience in a complex system.

Complexity is different from complication, as there is no single logical response to a complex issue. The tightrope is not a matter of complicated logic, especially when you extend the invitation to others, as I argue you must. This is often called a "wicked problem', as I discussed earlier. Keith Grint has explored leadership in relation to wicked problems, and argued that they "require the transfer of authority from individual to collective because only collective engagement can hope to address the problem"[7]. (Many phenomena, including arts engagement, can be framed as failures in addressing wicked problems but that is not always the most useful way of framing them: I always want to start with assets, and what we do know and can control enough to move out from that.)

Leadership in complex systems is seen not as a position of authority but as a series of events where people interact. These might be conversations, meetings, moments in the day of an organisation, but they are dynamic and relational, not static or hierarchical. Leadership *emerges*, in this view. This emphasis on emergence is also found in the work of writers such as Peter Senge, who has been influential in spreading a systems approach and collaborative processes. This fundamentally challenges some approaches to leadership: "Ineffective leaders try to make change happen. System leaders focus on creating the conditions that can produce change and that can eventually cause change to be self-sustaining."[8]

Many of the facilitation techniques used in defining purposes and strategy have roots in Senge's techniques, and his emphasis on empathy, communication, relationships and reflection. His practical basis is relevant to sectors such as culture and the social sector, where learning by doing is often a preferred style. He calls for "practice, practice, practice", using the tools with "the regularity and discipline needed to build their own and others' capabilities".

Systems leadership has become commonly advocated in the public sector, partly as a response to the many challenges faced by local authorities and those they work with in civil society. Collaborate CIC have worked with academic and ex-arts organisation director Toby Lowe to explore funding, commissioning and managing in complexity. This is largely applied to the place-based social and public sectors but is highly relevant to the cultural and socially engaged arts sectors. *Exploring the New World* argues for an approach summed up as Human Learning Systems, a frame Lowe described to me as deriving from his work in the arts, where it became clear that an outcomes-focus was "the wrong frame for good work". The Human Learning Systems framework stresses learning – including a need for funders to explicitly fund learning, not outcomes – and a "positive error culture" when things do not work as planned.[9]

I want to conclude this section by mentioning briefly some other areas useful for me in contextualising the type of leadership I sum up as multiplying leadership, which I have seen in Creative People and Places, in the arts centres network and in other cultural organisations, especially those working with communities on an equal footing.

First is the continuation of a shift first described by Daniel Goleman[10] as the coming together of IQ (commercial) and EQ (social) skills. Dry, data-driven management is increasingly out of tune with a cross-generational workplace. Many teams will now combine people with different frames, ages and life experiences and different, sometimes clashing, takes on gender, sexuality, identity and equity. This requires sophisticated interpersonal skills.

The distributed, decentralised models referred to earlier are explicitly seen by some writers as a necessary response to ethical or social justice failings in dominant power, command and control models. Leaders working in these ways, the argument goes, tend to be white, tend to be male, tend to not identify as disabled or LGBTQIA+. Styles often mirror the power patterns and methodologies of privilege, patriarchy and colonial mindsets.

Peter Block suggests that it is not simply the outcomes of organisations but the processes which embed patriarchal and colonial paradigms in them and the people working within them. Organisational rituals such as meetings, reporting and performance appraisal can combine to subvert equity and collaboration. The structures and scaffolding of leadership conversations can free or subdue, create dependency and compliance or freedom, responsibility and commitment. The organisation can extract value or co-produce it. It can engage in active listening or in broadcast and response.

These strands connect to an interest in decolonisation of institutional practice. Although this is often framed as the leadership necessary for the work – e.g. what kinds of leadership best decolonise museums, tackling issues of history and repatriation of stolen collection items – there are fewer people linking hierarchical, target-driven leadership to the colonial mindset of control and extraction of value leadership. One such is Edgar Villanueva, author of *Decolonizing Wealth*. About decolonising leadership he writes: "We have to shift from our obsession with individual leaders to a focus on organisational design… moving us away from the colonised hierarchical pyramid structure, with its command-and-control leadership, to a realisation of how everyone has leadership potential."[12]

Finally, there is much read-across between feminist leadership thinking and the patterns described above. In *A cultural leadership reader*, Donna Lakin suggests an "aesthetic of inclusivity" to promote women in senior leadership. In

Feminist Leadership for Social Transformation: Clearing the Conceptual Cloud, Sriwatha Batriwala examines broader feminist theory. A quote she shares from Mahnaz Afkhami, Ann Eisenberg and Haleh Vaziri in *Leadership Training Handbook for Women*, makes a suitable conclusion to this section: "Good leadership – leadership that serves both women and men, poor and rich, and the powerless and powerful – is inclusive, participatory and horizontal… the processes are just as important as the objectives themselves."[13]

The picture drawn here is one of long-term change in how leadership is conceived by some people and constituencies. These are not uncontested, of course. One need only look at the realm of elected politics to see different ideas of what makes for good leadership demonstrated by both politicians and the public. Neither should the tension between openness and control be seen as an issue of progressive or liberal mindsets against conservative or authoritarian ones. There are advocates – some vocally, some silently – for all kinds of leadership. This is true within the cultural sector as much as anywhere else.

There is a long history of practice in community arts and socially engaged practice, well documented now by writers such as Francois Matarasso, Alison Jeffers and Gerri Moriarty. Parts of Moriarty's account of the early days of community arts in the north west of England could be taken directly from interviews with Creative People and Places directors and teams, or with those leading many arts centres: "I talked very little and I listened a lot. My work became informed by the everyday difficulties and concerns of local people; I did not try to create a plethora of arts activities and expect people to turn up to take part in them. I tried to engage with and contribute my skills to the existing cultural life of the community; I did not try to drag an unwilling and disinterested community into 'my' version of culture."[14]

In this way we see what I describe as multiplying leadership approaches are not innovations, but rather build on and form part of a long decentralising movement towards collaboration and stewardship, and away from command and control hierarchies, including within culture and cultural value. They can, though, be adapted and spread by finding what works best for each group of people, each creative community.

Creative People and Places, at its best, has injected different, more open and

collaborative leadership into those place-based leadership systems. It has been 'in the room' with its vision, and with unusual suspects. (This is now deepening at governance level in some Places, with independent community members joining the consortia discussions that guide each Place's work.) It has been conscious of those *not* in the room, and sought to host new conversations. It has brought an approach of engaging positively with ideas, people and groups 'saying yes, and', as part of its action research ethos. As Peter Senge wrote: "Transforming systems is ultimately about transforming relationships among people who shape those systems."

Multiplying leadership

I will describe in more detail what I mean by multiplying leadership. It is at times a style of leadership, and at times an ongoing process. Often it is both simultaneously.

The academic and trainer Liz Wiseman has written about the way in which some leaders can double effort and results from their teams, whilst the style of others actually reduces effectiveness and commitment.[15] The diminishing leader, as she calls them, is a micromanager, a directive, know-better decision maker, as well as at times a controlling empire builder. (Note the colonial imagery.) In contrast multipliers attract and liberate talent, stretch people through challenge and debate, and invest in others.

Investment in talented new leaders, either as part of the team or in the community, often leading to new independent groups, is increasingly seen as part of the exit strategy for the Creative People and Places projects entering later phases. Several interviewees described the talent that would be left as a central legacy of their work. For some, "doing ourselves out of a job" was a major aim of Creative People and Places leadership development.

Fundamental to the multiplying function is a belief in people's abilities and creativities. The core assumption has shifted from a deficit model, rejected by many early on in audience development programmes and in Creative People and Places's evolution, to one of assuming the ability to figure things out and therefore looking for the ideas people have, or can create together. Creative People and Places seems to have become essentially people-led, working in

particular places and systems *with* them, not on them or doing things to or for them. In a presentation at a Creative People and Places/Clore Leadership Development Day, Phil Douglas of queer arts organisation Curious, argued that "I haven't led from the front, I have led from within. A For and With approach is honest, open and when most effective, without agenda. The only outcome should be people focused, from that genuine community led content will be developed. Focusing on the 'with and how' more than the 'what'."

The exploratory positivity of an action learning project such as Creative People and Places is, it should be conceded, a more straight-forward place to get beyond comfort and risk-reducing zones and into a safe space for risk-taking than many arts organisations with business-critical issues to face and revenue income targets to meet. Sometimes, some chief executives might counter, it's just impossible for them to say yes so readily. This has been one of the privileges of Creative People and Places, although projects increasingly have to consider income generation and fundraising as well as capacity building and learning.

Eco-system leadership

Each Creative People and Places project is led by a consortium. These must include a community organisation and an arts or cultural body, and they typically include other arts groups, local authorities, private sector, housing, health or others. Each has a Lead Partner who holds funding on behalf of the consortia and is ultimately responsible for the grant. They then employ a delivery team, usually including a director or co-directors with formal leadership authority. Some models vary, with some becoming independent organisations, but this is the most common.

The consortium approach has meant that leadership has been shared and collective from the beginning, and part of the role of directors has been to work with that collective of views, styles and ambitions. This has built multiplication into the work in a really positive way, often bringing in 'unusual suspects', especially in terms of community and social sector partners. It has, however, added complication at times for directors and consortium members, with attention being paid to equality, competition for resources and local dynamics, as well as different styles. Consortia mean Creative People and

Places is by nature a multi-stakeholder environment both on the ground and at a governance level, which has drawn on and developed skills needed to work with groups. The consortia are structures, built to include a range of representation, insight and support. They are also relationships, and thus fluid and subject to change over time. This was described in an interview as creating "a challenge of managing expectations and ethics – intellectually it's complex and tiring". Overall, my strong sense is that consortium working is an important factor in enabling Creative People and Places to work in different ways to many arts organisations.

The nature of each consortium – e.g. whether it is led by an arts organisation or a social sector charity – has influenced how things have developed. Some of the relationships with host organisations and their leaders have been challenging for directors, although there are different patterns to be found. For some, being a cultural programme in a non-arts organisation has provided a clear social context, good networks, colleagues with complementary skills and direct routes into communities. For others, it has been isolating and some have felt they lacked support and supervision. For those hosted by cultural organisations, the downsides have included competition issues, which have become more apparent as the onus on consortia to raise funds has grown over the three phases, leading to difficult discussions sometimes over competing agendas within organisations. This competition is exacerbated by the pressure on organisations to ensure income and business resilience, whilst also hosting a developmental action research project in Creative People and Places. When these factors have combined with different leadership styles or imperatives, the impact on directors and their managers has sometimes been difficult.

In their report for Creative People and Places, *Creating the Environment: The cultural eco-systems of Creative People and Places,* Jonathan Gross and Nick Wilson argue for increased focus on eco-system leadership.[16] They position Creative People and Places as part of a network of organisations and influencers active in leading or stewarding local, and by implication regional and national, eco-systems to achieve or maintain health. This suggests an onus on the Creative People and Places network to nurture leaders beyond its own teams. The report quotes a director as saying "I love it when people don't need us anymore. And people find the confidence not to consult with us to do things, and that's exactly the way it should be." This was echoed many times in my interviews.

The traits of systems leadership identified by Peter Senge et al, of openness, listening, trust and collaboration, are all repeatedly identified as important to Creative People and Places leaders, in interviews and in the survey of teams. This is also reflected in how many arts centres and arts organisations have practically worked during Covid lockdowns, connecting not to ticket purchasers but to local partner organisations across the voluntary sector, or with local people through family events or doorstep performances, as well as online and through 'old' tech such as the postal service or the landline. Managing and co-ordinating relationships and considering impact together come through as important factors. Reflection is noted as happening both with the various stakeholders in a place, and across the Creative People and Places network through the peer learning groups. The value of the peer learning network, supported by Arts Council England from the beginnings of Creative People and Places, and the network of critical friends, are repeatedly connected by directors to their role within ecosystems of place and culture.

Gross and Wilson note that "ecological leadership is likely to require the ability to build partnerships in ways that combine both flexibility of membership/involvement and clarity of purpose: such that, regardless of the ebbs and flows of funding, relationships last". This is clearly a concern for those consortia entering the later phases of their funded work, who are now looking to embed ways of working into the broader networks. One director described "a lot of stepping back and letting things happen, so the learning can be had – whilst knowing when to step in and out."

The notions of stewardship and servant or service leadership seem a good fit for much of Creative People and Places leadership. There is a consciousness about inadvertently creating dependency and not recognising pre-existing skills. Although words including "enabling" and "empowering" were used in interviews, they were usually qualified. Often they were used more in line with Stella Duffy's neologisms "compower" or "conable", and her argument that "we need to stop empowering people", and start doing *with* rather than *for*.[17] Creative People and Places directors often described a sense of responsibility for "bringing people on" or "creating pathways" on which people could develop. From community champion type roles, through to apprenticeships and formal or informal mentoring by team members, teams have often focused effort on developing local people as cultural and social activists and, where desired, professionals.

A framework for multiplying leadership practice

A difficulty with frameworks is they elide a diversity of ways of doing things, boil a panoply of qualities into a smooth soup of cycles or lists. They can make the difficult seem manageable – or turn the bleeding obvious into buzzwords. They can make the messy seem linear – or in avoiding that become confusing. What follows may fall into all those traps, but it attempts to sum up the main patterns of leadership practice described in the previous section.

What is most interesting to me about multiplying leadership is not so much the individual skills but the collective practice. The first question for the potential leader should not be "How do I do this?" or "What skills do I have to do this?" but "How do we do this together, and how do I act to help that happen?" What follows then builds on individual skills and ways of working, especially how each uses some of the elements described in the next section. But this practice is done collectively and collaboratively and the framework below can be seen as the attributes of a healthy culture or system as much as that as those working within it.

Multiplying leadership is more a process than a programme or a set of skills, competencies and behaviours, but it is not a linear one. Although the eye seeks lines and circles, reality will mean many loops and steps back and forth between the elements described below. Connection is necessary for collaboration, and then for amplifying what's done and learning from it, but it can also flow from that collaboration and reflection. Leadership happens in time, and takes time: putting it on the page can make it look static, but it is fluid.

The leadership approach is rooted in activities which

- **Connect** people and ideas

- **Collaborate** and co-create with people through exploration of shared purpose
- **Multiply** the visibility and awareness of the effect, range and diversity of people involved, and also the collective learning from experience
- **Know** the self, the community and the context, and **Ask** useful questions

There is a recursive pattern here: these elements apply to how a consortium works, to a programme team, to work across localities or neighbourhoods, and to work in the place as a whole, as an ecosystem. The pattern also applied to how new 'leaders' have been involved, developed and supported.

One problem referred to above is that many frameworks concentrate on leadership by individuals, no matter how connected or collaborative. The frameworks are often implicitly individual/first person singular. However, these could be reframed into the first person plural. For instances, the Clore Leadership and Clore Social models could be reinterpreted as opposite.

The Multiplying Leadership framework is designed in reverse: from the collective activity of multiplying leadership must be drawn the individual skills and responsibilities necessary.

CLORE LEADERSHIP

FIRST PERSON SINGULAR (I)	FIRST PERSON PLURAL (WE)
Know yourself	We know our communal/collective strengths and weaknesses
Build relationships	We can work together to find shared purpose, making the most of our differences
Am responsible	We take collective responsibility
Innovate and embrace change	We can do things differently and embrace positive change

CLORE SOCIAL

FIRST PERSON SINGULAR (I)	FIRST PERSON PLURAL (WE)
Inspirational communicator	We are able to communicate well between ourselves and enthuse others
Empowering enabler	We are able to draw out the skills and abilities of all of us, so everyone feels confident to act
Focused strategist	We are able to find the best way forward to achieve common purpose
Passionate advocate	We are able to tell our story and generate support
Generous collaborator	We are able to work together generously
Courageous changemaker	We are able to make changes with bravery

53 tactics for Multiplying Leadership practice

This section describes individual elements that can be important to the Multiplying Leadership practice framework. They form four suits – as in a pack of cards – Connect, Collaborate, Multiply, plus a fourth of Know/Ask, which reflect the four parts of that framework. (There is also a Joker.) This deliberately large set is a device for setting out my own synthesis, based on patterns in what emerged from the Creative People and Places research, and from my work with other organisations and networks, as key skills for more collaborative open leadership practice. Part of the argument is that multiplying leadership requires a set of skills which cannot be held by one person, at least not at any one time.

I present this very wide set of things deliberately, as it feels reductive and prescriptive to boil this set down further. Many leadership frameworks imply an unrealistic level of uniformity in individuals: in reality no single person, team or place will be working with all 53 elements. They may, though, each combine elements in different ways, depending on personality and context, and at different times. The elements are a mixture of things to do, things to be, consider or ensure, ways of being and relating to others.

You might read this section straight through, or you may find it helpful to look for factors which you think most relevant to your own practice. In the compendium of tools is a set of questions related to these tactics, intended for practical use by individuals or teams.

Connect
- Know
- Human
- Connect
- Disrupt
- Share
- Listen
- Host
- Consortium
- Trust
- Identity
- Honest
- People
- Curious

Collaborate
- Steward
- Community
- Care
- Failure
- Diversity/Difference
- Purpose
- Empathy
- Co-create
- Time
- Generous
- Who
- With/In
- Open

Multiply
- Amplify
- Multiply
- Let go
- Mentor
- Distributed
- Powerful
- Relational
- Incremental
- Messy
- Reflect
- Decision
- Status
- Voice

Know/Ask
- Of/By
- Authority
- Power
- Story
- Learn
- Joy
- Proportion
- Vulnerability
- Who
- Patience
- Eco-system
- Committed
- Frame

The Joker: Paradox

CONNECT

Know

Self-knowledge is crucial for the leader – understanding your own values, motivations, preferred styles, strengths and weaknesses, and observing the effect you have on others. Knowing and understanding communities you are working with and in is important – this may include demographics but, more importantly, it will, over time, need to include the people and associations, formal and informal, that connect communities. (Use the ABCD tool to help.) On a simple level, getting to know a wide range of people is crucial – not just the usual suspects or those in formal positions of authority.

Human

One former Creative People and Places director described to me that when they saw the "human-centred design" process, connected to Creative People and Places by The Audience Agency, she felt "Yes! I didn't know what I was doing before but now I know what I'm doing and want to carry it on." Being people centred and connecting to people on a human level, with empathy, can help strip away the consequences of hierarchy and power. It is the opposite of 'corporate'.

Connect

This is one of the basic building blocks of Multiplying Leadership. When people connect they share ideas and skills, and come up with fresh ideas. They explore similarities and differences. They can become a community, a team, a squad, friends and colleagues. Results start to belong to teams, to 'creative communities'. E.M. Forster famously wrote "only connect". The Multiplying Leader would go on to encourage those connections to become networks, collaborations and partnerships.

Disrupt

The tech-capitalists are fond of disruption, but I don't see why we should let them own the word. For many, especially those with backgrounds in community development and diversity, disability activism or anti-racism work, for whom challenging and changing dominant norms has been important, the word still resonates. This is the partner in paradox of 'connect'.

Share
This is a central verb for creative resilience and multiplying leadership. Enabling community decision-making by sharing power, as well as time, attention, resources. The spaces for exploring needs, challenges and ambitions through conversation and co-creation need to be ones that people of all kinds can share. Sharing of resources and assets also tends to increase community resilience.

Listen
The power of active listening is not only in gathering information but in ensuring everyone feels heard. Feeling heard can be a rarity in lives which lack agency and power. Communities can feel ignored, or patronised. For many, seemingly cash-rich projects or cultural organisations need to prove their sincerity before they can be trusted. That starts with listening. It continues with listening to everyone involved in the co-creation.

Host
Margaret Wheatly has written of a shift in the leader's role "from hero to host". I choose to emphasise the verb not the noun, to suggest that hosting is something everyone in a place or system needs to do. The care necessary to hold open a space in which people can come together is that of hospitality and welcome. The host – or facilitator – can hold the space so people can discuss safely, or play. (It also often involves food.)

Consortium
Consortium working is more and more common in the cultural and social sectors. People are increasingly developing shared views, ambitions and action plans to work on together, in both formal and informal 'governance' structures. Consortium working loosens control over what is done, although every member should retain the right to say no and power dynamics still need to be acknowledged. What happens if we see all work as part of a consortium, formal or not?

Trust
Trust has been central to the achievements of Creative People and Places, and has been a vital component of its leadership role. It is central to co-created work and to the work of consortia and partnerships. Trust within teams, consortia, communities, and with artists and audiences, must be continually

built and can easily be lost. Trust enables dialogue, exploration of ideas and co-creation. Trust can trump fear or risk.

Identity

Identity can be limiting *and* liberating. Adopting more open, collaborative leadership does not mean you, your organisation or your programme should lack identity. The many different identities within creative communities means the leadership should represent the full diversity of the communities. Different identities expressed through shared exploration and purpose don't cancel each other out: they multiply possibilities.

Honest

When working collaboratively in communities there is a need to avoid dissembling, resorting to management-speak euphemism, over-promising or leading people on. This can mean being frank about the limits of possibilities as well as their extent, about resources available and the pressures and context of your work. Being honest encourages others to get involved. It also relates to what I have elsewhere called one-to-one accountability of leadership. Put simply, can you look people in the eye?

People

Connecting people as individuals, or individuals coming together as a group, rather than slotting them into types, seems more conducive to collaborative effort. It is also a useful reminder that leaders are also people, with the baggage and variety that implies. Multiplying leadership is an in-person art, not one of paper strategies, so is absolutely about people coming together.

Curious

Multiplying leadership is driven by questions more than answers. Those working in this way are curious about people and their situations, needs and ambitions. Being curious leads to connection and exploration. It is also, of course, a common trait of artists and creative people.

COLLABORATE

Stewardship
The word stewardship suggests care, and the creation of structures and pathways. Many of the gifts of a good event steward – welcome, care, understanding, skill, knowledge, face-to-face interpersonal skills – apply equally to those in other forms of leadership. A lesson from Creative People and Places might be that the more you reject the tag 'leader' the more likely you are to multiply leadership and make other leaders.

Community
Community is at the core of my vision of leadership. Each work team, workplace and organisation is also a creative community of a kind. Acknowledging difference as well as commonality within communities of place and interest is vital. The multiplicity of communities of which a single 'leader' or programme may be part is also a complicating, enriching factor. The skill is finding structures in which more people in communities can take part by designing welcoming spaces for meaningful conversations.

Care
Working in communities of any type, anyone active in leadership has a duty of care to those they work with and for. They also have a duty of care to their team and themselves. It is also important to build leadership around what matters to people – what they care about. Care is also, as the Care Collective point out, the opposite of careless.

Failure
Research tells us there is a lot to be learnt from failure, and even more to be learnt from the small failures within broadly successful activities or projects. Habits of after-action review, including a range of perspectives, are important to failing well, as is absolute honesty. Some failures can be catastrophic though. Failing better doesn't mean risking lives.

Diversity
If everyone can play in the leadership space with practice, it is vital that this means *everyone*. It needs to be more diverse than now, in all ways – more women, more people of colour, more people who identify as LGBTQIA+,

more working class people, more disabled people, more neurodiverse people, a wider range of ages: more people whose life experiences and ways of thinking differ from each other. If collective, distributed leadership is not diverse, then it isn't collective or distributed.

Purpose

There is no genuine collective leadership, or creative resilience, without purpose. Only managers with 'big cheese' job titles can provide 'leadership' without purpose. For the collective, the central question, eventually, after a process of trust-building and exploration, is likely to remain, "what do we want to do together?" Agreeing shared purpose does not mean giving up your private or individual values and drivers, but rather finding a common way to achieve them, alongside individual effort.

Empathy

To understand others' motivations and experiences, "to imaginatively enter into what life is like for them" as one person put it. This helps find common ground, explore potential and bring others into the leadership conversation. It is also important to audience-focused leadership. On the flip side, a lack of empathy is a common problem for heroic leadership styles.

Co-create

You multiply leadership when you make something together on a genuinely equal footing. When you find a way to co-create from very different perspectives, making new ideas from old certainties, using everyone's skills and not holding decision-making centrally. That means artists and so-called participant or community members collaborating, each respecting and drawing on the others' skills, history and identity.

Time

Leadership is not a one-off act, it is a dynamic that ebbs and flows over time. The skilled practitioner learns the rhythms of an organisation or a project – the meetings, decisions, strategising or review moments – and how the pace of activity may change. Sometimes picking up the pace can help multiply leadership, but you need to build in reflection and 'warm down' time too. There is never enough time is scarcity thinking: the most exciting leaders apply abundance to time, too, and see what happens.

Generous

You have to be generous to multiply leaders: you have to invite, offer, not hold your cards close to your chest. The kinds of people applying this approach to leadership give without bartering for specific return. They mentor, they give support, they listen. You can be generous with time, commitment and insight even when you have little money or space. What can you give? To what can you say "yes, and"?

Who

Who gets involved in leadership matters and is influenced by how processes are structured. Who is employed matters and the diversity of backgrounds matters – for the messages that sends as well as the quality of discussion and decision. Who is in the room and who is not in the room also matters. Historically some people have been kept outside. Covid has shown that online can multiply who can be involved – lessons to be taken into the future.

With/In

Multiplying leadership works with people in their communities. It stands with them. It is in or within them. It leads not from the front at all times, but always from within. It does not bring or bestow power, assets or creativity but reveals, finds and uses what is there already, often unsupported previously, sometimes even expressly ignored or discouraged. It starts by being together with people in a place and asking "why?" and "what if?", and works out from that to specific aims.

Open

Open - as verb or adjective - is an important word for multiplying leadership. It reflects the spirit required of individuals, a state of mind. It should also describe the networks active in leadership, and the working partnerships they create. Communication should be open, too. The system should welcome diverse and challenging perspectives without closing ranks. It is also worth remembering that open questions often illicit the deepest reflection.

MULTIPLY

Amplify

An important part of Multiplying Leadership is providing a platform for talent from all parts of the system, giving credit to those who've played particular roles, whether they are funder, stakeholder, or others. The advocacy work should centre on amplifying the voices and perspectives less heard in the dominant narratives. In practice this can mean leaders stepping back to let team members front activities, as well as leading behind the scenes.

Multiply

The way in which you carry out your leadership role can help others become active in leadership – by creating structures and spaces, by generating opportunities for leadership for others, by building confidence. This may mean taking up less space yourself. Things will get further from you: this is good. It could, though, lead to greater change, and more diverse and equitable processes and results.

Let go

Working in more of a stewardship mode may mean letting go of some dearly held habits. Some artistic directors can be uncomfortable at letting go of control – especially at programming work they didn't really like, against much of their training – in order to reflect community need or the results of co-creation. Most fundamental may be the necessity of letting go of the idea that single leaders can provide all the leadership necessary for healthy creative communities.

Mentor

Every leader should see themselves as a mentor to individuals and to the culture they want to flourish. This means being generous with time, knowledge and insight, based on a deep knowledge of themselves, including of whatever privilege may have helped them reach their current position. Mentoring should avoid simply shifting 'boys club' benefits from one group to another, though, but seek to multiply the range of people active in leadership.

Distributed

To multiply leadership, decision-making and power need to be distributed

through the system and the communities of a place. The ability to build consensus is crucial, particularly when tough decisions need to be made (including the most difficult times, when we will not all agree). Not just decisions but conversations, dialogues and partnerships may need to be decentralised. For those in formal positions of authority this may mean asking questions more than providing answers/decisions.

Powerful

This may be a surprising word, or not. I choose it over 'empowerment' or 'empowered', to avoid the sense of power being bestowed by some benevolent being to the less fortunate, who will henceforth be 'empowered'. I want, instead, to focus on the power that resides in all of us when engaged in or with leadership. It is used in the sense of 'power with' or 'power to' rather than 'power over': agency, as I have described it in relation to creative resilience. It connects to the basis of democratic practice.

Relational

Relationships are vital to systems – the system is defined by how different parts relate, or not. As academic Joe Raelin identifies, leadership as practice focuses not on the relationship between leaders and followers but on the interactions, connectivity and adjustments made in the ongoing activity of everyone involved. People create leadership for and with each other across groups, types and power dynamics.

Incremental

The multiplying leadership approach is about change not efficiency. Multiplying leadership is not linear, nor is the change it provokes, which may come in fits and starts – it will be incremental, but not necessarily always progressing in a single direction. The incremental chart of progress is more likely to be a zigzag than a rocketing arrow or a staircase. This pattern recurs in/from discussions of creative resilience.

Messy

Living with messy, clumsy solutions is the essence of tackling wicked problems and living with complexity. Do not expect leadership approaches that seek to multiply involvement to be as tidy as patriarchal control approaches. You may be accused of not being clear enough. The trains may not always run on time. Relish what that might bring. You may need to explain 'mess' to others less comfortable with it.

Reflect

To play a part in collective leadership, there must be time to reflect, using the kinds of learning and evaluation tools shared here. This might be individual reflection, about purpose and performance, and the effect of your leadership. It can also be powerful to reflect together about patterns, change and how the collective is working. It is important to involve as wide a range of informed perspectives in that as possible. Having a critical friend or coach to the collective has been useful to many practitioners.

Decision

Many lists of the traits of great leaders include 'decisiveness'. However, in a collaborative context, it is important to shift that to either more collective decision-making or decision-making involving genuine input by many people. Giving up total control of decisions can be liberating: even in less collaborative, more hierarchical contexts, formal leaders tend to be expected to make many more decisions than really necessary.

Status

Multiplying leadership means erasing hierarchical notions of status. These are sometimes so deeply engrained in us we don't even realise they are there. Status makes itself known by limiting conversations, limiting expectations and limiting who is given a platform. It can also be reflected in how credit is given. Multiplying leadership works on the basis that status is illusory or where given irrelevant to collective effort.

Voice

Although multiplying leadership is shaped by faith in a decentralised, collective model of leadership, each person or organisation involved will healthily bring their own voice to that. It is important to understand yourself, and your strengths and weaknesses, to use that voice well. It is also important to use your voice to encourage others, and sometimes to stay silent to create space. (This applies especially to those whose voices have dominated previously, typically older white males.)

KNOW/ASK

Of/By

Nina Simon connected *of* and *by* in the organisation Of/By/For All. She argues that "if you want to be FOR your whole community, you have to be representative OF them and co-created BY them. To involve people in meaningful, sustainable ways, you can't just make programs FOR them. You have to involve them in their creation." It will require you to share power and build confidence in others.

Authority

Authority is a complicating factor. It can be vested in certain positions and roles as part of managerial approaches to leadership. Control often goes hand in hand with a chain of command. However, these may need to be respected in context, or may stem from specialist roles – e.g. someone in a safeguarding or event management role. The notion of leadership 'beyond authority' has been spread, by amongst others, Common Purpose founder Julia Middleton, who connects it to networks and systems.

Power

The kind of cultural and social leadership described here exists in a society where power is not evenly distributed, and in structures which tend to privilege white, male, middle and upper class backgrounds. Power gets in the cracks: it is distinct from Authority. It is, in an odd way, not the root of 'powerful', but the opposite, its blocker. But the most inspiring people shine a light on power and create structures so everyone that wants to can tap in and contribute to it, rather than pretend it doesn't exist.

Story

Multiplying leaders tell a story others want to join in with. They create newly possible worlds, or versions of the world, finding structures and asking questions that allow us to add to it. They communicate convincingly, but leaving enough space for others to believe themselves needed. They may or may not be charismatic advocates themselves, but they join with others to make stories that reflect many voices, including those side-lined by dominant structures of culture and politics.

Joy
The people I have interviewed and worked with often talk of the importance of joy to their work: from the people they work with achieving something, the artworks created, and the process of making things happen. Several teams talked about the importance of laughter, of collective leadership being a joyful practice, not a dutiful one. The work may be challenging at times, but just as 'high challenge' can be productive paired with 'high support', it can also be helpfully combined with 'joyful'.

Proportion
Proportion matters. The word suggests a sense of pleasing relationship, a kind of harmony when things are in proportion. The work should be big, but not too big, or small but not too small, manageable but not too easily manageable. There is also an elegance suggested by proportion, a paying of attention to things in their proper scale and order, which leadership beyond command and control requires. (Yes, this may sit paradoxically with 'messy'.)

Vulnerability
Brené Brown has written several books on the importance of vulnerability and courage to leadership. She argues that fear of vulnerability stems from a scarcity culture that encourages shame, which in turn undermines personal bravery, ultimately damaging both innovation and human connection at personal, organisation and community level. All involved in collaborative leadership need courage to step forward in each act, each meeting, each decision, each opportunity to connect or to learn.

Learn
See culture as an action learning project. The ability to learn and to encourage learning in others are vital leadership skills. This includes learning-from-testing (at an early stage, say), learning-from-failure, learning-from-success, and learning-from-the-process. It is about process and product. It is about our own selves too.

Process
Multiplying leadership is not a programme of activities or actions but rather an ongoing process and practice. It is something you do, not something you acquire, although you can become better at it. It is not always straightforward or predictable, but iterative and exploratory. It is helpful to think about starting

points, feedback loops and learning cycles within collective leadership, and to understand interactions as processes which are part of larger patterns.

Patient

Those working towards social change often describe a tension between the urgency of change and the time needed to build trust and make that change sustainable. The need to be patient whilst maintaining momentum and being focused on change is often cited. Resisting the temptations of short-termism, with immediate gains but long-term damage, and of complacency, is vital. Sometimes people take time to assume their freedoms and responsibilities, and those involved in leadership need to be patient.

Eco-system

Each community or place can be viewed as an ecosystem, with connections, feedback loops and unexpected, non-linear outcomes. This may be an ecology of place, artform, culture or a mixture. You may have to be flexible to make the relationship last long enough to mature. It is important to acknowledge the conflicts and interdependencies implicit in the notion of ecosystem, and to work towards ongoing health and productivity.

Committed

Being part of collective or distributed leadership, bringing others, even many others, into leadership does not mean you need to be any less committed to your values and mission. Multiplying leadership does not barter to get compliance as more managerial approaches do. It commits to something and invites others to do so. It is passionate in its collaborations, and in how it seeks shared purpose for everyone.

Frame

As described in Chapter Four, when working in a distributed and collective way, leaders need to help the collective frame and reframe purpose, issues, learning and ideas. This is most often done by asking questions and suggesting alternative ways to look at something. Reframing has often helped people look at places and problems differently.

The Joker: Paradox

Paradox is something more than the ambiguity created by complexity. Sometimes those aspiring to leadership must live with paradox: contradictory

truths or realities which cannot be resolved or denied. Some say that's where the truth hides, some that it's what stimulates the best thinking. It is implicit in the improvisatory art of saying "yes, and". It also lives alongside the egos of collaborative leaders.

So what? Away from toxic, dividing leadership

I want to conclude this chapter with why I think this matters for the dreamers on the high wires, for the cultural sector, for creative resilience and for place-based community and cultural development.

I think it shows that an emphasis on connection, collaboration and collective learning (and on 'funding for learning and connection' from funders) can lead to a wider range of ways of working than is sometimes possible in more results-oriented, target-driven settings, or in income-generation centred models. At its best, this can lead to a wider range of people getting involved effectively in systems leadership as well as cultural activity, and to less damaging modes of leadership. It can get more people up on the high wire, but safely, so you can catch each other. It may create new unwelcome patterns, too, of course, such as longer timelines or protracted developments or more failure than can be tolerated.

Changing the pressures makes a difference to behaviours. What one might call 'dividing leadership' is common in the sector. The behaviour is not toxic or extreme, at least in small doses: it's usually nothing to raise a grievance or start a disciplinary about. Leaders might strictly and hypocritically separate their private-self and their values and beliefs entirely from their work-self and the decisions they make as a leader. They might stick narrowly to chains of command and control, target-driven management approach KPIs and measured results, including payment/assessment by result, working within silos and specialisms working to clear briefs with precise deliverables, set within centralised hierarchies of decision-making and monitoring. They may manage their teams' expectations of autonomy carefully, using scale and seniority, and they may review performance against KPIs in ways that encourage compliance and hitting targets more than development and learning. Their relationships with external partners are built on contracts more than trust. They see themselves as accountable only to their chair, and their own organisational reporting structures and agreed targets.

There are, though, more toxic traits that people have raised that are too often seen in some cultural leaders: bullying behaviour, dishonesty about success and failure. Some of the stories I was told by disabled people about how others had treated them in non-disabled-led organisations were horrifying: people having to go outside and into another building to use a toilet, people refused flexible working for no good reason, people removed from jobs when they developed limiting conditions. The organisation Pregnant Then Screwed is not specifically for the cultural sector, but began when the founder Joeli Brierely was sacked by a cultural organisation after becoming a mother, and many of the stories shared by women show toxic leadership in action. Leaders can also be extractive – not just from workers and artists but from community partners, too, in ways which destroy trust. The Multiplying Leadership elements need to be applied to make these examples hypothetical in future.

A Multiplying Leadership approach challenges deeply engrained, dominant ideas about leadership, accountability and control. Does the buck or the decision have to stop at a single person's desk? Maybe not. Maybe that idea reflects deep patriarchal structures, even when it's trying to be helpful. Maybe any business or group would be stronger if we *all* acted as if the buck stopped with us. And maybe, just maybe, the evidence from Creative People and Places increasingly suggests, that would mean more people were involved in, engaged or simply enjoying arts activity.

Creative People and Places has had some success in encouraging new views of what arts and creative engagement looks like, and in getting more people to start with the public or community views of culture. It has also been successful in attracting people who have not engaged regularly with the arts to get involved. Creative People and Places is not unique in this, but part of a progressive movement you can see all over the UK, of people developing and modelling leadership in more productive ways than archaic, heroic, individual-centred models. During the Covid crisis projects involved people in decision-making and planning online, as well as delivering a panoply of activities to meet the practical and emotional needs of local people – from creativity packs to online galleries, Ramadan storytelling, BSL videos about lockdown, and involvement in local mutual aid and food supply chains. This was replicated across many other organisations, of course. I have studied projects in Arts Council England's Celebrating Age programme and their responses to Covid combined digital with very old school communications methods: the letter,

postcard and landline. There are challenges to this digital and hybrid thinking, as it has potential to exclude the many people who cannot connect digitally in deprived communities, and those who simply don't want to: some research by the Local Government Association suggests some people would prefer to stick to their old face-to-face ways or wait. They feel no real impulse to embrace a digital hybrid new normal.

This approach, identified through considering Creative People and Places but seen more broadly, also has, I think, real relevance to how organisations, consortia and sectors or localities can build creative resilience. Those involved in multiplying leadership necessarily focus on core purpose – this is one reason it was easier to switch methodology but continue focus during Covid – and forge a strong sense of shared culture and values. Networks and relationships built on trust instead of extraction have been crucial to Creative People and Places at its best, and as described are central to resilience. The diversity of the partnerships has been important, with the voluntary sector ecology and the cultural sector ecology becoming much closer in Creative People and Places localities than is typical. This has also been shown during Covid, with organisations creating collaboratively to get things done and to support local people. Perhaps in future all arts organisations should have health and voluntary sector voices on their boards, if not staff, and vice versa? The power and agency to get things done has also been clear: in some ways Creative People and Places has sometimes shown up how funding structures can reduce agency for some organisations, and how flexibility from funders can help be adaptive and responsive to needs. Peer learning, which has been encouraged from the beginning, has also proven invaluable during Covid, providing support, information and ideas.

Those organisations with strong, equitable and inclusive networks in the community have been able to step up and be useful to their local communities, or to communities of freelancers and creative practitioners. They have simultaneously tended to show themselves as more resilient than those reliant on trading income and extractive business models that don't return energy and agency to people. That chief executive who won't talk to anyone of a lower rank was probably furloughed in 2020, or should have been. (Or embraced their Days of Endless Zoom.) Hopefully they learnt something – or at least felt uncomfortable. The ones getting their hands dirty on an equal footing found themselves busier than ever. How far the collaborative, distributed model can take over from control, targets and ego may depend on our collective ability to multiply leadership in the next decade.

TOOLS & TACTICS 3: OUTSIDE/BEYOND

Introduction

The tools and frameworks in this section are especially useful as you or your organisations or networks move outside your immediate concerns and explore your connections with the broader sector and society.

This section includes the following tools.

TOOL	WHAT YOU MIGHT USE IT FOR
Starting from ABCD	To map assets and capacities found in communities or places, and identify actions
Multiplying leadership coaching questions	To reflect on non-hierarchical leadership practice and identify positive actions, either alone or with others
Multiplying Leadership Dashboard	To think about your approach to engaging with a community or considering who you connect, collaborate and multiply with and how
The after action review	To review a project and learn from what was done, and to identify improvements
The Failspace Wheel of Failure	To consider a project and what it achieved from a range of perspectives and ask, "success or failure for whom, or which groups?"
Connecting Organisational Memory and the Adaptive Cycle	To recognise where in the adaptive cycle you are (and have been and might be in future) so you can devise tactics for the future
34 Stray and Sundry Tactics	To provide inspiration when you are 'stuck' and need some things to try or projects to plan?
A Cultural Doubtnut	To think about the likely ecological sustainability of a development and the effect of creative resilience

Starting from ABCD

A central concept in socially engaged cultural practice is summed up as asset-based community development or 'ABCD'. ABCD moves away from a needs-based deficit model to build on what communities *do* have, often unacknowledged or under-appreciated. Pioneered by John McKnight, the approach has been shown to build agency, confidence and sustainability. Basic principles of the approach are that it is citizen-led, inclusion focused and that it often works at the level of neighbourhoods in terms of place.

ABCD involves mapping six different sorts of assets and capacities, and then community members shaping their own plans for the future. The six categories are:

- The gifts of individuals in a community: what they know, can do and care about
- Citizen's associations: from lunch clubs to Neighbourhood Watch or the Photography Society
- Local institutions: non-profit, commercial, state or local authority institutions and public bodies active in a place, from the police to the park, art gallery and library to the post office
- Physical assets: the buildings, equipment and landscape assets available in a locality – e.g. halls, schools, fields, rivers
- Relationships: connections (and the networks/occasions to encourage them) between institutions, associations or individuals that enable the exchange of services or knowledge
- Culture, history and stories: the tangible and intangible cultural assets that can often shape how people feel or think about a place.

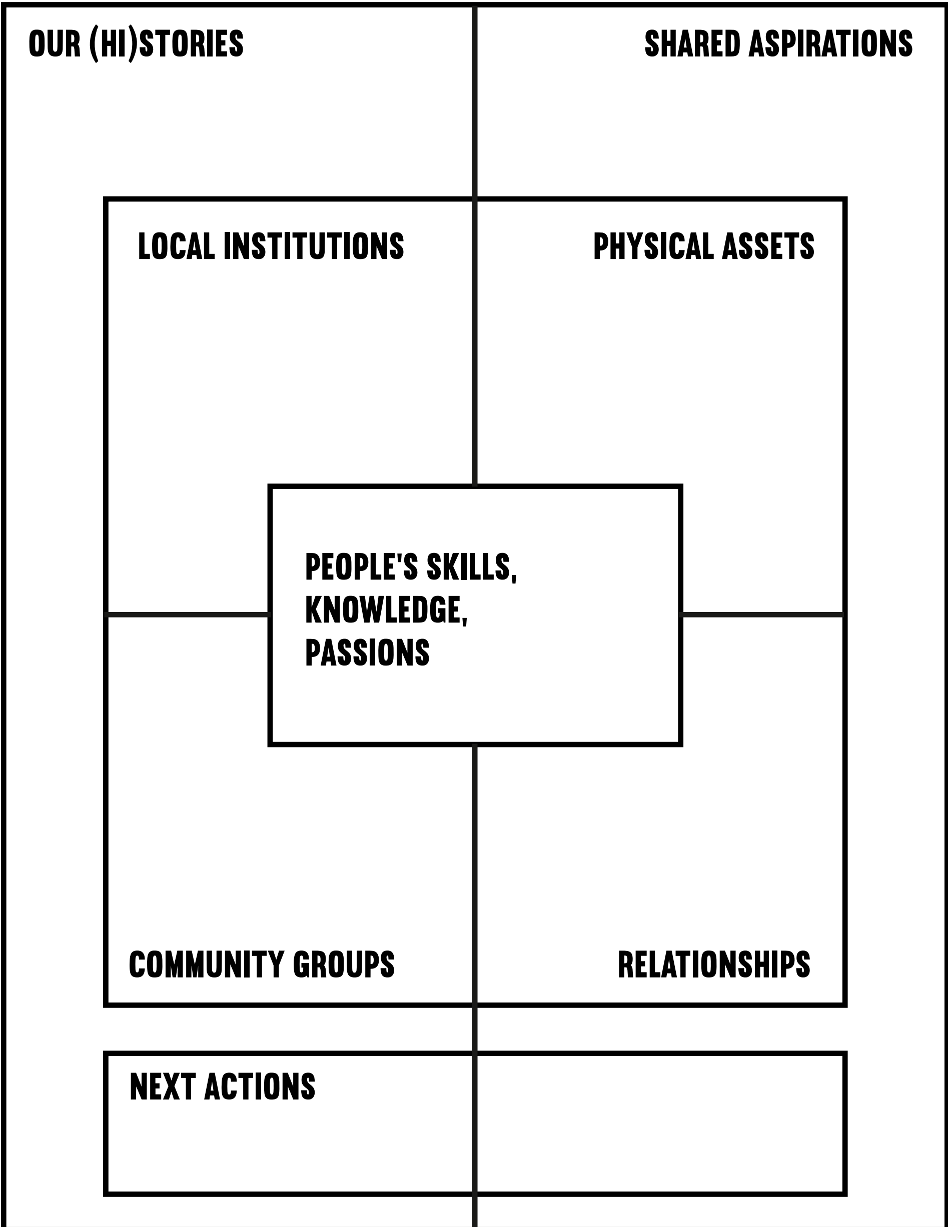
The approach can be used in a large-scale systematic way, involving many people in the mapping of assets and capacities, and planning informed by that knowledge. Smaller, quicker versions can be done in workshops or meetings, though, and still be useful. As part of the Multiplying Leadership work with Creative People and Places leaders, the following were identified as good starting with ABCD questions for cultural co-creation.

The following questions can be good ways into developing plans based on assets not deficits. Make notes using the mapping canvas below to give you a one-sheet picture. If working in a group meeting, break out the post-its so you

can categorise things as you go, or the electronic post-its if working online. (Alternatively, work through the headings in the canvas.)

- What and who have we got that could contribute or be useful, and how?
- Who is here (or would have liked to have been) and who knows who?
- What are we good at here?
- What are our (hi)stories?
- What do we most aspire to?
- What could we do together?

ABCD Canvas



Multiplying Leadership Coaching questions

The questions that form this tool were originally developed as a set of cards to accompany the Multiplying Leadership report published by the Creative People and Places Network. I have slightly adapted some of the questions for this book and swapped in a couple of different terms. You can find a printable version of the original cards on the Thinking Practice or Creative People and Places websites. The coaching questions are intended for those involved in leadership to use, relating to the 53 elements set out in Chapter Seven. Some may be useful in group contexts too, with the 'you' shifting from singular to plural in meaning. This is something everyone in a group or organisation can be involved in, not just one person or the senior management. Sharing the reflections can be a simple and effective way of breaking down hierarchies, though you have to be prepared to be surprised by what might come out, and to be honest in your listening and sharing. It is worth spending time at the beginning of a conversation to agree what this means for you, in your context – to 'contract' with each other.

These questions can be used as reflective or coaching prompts for self or team, picking elements which feel particularly relevant for you to explore. I have deliberately given a slightly unmanageable set of questions to deter the emergence of new norms. Of course, the risk of my approach is some will find it overwhelming, too much choice. The set of questions is not, though, unfocused: it is various because people and situations are various. (And because I take as much pleasure in the various as the elegant, I confess.) Those who prefer something they can write on the back of their hand can see the GROW tool for something that is infinitely flexible within its elegance. I'd recommend letting your eye skim over these pages to see what jumps out at you, letting an element of chance play its part, unless you know there is a specific area on which you want to focus.

You might try some of the following:

- Pick a term at random and consider the questions
- Agree questions with a group of people to reflect typical strengths or ways of working
- Find the term that makes you most uneasy and consider the questions
- Identify elements of multiplying leadership most relevant to one area of your work

After reflecting on the questions, I would suggest adopting the discipline, useful for many meetings, especially evaluative or reflective ones, of allowing time to ask, "So what does this mean I/we should do, stop doing, or do even more or better?" Reflection is a good discipline to nurture, and can really help build the characteristics of creative resilience, but it needs to be taken through to action and habit. You might find it useful to take notes, but it's not essential. Try and summarise reflections in discussion, though, and note the consensus or divergence in perspectives. Capturing potential actions is a good idea, too, so they don't blow away.

You should also obviously feel free to adapt the language, add your own questions and make up your own games and exercises.

v. KNOW

What do you know and understand about yourself and your skills, style and impact?
What do you know and understand about the people and communities you work with?

v. SHARE

How might you share power, in practice, and with whom?
What values, vision or ideas do you share with the person/people you disagree with most often?
What do you find most exciting/hardest about sharing?

v. HOST

What kind of coming together could you host?
What do you want gatherings you host to be/feel like?
What's your main duty as 'a leader' when hosting?

v. CONNECTING

Who could you connect?
Who could you connect with?
Who are you already connected to with whom you could do more together?

v. LISTEN

How well do you practice active listening – checking meaning, playing back, paying full attention?
Who are you listening to?
How do you respond to what you hear?

n. TRUST

How can you build trust with those with whom you work, or would like to work?
When do you feel least trusted, and how could you change that?
Who or what do you not trust as much as you would want?

v. DISRUPT

What do you want to disrupt?
What's the most helpfully disruptive thing you could do, or work with others to do?
Who or what do you owe a duty of care during any disruption?

Adj. HUMAN

What does being human with others mean to you?
Are you bringing as much of your whole self as you would like to your leadership?
How do you treat people like human beings, not types or demographics?

Adj. CURIOUS

What do you want to know more about that's relevant to your leadership activity?
What's your favourite question when part of a leadership group?
How could you use your curious mind to multiply leadership?

n. IDENTITY

Who are you and what do you stand for?
What identity does your collective leadership portray?
How can you best express your identity through collaborative leadership?

n. PEOPLE

What people are you missing in your work ?
What do you value about the people you work with?
How do you treat each person you meet as an individual?

Adj. HONEST

What does honest mean for your leadership?
When did you last fudge something and why?
How do you encourage others to be honest with you?

n. CONSORTIUM

What do you want out of any current consortium or group work?
What can you help others achieve by working together?
To what might you say "no and…"?

n. FAILURE

What can you learn from your most recent failure?
What's the failure hidden within your most recent 'success', and what does it teach you?
How can you encourage others to be comfortable with failure as a learning process?

n. STEWARD

To what greater cause or community than your own do you feel accountable?
What authority do you have you can pass on or share with others?
How can you encourage commitment without control?

n. CARE

To whom do you have a duty of care and how are you fulfilling it?
What do you care about most?
What do others involved in leadership with you care about and what does that mean for you?

n. PURPOSE

What do you want to do together?
How clear do you think everyone involved in leadership is about your purpose?
What are you not prepared to give up in committing to a shared purpose?

n. EMPATHY

With whom or what do you find it hardest to empathise?
What do you think are the drivers behind the behaviour of others active in leadership with you?
What would others say about your leadership style?

n. COMMUNITY

Which communities do you feel part of or accountable to?
What structures, activities or spaces would help more community members be active in leadership?
How do you multiply leadership within your communities?

n. DIVERSITY

How different are the people in your leadership circle from each other?
How representative of your communities are those active in leadership?
How can you amplify the voice of someone who the dominant culture might exclude, including your own?

Pro. WHO

Who is your work for?
Who is not in the room?
Who would you most like to join you in your leadership?

Adj. OPEN

How recently did you invite someone new into your network?
How do you respond to challenge?
What could you do to share with others how you prefer or need to work?

Prep. WITH/IN

How can you get more people involved with your leadership in your place?
Who is not currently with you that could or should be, and how could you encourage them in?
What was your most exciting moment of being with/in a community?

n. TIME

What are the rhythms to which you need to pay attention?
How much time have you got (e.g. for your leadership ambition, or plans)?
What would you do if the time you have was enough time?

Adj. GENEROUS

What do you have or know you could share or give others to bring them into leadership?
What examples do you have of generosity towards you?
What have you done this week others would describe as generous?

v. CO-CREATE

Who had agency or control in your most recent project?
What did you find exciting the last time you co-created something?
What do you find hardest about working with others to co-create?

v. MULTIPLY

How could you make space for someone else?
How many other leaders have you helped become active?
How effective are the structures and spaces where distributed leadership happens?

v. AMPLIFY

Whose voices could you amplify to make sure they don't get ignored or drowned out?
Which stories do you need to amplify?
How could you amplify the voices of others doing leadership work alongside you?

v. MENTOR

What experience, knowledge or insight do you have someone else could benefit from?
What would you want to learn from being a mentor?
How could your mentorship multiply leadership?

v. LET GO

What story do you tell most often that you would benefit from letting go?
How confident are you that others will care for anything you let go?
How does it feel to let go of the illusion of direct control?

Adj. DISTRIBUTED

What decisions do you currently take that could be made by or with others?
Where does power need to be in the system for it to work better?
How can leadership be distributed more equitably and transparently?

Adj. POWERFUL

What power do you have that you are not using, or not using well enough?
How could you help others find or use their own power?
When do you feel at your most powerful?

n. VOICE

What does the way you communicate say about you?
How can you communicate your purpose and values without drowning others out?
What other voices could you encourage?

Adj. INCREMENTAL

How quickly do you need change?
How much time, energy and freedom have you got for winding staircase progress?
How do you describe change or impact to others?

n. STATUS

How differently placed in their hierarchies are the people you trust most?
How often do you think of your status or perceived status?
Are some of your colleagues in leadership more equal than others?

Adj. MESSY

How much discomfort can you and those you work with bear?
How do you steer through uncertainty?
What questions help you and others understand your experiences?

n. DECISION

What decisions do people come to you for that they could make themselves?
How can you support others involved in leadership to make good decisions?
What decision would you most like to hold on to?

Adj. RELATIONAL

How would you describe the relationship of your work to that of others in your communities?
How would you describe your relationships with others active in leadership in your system?
What kinds of relationships do you work best in?

v. REFLECT

What kind of leadership have you modelled for others lately?
How have you encouraged others to lead?
What do you (individually or collectively) need to do differently?

Prep. OF/BY

What communities are you part of and which communities are part of you and your work?
In what ways can you ensure your work reflects those communities?
How might you make sure leadership is done by your creative communities?

n. POWER

How does power shape your actions?
What power would you like?
What has power ever done for you?

v. LEARN

What have you learnt recently?
How widely have you shared what you learnt?
Who are you already connected to with whom you could do more together?

n. JOY

What made you feel joyful in your leadership most recently?
How can you encourage others to be joyful?
How can you highlight joy within your collective leadership?

n. PROPORTION

What feels out of proportion for you right now?
What do you sometimes just have to let go?
How do you encourage others to be honest with you?

n. STORY

What story do you want others to join in with?
What is your role in the story?
If your story had a twist, what would it be?

n. AUTHORITY

What formal authority do you hold and how do you use it?
What informal authority would others ascribe to you?
When have you best provided leadership ‘beyond authority’

adj. PATIENT
What or who are you currently trying to rush?
How long can you wait for the results you are working on?
What are you doing while you are being patient?

v. FRAME
What question could you ask that would help someone, or a group, see their own thinking differently?
What are the frames that you hold to most dearly?
Which of your own issues or ambitions could you look at differently?

n. ECOSYSTEM
How would you describe the main ecology you play a leadership role in?
What is your role in that ecology?
What could you do to most positively influence the ecology?

n. VULNERABILITY
What happened last time you showed how vulnerable you felt?
How can you encourage others into your collective courage?
If nothing could go wrong, what would you do?

n. PROCESS
How do you use your skills and strengths to multiply leadership?
What aspects of leadership practice have you got better at lately?
What have you learnt lately?

Adj. COMMITTED
Who or what are you committed to?
What's at stake for you in this leadership context?
How do you best express your commitments through leadership?

n. PARADOX
What is the paradox you feel most in your leadership work?
What paradox would you most like to solve?
What paradox are you most attached to?

v. START
What have we got we could use?
What are we good at here?
What is our history?
What do we most need?
Who is here?
What do we need to do?

Multiplying Leadership Dashboard

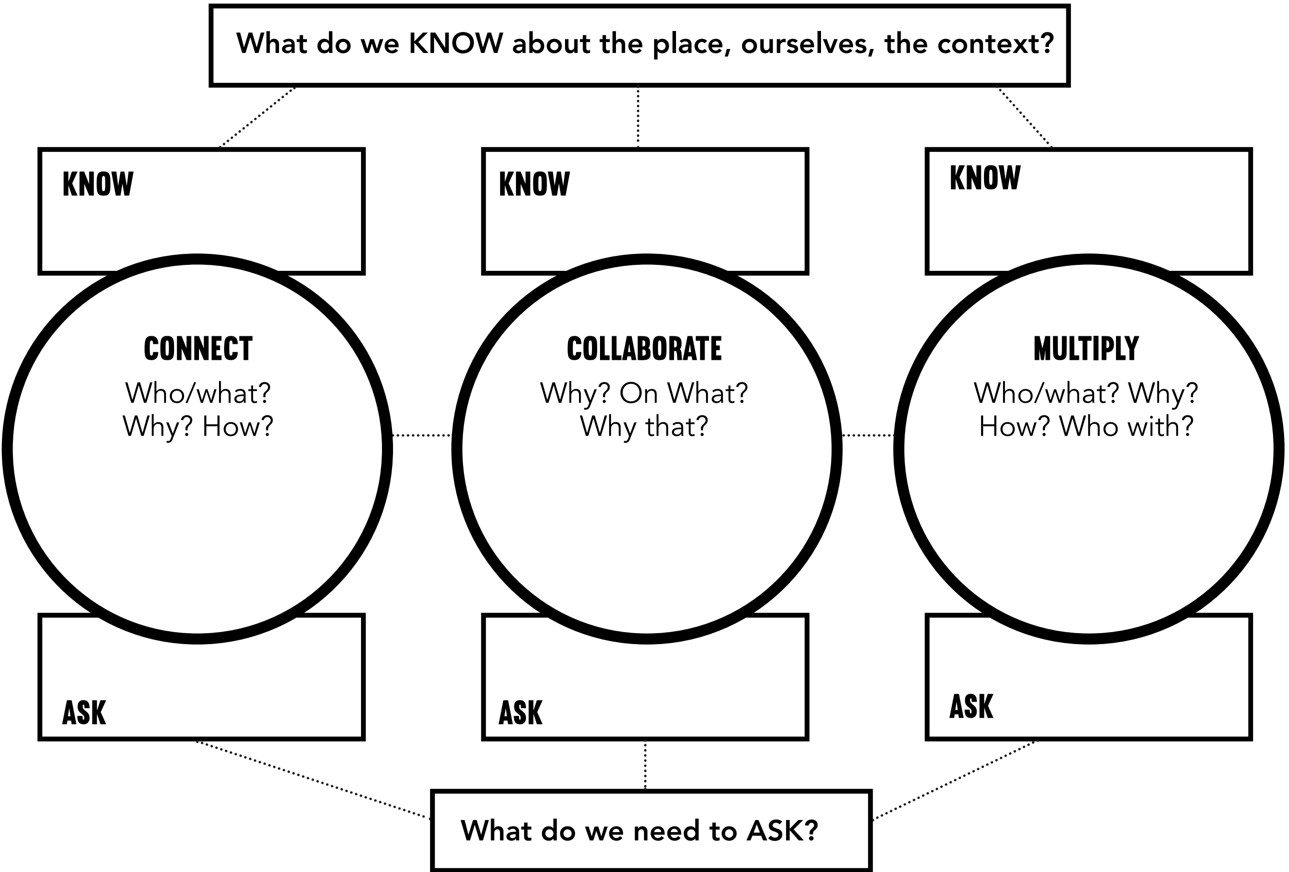
This tool aims to be a way to start planning your multiplying leadership approach and builds on the Multiplying Leadership framework described in Chapter Seven.

The Multiplying Leadership approach can be summarised as rooted in activities which:

- **Connect** people and ideas
- **Collaborate** and co-create with people through exploration of shared purpose
- **Multiply** the visibility and awareness of the effect, range and diversity of people involved, and also the collective learning from experience
- **Know** the self, the community and the context, and **Ask** useful questions

You can use this tool as a canvas for thinking about your approach to a new project, or engaging with a new community or place, or for overall planning purposes. It should help boost the characteristics relating to networks, leadership and governance, and creative capacity. I find it works well, though, to start with the Connect part of the framework – as it's hard to Collaborate or Multiply those you're not connected to, and think about who and what you could connect to, or connect to each other, and what you already know about them or the context. You can then think what you'd like connection to lead to in terms of collaboration, and what that might then amplify. Think especially about the diversity and range of the people and ideas you can connect and collaborate with, and where and how you can multiply and amplify the voices and activities of others. Think about equality and inclusion and whose interests you want to be part of. Look for gaps and omissions.

I have described this as a dashboard, as it can be used to keep a picture of the reach of your work, either as a whole or on a project/place basis. Who you connect to in a place, what you know about it, and what you need to ask will change over time as you work there, for instance. This is a fluid process, not a linear one.


What do we KNOW about the place, ourselves, the context?
KNOW
KNOW
KNOW
CONNECT
Who/what?
Why? How?
COLLABORATE
Why? On What?
Why that?
MULTIPLY
Who/what? Why?
How? Who with?
ASK
ASK
ASK
What do we need to ASK?

The after-action review

Seven steps to an After-Action Review:

1. At the end of a piece of work or a project, or even a phase of a larger project – e.g. the launch of a new product – gather the people who have been involved, or a selection of them. One person will need to act as facilitator – this can be one of the leaders in the group, so long as it is someone who can be objective, neutral and help everyone in the group to contribute confidently. If you think the discussion is likely to be tricky and potentially create conflict, an external facilitator can be helpful. In a bigger organisation, this might be someone from a different team. The facilitator's main jobs are to guide the group through the process, to make sure everyone contributes to the discussion, and to capture the main points at the end.

2. Ask "What was supposed to happen?" (e.g. "We meant to run a small poetry festival in the village hall that would bring the local community together.") This should capture the intent of the project or activity, the practicalities, and what you thought would result. Note where people have different views of what was supposed to happen, and explore how this came about.

3. Ask "What actually happened?" (e.g. "We delivered the festival on time and on budget, and it all ran smoothly. Unfortunately no one came apart from people who hated it, and it ended in a fight.") This might include noting the actual results of the work, how things were done and when. Establishing a clear timeline can be important, leading to reflection on which decisions were taken, by whom, when – and why. Try not to let the conversation rush on to analysing the differences between what was supposed to happen and what did until you have the events and results clear. It's important to be descriptive not judgemental in this stage.

4. Once there is agreement about what happened – or after any unresolvable disagreements over facts or timing have been noted – ask "Why were there differences?" (e.g. "We had programmed a controversialist by accident because we hadn't checked them out

sufficiently, and they and some of the audience started arguing about the Queen.") You can include questions about what went well and what went not as well as expected in this section of the discussion.

5. The next question is "What have we learnt?" (e.g. "Not everyone is quite what their publicity says.") In this section, you may cover what you've learnt about yourself, your team or organisation, and what you've learnt about your audiences or markets or partners. There may be technical or very practical things you need to note.

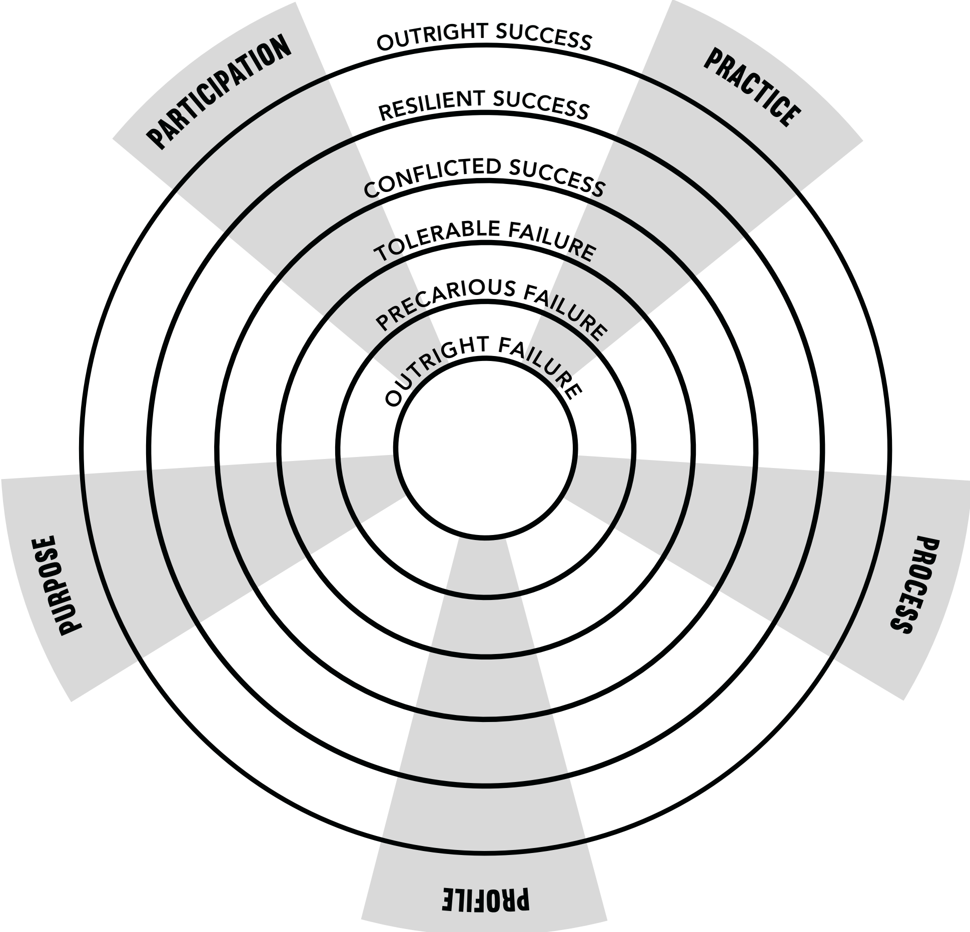
6. To conclude you should identify some specific recommendations or ideas for doing things (even) better in the future. (e.g. "Check out the acts of everyone we book.") Make sure they are potentially doable and within your control, or can be worked towards in a practical way. There's no point making recommendations to yourselves that you can't act on.

7. Make sure you capture the learning from the After Action Review in a way that can be easily shared. Depending on your organisation, this might include a short report or email circulated to everyone, a presentation to others, a report kept on file for future reference, or a poster put up in the kitchen. The important thing is that when you or others start a similar project, you can read the summary to find out what was learnt last time – that way you won't have to go through the sometimes painful learning of a lesson that has already been learnt.

After Action Review template

QUESTION	NOTES
What was supposed to happen?	
What actually happened?	
Why were there differences?	
What have we learnt?	
What does this mean for us in the future?	

The Failspace Wheel



This tool is adapted from the Wheel of Failure developed by FailSpace — also known as *Cultural Participation: Stories of Success, Histories of Failure*. This is an AHRC-funded research project exploring how the cultural sector can better recognise, acknowledge and learn from failure.

What Failspace call the Wheel of Failure can also be thought of as a grid or framework. Essentially, either the circle or the grid allows you to concentrate on five aspects of a project or policy, thinking about how it worked and for whom, looking for particular signs of success and failure. A discipline encouraged by the Failspace framework is to ask, "success or failure for who, or for which groups?" This is not to imply success for all is achievable, given different opinions, preferences and inequalities, but to focus attention on the balances and choices made. This relates clearly to the networks and purpose aspects of creative resilience.

The five facets of success/failure are:

- **Purpose** – how did your project, policy or work achieve its stated aims, objectives and outcomes and which groups benefitted?
- **Process** – how well did the whole process of design and delivery work?
- **Participation** – Who took part and how, throughout the lifetime of the project or policy? What stakeholders came together, and what different interests, influence or power did they bring?
- **Practice** – How well were the creative and cultural aspirations of the policy/project met? How was it received, by whom, and what differences were there between perspectives?
- **Profile** – What impact did the work have on the future prospects and reputation of those involved? Will it lead to further progress?

The degrees of failure/success are described as:

- **Outright failure** – even if there have been some elements of success the prevalence of failures resulted in goals/intentions fundamentally not being achieved. Opposition and criticism is common and/or approval and support is virtually non-existent.
- **Precarious failure** – failures may slightly outweigh successes and few if any of the secondary goals/intentions are achieved. A number of the primary goals/intentions are only partially achieved. Opposition and criticism outweighs approval and support.

- **Tolerable failure** – failures may slightly outweigh successes and few if any of the secondary goals/intentions are achieved. A number of the primary goals/intentions are only partially achieved. Opposition is small and/or criticism is virtually non-existent but any support/approval may be limited to specific groups of stakeholders.
- **Conflicted success** – failures are fairly evenly matched with successes and the achievement of goals/intentions is varied. Criticism and approval exists in relatively equal measure but varies between different groups of stakeholders. It proves difficult to avoid repeated controversy and debate.
- **Resilient success** – successes may slightly outweigh failures and a number of the secondary goals/intentions are not achieved. However, none of the failures significantly impede the fulfilment of the primary goals/intentions. Opposition is small and/or criticism is virtually non-existent but any support/approval may be limited to specific groups of stakeholders.
- **Outright success** – even if there have been some elements of failure, the prevalence of successes resulted in all of the goals/intentions being fully achieved. Criticism and opposition is virtually non-existent, and approval and support is almost universal and from a diverse group of stakeholders.

For any project or policy, you can either use this framework alone or – preferable for me so you can compare and learn from different perspectives – with others to explore each facet in turn, before coming to an overall conclusion.

	Outright Failure	**Precarious Failure**	**Tolerable Failure**	**Conflicted Success**	**Resilient Success**	**Outright Success**
	Goal not achieved Much criticism/ opposition No support	More failures than successes Goals only partly achieved Opposition > support	More failures than successes Goals only partly achieved Little opposition Support limited to specific stakeholders	More failures than successes Criticism = support but varies across stakeholder groups	More successes than failures Main goals being achieved Little opposition Support limited to specifc stakeholders	Goals fully achieved No opposition/ criticism Universal support from diverse stakeholders
PURPOSE						
PROCESS						
PARTICIPATION						
PRACTICE						
PROFILE						

Connecting Organisational/Sectoral Memory and the Adaptive Cycle

The adaptive cycle – described more fully in Chapter Five – is a useful tool for recognising where you are (or have been, or might be in future) and for understanding how it feels, so that you can plan for the future.

This tool can help put your experience and organisational memory into context, and reduce nervousness and/or increase excitement about change. There is something reassuring, even exciting, for most people about the idea that things don't stay the same: no matter how tricky, or good, they are, they won't stay that way forever. There is also the valuable idea that you do not have to keep going round this cycle until you somehow reach nirvana: you can try and switch cycles through a system-wide transformation. And sometimes understanding the adaptive cycle can be useful in deciding when or whether to stop things. Creative resilience does not mean you have to go on forever.

You can combine this with a 'timeline' for your team or organisation, to build organisational memory, whilst also thinking about the future. You can use this tool on your own, and apply it to your working life, or to your time with a single organisation – think of the growth of the early months, the consolidation of working out what it is you do or are good at, and the release and reorganisation of promotion, new roles, a new boss or new challenge, or even leaving to work elsewhere. It is also a good way to involve a team or whole organisation in developing shared purpose and organisational memory, as everyone can contribute regardless of the length of their service. Having a group work on this also brings different perspectives – some might have different takes on the same period of time when looked at through the adaptive cycle.

The adaptive cycle has four phases, Growth, Consolidation, Release and Reorganisation, although it is important to note that an organisation, especially a larger one, may have characteristics of all four phases simultaneously, and that movement between phases is sometimes not as linear as the figure suggests. Understanding this alone might be useful to you in managing the different phases whilst retaining a shared purpose.

1. Create a timeline and invite people to add significant achievements or milestones in the history of the organisation. Depending on the history of your organisation you may need to play with the scale, and 'compress' the 19th and 20th centuries and allow more space for the last few years. In groups, I often start by asking people to begin by putting their arrival in the organisation onto the timeline. Think as broadly as seems fit: shows, productions, awards, directors or CEOs, big breakthrough ideas, structural changes, capital developments, financial growth or contraction, first or last grants, controversies and brouhahas… whatever feels important for everyone to know.

2. Discuss your sense of the recent or longer history of your organisation – which bits of this cycle do you think you've been through and what did you take or learn from that experience?

3. Discuss and find consensus if possible on where your organisation is now predominantly.

4. If you are predominantly in the GROWTH phase, discuss which areas are undergoing most growth and why, to what extent you expect this to continue, and what you might do to make sure growth is sustainable. Identify what actions you would have to take to make sure you consolidate the aspects of your work that have led to growth. It's also worth thinking about what you would do if growth slows or stops.

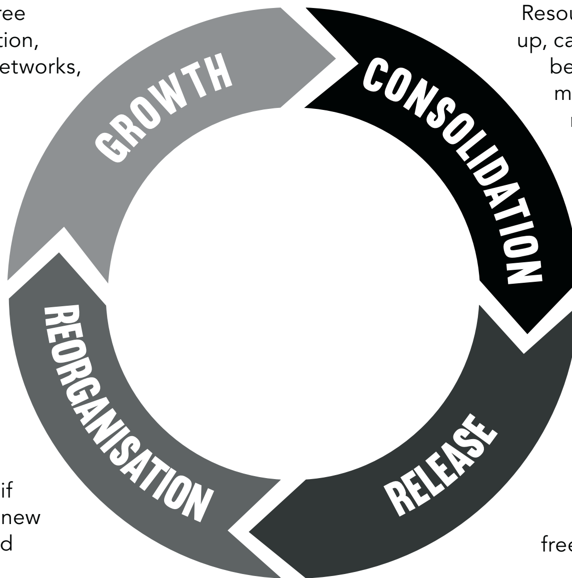
5. If you are predominantly in the CONSOLIDATION phase think about what disturbances or changes might be most likely in the future, and what you might do to turn threats into opportunities. Consider whether any of your structures or ways of working are hampering your ability to respond to change and, if some are, identify what you might do about it.

6. If you are predominantly in the RELEASE phase, identify which of your current ways of working need to be retained, and which could be reconfigured. Identify roles within the release, so everyone knows who's doing what and on what terms. You may want to think about what help or support you need from specialist advisors, stakeholders such as artists or audiences, or your board, and how you can best support each other during what can be a turbulent time.

7. If you are predominantly in the REORGANISATION phase, identify the main drivers for your reorganisation (you could use the results of a discussion of the Eight Characteristics of Creative Resilience) and how they are shaping your choices. How will the new structures and ways of working – new products even – express your core identity and purpose? How will you talk about this to others inside and outside the organisation?

8. Finally, using the framework of the adaptive cycle, explore what the next period might hold for your organisation. Define the length of time you'll consider according to your context. For an organisation facing a crisis or a big-shift opportunity it might be 6-12 months or even less, for others it might be 3-5, or even 10-20 years. Think about your experience of the Covid pandemic and the challenges faced there, if you were involved. What steps could you take to ensure creative resilience over that period, through all phases of the adaptive cycle?

9. In a follow-up session, revisit the potential actions you identified and agree to take at least one of them forward.



38 Stray and Sundry Tactics

These are not so much tools as sundry tactics that can be useful for dreaming on the tightrope, for building creative resilience, and for strengthening creative community. To avoid the book turning into something even baggier than it may already seem, I have not expanded on them, though I have clustered them in to three subsets that mirror the tools and tactics. (The liminal zones suitable for stray and sundry tactics.) I have also grouped them as 'things to try' – generally quick, messy and cheap – and 'projects to plan', which can be much more long-term and complex.

Self/Inside

Identify a rule or 'denying ordinance' you could change
Share a weekly note of what you've learnt or noticed
Leave a gap in your programme
Walk the streets of your place as a team or with a friend
Buy a book
Mentor someone
Give permission not forgiveness
Make a Plan B for your budget

Reserve places on boards for young people
Create a succession plan for your job or work
Define what value means for you and what it means for those you work with/for
Invest in design and communications

Inside/ Outside

Invite someone you don't know to an event or to see what you do
Invite a peer to a staff/ management/board meeting to talk about what they do and how they see what you do
Work out how much a meeting costs
Share something online
Send someone a present
Gather good data
Take someone out to lunch
Create internal collaborative teams
Insist on verbs
Read a different newspaper or magazine than usual
Publish your workforce data on your website
Put every member of staff's contact details on your website

Build a diverse work force and talent pool
Collect, monitor and discuss data about the diversity of your programme, artists, staff and audiences – and understand the nuances
Share what you can in order to benchmark and interpret data
Take on an apprentice
Start a scratch night/gallery
Audit your networks
Target a network you have not connected to before

Outside/ Beyond	Have a conversation about your own and others' versions of diversity Do a staff volunteering day in a local charity Invite a local business, charity or social activist to a staff/ management/board meeting to talk about what they do and how they see what you do Take a stall at a community event like a fete	Open up decision-making processes to include a diversity of people making actual decisions as well as feeding in perspectives Create a panel of international trendspotters Engage a new community group Open a pub/foodbank/ bookshop

A Cultural Doubtnut

I want to make the last tool in the toolbox one to cast doubt rather than certainty. Kate Raworth's *Doughnut Economics* is a primer on the evolution, limitations and damaging effects of our obsession with growth as the sign of health for our economy. She argues persuasively that we need to reconsider the purpose of that economic activity, as well as its full cost – which has generally left our use of the earth's energy out of calculations, leading to the climate crisis we are in now, living as if there were more than one planet. She goes on to offer her eponymous doughnut as a way to define a "safe and just space for all". This has an "ecological ceiling" made up of nine "planetary boundaries" such as biodiversity loss, pollution and climate change which we should not overshoot. There is also a social foundation of various aspects of well-being such as health, education and gender equality. Between these, Raworth argues, is where we need to live and work and keep our economy.

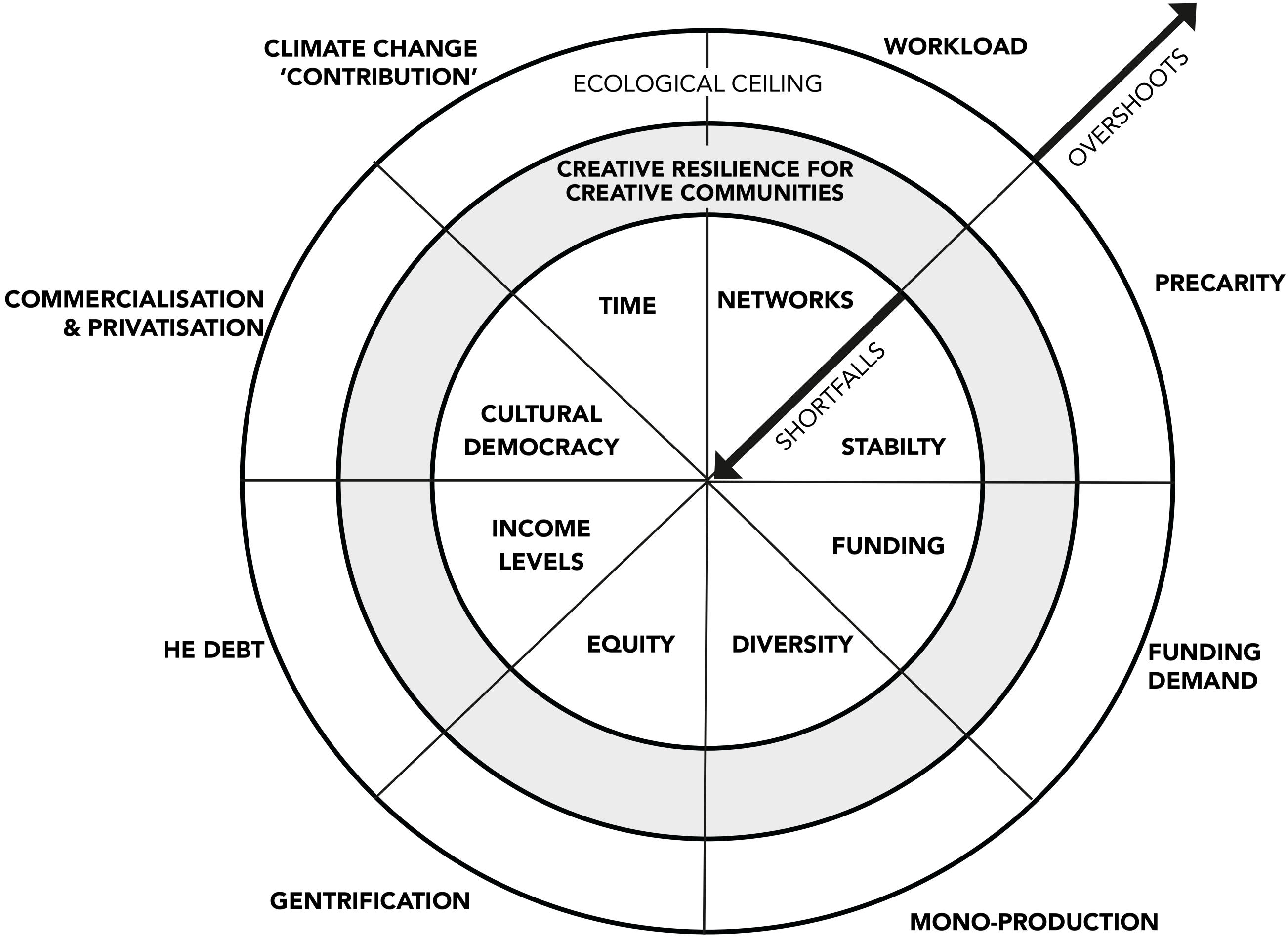
Below is a framework for a cultural version of the doughnut. I have called it a Doubtnut for three reasons: I enjoy bad puns as an assault on good taste; I don't seem able to type the word 'doughnut' correctly first time; and finally, and most seriously, I want to encourage doubt. People in arts and culture can seem very sure of everything, mainly the importance of what they do, which is, of course, perfectly reasonable, and essential to actually making anything creative. (I sound sure of myself at various points in what I've written here, I hope.) But the sector also needs what I might half-seriously term strategic

doubt. Is culture always good for us? Whose stories are we not hearing? How did the stories we hear get to be heard? Who's getting paid and how much? What's the 'full cost' of the culture we make? I hope the Doubtnut will give a coherent way to stop, pause and reflect on such questions.

My Doubtnut parallels Raworth's doughnut. It describes a set of foundational elements of creative resilience in creative communities, shortfalls of which would be problematic for creative resilience. It also suggests elements of which having too much would be damaging.

SHORTFALLS TO AVOID	OVERSHOOTS TO AVOID
Networks	Workload
Stability	Precarity
Funding	Funding demand
Diversity	Mono-cultural production
Equity	Gentrification
Income levels	HE Debt
Cultural Democracy	Commercialisation & privatisation
Time	Contribution to climate change

This simple framework can be used to think about the likely ecological sustainability of a development and what might come from creative resilience. Does it help us improve or maintain the social foundations we aim for, or does it push us to unsustainable living, with the kinds of results which are all too apparent? To what should we pay more attention? How high are the ceilings under which we can work? Consider each element in turn and assess the overall picture by identifying risks of shortfalls and overshoots. Find your confidence alongside your doubt.



CLIMATE CHANGE 'CONTRIBUTION'
WORKLOAD
ECOLOGICAL CEILING
OVERSHOOTS
CREATIVE RESILIENCE FOR CREATIVE COMMUNITIES
COMMERCIALISATION & PRIVATISATION
PRECARITY
TIME
NETWORKS
SHORTFALLS
CULTURAL DEMOCRACY
STABILTY
INCOME LEVELS
FUNDING
EQUITY
DIVERSITY
HE DEBT
FUNDING DEMAND
GENTRIFICATION
MONO-PRODUCTION

CHAPTER EIGHT
TRANSITION ON THE TIGHTROPE: FROM HURT TO HOPE

Some conclusions:

- *The opportunity to move from hurt to hope, carelessness to care, despite uncertainties and trauma, through a set of ecological and social transformations*
- *A focus on building the sector as a cultural, social, creative learning space where people can do good work and sustain livelihoods*
- *We should design our work to build resourcefulness and creative capabilities in ourselves, in others and the collective*
- *We should ditch hierarchical leadership models to connect, collaborate and multiply many, many voices*
- *We should make ourselves useful and make space for others even as we take up our own*
- *We should keep some slack for ourselves and the system*
- *Any one of us only gets to do the tightrope in our own unique way when we all get to do it in our own unique way*

Some questions:

- *How can you ensure your creative resilience reflects your values and resists processes or powers that negate them?*
- *What can you add to the cultural commons or share in terms of support?*
- *What space can you open up or offer to someone else?*
- *What voices or ideas do you want to connect, collaborate and multiply?*
- *What will you do on the tightrope?*

"Hope is the story of uncertainty, of coming to terms with the risk involved in not knowing what comes next, which is more demanding than despair, and, in a way, more frightening. And immeasurably more rewarding."
Rebecca Solnit [1]

Introduction

While checking a reference, I was reminded that *Rethinking Relationships,* the publication that came out of the Inquiry into the Civic Role of Arts Organisations, opens by quoting something I said in *Faster but Slower, Slower but Faster*. What I said feels even more true today, so I will repeat it here to begin this last part of my argument:

"This is a time of such uncertainty – economically, politically, socially, culturally – that the need to be creative together as citizens feels urgent. But if that is true, only the fullest possible cultural participation – everyone – will do."

So many of the issues highlighted in the weird, painful, shut-in but mind-expanding challenges of 2020, so many of the frustrations people want to address, have been there all along. We knew them. We *knew* them. Some of us have been working on them. More have been talking about them. We have not done enough. We must acknowledge the persistent nature of these issues in order to tackle them. I want now to consider how the sector has an opportunity and an obligation to change, to be more creatively resilient for and with the people inside it, outside it and beyond in society, and to jump systems or cycles if it can't do that fairly within existing paradigms.

And yet, there are also things that give me hope. I do not always think that versions of the common creativity I aspire to here *will* come to be the dominant ones, but many things convince me *it makes sense* that they should. That is why I am hopeful, if not always optimistic. I choose to work towards the things that make me hopeful rather than the things I am sure will succeed. I will end by describing some of the ways I hope we can use the moment to jump out of this frustrating cycle into a new kind of ecology based on creative community, a coming together to build creative resilience in creative communities.

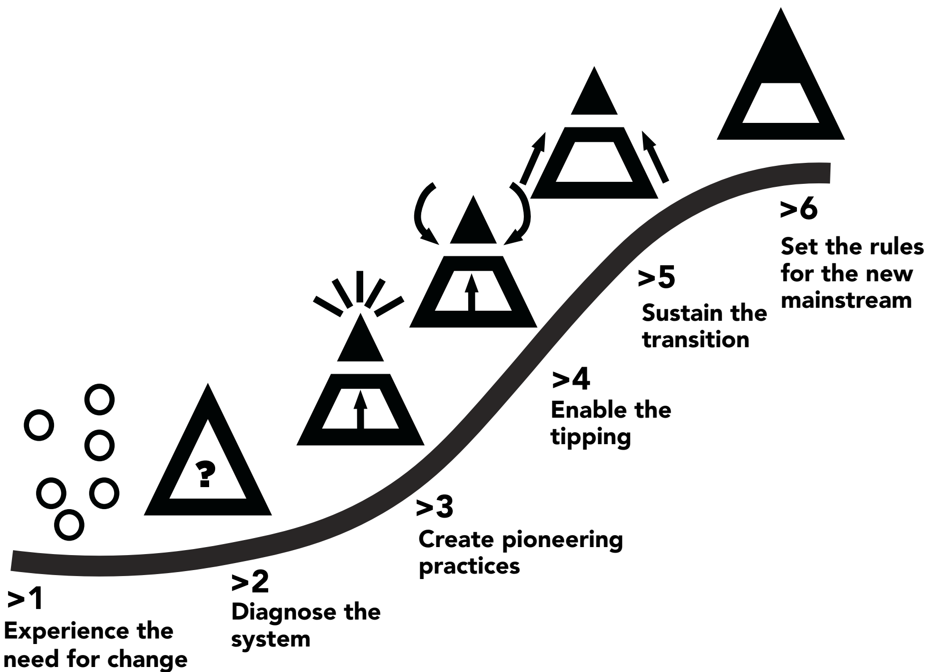
Sinking & Swimming: Understanding Britain's Unmet Needs is a report by the Young Foundation, published in 2009 but sadly still highly relevant.[2] It describes the kind of dilemma faced by many places, such as Teesside where I have lived for nearly 30 years: for all the loss, trauma and change that has occurred, the social fabric and creative community have proved remarkably resilient, for most if not all of the population. There is more coping persistence and

vulnerable dependence than we would like, many frustrated innovators who grow up here end up leaving, and there is a proud-but-paranoid strain to many conversations. As the Young Foundation report concludes: “Not all kinds of resilience are equally useful. Some communities are proving very resilient to economic shocks – particularly the old working class communities that have now experienced several decades of high unemployment. They are good at providing mutual support, and good at absorbing setbacks. But this kind of passive or survival resilience does not necessarily help people to adapt and prosper – people survive the fall but fail to get up and maximise their potential. In these communities, what is most needed is a more active or adaptive resilience.”

Passive is not the best word here: it actually takes a lot of effort to provide that mutual support, to survive. This is something that artists and many arts organisations have become very good at, in the ways some communities have. But is a poor artist creatively resilient? Or in what ways is a poor artist creatively resilient? What are the pros and cons of that artist being that resilient? Who can sustain that kind of resilience, and why should they? What structures make it more or less possible for creatives of all backgrounds to do so?

The challenge is to resist getting by, and to build creative resilience that makes and explores alternatives, in a constant learning process. It may take a different sort of energy, it certainly needs a different kind of support and encouragement, and an awareness of the potential tipping points and levers for change. And sometimes, as was suggested in the explanation of panarchy, it takes a jump or transition to a new state.

A tipping point: towards new norms



In *Systemic Innovation*, a NESTA discussion paper, Anna Birney describes "Six steps to significant change"[3]. I first wrote about this in the context of Creative People and Places, in *Faster But Slower, Slower But Faster,* but the six steps seem to me relevant to our explorations of the post-Covid renewal and recovery, and the decade to come, and to the models I have set out here.

After sensing a need, Creative People and Places consortia had experimented, diagnosed local systems, sometimes finding pioneering practices, often building on a history of community, education and socially engaged arts practices. Their visions have always been to enable tipping – behavioural change that doesn't flip back. Arts Council England, the progenitor of the programme and the main funder of activity, especially in the early years, has also invested significant sums over a relatively long period, with a total commitment between 2012-2024 of around £108m. This is – overall, with some caveats about how funding has been tapered off – a really good example of the kind of sustained, serious funding required for long-lasting change.

The final step in Birney's model is setting rules for the new mainstream. Katrina Brown's work on resilience sets out some things which typically alter during the 'transformation' of any system, be that designed change or as the result of positive disturbance or catastrophic events, or a mixture. These are a combination of what she calls ecological transformations (how the ecology works and services itself, how feedback loops function) and social transformations (norms, values and beliefs; rules, practices and regulations; and the distributions and flow of power, authority and resources.)

I have grouped some reflections on emerging and potential shifts against these categories in the table overleaf. These are indicative examples, not a comprehensive set of proposals.

Although at times we talk about levers for change, this is, at root, a mechanistic image which suggests a linear, rational or at least designed approach to change, not a systemic one. There's a lever: pull it. Job being done follows inevitably. We know cultural and community life is more complex and unpredictable than that. In resilience thinking, however a tipping point can be both recognised and designed or introduced, being that point after which the system shifts potentially irreversibly into a different equilibrium state. This is not necessarily healthier for all individual parts of the ecology, of course: a village flooded as a result of a new dam is arguably in a different equilibrium state as much as one where a new forest is being planted and nurtured. (As someone – I forget who, apologies if it was you, *lecteur* – said to me: "If the arts really are an ecology we need to think about who's eating who.")

Neither is equilibrium always what is desired or needed in culture and community; we are back to the paradox of stability and change. Sometimes this is abrupt and seismic: Covid has created this kind of phase for many. The new equilibrium that emerges may be so undesirable – e.g. for someone whose work has disappeared until festivals can happen again, and then must work in a narrow version of what's possible, or be censored in what can be said for commercial or political reasons – that it requires a shift into a new system. Being made redundant is an example of an abrupt change that requires a new state: changes to workplace or pattern, or retraining in a different industry for instance. It can be traumatic, and it can also be an opportunity to jump out of a cycle that was unhealthy or not as rewarding as it once was.

CREATIVE RESILIENCE AND MULTIPLYING LEADERSHIP IN CREATIVE COMMUNITIES

	ECOLOGICAL/ SYSTEMIC TRANSFORMATIONS	SOCIAL TRANSFORMATIONS
Self (I*ndividuals)*	• Well-designed devolved funding working with sector networks	• Membership of unions or collaboratives to provide collective insurance, sick pay etc common • Freelance and community participation in governance
Inside (organisations)	• More use of collective/ co-operative models • Co-creation built into creative resilience	• Doing less for more • Building reserves • Payment models for online/ streaming that serve artists and audiences
Outside (sectors)	• Flexible but focused investment models including loans • Devolved place-based funding • Increased roles for local authorities/ consortia	• Anti-discrimination activity as norm • Networking of the networks • Funding governance includes networks more • Inclusion seen as core outcome
Beyond (society)	• Funding focuses on building resilience/agency not gratitude or ROI • Universal basic income • Changes to self-employment regimes	• Adoption of online/personal hybrids • New collaborative economy/ commons • Culture as central to place, place to culture

The idea of a transition phase is also useful at a sectoral level, as a system moves from one equilibrium state to another, one way of being to another, often with different results. Such phases are described as taking different forms and timescales depending on the size of the system, the nature of the drivers for change, and the type of transition. Some systems may exist almost continuously in a transient state if there is frequent disturbance. This might apply to the parts of the cultural sector that change in smaller, faster adaptive cycles, as innovations in tradition change forms continually, and elements change relatively rapidly. (Think small-scale touring theatre and dance, for instance.) Importantly, larger systems which are slower to respond to change always exhibit a gradual shift in ecosystem state through time. In the cultural sector, this can be a source of frustration to those who mainly inhabit the short, fast cycles, who want to see change in the larger bodies happen quicker, without fully acknowledging the different nature of those institutions.

Funder strategies are also in transition, more or less profoundly. You can see this in Arts Council England's latest 10 year strategy, *Let's Create*, which puts a very different emphasis on individual and community creativity than their previous *Great Art For Everyone* – and yet that strategy was in some ways the continuation of a transition toward 'everyone' and away from 'excellence' alone, that had been ongoing since at least the turn of the century if not before. *Let's Create* emerged from activity in the previous cycle, and will be part of a transition in the next 10 years. Arts Council Wales have also flagged how the post-pandemic strategy will "explore new territory with imagination and generosity, ensuring that we engage more fully with the many people and communities who haven't benefited previously from public funding of the arts". Similar patterns can be seen internationally. The Institute for Voluntary Action Research has brought together funders to make commitments based on openness and trust, building on learning from joint working and simplification of processes during the pandemic. This will, I suspect, be a gradual process, an evolution of approaches, habits and systems, all of which will also be affected by the operating and political environment. These will include counter-flows, including an emphasis on economic recovery potentially privileging areas of the creative industries where growth might be highest over activity aimed at degrowth or community depth, and potential clashes over identity, history and social justice.

Contradictory times, challenges and action

The context for any new state is even more contradictory times than I described earlier, and where the contradictions have even sharper, more dangerous edges. There are a number of aspects to this which I set out before concluding.

There is, most prominently, the question as to whether a combination of Covid, climate emergency, 'culture wars', austerity and the devastation of parts of the economy (especially culture and hospitality) will turn contradictory times into 'a Long Crisis', to use a phrase from some sobering scenario development by Local Trust.[4] What they call the Long Crisis scenarios are shaped by two drivers of change: governments being more or less focused on delivery or holding onto power, and people playing a local role or being active at all levels of society. This leads to four scenarios whose titles alone are challenging: Big Mother, Rise of the Oligarchs, Winning Ugly, and Fragile Resilience. This last is a place of chaotic, vulnerable innovation, or where some parts of the cultural sector, especially artists, creatives and freelancers, have been for some time.

The potential for a Long Crisis is also apparent in evidence looking specifically at the cultural and creative sectors. Some touch on the threat posed by restrictions on movement and gathering to the very nature of much cultural activity: gathering in crowds and audiences, laughing, singing, conviviality and touch are at risk, as well as the businesses that rely on them, which were amongst the first to close and may be the last to re-open. There may be an exodus of workers from the sector, and a reduced number of organisational or network vehicles for cultural artefacts and productions. Audiences may have developed new habits which undermine even innovative, responsive business models. There may be downsides to the digital shift which has also opened up opportunities, with more previously unengaged people connecting online.[5]

A lesson I take from the experience of cultural organisations during Covid is an inconvenient one in many ways: we cannot stop and start again. This is despite the drastic way in which many people's work has disappeared or reduced, and despite all the gigs, readings, plays, exhibitions, festivals, events and so on we have missed, and the interactions around them. But arts and

cultural activity has not stopped: people have found new ways to do what they did before. Not all of it has been about going online. People have connected by phone, by post, at a distance.

This kind of ingenuity to maintain connection between ideas, expression and people is the heart and start of the dream of the tightrope walkers. To do something amazing and to draw others in. We must engage in multiple, ongoing transitions and changes at system level, using all our senses, muscles and imagination. This is both more exhausting and more necessary than visions of overnight transformation by either burning it down or changing the locks. The great thing seen during Covid is that creativity can flourish in different forms, under pressure, and help with that pressure. Any new equilibrium must remember that, make that its new muscle memory and carry it within its new practices. It must avoid falling into recast versions of the old, conflicted but also productive equilibrium.

The pandemic also seems to be having an unequal impact in the cultural sector, parallel to that seen in the tragic patterns of illness and mortality. Core Cities have raised concerns that people from Black, Asian and other sometimes marginalised ethnic communities, as well as women and disabled people, will suffer disproportionately. One study found the crisis particularly hurt women, with women "96% more likely than men to have been made redundant because of the COVID-19 pandemic, with 8.6% of women reporting a job loss during lockdown compared with 4.4% of men": patterns likely to be replicated in the cultural sector.[6]

There are particular worries in terms of employment. Work for the Centre for Cultural Value shows that in the first six months of the crisis, there was a collapse in working hours, and 55,000 job losses (a 30% decline) in music, performing and visual arts. 15% of people who worked in creative occupations in the first quarter in 2020 were no longer working in creative occupations by June. The damage to the workforce was particularly bad in music, performing and visual arts. Younger people, especially those under 25, have been especially badly affected.

From Hurt to Hope

Nicholas Burbules, writing on dialogue in teaching, suggests there are six things necessary to successful dialogic conversation: a concern for others, trust, respect, appreciation, affection and hope.[7] I want to now draw out how many of the traumatic patterns affecting us can lead to hope, in ways which also illustrate Burbules' other factors.

As with other aspects of the virus, those groups who were most disadvantaged before Covid have been disproportionately hurt by it. This means those facing structural racism, sexism, ableism, homophobia and transphobia. 2020 also saw major crises and/or breakthroughs in some of these areas, especially the responses to the Black Lives Matter movement, which have met both cynicism – "where's the action?" – and hope – "at last some action, not just diversity talk". The number of anti-racism statements, and the concerted planning for action some are engaged in, does indicate that this could encourage more structural change, but it is uncertain as I write. If enough concrete actions are taken on this, or to move the sector in line with, say, the Seven Principles set out by the gathering of disabled artists and disabled-led organisations We Shall Not Be Removed, which include co-production with disabled people and embedding anti-ableist action, these may well provide anchor elements for a new state, moving through a very different adaptive cycle than previously.[8] There are also a growing number of highly practical networks and initiatives working in fields relating to, for example, decolonising museums practice, including repatriation of assets stolen during colonialism (e.g. Museums Detox), class (e.g. Museums As Muck), Cultural Democracy (e.g. 64M Artists, Fun Palaces), Arts and Older People (e.g. CADA, the Creative Ageing Development Agency), climate change (e.g. Culture Declares Emergency) that give hope that these things may become part of a reconfigured ecology. The hope is that, over time, the networks connect in larger networks of networks, and draw in enough other people, ideas and activities to make the connections *last*.

Changing the norms will require facing up to the traumas and hurts many people have faced in their lives and cultural lives, and the privilege of those that have been shielded from the causes (and often the effects). There are many conversations and projects now which implicitly or explicitly confront the damage done by heritages of slavery and colonialism, sexism, racism, ableism,

homophobia and other conditions. Any commitment to new ways of working or being must be articulated in relation to what I might call 'hurt' – pain, trauma and loss are wrapped up in that term. Whether this is the ongoing, traumatic personal, familial and structural legacy of colonialism; economic and social attacks on places then forced into often clumsy regeneration; race, religion, gender or class-based exclusion or its flip-sides erasure by labels and tokenism; or the dangers felt by people identifying as LBGTQIA+, these experiences are now being articulated and heard, attended to.

This is, though, also creating conflict. The rows and culture wars manufactured by conservative media over the National Trust tackling its heritage of slavery and colonialism, and the resistance to equality for transgender, non-binary and gender-neutral people from some quarters, are examples of conflict and hurt arising from the increasing visibility and awareness of an issue, which should be a positive development. Acknowledging hurt, let alone healing it, may not be easy, but is an important process for people working in/with culture in any kind of social context. A number of projects and initiatives are emerging taking a broadly therapeutic approach to some of these areas, such as The Loss Project which connects people in local communities through grief, loss and trauma in all of their forms. (They explicitly connect grief and loss to diminished resilience.) Inc Arts, for instance, which was founded to help develop an inclusive arts workforce, have expanded to offer Inc Arts Minds, free group therapy for people who have suffered racism. This approach could usefully inform all practice in creative communities, given the levels of mistrust and hurt heard in any large conversation in deprived communities or groups of freelance creatives.

Some of the hurt may even represent progress tracing its slow arc forward, as what was once unacknowledged or unspeakable becomes a source of pride and identity for some but resentment for others. Some, maybe much, of our current pain has grown out of older, often hidden, hurt. (This is not to downplay people's current struggles in any way.) This is a process, culture as the potential space for therapeutic healing, more than simply 'tackling isolation' or 'improving well-being', much as it can do those things. The future may be intersectional but it will also, I hope, be inter-generational, and make the most of the creative resilience of so many people, groups and ideas. We need to take both immediate and long views to stay hopeful, to heal hurt where possible, and to take hope from hurt.

Risk, Positive Error Culture and Agency

The tightrope is not a place for you if you want guaranteed safety. It is a place of guaranteed risk. You will fall off. If you never fall off you're not doing it right. If you fall off all the time, you may not be doing it right either. Walking the tightrope of cultural practice with creative communities cannot be without risk, but we have a collective responsibility to look after ourselves and each other. For creative workers to expect that someone else can legislate into being all the conditions and assets I described earlier, is to misunderstand the difference between regulation and agency, between safety and protection. This can be provided by law, by norms, by behaviours: all of which require collective effort and which demand and boost agency and self-determination. They also require us to be active in that collaborative protection. (Just as in a plane emergency you are advised to put on your own mask before helping others: that's not selfishness, it's being part of a team.)

One aspect of this is reflecting on our own behaviour, within an environment that creates a positive error culture rather than one that looks for blame and infraction. This is something I have seen within Creative People and Places' action research ethos, and in the work of many individual arts organisations. It has, also, though, proved tricky in the cultural sector, delaying processes of healing and mediation beginning in areas of racial and social justice, for example, due to a historic lack of reflection on failure or damaging side effects, and a culture of endless, insecure positivist advocacy within the culture sector. For some, the right to fail has become something of a mantra, for others failure to overturn the conditions of late capitalism is a stick to beat funders and national institutions with. I absolutely understand the importance of it to artists – and producers and promoters and others – but also worry about whether, as one moves more into the co-creation space, the right to fail further reveals and exacerbates the inequalities in the cultural sector. Who gets to fail, on what terms? Who gets to fail quietly, and leave for new roles? What are the consequences of failure, and how do they differ across race and gender? I suspect it is easier for a white, non-disabled man to make a discreet 'exploring new opportunities' exit and then move on to a very similar job with only a few private murmurs than it is for others. However, this is exactly why I want to talk about it here: the attitude to failure, the scope to take on attitude which admits to things other than success, is an important component of power and

agency. So the question is not just "Are you resilient enough to fail?" but "Do you fail enough to be resilient?"

A positive error culture embraces learning from unpredicted results, including failure, and helps build trust and confidence. Some people have the word failure ringing in their ears – inhabiting and inhibiting their sense of self-determination. It can keep people away from the welcoming space creativity can become. It can make some cautious and over-compliant with fashion or instruction. In every potential project they see the things that might not work. It can make others twitchy and impulsive. It can be a cause of a pre-existing pandemic in the sector, Imposter Syndrome, even amongst the most seemingly confident and successful people. Others love failure, or say they do. They talk of "the glory of failure". It can be exciting and liberating spending time with these people. Others mention failure only in passing. They hurry on to learning and how failure taught them everything they know. They say there's no failure except the failure to learn. Some believe that one day things will turn to gold, if they just keep experimenting. Some people admit nothing.

At the heart of people's reluctance to talk about failure as if it mattered is what writer Brené Brown terms "vulnerability", one of the central ideas in resilience. Yet, as Brown so powerfully illustrates in her writing, embracing vulnerability can lead to greater resilience, and greater learning and trust. The making of culture inevitably involves risks of all sorts – personal, financial, psychological, physical – you cannot dream on the high wires without risk. Some years ago I wrote an article for NESTA's Digital R&D Fund about failure which argued for taking failure seriously. The value of that risk-taking had, NESTA found, outweighed the negative feelings that lingered around the world, and I came to share their conclusion that those who admitted failings should be seen as heroes.

More recently, an AHRC-funded research project led by Leila Jancovich (University of Leeds), with David Stevenson (Queen Margaret University, Edinburgh) alongside Lucy Wright and Malaika Cunningham, set out to explore how the cultural sector can better recognise, acknowledge and learn from failure, particularly when undertaking work intended to diversify and grow the people who are taking part in subsidised cultural activities. FailSpacehas developed a set of tools and a framework useful to any evaluation, which is also still being developed and adapted.[9]

In a sceptical mood, one might ask "Why learn from failure when you can learn from success?" Neuroscientists at MIT have found that brain cells in monkeys track the success of behaviour, and become more finely tuned when a behaviour is successful. Failure made little or no difference to either the brain or the behaviour. According to Harvard academics Francesca Gino and Gary P. Pisano, success tends to not inspire the kind of questions that difficulty does. They term this "failure to ask syndrome". Even if we review successful projects, they found, we are likely to be over-confident about our own abilities, giving more credit to our own actions than to environmental factors. Research into After Action Reviews, often used in military situations where the stakes of failure can hardly be higher, suggests they are useful whether an exercise has succeeded or failed. Although we learn more from successes by focusing on what didn't work within them than what did, research in the military found those who discussed *both* successes and failures learned at higher rates than those who discussed *just* failures.

So we need to move on from failure as taboo or totem whilst maintaining a positive error culture. We need to think about how we extract maximum learning from what we do, in R&D and everyday situations, because learning leads to insight, change and agency. (This may be the most hopeful idea in this book.)

Parochial Cosmopolitanism

On the 1st January 2021, during a third national lockdown in response to the Covid pandemic, the United Kingdom and Northern Ireland left the European Union, four years after a divisive and disastrous referendum. At the time of writing, whilst international travel was but a nostalgic memory or a distant dream given the global restrictions on travel, the assurances given over such things as musicians' ability to travel for work to the EU without visas and additional costs proved to be the chimera many suspected all along. Meanwhile, trade was hit by restrictions, and socially, racism and anti-immigrant feeling had been stirred up and operationalised through the government's Hostile Environment policy, leading to fears of a 'brain drain' of immigrant talent. Groups such as Migrants in Culture came together to improve conditions for migrants and others affected.

Much of the emphasis of what I have written here is on the local, even the hyperlocal, but I also want to insist upon the international, and on the connection between the two. Creative resilience is enhanced by difference, by different ways of looking at things, different cultural structures, grammars and patterns, by sharing and comparing. For some years I was involved in the Swallows Foundation, an initiative connecting the Eastern Cape in South Africa and North East England. I learnt as much about home as I did about abroad from the people I met and the art I saw and heard.

Future Arts Centres has done work to promote international connection and collaboration across its membership. The benefits from internationalism that arts centres identified from their many encounters can all be seen to boost creative resilience and greater inclusion. They included internationalism as anti-isolationism, breaking insularity through long-term dialogue including with local diaspora communities; internationalism as solidarity, internationalism as developmental activity for artists, staff teams and local people; internationalism as mutual exchange and exploration of people and ideas, work in both/several directions. Internationalism was rejected by arts centres where it was restricted to internationalism as exotic trip or gap year, internationalism as import/export business and internationalism as cultural colonialism. (Although Covid has halted physical internationalism, the connections between cultural organisations have often been maintained, and in some case even enhanced through use of digital technology, making international connections less expensive in time, money and carbon.)

As described in Chapter Six, in *The Care Manifesto*[10] The Care Collective argue that care should move beyond family boundaries to more "promiscuous" models of kinship and communal life. They see a need to "mobilise and cultivate radical cosmopolitan conviviality" through "everyday cosmopolitanism". I connect this idea to the ongoing need for internationalism to avoid the focus on place and community turning inwards. The internationalism seen through the Future Arts Centres network combines local and international, as an example of what I might call "parochial cosmopolitanism". This is not quite think global, act local, although it is not counter to that. It is more: know your home to travel well or travel (imaginatively) to know your home and history. Don't confuse either your home or your travels for the whole world. Through this oxymoronic term, parochial cosmopolitan, we might be able to escape the perceived lack of relevance for some of much international

and global activity and the perceived narrowness and restriction for others of local ideas and local roots. Rather than choose between Somewhere and Anywhere, perhaps there is more space in the Hyperlocal Everywhere?

(I have tended, in my creative writing, to 'hide' a slightly unresolved poem in each collection that better belongs in my next book: this may be that paragraph in this book.)

Care and Justice in Creative Work

Care, as in the example of *The Care Manifesto*, is another area where a greater focus on creative resilience in communities bolstered by multiplying leadership can be a useful lens for the future. The Care Manifesto suggests caring communities have four common features: mutual support, public space, shared resources and local democracy. I hope it is very easy to see the first three within the framework of creative resilience and multiplying leadership, and to see the last as implicit in much I have argued, especially through the emphasis on co-creation. Certainly, care has been given greater focus over the last year, and there is a groundswell of organisations now asking how they might better care for their workforce, including freelancers.
This also relates to two central principles of what Mark Banks describes as "Creative Justice"[11] – what I read as the outcome of a sector that centres itself in a version of creative resilience not too far from my own. As well as objective justice – treating culture and cultural products on their own terms – two pillars of creative justice are parity of participation and reduction of harms. These relate very much to the kind of picture set out in Chapter Three, and the pernicious results of inequality and damaging working conditions. More attention to care and reduction of harm is required for creative resilience to contribute to resisting inequality, harm and hierarchy.

The Institute for the Future of Work, in a report exploring the opportunities for *A better future for work: the world after Covid-19*, suggest that the abrupt disturbance to some work, alongside the urgent need for others, created what they term "a secular revelation" about the purpose and nature of work.[12] They argue that "far too much work leaves particular communities and entire sectors of our workforce vulnerable … (and) that far too much work that is critical to our collective wellbeing is not adequately valued or rewarded." They explicitly

connect "good work" to the kinds of characteristics of creative resilience I have described, aiming to empower people and communities to be resilient.

They propose a Good Work Charter which could be adopted wholesale by cultural employers for everyone they work with, including artists, creatives and freelancers.

It has 10 principles that would support creative resilience without changing a word:

- Access: Everyone should have access to good work
- Fair pay: Everyone should be fairly paid
- Fair conditions: Everyone should work on fair conditions set out on fair terms
- Equality: Everyone should be treated equally and without discrimination
- Dignity: Work should promote dignity
- Autonomy: Work should promote autonomy
- Wellbeing: Work should promote physical and mental wellbeing
- Support: Everyone should have access to institutions and people who can represent their interests
- Participation: Everyone should be able to take part in determining and improving working conditions
- Learning: Everyone should have access to lifelong learning and career guidance

(I have in general avoided requiring specific action from readers of this book, being more interested in seeing the many different ways to achieve the direction I describe. But I allow myself this exception in the final pages: adopt and enact that Good Work Charter, please.)

Conclusion: Creative Resilience in Creative Communities

Some people and organisations are born resilient and creative enough for the tightrope, some achieve a way of moving and juggling and holding others when they need to, and some have it thrust upon them by funders and policy makers. The end, surely, has to be to move and grow on the tightrope in good health, amid the beauty of movement and balance, as long as you need to for your mission, and in the ways you choose. This might be for six months, three years, or forever – that's up to you in the end, depending on the nature of your purpose, your work, your personality, your time. The resourcefulness and capabilities of creative resilience could give you more power to shape how you put your principles and values into action in the world, how you connect to others, and in what you want to persist. (Persistence is not resilience, but it is undeniably a factor in learning and in creative lives. You do not get back up on the tightrope without persistence. Persistence alone will not keep you there.)

The development of business models, assets and networks that enable you to "be robust about what we stand for and what our values are" boosts the potential to resist against the forces that damage and limit our creative communities. It is in keeping with a long history of self-organisation such as trade unions, co-operatives, credit unions and other coping mechanisms. That a way of thinking helps you cope with the outcomes of neoliberalism does not necessarily mean you cannot also use it to continue to work to resist that marketisation in the long term. In culture, we have great opportunities to do this by the way our work can simultaneously add to 'the commons' across so many areas., even as we may be forced to compete within markets for audiences, funding, commissions or attention. I would argue we need to build our creative resilience in the context of this cultural 'commoning' through greater sharing of spaces, resources and skills; more collaborative working and consortium working – as seen in different ways across so many programmes, and in freelancers' responses to Covid lockdowns. Together, perhaps, we can if not totally avoid competition – some is arguably inherent, even if it is for attention as an artist – but make it fairer and less distorting.

These are not easy positions to take, or simple to deliver. At what point you feel bending not breaking turns to bending out of shape, or the stubbornness and sacrifice necessary for digging in becomes self-destructive are, to some

degree, questions of values and design. How do you want to live? What do you want to be loved and valued for? What do you want to care for as well as care about? Which imperfect options can still be creative and useful?

For me, those questions exist at a series of points of dynamic balance, like the many dreamers on the tightrope and those holding them up or drawing strength from them. They do not stand still. If you stop asking these questions, if you settle for answers and mechanisms, you are likely to tip in a direction you do not own. That is as likely to be a form of despair as of hope. If you keep asking them, you can draw up today's tactics for the tightrope, invite others to join you on the wire and start dreaming together.

The frameworks of creative resilience, multiplying leadership, co-creation and welcome offer ways to think strategically and systematically about what needs to change and how this can be done. There will, I hope, be many ways people can take action – as I hope is apparent by this point, the greater the diversity of approaches in a collective and collaborative purpose, the better. I want to end by making a few points about system change and drawing attention to particular areas I hope the ideas in this book could help people work on together.

The central shift is that we should focus strategy and tactics less on individual cultural outputs and more on the culture and system that produces them, and the resilience of the creative people and communities that co-produce them. Just as systems thinkers in public services have argued for funding-for-learning, we could see the sector not as the site of oppositional battles for control of the stages and keys, but as a cultural, social, creative learning space.

A murmuration of birds takes shape and moves without top-down leadership thanks to highly nuanced and responsive networks, beginning with individuals and moving through groups to the edge. Creative communities can continually refine our values and actions similarly, using the frameworks of creative resilience and multiplying leadership in the learning space of self, inside, outside and beyond. We can resist selling ourselves and each other by plotting our own courses while self-organising as creative communities, learning together within a handful of principles that make creative resilience a form of resistance instead of co-option.

We should design our work to **build resourcefulness and creative capabilities** in ourselves, in others and the collective.

We should **ditch hierarchical leadership models** to **connect, collaborate and multiply** many, many voices.

We should **make ourselves usefu**l and **make space for others even as we take up our own**.

We should **keep some slack for ourselves and the system**.

Our work on the tightrope is to guide others up into the air and be guided by them: culture makes culture when it enables others to make culture. To do this we must hold on to this paradox or conundrum: **any one of us only gets to do the tightrope in our own unique way when we all get to do it.**

CHAPTER NINE: CODA
"DREAM A LITTLE BEFORE YOU THINK": 19 MUNDANE DREAMS ABOUT CULTURAL POLICY

"We are in a mess, we know; we have to get out, and only the archaic definition of the word 'dreaming' will save us: 'to envision; a series of images of unusual vividness, clarity, order and significance.' Unusual, clarity, order, significance, vividness. Undertaking that kind of dreaming we avoid complicating what is simple or simplifying what is complicated, soiling instead of solving, ruining what should be revered."
Toni Morrison

1.

Right now, the days seems to crash straight into dreams. Picking dough off my forearms with my fingernails while being interviewed for jobs I don't want, in a pin-striped suit I should never have bought. Running between laptops in farce-mode having three Zoom meetings simultaneously like a bad cover version of Jimmy Stewart playing Eddie The Eagle. Being pushed up to sing at a succession of folk clubs, able to stutter only the phrase "blah blah blah shoals of herring". Starting fights in the park. The details may be mine alone, the anxiety isn't.

The phrase 'new normal' bounces off the empty walls of my brain too rapidly for me to make sense of it. It feels too early to be thinking of such things, or far too late. So much of what people talk about when they talk about the new normal feels like the old normal anyway, or how it looked sometimes through certain windows and gaps in the fences; 'normal' being, like the future, always already here, just not evenly distributed. This has not prevented me using the phrase myself.

I want to share some deliberately mundane waking dreams of the cultural sector and cultural policy in the future. I am interested in the glimpses a different kind of dreaming might give. I am inspired by the phrase I've used as the title, which found me in an essay by Toni Morrison. It's in her book of essays, *Mouth Full of Blood*, and is actually advice from a Commencement Address she gave at Sarah Lawrence University in 1988.

"Dream a little before you think" is a helpful steer for someone like me. What follows is a series of images, not a full picture. There may be order, but also, I suspect, contradiction. I want to leave to others, or to other times, pandemic panegyric case studies, and new normal calls that chant old mantras, wondering why the universe has yet to reward them. I want to be specific in the way dreams are, and to avoid what has lately felt like the "soiling" effect to which Morrison refers, which cultural strategy language can have on lived experience. There have been, and will be again, times for words like those that preceded these. But they are not what feel useful to me to right now. This might be a selfish feeling. The abstract brings out my anxiety, like polyester does eczema, the specific, the tactile, actual sounds and movements and tastes have helped.

Like dreams, what follows may not make sense, may not cohere, or include a call to action. Some things might not be wholly positive. Some might seem entirely banal to you, dear reader. So it goes. Dreams often are banal, at least mine are. No salami-slicing eyeballs, melting clocks or TikTok-making hippos, no red flags from the opera house roof, sorry.

2.

The artist is digging up an allotment, turning wet sods over in neat rows. They push an old wheelbarrow home, full of carrots and onions and leeks. The leeks are absolutely massive. They are feeling relaxed because they know the invoice sent in last week got paid today. By a university, too.
/
A meeting has broken out. The dreamer looks round the room, and at the people attending by Zoom as well, and no two people look or sound alike. It's not exactly the United Nations, but you have to pay attention all the time. They keep getting surprised, or given new ideas. And every now and then, everyone laughs.
/
The artist opens their pension statement and smiles without irony at the amount the people and companies they have worked for in the last year have added to the pot.
/
The Chief Executive opens their pay packet, notices the bottom line figure has gone down. They read: "The Fair-Dos Law of 2022 is now in operation,

meaning no person's pay and rewards package can be more than a single-digit multiple of the lowest paid full-time employee's salary and employer pension contributions. We do not apologise for the reduction in your pay."

/

The speech has been circulated in advance, and plays as subtitles, surtitles and BSL during the keynote. The speaker is not waving their hands in that way people used to. I get up and wave my arms around like Magnus bloody Pyke.

/

The dreamer is unable to move. They always are. They breathe with the help of a ventilator. Their carer has a machine and painstakingly takes dictation by following the movements of their eyes in response to endless questions. This is how they wrote their last two books of poems. They are watching the RSC's *King Lear* on a screen in front of them, live, with Robert Lindsay playing both Edmund and Lear. They would smile if they could.*

/

It's Tuesday morning and chucking it down. A coach full of excited year 10s pour into the arts centre, spraying Lynx and hormones. Within 10 minutes they are dancing, working with people who have trained to make their bodies do what they are told, and to tell them things in return. Later, one of the group lingers by the lunch buffet just a little too long, and in the space on the evaluation form for "Best thing about today" they write "All the food".

/

The kitchen table is scratched to hell, and clods of paint are stuck in the dents from the toddler years, where spoons beat out hungry rhythms. A song is being made to go with a painting. The dreamer and their children start to work out a short dance to share on TikTok. It flows and jerks and waves their limbs about. They laugh.

/

The Home Office Border Control Officer blushes as they ask the new questions, and the interpreter passes them on. What creative skills do you have you could share? What is the most important activity from your culture you would like not to lose? They think about the old days.

/

The dreamer is being shown around an abandoned theatre. There is pigeon shit everywhere, massive posters of Sirs Ian McKellen and Patrick Stewart sprayed with the stuff. Another in the small group on the tour remembers that show. They thought it was funny, but would never end. They know they are going to reopen this place, but it will be different. They look around the

space and imagine, panic rising in their chests.
/
The artist holds a glass of warm white wine in their hand. Inside the artist is someone who used to work as a carer, then a nurse, then a taxi driver, then a teacher, then something they'd prefer to forget. Two of their paintings are on the wall of this crowded, chatter-filled room. They think back to their oldest giving them a kick up the arse and a lift to the doctor's, who prescribed art classes. They are wondering how they got to be in this awkward conversation with someone dressed in black who is, apparently, a curator. The curator is also wondering this, and enjoying the feeling. Over the P.A. system, Gwen Verdon sings 'If They Could See Me Now.' The artist is feeling very proud of themselves but sad that their spouse is not here to see it.
/
In the school gym, 200 people are gathered to decide how arts council funding for their town is distributed, talking round tables, circulating, arguing, falling silent, finding agreements and points to move on.
/
There are rooms of people settling down who don't know each other, but will. They talk in raised voices, and in quiet voices, blurred sounds that come into focus every time someone says yes. Some kind of timetable is on a flipchart and gradually fills up. The dream pans in and every word is yes.
/
The board member dreams of not being able to sleep. They are afraid they have not been brave enough in the conversation earlier, when the board heard the presentation from the latest apprentice to join the staff, who talked about how the job had helped them cope with their parents' depression, and their own. The new board members jumped in so enthusiastically with their own experiences, they had nothing to say without admitting to things they had never admitted to before.
/
The Council newspaper comes through the letterbox and drops onto the mat heavy with its new Citizen Creativity Supplement. The dreamer opens it and out fall pens and crayons, seeds, recipes, beads, string, words on magnets to arrange on the fridge. The first thing to catch their eye says, "What do you remember of last week?" The second is "Make something that tells you what day it is."
/
The dreamer finds themselves in a crowded room, with everyone looking at

them. They seem to be admitting that when push comes to shove they don't really care if the National Theatre and the Royal Opera House never reopen, they are more concerned about music lessons in their child's secondary school. The faces around them swirl into disbelieving paisley swirls, like a Disney acid trip.

/

The technician is representing the future in Lego, wondering if now being invited to the away days is such a great improvement.

/

Across town, a financial administrator taps the keyboard in time to 'Boys' by Lizzo as they authorise that month's payroll, each of the 26 employees receiving exactly the same salary, enough to pay a small mortgage in their town.

/

On Europe's widest High Street, dancers dressed as hippos but out of Mad Max move through crowds in the dark, on stilts, with flame-throwers, while overhead a French artist dressed as Boris Johnson unicycles on a high wire. There are thousands of people watching, in ones and two and small groups, each group two metres apart.

3.

By the bed, they found a notepad. The only remaining page was headed "NO DREAMS ALLOWED: STAY ALERT" in neat handwriting. It bore the following list, written in an increasingly frantic-looking hand.

"The song itself is not as important as the communal knowledge that produces it." (Yunkaporta)
Universal Basic Income now!
Pensions and CPD percentages on all freelancer invoices
Training levy on all cultural activity
Redistribution of funds to local level
Place-based funding for commons not consortia
Obligatory community (all types) membership of boards
Everyday creativity and well-being via many channels
Conflict resolution and trauma therapy
Community chests
Ignore those that ignore you

Community asset transfer of closing charity/commercial assets as well as local authority ones
People not structure
Care
[illegible]

4. **The Infinite Town**

A slice of future
Has tracked us down
The river's freshness
The afterflash of fireworked skies

These stones listen
To the infinite town
In the rasp of morning
The slow breath of dusk

A hope
That now and here
May be somewhere to settle
And train ourselves to dream

Parts 1-3 of this were originally written in May 2020, in the first lockdown of that year. Part 4 was originally commissioned by Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council and is carved on a large plinth on the Stockton High Street, from which emerges, every day at 1pm, The Stockton Flyer, a kinetic sculpture by artist Rob Higgs.

*This particular dream, indeed, this whole book, is dedicated to my late friend Gordon Hodgeon, a poet, editor, educationalist and teacher who spent the final eight years of his life able to move only his head, eventually forced to communicate only by blinking. He continued to write poems, though, with the help of his family and carers. When I first met Gordon, he was Chief Education Advisor for Cleveland County Council, and he became one of the people who helped me most in my first professional job in the arts, as a Literature Development Worker in Cleveland, almost 30 years ago. He taught me that creativity and culture, writing, reading, music, art shape our world,

even as they bend like light to its shape, whatever the degree of calamity, isolation, joy and connection. They expand the more you pass them onto others. They can keep going, even growing, through more than you could ever predict, though you should never forget nor fail to grieve how much might be lost in that process. This seems, right now, a useful example and inspiration.

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This poem was part of a commission from Tyne and Wear Community Foundation/Sponsors Club for Arts & Business and first published in *21 Ways of Looking at the Sponsors Club*, 2012.

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Mark Robinson is the founder of Thinking Practice, through which he writes, facilitates, coaches, advises and avoids a job title.

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